



Crossing

*Language & Ethnicity
among Adolescents*

Ben Rampton



ST JEROME
PUBLISHING

St. Jerome Publishing
Manchester, UK & Northampton MA



First published 2005 by
St. Jerome Publishing
2 Maple Road West, Brooklands
Manchester, M23 9HH, United Kingdom
Telephone ++44 (0)161 973 9856
Fax ++44 (0)161 905 3498
Email stjerome@compuserve.com
Website: www.stjerome.co.uk

ISBN 1-9000650-77-0 (second edition, pbk)
ISSN 1471-0277 (*Encounters*)

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Printed and bound in Great Britain by
T. J. International Ltd., Cornwall, UK

Typeset by
Delta Typesetters, Cairo, Egypt
Email: hilali1945@hotmail.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

Rampton, Ben

Crossing : language & ethnicity among adolescents / Ben Rampton.-- 2nd ed.
p. cm. -- (Encounters, ISSN 1471-0277)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-900650-77-0 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. Code switching (Linguistics)--Great Britain. 2. Sociolinguistics--Great Britain. 3. Languages in contact--Great Britain. 4. Youth--Great Britain--Language. 5. Language and education--Great Britain. I. Title. II. Series: Encounters (St. Jerome Publishing)

P115.3.R36 2004

306.44'6'0941--dc22

2004008422



Encounters

A new series on language and diversity

Edited by Jan Blommaert, Marco Jacquemet and Ben Rampton

Diversity has come to be recognized as one of the central concerns in our thinking about society, culture and politics. At the same time, it has proved one of the most difficult issues to deal with on the basis of established theories and methods, particularly in the social sciences. Studying diversity not only challenges widespread views of who we are and what we do in social life; it also challenges the theories, models and methods by means of which we proceed in studying diversity. Diversity exposes the boundaries and limitations of our theoretical models, in the same way it exposes our social and political organizations.

Encounters sets out to explore diversity *in* language, diversity *through* language and diversity *about* language. Diversity *in* language covers topics such as intercultural, gender, class or age-based variations in language and linguistic behaviour. Diversity *through* language refers to the way in which language and linguistic behaviour can contribute to the construction or negotiation of such sociocultural and political differences. And diversity *about* language has to do with the various ways in which language and diversity are being perceived, conceptualized and treated, in professional as well as in lay knowledge - thus including the reflexive and critical study of scientific approaches alongside the study of language politics and language ideologies. In all this, mixedness, creolization, cross-over phenomena and heterogeneity are privileged areas of study. The series title, *Encounters*, is intended to encourage a relatively neutral but interested stance towards diversity, moving away from the all too obvious 'cultures-collide' perspective that is dominant within the social sciences. The target public of *Encounters* includes scholars and advanced students of linguistics, communication studies, anthropology, cultural studies, sociology, as well as students and scholars in neighbouring disciplines such as translation studies, gender studies, gay and lesbian studies, postcolonial studies.

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the *Handbook of Pragmatics* (John Benjamins 1995-2003) and *The Pragmatics of Intercultural and International Communication* (John Benjamins 1991).

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Acknowledgements

This book has taken a long time to complete. It would have been impossible without the the young people who acted as informants. They made fieldwork the high point of the research process, and I have a very great debt to them. I would also like to thank their teachers and youth leaders. I hope I can be forgiven for using pseudonyms when I refer to them.

Though they may not recognise it in the end product, there have also been a number of other people who have taken time to improve my understanding of the social and linguistic processes that I try to describe: Chris Brumfit, Jill Bourne, Debbie Cameron, Paul Drew, Liz Frazer, Penny Harvey, Roger Hewitt, Dick Hudson, Eric Kellerman, David Langford, Bob Le Page, Iris Lincoln, Derek Lincoln, Carol Pfaff, Kay Richardson, Celia Roberts, Mukul Saxena, Peter Skehan and Mike Stubbs. I'm also grateful to Liz Frazer, Euan Reid and Jennifer Coates, whose detailed comments on earlier drafts have made the final text much more readable.

Financial support for the work has been provided by the Economic and Social Research Council (a doctoral studentship and a project grant [00232390]), the British Association of Applied Linguistics (a grant for equipment), and the Leverhulme Trust (a Research Fellowship). I would like thank all three.

Words can never properly acknowledge the extent of my debt to the inspiration and support of Joan, Tony and Amelia Rampton.

Transcription symbols and conventions

Prosody

˘	low fall	ˈ	high stress
˙	low rise	ˌ	low stress
˘˘	high fall	ː	very high stress
˙˙	high rise	ˑ	very low stress
˘˙	fall rise	↑	pitch register shift upwards
˙˘	rise fall	↓	pitch register shift downwards
		↑	extra pitch height

Segmental phonetics

[] IPA phonetic transcription (revised to 1979)

The sounds of the phonetic symbols used in transcription can be roughly glossed as follows:

Vowels

[ɪ]	as in 'kit' [kɪt]
[i]	as in 'fleece' (but shorter) [fli:s]
[e]	as in 'dress' [dɹes]
[ɛ]	as in French 'père'
[æ]	as in 'trap' [tɹæp]
[a]	as in French 'patte' [pat]
[ɑ]	as in 'start' (but shorter) [stɑ:t]
[ʌ]	as in 'strut' [stɹʌt]
[ɒ]	as in 'lot' [lɒt]
[ɔ]	as in 'north' (but shorter) [nɔ:θ]
[o]	as in French 'eau'
[ʊ]	as in 'foot' [fʊt]
[u]	as in 'goose' (but shorter) [gu:s]
[ə]	as in 'about', 'upper' [əbaʊt] [ʌpə]
[ɜ]	as in 'nurse' (but shorter) [nɜ:s]
[eɪ]	as in 'face' [feɪs]
[aɪ]	as in 'price' [praɪs]
[ɔɪ]	as in 'choice' [tʃɔɪs]
[ɪə]	as in 'near' [nɪə]



[ɛə] as in 'square' [skwɛə]

[ʊə] as in 'cure' [kjʊə]

[əʊ] as in 'goat' [gəʊt]

[aʊ] as in 'mouth' [maʊθ]

Consonants

[p] as in 'pea' [pi:]

[b] as in 'bee' [bi:]

[t] as in 'toe' [təʊ]

[t̪] like [t], but with the tip of the tongue curled back (retroflexed)

[ɹ̥] voiceless alveolar click, the sound often made in disappointment, or, used twice, with disapproval

[d] as in 'doe' [dəʊ]

[d̪] like [d], but with the tip of the tongue retroflexed

[k] as in 'cap' [kæp]

[g] as in 'gap' [gæp]

[x] as in Scottish 'loch' [lɒx]

[f] as in 'fat' [fæt]

[v] as in 'vat' [væt]

[θ] as in 'thing' [θɪŋ]

[ð] as in 'this' [ðɪs]

[s] as in 'sip' [sɪp]

[ʂ] like [s], but with the tip of the tongue retroflexed

[z] as in 'zip' [zɪp]

[ʃ] as in 'ship' [ʃɪp]

[ʒ] as in 'measure' [meʒə]

[h] as in 'hat' [hæt]

[ʔ] glottal stop, as in Cockney 'butter' [bʌʔə]

[m] as in 'map' [mæp]

[n] as in 'nap' [næp]

[ŋ] like [n], but with the tip of the tongue retroflexed

[ŋ̪] as in 'hang' [hŋ̪]

[l] as in 'led' [led]

[l̪] like [l], but with the tip of the tongue retroflexed

[ɫ] as in 'table' [teɪbɫ]

[ɹ] as in 'red' [ɹed]

[ɹ̪] like [ɹ], but with the tip of the tongue retroflexed

[r] like [ɹ], but with the tongue tip tapping once against the teeth ridge (sometimes used in English 'very')



[j] as in 'yet' [jet]
 [w] as in 'wet' [wet]
 [tʃ] as in 'chin' [tʃIn]
 [dʒ] as in 'gin' [dʒIn]

Conversational features

[overlapping turns
=	two utterances closely connected without a noticeable overlap, or different parts of a single speaker's turn
(.)	pause of less than one second
(1.5)	approximate length of pause in seconds
l.	lenis (quiet) enunciation
f.	fortis (loud) enunciation
CAPITALS	fortis (loud enunciation)
(())	'stage directions'
()	speech inaudible
(text)	speech hard to discern, analyst guess
Bold	instance of crossing of central interest in discussion

Informant backgrounds

The ethnic background of informants is indicated as follows:

AC = Afro-Caribbean
 An = white Anglo
 Ba = Bangladeshi
 In = Indian
 Pa = Pakistani

(Classifying informants in terms of ethnic background raises some of the problems discussed in chapter 1.2. The use of classifications such as these is discussed in chapter 1, note 3.)

F = Female
 M = Male



For

Amelia

Joan and Tony





Preface to the Second Edition

Cultural Politics, Language and Linguistics

Looking back, there are two closely related preoccupations underpinning this book. First, there is a concern for the part that language can play in everyday cultural politics, and this is obvious in the book's concentration on young people destabilizing ethnic identity as it is most often conceptualized in public and policy discourse, through the use speech varieties normally associated with other people. Second, there is unease with the idea that (socio-)linguistic analysis can end its task with the specification of community conventions, and this should be apparent both in the emphasis on these adolescents' active, ongoing (re-)negotiation of ethno-linguistic differences (evidenced in a proliferation of transcripts of improvised performance), and in the absence (I think/hope) of any suggestion that all these practices resolve themselves in the emergence of some stable, pan-ethnic speech style, of the kind that might be used to typify – or reify – language among local youth. I would like to amplify these points by trying to set them in a broader context.

Ethnic Absolutism and the 'Linguistics of Community'

Much of twentieth-century linguistics was dominated by the view (a) that language study is centrally concerned with regularity in grammar and coherence in discourse, and (b) that these properties derive from community membership, that people learn to talk grammatically and coherently from extensive early experience of living in families and fairly stable local social networks. Certainly, sociolinguistics long fought against the idea that language and society were homogeneous, but on encountering diversity and variation, its strongest instinct was to root out what it imagined to be the orderliness and uniformity beneath the surface, an orderliness laid down during early socialization.¹ Mary Louise Pratt characterized this as the 'linguistics of community', and noted that

[w]hen internal social division and hierarchy *are* studied, the linguist's choice is often to imagine separate speech communities with their own boundaries, sovereignty, fraternity and authenticity ... giv[ing] rise to a linguistics that seek to capture identity, but not the relationality of social differentiation. (1987:56, 59)

The 'linguistics of community' has been extremely influential in education policy,² and it is just one example of a much more general discourse



of 'ethnic absolutism', a term that Gilroy 1987 used to characterize the belief (1) that a person's ethnicity is fixed, if not at birth, then at least during their early home experience, and (2) that ethnicity is the most important aspect of a person's identity, with other social category memberships paling into insignificance beside it.³ The account in this book recognizes the salience of ethnicity for adolescents in the neighbourhood I studied, but provides fairly extensive testimony (i) to ethnic absolutism's inadequacy as a representation of these youngsters' lived experience, (ii) to the efforts they themselves often made to contest its ideological hold, and (iii) to the limits of a linguistics shaped in its shadow.

Contemporary Alternatives

Of course this book certainly isn't the first to attempt this. It obviously owes a very great deal to Hewitt's 1986 *White Talk Black Talk*, and from very early on, the work of Le Page and Tabouret-Keller served as a guiding counterweight to the 'linguistics of community'.⁴ More generally, the book falls in line with developments over the last 15 years outside linguistics in the humanities and social sciences,⁵ where instead of trying to define the core features of any social group or institution, there has been a flurry of interest in fragmentation, hybridity, indeterminacy and ambivalence, in boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, and in the flows of people, knowledge, texts, images and objects across social and geographical space. In sociology, for example, there is a widespread feeling that the image of society as a "compact, sealed [and systematic] totality" is rather uncomfortably based on an idealization of the nation-state (Bauman 1992:57), and that "the reality to be modelled is... much more fluid, heterogeneous and 'under-patterned' than anything that sociologists tried to grasp intellectually in the past" (ibid.:65). And inside sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, there are clear links, for example, to the recent growth of interest on 'language ideologies' and 'communities of practice'.

Historically, as Pratt suggests, 'speech community' has been conceptualized as an empirically identifiable 'real' thing, a body of people who interact regularly, who have attitudes or pragmatic rules in common, and who constitute the largest unit that one can generalize about in any given study.⁶ But during the 1990s, the concept split in two directions, making it much more sensitive to the 'relationality of social differentiation'. In one direction, both 'community' and 'language' are themselves treated as totalizing signs in research on language ideologies. Here, analysis focuses on the ideological role that notions like 'language' and 'community' play



in the social, political, and indeed academic, processes that constitute a spread of individuals as a distinct group, that link languages with peoples, that develop nation-states and expand and police empires.⁷ In the other direction, in work on communities of practice, there is intensified study of situated interaction in very specific institutional sites (workshops, classrooms, marriages etc), where people with different priorities, skills, and resources regularly come together in the pursuit of some activity, generating new conventions and a sense of community through the multi-modal, semiotic co-ordination that the activity entails.⁸

Neither of these revisions permits generalizations about ‘the Asian speech community’, or about ‘the language of youth in such-and-such a locality’. The language-ideologies perspective interrogates the stereotyping involved in claims of this kind, it asks where these claims are ‘coming from’ and where they fit in ongoing processes of political argument and policy formation, and it scrutinizes them for what they leave out, why and with what consequences. The communities-of-practice approach wants to know more about the social life of the language forms clustered under the label ‘Asian’, ‘youth’ or ‘such-and-such a locality’: under precisely what conditions are these forms produced, doing what, when, where, in relation to who else doing what in the vicinity, within what interactional and institutional histories? Indeed, these two newer approaches to ‘community’ do more than simply undermine sociolinguistic essentialism. Merging with a number of sociolinguistic perspectives which see communication as both political and locally situated,⁹ they invite us to return to the empirical field and to see how things look if we conceptualize communication as an intricate process of imposition, collusion and struggle in which people invoke, avoid or reconfigure the cultural and symbolic capital attendant on identities with different degrees of purchase and accessibility in specific situations. If we follow this up, then instead of studying how African Caribbeans, Asians and Anglos use language, either together or on their own, we need to look at the role that language plays when humans interact together in situations where (a) discourses of race and ethnicity have currency (impacting on the distribution of material and symbolic resources, circulating in local, national and global networks), where (b) they’re potentially relevant to the participants (classifying and rating them differently), where (c) the participants may want or happen to activate these associations, but where (d) they might also have other things on their minds, or have come to an understanding that neutralizes the personal impact that these discourses can have. That, anyway, is the angle adopted in this book.



Social Construction and its Methodological Implications

Common to these reconceptualizations of ‘community’, to my own perspective, and to a lot of important work in sociolinguistics, there is a belief that human reality is socially constructed – that it is more than just the product of forces that actors neither control nor comprehend, and that instead, it is extensively reproduced *and created anew* in the socially and historically specific activities of everyday life.¹⁰

The conventional side of human activity is extremely far-reaching, and our structured expectations about the ways in which phenomena should pattern together are closely tied to the intelligibility of speech, to the organization of physical space, to our sense the relationship between social groups, and to a great deal else. All this needs to be described very carefully: it is here that we can find the processes of domination that are taken-for-granted as an ordinary part of everyday life, and if the analysis of structure is only cursory, it trivializes the constraints and limitations in which people endeavour to produce their lives.¹¹

But equally, if we are serious about the creative side of social life, there are major methodological implications, as Varenne and McDermott (1998:177) make quite clear:

‘construction’ as a concept intended to highlight the centrality of practical activity by concrete individuals is too central to be used imprecisely. It is not easy to capture people in the real time of their practice. When we perform practical research tasks ..., apparently paradoxical things happen as we notice how actors are both continually sensitive to matter they cannot be said to have constructed [i.e. sensitive to convention] and also slightly ‘off’ the most conventional version of what they could have been expected to do ... [W]hat subjects construct in the real time of their activity can never be said to be what it would be easiest to say it is. What subjects construct may never be any particular thing that any audience may label it to be. We, as analysts, must always take the position that it is something more, something other, something that cannot be named without replacing it within the very frame the act attempted to escape. (See also Williams 1977)¹²

People have the capacity to act unconventionally, and so researchers should expect to have to struggle to make sense of what their subjects are doing. In contrast, if the process of analysis is rapid, tidy and definitive, then it inevitably favours the conventional aspects of human conduct, ignoring the distinctiveness and the creative agency in what’s been said or done.



And since agency and the capacity to break with dominant discourses and conventional structures are central to cultural politics, quick-and-neat analysis can be seen as a form of intellectual imperialism, promoting whatever ‘parsing’ framework the analyst prefers above the participants’ own alertness to the matrix of constraints and possibilities problematically on-hand in any activity being investigated.¹³ In this regard, analysts need to be particularly careful with linguistics, since as many scholars have noted (e.g. Volosinov 1973:45-63; Garfinkel 1967:70; Williams 1977:21-44), it has often been prone to neglect creative improvisation. Linguistics certainly provides a marvellous technical vocabulary for the description of structure in communicative practice, but it needs to be disciplined by a carefully formulated recognition of the tension between creativity and convention central to human activity. Such recognition isn’t actually very hard to find, and there are valuable formulations in, to name but a few: the micro-ethnography of McDermott and his collaborators, where the political implications are made particularly clear (e.g. McDermott and Gospodinoff 1981; McDermott and Tylbor 1983, McDermott 1988); in Bakhtin’s ‘translinguistics’, with its emphasis on unfinished dialogism (Bakhtin 1984, 1986; Volosinov 1973; Todorov 1984); in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, with their orientation to ‘artful practices’, ‘another first time’ and what Silverman calls the ‘aesthetic of slowness and smallness’ (Heritage 1984:122-3; Garfinkel 1967; Silverman 1999); or in the ‘modern philology’ articulated by Becker (1995) and Johnstone (1997), with its sensitivity to individuality and ‘linguistic newness’.¹⁴ But whatever perspective one adopts, a regard for the interplay of convention and creativity has consequences for the process of analysis, and I would like to comment on the way it worked for this book.

***Convention, Creativity, the Analytic Processes in this Book,
and their Place in Social Science***

A lot of ethnography starts with a sense of unease about prevailing discourses, and with the observation of a disparity between the claims that these discourses make about social life, and what you can see in social life as it actually seems to happen. Hymes calls this a ‘contrastive insight’ (1980:90), and in my case, there was a striking gap between the way that youngsters in multi-ethnic peer groups were supposed to use their ethnic languages, and the language mixing and crossing that I could hear around me.¹⁵ Among other things, Hewitt’s work fortified my sense of the significance of this insight (Gilroy came later), and once I’d done the fieldwork (supported by funding I’d gained with Hewitt’s assistance), I consolidated



my initial bearings through a content analysis of my interview data.¹⁶

It was after that that I started on the slow process of interactional data analysis. I began with a broad transcription of all the sequences where I could identify youngsters crossing into Panjabi, Creole and stylized Asian English, and I first classified these in the relatively general terms provided by the ethnography of speaking (participants, activities, speech forms and functions, topics, key etc – see Hymes 1972). This allowed me to sort the episodes into the three broad categories represented in the central sections of the book – interaction with adults, interaction with peers, and performance art – and I could then start to formulate arguments about the ways in which each of the varieties were used in these settings. It was at that point that the analysis of interactional sequences became much more intense. Once I had a (not too) specific issue in mind – ‘resistance in Asian English’, for example, or ‘jocular abuse in Panjabi’ – I’d identify potentially relevant transcripts, work in more transcriptional detail, and then try to ‘inhabit’ each of them, putting my sense of a developing argument to one side, taking instead a slow, close look at the moment-by-moment unfolding of each episode. I had a rule that I would never put pen to paper about a conceptual link between one fragment and another, or incorporate an extract into a prose commentary or argument, until I had spent at least one hour on it. Almost invariably, the hour turned into two or four, and sometimes days not hours, and even though I might sometimes find myself sitting for ten minutes wondering what on earth else I could say to fill up the time, when I did eventually finish on a sequence, the propositions and ideas I’d started out usually looked either crude or just plain wrong. Instead, I now had a reasonable idea of which aspects of the interaction I really could start to make plausible claims about, as well as a much sharper sense of the dimensions that I either couldn’t understand¹⁷ or couldn’t properly comment on (even though they seemed intriguing).¹⁸

Of course, much more could be said about method and ‘bottom-up’ theory development in this kind of study,¹⁹ but what’s the significance for the tension between creativity and convention?

At a very gross level, the whole book is about ‘creativity’. It describes young people transgressing the conventional equation of language and ethnicity prescribed for them in ethnic absolutism, it’s relevant to wider public discussion about new ethnicities and cultural hybridity, and it would be quite easy to cite as evidence of cultural innovation in globalized urban spaces. But if *only* taken at this very general level (as “crossing = new ethnicities and cultural hybridity”), this could amount in the first instance to little more than a ‘new exoticism’²⁰ (“oh look, now urban ethnics/young-



sters are all using each others' languages"), and, second, it would actually reveal very little of what crossing could really *mean*. In contrast, dwelling on transcripts of interaction in particular activities, you soon realize that local, institutional, activity- and discourse-specific identities²¹ may be a lot more compelling for the participants than their Anglo, Pakistani or African Caribbean family backgrounds, and that when ethnicity does become an issue, this happens in all sorts of different ways – deconstructive, respectful, and racist, some quite spectacular and others hardly noticed. What you've got are people interacting together in activities that are often very humdrum, and the reader is eventually presented with a range of quite vivid transcripts where they can see specific individuals playing, arguing and hanging around together, chatting to friends and associates about people they know, about recent events, about food, music, school and so forth. It is only in the context of ordinary activity like this that issues of ethnic (or other kinds of) identity move in and out of salience, and this tends to act against the fetishization of ethnicity (or gender, or age) that is often hard to avoid in other modes of research presentation.

Methodologically, then, interactional micro-analysis can provide quite significant constraints on the exoticising tendencies in cultural description. It can also serve as a useful counter-weight to totalizing over-generalization. Its aim is to track participants' sense making procedures in the moment-by-moment unfolding of a situation, right up to the point where participants "have a grasp, if only tacit, of the specific contextual moments in which they should act and of how various possible courses of action will fulfil or disappoint the constitutive expectancies attached to those moments" (Heritage 1987:244). In doing so, it offers a validity check on notions like 'contradiction', 'liminality' and 'ambivalence', which in more macro studies sometimes seem more like analyst attributions than participant experiences. Alternatively, because one is usually working with dozens (even hundreds) of examples, "small facts continually get in the way of large issues",²² and it's obvious that there are lots of different things going on with, say, a set of acts that one might broadly call 'resistance',²³ and that there are clear limits to how far you can use 'carnavalesque' to characterize a particular kind of practice.²⁴ Within any single episode, there is usually a lot of data on the context, and so if you're interested in political analysis, you can look at a particular act as a micro-political intervention in specific social relations there-and-then. Indeed, when quite a large number of transcripts are grouped together for their relevance to discourses of, for example, ethnic absolutism, analysis of this kind enables us both to address hegemony "as a saturation of the whole process of living",²⁵ and to explore the varied and complicated workings-through that Williams



associates with creative, counter-hegemonic practice – “the long and difficult remaking of an inherited (determined) practical consciousness: a process often described as development but in practice a struggle at the roots of the mind – not casting off an ideology, or learning phrases about it, but confronting a hegemony in the fibres of the self and in the hard practical substance of effective and continuing relationships” (Williams 1977:212).²⁶

I certainly don't hold to the view that this kind of micro-analysis should take precedence over all other types of research on culture and society, and that “before one tries to address distributional, institutional and social structural problems... [it is essential that] we have described how the phenomenon on hand is locally produced” (Silverman 1999:407-8). If sociologists and others really did hold back till the work of detailed interaction analysis was concluded, nobody would have any idea of what distributional, institutional and social structural problems such findings might actually clarify.²⁷ Gumperz is right to insist that interactional “sociolinguistic analysis can yield new insights into the workings of social process... and [contribute] to general theories of social interaction and evolution” (1982:7), and for this to happen, nose-to-data discourse analysts need to accept it if other people pick out some micro-analytic finding, shave off a lot of its nuanced particularity, and then recontextualize in more abstract and/or general arguments. Better still, we should do this ourselves.²⁸ Even so, it should be no cause for regret if, in our attempts to combine broader relevance with as much faithfulness to our findings as we can manage, our summaries end up looking rather baggy, lacking in eye-catching elegance. Empirical processes more or less like the ones described in this book are very general,²⁹ and they are likely to arouse comment and interest in a wide range of arenas for some time to come. It is important that beneath the headlines and beyond the attention to spectacular cases, there's some documentation of the intricacy, distribution and significance of these processes in ordinary lives.

A Second Edition

For space reasons in the 1995 version of this book, I cut out some description of the town and neighbourhood where the research was cited, and I have now reinstated these in chapter 1.7, giving a slightly fuller picture of the historical background and the material inequalities attendant on it. Elsewhere, the text is unchanged.

The term ‘crossing’ has gained some currency in sociolinguistics,³⁰ and I do think that it was a timely addition to the notion of ‘code-switch-



ing', reminding us that many people alternate between more than just their national standard language(s) and the home vernacular, and that they also use varieties associated with ethnic outgroups, not just in mockery. More than that, it's useful to have a term that points so clearly to the empirical inadequacy of the 'linguistics of community'. But I don't think I would want to fight over it. Speech practices in multilingual discourse are always hard to classify; terminology in research on bilingualism is famously unstable; and like most constructs in ethnography, 'crossing' is much more of a 'sensitizing concept' than a 'definitive' one, suggesting 'directions along which to look' rather than 'prescriptions of what to see' (Blumer 1969:148). For a larger theoretical home, I would continue to link it to Bakhtin's account of double-voicing,³¹ and although I don't think it's fatal for my analysis,³² I am aware that as a summary term, 'crossing' isn't particularly apt for the use of Asian English by kids with South Asian backgrounds, where the relationship between language and user was often more intimate than it was with crossing into Creole and Panjabi.³³

But otherwise, the account still seems to me to be reasonably coherent, and I am very pleased that Jan Blommaert, Chris Bulcaen and St Jerome Press felt that it is worth keeping in print.

Notes:

1. This instinct can be seen, for example, in the variationist's quest for the vernacular; it has led code-switching researchers to look for *conventional* syntactic and pragmatic patterns in the mixed speech of relatively well-established ingroups; and when sociolinguists have looked at intercultural contact, there has been a strong tendency to emphasize the integrity of tradition *inside* particular social groupings, the concern being that 'sociolinguistic interference' is likely to occur in cross-cultural encounters where people with very different backgrounds interact.
2. See chapter 13 below. Also Rampton *et al.* 1997:228; Leung *et al.* 1997; Harris *et al.* 2001:30-3; Rampton *et al.* 2002: Section 4.
3. See also chapter 1 below.
4. See e.g. Le Page 1980, 1988 and Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985; also Hudson 1980.
5. Rampton 2001c.
6. For a review of the notion of speech communities that also discusses language ideologies and communities of practice, see Rampton 1998a.
7. Joseph and Taylor 1990; Kroskrity, Schieffelin and Woolard 1992; Pennycook 1994; Gal and Irvine 1995; Blommaert 1999; Gal and Woolard 2001; also e.g. Fishman 1972; Robins 1979:Chs 6 and 7; Anderson 1983.
8. See e.g. Eckert and McGonnell-Ginet 1992; Lave and Wenger 1991; Holmes (ed.) 1999; O'Connor 2003.



9. See e.g. Hymes 1980, Gumperz 1982, 1986.
10. See chapter 1.4 below.
11. This is a criticism that can be levelled at the work of Le Page and Tabouret-Keller. They use the phrase ‘acts of identity’ to describe their theory of language, but they don’t situate these ‘acts’ in any analysis of interactional structure (as provided, for example, by conversation analysis). For some repair to this problem, see Sebba 1993.
12. Raymond Williams takes a broadly comparable position in his criticism of reification in cultural analysis:

In most description and analysis, culture and society are expressed in an habitual past tense. The strongest barrier to the recognition of human cultural activity is this immediate and regular conversion of experience into finished products. What is defensible as a procedure in conscious history, where on certain assumptions many actions can be definitively taken as having ended, is habitually projected, not only into the always moving substance of the past, but into contemporary life, in which relationships, institutions and formations in which we are still actively involved are converted, by this procedural mode, into formed wholes rather than forming and formative processes. Analysis is then centred on relations between these produced institutions, formations, and experiences, so that now... only the fixed explicit forms exist, and living presence is always, by definition, receding ... [I]t is the reduction of the social to fixed forms that remains the basic error. Marx often said this, and some Marxists quote him, in fixed ways, before returning to fixed forms. (1977:128)

13. These parsing frameworks can be very varied in their political colour, and inattentiveness to the situated particularity of action is sometimes found, for example, in leftist critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1989; for discussion, see Blommaert and Bulcaen 2000; Blommaert 2001; Verschueren 2001. See also the note above).
14. Johnstone describes her approach to discourse analysis in the following terms: “Discourse analysis is well suited ... for uncovering linguistic newness. Like ethnography, it is a science in the ‘cases-and-interpretations’ mode, rather than a science of the ‘rules-and-instances’ sort” (Geertz 1980:165). Discourse analysts’ goal is to understand their data, rather than to prove or disprove preformulated hypotheses or to create general predictive models. Discourse analysts in the philological mode are not bound by their theoretical goals to notice only what they already think might be there, or only what fits into a list of items they are looking for, or only what can be generalized about. One’s text or texts, rather than one’s theory, tends to be the source of discipline” (Johnstone 1997:24).



