

## Unsettling race and language: Toward a raciolinguistic perspective

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### ABSTRACT

This article presents what we term a *raciolinguistic perspective*, which theorizes the historical and contemporary co-naturalization of language and race. Rather than taking for granted existing categories for parsing and classifying race and language, we seek to understand how and why these categories have been co-naturalized, and to imagine their denaturalization as part of a broader structural project of contesting white supremacy. We explore five key components of a raciolinguistic perspective: (i) historical and contemporary colonial co-naturalizations of race and language; (ii) perceptions of racial and linguistic difference; (iii) regimentations of racial and linguistic categories; (iv) racial and linguistic intersections and assemblages; and (v) contestations of racial and linguistic power formations. These foci reflect our investment in developing a careful theorization of various forms of racial and linguistic inequality on the one hand, and our commitment to the imagination and creation of more just societies on the other. (Race, language ideologies, colonialism, governmentality, enregisterment, structural inequality)\*

### INTRODUCTION

In US-based sociolinguistics and beyond there is a longstanding history of challenging deficit views of linguistic and cultural practices associated with racialized and socioeconomically marginalized populations. Proponents of deficit views once framed these populations as suffering from ‘verbal deprivation’ (Bereiter & Engelmann 1966) and a ‘culture of poverty’ (Lewis 1959) that allegedly resulted in low educational achievement and related societal problems. In opposition to such perspectives, sociolinguists have demonstrated the systematicity of racialized language practices and the linguistic dexterity that characterizes the communities in which they are used. This includes research seeking to legitimize so-called nonstandard language varieties such as Spanglish (Poplack 1980) and African American English (Labov 1972), as well as studies focused on documenting and revitalizing heritage language practices associated with various indigenous and (im)migrant groups as part of broader efforts to promote bilingualism (Fishman 1991). Yet, despite decades of sociolinguistic research debunking deficit perspectives and

challenging racializing discourses (Urciuoli 1996; Hill 1998; Dick & Wirtz 2011), they remain as pervasive as ever, as illustrated by recent claims about the supposed thirty million ‘word gap’ between predominantly middle-class white communities and low-income communities of color in the US (Hart & Risley 1995; Suskind 2015).

In this article we connect critical-language research with critical-race scholarship in order to develop a more robust understanding of the historical and structural processes that organize the modes of stigmatization in which deficit perspectives are rooted. This focus on historical and structural processes requires us to shift from privileging individual interactions and speaking practices as the primary sites in which categories of race and language are created and negotiated, toward investigating how institutionalized hierarchies of racial and linguistic legitimacy are central to processes of modern subject formation. Since the project of modernity is premised on the stigmatization of racialized subjects across nation-state and colonial contexts, efforts to legitimize racially stigmatized linguistic practices are fundamentally limited in their capacity to unsettle the inequities that they seek to disrupt. Indeed, as Toni Morrison pointed out more than forty years ago:<sup>1</sup>

The function, the very serious function of racism is distraction. It keeps you from doing your work. It keeps you explaining, over and over again, your reason for being. Somebody says you have no language, so you spend twenty years proving that you do. Somebody says your head isn't shaped properly, so you have scientists working on the fact that it is. Someone says you have no art, so you dredge that up. Somebody says you have no kingdoms, so you dredge that up. None of that is necessary. There will always be one more thing.

Taking our cue from Morrison, we seek to theorize a raciolinguistic perspective, which interrogates the historical and contemporary co-naturalization of language and race. We explore the analytical and practical implications of the co-naturalization of language and race across differing nation-state and colonial contexts, linking the analysis of race and language in the US to a transnational frame in which the modern world is profoundly shaped by the globalization of European colonialism. Central to our raciolinguistic perspective is an analysis of the continued rearticulation of colonial distinctions between Europeanness and non-Europeanness—and, by extension, whiteness and nonwhiteness. These distinctions anchor the joint institutional (re)production of categories of race and language, as well as perceptions and experiences thereof. Rather than taking for granted existing categories for parsing and classifying race and language, we seek to understand how and why these categories have been co-naturalized in particular societal contexts, and to imagine their denaturalization as part of a broader structural project of contesting white supremacy on a global scale. Refusing to restrict a careful consideration of race to the analysis of language within the US and other nation-states built on settler colonialism and chattel slavery, which are often recognized as racialized societies, we suggest that raciolinguistic patterns and particularities must be apprehended across the modern world. Thus, while many of the examples and analyses throughout this article position the US as a point of entry, we seek to

enter into a broader dialogue with scholars whose work is situated in various nation-state contexts to examine local and global implications of the co-naturalization of language and race.

Building from our previous work on raciolinguistic ideologies, which explores how the linguistic practices of racialized populations are systematically stigmatized regardless of the extent to which these practices might seem to correspond to standardized norms (Flores & Rosa 2015), this article proposes five key components of what we term a *raciolinguistic perspective*: (i) historical and contemporary co-naturalizations of race and language as part of the colonial formation of modernity; (ii) perceptions of racial and linguistic difference; (iii) regimentations of racial and linguistic categories; (iv) racial and linguistic intersections and assemblages; and (v) the contestation of racial and linguistic power formations. These foci reflect our investment in developing a careful theorization of relationships between racial and linguistic structures on the one hand, and our commitment to the imagination and creation of more just societies on the other.

#### HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CO-NATURALIZATIONS OF RACE AND LANGUAGE AS PART OF THE COLONIAL FORMATION OF MODERNITY

Contemporary raciolinguistic ideologies must be situated within colonial histories that have shaped the co-naturalization of language and race as part of the project of modernity. Two central components of the European colonial formation of modernity were the construction and naturalization of the concept of race along with the construction and naturalization of languages as bounded and separate objects associated with particular racial groups. The construction of race was an integral element of the European national and colonial project that discursively produced racial Others in opposition to the superior European bourgeois subject (Stoler 1995). This positioning of Europeanness as superior to non-Europeanness was part of a broader process of national-state/colonial governmentality (Flores 2013), a form of governmental racialization that imposed European epistemological and institutional authority on colonized populations worldwide as a justification for European colonialism (Hesse 2007). In conjunction with the production of race, nation-state/colonial governmentality imposed ideologies of separate and bounded languages on colonized populations (Makoni & Pennycook 2007). As with race, the creation of language hierarchies positioned European languages as superior to non-European languages (Veronelli 2015). A raciolinguistic perspective seeks to understand the interplay of language and race within the historical production of nation-state/colonial governmentality, and the ways that colonial distinctions within and between nation-state borders continue to shape contemporary linguistic and racial formations.

