Routledge Critical Studies in Multilingualism

QUEER, LATINX, AND BILINGUAL

**NARRATIVE RESOURCES IN THE NEGOTIATION
OF IDENTITIES**

Holly R. Cashman

Queer, Latinx, and Bilingual

Queer, Latinx, and Bilingual provides a unique insight into the language practices used by speakers to construct, negotiate and display Latina/o and queer identities in interaction. By focusing on a group who have previously been excluded from sociolinguistic examinations of queerness—queer people of color—Cashman's book takes the fields of language and sexuality and sociolinguistics into an exciting new era of development where they are encouraged to critically examine their own hegemonic practices.

—*Helen Sauntson, York St. John University*

This book is a sociolinguistic ethnography of LGBT Mexicans/Latinxs in Phoenix, Arizona, a major metropolitan area in the U.S. Southwest. The main focus of the book is to examine participants' conceptions of their ethnic and sexual identities and how identities influence (and are influenced by) language practices. This book explores the intersubjective construction and negotiation of identities among queer Mexicans/Latinxs, paying attention to how identities are co-constructed in the interview setting in coming-out narratives and in narratives of silence. The book destabilizes the dominant narrative on language maintenance and shift in sociolinguistics, much of which relies on a (heterosexual) family-based model of intergenerational language transmission, by bringing those individuals often at the margin of the family (LGBTQ members) to the center of the analysis. It contributes to the queering of bilingualism and Spanish in the U.S., not only by including a previously unstudied subgroup (LGBTQ people) but also by providing a different lens through which to view the diverse language and identity practices of U.S. Mexicans/Latinxs. This book addresses this exclusion and makes a significant contribution to the study of bilingualism and multilingualism by bringing LGBTQ Latinxs to the center of the analysis.

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Narrative Resources in the Negotiation of Identities

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To the victims killed in the attack on the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Florida on June 12, 2016, the survivors, the families — both biological and chosen, and to all who work to create safe and nurturing spaces for queer youth, particularly queer youth of color.

To my wife, Heather, who is my lighthouse, my anchor, my compass, and my sail. I dearly hope that we will be lucky enough to grow old by the sea together.

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Transcription Conventions

Based on Jefferson (2004)

text	original talk
<i>text</i>	translation of Spanish
(text)	best guess at transcription of talk that is indecipherable
((text))	not part of the original talk; transcriber's comment
<u>text</u>	emphatic text
°text°	significantly quieter than surrounding talk
[text]	"interviewers' comments or backchannels"
[	beginning of overlapping talk
tex-	cut-off or self-interruption
hhh	laughter
::	lengthening of preceding sound
(1.0)	"time in seconds of a speaker's pause"

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1 Introduction

Locating a Queer Latinx Phoenix¹

The Original Inspiration for This Book

One evening, while sitting with friends on the patio of a bar in Phoenix, Arizona, that caters to a predominantly lesbian clientele, a friend casually bemoaned the fact that her nieces and nephews were not learning Spanish, which they would be, presumably, if they were her children. Other friends chimed in with comments, and the conversation quickly moved on to other topics, but I was left wondering: what role would this friend, a lesbian, ever have in traditional research on language maintenance and shift? Where are the queer folks in the traditional three-generational family model of language transmission? Does anyone care what queer bilinguals do, or are they irrelevant because they often do not fit into a heteronormative family structure? Later searches would reveal that there is, in fact, very little sociolinguistically-oriented research on the language practices of queer bilinguals, and even less on queer Latinxs in the U.S. This chance interaction sparked a curiosity that would develop into a consuming passion and lead me to research and write this book.

Language Resources in the Construction of Queer Latinx Identities: An Illustration

It was June 2012. I only recently arrived in Phoenix to begin the bulk of my fieldwork, and I, somewhat at the last minute, charged a ticket to the Phoenix Pride Gala, cobbled together an outfit that could pass as sufficiently dressy, and braved the heat to which I still wasn't accustomed for a short trip downtown. The wide hallway outside the ballroom at a major downtown Phoenix hotel was packed with a wide array of members of the LGBTQ community and community allies, from drag queens and kings representing the city's many gay and lesbian bars to the Grand Canyon Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence in full habits and makeup, from young student recipients of Phoenix Pride scholarships to older established LGBTQ professionals, from owners and employees of the many gay-owned businesses to representatives of all the various non-profit groups created by and for the city's LGBTQ

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community. Also in attendance were the city's mayor and his wife, who would be accepting an award for being outstanding allies of the LGBTQ community, along with the city's chief of police. There was free champagne and good, loud conversation. A roving photographer captured candid shots, and a musical number erupted at the end of the corridor to mark the end of the reception and the time to move into the ballroom. Inside, the master of ceremonies greeted guests who were seated with friends and co-workers at large tables purchased by the various groups, bars, and organizations they were affiliated with, while I made pleasant small talk with the mishmash of last-minute ticket buyers at my table.

In addition to the bestowing of recognitions and the public awarding of scholarships, the main event of the Phoenix Pride Gala was the raffle and auction. While a professional auctioneer was present for the latter, the master of ceremonies turned over the microphone to local celebrities for the picking of winning raffle tickets, and it was then that Grecia Montes-D'Occa, the reigning Miss Phoenix Gay Pride 2012, took the stage with the reigning Mister Phoenix Gay Pride 2012. They arrived at the podium on stage, and they were momentarily lost, taking a minute to find their page in the common script. Upon finding the right spot, Grecia exclaimed in her Spanish-accented English, "Oh, this is in *English*! Where is the *Spanish* version?" The audience roars with laughter, and she jokingly insisted, "I'm not *joking*!" Grecia played with the audience, explaining that she needs the Spanish version "because I'm a little bit bilingual. Un poquito español". (The last phrase was rendered in heavily English-accented Spanish, complete with aspiration of the voiceless stops and diphthongized /ou/.) One of several raffle items the pair would award included a trip to "Rocky Point" (Puerto Peñasco, Sonora, Mex.), a favorite vacation destination for Phoenix residents. When Grecia drew the ticket for this prize, she read the number in English and Spanish, adding to the winner, "I hope you're not Mexican! If you are, just mention my name to the coyote". Again, the crowd erupted in laughter. The event's master of ceremonies, returning to the stage after the Pride Parade royalty had finished their work, remarked, with some discomfort, "I think it's funny to hear Grecia talking about being illegal with the mayor and police chief in the room. I guess we're just lucky Sheriff Arpaio isn't here", referring to the county's well-known, anti-immigrant crusader and head of law enforcement, who is reviled by many and beloved by the majority of voters who elected him for six terms of office (between 1993 and 2017).