15. There are more detailed accounts of my research trajectory in Rampton 1992 and 2002.
16. See chapter 2 below.
17. If you are working on a corpus of interactions (or doing participant observation), your understanding of other episodes is sometimes – and of course within limits – a valuable resource here.
18. This book certainly isn't an extended piece of conversation analysis: it's concerned with the meanings of talk rather its formal 'machinery' (Moerman 1988), and I might not have got on to the issues that interest me if my analysis had observed the rules of evidence and validity criteria that govern the formulation of claims deemed publishable in CA. But as a discovery procedure, I have always been very impressed by the slow, close, 'unmotivated observation' institutionalized in the preliminary phases of CA (Sacks 1984:27; Schegloff 1999:577-8; Ten Have 1999:102-4; also e.g. Volosinov 1973:45), and for part of the time that I was writing the book, I attended an undergraduate course of data-sessions run by Paul Drew.
19. I find Erickson 1986 an extremely good account of research methodology in ethnographic and interactional discourse analysis, and even though the realities never quite match up to the prescriptions, it comes quite close to the process of analysis as I've experienced it (Rampton 2001c:286-7).
20. Roxy Harris (personal communication).
21. Neighbour, pupil, trouble-maker, goalkeeper, card-dealer, joke-teller, bore etc. etc. – see e.g. Zimmerman 1998 on 'transportable', 'situated' and 'discourse' identities.
22. Hannerz 1987:556.
23. See chapter 5.8 below.
24. See chapter 12.4 below.
25. Williams 1977:110.
26. See Rampton 2003.
27. There are also obviously a lot of ethnographers and cultural analysis with extremely sensitive ears and eyes for interactional detail, and so it would be equally wrong to suggest that sensitivity to the fine grain of cultural activity was the monopoly of (or even universal among) paid-up micro-analysts.
28. In this book and elsewhere, I've tried to connect bits of micro-analytic data to more broadly based discussions of resistance, liminality, creolization, critique and class hegemony (e.g. Rampton 1999, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, Harris and Rampton 2002).
29. In the last few years, there have been a number of language-focused studies (of both face-to-face and mediated communication) that are relevant to the issues addressed in this book. For example: Back 1995 and Sebba 2003 in the UK; Urla 1995 and Pujolar 2001 in Spain; Androutsopoulos 2001 and Auer and Dirim 2003 in Germany; Doran 2004 in France; Bell

1999 in New Zealand; Bucholtz 1999, Cutler 1999, Hill 1995, 1999, Johnstone 1999, Lo 1999, Bailey 2000, Sweetland 2002, Ibrahim 2003 and Clark 2003 in North America. Some of these are collected in Rampton (ed.) 1999, and Harris and Rampton (eds.) 2003.

30. e.g. Duranti (ed.) 2001.
31. See also Rampton 1998b.
32. The stylization of Asian English is quite comfortably accommodated within Bakhtin.
33. See Johnstone 1999:506, 514. By the same time token, I think that there is probably much more to be said about indexical meaning in the stylizations of Asian English than I manage in this book. In fact, of the three main varieties addressed here, the treatment of SAE now seems to me the least adequate.

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Part I

Introductory







1. Introduction

Language, Ethnicity and Youth in Late Industrial Britain

During a game of badminton:

Chris ((to Peter)): what you doing
Peter: PLAYING BADMINTON (.)
Chris: could have fooled me
Rich.: go on you ser|ve
Peter: ((in Indian English)): **ONE NIL**
Imran: love- love one
(adapted from Extract III.8)

During detention:

Ms J: I'll be back in a second with my lunch
Asif: NO dat's sad man (.) I had to miss my play
right I've gotta go
(2.5)
((Ms J must now have left the room))
Asif ((Creole influenced)): **ll:unch** (.) you don't need no lunch **not'n grow**
anyway ((laughs))
Alan: ((laughs))
Asif: have you eat your lunch Alan
(adapted from Extract II.17)

Listening to Panjabi music during breaktime:

Sally ((calling out)): OH LORRAINE
EH LORRAINE HAS IT GOT **KENOO**
MINOO ON it
?: you want the other side
AnonA: it's got ((singing)) **holle holle**
Sally ((sings)): **o kennoo mennoo** I love-
Gurmit: oh that
(adapted from Extract IV.5)

Concentrating on exchanges such as these, this book studies socio-linguistic processes in multiracial urban youth culture. It draws on



ethnographic research into adolescent friendship groups in one neighbourhood in the South Midlands of England, and it focuses on ‘language crossing’ – the use of Panjabi by youngsters of Anglo and Afro-Caribbean descent, the use of Creole by Anglos and Panjabis, and the use of stylized Indian English by all three. Although linguistic interchange of this kind has been very little researched, it plays an important role in the negotiation of social identity, and serves as a rich point of entry for analysis of the connections between language, ethnic relations, youth culture and the experience of social change.

Due to the diversity of their ethnic backgrounds, the adolescents in this study differed a good deal in their knowledge of neighbourhood languages. In addition, Panjabi, Creole and Indian English had each been the subject of considerable controversy in race politics. But running contrary to potentially divisive pressures such as these, adolescents often seemed to renegotiate the relationship between language and group membership in the course of spontaneous multiracial recreation. How far, and in what ways, were intricate processes of language sharing and exchange turning the resources originally associated with separate ethnic inheritances towards the enunciation of interethnic youth, class and neighbourhood community?

It can be very difficult to obtain accurate reports of these delicate processes, or to simulate them outside the context of spontaneous peer group interaction. But they can be investigated using the methodologies of ethnographic sociolinguistics (Hymes 1972a,b; Gumperz 1982a), combining close attention to the situations, activities and social relationships that promote language crossing, with detailed analysis of the spontaneous discourse in which it occurs.

1.1 Starting points in sociolinguistics and sociology

In a variety of ways, Roger Hewitt’s book *White Talk, Black Talk* (1986) acts as a central point of departure. Looking closely at adolescent social life in playgrounds, streets and youth clubs in South London, Hewitt provides an ethnographic description of the different ways in which white adolescents developed the use of English-based Caribbean Creole in their interactions with white and black peers. In principle, young people of Caribbean descent were generally opposed to what they regarded as an unjustifiable expropriation of one of the vital resources of their ethnic inheritance, and Hewitt explains this opposition in terms of Creole’s



major symbolic role in the political struggle against race oppression, locally, nationally and indeed internationally as well. Despite this however, certain minimal uses of Creole by whites were quite widely acceptable to black adolescents, and within the relative privacy of interracial friendship, some white youngsters actually used Creole quite extensively. In describing the delicate processes through which these adolescents managed to gain access to Creole, Hewitt provides a detailed view of the ways in which adolescents provisionally renegotiated the political significance that wider patterns of race stratification had for them.

For sociolinguistics, Hewitt's study is significant both in its sustained attention to the politics of interactional language use, and in its comprehensive description of a type of linguistic practice that has received very little attention in the literature. But it is also important as a sociological contribution to the study of race and youth.

Over the last 20 years in Britain, the social relations of young people of different ethnic backgrounds have been researched from a number of perspectives. The links between race, peer relations and school have been studied quite extensively in education, psychology, and social psychology,¹ but within these disciplines the emerging descriptions have frequently been limited by at least three factors. Firstly, because the importance of ethnic group membership usually varies a great deal from one interactional situation to another, there are problems of validity for methods built around a fairly brief encounter between researcher and informant (e.g. sociometry and attitude testing). Secondly, adolescents (and indeed adults) often express their group identifications in inexplicit, non-propositional ways, for example through style, activity and accent, and so some of the most important ethnic processes can be missed in studies that rely on the answers given in questionnaires and interviews (Willis 1977:122; Hewitt 1986: 7-8). Thirdly, research in these traditions is usually very limited in what it can say about the ways in which adolescents actually negotiate ethnic difference in interaction with one another (cf Tomlinson 1983:126; Milner 1983:125; Hewitt 1986:2).

During the 1970s and early 80s there were also a number of ethnographic studies of school and peer group culture which attended to ethnicity (e.g. Pearson 1976; J.Taylor 1976; Robins and Cohen 1978; Troyna 1978; Pryce 1979; Kitwood and Borrill 1980; Wright 1984). These generally presented a fuller picture of the youth cultural milieu influencing group relations, but they were overwhelmingly concerned with providing a description of particular ethnic groups: what actually happened in the arena of intergroup contact was seldom empirically addressed.



It is only more recently that a number of studies of youth have centred their attention on cross-ethnic interaction itself, and have located this within a broader context of political and economic relations (Gilroy 1987; Gilroy and Lawrence 1988; Jones 1988; Back 1993). Hewitt's research comes as a front runner among these more recent studies, and it is unique in its demonstration of the central role that language plays in adolescent negotiations of race and ethnic difference.

In the chapters that follow, I shall frequently refer back to Hewitt's research. My own work includes analyses of Creole use among adolescents of non-Caribbean descent, it attends to roughly the same historical period, and in a number of respects, fieldwork methods directly replicated Hewitt's. As with other forms of ethnography, critics often accuse linguistic ethnography of a-theoretical butterfly-collecting – “descriptive fieldwork... at the expense of comparative analysis” (Philipsen and Carbaugh 1986:387; Fasold 1990:60-62; also Hammersley 1987, 1992). Taking note of this, my own study attempts to contribute to a properly cumulative, comparative ethnography of communication (Hymes 1980), and in part, it is through cross-reference to the South London research that I try to do so. But in addition, theoretical aspirations are also assisted by the availability of other, more exclusively sociological studies of the socio-cultural terrain that Hewitt describes, and among these, Paul Gilroy's book *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (1987) is especially helpful.

Gilroy's book is a detailed cultural history of ethnic relations in Britain from the 1970s to the mid 80s, focusing on dominant mass media discourses, municipal anti-racist campaigns, anti-racist popular movements, and expressive youth culture. These analyses are set in a framework of sociological theory that is much more explicit than Hewitt's, and because (a) it provides an important cultural and political map of contemporary Britain, and because (b) I shall draw on several of its key notions quite frequently, it is worth taking a little time to summarize some of its central arguments.

1.2 Competing grounds for political solidarity

Gilroy pays particular attention to the relationship between race and class: he recognizes that the unequal social and material relationships generated around work are important, but rejects any idea that these have an exclusive role in social structuring. Workplace relations and the conflict between capital and labour are no longer central in the subjective experience of inequality: less than 30% of the UK workforce is now engaged in manufacturing; there is mass unemployment and substantial regional inequality;



race solidarity often cross-cuts formal economic divisions; feminist analyses reveal major structural inequalities at home. In view of the many kinds of discrimination that exist outside the workplace, it is no longer possible to regard class alone as an adequate basis for political organization:

What is the working class today? What gender is it? What colour is it? How in the light of its obvious segmentation, is it to be unified? Is this unification still possible or even desirable?... The complex experiential chemistry of class, 'race' and gender... yields an important reminder of the limitations of analysis based exclusively on a narrow conception of class. (1987:19)

Gilroy offers no definitive answer to the questions he poses. But he does provide a detailed account of the way in which different kinds of solidarity compete to replace class as central points for political affiliation. For my research, two are particularly important.

One strand can be found in the discourses of nation that feature in formal politics and the mass media. Here with increasing force, an ethnically exclusive idea of British culture and nationhood is put forward as a central basis for political solidarity. With the late industrial crisis in the political representation of the working class movement, people in subordinate material and economic positions are increasingly invited to conceptualize their political situation in terms of nation and ethnicity. Discourses about nation are involved in some of the most obvious forms of racism. But at the same time, there is also a shift away from crude efforts to define nationhood in terms of biological race, towards a view of nationhood in terms of 'culture' and 'way of life'.

This shift accommodates more subtle forms of racism and it finds expression in more respectable political circles. When nationality is understood as 'culture' rather than as biological descent, the boundaries around national belonging become more permeable, there is some scope for assimilation, and there is no longer such an obvious contradiction of the fundamental liberal view that people should be judged by their conduct rather than by their birth. Even so, this new approach continues to have much the same kind of impact as discourses which invoke biological definitions of 'race'. This is because it is grounded in a narrow interpretation of 'culture'. 'Cultures' are seen as a set of discrete, homogeneous and fairly static ethnic essences, and these ethnic essences are regarded as serving as the central influence in shaping a person's character. Gilroy calls this perspective 'ethnic absolutism' (ibid.:chapter 2). It gives to ethnicity an exclusive emphasis which hides all the other social categories which individuals belong to (categories defined in terms of age, gender,



sexual orientation, residence, occupation, interests, style, activity, role etc. etc.). It obscures the fact that individuals form complicated and often contradictory patterns of solidarity and opposition across a *range* of category memberships. And the emphasis on one aspect of identity to the exclusion of all others permits the straightforward division of people into simple dichotomous groups, a division supported by the spurious and idealized notion of unitary 'Britishness'. The possibility of conversion from non-British to British remains, but ethnic absolutism means that any activity showing the traces of non-British roots can be read for signs of disloyalty rather than, for example, as an effort to articulate complex experience in a way that might make sense of life in Britain for a highly heterogeneous population.² Gilroy argues that in concrete terms, from about 1976, one of the effects of this discursive shift towards a culturalist definition of Britishness has been to draw black cultural and recreational institutions (for example clubs and social events) into sharp public focus, casting them as the alien catalysts of social disruption in British life. These have become the target for heavy police surveillance, as well as a primary site of political confrontation (ibid.:Ch. 3).

This, then, has been one influential and reactionary effort to generate new forms of late industrial solidarity – it makes itself very evident in the press and public media, it is 'ethnically absolutist', equating nation with culture and then culture with ethnicity, and it has coordinated with increased state surveillance of black recreational institutions. Differing from this in almost every respect, Gilroy then draws attention to the political sensibilities emerging from within mixed communities in inner city areas. He suggests that as a potential point of orientation in the organization of (radical) collective action, experiences of multiracial urban community actually compete with discourses of 'Britishness', and in an attempt to define the character of this kind of alternative political solidarity, he draws on the theory of 'new social movements' (Gilroy 1987:Ch. 6; Melucci 1980, 1981, 1985, 1988; Touraine 1981, 1985).

Gilroy's analysis of urban communities as social movements is more tentative than his analysis of the dominant race and nation discourses, and he also suggests that a more robust radical politics can be identified in black music and the modes of consumption most closely associated with it (1987:Ch. 5). Nevertheless, there is a great deal of relevance for my own work in the way in which Gilroy discusses social movements.

A social movement – for example, the women's or the peace movement – is neither simply a pressure group, nor is it a "peripheral phenomenon of deviation or outright conflict" (Touraine 1981:94). Far from being "exceptional or dramatic events, social movements lie permanently at the heart of social life" (ibid.:29), and this is reflected in Gilroy's



phrase ‘interpretive community’. Seen as interpretive communities, social movements

are not ready-made agents for structural change, but rather “symptoms of resistance to domination”. They have their roots in a radical sense of powerlessness and though their resistance may have important effects on cities and societies, they are best understood as defensive organizations which are unlikely to be able to make the transition to more stable forms of politics (Gilroy 1987:231).

Social movements are ensembles of causes, and rather than seeking to conquer political power or state apparatuses, their objective is “the control of a field of autonomy or independence vis a vis the system” (ibid.:226).

Their goals involve the transformation of new modes of subordination located outside the immediate processes of production and consequently require the reappropriation of space, time, and of relationships between individuals in their day to day lives... “The defense of identity, continuity and predictability of personal experience is beginning to constitute the substance of new conflicts” (Melucci 1980) ... advanced capitalism has developed a “capacity for intervention and transformation which extends beyond the natural environment and exerts an influence on social systems, on interpersonal relations and on the very structure of the individual” (Melucci 1980:218) (Gilroy 1987:224,225).

Political action usually focuses on the immediate conditions in which exploitation and domination are experienced, and in this context, face to face interaction becomes a potentially important arena for action and analysis. In fact, with its connotations of mass political mobilization, the term ‘social movement’ can be a little misleading. To bring out the importance of relatively small-scale local processes, Melucci suggests the phrase ‘movement networks’ to describe the most common situation:

The normal situation of today’s ‘movement’ is a network of small groups submerged in everyday life which require a personal involvement in experiencing and practicing cultural innovation. They emerge only on specific issues, as for instance the big mobilizations for peace, for abortion, against nuclear policy... [But for much of the time, movements are ‘latent’.] Latency allows people to experience directly new cultural models – changes in the system of meanings – which are very often opposed to the dominant social codes: the meaning of sexual differences, time and space, relationship to nature, to the body and so on. Latency creates new cultural codes and makes individuals practice them... [Movements leave latency and become visible w]hen small



groups emerge to confront a political authority on a specific issue, ... demonstrat[ing] opposition to the logic underlying decision making with regard to public policy. (Melucci 1985:800-801)

In Gilroy's analysis, the symbolic repertoire of black expressive culture plays a central role articulating opposition to 'dominant social codes', and more generally, urban social movements are often unified by the rituals and symbols associated with community, where it is the 'multi-acculturality' and 'malleability' of such symbols that constitutes their value:

The idea of a social movement as an interpretive community should not lead to an undifferentiated monadic view of the group from which it wins support. Sharing a common body of symbols created around notions of 'race', ethnicity or locality, common history or identity does not dictate the sharing of the plural meanings which may become attached to those symbols and cluster around them. Community is as much about difference as it is about similarity... (1987:235)

It is clear, then, that as points of political orientation to replace the discourses of class, there is a sharp contradiction and a continuing conflict between an active sense of urban community on the one hand, and on the other, absolutist discourses of race and nation. Discourses of race and nation have their roots in constituencies remote from the experience of inner city life. They merge the inner city with images of crime, danger and alienation (ibid:Ch. 3), and in the representation of urban riots, they filter out the facts of white participation and instead talk only of black youth criminality. In contrast, an active sense of urban community is generated locally, and neighbourhood serves as symbolic resource articulating a diverse range of local interests. At local level, the ethnic absolutism and the culturalist definitions of nation disseminated through the mass media are experienced as a set of disabling racist images, which continually threaten to insert themselves into the interpersonal relations of everyday life (Gilroy 1987:234,235; Hewitt 1986:236; Jones 1988:177), and here, if anything, urban riots are regarded as major events reclaiming neighbourhood from the intrusion of a state surveillance which persistently transgresses the norms of decent conduct (Gilroy 1987:Chs 3 and 6).

A full treatment of absolutist discourses, social movements and the tension between them would require a much more comprehensive account of macro-social organization than I can provide in this study. Nevertheless, these concepts serve as important points of background orientation, and in much of what follows, I shall try to situate multiracial adolescent



language use in the terrain where these forms of solidarity conflict.

In fact Gilroy's analysis is compatible with sociolinguistics in other ways. It treats 'race' (and indeed 'class') as a socio-cultural construct, a contextually contingent interpretive device shaping a range of often conflicting actions at interpersonal, local and national levels (1987:17,27,38; cf e.g. Gumperz 1982a:99). And although language itself figures only occasionally, Gilroy's account provides a clear rationale for the political importance of linguistic and cultural phenomena. Where the economic relations of class are seen as the single most important axis of stratification, the political significance of culture has often been played down. This has happened, for example, within the sociology of youth subculture: "There is no 'subcultural career' for the working class lad, no 'solution' in the subcultural milieu for problems posed in the key structuring experiences of the class... Subcultures... 'solve', but in an imaginary way, problems which at the concrete material level remain unresolved" (J. Clarke *et al.* 1976:47-8). The same occurs in linguistics. In discussion of language and gender, Cameron notes:

a change in linguistic practice is not just a reflection of some more fundamental social change: it is, itself, a social change. Anti-feminists are fond of observing that eliminating generic masculine pronouns does not secure equal pay. Indeed it does not – whoever said it would? Eliminating generic masculine pronouns precisely eliminates generic masculine pronouns. And in so doing it changes the repertoire of social meanings and choices available to social actors. In the words of Trevor Pateman (1980:15), it "constitutes a restructuring of at least one aspect of one social relationship". (1990:90)

Though they're undoubtedly still important, politics involves more than economic class relations.

So, in their analyses of the complicated dialectic between race, class, language and multiracial community, Hewitt and Gilroy provide the most important initial bearings for the present study. In what ways can it claim to be distinctive? In due course, a number of differences will emerge, but two are particularly clear at the outset.

1.3 Distinctive concerns in the present study

One of the most significant differences between my work and the research of Hewitt, Gilroy and closely related authors lies in its attention to adolescents of South Asian descent. Although they sometimes make passing reference to young Asians, sociological discussions of interethnic youth



culture have been overwhelmingly concerned with the relationship between white and black.³ Furthermore, to date, sociological descriptions suggest that in some areas Asians are not only excluded from this multi-racial dynamic, but that they are also the object of shared black and white hostility (Cohen 1972:29; Hewitt 1986:195,216-8; Jones 1988:217-9; Back 1992:29; Centre for Multicultural Education 1992:37). In contrast, my own work was based in a neighbourhood where young Asians played a major role in multiracial youth culture, just at the time when a form of popular music with Panjabi roots was starting to achieve some national celebrity (bhangra). As a result, it is able to add an important corrective to the growing sociological literature on multiracial youth culture. In terms of sociolinguistic analysis, this also means that Hewitt's micropolitical analyses of Creole are extended to Panjabi and Indian English.⁴

I also give fuller attention to language education issues (though cf Gilroy and Lawrence 1988, and Hewitt 1989a). School corridors, dinner halls and playgrounds serve as settings in many of my empirical analyses; educational responses to cultural and linguistic diversity feature quite often in my interpretations of the significance of language crossing (especially in Part II); and as a whole, this study has implications for language policy discussion that are drawn out in Part V. Language education obviously involves far more than technical pedagogic issues, and over the last 30 years in Britain, language and race in education has been a major focus for conflict between central government, local government, educational professionals, parents, pupils and the 'general public' (each of these constituencies itself embracing a range of frequently conflicting positions). Questions about equality of opportunity, cultural pluralism, racism, social cohesion and social justice have featured as significantly as issues of teaching method in the discourse of language educationalists, and in race politics more generally, language in education has frequently been a central concern.⁵

In this debate, there has been a great deal of concern with the impact that different forms of linguistic provision are likely to have on interethnic relations among youth (e.g. DES 1985:Ch. 7; DES 1988:43; DES 1989: 10.12). But despite widespread sociolinguistic recognition of the peer group's role as a key socialising agency (Bernstein 1960, 1975; Hudson 1980; Romaine 1984), with the exception of Hewitt, there has been a dearth of ethnographic research into language and ethnic relations in pupil peer groups. In the fairly extensive British literature on young ethnic minority bilinguals and bidialectals,⁶ some research has focused on attitudes, relations and language use with agemates, but like many other British studies, these have entailed neither prolonged first-hand contact with informants



in the field, nor close analysis of the details of cross-ethnic adolescent interaction. A number of educational studies have used observational methods to describe peer group interaction in the classroom,⁷ and a few have also observed behaviour in the playground. But their perspective has been pedagogic rather than sociolinguistic or sociological. One of this book's aims is to make up for some of this deficiency, and to enable debate about language education to refer to a more firmly grounded base of research on multilingual peer group interaction (see also Rampton 1988, 1992).

With these sociolinguistic, sociological, and educational coordinates for my own research in place, it is now possible to formulate the central questions guiding it. These are, primarily,

- a) How do outgroup uses of Panjabi, Indian English and Creole relate to the shifting and contested relationship between race and class in late industrial Britain?
- b) How far and in what ways can language crossing practices be construed as a form of everyday cultural politics?

Also,

- c) What implications do they have for educational discussions that are often oblivious to the cultural activities of the youth that they target?

These questions also mean that in more purely sociolinguistic terms, I shall also be asking:

- d) What is language crossing? As a discursive strategy, how is it to be characterized? For the purposes of initial description, we can take it as the use of language varieties associated with social or ethnic groups that the speaker doesn't normally 'belong' to, but in due course, crossing will need to be systematically situated among other pragmatic phenomena.

To address these questions, it will be necessary to attend to several different levels of social organization, some micro and some macro. I shall briefly refer to these in the next section, and provide some general theoretical comment on the relationship between them.

1.4 Descriptive and theoretical concepts

Verbal interaction will be the central object of empirical attention in this study (from chapter 3 onwards). In the course of its examination, four



broad dimensions of linguistic and socio-cultural organization will be taken into consideration:

- i) *Language use*: the pragmatic and symbolic meanings of Creole, Panjabi and Indian English, particularly when these are used by people who neither have linguistic ‘ownership rights’, nor normally speak these languages.
- ii) *Interaction structures and processes*: the kinds of phenomena extensively explored by Ervin Goffman – different speech and listening roles, the ways in which participants arrange themselves, access one another and distribute their attention both in verbal and non-verbal conduct, and the concern with moral propriety which suffuses every gathering and interaction.⁸
- iii) *Institutional organization*: interpersonal networks; institutional domains; and activity types as “culturally recognized units of interaction that are identifiable by constraints on (a) goals, (b) roles activated in the activity, (c) interactional structure, and (to some extent) (d) participants and settings” (Brown and Fraser 1979:40).
- iv) *Participants’ knowledge specifically as this relates to ethnic groups*: people’s ideas and feelings about ethnic groups, their attributes, their positions in society, their prestige, their interrelationships, its legitimacy and so forth.

A fuller introductory discussion of these analytic dimensions is given in Appendix I. Here though, it is important to be explicit about my (fairly unremarkable) social constructionist assumptions about the relationships between knowledge and action that operate across these four descriptive levels. This will clarify some of the ways in which interpersonal conduct can be linked up with widespread social change. Social change is centrally at issue in the first and second of the guiding questions outlined in the previous section, and discussion of it will also lead into a few observations on the notion of ritual.

The assumption is that understanding and activity exist in a close dialectical relationship. People’s social evaluations and classifications are shaped through their experiences of interaction. Equally, in combination with inferencing, processes of classification play a crucial role in getting action to make sense. Classifications channel participation in further activity, and are themselves embodied, endorsed or reshaped as action develops. A person’s knowledge is idiosyncratic to quite an extent, but it generally becomes fairly extensively synchronized with other people’s through experiences in which participants coordinate the action to which



their cognitive and emotional understandings give shape (though this certainly doesn't mean that individuals agree with one another at every point: individuals can vary a great deal in their commitment to the provisional consensus established in an interaction, and more generally, network analysis serves as a valuable tool for tracing the breaks and continuities in the social distribution of these understandings).

In language, the dialectical relationship between knowledge and action is extensively recognized in functional and socio-linguistics (e.g. Halliday 1985), as indeed is idiosyncrasy (Hudson 1980:12; Le Page 1980:1-2). Though speech events have been most frequently described as objective practices, their cognitive representation is directly entailed in Hymes' notion of communicative competence (1972b) and it is foregrounded in Levinson's account of activity types as sets of 'inferential schemata' (1979). And though domains may summarize objective regularities of conduct, they only do so because people operate with them as socio-cognitive constructs that 'guide them through the infinite encounters of daily interaction' (Fishman 1972:51). Of course classifications and evaluations refer across a far larger array of entities than these, but the first point here is that both our knowledge and our interaction play an important role in continuously reproducing central features of what one can loosely call 'social structure'. Sapir puts it in the following terms:

It is obvious that for the building up of society, its units and subdivisions, and the understandings which prevail between its members, some processes of communication are needed. While we often speak of society as though it were a static structure defined by tradition, it is, in the more intimate sense, nothing of the kind, but a highly intricate network of partial or complete understandings between members of organizational units of every degree of size and complexity, ranging from a pair of lovers or a family to a league of nations or that ever increasing portion of humanity which can be reached by the press through all its transnational ramifications. It is only apparently a static sum of social institutions: actually it is being reanimated or creatively reaffirmed from day to day by particular acts of a communicative nature which obtain among individuals participating in it. (Sapir (1931) 1949:104; also e.g. Heritage 1984:Ch. 7)

The second point is that although there are obviously limits to what individual actors can achieve – as is often said, social reality may be a human product but it faces humans like a coercive force – there are implications in this for the ways in which interactional experience connects with social



change. This second point needs a little elaboration.

