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CHAPTER

5 Reimagining Race and Language: From Raciolinguistic Ideologies to a Raciolinguistic Perspective

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Abstract

This chapter presents 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, the chapter explores how and why these categories have been co-naturalized and imagines their denaturalization as part of a broader structural project of contesting white supremacy. The chapter explores five key components of a raciolinguistic perspective: (1) historical and contemporary colonial co-naturalizations of race and language; (2) perceptions of racial and linguistic difference; (3) regimentations of racial and linguistic categories; (4) racial and linguistic intersections and assemblages; and (5) contestation of racial and linguistic power formations. These foci reflect an investment in developing a careful theorization of various forms of racial and linguistic inequality, on the one hand, and a commitment to the imagination and creation of more just societies on the other.

Keywords: race, language ideologies, colonialism, governmentality, enregisterment, structural inequality

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RESEARCH focused on race and language throughout the last several decades has made important strides in identifying endemic forms of discrimination and establishing the rule-governed nature of racially stigmatized populations' language practices (Baugh 2003, Fought 2003, Labov 1972, Poplack 1980).¹ This chapter seeks to build on these previous analyses while also reconsidering the fundamental nature of race and language by theorizing what we term 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 longstanding analysis of race and language in the United States 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 non-whiteness. 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 United States and other nation-states built on settler colonialism and mass enslavement, 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 chapter position the United States as a point of entry, we seek to contribute to broader dialogues 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 chapter proposes five key components of what we term a raciolinguistic perspective: (1) historical and contemporary co-naturalizations of race and language as part of the colonial formation of modernity; (2) perceptions of racial and linguistic difference; (3) regimentations of racial and linguistic categories; (4) racial and linguistic intersections and assemblages; and (5) the contestation of racial and linguistic power formations. These foci reflect our investment in developing a careful theorization of relationships among racial and linguistic structures on the one hand, and our commitment to the imagination and creation of more just societies on the other.

1. Situating Raciolinguistic Ideologies within Colonial Histories

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 purportedly superior European bourgeois subject (Stoler 1995). As with race, the creation of communicative hierarchies positioned European languages as superior to non-European modes of expressivity (Makoni & Pennycook 2007). A raciolinguistic perspective seeks to understand the interplay of language and race within the historical production of modernity, and examine how colonial distinctions within and between nation-state borders continue to shape contemporary linguistic and racial formations.²

In the early period of the colonization of what Europeans would come to call the Americas, raciolinguistic ideologies were used to position Indigenous and enslaved African 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.³ 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 deemed integral to becoming a full human being.

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 sub-humans versus less evolved humans. Whereas in early years of European colonization Indigenous languages throughout 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 the European worldview at the top of the evolutionary scale of human development (Makoni & Pennycook 2007; see also McElhinny & Heller, Severo & Makoni, this volume).

These historical, colonial dynamics surrounding language and race are reconfigured and rearticulated in purportedly postcolonial, post-racial, and post-apartheid 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) links this colonial history to the emergence of categories of personhood in the Philippines that reflect how postcolonial societies are continually structured by anxieties about postcolonial subjects' efforts to copy or imitate linguistic and cultural practices associated with colonizers. In addition to the rearticulation of colonial discourses in postcolonial relations, raciolinguistic ideologies shape the experiences of diasporic populations across societal contexts (Ndhlovu 2014). An example is the positioning of US Latinxs'⁴ English and Spanish use as perpetually deficient in relation to this population's colonial subjugation in the United States and Latin America. 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). Although raciolinguistic ideologies differ in some ways across 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.

p. 93 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. Raciolinguistic ideologies that organized these colonial relations continue to shape the world order in the postcolonial era by framing racialized subjects' language practices as inadequate for complex thinking processes needed to navigate the global economy on the one hand, and as targets of anxieties about authenticity and purity on the other. Contemporary raciolinguistic ideologies must be understood within this broader history of European colonialism. These historical and contemporary modes of governance are a precondition for the hegemonic racial and linguistic perceptions that we explore in the next section.