Just a few months earlier, in February 2012, a crowd had gathered at the Tempe Center for the Arts to crown Miss Phoenix Gay Pride. In the audience was a group wearing matching aqua T-shirts and cheering for 29-year-old Javier, whose drag persona is Grecia Montes-D'Occa. Grecia is the reigning Miss Apollo's, representing a bar—Apollo's—that is not one of the two most closely associated with a Latinx clientele. That same year, Javier marked 10 years in the business of drag performance, according to

a magazine cover story that featured him and 15 years since his family, consisting of his single mother, grandmother, and siblings, came to the U.S. from the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua. It had also been ten years since he had come out to his family. The aqua-clad support crew included Javier's family, from his 72-year-old grandmother to his 2-year-old niece. They cheered and beamed with pride when the coveted crown, probably the most prestigious drag title in Phoenix, went to Grecia.

Javier, as Grecia Montes-D'Occa, dedicated himself to the role of Miss Phoenix Gay Pride, doing an overwhelming number of shows and appearances and raising a great deal of money for the Phoenix Pride Scholarship Program. He saw himself as doing double duty as both a representative of the LGBTQ community and, within the LGBTQ community, a representative of the Latinx community. He took both roles very seriously and was widely applauded as a crossover success, transitioning from performing for a majority Mexican/Latinx² audience in a predominantly Mexican/Latinx gay bar to performing for majority Anglo³ audiences in gay bars with a predominantly Anglo clientele.

Fast-forward to April 2013. Grecia, the reigning Miss Phoenix Gay Pride is at the microphone, hosting the competition for her replacement. Circulating through the crowd, she stops by the table of the sponsors of one of the contestants, Deborah K, Miss Krazzy Latinos. Unlike other contestants who represent bars, Deborah K represents a non-profit organization, Krazzy Latinos, founded by two Mexican immigrants. Playing to the majority Anglo crowd, Grecia looks at the people seated around the table and jokes, "Ay, no. The *Mexicans*." The joke gets a big laugh, but members of the group and some other Mexicans/Latinxs in the crowd feel hurt, put down, and disrespected, seeing Grecia's comment as a betrayal. Although Miss Krazzy Latinos does not win, the winner is the drag queen who represents the premier Mexican/Latinx gay bar in Phoenix. In June 2013, Grecia accepted the Community Spirit award at the 2013 Phoenix Pride Gala in recognition of her outstanding service and dedication to the LGBTQ community.

The story of Javier/Grecia is one relatively public example of the complicated interaction of sexual identity and ethnic identity, and of the choices that LGBTQ Mexicans and Latinxs make in navigating the complex socio-political and linguistic terrain of queer mexicanidad/latinidad⁴—or Mexican/Latinx queerness—in the U.S. Southwest during a period of extreme backlash against Mexican immigrants. Javier is bilingual and uses Spanish in most domains of his life. Only one person in his social network, his boyfriend, speaks no Spanish. Javier is out in every area of his life, even in the construction industry/roofing inspection job that he had only recently left when we met. As he described his move from a predominantly Mexican/Latinx bar to a predominantly Anglo one (and the subsequent move of a non-Spanish-speaking drag queen into the Mexican/Latinx bar), it is clear that he is very aware of the pitfalls and possibilities of crossover. He is passionate about representing the Mexican/Latinx community well within the

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broader LGBTQ community, and he is equally passionate about educating the Mexican/Latinx community about gay people. He believes in supporting the queer Mexican/Latinx community in Phoenix, but he prioritizes dedicating himself to breaking down the barriers between Anglos and Mexicans/Latinxs. His drag persona, Grecia Montes-D'Occa, uses both Spanish and English in the public sphere without apology and takes advantage of bilingual word play to make jokes that monolingual English speakers in the audience might not understand, but at the same time she relies on stereotypical ideas about Mexicans, even making fun of other Mexicans in the crowd, to elicit laughter from audiences. Javier's story is one that illustrates some of the main themes of this book, which will be explored in the chapters that follow through the analysis of an eclectic body of data from interviews to recordings of spontaneous interaction, from questionnaires to participant observation.

The Social and Political Context: Phoenix, Arizona, USA

Arizona is one of four states—together with California, to the west, and New Mexico and Texas, to the east—that border Mexico on the United States' southern border. The physical proximity to and prolonged contact with Mexico has certainly profoundly impacted the state's history, social character, and demographic profile. Although the territory that comprises Arizona belonged to Mexico until its annexation via the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848), which ended the war between the U.S. and Mexico, and the subsequent Gadsden Purchase (1853), the Anglos who moved to populate the territory after the war managed to impose Anglo and English hegemonic rule and exclude the Mexican population, whom the border had crossed, and their language, Spanish.⁵

The Contemporary Demographic Profile of Arizona

Compared to the other three aforementioned southwestern states, Arizona remained less developed during Spain's colonial period and later during that of Mexico. While California (39 million) and Texas (27 million) are the first- and second-most populous states in the U.S. today, Arizona's population is far smaller at just over 6.8 million people (U.S. Census Bureau 2015a). Arizona's most populous county, Maricopa County, in which the state capital Phoenix is located, boasts more than 4 million people. The population of the city of Phoenix is over 1.5 million (U.S. Census Bureau 2015b).