In making sense of the world around us, we rely quite extensively on the assumption that things generally run together in predictable clusters. Much of the time we operate with the expectation that particular sounds, words, objects, topics, ways of speaking, interaction structures, roles, situations etc. etc. combine with one another in predictable ways, and these expectations about likely concurrence relationships make it much easier for us to process the endless flux of sensory data in which we are immersed. Beyond that, these routinized expectations constitute much of our everyday, common sense knowledge of social reality.

Obviously, for a huge number of reasons (unfamiliarity, ignorance, rhetorical purpose, and so forth), people often encounter pieces of talk and action that fall outside the boundaries of what they normally expect, and they frequently cope with these without too much difficulty. Frequently, these contradictions and interruptions of normal expectancy are highly diverse, differing from encounter to encounter. But on occasion, customary assumptions about rather fundamental relationships between elements of the social world can be destabilized quite generally. This is what happens in the case of major social contestation. During such periods, conservative reaction often emphatically reaffirms the assumptions that have been dominant hitherto, but elsewhere, people find that they can no longer depend confidently on their routine presuppositions. In fact, it would be mistaken to suggest that this destabilization of tacit understandings stems only from larger outside forces. In their daily conduct and communication, individuals can themselves undermine taken-for-granted realities and try to establish new conventions and assumptions where old ones no longer seem tenable. Their success in achieving this will depend on a number of factors.

Bourdieu has broadly comparable processes in mind when he talks of 'heretical discourse'. But he stresses the complex collective political task involved in establishing alternative definitions of reality:

Heretical discourse must not only help to sever the adherence to the world of common sense by publicly proclaiming a break with the ordinary order, it must also produce a new common sense and integrate within it the previously tacit or repressed practices and experiences of an entire group, investing them with the legitimacy conferred by public expression and collective recognition. ((1981) 1990:129)

Alternative orders/conceptions of social reality need to be given enduring institutionalized status, and Bourdieu goes on to consider the way



these can be publicly sanctioned through symbolism, dramatization and ceremony.

This discussion about interpersonal and collective conduct affirming or disrupting taken-for-granted reality can be tied to Gilroy's account of dispute about the meaning of race and ethnicity. There is a *prima facie* case for suggesting that in contemporary Britain, race/ethnicity constitutes precisely one of those socio-cognitive categorizations on which interactional consensus can now no longer be assumed, and that it has become the site of intensive contestation, as different interests struggle to redefine its meaning.

In much of what follows, I shall use a broadly focussed discourse analysis (drawing on the four analytic dimensions outlined above) to consider the ways in which race and ethnicity are asserted, questioned and contested in daily adolescent language crossing. Taking up the cues provided by Gilroy and Bourdieu, I shall also pay particular attention to the *ritual* aspects of adolescent activity.

Prototypically, ritual can be defined as formulaic conduct that displays an orientation to issues of respect for social order and that emerges from some sense of the (actual or potential) problematicity of social relations. Typically, ritual gives a more prominent role to symbols than to propositional expression, it elicits a marked emotional response, it creates an increased feeling of collectivity between at least some of the participants, and it is itself subject to comment and sanctions. The empirical forms that ritual takes are in fact very varied. The considerable sociological and anthropological literatures on the topic make it clear that ritual action can be serious or playful, lengthy or fleeting; it can occur in large gatherings or two-person encounters; it can strengthen feelings of either similarity or difference; and its meanings are intricately tied to the particular symbols it employs. In fact, because of the many different forms in which it has been described, ritual recommends itself as a 'sensitizing' rather than as a 'definitive concept' for the present study, suggesting 'directions along which to look' rather than 'prescriptions of what to see' (Blumer 1969:148). In what follows, different aspects of ritual will be introduced stage by stage, closely tied to particular pieces of data.

Even so, it is worth taking a brief glance at ritual's potential relevance to the social field that is being sketched out here. Whether in religious ceremony, in greetings or apologies, ritual action is intricately associated with problematic moments in the flow of social life, occasions when habitual assumptions about common sense reality and normal social relations loosen their hold. For this reason alone, one might expect to find a lot of ritual activity in circumstances where fundamental socio-cognitive



categories have become the focus of uncertainty and dispute. But the value of ideas about ritual reaches further. In their analysis of initiation rites in agrarian society, anthropologists have often identified a central period of transition, and during this, initiands occupy neither their former nor their future statuses. This 'liminal' period *outside* normal social structure is invested with great risk and promise, and Victor Turner extends this concept to the kinds of activity that occur in contemporary urban recreation (1974). Appropriating this for analysis of the dynamics of race and ethnicity, we will be able to investigate actions which create, sustain, terminate or simply occupy these liminal periods outside dominant social structure. Focussing on moments such as these, it will be possible to examine adolescent attempts to escape, resist or affirm the racial orderings that threaten to dominate their everyday experience.

Perhaps it is also worth noting that ritual seldom figures in sociolinguistics textbooks, and that in the sociolinguistics of contemporary urban society, ritual is most generally understood either as routine (e.g. Coulmas 1981a) or as politeness (Brown and Levinson (1978)1987). While both of these may fall within its ambit, neither carries the concept as far as it can go: 'routine', for example, ignores ritual's creative potential, and 'politeness' neglects its role in subversion. In contrast, all of these aspects will feature in the discussions that ensue.

Leaving the issue of ritual temporarily to one side, this is an opportune moment to give a more precise description of this study's subdisciplinary position within sociolinguistics itself.

1.5 Siting within sociolinguistics

The most sustained effort to integrate all four of the descriptive dimensions that I shall attend to – language, interaction structures, institutional organization and knowledge about social groups – can be found in the tradition of 'interpretive' or 'interactional sociolinguistics' associated with John Gumperz (e.g. Gumperz 1982a; Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz 1982; Chick 1985; Cook-Gumperz 1986; Erickson and Shultz 1982). In fact there is interactional sociolinguistic work that examines communication between Anglos, Afro-Caribbeans and South Asians in contemporary Britain (e.g. Gumperz *et al.* 1979; Gumperz 1982a,b; Furnborough, *et al.* 1982; Roberts and Simonot 1987; Roberts *et al.* 1992). But though this study is a loosely comparable in its interest in the interaction of social identities with the micro-processes of talk, in many ways its empirical portrait of 'cross-cultural communication' contrasts very sharply with all



of these analyses. Interactional sociolinguistic studies of interethnic communication in Britain have been generally concerned:

- (i) with work place interactions involving adults, who
- (ii) have been brought up both inside and outside Britain, who
- (iii) are unfamiliar with one another, and who
- (iv) occupy different positions of institutional power.

The gist of these studies is to show how:

- (v) despite initial good will, hidden differences in participants' communicative resources disrupt
- (vi) straight discussion, generate negative social categorizations, and
- (vii) result in the reproduction of racism.

In contrast, my concern is:

- (a) with the recreational interaction of
- (b) British-born adolescents, who
- (c) know each other well, and
- (d) whose institutional positions are roughly similar.

These youngsters:

- (e) recognize and even exaggerate the differences in their communicative repertoires
- (f) in a set of stylized and often playful interactions that up to a point at least,
- (g) constitute a form of anti-racism.

The approach taken in previous studies has much to offer. They generally study sites where interactional discourse and institutional processes come together – interviews, advice sessions, committee meetings – and by analysing face-to-face processes that result in decisions that critically affect a person's access to knowledge or material resources, they have revealed dimensions of discrimination that have been unrecognized hitherto. They also contest legitimating official ideologies that blame the victim, and challenge, for example, language teaching orthodoxies by stressing the inadequate social and communicative practices of monolinguals in authority.

Nevertheless, even though they are no longer seen as exclusively responsible for their own failure, there is no fundamental break with the 'blacks as victims' idea that Gilroy (1987:11) identifies as a cornerstone in the discourses of racism (on this issue in cross-cultural training, see



Roberts *et al.* 1992:33, 121). Specifically surveying interactional sociolinguistics, Singh *et al.* (1988) pick up on this, and they also argue that interactional sociolinguistic studies of ‘cross-cultural’ communication have been too concerned with language as an instrument for assimilation to the demands of capitalist bureaucracy. They suggest that rather than studying ‘joyless [managerial] formalisms’, ethnic resistance needs to be recognized and “understood in light of the human sense for the joyfulness of speech” (1988:45). There is much in this to key with Hewitt and Gilroy’s analyses. The account of communicative practice in stratified multiracial settings can be usefully extended to include a few of the phenomena listed in (a) to (g) above.

This is probably sufficient as an introduction to the descriptive and theoretical angle on language, youth and race that I shall be adopting. In this chapter, two further tasks of preliminary clarification are still required: first a summary of my empirical methods; second, a brief introduction to the town, neighbourhood and networks where the research was set.

1.6 Fieldwork, methods and the data-base

The research draws on two periods of fieldwork – one year in 1984, and a second in 1987. There were a few differences in my data collection procedures during these two periods, but radio-microphone recording, interviewing, and participant observation featured centrally in both. The main methods that I used can be summarized as follows (Appendix II contains a fuller account):

- a) Radio-microphone recordings of recreational activity at a youth club and during free time at school. In 1984, radio-microphones were given out to 23 informants, producing about 45 hours of data; in 1987, 37 informants were involved, resulting in approximately 100 hours of data.
- b) Interviews focusing on language and adolescent social life. In 1987, 35 informants participated in the language interview, and 39 in the one that addressed social issues. Interviewing in 1984 involved 23 informants.
- c) Participant observation as a voluntary worker at the local youth club – about 40 evenings during the 1984 fieldwork, and about 50 evenings during 1987.
- d) Local translation and commentary on all recordings of Panjabi. As my own proficiency is very limited, in 1987 two 17-year-old bilinguals

from the locality translated and commented on all the examples of Panjabi recorded on radio-microphone during 1984 and 1987 (about 500 extracts).

The most relevant differences between fieldwork procedures in 84 and 87 were as follows:

- e) Retrospective discussion with participants of extracts selected from the radio-microphone recordings. I did this during 1987 with 33 informants.
- f) Discussions of findings from the 1984 research. In 1987, I discussed the findings from fieldwork in 1984 with about 25 youngsters, 18 of whom had been informants during the earlier research.

In 1984, I approached Southleigh Middle School to make contact with four youngsters who I already knew. Thereafter, informants were recruited through friendship networks. In 1984, this resulted in a sample of 23 informants, comprising two boys of Caribbean descent, one of mixed Caribbean/Anglo parentage, three Anglo, seven Indian and ten Pakistani. There were no female informants at this stage, partly due to statistical analysis that had been originally planned.⁹ In 1987, sixty four 13-16 year old adolescents – virtually all now attending the local upper school – were recorded in at least one of the elicitation contexts in which I was a participant (procedures (b) to (f)): 12 were Afro-Caribbean (7M 5F), 2 were mixed Caribbean/Anglo (1M 1F), 14 Anglo (9M 5F), 3 Bangladeshi (M), 18 Indian (10M 8F), 1 mixed Indian/Anglo (F), 12 Pakistani (10M 2F). A core of 34 of these were tape recorded in at least three of the 1987 elicitation contexts, and of this core, 14 had acted as informants during the 1984 fieldwork. Eighteen informants in 1987 lived outside Ashmead, and most of them had gone to lower and middle schools outside the neighbourhood. The rest had been at Ashmead's Southleigh Middle School with the 1984 informants. It was originally planned that the 1987 sample should be balanced in terms of gender, but because the youth club was more heavily frequented by boys, the eventual ratio of males to females was about two to one.

The analysis of language crossing that follows is based on about 68 episodes in which non-Panjabis used Panjabi (59 taped and 9 observed), about 160 exchanges involving stylized Indian English (SAE) (40 observed, 120 taped), and more than 250 episodes where I detected a clear Creole influence in the speech of whites and Asians. Two limitations need to be emphasized here.



Firstly, my purpose in giving these figures is (a) to show that language crossing wasn't a freak occurrence – a molehill isn't being built into a mountain; and (b) to give the very roughest idea of the comparative frequency of different kinds of crossing. However, it is impossible to use these figures in any precise quantification. This would require a much more systematic specification of linguistic units than anything I have used here.¹⁰ In addition, the quality of the recorded data varies: good recordings can be used for a range of analytic purposes, but poor ones may be much more limited in the usability of the information they provide. This means that the size of the empirical base itself varies, according to the question being asked.

Secondly, the data on Creole crossing hasn't been as intensively analyzed as the extracts involving Panjabi and SAE. They have been comprehensively scrutinized at the level of analysis traditionally associated with the ethnography of communication – participants, topics, events and so forth – but because of their quantity, only a small proportion has been transcribed closely enough to allow detailed commentary on interaction structures and processes. So in this regard, generalizations about language crossing in Creole are more impressionistic than they are about Panjabi and stylized Indian English.

In spite of this, the combination of methods used in fieldwork provides quite a sound basis for establishing the authenticity of a lot of the data: working in one extended peer group meant that there were a great many cross-references in what adolescents talked about, and several sources and kinds of data can be brought to bear in the analysis of particular linguistic practices. There is also some scope for longitudinal investigation of developments in language crossing over time. In addition, Hewitt's use of radio-microphones and participant observation served as a model for my own, and so as I have already suggested, there are good opportunities for cumulative comparison with other studies.

Although interactional conduct is the major focus of this study, an understanding of the local setting will often be important, and so it is now worth turning to a sketch of this.

1.7 The town, the neighbourhood and networks

The town

a) *Immigration.* Stoneford (not its real name) is situated in the South Midlands of England, and it has a population of about 100,000. It was originally a market town, but substantial immigration dates from the latter part of the nineteenth century, which began when Stoneford became a



major place of settlement for white Anglos returning from colonial service in India. These were attracted by the town's cheap private schooling, and between 1871 and 1914, about 5000 houses were built, big enough to accommodate large families and their servants. During the 1890s, there was also a significant movement of industry into the area from London, and this attracted workers from London, Wales, Ireland and North East England.

Substantial recent immigration dates from the Second World War. After the war, there was a sizeable influx from other parts of Britain into skilled and professional jobs, but as elsewhere in Britain, employers found that rising aspirations meant that the indigenous population was no longer willing to provide the low paid manual labour that heavy industry demanded. Advertising in areas of high unemployment was unsuccessful, and to meet the requirements of the post-war reconstruction programme, local employers started to recruit 'replacement labour' from abroad. This began with refugees and political exiles from Poland, the Baltic States, the Ukraine and Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia. From the early 1950s, wage earners started to arrive from Italy (from a few villages in the South). From 1958 onwards, this was followed by substantial immigration from the West Indies (about half from Jamaica, one fifth from Barbados, and others from Grenada, Carriacou, Trinidad, Antigua, Nevis and St Kitts), from India (from Jullundur, Hoshiapur and Kapurthala), and Pakistan (from Mirpur and Gujranwalla). As these became established, many of their close dependents came over to join them, although immigration laws introduced from the mid 60s to early 70s increasingly restricted migration from the New Commonwealth, and after 1972 those to arrive came chiefly from Bangladesh and East Africa.

b) Population. In 1951, Stoneford had a population of 61,000. By 1971, this had grown to 86,000 (though much of this was due to immigration from other parts of Britain). The 1961 census reported that 12% of the town's population had been born overseas; in 1966, this was 14%; in 1971, 16%, with 19% born to parents from overseas (there was no question on ethnic descent in the 1981 census). Though there are no very reliable recent statistics available, the local Community Relations Association estimated that about 40% of the town's population was minority ethnic in 1979. Figures produced by the Local Education Authority reported a 2.7% minority ethnic presence on school rolls in 1955, 14% in 1961, 19% in 1966, and 24% in 1969. In 1979, this was 31%, and out of a total school population of about 13000, 46 were of African descent from Africa, 54 were of Asian descent from Africa, 70 had family links to Bangladesh, 849 (about 6%) had links to the Caribbean, 40 to China, Hong Kong,



Vietnam, 161 to Eastern Europe, 1288 (about 10%) to India, 1032 (about 8%) to Italy, 286 (2%) to Pakistan, 115 to other European countries, and 41 to other countries outside Europe. Local education authority figures for 1979 also showed that in some lower schools, minority ethnic children represented less than 5% of the pupil population, while in others they constituted between 70% and 90%. This reflects the uneven distribution of minority settlement in Stoneford.

c) Housing. All of the groups coming to the town from overseas had faced discrimination in housing, and they settled in four main areas. These contained the oldest housing stock in the town, which required most maintenance, had the lowest appreciation in value, and had been relinquished by Anglos. A 1976 study found that in 1971, areas of highest 'housing stress' accommodated 16% of the town's Anglo population, over 50% of the European born population, and 70% of its residents with both parents born in the New Commonwealth (among other things, greatest 'housing stress' correlated with high levels of overcrowding, an above average incidence of young children, an unfurnished private rented sector, low socioeconomic status, and low levels of car ownership). A large 1981/82 survey found that residence in pre-1914 properties was 26% Anglo, 40% West Indian, 54% Italian, 69% Indian and 94% Pakistani. For post-1945 houses, the figures were 45% white Anglo, 26% West Indian, 20% Italian, 7% Indian, and 0% Pakistani.

The period of minority ethnic settlement and inner urban neglect coincided with unprecedented suburban expansion, and several large estates of mixed private and public sector housing were built between 1945 and 1974. But there is no evidence that any of the public sector houses were allocated to ethnic minority residents during this period, and access to the new private sector housing was blocked by a combination of low income, high house price, and the racial discrimination of vendors, estate agencies (who directed minority ethnic clients towards 'appropriate' areas), and lending institutions (which for a long time refused mortgages, despite high levels of minority investment).

During the 1980s, building societies started to make more finance available to minorities, and there was evidence that some people of Italian descent were moving to new areas. There was also a little Afro-Caribbean dispersion, though the 1981/82 survey found little change in the localities where Asians were settled. Although the links between housing institutions and minorities improved during this period, the survey described these as still 'limited' and 'precarious', and there was clear evidence that estate agents and building society managers continued to operate with race stereotypes that affected minorities in different ways. While building



societies favoured Italians and Indians as clients, estate agents were suspicious of Asians, and both had negative views of second generation Afro-Caribbeans. As the complex result of this and other processes, minorities now occupied rather different positions in the housing market: broadly speaking, Italians had been able to move into better accommodation, and so (to a lesser extent) had Indian families. Afro-Caribbean and Pakistani households tended to live in poorer circumstances. Bangladeshis lived in the most difficult circumstances of all: although by the 1980s there was very little left of it – only 5% of all accommodation – a quarter of all Stoneford Bangladeshis lived in private rented accommodation.

d) Employment. The 1971 census found that household heads from New Commonwealth and Pakistan were almost three times as likely as other workers in the town (including those from Europe) to be in unskilled jobs, twice as likely to be in semi-skilled jobs, and three times less likely to be in professional and managerial jobs. An Open University study 10 years later found much the same situation. They also found that while 14% of their Anglo sample did shiftwork, this was 34% for Afro-Caribbeans, 37% for Italians, 49% for Indians, and 71% for Pakistanis. Variation in unemployment rates among household heads was relatively minor (21% Anglo, 29% Italian, 28% Indian, 33% Afro-Caribbean), with the exception of the Pakistanis in their sample, 49% of whom were unemployed. In 1981, unemployment for males in 16-29 age range was 12% across the Stoneford population as a whole, but among Asians and Afro-Caribbeans it was as high as 30%. A study of Employment Office records from 1962-1978 revealed that New Commonwealth males (mostly Afro-Caribbean) were more than two and a half times more likely to be out of work than Anglos during periods of high unemployment, and one and a half times more likely when employment prospects were relatively good. Among local employers, Italians and Indians' tended to be rated more highly than Afro-Caribbeans and Pakistanis.

e) Local government. Between about 1951 and 1974, the unequal development of housing opportunities in Stoneford was steered through local government by a close and highly influential network of rather secretive councillors, who finally lost power through elections and the nationwide reorganization of local government in 1974. But even by the mid 1980s, the borough council wasn't monitoring housing allocation processes, and couldn't produce aggregate data on ethnic minority council tenants. Despite constituting about a third of the town's population, at the start of the 1980s there were just 2 minority ethnic magistrates, 1 councillor, a handful of social workers and health visitors, and about 30 teachers. There was little evidence of change by 1987, when an industrial tribunal could



condemn the county council for not doing enough to encourage the careers of ethnic minorities, and when the implementation of the county and borough councils' equal opportunities policies could be summarized as 'painfully slow'.

f) Summary. A picture emerges, then, of a town in which racial discrimination and minority ethnic disadvantage were well entrenched in housing, employment and local government. At the same time, there was also a degree of stratification between settling groups, with Italians and Indians doing better than Afro-Caribbeans and Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis in the worst position of all. Nevertheless the housing stock in Stoneford was better than in many inner city areas, and the rate of unemployment had been consistently below the national average. So there wasn't the same intensity of material and economic deprivation that could be found in major conurbations during this period. Neither did it appear to match them in the extent of racist violence. After the riots in major UK cities in 1981, there was some disturbance in a couple of inner areas of Stoneford, but these were relatively minor. In comparison with other towns, the consensus among my informants was that Stoneford was a 'quiet' place and even rather 'boring'.

It is worth now turning a description of Ashmead, the neighbourhood where my research was sited.

The neighbourhood

The neighbourhood I shall call Ashmead lies to the north of Stoneford, geographically well defined in being bounded by a river, a motorway, farming land and a middle-class commuter village. Three quarters of its housing were constructed between 1875 and 1914, mainly 2-3 bedroomed terraced houses with some larger Victorian villas around its edges. Three quite substantial local employers are situated within its boundaries, and while much of the rest of Stoneford was professional and agricultural, Ashmead had always earned its living in manufacturing. In 1976, it accounted for one third of all Stoneford's 'high stress' housing.

During the 1960s, the threat of major road developments led to substantial white Anglo out-migration. The depreciation of house values provided an opportunity for Stoneford's ethnic minorities to make their first house purchases, moving into the area from the run-down lodging houses in the centre of town that had provided the first accommodation for all incoming groups. In 1961, about 10% of Ashmead's population had been born overseas. By 1971, out of a population of about four and a half thousand, almost 40% of its residents had been born overseas, half of these in Europe and half in the New Commonwealth and Pakistan. More



than a quarter of the population had parents who were both born in South Asia or the Caribbean, though at this time Italian and Indian communities predominated. In 1984, the ethnic composition of the area's state middle school (Southleigh) was 12.4% Bangladeshi, 20.1% Anglo, 28.2% Indian, 0.7% Italian, 27.8% Pakistani, 8.8% Afro-Caribbean (virtually all the local Italian children went to the Roman Catholic schools nearby). During 1987, it was often remarked that a number of Indian families were now moving elsewhere. While I was researching in the area, it contained retail and grocery shops that either provided for, and/or were run by, local Anglos, Afro-Caribbeans, Italians, Indians, and Pakistanis, and there were also several building society cash offices. Ashmead was the most ethnically mixed of the main areas of minority settlement in Stoneford.

Elsewhere in the town, attitudes towards Ashmead were predominantly negative. There is documentation of estate agents describing the area as being 'spoilt by the immigrants', and in a survey of 802 households (168 Afro-Caribbean, 183 Anglo, 14 Bangladeshi, 207 Indian, 167 Italian, 48 Pakistani), Ashmead was the most frequently mentioned as the area into which respondents were most keen to avoid in their next move. My own informants were aware that the area had an (unwarranted) reputation for crime, that jokes about visitors 'needing a passport' were common, and from time to time the Stoneford press carried letters in which Anglo parents expressed fears about their children having to walk through the area. A number of Asian and Afro-Caribbean informants reported experiences of racist aggression when they left Ashmead and went into the centre of town, and during my fieldwork, a visit by Ashmead youth club to a club in one of the villages nearby ended in violent confrontation.

The local press occasionally carried stories about Anglo children suffering as the small minority in 'immigrant' schools, and negative attitudes towards Ashmead found their most politically elaborate expression in an acrimonious and very protracted dispute about school catchment areas and closures. At the end of the 1970s, the construction of a new upper school in Ashmead – Newton Upper – became the focus of controversy when it was discovered that its catchment area extended to other districts of primary minority ethnic settlement, but excluded immediately adjacent areas that were predominantly white middle class. In response to criticism, there was some adjustment to increase the class and ethnic spread of the pupils attending the school, but then in the 1980s, when the town was faced with falling rolls and a surfeit of upper school places, the initial decision was that it should be Newton Upper that closed. This decision was then reversed, and it was instead proposed that Newton Upper in Ashmead should merge with Hammerton, a school serving one of the white



suburban estates on the other side of town. Hammerton parents mounted a long and bitter campaign against this: they collected a petition of more than 20,000 signatures, presented their case independently to central government, and recruited the support of the local Tory MP (as well as most of local press). When the Secretary of State for Education finally approved the council's merger plan, the campaigners raised more than £20,000 to contest this in the High Court, eliciting £3,000 in a single public meeting. In the event, they were unsuccessful, and a new merged school was opened soon after my fieldwork ended, taking 13-16 year olds on the Ashmead site and sixth formers at Hammerton. During this dispute, references to ethnicity were usually well-coded (cf Husband 1987:321), but Ashmead locals had little hesitation attributing a central role to racism, and in an interview towards the end of the Hammerton campaign, one of its organizers felt compelled to say that "we are not bad people, just concerned for the education of children in Stoneford".

Clearly, there were many similarities between majority ethnic Stoneford's view of Ashmead, and the dominant discourses of race that were described in 1.2 above. Its residents were regarded as immigrants, as problems, as threats to education, and as the inhabitants of a rather dangerous alien zone. It looked as though the conceptualizations offered through national media had contributed significantly to Anglo Stonefordians' understanding of their situation, and indeed on occasions, this had fed back to national audiences.

In its response to this, did Ashmead resemble the kind of mobilized urban community that Gilroy analyses in terms of the 'new social movements'? As I have already indicated, my own work focuses on everyday sociolinguistic relations, but it is worth noting in passing that, at the more macro level of community and local government politics, there certainly was an (ultimately successful) campaign against the closure of Newton Upper during 1983, and this mobilized both old and young and black and white. So in broader political terms, there was some local tradition of organized defensive action, using neighbourhood community as a central symbol.

But even the most superficial view confirms Gilroy's observation that active community politics had no base in seamless social unity. One informant described a march against school closure as "whites at the front, and blacks and Indians at the back", and none of the long-running dispute about Newton Upper touched Ashmead's Italian residents, who sent nearly all their children to (virtually all white) Roman Catholic schools. The neighbourhood itself was sufficiently large to allow a certain amount of



residential clustering, and it was recognized that Anglos often lived in more modern houses in the leafier parts of the district.¹¹ As well as Jats and Ramgharias, about half the Indian migrants to Stoneford came from untouchable castes (Chamars and Balmikis), and among older people this was another source of division in Ashmead.¹² Casual intra-ethnic conversations on the bus or at the bus-stop often evidenced the racial hostility of older whites;¹³ and among other things, stratification between South Asian groups was reflected in the Newton Upper language curriculum: Panjabi was well established, Urdu was only offered with untrained part-time staff, while the failure of efforts to recruit a teacher of Bengali meant that a great many youngsters of Bangladeshi descent received only extra English. On the one hand, adolescents often said that there wasn't much racism in Ashmead (and certainly no scope for skinheads), while on the other, they commonly agreed that racial harmony was only on the surface.

It is worth now turning to local adolescent friendship networks.

Local adolescent friendship networks

It is situated discourse analysis that will bring us closest to understanding what particular social divisions actually meant to local youngsters, and how they managed them in interaction. Even so, network analysis provides a rough but useful view of the extent to which adolescents with different ethnic backgrounds associated with one another on a regular and friendly basis.

Both among the 11-13 year old boys that I studied at Southleigh Middle, and among the 13-16 year old males and females at Newton Upper, there was a general tendency to associate with peers who were of the same sex and ethnic background (cf also Davey 1983; Thomas 1984).¹⁴ In 1987, I most closely observed about 15 friendship clusters, and in about nine or ten of these, one ethnic group could be said to predominate. A number of informants themselves said that people tended to hang around with others from the same background, and adolescents often referred to ethnicity when identifying different network groupings (as being Indian, black, Pakistani and so forth). Indeed several informants who participated in more mixed clusters felt that these were unusual, and even rather fragile:

'you know you're expected to be either white and stick around with white girls, or black and stick around with black girls, or be Indian and stick around with Indians, but I'm the sort of Indian girl that goes with everybody' (Anita, Indian background, 15 years old)



‘you can sort of tell that when they get older, most people don’t hang around with black people... if they’re whites they hang around with white people, and if they’re coloureds they hang around with coloured people... I think it’s probably going to happen to most of the people in this school who hang around with white people, it already is happening really... Hopefully I’ll still be hanging around with coloured people but I dunno, I think we might split, I’m not sure’
(Ian, Anglo background, 15; abbreviated transcription)

So ethnic descent was clearly an important organizing principle in the associative networks of local adolescents. Even so, in comparison with home and the adult community, school and peer recreation were still important sites for ethnic *mixing*. In 1984, no one associated exclusively with co-ethnics, and while most friendship cliques were *predominantly* co-ethnic in 1987, only a small proportion were exclusively so. In fact, patterns of interethnic friendship interacted with gender and neighbourhood residence in quite complex ways.