In the early period of the colonization of what Europeans would come to call the Americas, raciolinguistic ideologies were used to position indigenous populations as subhuman. Veronelli (2015) shows how European colonizers described indigenous language practices as animal-like forms of ‘simple communication’ that were incapable of expressing the complex worldviews represented by European languages. In related work, Greenblatt (1990) explores the ways early European colonizers characterized indigenous languages as incapable of expressing Christian doctrine and questioned whether these communities were sufficiently human to receive Christian teaching. He notes, ‘the real test of their conversion to civilization would be whether they had been able to master a language that “men” could understand’ (1990:18). In short, from the onset of European colonization, indigenous populations were stripped of their humanity at least in part through representations of their languages in animalistic terms that suggested they were incapable of expressing ideas that European colonizers thought were integral to becoming a full human being. This positioning of indigenous populations as linguistically subhuman is part of the origin of longstanding, racialized ideologies of languagelessness (Rosa 2016a) that position colonized subjects as incapable of communicating legitimately in any language.

The framing of indigenous populations as subhuman began to conflict with Enlightenment ideas related to equality and freedom that emerged in concert with the rise of European nation-states (Lowe 2006) and morphed into the framing of colonized subjects as less evolved humans than Europeans (Mignolo 2000). Importantly, these conceptions of freedom hinged on racialized distinctions between European and non-European subjects, such that racialized populations could be legitimately enslaved, abjected, and annihilated based on epistemologies that restricted political rights to normative European subjects. Raciolinguistic ideologies played an integral role in the epistemological shift from positioning non-European populations as subhumans rather than less evolved humans. Whereas in the early years of European colonization indigenous languages, in contexts such as the Americas and Africa, were described in animalistic terms as a way of denying indigenous populations their humanity, this reconfigured colonial epistemology sorted both European and non-European populations into separate and bounded communities with their own unique worldviews and Europeans atop the evolutionary scale of human development (Makoni & Pennycook 2007).

Language was seen as key to distinguishing between and potentially eradicating these differences in worldviews. On one side of the debate, were proponents of the maintenance of indigenous languages based on differing rationales. Christian missionaries and other colonial agents saw advantages to using indigenous languages to impose a Eurocentric epistemology on indigenous populations (Bamgbose 1983; Pennycook 2002). These epistemologies informed the creation of dictionaries, grammars, and writing systems for indigenous languages as part of colonial domination, in some cases prompting colonized subjects to contest these practices through various acts of resistance and rebellion (Hanks 2010). Other European

colonial advocates for indigenous communities depicted indigenous populations as ‘noble savages’ whose worldviews should be protected from European influences (Derrida 1974). This protection of indigenous worldviews was attempted in part through efforts by European colonizers to name and codify indigenous languages as bounded and separate objects in the hopes that this would facilitate the preservation of indigenous cultures and human history more broadly (Pennycook 2002). Though ostensibly focused on preserving indigenous cultures, these efforts involved the imposition of colonial views of cultural difference on indigenous populations.

On the other side of the debate were European colonial agents who saw no role for indigenous languages in European colonial projects. Proponents of this perspective equated indigenous languages with primitive worldviews that should not be preserved but rather eliminated through the imposition of European languages on these populations (Mignolo 1995). From this perspective, colonized people could further evolve in their humanity only by mastering a European language. Yet, as Fanon (1967) suggests, colonized populations’ subordinate positions prevent them from accessing the forms of legitimacy associated with mastery of European languages. In particular, he describes the ways that, in the context of French Caribbean colonialism, white French speakers often engaged Black French speakers as if they were children and refused to recognize them as legitimate French speakers with the same intellectual capacity as white people. Vigoroux (2017) explores how stigmatizing stereotypes about Black populations circulate not only in French colonial and postcolonial societies, but also in the European metropole. Specifically, Vigoroux investigates the stereotypical framing of ‘Africans as incapable of speaking French’ within France. Relatedly, Morgan’s (2002:10) African American research participants invoke fraught histories of enslavement and postemancipation in which ‘you could get into trouble for speaking like a grown man or woman’. This underscores relations among colonial histories and racialized language ideologies that link and in some cases imbricate anti-indigenous and anti-Black perspectives. Even when colonized subjects complied with the imposition of European languages, they continued to be positioned as racial Others who would never be fully European—and, by extension, fully human.

These raciolinguistic ideologies have undergone another transformation in the postcolonial era. This transformation is reflected in part by discourses of endangerment that ecologize indigenous languages by positioning them as repositories of exotic worldviews that should be preserved as a way of maintaining humanity’s connection with its history (Cameron 2007). An alternative ecologization of language positions European languages as modern conduits of science and technology and indigenous languages as antimodern communicative forms that hinder national development (Marr 2011). In a continuation of raciolinguistic ideologies of European colonialism, these differing ecologizations of language suggest that indigenous communities must be excluded from contemporary nation-states in order to maintain their unique worldviews or must replace their heritage language with a

European language in order to become modern citizen-subjects of contemporary nation-states. Such racialized chronotopes—space-time narratives linking particular models of personhood and language practices to particular temporal and geographical contexts—are powerful articulations of raciolinguistic ideologies (Wirtz 2014; Rosa 2016b).

These historical and contemporary linkages underscore the importance of interrogating the role of language and race in the reconfiguration of colonial distinctions in purportedly postcolonial, postracial, and postapartheid settings (Alim & Reyes 2011; Williams & Stroud 2015). Rafael (2000) analyzes historical and contemporary conceptions of racial and linguistic mixing in the Philippines, a site of Spanish and US colonialism, and the contested perspectives from which this mixing is framed as a sign of superiority or inferiority. Reyes (2017) ties this colonial history to the emergence of the postcolonial category of the Philippine *conyo*, a fraught urban-elite youth figure stereotyped as light-skinned, superficial, and materialistic, and associated with English-Tagalog (i.e. ‘Taglish’ or ‘Englog’) language mixing. Building on Bhabha’s (1984) theorization of colonial mimicry, Reyes (2017) examines how efforts to discern ‘real’ vs. ‘fake’ *conyos* reflect the ways that postcolonial societies are continually structured by anxieties about postcolonial subjects’ efforts to copy or imitate practices associated with colonizers. The key point is that distinctions between ‘pure’ versus ‘mixed’ Filipinoness, Spanishness, and Americanness on the one hand, and Tagalog, Spanish, and English on the other, are historical and colonial productions rather than objective racial and linguistic classifications—in short, they are raciolinguistic ideologies. Thus, a raciolinguistic perspective illuminates the importance of conceptualizing contemporary debates about racial and linguistic authenticity in relation to colonial logics through which boundaries delimiting categories of race and language are co-naturalized in shifting ways as part of broader power formations.