The 'Hispanic or Latino'⁶ population in Arizona is estimated to be at just over 30% of the state's total population, or over 1.9 million individuals (U.S. Census Bureau 2014a). The overwhelming majority of the 'Hispanic or Latino' population in Arizona is of Mexican descent; in fact, over a quarter (27%) of the state's total overall population is of Mexican descent. Arizona has smaller than national average 'Black or

African American' population (4.2%, as compared to 12% nationally) and a larger than national average 'American Indian and Alaskan Native' population (4.4%, as compared to 0.8%; U.S. Census Bureau 2014a). It has been projected that the Arizona public school system will become a majority-minority system (50% 'Hispanic or Latino' students) by the year 2020 (Arizona Chamber of Commerce 2015), and the state is projected to become a majority-minority state (i.e. less than 50% 'White alone' population) by the year 2027.

Within the city of Phoenix, the 'Hispanic or Latino' population represents over 40% of the total population; over a third of the city's population is of Mexican descent (37%), according to the ACS population estimate 2015. Phoenix is already a majority-minority city: less than half of Phoenix residents are 'White alone' (46%), and the city is well on its way to becoming a majority 'Hispanic or Latino' city, given that the city has a remarkably high racial generation gap: 55% of children under 18 are 'Hispanic or Latino', while 73% of city residents over 65 are 'White alone' (U.S. Census Bureau 2014b).

Three in every ten of the city's residents, who are 5 years old and older, report speaking Spanish at home, and roughly 80% of the 'Hispanic or Latino' population in Phoenix speaks Spanish at home (U.S. Census Bureau 2014c). Roughly half of those who speak Spanish at home in Phoenix were born in the U.S. (50.9%), and just under half were born outside the U.S. (49.1%) (U.S. Census Bureau 2014d). Over 17% of citizens 18 years old and older speak Spanish at home (U.S. Census Bureau 2014c).

While there is detailed census data about the 'Hispanic or Latino' population, the U.S. Census Bureau to date has not included questions to elicit information on participants' sexual identities or orientations. According to Smith and Gates (2001), in addition to the lack of a specific question on the census form, other factors impact any attempts to count the LGBTQ population, including prejudice and discrimination, and confusion about the census form. Available data on the LGBTQ population relies on imputed census data or polling separate from the census. Imputed census data (e.g. Gates and Cooke 2011) uses the count of unmarried heads of household who identify another adult in the household as a spouse or unmarried partner in order to identify the gay and lesbian population of U.S. states. While this is a start, the method has serious limitations today, as more and more same-sex couples are married; many LGBTQ people are either single or not in monogamous, dyadic relationships; LGBTQ people in relationships may live separately; trans people and bisexual people may be in 'opposite-sex' relationships; and so on. Gates and Cooke (2011), based on data from the 2010 census, rank Arizona as fourteenth among U.S. states for same-sex couples, with 15,817 couples, or 6.64 same-sex couples per 1,000 households. Phoenix, with an adjusted number of 5,450 same-sex couples, ranks twentieth among U.S. cities with 10.59 same-sex couples per 1,000 households.

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Gates and Newport (2012) reported that a 2012 Gallup Poll—“the largest single study of the distribution of the LGBT population in the U.S. on record”—found that the LGBT population in the United States is 3.4% of the total population. Interestingly, they found that ‘non-White’ people are more likely than ‘non-Hispanic White’ people to identify as LGBT: non-Hispanic White, 3.2%, Black 4.6%, Hispanic 4% and Asian 4.3%. The same poll data indicated that 3.9% of Arizonans identify as LGBT (Gates and Newport 2013). The National Council for La Raza’s report (Dutwin 2012) on LGBT acceptance found that among the 10,001 respondents in their nationwide survey, 5.9% self-identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. Given the small sample size, the survey does not have breakdowns for individual states, and the author cautions that the margin of error is high (+/- 2.6%).

The Backlash against Mexican/Latinx and LGBT People in Arizona

Latinxs generally, and Mexicans specifically, were the focus of a fierce backlash at the end of the 20th century and at the dawn of the 21st century in the U.S., fueled by xenophobia and racism. Those behind the backlash were determined to reverse rights secured and advances made in preceding decades (Santa Ana and González de Bustamante 2012). First, through the use of ballot propositions, Arizona voters have overwhelmingly approved socially restrictive legislation targeting the Mexican/Latinx population, denying public benefits to undocumented immigrants, making English the official language, banning bilingual education, and punishing employers who hire undocumented immigrants (Cashman 2010, 2009, 2006). More recently in spring 2010, the Arizona legislature approved two laws that have had a profoundly negative effect on the Mexican/Latinx population in Arizona. The first, known as SB1070, among other things requires local police to enforce federal immigration law and requires all people to carry identification documenting their legal status; the second, known as HB2281, bans the teaching of ethnic studies in the state’s public schools. While SB1070 has been challenged in court, the core of its provisions has been upheld, causing widespread harm (e.g. Menjívar 2016; Rubio-Hernandez and Ayón 2016; Sabo et al. 2014). In addition, the sheriff of Maricopa County, Joe Arpaio, whom I described earlier as a very vocal critic of undocumented immigration, continued to engage in highly publicized immigration raids around the county, even after being prohibited from doing so by the courts. These raids have further cemented his cult hero status among anti-immigrant groups, further terrorized immigrants and non-immigrant Mexicans/Latinxs, and led to numerous lawsuits and a federal civil rights investigation. In the face of this assault, Mexicans/Latinxs and allies have organized, gathered people together in protest and civil disobedience, engaged in voter registration drives, and made the case for immigrant rights.