Although there were one or two notable exceptions, youngsters of Bangladeshi descent were generally excluded from mixed and other-ethnic friendship clusters. There were a lot of friendships between Indian and Pakistani youngsters, though it was much more common for boys of Indian and Pakistani descent to go around with Caribbeans or Anglos than it was for Indian and Pakistani girls. There were other striking sex differences. White boys only participated in cliques with Afro-Caribbeans or Asians if they lived in the same area (or had done until recently). In contrast, neighbourhood co-residence seemed less important for white girls. In fact, although local patterns can vary and change quite rapidly (Hewitt 1986:42, 91-2; Jones 1988:136), in this neighbourhood the only cross-ethnic dating involved white girls, and in my sample, they tended to live in a different area from the boys they went out with. Neighbourhood co-residence didn’t seem to be an important as a criterion for cluster membership for black or Asian youngsters either, and in fact for some, the move to a school with a larger catchment area led to the consolidation of ethnic networks (cf Thompson 1974:247).

It is also important to recognize the extensive general sociability that occurred in large, polyethnic, mixed sex crowds. School provided a number of sites for this kind of wider socialising. Lessons were one important setting: “when you get to know friends in lessons, you can mess about”; “I know a lot of others – Leela, Marina and Julie – but I



don't hang around with them out of lessons"; "I reckon more goes on in lessons than there does in six weeks holiday". Dinner queues and break-time were others, and outside school, many adolescents congregated in large groups in parks and youth clubs. The social field that each of these sites made available was of course constrained in a number of different ways. In lessons, participants were grouped according to an idea of academic ability, which wasn't random in the way it intersected with race. Dinner queues only brought together pupils from the same year group. Unofficial social zoning of the upper school playground meant that you couldn't meet a full cross-section of the pupil population if you hung around only in one place. And at the local youth club you would be much more likely to encounter Pakistani, Anglo and Indian boys than girls, Afro-Caribbeans, Bangladeshis or Italians. Nevertheless, it was within larger gatherings of this kind that male-female relationships were formed and it was here that network clusters came together, defined themselves, and sometimes changed their membership. And though to differing degrees, many of these bigger gatherings were multi-ethnic.

Investigation of local adolescent networks suggests, then, that a shared ethnic background is of major significance in friendship formation. Even so, its force was far from absolute. In fact, this combination of influential co-ethnicity on the one hand, and on the other, a substantial amount of movement across the boundaries of ethnic ingroup membership, would appear to be a central feature of the terrain in which language crossing took root as an important symbolic practice.

However, because it has been framed primarily in terms of contact and liking, this account of interethnic friendship has had little to say about race stratification. Stereotypes about ethnic groups and their inferiority have been identified as active principles in the allocation of material resources in Stoneford generally, but the effects of race hierarchization were much more pervasive than this. The ways in which local adolescents themselves recognized and negotiated social division of this kind could focus on a number of different practices, but language crossing played an especially obvious role in this process. This will start to emerge in the next chapter, which provides a preliminary outline of the ways in which adolescent themselves reported on this practice. But before then, it is important to say just a few words about the organization of this book.

1.8 The chapters that follow

Writing one text about three varieties – four if you include the local multiracial vernacular – presents certain organizational challenges. If it



was structured around theoretical themes, the book would run the risk of obscuring or collapsing important empirical differences in the way each variety was used. Since language crossing is a relatively new area for sociolinguistic research, it is important not to underestimate the value of trying to make a descriptive contribution to 'the ethnographic record'. On the other hand, although it might be more adequate descriptively, taking each variety separately could result in some rather weary plodding back and forwards over the same theoretical terrain. In the end, I have aimed for a compromise, which at least gives a fair impression of the inductive processes that led to the relatively 'grounded' theoretical perspectives, which the book proposes. More specifically, its organization is as follows.

The main empirical analyses are grouped together into three central sections, each one describing a different situational context. In order, these contexts are: adolescent interaction with adults, informal peer-peer interaction, and interaction focussed around performing art. Each of these entailed different institutional role relationships, and they also often differed in the prestige that they accorded to the languages at issue here.

Within each of these three settings, Creole, Panjabi and stylized Asian English are introduced in separate chapters. This means that the book itself develops through a process of cumulative comparison: initially, crossings in Panjabi, Creole and Asian English are compared *within* each of the three broad contexts, but gradually, similarities and differences *across* contexts also become clear. Usually – though not always – in Parts II, III, and IV, the largest part of each chapter is relatively descriptive, looking at the situated use of a particular out-group variety more or less in its own terms. But of course, these descriptions themselves necessarily draw on wider analytic frameworks, and they also invariably invite a number of theoretical extrapolations about language crossing itself. And so the later parts of each chapter are usually more theoretical, and the more general points they address are flagged up in the subtitles attached to each one. In fact, the theoretical interpretations themselves build up and in trying to account for language crossing as a phenomenon, certain key ideas are progressively elaborated (concerning for example, resistance, ritual, polyphony, and the relationship between macro and micro). In the last part of the book, much of this is drawn together. There is an attempt to provide a clear statement about code-crossing's character both as a sociolinguistic practice and as a form of everyday cultural politics. In the very last chapter, I discuss some of the wider educational implications of a mode of language use that has either been neglected, or conceptualized in ways that obscure its social and political significance.

Before starting on the empirical interactional analyses, it is useful to consider what adolescents themselves had to say about language crossing.

Notes

1. For useful surveys, see Taylor 1981 and Taylor and Hegarty 1985.
2. In fact, it is not only in reactionary discourse about the British way of life that Gilroy detects the influence of ethnic absolutism: despite their being radically opposed on a number of other grounds, it also operates within municipal antiracist discourse (1987:143) and in certain forms of black cultural nationalism which rely on “mystical and essentialist ideas of a transcendental blackness” (ibid.:65).
3. It is important to say a word in explanation of my use of terms like ‘Asian’, ‘Anglo’, ‘Afro-Caribbean’ etc, since both ethnic labelling and ethnicity itself are highly problematic processes. All my informants were British, and the labels I use generally describe the countries or regions that their parents or grandparents come from. In line with a lot of local practice, my use of the term ‘black’ generally excludes youngsters of Asian descent, though in recognition of their inclusion in the term in certain political discourses, I often use ‘Afro-Caribbean’ to designate black adolescents with family links to countries in the Caribbean. The danger with all these labels is that they invite ethnic absolutist interpretations, which run directly contrary to my central concern with processes of social redefinition. This risk, though, seems unavoidable, since the research is itself located in a period when biological descent and domestic upbringing – basic terms in absolutism – compete alongside (for example) class position and neighbourhood residence as active factors in people’s ongoing negotiations of social identity. Indeed, to obscure racial categorization would be to deprive the research of its central analytic interest. The only safeguard against absolutism can be to underline the fact that ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’ and indeed ‘inheritance’ are themselves social constructions that are continuously negotiated through processes of social interaction (this point is discussed at greater length in chapters 11.6, 13.4, 13.6-13.7 below).
4. In an analysis of the people who used them as a part of their ordinary speech, the terms ‘Creole’, ‘Panjabi’ and ‘Indian’ or ‘Asian English’ would be very clumsy, clustering a number of varieties which both the speakers themselves and professional linguists might well want to distinguish (on variation among speakers with roots in the Caribbean, cf e.g. Sebba 1986, 1993; Hewitt 1986:102-104; on speakers with links to Pakistan and Northern India, see Shackle 1979, Fitzpatrick 1987, LMP 1985). But in their informally acquired use among members of ethnic outgroups, these differences were generally unimportant (the special case of the interface between Creole and local vernacular English is discussed in chapter 5.5 and 5.6). Occasionally with ‘Asian English’, an imitation closely following on the utterance of a particular ESL speaker might achieve a degree of verisimilitude that would allow one to identify it as a copy of, for

example, specifically Bengali English. But this was very rare and it doesn't warrant the introduction of linguistic subdivisions into the secondary stylizations that are of central concern here.

5. There have been, for example, repeated scares about linguistic diversity and educational standards (cf e.g. Rose *et al.* 1969; Halstead 1988:Ch. 3); government frequently invokes Standard English as a key symbol of national culture to legitimate its centralization of the curriculum, sometimes with acute electoral timing (Cameron and Bourne 1988; Rampton, Bourne and Cameron 1988); and in fact, the possibility that government policies on parental choice might lead to ethnically segregated schools has sometimes been justified in the right wing press by 'horror' stories about white children learning Asian languages at school (cf e.g. *The Sun* 7.5.87). The interweaving of sociolinguistic and political issues is enormously complex in this educational debate, and schooling is clearly a major institutional target for discourses of ethnic absolutism, as well as being the focus of minority ethnic and urban community campaigns (cf e.g. Halstead 1988 on the Honeyford affair). For some further discussion, see chapter 13 below.
6. Mercer *et al.* 1979; Rosen and Burgess 1980; Ganguly 1980; Sutcliffe 1982; Miller 1983; Linguistic Minorities Project 1983, 1985; Sebba 1986. For research on attitudes, relations and language use with agemates, see e.g. Durojaiye 1971, Dickinson *et al.* 1975, Agnihotri 1979, Smith 1979, Edwards 1986.
7. Hester and Wight 1977; Brown 1979; Wiles 1981; Coates 1985. Lucas 1972, Payne 1985 and M. Clarke *et al.* 1985:chapter 13 carried out some playground observation.
8. It is chiefly in its more detailed attention to the 'interaction order' that the analytic focus of my study differs from Hewitt's.
9. In the original design for my PhD, I planned to conduct a statistical analysis of language variation in the manner of Labov 1972a, Milroy 1980 and LePage 1980. With ethnicity alone as the independent variable, I needed a minimum of 20 informants (5 of Afro-Caribbean descend, 5 Anglo, 5 Indian, 5 Pakistani). To introduce gender as a variable, I would have had to double my sample size. Given the rather elaborate methodology I was trying to develop, this wouldn't have been practicable (cf Rampton 1989, 1992).
10. In view of the thin and shifting line that separated it from local multiracial vernacular speech, this would be a particularly complex with Creole (cf Sebba 1993:Appendix 1; Hewitt 1986; also chapter 5 below).
11. Though I never heard any of the smaller, more ethnically exclusive areas within the district being used as group identifiers – the major local territorial reference in adolescent self-descriptions was Ashmead ('the AM boys'; 'Remember, AM always wins'; 'the latest from AM').
12. Though my South Asian adolescents informants invariably reported that



caste was unimportant among young people, and many didn't know what caste their friends were.

13. Though there were a lot of middle-aged local white women working as school secretaries, non-teaching assistants and dinner ladies, who were the focus of general affection.
14. Full details of the 1984 networks are contained in Rampton 1987a.



2. Local Reports of Language Crossing

This chapter introduces language crossing by way of informant reports. It is intended as a preliminary sketch-map, and it provides an outline of issues which are taken up in much greater detail in the analyses of spontaneous interaction contained in the three central parts of this book.

In sequence, this chapter takes interview accounts of crossing in Creole, Panjabi and Indian English, and with each variety, it addresses the following questions: what kinds of people were and weren't regarded as being involved in crossing? In what contexts? What attributes were they thought to project in their use of outgroup varieties? And how were they evaluated? As the account progresses, I shall take space to build up a comparative overview, giving an indication of the way informants discerned similarities and differences in the kinds of symbolic meaning offered by these three language varieties. This cumulative process will also make it easier to achieve another of this chapter's aims, which is to start tying language crossing back to the specific historical setting of race and class relations portrayed in chapter 1.

In fact, the comparison process can begin immediately, taking Hewitt's research in South London in the late 1970s and early 1980s as the starting point.

2.1 Reports of interracial Creole

Hewitt's research emphasized the central role that race stratification played in the dynamics of adolescent Creole use, and it serves as an important initial reference point. In Hewitt's interview discussions with black informants, two issues were especially apparent which clearly located Creole as a cultural resource or marker of ethnicity within a specific historical/economic frame. These were that white creole use was regarded (a) as derisive parody, and hence as an assertion of white superiority, and (b) as a further white appropriation of one of the sources of power – "It seems as if they are stealing our language" (1986:162).

However, "despite the generalized hostility to white Creole use, the practice is acceptable in the case of particular white friends" (ibid).

My sample of black adolescents was much smaller than Hewitt's,¹ but there were some similarities in their responses. There was one report of Creole being used in hostile mockery, and generally, Afro-Caribbean responses were unenthusiastic. But while it was quite frequently said that outgroup users of Creole were stereotyping, 'stupid', 'silly' and should



'stick to their own language', there was no mention of the expropriation of language as a resource of power:

Extract I.1

Participants: Cyril [15 AC M], Paul [15 AC M], David [15 AC M], BR.
Setting: 1987. Interview. [Simplified and abbreviated transcription]

Cyril: well, there're, there are some people who act black, which isn't wrong, it's just that... the way how they do it... I mean.. if they act black that means that they think that everybody, or every black person sort of acts like that, so they

Paul: stereotype

Cyril: go around to some people talking like that. They probably don't mean to sort of offend, but it's just that

Paul: it does

((.....))

Cyril: them two, they don't don't mean to offend as I said, but they're just silly really, cos they should act normal, as themselves

Indeed these black informants sometimes found outgroup Creole quite amusing, and in contrast to the South London situation, Creole crossing was often associated with (a) quite widely recognized *groups* of adolescents that (b) the respondents *didn't* have a particularly close relationship with – in Hewitt's account, it was only the usage of exceptional *individuals* that was deemed acceptable, and such usage was generally negotiated through 'private conspiracies' and in the 'privacy of close friendship' (ibid:163,165):

Extract I.2

Participants: Martha, Hazel [15 AC F], BR

Setting: Ashmead 1987. M and H are listening to recordings of their interaction a few days before. Jagdish and Jeets are Indian boys, and Asif and Kazim are Pakistani. 'kukabin' is a nonsense Creole pastiche. [Simplified transcription]

BR: who do you think, which white or Asian person do you think knows it best around here

Martha: Jamaican? I've heard Jagdish ... think Jeets or one of them

Hazel: yeh one of them lot, one of Asif and them

Martha: yeh they speak Jamaican quite good

Hazel: ((laughs))

BR: like what, like what



Hazel: they make you laugh
BR: ((referring to the recording)) we have an example on here of
Kazim saying 'kukabin'
M and H: ((loud laughter))

For their part, a substantial number of informants of Asian and Anglo descent said that they used Creole quite frequently, and that black peers didn't usually disapprove. They generally recognized that white and Asian uses of Creole were potentially disrespectful and offensive, but that there would be no problems if this was done with an understanding of certain constraints: in the presence of a black person who didn't know or like them, other-ethnic Creole should be avoided – otherwise it would be challenged. In addition, white and Asian informants often emphasized that they didn't use Creole seriously, only joking and mucking about.

In certain respects, these reports from white and Asian informants also tune quite closely with Hewitt's findings. In the South London study, 'joking' uses of Creole were much more common than serious ones, as well as being less likely to be elicit black disapproval (ibid:170ff). There was also substantial correspondence with Hewitt's account of the connotations that peer group Creole had for white (and indeed often for black) adolescents. Informants of Asian and Anglo descent variously thought it tough, cool and good to use, and associated it with argument, abuse, assertiveness, verbal resourcefulness and opposition to authority. Participation in this kind of Creole crossing was also generally regarded as more common among males, though some girls were mentioned in the interviews I conducted, and several female informants reported using it themselves (again cf ibid:141).

It was noticeable in Ashmead that far from being a matter of ephemeral fashion, a number of non-Afro-Caribbean boys regarded these non-serious uses of Creole as locally rooted and as something of a tradition for them:

Zaffar [15 Pa M]: all of us you know Asian guys, we can use it well
you see, cos we've all been talk... you know speaking it since
Southleigh second years

Extract 1.3

Participants: Manwar [14 Pa M], Faizal [14 Pa M], Billy [14 An M], BR
Setting: 1987. Interview. Barbara is a white girl whose use of black expressions was noted by several informants. [Simplified and abbreviated transcription]



Manwar: here Faizal, Barbara goes to me 'laters' – I was cracking up man ((laughs)) – 'who you saying that to!'

Faizal: 'laters'!
((.....))

BR: do you do you use some ((black expressions)) at all?

M: yeh but ()

F: yeh we do sometimes, but we've been doing it for a long time anyway

The 1984 recordings, made about three years earlier, confirm these reports, and once again there is a degree of resemblance to what Hewitt found (ibid:150). But at the same time, systematic differences persist. In young whites' early familiarity with Creole, Hewitt again emphasizes the importance of close association with black friends (ibid:158,164, also 53,85,88; and Jones 1988:129-30). In contrast, in spite of its being something that 'we've been doing... for a long time', it was clear from the 1984 fieldwork that in Ashmead, this kind of Creole use wasn't linked to any particularly close involvement or strong identification with black age-mates. In 1984, the two or three black boys in Manwar, Faizal and Zaffar's friendship circle used very little Creole, and were referred to as sources comparatively rarely. At that time, black female classmates, other Asian friends, older brothers and the mass-media were much more widely cited as models. Even now, none of these boys were part of primarily Afro-Caribbean friendship groups, they didn't attend the social events where they said Creole was used most (parties, blues dances), and they were sometimes critical of activities which they associated with black youth culture.

In addition to these longstanding but relatively autonomous appropriations, there was however another commonly reported strand of outgroup Creole use, which did appear to involve close identification and involvement with black friendship groups. Here informants often mentioned a youngster of Bangladeshi descent, who ran a sound system with a substantial black following, as well as several white girls who came to Newton Upper School from smarter areas outside. These were often described as 'acting black' or 'thinking they're black', and in the sample of the informants that I interviewed, opinions were sometimes more strongly opposed to crossing than before (though this was by no means always the case). My own fieldwork contact with crossers of this kind was generally only passing and rather indirect, and I was unable to study the way in which these adolescents negotiated access to this type of Creole use in any detail. However, it was clear that in its spread across the adolescent population, there was something very similar to the broad distinction that



Hewitt's informants made between joking uses of Creole on the one hand, and serious ones on the other (1986:170).

Summarizing this preliminary view of outgroup Creole use, it is evident that in a number of respects, there was a good deal of similarity to Hewitt's account of the situation in South London several years earlier: Creole had connotations of toughness, the potential offensiveness of its other-ethnic use was recognized. For some, it had become established before their teens, a distinction was made between joking and serious uses, and there appeared to be exponents of both. But there were also some significant differences: black informants didn't mention expropriation, their objections to outgroup Creole seemed to be a bit more relaxed, its use was accepted to a greater extent outside the context of intimate friendship, and indeed it was outside the context of intimate friendship that Creole had originally become established among many relatively accepted other-ethnic users. What could account for these differences?

Up to a point, these differences could be related to a change in the forms of black music that were most popular during the periods when the fieldwork for these pieces of research was conducted. In the situation that Hewitt describes, Rastafari and reggae were major forces in the immediate history of black youth culture, 'elaborating the connections between Creole and political relations' (ibid:110). Even so, Hewitt writes:

[t]he balance between Jamaican and North American cultural orientations were at a pivotal point during my fieldwork period. In the very early 1980s, the strongest input was closely associated with reggae music. At the same time, the American influence was effected through Black American soul music. Soul, it was often said, was a black musical form but one equated with black and white social mixing, while reggae was a music essentially for black people. (ibid:100)

Since the early 80s, there had been a major shift in favour of North American forms (cf Gilroy 1987:187-197; Hebdige 1987:Chs 13-17; Jones 1988:55,143), and in 1987, this was reflected among black, Anglo and Asian informants, who in interviews almost invariably mentioned soul, funk, and hip hop before reggae. Though black performers remained preeminent within it, hip hop's frame of reference was also urban American rather than Caribbean, and it was more open to Hispanic, white and Asian participation (Gilroy 1987:190,217; Jones 1988:139,218). With this shift, some important external support for the political meaning of Creole receded, and a specifically Afro-Caribbean inheritance became less important in the access it granted to the most prestigious forms of expressive youth culture.

Another important factor contributing to the difference between Hewitt's findings and my own appeared to be more local. In the schools where my research was conducted, South Asians formed the largest section of the pupil population: the figures for Southleigh were given in chapter 1.7, and at Newton Upper, 30% were Anglo, 8-9% were Afro-Caribbean while Asians constituted about 50%. More generally, informants frequently described Ashmead as a mainly Asian neighbourhood; the youth club which a lot of black youngsters frequented lay *outside* Ashmead in the centre of town; there were no white 'posses' in the locality; and talking of the ways in which Asians used 'ghetto-blasters' (very large portable tape-recorders) to play Indian music, one black informant reckoned that "the Asians just do stuff like that just cos nobody's going to criticize them because... this area is mostly Asian". In Hewitt's analysis of adolescent race relations, in 'Area B' black predominance and power at street level played an important part shaping white acceptance of black youth (1986:80, 90-1; also Jones 1988:219). Something of the same process seemed to occur in Ashmead, only here South Asians were dominant, and part of the impact was on attitudes to outgroup Creole use.

In fact, reports about relatively uncontroversial joking uses of Creole mentioned Asians as a group and Asian individuals much more often than whites.² References to *unacceptable* joking uses occasionally alluded to whites but not Asians, and as well as some of the females in my sample, it tended to be Anglos from outside the area who played down their use of Creole, or said they didn't use it at all. This suggested some kind of special relationship between youngsters of Caribbean and Asian descent, and this was further indicated in reports of language 'exchange':

Extract I.4

Participants: Martha, Hazel [both AC F 15], BR

Setting: 1987. Interview. Martha is talking about Asif and his friends [Simplified and abbreviated transcription]

Martha: they learn ((Creole)) quite quick – you say something, first thing you say in English ((lessons)), by the end of the lesson you hear them saying it again, pass it on like that

Hazel: yeh ((...))

Martha: if you say something, they might say it and it sort of sticks in their head and they carry on saying it... They might forget about it and then it might come back to them.

BR: is it that they kind of catch you saying something or that you actually teach them



Martha: no
Hazel: no, they catch it
Martha: but they sometimes try to teach us Indian
Hazel: yeh ((laughs))
Martha: bad words
BR: and do you learn them
Martha: yeh ((laughs))
Hazel: try to
Martha: ((laughs)) ((...))
BR: like what things do they teach you
Martha: I can't really remember now. It's funny when they're around
us, I sort of like.. copy them but I don't know
Hazel: I can't remember them

Indeed this parity in access to ethnically specific linguistic resources extended beyond reciprocal language learning or teaching to the (generally good humoured) exchange of abuse:

Extract I.5

Participants: Mohan [15 In M], [Jagdish 15 In M], BR
Setting: 1987. Interview. Mohan and Jagdish are talking about interactions with black peers. 'Raas klaat' is a terms of abuse in Creole. [Simplified transcription]

Mohan: we sometimes we just say you're a 'raas klaat' and all this
Jagdish: yeh yeh stuff like that.. they even know some Panjabi words
as well

Extract I.6

Participants: Andrew [14 AC M], Darren [15 AC M], BR
Setting: 1987. Interview. Getting 'blown' means being shamed or made a fool of. 'teri maadi' is Panjabi abuse. [Simplified transcription]

Andrew: suppose a ((Indian)) girl's getting rude now she's speaking Indian.. probably that's when we'll use it ((Panjabi))
Darren: yeh man
BR: r ight okay
Andrew: see we might be just getting blown and we don't even know about it
Darren: exactly
Andrew: in Indian innit, so you know, we have to sort of attack in an Indian word – that 'teri madi', and putting in a raga-muffin tune into it – 'raas klaat you chat bout there'

These reports also start to suggest the way in which in interaction, Creole and Panjabi could be used in very close proximity.

2.2 Interracial Panjabi

Knowledge of Panjabi was reported to be quite widespread among adolescents of Caribbean and Anglo descent – over 30 individuals were specified in 1987, and this was spread fairly evenly over males and females, blacks and whites.³ Several black youngsters said that some knowledge of Panjabi was the inevitable consequence of long residence in the area, and according to Asian informants, white and black uses of Panjabi were generally linked to familiarity with Indian and Pakistani peers:

if they're friends, we teach them it

most of them do really, who hang around with us lot, you see, they all know one word I bet you

it's mostly the boys... um I think most... popular boys.. yeh right, who are not Asian, who get a lot of swear words because they get them all off their Asian friends.

On occasion, Indian and Pakistani informants saw attempts to use Panjabi as intrusive and derisory, and in turn, their own use of it could sometimes be seen as aggressively exclusive by white and black youngsters. But accounts of hostile Panjabi were comparatively rare. A number of bilinguals explicitly denied the suggestion that Panjabi crossing was disrespectful, and attitudes were generally quite enthusiastic:

Extract I.7

Participants: Sukhbir [15 In M], Asif [15 Pa M], BR

Setting: 1987. Interview. Timms is an Anglo whose Panjabi swearing vocabulary was quite renowned. Jonesie is also Anglo. [Simplified transcription]

Sukhbir: no it's quite good, it's impressive, ain't it, if they learn it

BR: yes well I think it is

Sukhbir: I think it is as well

BR: but sometimes it might happen () some people thought they were you know, taking the piss or anything, does that happen at all or not?

Sukhbir: if they can talk it right, they're obviously interested in us,



innit, so they won't take the piss
 Asif: yeh like Timms, he's alright he is
 Sukhbir: cos if they, if they.. the type of people take the piss wouldn't
 like us innit, they wouldn't be interested to learn anyway, innit
 Asif: yeh like Jonesie, he's a piss-taker

It was invariably reported that Anglo and Afro-Caribbean knowledge of Panjabi was very limited. References were made to the way in which black or white youngsters used Panjabi against teachers, but everyone agreed that there was no one who could conduct a conversation. Other-ethnic competence was restricted to swear words, terms of deprecation, perhaps a few numbers, a very small selection of stock formulae and one or two nonsensical pseudo-Panjabi inventions that non-Panjabis might themselves have had a hand in coining. Indeed, pronunciation difficulties were often mentioned, and informants frequently referred to the fragments of Panjabi that they had now forgotten. But in consequence and compensation for the linguistic difficulties that Panjabi was said to present to Anglos and Afro-Caribbeans, there were many accounts of the entertaining language teaching that went on informally in cross-ethnic peer group interactions. Indeed, despite its limitations, knowledge of Panjabi could be an important social marker:

Extract 1.8

Participants: Manwar [14 Pa M], Faizal [14 Pa M], Billy Hayman [14 An M], BR

Setting: 1987. Interview. 'Jabber' is an originally pejorative term for Asian. Peter is Anglo. [Simplified transcription]

Manwar: we've nicknamed Billy... for a about a year in our school...
 half, half, half-jabber
 Faizal: he's half-jabber now – knows most of the words – and
 so's Peter, he knows quite a lot of words too
 Manwar: yeh, these two are one of us

Extract 1.9

Participants: Faizal, Kuldip [14 In M], BR

Setting: 1987. Interview. [Simplified transcription]

BR: so who would you say knows most
 Faizal: Peter
 Kuldip: yeh he knows, he's been in our sort of community



Faizal: he's been our friend long time, he doesn't like going with
white people, just hangs around with us
Kuldip: and Billy Hayman, he knows a lot

These characteristics and evaluations referred to the most general forms of cross-ethnic Panjabi use. There was however, another very important context for the use of Panjabi, which entailed a rather different interracial dynamic. This was bhangra, a form of dance music that originated in the Panjab and that integrated a range of popular musical influences in its transposition to the West, including elements of hip hop (cf Banerji and Bauman 1990). By 1987, bhangra was a major youth cultural force in the neighbourhood, disseminated on cassette, local radio and at a variety of both local and national functions (weddings, concerts, discos). Among many Panjabis, the knowledge and abilities associated with bhangra were valued and cultivated, and excellence was an important source of prestige. White and black adolescents encountered bhangra in a number of settings at school, and it served as the standard musical background on ordinary nights at the local youth club. There was however, relatively little active interest in bhangra among most black and white youngsters, even among those whose Panjabi was read as an expression of particularly close interethnic friendship. Comparably, Indian and Pakistani informants expressed little enthusiasm when they noted the participation of white musicians in top bhangra bands. There were, though, some exceptions to this broadly ethnic division in aesthetic taste, and as before, these generally tended to be white girls, sometimes from the other side of town.