In addition to the rearticulation of colonial discourses in postcolonial relations, raciolinguistic ideologies shape the experiences of diasporic populations across societal contexts (Kubota 2014; Motha 2014; Ndhlovu 2014). An example is the stigmatization of US Latinxs’<sup>2</sup> English and Spanish use, which must be understood in relation to longstanding experiences of internal colonialism involving the remapping of transnational colonial relations within a colonizing or previously colonized nation-state’s borders (Del Valle 2006; Capetillo-Ponce 2007). As a result of both Spanish and US colonialism, many US Latinxs are confronted with reified national, linguistic, and ethnoracial borders between Latin America, which is often stereotyped as brown and Spanish-speaking, and the US, which is often stereotyped as white and English-speaking. In addition to erasing intersections among Latinx, indigenous, and Black populations and their language practices, as well as other racialized populations and their modes of communication, these raciolinguistic ideologies frame US Latinxs’ English-Spanish bilingualism as deficient. In particular, US Latinxs are often depicted as lacking full proficiency in either English or Spanish and in need of linguistic remediation to provide them with access to the

so-called ‘academic language’ required for complex thinking processes and successful engagement in the global economy (Flores 2016). While these raciolinguistic ideologies differ in some ways from those used to represent languages and populations in conventionally defined colonial and postcolonial contexts, these various settings are characterized by the ideological assumption that racialized subjects’ language practices are unfit for legitimate participation in a modern world.

In summary, nation-state/colonial governmentality relied on raciolinguistic ideologies that positioned colonized populations as inferior to idealized European populations. In the early period of European colonialism of the Americas, these raciolinguistic ideologies positioned indigenous American and enslaved African populations as subhuman. Gradually, as European Enlightenment epistemologies challenged these ideologies, colonized populations in the Americas and other European colonial contexts were repositioned as lower on the evolutionary scale—less human rather than subhuman—in relation to Europeans. This ascribed evolutionary inferiority was reflected in the management of the languages of colonized people, which stipulated mastery of European languages as a requirement for the evolution of colonized populations. Even in cases where European colonizers promoted the use of indigenous languages, this was often in the service of furthering colonial domination through the indoctrination of Eurocentric epistemologies or through efforts to preserve the lifestyle of ‘noble savages’. The raciolinguistic ideologies that organized these colonial relations continue to shape the world order in the post-colonial era by framing racialized subjects’ language practices as inadequate for the complex thinking processes needed to navigate the global economy, as well as the targets of anxieties about authenticity and purity. Contemporary raciolinguistic ideologies must be understood within this broader history of European colonialism. Indeed, contemporary raciolinguistic ideologies are an ongoing rearticulation of the processes of racialization at the core of nation-state/colonial governmentality. These historical and contemporary modes of governance are also a precondition for the hegemonic perceptions that we explore in the next section.

#### PERCEPTIONS OF RACIAL AND LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCE

To the extent that colonial histories shape and often overdetermine interpretations of racialized subjects’ language practices, it becomes crucial to develop a theory of racialized language perception. This section attempts to do so by building upon three key insights: (i) we draw on Inoue’s (2003a,b; 2006) analysis of the role of the masculine ‘listening subject’ in the production of the sociolinguistic category of Japanese ‘women’s language’ by redirecting analytical attention from the communicative practices of racialized speaking subjects to the hearing practices of white listening subjects; (ii) we elaborate on our previous theorization of the white listening subject (Flores & Rosa 2015) by framing a discussion of racially hegemonic perceiving subjects more broadly that are oriented to spoken language

as well as other modes of communication and semiotic forms; and (iii) we emphasize that racially hegemonic perceptions can be enacted not simply by individuals but also nonhuman entities such as institutions, policies, and technologies associated with linguistic profiling (Baugh 2003), and not simply by white individuals but rather by whiteness as an historical and contemporary subject position that can be situationally inhabited both by individuals recognized as white and nonwhite (Haney-Lopez 1996). These insights inform our conception of the reproduction of raciolinguistic ideologies through racially hegemonic modes of perception that shape how racialized subjects' language practices are construed and valued.

This section is largely inspired by Inoue's notion of the listening subject (2003a), her analysis of gender, class, racial, and linguistic ideologies (2003b), and her broader treatment of the ideological category of Japanese 'women's language' as a form of 'indexical inversion' (2006). Whereas many sociolinguistic analyses approach Japanese women's language as an empirically observable and objectively quantifiable linguistic category, Inoue redirects attention to the ways in which anxieties surrounding women and their expressive practices, in the historical context of Japan's political and economic modernization, produced masculine 'listening subjects' who overheard schoolgirls' speech as a problem in need of careful management. Thus, for Inoue, it is crucial to attend to the ways that 'noise and language are neither naturally pregiven nor phenomenologically immanent' (2003a:157), and how language ideologies can produce the very linguistic forms that they purportedly document. From this perspective, Japanese women's language can be understood as a 'compelling copy which needs no original for its effectivity' (2003b:325). For Inoue, this illustrates how the analysis of Japanese women's language requires a theory of indexical inversion. Rather than the common analytical use of indexicality to understand how linguistic signs index social categories, indexical inversion considers how language ideologies associated with social categories produce the perception of linguistic signs. We suggest that raciolinguistic ideologies function in similar ways by producing racialized language practices that are perceived as emanating from racialized subjects.

Our raciolinguistic approach draws from Inoue's work by refusing to center the analysis on attempts to document the empirical linguistic practices of racialized subjects, and instead interrogating the interpretive and categorizing practices of racially hegemonic perceiving subjects. In previous work (Flores & Rosa 2015) we explored how US educational classifications such as long-term English learner, heritage language learner, and standard English learner, which are often associated with distinct racialized populations and analyzed separately, function in similarly stigmatizing ways by positioning racialized speaking subjects as deviant and inferior from the perspective of white listening subjects. We showed how these racialized subjects are perpetually perceived as linguistically deficient even when engaging in language practices that would likely be legitimized or even prized were they produced by white speaking subjects. The celebration of the Spanish-English bilingualism of 2016 US Democratic vice presidential



candidate Tim Kaine, a white man, juxtaposed with the purportedly faulty bilingualism of potential vice presidential candidate Julian Castro, a Latino man, is one example of this dynamic. US Latinxs can achieve the highest levels of education, drawing on a range of multilingual practices to navigate various interactions in ostensibly effective ways, and yet still face the stigmatization of their Spanish and English abilities. Rosa (2016a:162) shows how many self-identified monolingual white teachers in a Chicago high school viewed their bilingual Puerto Rican principal, who held a doctorate in education, as intellectually and linguistically inferior, with one teacher suggesting that the principal's "English is horrible, and from what I hear, her Spanish isn't that good either". Collins (2017:49) explores similar issues of race, stigmatizing school-based language perceptions, and the rearticulation of white supremacy in the South African context, showing how particular racialized populations' self-identified English language use is construed as impure based on 'ideologies that equate language mixture with defective populations and persons'.