LGBTQ individuals have also been targeted by restrictive legislation in Arizona, most notably around the issue of marriage equality and access to public accommodation and bathrooms. Prior to the Defense of Marriage Act being struck down by the Supreme Court in 2013 and the Court's *Obergefell* decision in 2015, which legalized marriage between two people of the same sex in 2015, Arizona voters had passed an amendment to the state constitution limiting the definition of marriage to the union between one man and one woman. The activism of Arizona's Senator John McCain on the issue of the U.S. military's 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy, which was repealed in December 2010, had further kept gay and lesbian issues at the fore in Arizona politics. More recently, Arizona's state legislature debated SB1045, a so-called bathroom bill that would have allowed businesses to restrict customers' access to the (binary-gendered) bathroom that (best) matches their gender identity before it was withdrawn in 2013. Finally, the legislature did pass SB1062—a bill that was aimed at allowing individuals and businesses to be exempted from state laws that infringed on their religious beliefs, including the public accommodation law, which prohibits discrimination. Viewed as a thinly veiled attack on LGBTQ individuals, the law was vetoed by Governor Jan Brewer in 2014.

The backlash against Mexican/Latinx and LGBTQ people in Arizona has occasioned an activist response that has been described by Chávez (2013) as a series of 'coalitional moments'. While a single-axis view of identity remains dominant in media coverage and public discourse about immigrant and LGBTQ rights, Chávez explains that activists have responded by finding common ground and building coalitions across traditional boundaries of social movements. Activists who are both undocumented and queer in Arizona work with both movements and form an intersectional movement that strives to "challenge and directly confront normalizing discourses of belonging undergirding LGBTQ and immigrant rights frameworks" (Cisneros 2015, 155).

To sum up this brief overview of the social setting of this research with LGBTQ Mexicans/Latinxs, the following must be foregrounded: Arizona has become an increasingly hostile place for Mexicans/Latinxs due to institutionalized discrimination and increased surveillance; many Mexicans/Latinxs have resisted the racism and xenophobia (both structural and individual); LGBTQ people/lives have been highlighted as a problem in Arizona that legislators continue to attempt to solve, although there have been some gains at the national level (e.g. Don't Ask Don't Tell, marriage equality), and these have filtered down, improving local realities for some individuals. There is always much more that could be said, and in this case, that is certainly true. Historical accounts (Sheridan 2012; Rosales 2000; Luckingham 1994, 1989) and contemporary social accounts (Magaña and Lee 2014; Santa Ana and González de Bustamante 2012) have informed my work, but there has been insufficient space here to give anything more than a brief outline of these accounts in order to contextualize the analysis of the data that will follow.

Theoretical Approach

In this section of the introductory chapter, I will outline my approach in this book, which I am calling ‘jotería sociolinguistics’,⁷ in order to lay the groundwork for the subsequent chapters. This approach involves an interweaving of the following approaches: sociocultural linguistics (Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 2005, 2010), anthropological linguistics (Zentella 1995, 1997), jotería studies (Hames-García 2011b; Pérez 2014), and thick(er) intersectionalities (Yep 2010, 2016). Before jumping into a discussion of my approach, I want to bring in one example to highlight a central issue.

In 2014, the Human Rights Campaign, a national LGBTQ organization, awarded the city of Phoenix a perfect score (100) on what they call their ‘municipal equality index’ for the first time. Although both mainstream publications and LGBTQ publications heralded the achievement, which recognized, for example, the city’s non-discrimination ordinances in employment, housing and public accommodation, the existence of an LGBTQ police liaison or task force, and anti-bullying policies, among other things, nowhere was it recognized that for many LGBTQ Mexicans/ Latinxs, the enforcement of SB1070 and HB2281, the ongoing immigration raids of Sheriff Arpaio, and even discrimination within the LGBTQ ‘community’ made equality seem very far off indeed. It is clearly only possible to give a post-SB1070 Phoenix a perfect score on an index of equality if one is utterly unaware of the fact that a sizable number of LGBTQ people in the city are Mexican/Latinx and/or immigrants, or if, knowing this, one opts to focus exclusively on only one aspect of people’s identities and only one vector of social inequality rather than understand identities as intersectional and oppressions as interconnected. This compartmentalization of identity limits how we understand oppression, how we understand resistance, and how we understand people’s lived experiences. This example underscores how queerness/gayness is constructed as White despite the fact that Phoenix is a majority-minority city and despite the sizable Mexican/Latinx population.

Sociocultural Linguistics and Anthropological Linguistics

This book is a critical sociolinguistic ethnography conducted with LGBTQ Mexicans/Latinxs in Phoenix, Arizona, with the concepts of anthropological (Zentella 1995, 1997) and sociocultural (Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 2005) linguistics at the very center of the project. First, Zentella’s concept of *anthropological* linguistics (original emphasis) aims to address the role of research in relation to questions of language, identity, and social inequity. She explains that the objective of anthropological linguistics is

to understand and facilitate a stigmatized group’s attempts to construct a positive self within an economic and political context that relegates its

members to static and disparaged ethnic, racial, and class identities, and that identifies them with static and disparaged linguistic codes.

(Zentella 1997, 13)

She further explains,

At the heart of anthropological linguistics is the view that subjects—or informants—are not objects, but individuals with a great deal to say about the ways in which language ideologies play liberating and/or oppressive roles in their lives. If we listen to *what* speakers tell us, not just to the phonemes, morphemes, syntactic constituents and discourse markers, we learn about the forces that control speakers' lives and shape their linguistic repertoires, and we find evidence of their acceptance of and resistance to the dominant ideology.

(1995, 14)

In sum, Zentella asserts,

By incorporating the word political in its name, anthropological linguistics openly declares its intention to discuss the language and politics connection and to make it clear that, whether we choose to discuss it or not, there is no language without politics.

(1995, 15)

Making the connection between language and politics in the spirit of anthropological linguistics includes, for example, looking not only at the ways that Mexicans/Latinxs (and in this present project, queer Mexicans/Latinxs in particular) are marginalized and disparaged but also looking at how they respond to and resist that marginalization and disparagement (see also Zentella 2003, 2014).

Echoes of Zentella's anthropological linguistics approach can be seen in critical ethnographic and sociolinguistic approaches. As Heller maintains, "Critique is fundamentally about identifying and explaining the construction of relations of social difference and inequality (and then deciding what position to take about such processes, and what, if any, action that might lead to)" (2001, 117). Heller notes that a pervasive methodological problem in linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics is the link between local (linguistic) practices and social (structural) processes (117). Heller advocates a critical sociolinguistics that includes embracing public engagement, drawing connections between local practices and structural constraints, and even taking sides in political processes (Heller 2001, 139).