2.3 Comparison of crossing in Panjabi and Creole

Compared with outgroup uses of Creole, Panjabi crossing seems to be distinctive in several respects. In interviews, approval tended to be the first response of Indian and Pakistani informants, whereas Afro-Caribbean support for Creole crossing was more equivocal. The use of Panjabi by white and black youngsters was emphatically linked to hanging around with Asians, and there seemed to be no major line drawn between general joking uses of Panjabi and the way it was employed by very close friends. In contrast, other-ethnic uses of Creole appeared to develop outside extensive involvement with Afro-Caribbeans, and Hewitt reports that in fact "whites who were well-established in their black friendship groups and fluent in Creole will claim never to use Creole 'jokingly'. It seems that to claim otherwise would admit to the merely borderline status from which

they are at pains to dissociate themselves” (1986:171). Asked to compare Creole and Panjabi, informants agreed that while the former was tough and cool, the latter was ordinary, funny or just like English. Indeed, although the individuals identified as knowing Panjabi were quite evenly male and female, Afro-Caribbean and Anglo, generic statements about typical users suggested that white boys were the most common Panjabi crossers.⁴

But despite these differences, there were also major similarities. Hewitt’s account of a folk distinction between joking and serious other-ethnic Creole applied in Ashmead, and it was extended as a basic structure in local perceptions of black and white Panjabi. There was recognition of derisive crossing in both languages; nonsense, abuse and pedagogic disrespect figured in their joking modes; and white girls were often most seriously involved in ethnically marked expressive culture, whether this was bhangra or hip hop.

Further similarities between Creole and Panjabi emerged when informants talked about the ethnic and class groups that were *least* likely to be involved in crossing. Ashmead adolescents echoed Hewitt’s observation that Creole had connotations of lower class life (1986:108) when they used it to emphasize opposition to poshness:

Extract I.10

Participants: Ian [15 An M], Richard [15 An M], BR

Setting: 1987. Interview. Ian is describing the expectation that his American cousins had about the way that he would use English. [Simplified transcription]

Ian: they think we speak really upper class English in England...
they they see on the... they say that Englishmen has got such
beautiful voices, and they express themselves so well... ((in
an approximation to Creole:)) ‘eh what you talkin’ abaat, wha’
you chattin’ about, you raas klaat’, and they don’t like it!
They thought I was going to be posher

More generally, the connotations of Creole contrasted sharply with the way in which informants described the white boys at their school that came from outside Ashmead. These non-local boys were classified as ‘posh’, ‘snobs’, even ‘posh wimpies’, and they were said to dress badly, to stick to themselves in one area of the school grounds during dinner-time, and to be capable of only the most laughably feeble gang-style

activities. But Creole wasn't the only language that could be used to differentiate oneself from the posh wimpies. Panjabi also played a part:

Extract I.11

Participants: Peter [14/15 An M]. BR

Setting: 1987. Peter is listening to a recording of his own dinner time interaction. Andrew, who he refers to, is of Afro-Caribbean descent. 'gorra' is a Panjabi word for 'white man'. [Simplified and abbreviated transcription]

Peter: 'gorra' – white man.. always call the people who didn't go to Southleigh gorras, yet I'm white myself

BR: the kids who didn't go to Southleigh you say

Peter: yeh cos we reckon they're a bit you know upper class (most of them)

BR: and what were they doing then, what were they doing, ((in the recording)), can you remember?

Peter: play it back.. no they're drinking and chucking things about.. what was it – apple cores! they chuck apples about, they're stupid idiots
((...))

BR: you also said, early in the dining hall, you said 'look at the gorras, the gorras are stupid, the gorra gang'

Peter: I might have said 'I'd get the gorra gang on you' – I always say that to Andrew

BR: what is the gorra gang

Peter: it's just a load of white people.. white boys, that ain't their name, I just call them it

BR: and these are the same kids who didn't go to Southleigh who were in the common room

Peter: yeh

There was a second social category that was generally seen as lying outside the social space in which Creole and Panjabi were considered legitimate interracial currency. This consisted of youngsters of Bangladeshi descent.

There were three Bangladeshi informants in my sample and it was clear that these three looked at Creole in much the same way as white and Panjabi teenagers: they liked it, they linked it with being hard or cool, they said they used it a bit, and they cited much the same stereotypical lexis. Beyond that, their ability to comprehend and improvise in Panjabi was much more extensive than black or white adolescents', and they showed a much fuller interest in bhangra and in Indian songs and films.

But this was overwhelmingly ignored in the accounts of who used out-group Creole and Panjabi,⁵ and instead, Bangladeshis figured in adolescent talk as the typification of unacceptable peer group characteristics. They were associated with unsociability, unfashionable dressing, linguistic incompetence and low educational performance, and the term 'Bengali' was repeatedly used in 'humourously' critical remarks about the conduct of associates.

The positioning of both non-local white boys and Bangladeshis outside the realms of likely or acceptable crossing in fact intimated a larger system of social stratification.⁶ Broadly speaking, the typification of these two marginal groups provided contrasting points of negative reference that helped define the 'normal'. The 'otherness' of these two groups formed a number of polar contrasts. Posh Anglos resided in wealthier villages and districts outside Ashmead, while many Bangladeshis lived in much poorer accommodation in the central part of town where migrants groups had traditionally settled on arrival. Adolescents frequently associated posh kids with private schooling, while prior to its closure in 1986, the local ESL reception centre was often described as a Bangladeshi school. Even within Newton Upper, informants linked posh kids with the high curriculum sets, and Bangladeshis with the low ones. Beyond their exclusion from the arena of customary language crossing, posh kids' English was regarded as 'proper', while Bangladeshis youngsters were seen as speaking only an inadequate second language variety. In each case, 'ordinary kids' could position themselves between these polar stereotypes.

In fact, neither image was unproblematic or uncontested, but dispute around them took different forms. Informants generally felt guilty about the way in which Bangladeshis figured in peer group discourse. It was recognized that 'lots of people spread a lot of lies about them', and that people made remarks 'only because they ain't got anything else to say which is funny'. Though themselves actually involved, informants might say that 'it's just a few in the community, you know, muck-about, you always get them', or alternatively, they might mitigate their own participation: 'I do make fun of Bengalis, I must admit... I might make a bit of comments right, but I'll never say you're a tramp and all this'. In fact, the pejorative comments made about Bangladeshis were similar to what many recent arrivals have been subject to, and in 1951, letters in the local Stoneford press were saying the same kinds of thing about Italians. Particularly among Indian and Pakistani informants, there was recognition that some aspects of their migratory experience were shared. They had friends and relatives who had attended the language centre, and derogatory remarks could cut both ways: 'you laugh at it at the time, but when



you think about it, I mean I wouldn't like that to happen to me... if anybody made fun of my language,... that would be worse than making fun of me'. But few claimed to be innocent: 'yes I think it is racism, but I just can't help it... I'm not as bad as some people'.

In contrast, there were no feelings of guilt expressed when posh people were discussed. Poshness in the form of snobbery was widely disliked, but there was quite a lot of disagreement about what poshness actually entailed. In fact, when it was detached from an attitude of social superiority, posh in the sense of 'high class' was frequently admired along with the wealth, educational success and/or linguistic ability with which it often collocated:

my cousin come ((over from India))... he's got a degree and everything, he speaks good English, but he didn't used to speak in English with us though, cos they sort of speak perfect English, innit. We sort of speak a bit slang, sort of innit – like we would say 'innit' and all that. He was scared we might laugh at this perfect sort of English... the good solid English that they teach 'em' [In M 15]

Freddie – he could pull out all these complicated words and boggle your mind – that man, he is the posh man, that man can boggle anyone, oh man. He could blow anyone [AC M 15]

Sometimes, rather than objecting to poshness itself as a social characteristic, criticism instead merely focussed on the spuriousness of the claims to it that particular people might be making:

she was talking to us in this high class ((voice)) – you know, she's from _____ ((a Stoneford private school)) – she was talking to us in this high class, all of a sudden I heard her voice change into different tones going down and down... until it got to this Cockney... so it's just a put-on, most of them girls, they just put it on [Martha AC F 15]

There was also a lot more disagreement about who was or wasn't 'posh' than there had been with the term 'Bengali', where only one boy was noted as an exception.

Overall, though 'posh' and 'Bengali' served together as categories of otherness delimiting the sphere of the socially 'normal/ordinary', the former represented a cluster of attributes that many informants rated highly, while the latter stood for a lower position from which all were keen to dissociate. This difference contributes to the explanation of two phenomena.



Firstly, the ambiguities surrounding poshness suggest one reason why non-local white girls were able to gain access to the most prestigious sites of black and Panjabi youth culture. Inserted within the rivalry pervasive in interaction between adolescent males, poshness in white boys would be difficult to detach from snobbery. In contrast to this – as a lot of the data below will suggest – male-female interaction appeared to provide some release from serious competition, and so here, less threatened by struggles for superiority, there was maybe more scope for adolescents to participate in a dialogue between the posh and the local.

Secondly, the negative view of Bangladeshis was an important factor in the way that adolescents perceived and used the third language variety of central concern to this study – stylized Asian English. It is necessary to start the description of this by considering the groups that might provide models of Asian English.

2.4 Stylized Asian English [SAE]

Bangladeshis were one group that was generally seen as having only limited proficiency in English. So were a number of Indian and Pakistani adults.

This perception was certainly not invariable. A lot of South Asian adults were recognized as speaking perfectly ordinary English – parents, relatives, teachers, youth workers, local, national and international media figures. There were also local adults with roles in the education service and the community who informants respected without regard for the fact that they spoke English with marked Panjabi accents. And it was understood that there was no necessary relationship between Panjabi pronunciation on the one hand and on the other, limited proficiency and prestige in English.⁷ Even so, many Indian and Pakistani informants indicated that competence in English was restricted among some of their older relatives and friends.⁸

Indian and Pakistani informants' accounts of this kind of limited proficiency were overwhelmingly solidary. For adults not brought up in Britain, the acquisition of English was often regarded as an achievement, and where deviation from local English norms was conspicuous, this could be a source of shared amusement ('sometimes my mum speaks English but I laugh cos she can't say it properly... she laughs herself'). There were accounts of bilingual youngsters translating and interpreting for their parents at home and in public settings, and there was a clear view of the links between linguistic proficiency and racism in cross-ethnic interaction:



you should see the way they treat the Pakistanis or Asians ((at the airport)) – there’s this woman standing there and she’ll go ‘Pakistanis, this way’ ((spoken loudly and slowly)) and I think ‘oh my God!’ you know, I thought ‘I do understand’, I felt like going up to her and I go ‘I can speak well you know, I can speak English perfectly and even better than you’... They’re nice to Europeans... You ask them a simple question and they make a big do out of it ((...)) old people cannot understand English as much as we can and... maybe older people don’t understand the way that some people sort of really speak slowly to impress other white people around that go ‘oh god, look at this one’ – cos they think they’re inferior to them... they can talk about equality, but when you go down the bloody shop, and there’s the um post – and they and they’re supposed to be giving a service to people ((...)) there’s this woman at the counter and she sort of talks really slowly and she looks, you know rolls her eyes at some other white people, and then you know.. that just shows right that people stereotype you immediately just because of the colour... [Yasmin, Pa F 15]

In fact there were clearly certain similarities in the way that adolescents regarded ESL among Panjabi adults and Bangladeshi peers. In both cases, proficiency in English linked up with issues of racism, social access and position, and with both groups, the use of English was intricately connected with awareness of migration and transition. Generally speaking, though, among Indian and Pakistani informants, shared kinship and ethnicity combined with generational differences, and awareness of adult language difficulties was tempered with personal loyalty, an understanding of recent family history, and a sense of continuity and broadly orderly change. In contrast, although attitudes to Bangladeshis themselves seemed fraught with feelings of guilt, similarities in age brought Anglo, Afro-Caribbean and Panjabi youngsters into contact with people with whom they shared few preexisting affiliations, and their perceptions of Bangladeshis were overwhelmingly negative. This difference contributed to the ambiguity surrounding restricted proficiency in English, and this increased in encounters with the mass media.

A brief glance at the British press and TV reveals that although they are by no means the only form in which they have been represented, pejorative sociolinguistic images of South Asians have had a wide national currency. More particularly, many of these stereotypes have inherited ideas about ‘babu’ developed during British imperial rule in India (Dummett 1973:279; Lawrence 1982:73-4; Goffe 1985; Khan 1986; Matthews 1986). The Oxford English dictionary reports the first use of ‘babu’ in English at the end of the eighteenth century and defines it as “A native Hindoo



gentleman; also (in Anglo-Indian use), a native clerk who writes English; sometimes applied disparagingly to a Hindoo or more particularly, a Bengali with a superficial English education". Yule and Burnell ((1886) 1985:44) have a further 1873 reference which characterizes 'the babu' as 'pliable, plastic... receptive... [and] servile'. Adolescents recognized the potential significance of this racist imagery in shaping the way that Anglos (and others) perceived South Asians, but their reactions to these caricatures, and to the comedians that performed them, were varied and often ambivalent.

you laugh at first but if you think about it, why should they take the piss out of the way we talk [Pa M 15]

A [In F 15]: I hate that, especially when- they do it on the telly as well, don't they

B [In F 15]: stereotypes

A: I don't like it... it's sort of a shame some of the younger audience, white people, they think it's true [In M 17]

I think it's quite funny, I mean it's just part of life innit... not everybody can speak proper English can they [In F 15]

A [Pa M 15]: he's good, he's a laugh

B [Pa M 15]: he's a big bastard he is, a racist

do you reckon he means it? [In M 17]

The effect of all this was that in a number of often contradictory ways, the association between South Asians and limited English proficiency was an insistent part of the social knowledge that adolescents carried round with them, and this tied in with the stylized performance of Asian English that was common in local adolescent discourse.

Informants often said that youngsters put on an 'Asian' accent and projected a comic persona that was deferential, polite, uncomprehending and incompetent in English – 'jolly good', 'very good, very good', 'excuse me please' and 'I no understanding English' were the kinds of utterance they reported. This was most typically described as a subterfuge that Indian and Pakistani youngsters used to undermine white authority figures, and this sort of strategic exploitation of limited English has been quite widely reported elsewhere. But it could also be targeted at Bangladeshis, and there were accounts of its use between friends. In fact, the link



between Panjabi accented English and the social imagery of 'babu' was certainly not invariant, and there were reports of it being either elaborated or displaced in drama lessons at school, when pupils sometimes played South Asian adults.

Evaluations of stylized Asian English were mixed. Some Panjabis were quite celebrated for their comic and/or daring performances, though by some informants, these were classed as 'full time dossers'. Using it 'to have a laugh' among friends was generally regarded as all right, and this could be extended to whites and Afro-Caribbeans. Their use of it however, was much more hazardous:

A: no no it's natural, man, it's natural

B: we can laugh at our own kind

A: when someone else, white, especially white.. when a white person does it, we take it serious [In M informants]

A: Leander ((AC)) does it for a laugh in the class sometimes

B: I think she's a bit of a racist if you ask me [In F informants]

It's more the Indians and these lot that put on the accent than us... we'd do it to people who we know who don't take offence... Like Asif and them. Asif wouldn't give two fucks, unless they've got a bad mood. If you did it with Ishfaq on a bad day.. he's liable to go wild... say you're being a racist and all that [An M informant]

In fact the use of stylized Asian English could sometimes express quite serious animosity:

Extract I.12

Participants: David, Paul and Cyril [all 15 AC M], BR

Setting: Interview. Lenny Henry is a very popular black comedian. (Simplified and abbreviated transcription)

David: 'jolly jolly good' ((laughter))

BR: why laugh?

Paul: cos that sounds so stupid when people do that, ((laughing:)) that is just really is taking the piss... ((serious:)) I mean if if I was an Indian, I wouldn't like that at all. I think that is really bad ((...))

BR: you never put on an Indian accent at all?

Paul: oh yeh, I've done that if they try and put on a black one. Simple as that.

BR: so you've done it back?.. Can you give me an incident where you did that?



- Cyril: well in my art lesson, there was this Indian guy, and he goes like this.. what did he say David? he goes, he goes 'the four Lenny Henry's' and I go 'yes jolly jolly good' ((laughter)) he got really offended by that because it was funny
- David: it was, I was rollin' on the-
- Cyril: and after I said that he shut up straight away.
- BR: who was that?
- Cyril: some guy called Harbinder, he's my mate but he just came out with it 'the four Lenny Henry's' and I go 'jolly jolly good'
- BR: but you say he is a mate?
- Cyril: yeh, but even though they're mates, they still unconsciously, or sometimes on purpose, still come out with the stereotypes innit. Everybody does it

2.5 Comparison of SAE, Panjabi and Creole

Though there could clearly be quite a lot of variation from situation to situation, friendship appeared to play an important part in eliciting a favourable response to black and white uses of stylized Asian English. In this regard, it resembled both Creole and Panjabi. However, as an intergroup (and indeed ingroup) currency, Indian and Pakistani informants were generally rather less enthusiastic about stylized Asian English than they had been about Panjabi, and both in this respect and in terms of wider interethnic awareness of the dangers of crossing, SAE was closer to Creole. SAE and Creole were also similar in so far as in both cases, there was often a sense that crossing was least likely, least appropriate, or indeed most hazardous for Anglos. In contrast, in other-ethnic Panjabi, Anglos had often been mentioned as the group that was *most commonly* involved.

The common factor behind these responses to SAE and Creole might well lie in the extent to which adolescents could gain access to these languages *outside* local peer relations. Where neighbourhood social networks controlled the flow of linguistic knowledge, a crosser's disposition would be more or less known and there could be some guarantee of amicable intentions. In cases where a language variety was misused, effective means of redress would be on hand, and its inheritors could generally play a direct and active part in shaping the interracial meaning of a language. None of this could be assured if a variety was made available to a much larger audience through mass communication channels, as was indeed the case for both SAE and Creole. In this wider national context, they could accrete stigma or prestige in ways that lay far outside the sphere of local

network influence. Whether or not adolescents embraced or abhorred their public meanings, these languages were now partially removed from the cross-ethnically privileging zone of neighbourhood familiarity, and so now in addition, majority-minority relations and white domination, derogation and expropriation could all become part of the socio-cognitive framework relevant to the evaluation of language crossing. There is some additional support for this explanation in the fact that it was precisely at the point where Panjabi acquired a more salient public profile that comments started to focus on the absence, inappropriateness, and incongruity of white participation. Through live performances, local radio and minority programmes on national TV, bhangra was starting to receive increasing amounts of public attention, and here comments about whites as a group were much more negative than before:

- A: there were two white girls singing the chorus
 B: yeh that was sick I reckon (...) that was shameful (...) it sounded alright, you could tell what they were saying, it sounded alright (), they should have Indian women there though innit [Informants: In and Pa 15 M]

he was an English guy... and everyone was just cracking up about him... he was a hippy ((laughs)).. his long hair, he was playing the guitar and um em he sang a song – first the Indian guy sang and then after a couple of songs he sang it (...) they were just taking the mickey out of the guy but he was good, really good (...) he cracked me up [In 14 F]

I don't think they let whites join, because (...) they probably think they're intruding and it doesn't concern them so why should they come (...) they jeer us, they mock us and then they want to join [Pa 15 F]

This linked into a second distinctive similarity in the interracial use of SAE and Creole. Both were linked to a set of well defined attributes – one connoted linguistic incompetence and bumbling deference, and the other tough assertiveness, quick-wittedness, and opposition to authority. Behind these lurked variations on the victim/problem and clown/threat dyads endemic to the dominating discourses of British racism (Gilroy 1987; Dummett 1973:212; Carlin 1975; Hebdige 1979:2,88; Walvin 1987; Verma 1985), in which Asians were stereotyped as compliant newcomers, ineptly oriented to bourgeois success, while Afro-Caribbeans were portrayed as troublemakers, ensconced in the working class and adept only in sports and entertainment (P. Cohen 1972:29; Rampton 1983; Hewitt

1986:216; Gilroy and Lawrence 1988:143; Jones 1988:217-218). In contrast, adolescents found it much more difficult to associate Panjabi with any set of well-defined characteristics. For Panjabi, there was no equivalent to the phrase 'acting black' and on the one occasion when 'acting Indian' was used, it referred to stylized Asian English. This absence of a highly defined Panjabi stereotype was doubtless due to its inter-racial currency being much more exclusively tied to local neighbourhood activity.

Only analyses of interaction can give a full idea of the extent to which adolescents either endorsed or subverted these stereotypes when they were invoked. But in closing this initial description of the way that youngsters reported on cross-ethnic multilingualism, one clue to their orientation can be found in the time frame that they used to authorize language crossing. I have already described the way that outgroup uses of both Panjabi and Creole were explained and justified as well-established local traditions, for many informants dating back to their pre-teens. Admittedly, the time-span in these legitimations was primarily biographical, but elsewhere, there was a sense of the role that language played in marking out the historical trajectory of social groups. There is an idea of forward movement in Asif's (albeit macho) intimation of the significance of Creole:

Extract I.13

Participants: Asif [15 Pa M], Sukhbir [15 In M], BR
Setting: 1987. Interview. [Simplified transcription]

BR: do you think there's a lot of difference between the ways
boys and girls talk

Asif: yes there is... a lot

BR: yeh?

A: yeh

BR: like what

A: well, we you know think quick, we got... they you know...
only some of the girls, some of the girls are.. like the posh
ones they know what to say innit.. (but) some of them don't
know the future language you see, we do... they only know
the past, they're they history you see

BR: uhuh

A: yeh

BR: what's the future language then?

A: pardon

BR: what's the future language?

A: ah like all this 'raas klaat' and all this, man, nobody knows
it you know

BR: right.. future? how do you mean the future?

A: ah you know like er.. we say all these 'kukabin'... them girls don't come out with no words you know, and they copy us

BR: and the past language?

A: they only know the past.. like you know, just ordinary past language... English, they don't use no slang or anything.. only some of them.

While these data only provide a glimpse of Creole conceived as 'the future language', there was abundant evidence that Asian English stood for a past that adolescents were now leaving behind. This was seen as a language of transition, associated with adult migrants and new arrivals who were seen as having adapted only imperfectly to the vernaculars dominant in the new country. Many informants felt some loyalty towards varieties of Asian English ('I mean our parents speak like that ((...)) well he grew up here my dad, but my mum does, and you know it's sort of- just sort of becomes part of you'), but in striking contrast to both Creole and Panjabi, they weren't associated with any prestigious youth creativity capable of attracting new adherents. Indeed, when stylized, secondary representations of Asian English were placed in time, it was generally proposed that these were declining in their influence (despite the fact that there were more instances in the 1987 recordings than there had been in 1984):

it's out of fashion now, they used to do it. ((It was)) in fashion in 1982. It was racism, more common then. [15 yr old male of Bangladeshi descent]

it happened in the middle schools ((...)) I don't think it's popular in Upper Schools, no, cos you sort of grow up more and you just sort of forget it, don't ya [An M 15]

A [Pa M 15]: did you watch the plays today? ((...)) it's out now 'yes yes' ((in SAE)), it's silly man.. it's stupid all this 'very good very good', that's out now, it's not in, you know, when you talk ((...)) it didn't sound good ((in the plays)) ((...))

BR: did people laugh a lot at that?

A: no, they used to but not now, nobody laughed

2.6 Summary and overview: A local and historical setting for language crossing

To conclude, it is worth summarizing the empirical description so far.

This chapter has looked at the understandings of language crossing



that adolescents expressed in interviews, and considered the ways in which these were integrated with perceptions of class, race and community. It started to build up an account of how national and local conditions could affect the social meaning of other-ethnic language use.

Among my informants, the interethnic mixing indexed by language crossing appeared to exist in a socio-cognitive space bounded by both race and class difference. Broadly speaking, crossing was not regarded as a legitimate or likely currency among either posh whites or Bangladeshis, who were seen respectively as superior and inferior groups lying above and below the ambit of 'ordinary' local adolescent practice (though of course, in actual fact, both groups might make use of outgroup varieties, and Bangladeshi informants certainly employed all three). In part, this differentiation was undoubtedly informed by objective patterns of economic, residential and educational stratification in Stoneford, and it corresponded with the social network structures I outlined in chapter 1.

However, an exception was made for white girls from outside the neighbourhood, and this points to a dynamic element in local perceptions of the 'demographic' position of the people who participated in 'normal' peer group practice. The admission of non-local white girls to the most prestigious sites for Afro-Caribbean and Panjabi youth culture opened up a dialogue with the 'posh', without in any way abandoning the symbols of ethnicity that differentiated Newton and Ashmead adolescents from the rest of town. This tuned with evaluations of poshness that were often favourable when they uncoupled it from snobbery. An interest of social (and historical) movement upwards was also evidenced in the view that Asian English was a variety that adolescents were gradually leaving behind.

Neighbourhood co-residence was another factor that could mitigate the social divisions generated by the wider pattern of majority/ minority relations in Britain. White boys often participated in mixed networks if they lived in Ashmead, and in the contexts of these friendships, they had access to the use of other-ethnic languages. However, if a language also operated conspicuously outside the confines of local peer relations, race stratification seemed to reassert itself as an issue, and white use appeared to become much more conditional.

Many of the quotations from informants have suggested that although it didn't stand for a seamless racial harmony, as a general practice language crossing was capable of carrying solidary interethnic meanings. At least in its interview representation, the use of an outgroup language could be cross-ethnically 'we-coded'. Set within larger coordinates of class and race, themselves cross-cut by community and gender, this chapter has tried to trace out local folk ideas about who 'we' was.

In addition, we have started to compare three varieties in the multilingual peer group repertoire in terms of their more specific symbolic meaning potential and their interethnic accessibility. There were several broad similarities in the way that adolescents described Creole, Panjabi and stylized Asian English: they could all figure in joking cross-ethnic interaction between friends, they could all be used competitively, all could be used against teachers and authority, and they were all ambiguous in so far as none was insured against racist intentions. But patterns of divergence and overlap were more complex than that, and (albeit at a risk of oversimplification), they are summarized in figure 2.1.

	Creole	Panjabi	SAE
Recognition given to serious youth cultural as well as joking uses	+	+	-
Fairly unqualified enthusiasm for outgroup use	-	+	-
Close association with inheritors/experts ⁹ a basic requirement for access	-	+	-
Models widely available through mass media	+	-	+
Well-defined stereotypic attributes	+	-	+
White (male) use especially dangerous, unlikely or incongruous	+	-	+
	(except in bhangra)		

Figure 2.1: Interview discussion of crossing into Creole, Panjabi and SAE: Summary of major similarities and differences.

Within this, the images of Creole and Asian English made available through mass channels were also radically different. So much then for the chapter's descriptive contents – what of its wider relevance?

So far, my concern has been (a) with institutional organization, (b) with



social knowledge as this relates primarily to race but also to class and gender, and (c) with the relationship of both of these to crossing's symbolic meaning potential. In fact, in its discussion of the people, styles, contexts and evaluations typically associated outgroup language use, this chapter has followed a well established path in the study of code-switching and bilingualism, where often a range of sociolinguistic data sources are analyzed in order to produce an account of a language's symbolic association with particular socio-cultural domains or frames of meaning (cf e.g. Fishman 1972; Blom and Gumperz 1972; Hill and Hill 1986:Ch. IV; Heller 1988:1-24). However, most studies address the relationship between bilinguals and the languages of their own inheritance, and attend much more closely than I do to language use in intra-ethnic spheres. Here, in contrast, the main focus is on the relationship between speakers and the languages of ethnic outgroups, and instead of looking at the ways in which intragroup practices enter, affect and adjust to intergroup experience, this study starts with a situation of intergroup contact and addresses the processes through which this might be reconstituted as a new, mixed, ingroup.

In stratified urban societies (and probably elsewhere), the language varieties associated with different social groups often become the site of diverse and conflicting symbolic meanings. At its simplest, speakers come to see their languages not only as a means for the direct expression of their intentions, but also as reified objects in the perception of outsiders (Bakhtin 1981:367), so that their words "are not simple acts of reference, but are seen as carrying an 'ideological' burden" (Hill and Hill 1986:392). In Bakhtin's terms, "there are no neutral word and forms... all words have the 'taste' of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life" ((1935) 1981:293). In fact, given the large scale relationships between language and social organization established in macro-sociolinguistic analyses, in mixed discourse "there are not only (and not even so much) two individual consciousnesses, two voices, two accents, as there are two socio-linguistic consciousnesses, two epochs... that come together and consciously fight it out on the territory of the utterance" (Bakhtin 1981:360; also Hill and Hill 1986:392).