Importantly, the linguistic interpretations of white listening subjects are part of a broader, racialized semiotics of white perceiving subjects. That is, the overdetermination of spoken language practices through raciolinguistic ideologies is tied to the overdetermination of various nonspoken and nonlinguistic signs associated with racialized subjects, including literacy practices, physical features, bodily comportment, and sartorial style. Recent cases of US-based, anti-Black racial profiling and extrajudicial violence exemplify the interrelationship between white listening subjects' and white perceiving subjects' overdetermination of signs. In 2014, when Darren Wilson, a white police officer, killed Michael Brown, an unarmed African American teenager, in Ferguson, Missouri, Wilson suggested that Brown's stature was monstrous and threatening despite the fact that he and Brown were the same height and he was the only one armed with a deadly weapon in their altercation (Bonilla & Rosa 2015). Similarly, in 2012, when George Zimmerman killed Trayvon Martin, another unarmed African American teenager, in Sanford, Florida, Zimmerman purportedly perceived the candy and soft drink Martin was carrying as potentially dangerous weapons. When political commentators such as Geraldo Rivera suggested that Martin's hooded sweatshirt was 'thug' wear, others noted the racial double-standards at work in interpretations of this allegedly threatening apparel, which is in fact a normative youth style of dress throughout the US. In these examples, George Zimmerman and Geraldo Rivera, who are both recognized from many perspectives as nonwhite Latinos, enacted anti-Black ideologies of white perceiving subjects through structural positions of authority that they inhabited as part of a neighborhood watch group and a celebrity media personality, respectively (Hodges 2015). This demonstrates the ways in which whiteness functions as a structural position that can be inhabited by whites and nonwhites alike depending on the circumstances. It also highlights that we must situate white listening subjects within a broader examination of white perceiving subjects that targets both linguistic signs and broader semiotic forms.

Whiteness is also animated through nonhuman entities such as technologies and institutions infused with raciolinguistic ideologies that endow them with the capacity to act as perceiving subjects. These include voice-recognition technologies that often privilege languages, varieties, and pronunciation patterns associated with normative whiteness. For example, as part of the stigmatizing effort to close the purported thirty million ‘word gap’ that allegedly plagues low-income children in the US (the majority of whom, at least in the related experiments, are children of color), a counting device is used to track the number of words spoken to children by caregivers in target households. These data are then used to prescribe interventions in the ways that low-income, predominantly families of color socialize their children. While linguistic anthropologists and applied linguists have offered a range of critiques of the problematic linguistic, racial, and class ideologies that inform this research (Avineri et al. 2015; Aggarwal 2016), it is important to note how language-gap interventions involve nonhuman technologies that function as perceiving subjects that measure deficiency in racially and socioeconomically marginalized households. In addition to digital technologies, nonhuman actors, including assessments and policies, can function as powerful perceiving subjects that profoundly shape racialized populations’ experiences across contexts. Seemingly objective procedures for testing and classifying language become powerful actors and institutional gatekeepers. Linguistic classifications and procedures can exclude racialized populations from access to opportunities and resources related to education (Flores, Kleyn, & Menken 2015), employment (Zentella 2014), legal representation (Haviland 2003), asylum (Blommaert 2009), citizenship (Ramanathan 2013), and migration (Dick 2011). In the context of contemporary global debates surrounding migration rights, it is particularly important to consider how technologies of surveillance and institutional procedures perceive racialized populations and practices as matter out of place.

Careful examination of the actions and consequences of human and nonhuman perceiving subjects is an elaboration on our conceptualization of the white listening subject, which is a crucial component of raciolinguistic ideologies. This analysis redirects attention from racialized populations’ linguistic practices to hegemonically positioned modes of perception through which these practices are apprehended. The interpretations of white listening subjects are part of a broader set of hegemonic perceptions that apprehend and often overdetermine not only linguistic signs, but also a wider range of semiotic forms. The following section builds on this wider semiotic view of a raciolinguistic perspective to consider how forms of language and race are regimented into recognizable categories.

#### REGIMENTATIONS OF RACIAL AND LINGUISTIC CATEGORIES

Many scholars have sought to interrogate the reified nature of named languages/varieties and racial categories, and to understand the logics through which named

languages/varieties and racial categories are continually reproduced. Analyses of linguistic reification include efforts toward ‘disinventing and reconstituting language’ (Makoni & Pennycook 2007), examinations of linguistic borders and ideologies of differentiation (Urciuoli 1995; Irvine & Gal 2000), and poststructuralist orientations to language more broadly (García, Flores, & Spotti 2017); examinations of racial reification include efforts to denaturalize race as a social construct (Haney-Lopez 1994), understand race as a ‘biosocial fact’ (Hartigan 2013), and interrogate historical and contemporary projects of racial formation and naturalization (Omi & Winant 1994; Shankar 2013). A raciolinguistic perspective seeks to synthesize these approaches by framing the co-naturalization of language and race as a process of *raciolinguistic enregisterment*, whereby linguistic and racial forms are jointly constructed as sets and rendered mutually recognizable as named languages/varieties and racial categories. Linguistic enregisterment has been conceptualized as the process whereby forms of language are endowed with cultural value as coherent sets (Agha 2005). Processes of linguistic register formation derive coherence from ideologies of speaking and listening subjects that construe language forms in relation to models of personhood and vice versa. The concept of enregisterment makes it possible to analyze dynamic patterns in linguistic form, as well as social personae associated with those forms. By denaturalizing boundaries that distinguish between languages and varieties thereof, enregisterment provides an overarching framework with which to investigate relations among prevailing sociolinguistic concepts that are often approached as distinct phenomena, such as codeswitching, styleshifting, voicing, and footing.

As Collins (2017:54) notes, a careful consideration of race is ‘a necessary engagement for register analysis, given the demonstrable ability of such analysis to integrate language variation, cultural categorization, and sociohistorical process’. Building from this insight, the notion of raciolinguistic enregisterment extends previous approaches to the analysis of register formations (Irvine 1990; Silverstein 2003; Agha 2005) by analyzing processes whereby signs of race and language are naturalized as discrete, recognizable sets. Rosa (2018) analyzes one such process of raciolinguistic enregisterment through which people come to look like a language and sound like a race. By tracing the ideological twinning of particular linguistic forms and racial categories, raciolinguistic enregisterment can be understood as the crucial condition of possibility for what come to be perceived as comparatively stable or malleable racial and linguistic categories and practices (Alim 2016; Roth-Gordon 2016). Rather than subjecting such perceptions to careful scrutiny, scholars have too often relied on ‘distinctiveness’ approaches to the study of race and language, in which racial categories are equated with empirically distinctive sets of linguistic features, simultaneously marginalizing the language-based study of racial groups that are not thought to possess such distinctive sets and reifying the boundaries demarcating other racial groups and their purported linguistic features (Lo & Reyes 2009; Chun & Lo 2016). This reflects a reliance upon a metaphysics of raciolinguistic presence—a sense that languages, varieties, and racial

groups are empirical ‘things’ in the first place—that is characteristic of how language and race are often approached from scholarly and lay perspectives. In contrast, by analyzing processes of raciolinguistic enregisterment, it becomes possible to understand how language and race come to be perceived and experienced in relation to one another.