The second thread in the theoretical approach that will be employed in this book is sociocultural linguistics, which Bucholtz and Hall define as, "a framework for the analysis of identity as constituted in linguistic

interaction” (2005, 585). While not denying the fundamental differences between/among the various approaches, sociocultural linguistics distills and intermarries important research on identity and interaction from social psychology (speech accommodation theory, social identity theory), linguistic anthropology (language ideology, indexicality), sociology (ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, identity in interaction), and sociolinguistics (style, identity). Identity is understood not in terms of static categories, but as intersubjectively produced and emerging through interaction (Bucholtz and Hall 2005, 2004, 2010). For Bucholtz and Hall “*Identity is the social positioning of self and other*” (2005, 586, original emphasis). Their approach “privileges the interactional level, because it is in interaction that all these resources gain social meaning” (586). In addition to viewing identity as emergent and defining identity in relation to positionality, the other principle of the sociocultural linguistics approach includes taking account of indexicality, relationality, and partialness. That is, identity emerges through indexical processes and through the construction of relations of similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy. The intersubjective construction of identities is not necessarily fully intentional, nor fully the work of the speaker alone. At the same time, it is not independent of wider social forces, ideologies, and power relations.

In this book, a sociocultural understanding of identity is employed. This has a number of implications: First, I am more interested in how participants define themselves and how others define them rather than how they fit into pre-existing identity categories, so although certain labels are used here in this chapter and throughout the book as a shorthand convenience, they are the topic of a deeper analysis in Chapters 2 and 6. Second, the view presented is not definitive in nature. It is based on the author-researcher’s experience and interpretation of local practices and ideologies at one given time (2010–2016) in one place. The LGBTQ population in Phoenix is growing, evolving, and constantly redefining itself, so this account is inevitably incomplete and unfinished. Third, the methods employed are eclectic, even ‘messy’ (Law and Urry 2005). Transcripts of interviews and spontaneous conversation were analyzed using the tools of discourse analysis and conversation analysis, and, in addition, some simple descriptive statistical analysis of questionnaire data complements the mainly qualitative, interpretive approach. In sum, the book is a critical sociolinguistic ethnography, as its subtitle indicates. I have chosen to take “a close look at language practices in a specific setting” (Heller 2006, 13) while attempting to make connections between analysis of practices and ideologies emerging on different scales and in different social spaces. Moreover, I have not shied away from taking positions with regard to social differences and inequality, and, where relevant, advocating for action/activism (to paraphrase Heller 2001, 117).

Calls for Attention to Thick(er) Intersectionalities in Social Research

In this and the following two sections, I will look in turn at a range of theoretical proposals that contribute to what I am calling a *jotería* socio-linguistics approach. First, Yep's notion of "thick(er) intersectionalities" (Yep 2010, 2016) builds on the notion of intersectionality, which can be traced back to Black feminist thought and Chicana feminist thought in the 1970s, 80s and 90s (see also Anzaldúa 1987 and the concept *nepantla*, as connected by Hurtado and Sinha 2016, for example). Legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1989, 1991) argued that race, class and gender were "intersecting oppressions" despite the single-axis framework that distorted Black women's experiences, rendered them invisible, and negatively impacted their legal claims of discrimination. In the decades that followed, a great deal of research with an intersectional perspective followed in a wide range of fields.

Communication scholar Gust Yep's (2010, 2016) call for attention to "thick(er) intersectionalities" grows out of his critique of much of this body of intersectional research. Yep argues that much of this research dutifully repeats the "race/class/gender/sexuality mantra" (Muñoz 1999), but suffers from a tendency to "homogenize people inhabiting similar intersections" (Yep 2016, 87), and this, in turn, "contributes to the erasure of their subjectivities and experiences" (Yep 2016, 88), and "hides how power is intricately involved in the production of social categories and identities" (*ibid*). Yep makes the case for the investigation of what he terms "thick or thicker intersectionalities" and defines them as follows:

An exploration of the complex particularities of individuals' lives and identities associated with their race, class, gender, sexuality, and national locations by understanding their history and personhood in concrete time and space, and the interplay between individual subjectivity, personal agency, systemic arrangements, and structural forces. It demands that we pay attention to the lived experiences and biographies of the persons inhabiting a particular intersection without preconceived notions of values, ideologies, and politics.

(Yep 2016, 173)

In order to accomplish this thicker approach to intersectionality, Yep argues that researchers must strive to understand the effects of relations of power on people's experiences in specific times and places/spaces; they must examine how people deploy affect in their identity performances; they must accept that everyday experiences are messy, fragmented, and contradictory, and they must be wary of the temptation of adopting social categories that too neatly delimit how identities are understood (2016, 90–91). So, in an attempt to deal with the complexity of participants' identities and

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intersecting oppression in a way that does not rely on a facile repetition of what Muñoz called “the race, class, and gender mantra, essentially a form of sloganeering” (1999, 166), I attempt to examine the interconnect-edness of gender identities, sexual identities, and ethnicity, among other things, without trying to clean up the everyday messiness of participants’ lived experiences and without assuming a priori that participants with similarly intersecting identities have similar experiences. In fact, exploring the heterogeneity of participants’ experiences is what interests me most. Moving forward along these lines, I hope to actually explore the taking up and deploying of identity categories by participants in interaction rather than imposing them and foreclosing any discussion of how they are used, how they correspond to participants’ subjectivities, and how they impact and are impacted by power relations in a particular place at a particular time. One important difference to note is that while Yep criticizes intersectionality research for focusing too much on marked, marginalized identities, I follow Hames-García’s (2011a) distinction between intersectionality and multiplicity, where the former maintains the original meaning of the intersection of oppressions, and the latter highlights the mutually constitutive nature of identities without necessarily involving oppression (e.g. wealthy, European-American, cisgender male could be discussed in terms of multiplicity, but not intersectionality).