Oriented primarily to the contradictory valuations set up in the context of ethnic stratification, the descriptions in this chapter have described some of the disparate and conflicting 'sociolinguistic horizons' that potentially converged on adolescent speech. If, like most other studies, my analysis of intergroup experience had started out in the close observation of one

group's intra-ethnic discourse, it might have been difficult to avoid the impression that when groups came together, this struggle between symbolic meanings could only create chaotic sociolinguistic diffusion, endemic conflict and communicative breakdown. Instead, however, there was quite a lot of consistency in what informants said about how people from different ethnic groups used one another's languages. This suggests that in fact in Ashmead, this 'heteroglossia' was itself partly conventionalized, with some agreement on procedures for handling the socio-ideological contestation that polyphony entailed. The task is now to describe some of those procedures, and to do so, interaction becomes a central object of attention.

Notes

1. My sample involved only twelve black informants (7M 5F), whereas Hewitt's black and white informant group totalled seventy (1986:9).
2. In 1984, there were two Anglos among the 21 non-Afro-Caribbean adolescents singled out in reports, and in 1987, there was one white among 10 named individuals.
3. Each ethnic/sex category of Panjabi crosser – black males, black females, white females, white males – was illustrated in the reports of at least 4 or 5 informants (i.e. 4 or 5 people mentioned a crosser who was black and female, 4 or 5 people mentioned a white male crosser etc).
4. There was agreement between at least six informants (2 In M, 2 In F, 1 Pa M, 1 Ba M) that whites used Panjabi more than Afro-Caribbeans (in two interviews it was suggested that this was because 'black people have their own language'). Only one informant suggested that as a group, black peers (girls) used it most. Four pairs of interviewees (2 Pa F, 1 Pa M, 4 In F, 1 In M) attributed more Panjabi use to boys than girls, and 3 white informants (2F 1M) said the same thing specifically in relation to white users.
5. About 14 informants of Indian and Pakistani parentage reported black uses of Panjabi, and about 14 reported white uses. About 10 Afro-Caribbean and Anglo informants reported other black or white peers using Panjabi. Apart from Bangladeshi informants themselves, only two people noticed any convergence towards Panjabi on the part of Bangladeshi peers.
6. This exclusion was matched by the way that neither Bangladeshis nor non-Ashmead white boys participated in local white, black and Panjabi friendship networks to any significant degree (cf chapter 1.7 above).
7. For example:

in India right, the people that I've seen that talk English... talk strict English, you know. Here, this is more of a slangish way... the English that people talk round here you know, they're not really talkin' proper English... if you go India right... they say it clear, in the proper words.



8. In addition to many interview comments, evidence for this comes from a 1984 questionnaire given to 15 bilinguals of Indian and Pakistani descent and 5 Anglo and Afro-Caribbean monolinguals. Among other things, they were asked to comment on their own English proficiency, and the English proficiency of people and groups around them. The results of this questionnaire are presented in Rampton 1987a, 1988.
9. 'Inheritors' of a language are people with family links to a particular variety. 'Experts' are people who use it well. This distinction is discussed at some length in chapter 13.7.







Part II
Interaction with Adults:
Contesting Stratification





3. Stylized Asian English (i)

Interactional Ritual, Symbol and Politics

This part of the book focuses on adolescent code-switching that was either directly addressed to adults, or that occurred when adults were a significant presence. Chapter 1 asked whether language crossing could feature in the development of an active sense of urban community, in which different local groups came together and contested common forms of domination experienced in their everyday lives. After that, chapter 2 reported adolescents saying that language crossing was an anti-teacher activity. It is the combination of these two possibilities that generates the central question addressed throughout Part II: how far and in what ways was adolescent crossing a strategy of resistance to adults in authority, helping to develop a sense of local group identity?

The next three chapters will look at the evidence on stylized Asian English, Panjabi and Creole in turn. The present chapter begins with a short outline of the linguistic features used to identify a stretch of speech as SAE. After that, interview reports of SAE code-switching with teachers are considered, and these suggest quite a close connection with ideas about youth cultural resistance. However, when actual incidents are examined, it becomes clear that informant reports oversimplify the social relations involved in adolescent-adult SAE. At this point, the analysis of symbolic ritual in interaction becomes relevant. Ritual is a slippery concept, and so a special effort is made to define the way in which I shall want to use the term. In the process I also develop a view of the connection between micro and macro levels of social organization, and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the links between interpersonal discourse and larger political processes.

3.1 Linguistic features marking speech as SAE

There was a range of grammatical, prosodic and segmental features that differentiated stylized uses of Asian English from the local vernacular variety of English. Sometimes it was signalled through deviant verb forms and by the omission of auxiliaries, copulas and articles. Where they did occur, verbal auxiliaries were rarely contracted. Prosodically, this code was generally characterized by the stressing of every syllable, with no apparent nucleus. Intra-sentential pitch changes sometimes seemed abrupt, often involving a greater range than was normal in vernacular English. In terms of its consonantal features, retroflexion was extremely common,



and voiced and voiceless plosives were either heavily aspirated, or unaspirated completely. Whereas the local vernacular involved a good deal of T glottalization and H dropping, these were rare in stylized Asian English. /w/ could be changed to [v] or [b] and there were also instances of epenthesis. With vowels, nasalization was common and long vowels were often shortened. Diphthongs were usually changed to monophthongs, so that for example the vowel in 'go' was variously realized as [ɔ], [ɒ] or [o], and 'day' was realized with [e] or [ɛ]. A short central open vowel, roughly equivalent to RP /ʌ/ in 'cup', was very common as a replacement for vernacular English /ə/, /æ/, /ɒ/ and /a:/. There was often an absence of schwa reduction. The switch from vernacular to Asian English was often marked out by a change in loudness, pitch, voice quality and/or speed of delivery. Though there was variation in the density with which these features co-occurred, the emic status of this code was attested (a) by the fact that informants had no difficulty in identifying it when listening to recordings, (b) by the examples that they produced in interviews, and (c) by the systematic patterning of its use in spontaneous interaction.

3.2 Interview reports

It was commonly reported that when a class was faced with a new teacher, or a temporary supply teacher, Panjabi pupils might respond to being addressed by pretending that they didn't know much English:

Extract II.1

Session with Ian [An M 15] and Richard [An M 15] in which findings from the 1984 research were being discussed. [Simplified transcription]

Ian: if a copper comes up to you right, and you ain't done anything ((...)) or just say you got a supply teacher in, Ben, and she asks you a question and Asif or someone will say '**excuse me me no understanding**'

Rich.: yeh

Ian: and and ((laughs)) you know it w- she she knows very well that you can understand her but it get her ff- ((quietly:)) do you mind if I swear – it gets her pissed off

Rich.: ((laughs))

Extract II.2

Interview discussion with Kuldip [In M 14] and Faizal [Pa M 14] of 1984 findings. Later on, Harbans was described as 'our clown', 'our clown of



dress (Miss) and an excuse in terms of personal inability (Goffman 1971:111; Heritage 1984:270). Thirdly, in addition to exploring the boundaries of teacher control, this fabrication might contain an element of political testing. There was a general consensus that, at least on the surface, there wasn't much racism in the locality, but that it was in the areas beyond that you'd be much more likely to meet it: 'if you lived outside it would be racist' [Pa M 15], 'our school is not prejudiced' [An M 15], 'Southleigh teachers aren't racist – been with Asian people for years' [In M 17]. In contrast, 'you find (it with) some teachers who come from villages outside' [In M 17]. The persona projected in these reported events reflected white stereotypes about Asians being polite but incompetent in English. If this was part of a new teacher's conceptualization of their pupils, then they could be drawn into ineffectuality. And finally, Anglos (and doubtless also Afro-Caribbeans) could appreciate aspects of this strategem (even though the active character of Tony Marsh's participation was unusual and threatened to instantly expose the ploy).

From these accounts, it looks as though SAE constituted a form of resistance, and this is the interpretation that Parmar puts on comparable reports in an influential publication from the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (1982:264-5; see also chapter 5.8 below). Indeed as extracts II.1 and II.2 indicate, this interpretation made sense to informants themselves when it was discussed with them (see also Rampton 1992:34-46). Even so, interview data often have distinct limitations. Analysis of situated interaction indicates that in fact there was a good deal of idealization in these reports. In actual practice, the political significance of such acts could be much harder to adduce.

3.3 Incidents observed

In my data, SAE was quite often used where adults were a relevant presence, either as addressees or as butts within earshot. Although the quality of their recording varied and some were noted in my diary rather than taped, there were about 40 instances. These involved teachers, caretakers, dinner ladies, youth workers, and myself (either as a youth worker or a researcher). In one group of informants it was suggested that SAE was mainly used by 'full-time dossers', and there was some evidence that with adults, SAE was more commonly used by adolescents who had animated, fairly uneasy relationships with people in positions of authority at school or in the youth club. Indeed, in the extracts that follow, one group of boys figures disproportionately. But despite that, reports suggested that SAE to adults was quite common, and in my data, it was used by more than 20

males (of whom 3 were of Caribbean descent and 2 Anglo) and two females (both Panjabi).

This was one incident:

Extract II.3

Asif (Pa M 15, wearing radiomicrophone) and his friend Alan (An M 15) are in detention for writing on desks during lessons. They are being temporarily supervised by Mr Chambers, standing in for Miss Jameson who is trying to see the Headteacher about something else. Round about lines 31 or 32 their friends Salim and Kazim (both Pa M) arrive at the door at roughly the same time as Miss Jameson.

- 1 Asif: there's loads of writing on this table (2.0) I just
 2 wrote two: words on there and then she put me in
 3 detention [ɪ] (.)
 4 Alan: ENNIT (1.0) guess what I put
 5 Mr C: what were they ()
 6 Alan: I put M R
 7 Asif: ((laughs)) I wrote mister right
 8 Mr C: () (.)
 9 Asif: that's it (1.0)
 10 Alan: ennit that's it ()
 11 Mr C: what () was there?
 12 Asif: what?
 13 Mr C: what ()
 14 Asif: yeh I know Alan wrote them
 15 Alan: don't be silly
 16 Asif: ((louder)): eh don't be silly now
 17 ((half laughing:)) look you're in
 18 detentⁱion so tell the truth
 19 Alan: you can't blame it on me now
 20 Asif: ((loud)): tell the truth Alan (2.0)
 21 Asif: she goes I don't trust you (.) she goes well I-
 22 Mr C: (neither
 23 do I Asif) (.)
 24 Asif: what?
 25 Mr C: I don't tr^ust (you)
 26 Asif: I don't trust YOU .
 27 ((half laughing)) I tell you straight right (7.0)
 28 ((?Mr C? whistles for 4.0 secs))
 29 Asif: nobody trusts a cowboy (1.5)
 30 Mr C: (what?)

- 31 Asif: ((laughing quietly)): () (.)
- 32 Mr C: ()
- 33 Alan: [()
- 34 Asif: ((f)) Kaz [ethe ro ethe ro]
((Panj: stay here stay here))
- 35 Mr C: (see you messing around)
- 36 Alan: [()
- 37 Asif: ((chants)) ['te'ri _____ 'a: ,di: ,di:]
((ff)) ((Panj: your + (obscenity) + nonsense))
- 38 Ms J: 'after 'you
- 39 Asif: 'after 'you: `
[ʌf̩ə juːu]
- 40 Sal.: ((at a higher pitch)) 'after 'you: `
[ʌf̩əɹ juːu]
- 41 Mr C: ([() (1.0)
- 42 [((door bangs shut))
- 43 Ms J: ((f)) have we got another cloth?
- 44 Sal.: ((f)) alright [()
- 45 [((a lot of loud laughter))
- 46 Asif: ((f)) Kazim you want to help us?
- 47 Kaz: pardon
- 48 Mr C: you want another cloth do you
- 49 Asif: ((f)) yeh yeh say yeh [ɑ: ɑ: ɑ: ɑ:]
((Panj: yes yes yes yes
())
- 50 Ms J:
- 51 Sal.: yeh I might [()
- 52 Mr C: [()
- 53 Asif: yeh
- 54 Kaz: I'll help 'em
- 55 Sal.: yeh we' ll help 'em
- 56 Ms J: [no you won't (.) out
- 57 Kaz : ((l)) come on 'en
- 58 Sal.: ((l)) come on
- 59 Ms J: OUT (2.0)
- 60 Kaz : ((l)) we're not joking
- 61 Asif: ((laughs))
- 62 Ms J: disobedient yes
- 63 Kaz: I know but I (don't)
- 64 Mr C: ((l)) come on Salim
- 65 Kaz: ((f)) so what you doing here anyway
- 66 Ms J: ((f)) thank you [very much
- 67 Sal.: [((f)) you you try to chat her up
- 68 ennit ()

- 69 Ms J: thank you very much
 70 ((Salim and Asif (start to) leave about now))
 71 Asif: can I go now
 72 Ms J: no, and I want [these desks
 73 Asif: [WHAT YOU ON ABOUT UUH
 74 Alan: [Miss
 75 Asif: [two words I wrote (.) You sa- is this half hour job

Quite a lot was happening in this episode and I shall return to discuss it when the focus shifts to the use of Panjabi with white monolingual adults in chapter 4. But in the meantime, the use of SAE in lines 39 and 40 certainly appears to endorse certain aspects of the report data. Stylized Asian English occurred at a moment when boundaries were at issue: Miss James was negotiating with the two new arrivals about access through a door that had special significance as a threshold to the classroom where the detention was being held. It also encoded a stereotyped politeness that couldn't be taken at face value, since a separation between the words uttered and the speaker's usual selves was indicated by a sharp change from normal pitch, tune and accent (in addition, Asif appears to have been situated inside the classroom and was thus in no position to make a genuine offer). The episode also shows clearly that SAE could be inserted within the micropolitics of pupil-teacher interaction: skirmishing over the assertion of authority became overt in lines 56-64, and plainly a system of wider institutional sanctions was at stake throughout (detention as punishment for misconduct). On these grounds, SAE does indeed appear to serve as a double-edged instrument of resistance in institutionally asymmetrical cross-ethnic negotiation.

A closer look, though, indicates that the bald term 'resistance' doesn't adequately capture the spirit of this encounter. Contrary to the prototypical situation sketched out in interview reports, the teachers involved here were well known to these youngsters: elsewhere, Mr Chambers was favourably mentioned for his minor adventures into multiracial adolescent Panjabi (see chapter 4 note 3), and when they were later left alone, there was quite a lot of relatively amicable conversation between Miss Jameson and Alan and Asif. Perhaps more significantly, the switch to stylized Asian English occurred within a sequence of *reciprocal* kidding that was actually initiated by Miss Jameson. In lines 38-40, it was her falsely polite 'after you' – equivalent to saying 'please, do come and join us in detention' – that constituted the first move away from straight, untransformed talk. Once this initial shift from normal politeness had been introduced, it was easier for Asif and Salim to increase the non-literal framing of the ex-



change through the addition of false accents (Goffman 1974:159). Where one might usually expect a gradually attenuating sequence ‘after you – thanks (– my pleasure)’, the interlude now promised to develop into an immobilizing spin of reciprocal deference (Goffman 1971:143-4). The recording is unclear as to who entered the classroom first, but a non-literal frame was maintained subsequent to the use of SAE, with both teachers participating until their bluff was called and Miss Jameson tried to bring things down to earth in lines 56 and 59.

Taken as a whole, this episode undoubtedly did involve conflict, with the boys probing away at the limits of authority. But given the actions of Miss Jameson and Mr Chambers, the extract might be more easily be characterized as ‘sport’ (or as ‘verbal duelling’) than political resistance.¹ Indeed, in inviting Salim and Kazim into detention, it was the teachers who transgressed basic features of detention as an event where attendance is involuntary and made by prior arrangement. Asif’s use of Panjabi still awaits analysis, but certainly in terms of the overall outcomes, there wasn’t much evidence of students breaking out from institutional norms. Kazim and Salim left the scene, Alan and Asif carried on with detention, and generally, this episode might well represent the kind of interactive juggling between play and seriousness that has been well documented as a popular and enlivening feature of the teacher’s professional experience (cf e.g. Pollard 1985:205-217).

The effect of this discussion must be to qualify any temptation to exaggerate the force of stylized Asian English as a language of resistance. However, there were episodes where SAE was used in more plainly oppositional exchanges. In the reports and extract cited so far, the use of SAE imported an element of apparent politeness into the (partly playful) sparring between pupils and teachers (**‘excuse me Miss’, ‘I no understand English’, ‘after you’**). On occasion though, these surface elements were omitted. This can be seen in the two subsequent extracts.

Extract II.4

Salim, Asif and Kazim have devised an illicit but profit-making procedure (‘sneaking’) which involves obtaining more dinner than they’re entitled to and selling some of it off at discount prices to their friends. Salim, Asif and Kazim have just sat down in the dining hall with their friends and prospective clients, Cyril [AC M 15], Richard [An M 15], Jagdish [In M 15] and some others. Another, Conrad [AC M 15], is nearby, as yet unseated. Although standing at some distance, the suspicions of one of white dinner ladies have been aroused (and after this episode, she comes up to Salim to make enquiries).

- 1 Asif: lady's getting a bit suspicious man
 2 Kaz: mm
 3 : (what's wrong with) (8.0)
 4 Kaz: ()
 5 : ()
 6 : ()
 7 : () (4.0)
 8 Kaz: nice ennit
 9 : ([mm football
 10 Asif: [mm (5.0)
 11 ?Jag?: **I am 'wat'ching, you:** ((others laugh))
 [aɪ əm wʌtʃɪŋ ju:]
 12 Sal.: ,I am 'vat'ching ,you:
 [aɪ əm vʌtʃɪŋ ju:]
 13 Jagd: ((light laugh))
 14 Jagd: Conrad (comes and leans) there man
 15 : ()
 16 Sal.: CONRAD (.) CONRAD (.)
 17 Conr: what?
 18 Sal: ((quietly)): come on (1.0)

The switch in SAE appears to be a response to the dinner lady's gaze (see also Extract II.5), and it contains no elements of deference. In common with previous uses of SAE, however, this utterance can be interpreted as registering boundaries. One of these is the conversational enclosure consisting of the young people seated at the table, which the adult has crossed into with her scrutiny. Interlinked with this and giving the enclosure special meaning, is the boundary between legitimate and illicit pupil conduct which these transactions with food are transgressing. It seems to be both that are indexed in Extract II.5, recorded later on the same day:

Extract II.5

Due to the watchfulness of the dinner ladies, Salim and Kazim have had to abandon their plans for further 'sneaking'. The two are now walking together away from the dining room. 'Kit Kats' are a type of chocolate bar.

- 1 Sal.: (the common room) (1.0) put our bags upstairs (5.0)
 2 Sal.: ((makes a short high pitched noise))
 3 Kaz: still not full up (.)
 4 Sal: ((slowly)) "**still 'not 'fuc'king, bloody** full
fʊl]
 [stɪ:l ɪ̃ ã:t fʌ:kɪŋ b'ɜ:di:
 5 Kaz: I know
 6 I'm starving innit



- 7 Sal.: ((smile voice)) I was going to go there again ma:n
 8 do another sneaker, but (2.0) then
 9 Kaz: should've went the first time () (1.0)
 10 then the bitch looked
 11 Sal.: yeh I was going [there
 12 Kaz : [I know you went like this ()
 13 the bitch looked and (you jus')
 14 Sal.: I went like this when the bitch looks (.) I went like
 15 this (1.5) **ah fuck it** (.) I go **fuck it** (2.0)
 ((1.)) ((1.))
 [f:ʌ:kʰɪ:tʰ] [f:ʌ:kʰɪ:tʰ]
 16 ((in American accent:)) shark it man (.) ((seeing a
 17 passing teacher)) GO ON MISS WITH THE KIT KATS

In line 4, Salim repeated the most of Kazim's preceding turn, but upgraded it with swear words and an SAE accent. Without adding any propositional information, this seems to revivify the conflict over 'sneaking', and the subsequent exchange returned to address it explicitly. In line 15, this SAE voicing was relocated directly within the earlier confrontation, and the oppositional potential of SAE was here made plain and unmitigated (it maybe also provided a gloss on an illocutionary force that was more concealed in the SAE utterance that Salim actually used in extract II.4). Salim was sometimes nicknamed 'Gabbar' by his close friends, after a locally notorious villain in the film 'Sholay' (Sippy 1975). These boys sometimes did 'Gabbar' impressions and it is quite likely that this character provided the model for Salim's voice quality and slow delivery in line 15.

Even so, oppositional potential of this kind was never openly declared in any of the institutionally asymmetrical interethnic exchanges that I recorded or observed (and even in extract II.5, it was expressed sotto voce outside authority's earshot). In addition, it is important to try to distinguish the contingent features linked to particular occasions from more stable characteristics associated with the use of SAE. In due course, I shall argue that the discussion of conflict, resistance and social movements in chapter 1.2 was indeed highly pertinent for an understanding of stylized Asian English, but to avoid confusion of the essential and the incidental, it's helpful to look at the use of SAE in interactions that were much more obviously cooperative. Here are two, recorded in my fieldnotes:

Extract II.6

As I was going down the stairs into the gym at the youth club, a small Asian boy (about 12 years old) was walking down in front of me. Jim



Cook, the school caretaker, was at the bottom by the doors. He held them open for us and as the boy went through, he turned to Jim as he passed and said in a very strong Panjabi accent (not subsequently maintained in ordinary talk): **'how are you doing Mr Cook'**. As I passed through after him, without any hint of annoyance Jim said something like 'might as well keep the doors open all the time', which he did. [fieldnotes]

Extract II.7

I was standing behind the snack bar. Ishfaq (Pa M 15) came into the club soon after it opened and in our first exchange of the evening, he came up to me at the counter and said in a strong Panjabi accent: **'Ben Rampton can I help you'**. Though it was me doing the serving, I sustained the joke and asked for 20? Mojoes (chews). Then in his ordinary voice he placed an order for 10 Refreshers – is this a party I asked etc.. [fieldnotes]

In these two extracts, SAE is used in opening encounters. In both, a Panjabi youngster walks towards a white adult and the use of SAE marks the beginning of a period of heightened contact between them, even if it is only very brief. Explicit greetings of the 'hello, how are you' kind were very rare in face-to-face SAE encounters between adolescents and adults that I recorded, but the kind of encounter instanced in extract II.7 was more frequent. In this particular incident, Ishfaq's role reversal – could *he* help *me* – was unusual (though cf II.4), but more generally, there were eight (possibly nine) instances when combining with a request, the transition to a period of heightened access was marked with stylized Asian English.

To understand what's happening here, it is useful to consider the usual structure of opening encounters. The opening of encounters – and even minor comings-together over a counter (Goffman 1971:78) – can be most simply analyzed into two stages: (a) cognitive recognition, in which each participant places the other within some framework of personal and/or social information about them; and (b) social recognition, which overtly welcomes the approach, shows that further communication is permissible, and acknowledges their specific personal and/or social identities and their membership of a shared relationship (see Goffman 1971:Ch7 and Schiffrin 1977 for a more differentiated account). Functionally, the 'phatic' work done in openings

allows [interactants] the opportunity to explore, in a tentative way, the social identity and momentary state of mind of the other partici-



pant, in order to be able to define and construct an appropriate role for themselves in the rest of the interaction... it would appear to have an important propitiatory function in defusing potential hostility... [and] it allows the participants to cooperate in getting the interaction comfortably under way, using emotionally uncontroversial communicative material, and demonstrating by signals of cordiality and tentative social solidarity their mutual acceptance of the possibility of an interaction taking place (Laver 1975:218-219, 220, 221; see also e.g. Firth 1972; Laver 1981; Ferguson 1981:23-24; Kendon 1990:Ch6)

In none of the episodes in which adolescents approach with an SAE request was the need for phatic work very intense (for example '**we want lifting**' (a lift), '**you could take me in your car?**', '**Ben can I come**'). The motives for the encounters were transactional/ business-oriented (cf Goffman 1971:71), the participants already knew each other quite well, the adults addressed occupied institutional roles that made approaches and requests appropriate, and often there had already been an extended period of co-presence (and maybe an earlier exchange of greetings) (cf Laver 1975:218). Nevertheless, an understanding of the structure of opening encounters clarifies what appears to have been happening in these exchanges. The use of SAE can be seen as a social recognition that registered an identity contrary to the kind of cognitive recognition that the recipient might be expected to make in the circumstances. It foregrounded a *social* category membership ('Asian who doesn't speak vernacular English') at a moment when the adult would normally be setting themselves up for interaction with an individual known to them in a primarily *personal/biographical* capacity. And in doing so, it promised to *destabilize* the transition to comfortable interaction and the working consensus that phatic activity normally facilitates.

Not that this led to conflict or communicative breakdown. As has already been suggested, in a great many institutional settings people perform their institutional roles none too seriously, displaying personality and humanness in a stream of minor acts that declare a distance from their official capacities (Goffman 1974:297-298). If these deviations are considered to fall outside the limits of conduct deemed acceptable by the institutional authorities, they can become the site of serious conflict. But alternatively, if they can be accommodated within the institution, they provide the grounds for the growth of more rounded, three dimensional relationships. The identity switches evidenced both in these approach sequences and in the pupil teacher interaction can be seen as a small contribution to this unofficial sideshow, inviting the recipient to display their competence and

understanding of the frame play in progress. Although the tipping of the balance would be affected by a range of additional contextual factors, in principle the recipient might either flounder, unable to decide on the frame or footing being offered (ibid.:423), or they might take it in their stride, showing deftness and a willingness to play. One youth worker told me that when Salim spoke to her in SAE, she thought it put her at a distance and made her feel embarrassed (and I too generally felt uncomfortable when addressed in SAE). But another, being told '**I go toilet**' by a Panjabi boy walking back into the club after closing time, responded in SAE with '**oh you bloody loony you**'.

But this discussion of (minor) disturbance to smooth interactional transitions is just the first of three analytic stages that we need to move through in order to grasp the relationship between SAE code-switching and a wider arena of social conflict. As a second step, it is useful to ask what it was in all of these interactions that prompted adolescents to code switch at all, and what was involved in the fact that they chose to do so in stylized Asian English.

3.4 Ritual, symbol and politics in interaction

In terms of its interactional occasioning, switches to SAE frequently occurred when Asian youngsters were negotiating participation in an interactional enclosure in which a white adult would have some control or influence over them. This influence might involve the distribution of goods or services, or it could occur at the threshold of activities such as detention or basketball. Reputedly, youngsters used it in response to teacher elicitation and on a couple of occasions it was also used when I asked for more concentrated attention during interviews. Outside the negotiation of engagements immediately on hand, SAE was also used when knowledge was at stake that could affect the course of encounters at a later date. It was used when adults were felt to be gaining unratified access to information about pupil activities that they might subsequently use against them (extract II.4), and it was occasionally used in closings, where it is quite common to 'sum... up the consequence of the encounter for the relationship, and bolster...the relationship for the anticipated period of no contact' (Goffman 1971:79):

- BR: ((at the end of an interview)) okay, good, that's very good, I'm glad to have got a bit of that
 Kazim: **so am I glad too**
 [sɔ əm aɪ ɡlɜd t'u]



In fact, understanding SAE's interactional location assists the analysis of its symbolic significance. To make the connection, it is necessary to draw the idea of ritual into the account. Though not all of these characteristics are relevant at this stage in the analysis, ritual was defined prototypically in chapter 1.4 as (a) formulaic conduct, (b) displaying an orientation to issues of respect for social order and emerging from some sense of the (actual or potential) problematicity of social relations, (c) giving a more prominent place to symbols than to propositions, (d) eliciting a marked emotional response and creating an increased sense of collectivity between at least some of the participants, and (e) being itself subject to comment and sanctions.

Opening exchanges are often described as *low-key* rituals. For example, Laver suggests that they can be seen as "rites of passage... easing and signaling the transitions to and from conversational interactions" (1975: 234; see also Firth 1972); characteristic (b) is clear in the earlier quotation on phatic communion; and in the routine enquiries about health that feature in much greeting conduct, it is easy to note (a) (and in so far as recipients don't normally treat 'how are you' as a serious inquiry about their state of health, at least part of (c)). Goffman describes these as 'access rituals', but also argues that interpersonal ritual is much more extensive than this, generally becoming prominent whenever there are threats or uncertainties around social life's innumerable norms and boundaries. "When individuals come into one another's immediate presence, territories of the self bring to the scene a vast filigree of trip wires which individuals are uniquely equipped to trip over" (1971:106), and when this happens, ritual work is in order, as it is when someone looks like deviating from the lines of conduct expected of them (1967). The great range and often very minor scale of the actual and potential offences that occasion ritual activity can be seen in Brown and Levinson's account of face-threatening acts and politeness (e.g. 1987:65-67).