Similar to Bucholtz & Hall’s (2005) approach to identity and interaction, we are interested in how processes of raciolinguistic enregisterment emblemize particular linguistic features as authentic signs of racialized models of personhood. This is found not only in sociolinguistic accounts of the features that compose categories such as ‘African American English’ (Green 2002) or ‘Chicano English’ (Fought 2003), but also popular stereotypes and modes of linguistic appropriation such as ‘Mock Spanish’ (Hill 2008), ‘Mock Asian’ (Chun 2004), ‘Hollywood Injun English’ (Meek 2006), and ‘linguistic minstrelsy’ (Bucholtz & Lopez 2011). In each of these cases, minute features of language, including grammatical forms, prosodic patterns, and morphological particles, are emblemized as sets of signs that correspond to racial categories. Crucially, as Meek (2006) demonstrates, these forms need not correspond to empirically verifiable linguistic practices in order to undergo racial emblemization. Moreover, as Lo & Reyes (2009) point out, the imagination of groups such as Asian Americans as lacking a distinctive racialized variety of English analogous to African American English or Chicano English, must be interrogated based on the racial logics that organize stereotypes about and societal positions of different racial groups on the one hand, and perceptions of their language practices on the other. Specifically, Lo & Reyes argue that racial ideologies constructing Asian Americans as model minorities who approximate whiteness are linked to language ideologies constructing Asian Americans as lacking a racially distinctive variety of English. In related work, Chun (2016:81) shows how emblemized Mock Asian forms such as ‘ching-chong’ are located across ‘the important boundary between ‘Oriental talk’ and English’, which sustains Asian Americans alternately as model minorities and forever foreigners. Thus, we must carefully reconsider seemingly ‘distinctive’ and ‘nondistinctive’ language varieties alike, by analyzing the logics that position particular racial groups and linguistic forms in relation to one another. That is, no language variety is objectively distinctive or nondistinctive, but rather comes to be enregistered as such in particular historical, political, and economic circumstances.

The concept of raciolinguistic enregisterment also builds on the work of scholars who have incorporated an analysis of race into their critiques of language policies, assessments, and classifications. For example, Bonfiglio (2002, 2010) argues that categories such as ‘Standard American English’ and ‘native speaker’ must be understood in relation to racialized perceptions through which racially unmarked subjects’ language practices are positioned as inherently legitimate and racialized subjects’ practices are perceived as inherently deficient. Similarly, Aneja (2016:353) suggests that race plays an important role in understanding ‘(non) native speakering as a theoretical and methodological lens through which the

historical origins and continuous (re)emergence of native and nonnative positionalities can be understood'. Flores & Rosa (2015) and Rosa (2016a) show how institutional assessments of and distinctions between 'academic language/home language', 'proficient language user/language learner/long-term language learner', and 'L1/L2', are often measures of the capacity to inhabit and enact idealized whiteness rather than empirical linguistic practices. Meanwhile, Urciuoli (1996), Lippi-Green (1997), and Hill (1998) have demonstrated the racialized ways in which ideologies of accent systematically stigmatize racialized subjects even when they are engaging in linguistic practices that would likely be perceived as legitimate were they produced by white speaking subjects.

These stigmatizing ideologies are reflected in a 'Standard English learner' linguistic screener used in US schools, which demonstrates how raciolinguistic enregisterment links linguistic forms and racial categories in institutionally consequential ways. The linguistic screener, which is used in one of the nation's largest public school districts, seeks to identify students who 'would particularly benefit from mainstream English language development'. Interestingly, the screener uses seemingly affirming, comparatively asset-based discourses, such as 'home language fluency', to refer to language practices that are understood to diverge from 'standard' or 'mainstream' English. Despite this apparent affirmation, the emphasis is still on targeting aberrant practices and teaching racialized students to modify their behaviors. The screener provides separate lists of 'African American linguistic features', 'Mexican American linguistic features', and 'Hawaiian American linguistic features'. Each list includes approximately twenty sentences that are represented in 'Standard English' and the respective 'nonstandard', racialized variety, highlighting the particular linguistic features that distinguish between the two varieties.

The screener is administered by reading the 'Standard English' sentences aloud, having students repeat the sentences orally and/or write the sentences, and then comparing their responses to possible racialized versions. For example, the African American screening tool highlights copula deletion, a widely enregistered African American English syntactic feature, in the sentences *The cat is in the tree* (Standard English) vs. *The cat in the tree* (African American English). However, the screening tool also identifies linguistic differences that are not as widely enregistered as distinctively African American forms. Examples of less widely enregistered forms include the purported problem of vowel pairs/homophones in the pronunciation of *pen* (Standard English) as *pin* (African American English) in the sentence *She uses a pen to write*; inflectional ending *-ing* in the pronunciation of *running* (Standard English) as *runnin* (African American English) in the sentence *They are running very fast*; and syllable stress patterns in the pronunciation of the word *hotel* with stress on the second syllable (Standard English) vs. the first syllable (African American English) in the sentence *She stayed at a hotel*. Similarly, the Mexican American screening tool highlights less highly enregistered patterns as problems, such as circumflex/sing-song musical intonation in the

pronunciation of *bad* (Standard English) as *baaad* (Mexican American English) in the sentence *Don't be bad*. Meanwhile, the Hawaiian American screening tool targets *th-* sound in the production of *That is not my dog* (Standard English) as *Dat dawg no mein* (Hawaiian American English). This last example, which purportedly focuses on the *th-* sound in the pronunciation of *that* as *dat*, yet also highlights other syntactic (e.g. *is not* vs. *no*) and phonological (e.g. *mine* /main/ vs. *mein* /mem/) differences, demonstrates how apparent efforts to identify particular linguistic aberrations can be overdetermined by imagined linguistically inept, racialized models of personhood that map deficiency onto various practices. Such racialized language features might be valorized or stigmatized depending on the perspective from which they are construed, but in the context of this normative linguistic screener they are positioned as signs of deficiency and the need for remediation. While one might be inclined to distinguish between examples within the screeners that focus on the identification of linguistic differences perceived as more and less consequential, the crucial point is that the screener is a product of broader processes of raciolinguistic enregisterment that bundle together ALL of these purportedly empirical linguistic forms as distinct sets that correspond to distinct racial categories as a measure of deviation from imagined standards. In this particular case, enregistered sets become institutionally consequential by overdetermining racialized students as linguistically deficient and in need of remediation.