2. Raciolinguistic Perceptions

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 on Inoue's (2003) notion of the listening subject, which demonstrates how language ideologies can produce the very linguistic forms that they purportedly document. 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.

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 non-spoken and extralinguistic 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 and 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 United States. In these examples, George Zimmerman and Geraldo Rivera, who are both recognized from many perspectives as non-white 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 non-whites alike depending on the circumstances, as well as the ways that we must situate white listening subjects within a broader interrogation of white perceiving subjects that target both linguistic signs and broader semiotic practices.

Whiteness is also animated through non-human 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 30 million "word gap" that allegedly plagues low-income children in the United States (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 into 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

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interventions involve non-human technologies which function as perceiving subjects that measure deficiency in racially and socioeconomically marginalized households. In addition to digital technologies, non-human 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, and 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 non-human 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 forms, but also a wider range of semiotic practices. 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.

3. Raciolinguistic Enregisterment

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 (Makoni and Pennycook 2007; Urciuoli 1995). 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), which makes it possible to analyze dynamic patterns in linguistic form, as well as social personae associated with those forms. The notion of raciolinguistic enregisterment extends previous approaches to enregisterment by analyzing processes whereby signs of race and language are naturalized as discrete, recognizable sets. 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. These approaches have simultaneously marginalized the language-based study of racial groups not thought to possess such distinctive sets and reified boundaries demarcating various racial groups and their purportedly emblematic linguistic features (Lo and Reyes 2009; Chun and Lo 2016). In contrast, by analyzing processes of raciolinguistic enregisterment, it becomes possible to understand how language and race come to be perceived and experienced in historically, politically, and economically situated ways.

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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 and 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 and 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 and 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. Thus, we must carefully reconsider seemingly “distinctive” and “non-distinctive” 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 non-distinctive, but rather comes to be enregistered as such in particular historical, political, and economic circumstances.

The concept of raciolinguistic enregisterment also builds on our previous theorization of raciolinguistic ideologies in relation to language policies, assessments, and classifications. Flores and Rosa (2015) and Rosa (2016) 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 ultimately measures of the capacity to inhabit and enact idealized whiteness rather than empirical linguistic practices. 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 systems, seeks to identify students who “would particularly benefit from mainstream English language development.” 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.

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”) versus *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, such as 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*; and “syllable stress patterns” in the pronunciation of the word *hotel* with stress on the second syllable (“Standard English”) versus 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 “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/mein/*) 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. 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.

4. Raciolinguistic Intersections and Assemblages

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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 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 analytical foci — some scholars view as more empirically verifiable and significant such as ethnicity, class, and gender. Alim and Reyes (2011) persuasively argue that scholarly and popular postracial perspectives obscure 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.

However, our centering of the co-naturalization of language and race is not intended to displace, avoid, or distract from important analyses of categories such as gender, social class, sexuality, and ethnicity. Building on a wide range of incisive, longstanding intersectional analyses forged primarily by Black feminist scholars and women of color feminist theorizing more broadly, we refuse dichotomies between categories such as race, social class, gender, and sexuality (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1981; Hill Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1991). Language-based scholarship in this tradition has produced profound insights. In her analysis of research on African American language practices, Morgan argues that Black women have been alternately “described as linguistically conservative and aggressive” (Morgan 2009: xix). Morgan 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” (2009: xx). 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) 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” (2006:15) 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. A 2015 CoverGirl cosmetics commercial circulated widely in the United States, featuring Sofía 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 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 non-normativity of DeGeneres’s 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 ideally feminine and linguistically incompetent. This resonates with related research on the ways that ↵ racial, linguistic, and gender stereotypes are jointly reproduced (Bucholtz 2011; Chun 2011; McElhinny 2010). Crucially, the example above demonstrates how these intertwined stereotypes can be commodified in service of capitalist accumulation.

A comparative intersectional and raciolinguistic approach must attend to the ways that 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 forms of raciolinguistic profiling in Europe and the United States 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 American 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.⁵ These profiling practices involve assemblages of signs that bundle together to position individuals in various ways depending on the context, but also reflect longstanding 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.