It is important to recognize, though, that interpretations of an offence do not limit themselves to the particular act or event in question, but instead, read a wider significance into the transgression. Goffman describes the way that people respond to transgression in the following way:

Social norms [or rules] are almost always couched in general terms, as if applying to a particular event because the event is one instance of a class to which the rule applies. Any deviation... on any one occasion when the rule is supposed to apply can give the impression that the actor may be delinquent with respect to the whole class of events. And any compliance can carry assurance regarding the actor's handling of all other events that come under the rule... This tendency of



individuals to read acts as symptoms gives an important expressive or indicative quality even to acts [that are significant in their own right], carrying as they do evidence of the actor's relation to a rule and, by extension, his relation to the system of rules of which the one in question is a part. And, of course, such information often is taken as relevant for an appraisal of the actor's moral character. (1971:97)

Complementarily, interpersonal ritual itself isn't primarily concerned with compensating for the specific discomfort or injury suffered on a particular occasion (ibid.:118). Instead it is "a conventionalized communication by which the individual... expresses his [moral] character" (1967:54) and indicates a more general relationship to "rules, which his actions appear to have broken, and to persons whose territories should have been protected by these rules" (1971:116).

Goffman's concern with interactional boundaries, with norms of propriety, with the wider moral implications of action, and with participants' active orientation to actual or potential offence, are all crucial to my analysis. But there is one sense in which his use of the term 'ritual' extends beyond the way in which I would generally like to use it in relation to language crossing. In Goffman's approach (e.g. 1981:21), sensitivity to the ritual significance of conduct is regarded as a pervasive feature of all socially situated speech and action, and it covers utterances in which explicit propositional meanings play a central role just as much as those in which symbolic connotations are primary. This has been a very productive assumption, as the work of Brown and Levinson (1987) testifies. But Brown and Levinson are sensible to talk of 'face work' and 'politeness' rather than 'ritual', since in much sociological and anthropological literature, symbolism is taken as a central feature in ritual, often counterposed to the modes of expression dominant in ordinary conversation.

The relationship between symbolism and factually oriented referential meaning is complex, and there is disagreement about the extent to which these involve different modes of cognitive processing.² Even so, whether it is a matter of degree or kind, a broad view of the difference between symbolic and ordinary communication is provided by Sperber (1975:94). Of ordinary communication he writes:

Our knowledge of the world is formed by organising statements according to... relationships [of implication and contradiction], by accepting a statement only with its implications – at least the most evident ones – and similarly, by avoiding contradictions. Experience



shows that... knowledge [of the world] is not immune to incoherences and contradictions, but all practical life is based on a continuous effort to avoid and correct them.

When we process an ordinary utterance in everyday communication, we analyze its propositions and integrate this with relevant pieces of world knowledge that we have brought to bear. In contrast, symbolic statements present a problem for routine propositional interpretation: they are often paradoxical and fairly immune to empirical contradiction. It is much harder to reconcile them with the bits of encyclopaedic knowledge that we first invoke, and this sets off the more extended process of memory search, which Sperber (1975) calls 'evocation'. A broadly comparable sense of the difference between practical and symbolic modes of communication informs many accounts of ritual:

Rituals... convey meaning by means of symbols, defined by one anthropologist as the 'minimal units of ritual' (Turner). If rituals are to be seen as a means of communication, they use very peculiar means... Rituals use symbols to refer and connote only in the vaguest of ways. Rituals employ relatively fixed sequences of language, and, above all, singing which hinders analytic communication. (Bloch 1985:699)

'Ritual' in the present analysis will obviously need to refer to a much more general set of activities than the religious rites that Bloch has in mind, but by the same token, it will also be necessary to keep symbolism firmly in view. As a concept, symbolism allows one to make connection with the role that ritual plays in wider societal concerns – concerns that Goffman plays down, but that are foregrounded in anthropological accounts as well as in the Gilroy argument outlined in chapter 1.2.

Let us return to the data on SAE. In the way that it was occasioned by movement across interactional enclosure boundaries, code-switches into SAE can be closely related to Goffman's account of access ritual. They also conformed to Goffman's notion in so far as they situated particular incidents within the framework of a more general social or moral relation (the gist of Goffman's account is that normally, the ritual activity occasioned by an act of transition means that in addition to their personal/biographical identities, participants would recognize each other as being generally considerate, decent members of society).

Here however, I have suggested that switches to SAE were designed to disrupt smooth transition and certainly, they partially obscured the speaker's personal identity. Beyond that, they appeared to evoke the wider

relation of Anglo-Asian domination as a relevant interpretive framework. This should certainly not be seen as the sum total of SAE's connotational resonances (see for example Extract II.5, where these are plainly much more complex). But this interpretation draws support from interview discussions (chapter 2.4), and it fits with these particular situations of use much more closely than those described in chapter 6 (cf Turner 1969:53 on the multivocality of symbols decreasing when they are studied in context). This being the case, it is possible to make more specific proposals about the way in which SAE might ruffle the transitions that occasioned it. SAE seemed to make relevant social knowledge about problematic intergroup relations, and to generate the potential significance of a 'worst case' scenario in which one of the participants might be seen as a white racist believing in babu stereotypes, or the other as an incompetent Asian (or both). And all this could be done while preserving politeness in the stylized surface features of the utterance.

To complete this account of the political character of interactional switching into SAE, the final step in the analysis entails further cross-reference to accounts of ritual as a macro-social, institutional practice. There are in fact a number of precedents for a shift between macro and micro examinations of ritual: Goffman's ideas were heavily influenced by Durkheim's study of religion ((1912) 1975), and this influence is also significant in Brown and Levinson (cf e.g. Goffman 1971:62-64; Brown and Levinson 1987:43-44; see also Collins 1988a, 1988b; Alexander 1988:190-1). Durkheim's work on religion has also been important for recent sociological analyses of institutional ritual, though running counter to his account, scholars have been at pains to emphasize first that ritual action need not be accompanied by an intense charge of collective emotional effervescence (Collins 1988a:110-111; Alexander 1988:190); secondly, that it is essential not to expect value conformity or a consensual outcome from the ritual process (Lukes 1975:296ff; Alexander (ed.) 1988); and thirdly, that no ritual is so rigid that there is no room for at least some improvisation (Turner 1974:82; also Parkin 1984).

Lukes' account is especially relevant to the present investigation. Lukes defines ritual as "rule governed activity of a symbolic character which draws the attention of its participants to objects of thought and feeling [objects, relationships, situations, ideas etc] that they hold to be of special significance" (1975:291). But he insists that this needs to be understood in the context of a stratified, conflictual and pluralistic society where there are 'socially patterned differences of interpretation among those who participate or observe' (ibid.:301). The political analysis of rituals should go:



beyond the conventional study of politics which... concentrates on who gets what, when and how, on 'how people get the things they want through government', and focus instead on mechanisms through which politics 'influences what they want, what they fear, what they regard as possible and even who they are'... It [should] explore the symbolic strategies used by different groups, under specifiable structural conditions, to defend or to attain power vis-à-vis other groups... It [should] also examine the ways in which ritual symbolism can provide a source of creativity and improvisation, a counter-cultural and anti-structural force, engendering new social, cultural and political forms... In this way, political rituals can be analyzed as part of what has been called the 'mobilization of bias'... – that 'set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals.. and constitutional procedures ('rules of the game') that operate systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at the expense of others'... And parallel analyses could be made of rituals that are not 'predominant' or hegemonic – whether these are subordinate and oppositional but posing no challenge to the existing social and political order, or else radically oppositional and representing a real challenge to the existing order. (ibid.:302, 305)

Code-switching into SAE can be seen as a 'mobilization of bias' at the level of interpersonal ritual. Taking its earlier description as a destabilising action sited at the boundaries of institutionally vested enclosures, we can say that it presents a challenge to the dominant social order in one of its most micro-interactional forms. But as Lukes and others emphasize, the outcome and interpretation of ritual action is open to variation and negotiation, and because of this, we needn't lose sight of the fact that these uses of SAE often seemed amicable. It has already been said (a) that in principle, the recipients of SAE might either flounder or flourish, and that (b) it conjured social knowledge of a wider pattern of intergroup stratification. Putting these two points together, we can suggest that if the subsequent interaction went badly, the problematicity of Anglo-Asian relations would be confirmed, with the interactants located on what could be construed as politically opposed sides. Whereas if it went well, then interaction could generate some reassurance that although it couldn't be ignored, knowledge of ethnic stratification wasn't dangerous or threatening for the relationship of these particular participants. In turn, the reception given to SAE might contribute to a sense of the legitimacy or otherwise of institutional relations and ultimately (along with other factors) affect the user's willingness to participate in them.

How does all this tie in with more general political processes? To

answer this question, it is helpful to return to our earlier discussion of urban social movements.

3.5 Interaction and social movements

As I have already indicated, a social movement can be seen as a loose collection of people drawn together outside the sphere of official political institutions by their active and enduring opposition to some very general socio-cultural pattern that oppresses them (Touraine 1985; Giddens 1989:624-9). In the context of dispute about race and nation, Gilroy suggests that this provides a productive way of characterizing the oppositional sensibilities developing in multiracial British inner cities. Since a social movement's fundamental concerns can cover "personal identity, the time and the space in everyday life, the motivation and the cultural patterns of individual action" (Melucci 1985:796; Gilroy 1987), there are good reasons for using face-to-face interaction as an arena for their empirical investigation, and the validity of an interpersonal perspective is endorsed when Melucci suggests that the term 'social movement' should be supplemented or replaced with the phrase 'movement networks' (chapter 1.2 above).

As the quotations from Lukes make clear, however, non-conformity and opposition can take a number of different forms, and some of these can be irrelevant to the kinds of resistance which sociologists identify with social movements. People may, for example, transgress dominant social codes in the course of a mass panic, but since this involves little more than a plurality of atomized individuals, it lacks the dimension of solidarity that characterizes a social movement. To distinguish it from several other kinds of oppositional activity, Melucci describes specifically *social movement* conflict in the following terms. (a) A social movement involves struggle between two (individual or group) actors, competing for resources or influence, and both sides in the struggle bring specific solidarities with them. (b) Instead of negotiating within an agreed framework (as typified in employer-trades union negotiations), the participants in a social movement break out from the working consensus that has been governing the argument hitherto. (c) Because they are defined as breaking the rules set for a dispute, social movements have a tendency to spread upwards through social structure from the sites where the conflict begins (see also Touraine 1981:87). They might start within a specific institution, but by challenging the power governing the local system of norms and roles, the argument soon becomes more than a matter of institutional business and a larger field of social contestation becomes relevant. (d) In

the process, the scope for negotiation diminishes, and the symbolic content of the dispute increases (Melucci 1981).

In the presence of adults, code-switching into SAE bore a number of similarities to this account of social movement conflict. Adolescents often switched into stylized Asian English with white adults in positions of institutional authority when the adults were on the point of increasing their control or influence (☞ a). The switch cast doubt over the frame governing subsequent interaction at the moment when it was introduced (☞ b). In switching, youngsters moved beyond the local occasion and seemed to make relevant a quite fundamental field of social contestation. Through symbolic action, race stratification was made available as a wider interpretive context for interaction, and both participants momentarily confronted the possibility of their being on opposite sides in the conflict about race (☞ c and d).

Admittedly, this appropriation of Melucci's definition of social movement conflict entails quite a radical shift of analytic levels. As in most sociological discussions of social movements, Melucci takes fairly large-scale features of social organization for his primary empirical focus – institutions, political systems and class relations. Phenomena such as these are rather more macroscopic than the main terms that we have been dealing with, and in this light, it wouldn't be surprising if when we tried to adopt an interactional perspective on Melucci's model of social movement conflict, we had to readjust certain analytic expectations.

At first sight, for example, it may be hard to accept that the minor doubts which SAE placed over the frame governing subsequent interaction could be equated with a social movement's breaking out from conventional rules for dispute, and with the decreasing scope for negotiation which this generates ([b]). As forms of disruption, SAE code-switching certainly looks very muted in comparison with the mass mobilizations, which Melucci generally has in mind. On the other hand, this may be no more than one would expect in interaction. Grammars may not have rules for managing what happens when rules are broken, but interaction does (Goffman 1981:21). The working consensus in interaction is often very far from fixed or inflexible, and conversationalists are famously adept at restoring orderly business when negotiation runs in to difficulty. This is not to deny that ruptures can occur (cf Roberts *et al.* 1992), but they may be much less spectacular in interaction than in more macroscopic social processes, and they may also be more threatened than achieved (cf G. Turner 1983:58-9).

But in other respects the shift to interaction produces analytic dividends. The analysis of macro-social phenomena necessarily involves the



aggregation of a wide range of different events and practices, and in this light, Melucci's insistence that there is no essential, single meaning or purpose in large-scale collective action is entirely fitting: "there are a plurality of analytical meanings which eliminate the apparent unity of the empirical object and yield a different evaluation of its structural components as well as its political implications" (Melucci 1981:173). A move towards interaction certainly doesn't eliminate ambiguity and analytic uncertainty: in the data we have analyzed, we can't say categorically what it was that SAE opposed (was it the particular adult, the institution that gave them their authority, the system of values that rated white above Asian, or some actual or potential combination of these?). Even so, ambiguity and analytic uncertainty are much less problematic. The analysis of situated utterance meaning covers many more intimately related contextual clues than one is likely to find in the analysis of macroscopic phenomena such as, for example, the green movement or youth subculture, and these aid and discipline the interpretation of what a particular action means. Furthermore, we have seen that indeterminacy in the symbolic meaning of SAE was an active feature of the interaction itself, interrupting ordinary processes of communicative comprehension, making the recipient's subsequent turn a little bit more problematic, but also affording both parties an opportunity to calibrate their relationship in their interpretations of the ambiguity (cf Sperber 1975). Ambiguity evidently mattered for participants themselves.

This leads into a second point. Studying interactional practices requires attention to the responses that code-switching elicits. These occur in close proximity to the symbolic action, and they not only display the recipient's orientation within the field that's been evoked, but also retrospectively affect the switcher's own interpretation of the significance of the political relations momentarily made relevant. This process means that to a considerable degree, an action's meaning is *jointly* constructed. One effect of this close relationship between utterance and response is to produce the relatively muted character of the frame disruption that we noted above. But more importantly, it provides a view of one of the ways in which urban communities can develop the heterogeneous solidarities described by Melucci and Gilroy. SAE appeared to raise controversial issues of identity, polarizing black-white and dominant-subordinate relations. But, as the code-switching data emphatically underlines, identity is, in Moerman's terms, "situated, motile, shaded, purposive, consequential, negotiated" (1988:90; also e.g. Erickson and Shultz 1982; Levinson 1983:295), and recipients could take SAE in their step, processing it in the context of other safer and more obviously bonding identity relations, which would



be activated before, afterwards or during. In fact in consequence, though some differences in the evocations generated by this symbol would be inevitable, the ritual practice could itself become accepted as part of a *common* tradition, and contrary to the assumptions of ethnic absolutism, this embraced white peers and it might even extend to teachers.

Close attention to interaction also makes it clear that the linguistic resources in the multiracial adolescent repertoire in fact carried *different* kinds of political momentum, and that in their relations to institutional hierarchies, some were more oriented to autonomy than opposition. This will become clear as the investigation now turns to Panjabi.

Notes

1. The following quotation from Edwards and Westgate 1987:96-97 meshes closely with the current analysis:

a great deal of classroom humour takes the form of repartee, whether between teacher and class or between teacher and individuals who seem almost to have been granted, or have claimed, a jester's license... Repartee trades on common knowledge, not only of particular events in past encounters which are referred to obliquely, but also of conventions which mark off permissible humour from humour which has 'gone too far'... [There is a] subtle line which can often distinguish cohesive from divisive humour... [and the] 'ritualizing' of insults [can] remove any offence as long as implicitly agreed limits are not overstepped. [This might occur when] a teacher is checking a pupil's work at his desk, but the interaction is clearly in public view. We suggest that to interpret it as evidence of the teacher's relationship with his class, it would be necessary to know how often such verbal duelling occurred, at what stages of lessons, and how far they constituted breaks from otherwise orderly, 'working' transactions... [In addition, it is essential to address] the immediate sequences in which the 'acts'... are located. In particular, it is argued that the function of an utterance is often unintelligible without reference to what came next.

2. Sperber 1975 emphasizes the difference between ordinary and symbolic interpretation processes by suggesting that they are handled by different cognitive mechanisms. Sperber and Wilson 1986 reject this view. Instead of seeing ordinary and symbolic interpretation as different in kind, they suggest that they differ in the amount of processing they require, the strength and specificity of the implications they generate, and the extent to which it is either the speaker or the hearer who takes responsibility for utterance meaning.



4. Panjabi (i) Interactional and Institutional Participation Frameworks

This chapter studies the way in which adolescents of Pakistani, Indian and non-Asian descent used Panjabi in the presence of white monolingual adults (drawing on about 16 episodes as well as on informant reports). It begins by discussing Panjabi's use in broadly conflictual interactions, but then moves on to illustrate Panjabi crossing in settings that were more cooperative. Central importance is attached to the ways in which the use of Panjabi structured the interactional participation of adolescents and adults (Goffman 1981). The latter were generally excluded from Panjabi exchanges, but the significance of this exclusion was very variable. Indeed, this exclusion was itself neither total nor necessary. A comparison is made with the participation frameworks entailed in the use of SAE, and the different social relations surrounding the use of these two varieties are interpreted as instantiations of their wider socio-cultural relationships to mainstream English. The micro-relations surrounding Panjabi reflected larger (though by no means universal) debates about cultural pluralism, whereas SAE's interactional relations were structured in the politics of assimilation.

4.1 Panjabi in conflictual interaction with adults

To start this analysis of how Panjabi figured in adult-adolescent relations, it is useful to return to Extract II.3 in chapter 3.3, and to begin by noting the ways in which Asif played along the boundaries of teacher control. When he instructed Alan to tell the truth and show respect for his punishment in lines 16,17 and 20 – 'look you're in detention so tell the truth' – he'd set Alan up (line 14) and was fabricating acceptance of a teacher's perspective. This was registered in Mr Chambers' 'I don't trust (you)' in line 25. The emphatic 'I don't trust YOU' in Asif's next turn does in fact look like a bald rejection of any interactional consensus that the teacher might try to establish, *except* of course, that it followed word for word what Mr Chambers had said and so in one sense it again respected the teacher's right to set the terms (if challenged, it would be easy for him to say that he was only agreeing).

The first use of Panjabi in line 34 – '[ethe ro ethe ro]', 'stay here, stay here' – continued this pattern of half-masked subversion. Admittedly, Asif was here addressing people who weren't legitimate participants in the

detention, and he was encouraging an action that was quite likely to disrupt it. But by doing this in Panjabi, which Mr. Chambers didn't understand, he hid its subversiveness and again, if challenged, he could deny any infraction (with for example, 'I was telling them to go away'). This use of Panjabi also illustrates the covertly directive role that Asif continued to play in the extract. In this friendship cluster, Asif was something of a leader (as is indicated for example in Extract I.2 where Hazel referred to this clique as 'Asif and them'), and this becomes apparent when Salim and Kazim enter the engagement. In fact, in addition to the opposition between school and peer group values, Asif's conduct during this interaction also produces a tension between his own authority and the teachers', and up to a point, he uses Panjabi as a way of preventing these two sources of influence from coming into direct confrontation.¹ Panjabi's function in concealing his own directives can also be seen in the switch in the reiteration in line 49.

However, the Panjabi used in line 37 – [teri _____ α:di:di:] – was rather different. The Panjabi utterances in lines 34 and 49 were clearly directed towards particular recipients, they carried propositional meaning, and they were simple but well-formed sentences that only the bilinguals present could be expected to decode. In contrast, the Panjabi in line 37 was an imprecation that veered into the nonsensical (according to the local translators), it didn't appear to elicit any response, and it drew on a stock of playground Panjabi words and phrases with which Alan was also familiar (see chapter 7). Rather than being used in covert tactical direction, here Panjabi's dominant function was to proclaim Asif's own affiliation to the values and practices of peergroup recreation, and as a result – in the subsequent interaction – none of his peers could be in any doubt about what was really going on when he appeared to follow the teachers in inviting them to stay.

From this episode, one might gain the general impression that Panjabi was indeed an instrument of covert opposition. But as with the analysis of stylized Asian English, it is vital to distinguish between what is contingent to a particular situation on the one hand, and on the other, the more stable social relations generated by the code. Unfortunately, fully bilingual uses such as those evidenced in lines 34 and 49 fall outside the brief of my analysis, and they would themselves need to be analyzed as merely one register among a number, many of these differing in the implied interlocutor relations. But given a governing interest in the development of multiracial solidarities, interethnically accessible utterances like the one in line 37 are of central concern, and other episodes indicate that

- 19 Alan: [vəddə nəkʰ]
 20 Asif: go on
 21 Kaz: he's gone
 22 Alan: he's gone (.) I've said it to him
 23 Asif: who was he with
 24 Alan: himself ((laughs)) [(he's a) loner (1.0)
 25 BR: [right right okay (.)
 26 ((referring to an utterance on the recording)) wha-
 27 wha- wha- what's dick gusty
 28 Asif: who
 29 Kaz: [Dick Dastardly (.) he just said it you know some
 30 () people
 31 BR: [Dick Dastardly
 32 Alan: and Muttley
 33 BR: okay

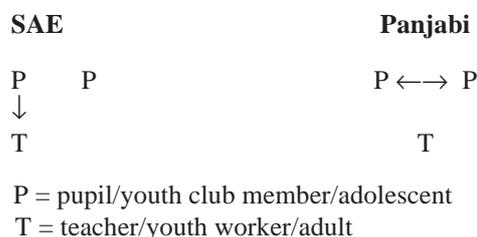
Several important issues raised by Alan's use of Panjabi abuse in lines 15 and 19 – for example, its relation to [teri _____ a:di: di:] in extract II.3, its status as a form of ritual action, and Asif's role as tutor – will be much fully discussed in chapter 7's discussion of peer group interaction. At this point, it is sufficient to say that it expressed antagonism *between peers*, and that this was its most common interracial form. Pupil-teacher conflict had no immediate relevance, and what's more, this episode didn't arise as a subversive distraction welcomed within a larger context of adult-adolescent opposition (as was the case in Extract II.3). Although they contain a disagreement, lines 1 to 7 indicate that the side involvement featuring Panjabi occurred within a main frame in which Kazim and Asif were keen participants (the listening activity that I was controlling). And rather than disrupting its central flow, their distraction from it synchronized with a temporary break that I had myself initiated (line 2). Indeed Kazim's interest continued for two turns after Alan had first introduced the tangential business of Salim (lines 11, 13 and 14). I did make one unsuccessful attempt to restart the main business while the talk focused on Salim (line 16), but after a short sequence in which all three boys discussed him, their attention returned to where I wanted it, with some only very light prompting (the boundary markers in line 25).

In both of the Panjabi episodes that we have examined so far, there are in fact two issues of interaction structure: (i) the framework of participation directly invoked by Panjabi, and (ii) the relationship between this and other participation frameworks. In both of these extracts, Panjabi utterances excluded adults, and in both, engagement in peer-peer discourse constituted time out from the lines of adult-adolescent communication

that were dominant. The difference between them was that in Extract II.3, peer-peer Panjabi provided a hidden space for undermining the dominant involvement, whereas in Extract II.8, it ran as more or less separate business. I shall shortly return to this difference, relating as it does to the character of (ii). But before that, it is worth dwelling a little on (i), since it provides a useful way of contrasting the social relations in the company of adults set up by the use of Panjabi on the one hand, and stylized Asian English on the other.

4.3 Adult-adolescent participation frameworks in Panjabi and SAE

In settings where adults were a dominant presence – in classrooms, at counters and in interviews – the data suggest that stylized Asian English was frequently addressed to the adult in control. SAE belonged in exchanges in which utterances were directed between pupil and teacher, youth club member and worker, researcher and interviewee. With Panjabi, the addressees were normally peers. There were obvious linguistic reasons for this difference: most white adults didn't understand Panjabi, whereas most Panjabi peers did (and within the restricted range of the playground variety, so did some white and black adolescents). In contrast, SAE was semantically comprehensible to teachers and others. The cultural frameworks that each evoked also differed in their accessibility. SAE drew on quite a full (and potentially troubling) set of images in dominant Anglo culture that were widely available to adolescents and adults alike; in contrast, most adults had very little view either of the playground practices where Panjabi was often relevant for non-Panjabi peers, or of the intra-ethnic themes and solidarities raised in its use among bilingual inheritors. The difference between them can be summed up diagrammatically, with arrows indicating the direction of address:



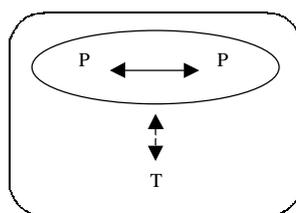
In fact, we can go further than this in the light of the preceding analyses: SAE was occasioned at the edges of interactional enclosures, generally



suggesting to its adult recipients that in spite of their overall institutional control, adolescent participation might be less than full-hearted. Panjabi was involved in no such adult-adolescent boundary negotiation. Instead, it set up an interactional enclosure that simply excluded monolingual adults. In the relation with adults that they set up at the moments of their use, one variety was about opposition and the other about autonomy.

But so far, the account only describes the most immediate participation frameworks invoked by these two codes. In classrooms and the other settings we have referred to, adults have overall responsibility for what goes on, and this makes them important as bystanders when Panjabi was being used. Their relation to peer-peer discourse is depicted by a dotted lined in the diagram below, and it now requires more discussion.

Panjabi



4.4 Bystanding as a contingent relationship

The relation between white adults and the enclosure instituted in Panjabi was variable, and subject to a wide range of contingencies such as for example, the tasks on hand, the adolescents' orientation to tasks and adult, and adult orientation to tasks and adolescents. It could sometimes be used to subvert a teacher's institutional authority, actively positioning him or her as a bystander. This was evidenced in extract II.3, and elsewhere it was reported that for example Panjabi was used to:

pass the answers around innit... if you're in class and somebody's stuck, you know, it's a good code sort of thing... today in class I was upset, and [the teacher] started saying you know get on with your work and I started swearing at him in Indian. [informant: In F 15]

Black and white peers wouldn't be able to understand all of such usage, but they could often understand bits of swearing, as well as a few Panjabi words which were quite widely used to refer to adults around the school (for example, dinner ladies were quite often known interethnically

as '[bʊdʒi]s' ('old women'), and one bald-headed teacher was widely referred to as '[aŋdʒa]' ('egg').

Subversion, however, was by no means a defining feature of Panjabi use with monolingual adults in authority. There was sometimes a feeling that teachers' proscription of Panjabi was unsurprising and acceptable given the requirements of classroom control; there was one recording where a boy used Panjabi to support a youth worker and undermine his friend when he was watching them play darts; and even in extract II.3, Asif's swearing in line 37 was mitigated by its deviant linguistic structure, which could work to suspend consideration of whether the propositions it expressed were true or false, maintaining it safely in the realms of the comic (cf Parkin 1980:60,61 and chapter 7.3 below).

Nor indeed was the exclusion of adults complete:

Extract II.9

Participants: Kuldip [In M 14 yrs], Peter [An M 14], BR

Setting: 1987. A play back session in the youth club. Kuldip and Pete have been listening voluntarily to recorded extracts on headphones, but in line 1, Kuldip indicates that he now no longer wishes to continue. (Perhaps it is worth adding that the dispute in this session was not typical).

- 1 Kuld.: oh be:N: (1.5) I can listen to this another day(.)you
 2 could sort of call me away [from Maths
 3 Pete: shshsh
 4 BR: no loo-listen I haven't =
 5 BR: =I really haven't got that much time (.)
 6 Pete: [()
 7 Kuld.: [you ain't going away
 8 BR: I am (.) I have to finish I have to f:inish the=
 9 BR: =programme at in December so [()
 10 Kuld.: [that's alright=
 11 Kuld.: = [I'll be at the youth club next week
 12 BR: [well I have- I have- I've I've got a really=
 ((acc))
 13 BR: =I've got a really crammed [time=-
 14 Kuld.: [I'll be at=
 15 BR: = you'll f- you'll have a reason not to do it then=
 16 Kuld.: = I PROMISE I'll do it then
 17 BR: no let's just finish this
 18 Pete: Kuld just do it now::=
 19 BR: = just do it now get it over with

- 20 Kuld.: [kɔ̃ʃi] shut up
 ((Panjabi: black pants))
- 21 Pete: [bʌndərə phɔ̃ddu]
 ((L2 Panjabi: ? fool))
- 22 Kuld.: [f:uck:ing]
 ((1.))
- 23 BR: look we'd have finish- we'd've-we'd've finished=
 ((dec.))
- 24 BR: =(slight laugh) now(.) [if you 'd er just (cooperated)
- 25 Kuld.: alright CA:rry: on(.) major
 ((1.))
- 26 BR: ((playing the recording again)) (1.0) and so what was=
- 27 BR: =he saying (.) he was saying [oggy oggy – oggy oggy
- 28 Kuld.: ((repeating)) that's two 10ps
 ((the session continues for a few more minutes))

Lines 1 to 26 were an insertion sequence set within a previously agreed activity that I was directing. It involved an escalating dispute about further participation, in which Kuldip mitigated his wish to withdraw by proposing alternatives (lines 1-2), elaborating them (lines 7 and 11), partially acceding to BR (line 10) and then finally promising to continue later (line 16). I countered these (lines 4-5, 8-9, 17), often with quite bald contradiction (lines 4,8,15,17). In line 17, rejection of what Kuldip wanted reached its plainest expression: I told Kuldip to finish what we were doing, Peter upgraded by dropping my first person 'let's' and switching to a second person imperative (line 18), which I then repeated (reinstating the (meagre) incentive of satisfactory completion carried in the (more mitigated) directive before Peter's – line 19).