Jotería Studies

Pérez (2014) describes *jotería* studies as an umbrella term encompassing a broad array of fields and approaches, including but not limited to Chicanx/Latinx studies and queer studies. As Hames-García explains in his introduction to a special issue of the journal *Aztlán* on *jotería* studies,

Even the meaning of the term *jotería* . . . is not fixed. Contributors . . . use it primarily to describe a group of people of Chicana/o or Mexicana/o descent whose lives include dissident practices of gender and sexuality.

(2014, 139)

Jotería theory can be seen as part of a broader theoretical developments relating to research with queer people of color. Hames-García (2011b) traces the genealogy of this theory in order to counter queer theory’s “repetition of a false chronology [that puts] texts by White authors first, followed by those by people of color” (p. 28). Hames-García’s main argument is that people of color “have been there all along, and that arguments for an analysis of race, gender, class, and sexuality as inseparable are nothing particularly new, while arguments for their separation should be viewed with some suspicion as to their political motivations” (p. 28).

The thread that ties *jotería* studies together, according to Pérez and others, is a sustained critical engagement with “nonheteronormative gender and sexuality as related to *mestiza/o* subjectivities and identities” (p. 145). So unlike queer theory, in *jotería* studies, the focus is on subjectivities and identities, while there is still an interest in anti-normativity. Hames-García (2011b) and Pérez both criticize the ‘subjectlessness’ or anti-identitarian approach that is advocated in queer theory. Hames-García (2011b) pointedly asks,

If a “subjectless” queer critique continues to hide the significant differentiation still necessary between queers of color and white queers, queer women, queer men, and trans queers, rich queers and poor queers, first-world queers and third-world queers, then which “identity politics” precisely has ‘queer epistemology’ successfully “deconstructed?”
(p. 39)

This is echoed in recent work by Hall (2013) who says, “I am concerned that queer theory, by maintaining its analytic distinction between practice and identity, ignores the subjectivity of those it was initiated to defend” (p. 640). Pérez (2005) goes even further, with respect to the anti-identitarian approach, contending,

Queer theory is very particular about the kinds of trouble with which it troubles itself. The problem of race in particular presents queer theory with dilemmas over which it actively untroubles itself . . . Queer theorists who can invoke that transparent subject, and choose to do so, reap the dividends of whiteness.

(Pérez 2005, 171)

In this study in Phoenix, I draw on *jotería* studies, as articulated by Hames-García, D. E. Pérez, and H. Pérez, because it is a critical queer approach that very specifically relates to Mexican/Latinx subjectivities and identities.

Jotería Sociolinguistics

The research presented in this volume incorporates the theoretical perspectives from social theory discussed in the last two sections, along with perspectives from sociocultural linguistics and anthropological linguistics. It thus represents a distinct new strand of sociolinguistic work in multilingual settings—a *jotería* sociolinguistics. It is a sociolinguistics that has as its sustained focus the language and identity practices of non-heteronormative Mexican/Latinx people; that makes central the exploration of thicker intersectionality; that understands identities as subjectively constituted and interactionally achieved, questioning the identity/practice binary; and that takes a critical/political stance.

Research Methodology

In arguing for the decentering of methodologies and articulating the need in the social sciences to develop methodological sensitivity to what is complex and elusive, Law and Urry (2005) remind us, “If methods are not innocent then they are also political. They help to make realities” (p.404). These scholars also articulate the questions that follow from their observation, addressing their readers as fellow researchers: “Which realities? Which do we want to help to make more real, and which less real? How do we want to interfere (because interfere we will, one way or another)?” (p. 404).

Heller (2012) also begins her discussion of sociolinguistic ethnography by insisting that methods are more than merely technical skills or tools. Instead, she explains that she sees methods as “practices of enquiry, shaped by the questions we ask, and by what we experience” (p. 24). She notes that tools and practices must develop and change for a new era in which we are faced with new realities and new complexities, and she argues that ethnography is well suited to carrying out research at a time when our subjects/fields, objects of study (e.g. languages, communities), and understandings of the world (e.g. globalization, superdiversity) are undergoing a kind of revolution. Martin-Jones and Gardner (2012) describe what they term a “new sociolinguistics of multilingualism”, which is characterized by its critical, ethnographic approach and its awareness of the consequences of globalization, transnational mobilities and new technologies. Drawing on these sources and those that I outlined in the earlier sections, I would describe my methodology as a particular strand of critical sociolinguistic ethnography—a *jotería* sociolinguistics—that draws on the tools and insights of discourse and conversation analysis; that considers the complexities of identity, community, and mobility; and that recognizes the partial nature of all enquiry. This approach emerged during the process of doing this research, in a way that was neither linear nor free from messy complications.

The fieldwork for the research project that is presented in this book was carried out at three separate points in time: in the summer of 2010, the summer of 2012, and the winter of January 2013. These extended periods of fieldwork were complemented by several shorter, weeklong visits between and after these periods. The data collected consists of the following:

- Ethnographic interviews—There were a total of 33 interviews with 35 participants. Most interviews were one-on-one with the interviewer (31), but two interviews involved two participants interviewed together. One of these cases was a couple and the other was twin brothers. In all cases, I allowed the interviewee to choose the setting of the interview. A small number of interviews took place in participants’ homes (7), and the remainder took place in public places (cafés, restaurants, bars, a community center, and an office). In most cases, the interviewee and I were alone (albeit in public places); however, in several cases, other

people were present during the interview (a friend, a partner). The interviews range in duration from 22 minutes, 15 seconds to 2 hours, 42 minutes, 15 seconds. The average interview duration was 71 minutes, 6 seconds.