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, with a particular focus on the ways that these categories 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 are deeply anchored in concerns about the ways material inequities are reproduced and challenged through institutional and interactional practices. The following section builds from these concerns to consider theories of change that inform a raciolinguistic perspective.

5. Combating Raciolinguistic Ideologies

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 anti-colonial, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist efforts in the late 1960s and 1970s (Flores 2016); projects promoting Indigenous language reclamation as part of decolonization efforts rather than simply language revitalization narrowly focused on creating “new speakers” (Leonard 2017); and the assertion of linguistic and cultural rights in global struggles against anti-Blackness (Makoni, Smitherman, Ball, and 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 colonization.

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; Hill 1985; 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 and Cavanaugh (2012) formulate this as “language materiality,” which considers “how language is involved in commodification, circulation, and value formation” (2012:356). 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, becomes 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 that working class whiteness becomes an embodiment of the “good ethnic citizen” in contrast to problematic racial Others. Thus, while whiteness is differentiated, internally heterogeneous, and stratified in various institutional settings, it continues to be distinguished from non-whiteness in its figuration as an idealized 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 (Brodkin 2000; Leonardo 2012; see also Spears, chapter 3, this volume). 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 and 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 not only as shifts in the global political and economic world order that benefit economic elites largely at the expense of working-class and poor people, but also as shifts in the global racial order that maintain white supremacy through the subordination and marginalization of racialized communities.

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 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 to white supremacist institutions. This reframing of inequity as an issue 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 communities 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 and 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.

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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 that perpetually marginalize particular populations. 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 and Smitherman 2012), and a strategic component of diversity-based institutional projects that commodify racial visibility while reproducing racial marginalization (Shankar 2015; Urciuoli 2016).

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 and 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 and Wee 2012:168). Rather than taking the accommodationist stance that the language practices of racialized communities should be modified 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 viewed as inherently good, but rather must be situated within a broader political and economic analysis that seeks to understand how these efforts reinforce and/or challenge racial and class inequities. This focus on structural dynamics suggests that without concerted efforts to combat the racial inequities that are foundational to and exacerbated by global capitalism, the commodification of language associated with the promotion of linguistic diversity will benefit whiteness more than racialized communities in the United States and throughout the world.

Toward a Raciolinguistic Otherwise

In this chapter we have sought to build on decades of research focused on the relationship between racial and linguistic phenomena by developing a raciolinguistic perspective that attends to the historical and contemporary co-naturalization of language and race across various societal settings. Our goal is not only to understand this structuring process, but also to envision the reconstitution 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.

p. 103 We have experienced firsthand how even when people of color are perceived as engaging in standardized academic language practices, these perceptions often position ↴ them as exceptions to other members of racialized communities. Indeed, an integral component of the continued legitimization of racial capitalism is the designation and recruitment of “exceptional” people of color to seek entry to white supremacist institutions and acceptance by white listening subjects (Ahmed 2012). Thus, offering linguistic solutions to racial inequities produced through European colonialism is insufficient in addressing 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 often 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 hierarchies to which they are linked.

Notes

1. This chapter is an adapted version of Rosa, J., and Flores, N. (2017). Unsettling race and language: Toward a raciolinguistic perspective. *Language in Society* 46:621–647.
2. See Bauman and Briggs (2003) for an extended analysis of language ideologies that emerged in conjunction with the rise of modernity.
3. See Irvine and Gal (2000) for a comparative account of the ways in which colonial representations of click languages in Sub-Saharan Africa degraded features of these languages as animal-like sounds.
4. We use “Latinx” as a gender non-binary label for US-based persons of Latin American descent. We use the terms “Latino” and “Latina” when referring to self-identified men and women, respectively.
5. Catherine Rampell, “Ivy league economist ethnically profiled, interrogated for doing math on American Airlines Flight.” *The Washington Post*, May 7, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/rampage/wp/2016/05/07/ivy-league-economist-interrogated-for-doing-math-on-american-airlines-flight/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.d75607697b4a (accessed November 6, 2018).

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