Instead of beginning by attempting to document the range of linguistic practices that are distinctive of a given racial group, raciolinguistic enregisterment involves asking how and why particular linguistic forms are construed as emblems of particular racial categories and vice versa, in what historical, political, and economic contexts, and with what institutional and interpersonal consequences. The following section builds on this approach by considering the intersectional ways in which language and race co-articulate with linked axes of social difference (Gal 2012) to constitute subjectivities that are simultaneously situated in relation to multiple dimensions of power.

#### RACIAL AND LINGUISTIC INTERSECTIONS AND ASSEMBLAGES

Our effort to conceptualize a raciolinguistic approach to the study of language in society reflects an ongoing concern with the ways that race has often been misunderstood or erased within previous work, such as the aforementioned analyses rooted in 'distinctiveness' models that naturalize racial and linguistic categories. Another significant misunderstanding is the notion that race is an epiphenomenal social construction or a hyper-politicized, US-centric category that should be avoided in favor of categories some scholars view as more empirically verifiable and analytically significant such as ethnicity, class, and gender. Alim & Reyes (2011) persuasively argue that scholarly and popular postracial viewpoints overlook the ongoing salience of race, as well as its links to related axes of difference

(Gal 2012). In contrast to racial distinctiveness or disavowal, our proposed raciolinguistic approach locates the co-naturalization of race and language in relation to longstanding histories of colonialism and nation-state formation; thus, the ongoing, recursive, cross-societal, and cross-institutional significance of the colonial European/non-European distinction makes race a crucial, indeed global, category of analysis.

Our centering of the co-naturalization of language and race, however, is not intended to displace, avoid, or distract from important analyses of categories such as gender, socioeconomic class, sexuality, ethnicity, and religion. Building on a wide range of incisive, longstanding intersectional analyses forged primarily by women-of-color feminist scholars focused on matrices of domination, we refuse dichotomies between categories such as race, class, gender, and sexuality (Moraga & Anzaldúa 1981; Hill Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1991). In concert with intersectional language-based scholarship, a raciolinguistic perspective can contribute to understandings of the ways that categories are intersectionally assembled and communicatively co-constituted. Key thinking in this vein includes Morgan's (2009:xix) analysis of research on African American language practices, which argues that Black women have been alternately 'described as linguistically conservative and aggressive'. Morgan (2009:xx) shows how these narratives reflect not only the exclusion of Black women as research subjects, much less as researchers themselves, but also the investment in reproducing hegemonic stereotypes that frame Black women as 'oversexed, loud, and bitter'. Black women scholars such as Mitchell-Kernan (1971) and Smitherman (1977) have faced criticism because they are seen as illegitimate, 'native' researchers whose anthropological and linguistic work cannot be reduced to previous exoticizing, stigmatizing, or romanticizing accounts. Jacobs-Huey (2006:15) stakes a claim to the power of such 'native' perspectives in her analysis of African American women's language socialization and hair-care practices, noting the transformative 'presence of "natives" who are intently gazing and talking back' in ways that contest their overdetermination.

Racial and linguistic stereotypes co-articulate with gender normativity in ways that alternately produce context-specific forms of privilege and precarity. Recall the example above of the bilingual Latina high school principal in Chicago, who held a doctorate in education yet still faced accusations of linguistic and intellectual inferiority. It is crucial to note the specific subject position Latinas inhabit in relation to perceptions of inferiority, as well as the ways this positionality is reproduced through hegemonic representations of Latinas as spicy, sexy, and unintelligent (Mendible 2007). A 2015 CoverGirl cosmetics commercial that circulated widely in the US—featuring Sofia Vergara, a Latina actress and television host, and Ellen DeGeneres, a white, openly lesbian comedian and television host—demonstrates these stereotypes. In the commercial, Vergara and DeGeneres introduce a new cosmetic product, but Vergara's 'accented' English quickly becomes the punchline. When Vergara notes that DeGeneres has stolen her lines, DeGeneres responds, "Well, no one can understand you". Vergara is framed as linguistically

incompetent while striking a sexy pose, with DeGeneres mocking her purported unintelligibility by reproducing it as gibberish. A potential reading of this commercial is that the nonnormativity of DeGeneres' queerness, which defies hegemonic feminine beauty standards, is mitigated by the intersection of ideologies surrounding race, language, gender, and sexuality, which simultaneously position Vergara as hypersexualized and linguistically incompetent. This resonates with related research on the ways that racial, linguistic, and gender stereotypes are jointly reproduced (McElhinny 2010; Bucholtz 2011; Chun 2011). Thus, the hearing practices of listening subjects should not be analyzed apart from the intersectional subject positions of communicators and interpreters alike.

While our analyses must attend to multiple dimensions of identity and the power relations through which they are constituted, Puar (2007) warns against approaches to intersectionality that frame identities in discrete ways such that they are only perceived as intersecting in particular, quantifiable moments. Instead, Puar describes these configurations of identity as 'unstable assemblages of revolving and devolving energies, rather than intersectional coordinates' (2007:175). Thus, a comparative intersectional and raciolinguistic approach necessarily considers how assemblages of signs and identities are configured in particular contexts, from particular perspectives, and with particular consequences.

These shifting positionalities and assemblages of signs are reflected in Khan's (2014) work, which shows how in a post 9/11/2001 context, Muslims have faced various modes of religiously oriented raciolinguistic profiling that involve the policing of semiotic forms such as clothing, facial hair, and language practices as potential signs of terrorism. Raciolinguistic profiling links language and other semiotic forms in ways that target various people and practices, such as a purportedly dark-haired, olive-skinned ivy league economics professor from Italy who was escorted off a 2016 US-based flight for questioning after a white woman perceived the mathematical calculations he was writing by hand as a potentially threatening foreign language in conjunction with his appearance and allegedly standoffish demeanor. These profiling practices involve assemblages of signs that bundle together to position individuals in various ways depending on the context, but also reflect long-standing processes of raciolinguistic subject formation that profoundly shape and often overdetermine individual presentations of self and perceptions of Others. From this perspective, what might appear as racial and semiotic flexibility at the level of individual bodies and practices, can in fact involve the reproduction and rearticulation of broader racial and linguistic structures within emergent contexts. This echoes Hesse's (2016:viii) 'colonial constitution of race thesis', which holds that '[r]ace is not in the eye of the beholder or on the body of the objectified', but instead 'an inherited western, modern-colonial practice of violence, assemblage, superordination, exploitation, and segregation... demarcating the colonial rule of Europe over non-Europe'. Hesse locates the origins of race in coloniality not bodies, and directs attention to the ways that colonial distinctions are recursively remapped within and across nation-state settings.