- Sociolinguistic questionnaires—The questionnaires, which were administered after the conclusion of the interview in most cases, included sections on language proficiency, language use, language attitudes, identity labels, and social network ties.
- Spontaneous interaction—Some participants later consented to recordings of spontaneous interaction. In most cases, participants decided what they thought would be interesting to record; in other cases, I asked to record specific events. This corpus totals just over 25 hours and includes diverse forms of events and interactions, including people conversing while playing darts in a bar; friends having lunch; a bartender at work conversing with customers; a mother-son interaction; a family gathering; people playing kickball in the park, playing poker, working (at a community organization), playing *lotería* in a bar, doing softball practice, attending a community event, taking part in a meeting of a community group, discussing a community event, and performing in a drag show. A total of 14 of the 35 participants were involved in the recordings of spontaneous interaction, all of which were audio only except for the drag shows, which were videorecorded. I was present for some, but not all, of the spontaneous interactions; when present, I wrote field notes during and after the recordings. For recordings made when I was not present, participants were asked to describe what they recorded and who was present.
- Extended observations and field notes.

As I described earlier, the Phoenix metropolitan area is a large and diverse urban/suburban environment. It is not the goal of this book to attempt to cover the entire region, and there is no claim whatsoever that the data collected from the 35 participants is in any way representative of all queer Mexicans/Latinxs in Phoenix. Adopting a focus on non-heteronormative sexual identities of Mexicans/Latinxs, my approach aims to interrogate rather than impose social categories, so it is not the aim of this project to tick off boxes or populate cells in order to provide a representative sample; in any case, given that the limitations of current data (census, polling) and the fluid, dynamic nature of gender and sexual identity keeps us from understanding the actual dimensions of the LGBTQ Mexican/Latinx population, a representative sample of a queer population is hard to imagine. Following Barrett (1997), I discarded from the outset the notion of an externally imposed paradigm based on social categories and, instead, I adopted what he calls a “contact-based perspective” in which community boundaries are assumed to be porous, participants are assumed to have multiple overlapping identities and affiliations, and participants are assumed to have varying language

backgrounds and linguistic repertoires. I identified potential participants through existing affiliations and social network ties, and I did not assume *a priori* the existence of a “queer Mexican/Latinx community”. While I did attempt to seek out participants with different perspectives and experiences, I did not aim for any kind of stratified sample like in quantitative sociolinguistic research (e.g. sex, age, social class). The result, as the reader will see next, is more (cisgender) male participants (19) than (cisgender) female (15) and only one transgender participant, more U.S.-born participants (20) than those born outside the (mainland) U.S. (15), more participants who identify as gay or lesbian than bisexual, more self-reported English-dominant bilinguals than Spanish-dominant, higher levels of education than the overall population, and a mean age of 34.5 years, to just scratch the surface of all the possible ways participants could be described and compared. In short, the sampling was purposive, with several criteria being used to select participants in order to address the research questions including an orientation to an LGBTQ identity, to a Mexican/Latinx ethnicity, and to involvement in Mexican/Latinx or LGBTQ social networks.

An ethnographic approach focusing on existing affiliations also helped to address the danger of collapsing gay, lesbian, and bisexual identities and experiences, which have long been recognized as different, although this recognition is often ignored. While researchers have often resolved this problem by opting to focus on one group (e.g. lesbians or gay men) exclusively, here the contact-based perspective (Barrett 1997) allows for the inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender participants in the study without any *a priori* assumption that participants’ experiences will be homogeneous (see Zimman 2009). This approach allows for the exploration of both possible points of difference and potential points of similarity in terms of identities and experiences, while being open to both intergroup and intragroup variation.

The Research Participants

Although it would have been possible to choose a particular research site, such as one of the bars that caters to an LGBTQ, Mexican/Latinx clientele,⁸ or a particular organization, such as one of the social/political groups that has been formed by and for queer Mexicans/Latinxs (that was, in fact, my original plan), this ethnography takes as its setting the greater metropolitan area of Phoenix within which thousands of queer Mexicans/Latinxs live, work, and play, and it incorporates many sites and groupings of people. Among the 35 participants are students and teachers, community leaders, artists and activists, but also many people who are not public figures in that way, but who are involved in social networks through which I was put in touch with them, snowballing from friends and contacts.

Table 1.1 presents the 35 participants along with information about their names or pseudonyms,⁹ place of origin, and age at the time of the

Table 1.1 Participants

<i>Name/ pseudonym</i>	<i>Origin</i>	<i>Age (7/2012)</i>	<i>Time in Phoenix (years)</i>	<i>Age at arrival in U.S.</i>
Mario	Guanajuato (Gto.), Mexico	21	18	3
Norma	Michoacán, Mexico	23	4	6
Roberto	Torreón (Coah.), Mexico	24	17	7
Elaina	Las Cruces, New Mexico	24	1	—
Jolovi	Dodge City, Kansas	25	22	—
Tony	Dodge City, Kansas	25	2	—
Joaquín	Tlatzala (Gro.), Mexico	26	24	2
Sebastián	Los Alamos, New Mexico	26	0.5	—
Nadia	El Paso, Texas	27	4.5	—
Javier	Chihuahua, Mexico	29	15	14
Luisa	Phoenix, Arizona	29	—	—
Joseph	Phoenix, Arizona	30	—	—
Jimmie	Phoenix, Arizona	30	—	—
Rafi	Phoenix, Arizona	30	—	—
Erica	Phoenix, Arizona	30	—	—
Bree	El Paso, Texas	31	11	—
Luis	San Diego, California	33	11	—
Michael	Mexicali (B.C.), Mexico	33	26	7
Sandra	Peru	33	1	8
Marisa	El Paso, Texas	35	14	—
Leti	Deming, New Mexico	37	5	—
Diego	Michoacán, Mexico	38	17	21

(Continued)

Table 1.1 (Continued)

<i>Name/ pseudonym</i>	<i>Origin</i>	<i>Age (7/2012)</i>	<i>Time in Phoenix (years)</i>	<i>Age at arrival in U.S.</i>
Lynn	Ruidoso Downs, New Mexico	38	2	—
Murum	Northern Mexico	39	12	27
Miguel	Puebla, Mexico	40	17	23
Martín	Choix, Sinaloa, Mexico	40	18	22
Andrés	Crescent City, California	41	13	—
Josefina	El Paso, Texas	42	15	—
Cindy	El Paso, Texas	42	11	—
Acell	Guadalajara (Jal.), Mexico	43	10	33
Johnny	San Fernando, California	43	10	—
Fidel	Southern Chile	45	10	10
Susana	Guadalajara (Jal.), Mexico	50	19	30
Silvana	Merced, California	52	17	—
Milagros	Puerto Rico	54	10	8

fieldwork. Fuller profiles of particular participants will be provided in subsequent chapters, including their language preferences, language use, language attitudes, and social network ties. Their narratives about home, family, and coming out (or not coming out) will also be given fuller consideration.

Although I use homogenizing terms like ‘Mexicans/Latinxs’ or ‘LGBTQ’ in this table, this group was far from homogeneous. What the participants did have in common is that, when I began the study, they all had been in the Phoenix, Arizona, metropolitan area for at least six months; they were all 21 and over; they had all been born in the U.S. or migrated to the U.S., and they self-identified (at least some times) as Chicanx, Mexican, Mexican-American, Hispanic or Latinx, and as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans(gender) or genderqueer/non-binary. The participants’ legal status was not taken into account (I did not inquire about this), although some participants shared this information with me during their interviews.

Of the 35 participants in Table 1.1, 20 were born in the U.S. and 15 were born outside the (mainland) U.S. in Mexico (12), in Chile (1), in Peru (1), and in Puerto Rico (1). One-quarter of the participants born in the U.S. were

originally from Phoenix, and three of those born outside the U.S. had been brought to Phoenix as very young children (under 5 years old) and considered Phoenix to be their home. In addition to a broader representation of transgender participants, also missing are LGBTQ people who are not out to anyone at all, other than maybe themselves, and who are not involved in any kind of queer social networks, as I would have had no way to identify them, and people who may be of Mexican/Latinx heritage but who do not identify with this in any way.¹⁰

The other participant, whose presence I might prefer to ignore or elide, but whose involvement, for better or worse, shapes every aspect of the project, is me, the researcher, fieldworker, and author of this monograph. This book is not a reflexive ethnography by any means, but I cannot pretend that my role as a researcher was inconsequential or that I am not a socially located person (Cameron et al. 1992); for that reason, I should not be invisible. It is necessary to recognize at the outset that the research process is intrinsically and unavoidably influenced by my interests and objectives, my identity and interaction with participants, and the dynamics of power and solidarity between me and the other participants. The relationships between the participants and me, as researcher, not only impacted the data collection process but also the products—that is, the data collected and the analysis produced. As an Anglo woman from the U.S. Northeast (New England) who is a cisgender lesbian, I began this project seeing myself as managing a complicated combination of insider and outsider identities vis-à-vis participants: an insider in some respects with regard to gender or sexual identity and an outsider with regard to ethnicity and, in many cases, gender. The deeper I got into the project, however, I realized that this was an incredibly simplistic way to conceptualize it. While I cannot completely discount the possibility that as a lesbian I might have gained access and trust that a heterosexual researcher might not have enjoyed, particularly with the participants who identify as lesbians, even this shared aspect of sexual identity with some participants, even combined with long-established relationships with some participants from when I lived and worked in the Phoenix metropolitan area (2001–2008), did not guarantee any pre-established trust. Of course, other researchers have already argued that the mere sharing of an ethnic, gender, or sexual identity is not sufficient to build trust, and it may in fact in some cases be counterproductive (e.g. Kennedy 1996; Lang 1996). While I had thought about these issues prior to beginning my fieldwork, and despite my understanding of identity as intersubjective and emergent, I only later realized that I had often assumed that I was being ‘read’ correctly as an Anglo lesbian when I did not articulate that when I initially made contact with possible participants, and I often did not do it during the interview either. In fact, I was at times completely surprised upon discovering how participants were actually reading my ethnicity and sexual identity.

In several cases, I learned during or after the interviews that the interviewee had assumed I was heterosexual, and on one occasion, I learned at the very end of the interview that I had been read as a heterosexual Chicana/Latina. There is no question that identity negotiation in interaction impacted the process of data collection and participant observation in the community, which is why I treat the interview as an interactional event or localized practice and, where appropriate, include my participation in the co-construction of interview talk (Schilling-Estes 2004). These conflicts and tensions cannot ever be resolved; instead, they must be acknowledged honestly and described as transparently as possible.

The Main Focus and Objective of This Book

The main focus of the book is to examine participants' conceptions of their ethnic and sexual identities and to examine the ways in which these identities shape (and are shaped by) language practices. The project questions the view of ethnicity and sexual identity as two separate entities with distinct and absolute boundaries (Latinx-Anglo, straight-gay). It also questions the universality of trajectories such as acculturation and coming out, by listening to the experiences of people living at/in the intersection of these two imagined entities (among others) and studying the emergence of their sexual and ethnic identities in interaction.

The first objective of this book is to show how the queer Mexicans/Latinxs participating in this study presented themselves in interaction, how they constructed, maintained, rejected, and negotiated ethnic and sexual identities in interaction, and how they articulated their imaginings of LGBTQ and Mexican/Latinx 'communities' to which they did or did not see themselves as belonging. Through close analysis of narratives and spontaneous interactions, I identified some of the agentive ways in which the participants drew on the different sociolinguistic resources available to them—as LGBTQ Mexicans/Latinxs—for 'doing identity' in interaction. I showed how they employed different identity category labels, how they displayed affect, and how they made social evaluations of Spanish and English.

The second objective of this book is to question the dominant narrative on language maintenance and shift in sociolinguistics, much of which relies on a (heteronormative) family-based model of intergenerational language transmission. I aim to bring LGBTQ individuals who are often at the margin of the three-generation family model to the center of my analysis. This research thus aims to contribute to the queering of the study of Spanish in the U.S., and of bi- and multilingualism more generally, by including a previously unstudied subgroup (LGBTQ Mexicans/Latinxs) and by providing a different lens through which to view the diverse language and identity practices of U.S. Mexicans/Latinxs, and broader patterns of language maintenance and shift.

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