From this perspective, while race and language come to be experienced in powerfully embodied and perceivable ways, the analysis of individual bodies and communicative practices must be situated within broader historical and institutional frames. Critical analyses of racial embodiment and racialized communicative practices necessitate an interrogation of the joint production of racial and linguistic categories, attending to the ways that they become tied to forms of governance and institutionality that profoundly condition everyday life. If we begin with individual racialized bodies and communicative practices, then we are limited in our capacity to apprehend the ways in which they become racially and linguistically legible, overdetermined, or constituted in advance of analysis. That is, categories of race and language are often understood as self-evident and defined circularly, such that race is the social construction of race and named languages are straightforward sets of linguistic forms. No embodied form is inherently racialized nor is any linguistic form discretely classifiable in relation to a named language, yet many analyses proceed as though this were the case. Thus, analyses of shifting, intersectional positionalities and assemblages of signs must situate individual embodiments and language practices in relation to broader structures and patterns of power.

Raciolinguistic approaches to the analysis of intersectional identity formations and assemblages of signs and materialities are deeply anchored in concerns about the ways inequities are reproduced and challenged through institutional and interactional practices. The following section builds from these concerns to consider the theories of change that inform a raciolinguistic perspective.

#### THE CONTESTATION OF RACIAL AND LINGUISTIC POWER FORMATIONS

There are longstanding, widespread templates for contesting raciolinguistic ideologies within broader racial justice struggles. These include the framing of bilingual education as central to radical US Latinx anticolonial, antiracist, and anticapitalist efforts in the late 1960s and 1970s (Flores 2016); projects promoting indigenous language reclamation rather than simply revitalization (Leonard 2012); and the assertion of linguistic and cultural rights in global struggles against anti-Blackness (Makoni, Smitherman, Ball, & Spears 2003). Building from these movements, a raciolinguistic perspective refocuses our theory of social change away from the modification of the linguistic behaviors of racialized populations toward a dismantling of the white supremacy that permeates mainstream institutions as a product of colonialism.

This reframed theory of change builds not only on insights from social movements, but also longstanding linguistic anthropological work on language and political economy (Gal 1989; Irvine 1989) alongside the recent material turn in applied linguistics (Pennycook 2015), which seeks to bring attention to the ways that language shapes and is shaped by the political and economic conditions of global capitalism. Shankar & Cavanaugh (2012:356) formulate this as ‘language

materiality', which considers 'how language is involved in commodification, circulation, and value formation'. Heller & Duchêne (2012) provide an example of language materiality through their analysis of pride and profit as two discourses that interact with each other in complex ways within the latest stage of global capitalism. They connect pride with nation-states, arguing that this primary unit of political organization within industrial capitalism was structured in relation to a European bourgeoisie that molded the European labor force in ways that maximized its profits. The joint promotion of national pride and a national language was a powerful tool used to ensure the cooperation of the labor force. In contrast, profit 'moves away altogether from modern ideologies of language, culture, and identity, to treat language instead as a technical skill' (Heller & Duchêne 2012:8). This move toward profit and the commodification of language is situated within a broader process of neoliberalism that involves deregulation and the transition from national to transnational markets (Shankar & Cavanaugh 2012).

By bringing attention to these broader political and economic processes, this materialist approach challenges us to reconsider the efficacy of a focus on language apart from the wider political economy in which it is situated. Yet, analyses of language and political economy that place a narrow emphasis on issues of socioeconomic class overlook the significance of race in the structuring of global markets, societal hierarchies, and forms of stigmatization. For example, while there is ample evidence of the stigmatization of the language practices of working class and poor white populations (Wolfram 1984), this stigmatization rarely calls into question their fundamental humanity, serves as grounds for their deportation, or is mobilized as a justification for their extra-judicial killing. Urciuoli (1998) explores processes of ethnicization and racialization in her analysis of the ways in which working-class whiteness becomes an embodiment of the 'good ethnic citizen' in contrast to problematic racial Others. Thus, while whiteness is internally heterogeneous and hierarchically stratified in various institutional settings, it continues to be distinguished from nonwhiteness in its figuration as a comparably idealized or legitimate form of citizen-subjectivity.

With this in mind, a raciolinguistic perspective infuses socioeconomic class analyses with a focus on race and vice versa through the adoption of a critical 'raceclass' approach that not only challenges the co-constitution of racial and class hierarchies, but also forges a joint critique of white supremacy and capitalism (Leonardo 2012). In this way, a raciolinguistic perspective combines the material turn in applied linguistics and linguistic anthropology with the work of race theorists who have examined the role of race in various reconfigurations of global capitalism (Robinson 2000). In particular, Omi & Winant (1994) argue that specific racial formations have taken shape throughout modern history, reconfiguring white supremacy in ways that accommodate changing political and economic circumstances. From this perspective, changes related to global capitalism theorized by scholars who are part of the material turn in applied linguistics and linguistic anthropology can be understood both as shifts in the global political and economic

world order that benefit economic elites largely at the expense of working-class and poor people, as well as shifts in the global racial order that maintain white supremacy through the subordination and marginalization of racialized populations.

Raciolinguistic ideologies have played a key role in the reproduction and reconfiguration of racial formations across historical and contemporary political and economic contexts. For example, Aggarwal (2016) describes the emergence of a reconfigured racial formation following the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision and the end of legal segregation in the United States. In this emergent, post-Brown era of racial formation, the root cause of racial disparities in educational achievement was located not in the inequitable distribution of material resources but rather in the deficiency of racialized students and their families. By extension, the solution to racial disparities was framed in terms of changing the individual behaviors of racialized populations rather than structural change within white supremacist institutions. Aggarwal points to aforementioned interventions intended to close the so-called 'word gap' between children from low-income communities of color and mainstream white communities as a contemporary example of this individualistic framing.

This representation of inequity as a matter of modifying individual behaviors, as opposed to challenging or dismantling institutional structures of power, is not unique to the United States. Instead, it is part of a broader global racial formation that emerged in the post-World War II era, which Melamed (2011) theorizes as a shift from white supremacist modernity to a formally antiracist liberal capitalist modernity. This shift, which deceptively reinforced white supremacy by placing new demands on racialized populations to modify their behaviors, impacted the emerging field of sociolinguistics and the theory of social change that informed the work that came out of it. Indeed, a common view in sociolinguistics is that societies should affirm the language practices of racialized populations while providing them with access to dominant ways of using language. While on one level this framing of the issue celebrates multiculturalism and multilingualism, on another level it is premised on modifying the behaviors of racialized populations in ways that obscure how white supremacy structures these populations' experiences and societal positionalities (Flores & Rosa 2015). As a result, many interventions proposed by sociolinguists reify the racial formation associated with the latest stage of global capitalism and obscure the nature of white supremacy.

This obfuscation of white supremacy is reflected in economic metaphors such as 'linguistic/cultural capital', 'linguistic resources', 'funds of knowledge', and 'investment', which are often invoked by researchers in their efforts to increase the value of stigmatized language varieties and practices (Leonardo 2012). These efforts towards legitimation through accumulation neglect the structural logics of racial capitalism through which particular populations are perpetually marginalized. Thus, we must not interpret the class ascendance of particular racialized persons as a product of their accumulation of cultural and linguistic capital, but rather as a legitimating articulation of white supremacy, a precarious positionality

that is often derided at the same time that it is celebrated (Alim & Smitherman 2012), and a central component of diversity-based institutional projects that commodify racial visibility while reproducing racial marginalization (Shankar 2015; Urciuoli 2016).

The deceptive nature of race and class dynamics in the institutionalization of diversity—and the importance of a critical raceclass perspective on language—is demonstrated in contemporary discourses of bilingual education and language learning more broadly. The promotion of bilingual education as preparation for participation in a global economic marketplace obscures the often racialized modes of exclusion that circumscribe the forms of value that come to be associated with particular populations and language practices (Petrovic 2005). These fraught processes of valuation and devaluation are exemplified by a recent US-based side-by-side advertisement for a Spanish language-learning book and English language-learning book. The ad for the Spanish language-learning book features a light-skinned man in a shirt and tie. It reads, *Can't speak Spanish? You need this book!*. The ad for the English language-learning book features a brown-skinned man in a casual shirt and reads, *¿No habla inglés? ¡Necesita este libro!* 'You don't speak English? You need this book!'. What might appear as an innocuous language-learning ad that promotes bilingualism and linguistic diversity in fact bundles together troublesome ideologies of race, class, and gender. These ideologies align Spanish language learning with the consolidation of white male socioeconomic superiority and English language learning with nonwhite male (im)migrant labor subordination. Similar ideologies of race, class, and linguistic diversity are at play in the contemporary valorization of bilingual education among middle- and upper-class whites, which often relies on low-income bilingual and multilingual children of color to function as repositories of cultural difference in service of racially and socioeconomically normative students in dual-language classrooms (Valdés 1997). Thus, a raciolinguistic analysis of the institutionalization of linguistic diversity requires a careful consideration of how structures of privilege and power are reproduced or disrupted through such programming.

This raciolinguistic analysis points to the limits of the current theory of change in liberal multicultural framings of sociolinguistics. Such framings characteristically celebrate linguistic diversity and attribute racialized populations' marginalization to a lack of access to standardized language forms. This focus on linguistic solutions fails to account for the workings of white supremacy within global capitalism. The theory of social change that we propose here attempts to move beyond accommodation-oriented policies that 'accept the existing structure... and seek to accomplish certain goals within that structure' (Park & Wee 2012:167) toward a reconfiguration-oriented approach that aims 'to challenge... the existing structure... seeking as its fundamental goal to transform the structure' (Park & Wee 2012:168). Rather than taking the accommodationist stance that the language practices of racialized communities must be modified in order to combat racial inequity, a reconfiguration-oriented approach seeks to connect language struggles to broader

contestations of power. From this perspective, efforts to promote linguistic diversity in education are not seen as inherently good, but rather are situated within a broader political and economic analysis that seeks to understand how these efforts reinforce and/or challenge racial and class inequities.

Returning to the example of bilingual education, this reframed theory of change would situate bilingual education advocacy in broader efforts to dismantle racial capitalism. That is, the only way for bilingual education to dismantle racial inequities is by situating advocacy for these programs within a comprehensive approach to community and societal transformation that addresses the white supremacist and capitalist relations of power that are root causes of these disparities. Focusing our theory of change on these structural issues is in no way intended to suggest that bilingual education or other such educational approaches that valorize language diversity are unimportant or that such programs do not improve the education of language-minoritized students. On the contrary, a great deal of evidence suggests that these programs do, in fact, benefit language-minoritized students (Collier & Thomas 2004). Yet, what this focus on structural issues suggests is that without concerted efforts to combat the racial inequities that are foundational to and exacerbated by global capitalism, the commodification of language associated with efforts to promote these programs will benefit class-normative white people more than racialized populations both in the US and abroad.

#### TOWARD A RACIOLINGUISTIC OTHERWISE

In this article we have sought to build on decades of US-based research challenging deficit perspectives on the language practices of racialized populations. The raciolinguistic perspective that we propose refuses to take racialized assessments of linguistic deficiency at face value as claims that can be disproved if we provide sufficient scientific evidence, and points to the benefit of redirecting attention to the historical and contemporary processes that structure the co-naturalization of language and race across various societal settings. Our goal is not only to understand these structuring processes, but also to envision unsettling the terms of race and language as part of broader efforts toward decolonization and the eradication of white supremacy. Thus, we are not simply advocating linguistic pluralism or racial inclusion, but instead interrogating the foundational forms of governance through which such diversity discourses deceptively perpetuate disparities by stipulating the terms on which perceived differences are embraced or abjected.

We have experienced firsthand how even when people of color are perceived as successfully engaging in standardized academic language practices, these perceptions position them as 'exceptional' in relation to other members of racialized populations who have not been provided access to such normatively defined success. Indeed, an integral component of the continued legitimation of racial capitalism is the recruitment of 'exceptional' people of color to seek entry to white supremacist institutions and acceptance by white listening subjects (Ahmed 2012). Thus,

proposed linguistic solutions to racial inequities produced through European colonialism often fails to address the root cause of the problem. Efforts to facilitate racialized populations' mastery of supposed 'codes of power' (Delpit 2006) are not empowering in the ways that are regularly discussed in sociolinguistics and related fields, but rather a mechanism for producing governable subjects that support the raciolinguistic status quo. Alternatively, the raciolinguistic perspective that we present here represents our effort to theorize the co-naturalization of race and language as a necessary step toward reimagining and reconstituting not only racial and linguistic formations, but also the range of historical, political, economic, and sociocultural structures to which they are linked.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>Toni Morrison at Portland State, May 30, 1975. From Portland State University's Oregon Public Speakers Collection: 'Black Studies Center public dialogue. Pt. 2'. Online: [http://mackenzian.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Transcript\\_PortlandState\\_TMorrison.pdf](http://mackenzian.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Transcript_PortlandState_TMorrison.pdf); accessed November 25, 2016.

<sup>2</sup>We use *Latinx* as a gender nonbinary label for US-based persons of Latin American descent. We use the terms *Latino* and *Latina* when referring to self-identified males and females, respectively.

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