With the confrontation of wills reaching a climax, Kuldip addressed Peter (who had already interposed on my side – line 3 and perhaps 6), and swore at him in playground Panjabi, to which Peter responded in kind (lines 20 and 21). In doing so, Kuldip contained explicit expression of antagonism within his close relationship with Peter, thereby preserving the more deferential relations he maintained with me (ironic though these might sometimes be – line 25). But though I was momentarily excluded from the participation framework that Panjabi invoked, it was easy to audit what was going on, and to recognize that Kuldip was annoyed with a situation in which I too played an active part. Kuldip's subsequent 'f:uck:ing' was ambiguously sited at the border of the Kuldip/Peter enclosure: while it might be occasioned by their particular dispute, I could also understand it. It was probably because it was intelligible to me that Kuldip mitigated this imprecation by muttering it quietly (cf the discussion of Goffman's

self-talk, response cries and imprecations (1981) in chapter 7.5). His own effort to atone for leaving early ignored, he did have a grievance but in his relations with the bystanding adult, he kept this subdued.

The auditing by teacher bystanders could in fact provide some of the entertainment in pupil-pupil Panjabi use:

this is a good one, this is one we always use... if there's a teacher who we hate right, like my tutor, and I'm talking to a friend... say me and Imran are talking right, then I'll be um you know talking to Imran in Urdu, and swearing at [my tutor] but looking at Imran ((laughs))... wicked one! If he saw me looking, I'd get done you know what I mean [Pa M 15] (cf Pollard 1985:85)

More than this, the bystanding adult's response could feed into adult-adolescent relations:

Extract II.10

Participants: Ian [An M 15], Peter [An M 14 with radio-mike], Richard [An M 15], Ishmael [Pa M 14]

Setting: 1987. Youth club in the evening. Ian, Richard and Peter are watching badminton in the gym, discussing other matters. Ishmael comes in on line 4. Gwen is a youth worker, whose relationship with Ismael was generally quite poor.

- 1 Rich: try to tie that 10p and I'll tie you
- 2 Pete: ((half laugh))
- 3 Imran: ((playing badminton)) ()
- 4 Ish.: ((to Peter, Ian and Richard)) [guess what Gwen said(.)
- 5 she asked for 50p innit I gave her i- she gave me
- 6 innit (.) an' I- I go to Salim (.) I go Salim you
- 7 [gəndi kətʃi] (.) right- and Gwen goes to me YOU
- 8 ((P: dirty pants))
- 9 WERE SWEARING TO ME you were swearing to me
- 10 and all this
- 11 (10.0)
- 12 Ish.: ((offering sweets)) (d'y wn (.) d'y wn) d'you wan'
- 13 Ian: no (thanks)
- 14 Ish.: d'you wan' (5.0) ((scuffles))
- 15 Ish.: oh- (.) oh- (.) oh- (.) I'm under () (.)
- 16 Peter: ((quiet laugh))
- 17 Ian: how d'you do Ish
- 18 Ish.: how's life



In lines 4 to 9, Ishmael told a story about the youth worker's inept misinterpretation of his interaction with Salim. In intervening in what had been a separate engagement and in construing this as an offence, the youth worker had herself acted improperly. It is worth also noting that Ishmael expected the monolinguals to be sympathetic to his complaint, and in making it, he *both* co-opted them into the group of people who wouldn't make silly mistakes misunderstanding Panjabi abuse *and* used Panjabi accordingly.²

Sometimes, rather than intervening from outside, teachers were themselves situated in the addresser-addressee framework that was normally reserved for pupils only. When the class register was being read out

I get angry... some teachers sort of make out it's- you can't say it... 'oh I can't read these names', as in a generalized thing that you know you can't take Asian names, and that really gets me... my name's not difficult to pronounce if you tried it properly, if you try, but they don't even try, they go 'oh my god, you can't pronounce these names', probably don't even consider them as names, you know what I mean... and they sort of make a joke out of it... [it's] supply teachers mainly [informant: Pa F 15]

But once again, it is vital to emphasize that negative interpretations of this kind were contingent. After all, not all whites stuck rigidly to English. There were appreciative reports of teachers entering the same kind of gaming monolingual-bilingual Panjabi interaction that were a staple form in its cross-ethnic playground use, with pupils "calling [the teacher] 'a dog' and saying it's 'hello' or something like that ((laughs))" [Pa F 15].³ Teachers themselves sometimes knew a little Panjabi ('the problem is, a lot of them understand now' 'yes cos most of the words are common now' [In F 15]) and occasionally, a white teacher actually knew quite a lot ("we had this English teacher", "we were talking Indian and everything and knew some Indian, he started talking in Indian 'do this, do that', we were all amazed, it's like he shut everyone up, innit" [In M 15]). Beyond that, there were ethnic Panjabi bilinguals on the teaching staff ("we've got an Indian tutor, so we can't say nothing" "yeh ((laughs))" "and she'd understand everything" "and she'd tell the head innit ((laughs))" [In and Pa M 15]).

And there were also periods in lessons and in the timetable when classroom activity was less centred on instruction, and teachers were no doubt happy to allow all sorts of informal language activity ('at tutor period, we swop [rude] words [in different languages], all boys together and all the girls'). In loosely structured settings of this kind, it would be much harder



to construe Panjabi as a disruption of central activity.

In the presence of adults, then, Panjabi usually set up a direct line of address between peers (who might be black or white as well as Asian). It opened into Indian and Pakistani adult and youth culture, and as subsequent chapters will clarify, as an interethnic variety it drew on a set of social relations and practices that had their base outside lessons. It was not itself immediately related to issues of respect and regard for the order of the classroom. Certainly, Panjabi could become the focus of disputes about what was proper classroom conduct, but whether or not this occurred was open to negotiation. In this, the response of bystanding teachers or youth workers was a central factor, and evidently, there was a good deal of variation. While the proscriptive actions of some could be regarded as racist, others could be coopted as ratified participants in Panjabi interchanges, and there were also adult bilinguals and serious second language users who could wrong-foot any attempted covert activity. Overall, Panjabi created a rich field of play, both within peer-peer relations, and between the peer group and supervising adults.

In contrast, SAE was more exclusively implicated in adult-adolescent relations, providing an opportunity for (minor) disruption beneath the guise of deference. Certainly, peers of different ethnic backgrounds could all play a role as collusive spectators or confederates. But though they apparently did on occasion, there was less scope for non-Asians to adopt the role of addresser.⁴ As chapter 7 will show, SAE was also used in the playground and sometimes, peer-peer uses might occur in class. But interethnically, these again appeared to be more problematic (cf Extract I.13 in chapter 2.4).

This difference in the way that Panjabi and SAE were used in asymmetrical interethnic interactions corresponded with differences in the institutional position of these two languages.

4.5 The institutional embedding of interactional relations

The micro-relations existing around classroom Panjabi bore some resemblance to wider negotiations within school organization. As already mentioned, there were adults of Indian descent on the teaching staff, Panjabi and Urdu were available as options in the mainstream timetable, and quite a lot of extracurricular provision was made for bhangra. Indeed, although of course there would be a great many additional contingencies at play, it isn't hard to imagine how local engagements with Panjabi at both interactional and institutional levels could influence each other. On the one hand, monolingual teachers would be encouraged to show respect

for languages that were offered on the curriculum and were spoken by their colleagues, and pupils could see that the school wasn't opposed to their heritage languages. Conversely, amicable informal interactions around Panjabi might well have been important in getting monolingual teachers to lend a hand in organizing bhangra discos or performances after school or in assemblies. Of course, this state of affairs was by no means entirely rosy. Pupils were critical of the school's attempt to provide for Urdu, and when they were disaffected with curriculum business, they could also mess around in classes where Panjabi or Urdu were actually being taught. But overall, these interactional and institutional processes were part of the complex negotiations in which ethnic inheritances were asserted and several local state institutions made efforts to accommodate them. The central concern here was with the development of differences that the principal local parties had agreed to value positively.

In contrast, stylized Asian English was lodged within a central preoccupation with the eradication of negative differences. This was again reflected in larger patterns of local school life (as well as being a dominant theme in the discourses of British racism).

At school, limited proficiency in English was primarily associated with pupils of Bangladeshi descent, belonging to the most recently arrived migrant group. Until recently, ESL provision had been provided in a separate language centre, and after its abolition, Bangladeshis were disproportionately placed in lower sets and singled out for extra help by peripatetic or school-based specialist teachers. Among the majority of Caribbean, Anglo, Indian and Pakistani pupils, Bangladeshis were held in low esteem, and there were a number of complaints about the preferential treatment they received from staff, who were presumably trying to compensate for the educational and indeed peer group disadvantage that Bangladeshis suffered (assuming that these complaints were well-founded – such complaints also have a well-recognized place in racist discourses).

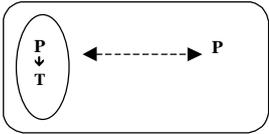
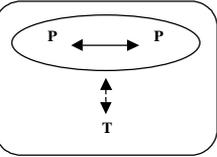
Again, it is possible to see some very strong correspondences between these local institutional processes on the one hand, and on the other, the stylized Asian English exchanges reported and analyzed above. Although it might exist in Ashmead side by side with the positive valuations of ethnic difference associated with Panjabi, for many people outside the neighbourhood, nationally and in government, the eradication of negative difference – cultural assimilation – is the *only* issue in majority-minority relations. This could explain why reports of SAE often specified temporary teachers coming from outside, who, incidentally, could also be expected to regard all Asians as being the same, another aspect of the prejudice on which SAE could play.



Beyond this, there are at least three ways in which the position of local ESL pupils could connect with elements highlighted in interactional analyses of SAE. Firstly, recognition of the institutional disadvantage experienced by non-fluent speakers of English could contribute to the connotations of problematicity and low status that I interpreted as a major element in SAE's symbolic evocation in chapter 3. Secondly, there was a remarkable correspondence between on the one hand, the marginal position of a group of second language learners struggling to gain a decent foothold in school (and elsewhere), and on the other, the use of SAE at the boundaries of interactional engagements in which white adults held institutional sway. Transition was centrally at issue, both at the level of social groups and institutions, and at the level of interpersonal conduct. Finally, (at least in the interpretation offered in the last chapter), in the same way that the school hoped to minimize Bangladeshi disadvantage, in interaction the best adult response was to show that SAE was no threat to the working consensus. Neutralization of difficulty was the optimum outcome, again at both levels. Overall, it is as if knowledge of the precarious institutional position of relatively recent immigrants acted as a cognitive template, which sensitized adolescents to particular micro-political moments, which they then marked out with SAE. Equally, the interactional organization of switches in SAE kept recent arrival alive as an issue on the implicit political agenda of local adolescent social life.

Complex historical and interactional contingencies invalidate any effort to characterize participants' general experience of reality as a set of straightforward and compelling antagonisms, whether these are Anglo vs Asian, adult vs adolescent and/or teacher vs pupil. *However*, micro-interactional codeswitching did momentarily dramatize some important political oppositions. More than that, switching into different languages conjured *different* aspects of the broader social contestation around majority-minority relations. In settings where plurality is acknowledged, diversity raises two central questions: (i) does the recognition of difference entail detrimental bias? or (ii) does it instead involve a constructive individualization (Cazden 1986:447)? Stylizations of Asian English in the presence of adults engaged with (i). In contrast, Panjabi was much more oriented to (ii). Panjabi generally asserted a frame of reference that was independent of the dominant interaction. Sometimes, it could involve struggle for influence against white teachers, but contrary to stylized Asian English, this was *not* inevitable. Indeed monolingual adults could themselves volunteer or be coopted into the alternative realm that Panjabi instituted. At the micro level, codeswitching into Panjabi was more creative than SAE, capable of generating new lines of adult conduct, and this coincided with its larger role in local institutional negotiations. Figure 4.1

below, summarizes these differences between Panjabi and SAE.

MICRO INTERACTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS	STYLISTED ASIAN ENGLISH	PANJABI
<p>Participation Frameworks:</p> <p>I N T E R A C T I O N</p> <p>Relation to adult-directed activity:</p> <p>Scope for Anglo and Afro-Caribbean pupils to participate as addressers:</p> <p>Principal fields of symbolic evocation:</p> <p>Effect on adult-adolescent relations:</p> <p>(Kinds of teacher most typically reported:)</p>	 <p>Opposition. Destabilises consensus at boundaries of adult-dominated engagement.</p> <p>Limited.</p> <p>Anglo-Asian race relations.</p> <p>Adult disconcerted, or both parties reassured of the irrelevance of threatening symbolic connotations.</p> <p>(Temporary teachers from outside)</p>	 <p>Independence, though adult a significant bystander to pupil engagements. Pupil engagements may be covertly opposed, supportive or unrelated to adult-dominated activity.</p> <p>Quite good.</p> <p>Intra- or pan-ethnic Indian and Pakistani adult and youth culture. Multiracial playground culture.</p> <p>Varied: adult ignores, reproaches, encourages or joins in with peer-peer Panjabi.</p> <p>(Permanent staff)</p>
<p>CORRESPONDENCE WITH:</p> <p>LOCAL INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS</p> <p>and</p> <p>MORE GENERAL POLITICAL PROCESSES</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">↕</p> <p>No Bengali classes, only ESL and lower set placement for Bangladeshis.</p> <p>Problems of access and transition for social groups with limited proficiency in English.</p> <p>Negotiations around the eradication of negatively valued difference.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">↕</p> <p>Panjabi and Urdu as curriculum subjects, bhangra as an extra curricular activity.</p> <p>Panjabi as a second language classes locally available for adults.</p> <p>Negotiations around the development of positively valued difference.</p>



There is one more point that needs to be made about codeswitching and the development of local adolescents' political understanding about race.

Because the micro-social arrangements and processes emerging around Panjabi and SAE instantiated larger problematics in majority-minority relations, watching or taking part in these code-switching interactions could help to sensitize black and white pupils to the political concerns of Indian and Pakistani peers.⁵ In this way, we can see how such interactions might play a pedagogic role for non-Panjabi adolescents, assisting "the growth of [their] social understanding and of [their] capabilities for the maintenance of social relations" (Cook-Gumperz and Corsaro 1986:4).

But in mentioning interaction and pedagogy, it is important to emphasize the way in which the processes examined here differ from orthodox accounts of classroom learning. Many studies look beyond the acquisition of linguistic structure to the ways in which school-students are socialized into relatively enduring roles and attitudes, and more recent interactionist studies have shifted away from emphasis on the dominating influence of schools, subjects and teachers, towards an account that recognizes the active role that pupils themselves play in shaping both the classroom environment and their own socialization within it (e.g. Mehan 1980; Cook-Gumperz and Corsaro 1986). These analyses of interactive negotiation are generally oriented to the conduct of official school business, concentrating on the way that pupils provide teachers with subtle (and by no means always progressive) guidance about how to do their jobs (cf McDermott and Gospodinoff 1981:226,228; Pollard 1985:160; Cazden 1986:440). There is a frequent interest in how kids 'teach teachers how to teach them'.

In the analyses offered in this chapter and the one before, adults in positions of relative authority were an indispensable presence, and in that regard, there was much in common with classroom interaction studies. But here the primary pedagogic relationship wasn't between adults and adolescents, and the knowledge at issue wasn't defined by the school curriculum. Teachers (and other adults) had a crucial role, but not as principal pedagogic agents. Instead, they functioned much more as instructional objects, focal components to be observed in interactional experiments run by one set of adolescents to the potential edification of others. Of course, this oversimplifies and adults too could learn from these episodes. But in the kind of political education specified here, the main pedagogic relationship existed between peers, and the 'lesson content' derived not from the adult but from adolescent knowledge and experience.

Notes

1. Another strategy that Asif used to prevent overt confrontation between his authority and the teachers' was what Goodwin and Goodwin (1990) call 'piggybacking'. A 'piggyback' is an utterance that is inserted immediately after a turn that is obviously directed to someone else. It is slotted inside an adjacency pair, after the first pair part but before the second pair part expected in the initial turn. As a result, when it comes, the response could be either to the first pair part, or to the piggyback, or to both (ibid.:101-107). This can be seen in the SAE sequence:

38 Ms J: after you
 39 Asif: **after you::**
 40 Sal.: ((at a higher pitch)) **after you::**

As already indicated, Asif was inside the detention room so it can't have been him that Miss Jameson was addressing. But he inserted a response before either of the boys standing at the threshold, so that when Salim replied, he could be taking his cue from both Ms J and Asif (note also how once again Asif shielded what was in effect a disruptive action by modelling it word for word (if not sound for sound) on the teacher's). Asif also piggybacked in line 49:

48 Mr C: you want another cloth do you
 49 Asif: ((f)) yeh yeh say yeh [α: α: α: α:]
 ((Panj: yes yes yes yes)
 50 Ms J: ()
 51 Sal.: yeh I might ()

and as a result, Salim's response was again ambiguous in terms of being oriented to either Asif or the teachers. This manner of intervention itself provided Asif with some protection from the teachers, in so far as censure would require some extra work, requiring them either to put 'on hold' the official exchange with the person that they'd addressed, or to return to the intervention after its moment had passed (which might also then involve dealing with an alliance created across the piggyback and the official second pair part) (cf Goodwin and Goodwin 1990:107).

At the same time, piggybacking also allowed Asif to both to coopt the teacher's authority and to dominate it (even though in principle, a person who piggybacks risks being ignored). He accepted the attentiveness in Salim set up by the teachers' first pair parts, but then attempted to subvert the responses that these expected, instead steering them in the direction that he chose.

2. The fact that as the recipients of this tale, Ian, Peter and Richard expressed no appreciation of it isn't of consequence here – Ishmael's story

contained only the briefest preface, it wasn't tied topically to anything in their previous discussion (Levinson 1983:324, 328; Nofsinger 1991:155-162), and he also muffed it up – in line 5, who gave money to whom?). When the episode was replayed to him, Peter clearly understood the gist of the Panjabi, and so Ishmael's code-switch had been fairly well-tuned to his interlocutors' proficiency. As two other Panjabi informants reported about Peter:

he don't know all the words [in Panjabi]... if you were talking to him right, you would say [it] in English, but if you were talking about some other person who was swearin' in Panjabi, then you'd tell him the swearin' words he said and he'd understand straight away cos he only understands the swearing words

Even so, Peter didn't know the precise meaning of the Panjabi words in Extract II.10, and it was plain that this kind of interaction was sustained more by interpersonal familiarity, shared institutional status, and contextual inferencing than by partially synchronized lexico-grammars.

3. This was another report of a teacher participating in the joking uses typical of cross-ethnic Panjabi among peers:

Extract II.11

Participants: Mohan [In M 15]; Jagdish [In M 15], BR [An M 30+].
Setting: 1987 interview. [Simplified transcription]

- Mohan: Mr Chambers, he don't really say much if we swear, he don't say nothing to us... sometimes he asks us what the words mean, he wants to learn sometimes
- Jagdish: yeh he's learnt quite a few of them, like we used to say [kətʃi] and all this
- Mohan: yeh and he asks what it means
- Jagdish: and he found out what it was, you know 'shorts'
- Mohan: and then Jagdish told me to say it, and I said it to him
- Jagdish: yeh, yeh because because then I told Mo to say words right, because I knew that Mr Chambers knew and I said 'you say [it], you watch what he'll do'

Elsewhere another informant of Indian parentage (F) criticized a good friend for making oppositional use of Panjabi in class on what she regarded as the false assumption that Mr Chambers was 'just another dry teacher'.

4. This was one occasion when a white boy used SAE to a man of Indian descent, who spoke local vernacular English and who was generally liked and respected:



Extract II.12

At the youth club on Friday evening. Gerry (An M 16) came up to Joginder (In M 30+) who was serving behind the counter and asked for some crisps in a strong SAE accent. Then, when he was given his change, he started counting in Panjabi [ɪk dɔ] ((one two)). (fieldnotes)

Gerry's initial use of an SAE opening-and-request utterance occurred at the boundary of an engagement that involved both asymmetrical institutional roles and ethnic difference, and in that respect, it was fairly conventional, corresponding to its use by quite a few Asian adolescents. On this occasion however, the actual distribution of ethnic difference would warrant Joginder's taking offence, and Gerry's utterance could be seen as racist. Maybe it was a realization of this that then prompted Gerry to switch into an unstigmatized code that instead evoked multiracial neighbourhood community. The shift to Panjabi translated the recognition of ethnicity carried by SAE into a frame in which there were more secure connotations of intergroup solidarity.

5. See Extract IV.4 and the comments on it in chapter 10.3.





5. Creole (i)

Links to the Local Vernacular

This chapter continues the discussion of participation frameworks and their institutional embedding, and the first three sections try to clarify Creole's similarities and differences from Panjabi and SAE. Crossing in Creole was more flexible than either of the other two – it occurred in both adolescent-adult and peer-peer exchanges. But at the same time, it was much less clearly demarcated as an official variety at school. In terms of both its greater cross-ethnic utility and its more indeterminate school status, Creole was more like ordinary vernacular English, and it is this relationship that is considered in Sections 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6. Initially, two episodes are used to show the way that Creole's connotations could be closely integrated with a crosser's serious interests. After that, Hewitt's account of the Creole/vernacular interface is discussed, and related back to the Ashmead data. Finally, adult reaction to Creole forms in adolescent speech are considered, and these confirm certain symbolic ties between Creole and traditional non-standard local speech.

After a summary focusing specifically on other-ethnic Creole use, the chapter ends with an overview of Part II. It draws the argument together, it specifies the contribution of sociolinguistic analysis to sociological research on youth culture, and it clarifies the way in which language crossing can indeed be seen as a small but significant contribution to the development of the political sensibilities identified in Gilroy's discussion of urban neighbourhoods with an active sense of mixed community.

5.1 Interview reports

In interview, black, white and Asian informants were unanimous in the view that Creole didn't fit with conformity to mainline classroom business. Reports suggested that Creole was used both when addressing teachers, and in talk among peers.

This was one account of Creole being used to teachers:

Extract II.13

Participants: Kiron [In F 15], Sohan [In F 15], BR

Setting: 1987. Interview. Miss Wall had been a temporary supply teacher. [Simple and abbreviated transcription].

BR: is there any Asian or white person you know who uses more kind of Jamaican language

- Sohan: yeh, Dev (([In M 15])) does a lot, he does
Kiron: yeh
Sohan: in drama especially,
Kiron: and in er
Sohan: [and Sewa (([In M 15]))
Kiron: [when he starts being cheeky to the teachers like in
computers
Sohan: [and Imran (([Pa M 15]))
Kiron: [he uses a lot of sort of things like that ((....)) especially
when we had that teacher, (Miss Wall) remember.. a lot of
that language then ((laughs))
BR: what, a supply teacher?
Kiron: yeh, and then he uses a lot of that sort of language then
Sohan: and kept walking out of the classroom. Dev, acting tough
to her
BR: he uses it in drama as well?
Sohan: when he's acting, and when he's speaking to the teacher
Kiron: especially the teacher he doesn't like... supply teachers
BR: how do teachers take it?
Sohan: she don't know what to say, she jus
Kiron: she didn't know what to say ((laughs))
Sohan: she just shuts up ((laughs))
Kiron: ((laughing)) she just shut up and sits there while he goes
on at her
BR: what do the black kids in the class think
Kiron: we don't have any black kids in our class
Sohan: they join in they do..., start going, 'yeh you're right', carry
on something like that

As noted in chapter 3, there was likely to be a good deal of idealization in this kind of retelling. Even so, Sohan's final point is supported by Hewitt, who found that white Creole use was more acceptable to black adolescents in the context of pupil-teacher conflict (1986:154-5). Sohan and Kiron's account also partly resembles what other informants said about SAE addressed to teachers – compare for example their comments on the supply teacher being dumbfounded with Extracts II.1 and II.2 in chapter 3.2. In addition, other people suggested that there was a certain amount of scope for amicable pupil-teacher negotiation around Creole use. One black informant reported Kazim's saying the nonsensical 'kukabin' to teachers (cf Extract I.2, chapter 2.1), and the un-dry cowboy Mr Chambers featured yet again in another youngster's description of adolescent-adult Creole use (cf Extracts II.3 in chapter 3.3 and II.11 in chapter 4, note 3).

Between pupils, Creole could also be a substantial source of entertainment, and here reports suggested some close interplay between Creole and Panjabi (cf Extract I.4, chapter 2.1):

Extract II.14

Participants: Asha [In F 14], Saran [In F 14], BR
 Setting: 1987. Interview. [Simplified transcription]

- BR: in any of the languages that you know, who do you think is the most kind of inventive kind of speaker
- Asha: I think I am cos [I use all the... I use
- Saran: [modest! ((laughs))
- Asha: because I come up with the good words for
- Saran: make up new words
- Asha: such as [kʊn kʊn] and 'blaps'
- Saran: ((laughs)) she makes us crack up... you know at the wrong time she comes up with these words, in the middle of a lesson or something ((laughs)), we all have to laugh

Though it's impossible to say whether or not they were oppositional, these innovations sound at least recognisably tangential to official classroom business, and 'blaps', here claimed as Asha's personal invention (as it was elsewhere by at least one other informant), was characterized as black language later on in the interview. But [kʊn kʊn] (a word which informants invariably said they didn't know the meaning of) had probably more ambiguous origins than this: it was widely used in the 1984 data, it was occasionally attributed to Creole, but it also converged on [kʊs kʊs], another semantically opaque terms in interethnic use, this time attributed to Panjabi.

Evidence from interaction elaborates the way in which Creole could be contiguous with both Panjabi and SAE. It also confirms that while SAE involved adolescent-adult address, and while Panjabi centred on peer-peer participation frameworks, Creole crossing embraced both.

5.2 Evidence from interaction

In my corpus, there were about 10 episodes when adults were a significant presence and white or Asian adolescents used Creole (overall, this involved four Anglos and three Pakistanis, all male). Two episodes from one interview illustrate the similarities and differences between Creole, Panjabi and SAE.

- 32 Alan: ((laughs))
 33 BR: what are you doing
 34 Alan: ben jaa ad
 35 BR: well leave () alone
 36 Kaz: IT'S HIM that ben jaad over there
 37 BR: right
 ((BR continues effort to reinstitute the listening activity))

This episode as a whole involved the destabilization of a frame in which I had central control. In it, *SAE* was used in apology for the disruption I was calling attention to (line 11), in acceptance of the conditions I was laying down for the continuance of the listening activity (lines 12 and 20), and maybe in endorsing my complaint about their conduct (line 23). Obviously, these expressions of renewed support for my wishes could not be taken at face value, and this frame play may have taken its cue from my non-serious ‘gents’ in line 7. ‘ben jaad’ was piece of corrupted *Panjabi* that on one occasion, Alan was credited with having invented. According to the local adolescent translators, it fell ambiguously between [ben jər], ‘Ben, friend’, and [pɛn tʃɔd], ‘sister fucker’, and it maybe illustrates the way that adults could sometimes be coopted into the cross-ethnic addresser-addressee relation that was common in multiracial playground *Panjabi* (chapter 7).

In line 26, the pronunciation of the second part of Kazim’s turn sounds Creole – see e.g. Wells 1982:565-7 on the British English and Creole contrasts between [ɔ̃] and [d], [θ] and [t], and on final consonant cluster reduction. Transgression was again at issue here, but rather than being oriented (pseudo-) affiliatively to offences that I had imputed to the boys, as their uses of *SAE* had been, here Creole served as a plainly *disaffiliative* ‘prime’, constructing *my* movement of the microphone as an impropriety (Goffman 1971:154-157). This led to a short ‘run-in’, in which I excused my action by laying the offence with Kazim, a move which he then ignored by simply repeating his directive. As action generally oriented to the repair of transgression, and in being addressed to an adult, Kazim’s Creole was similar to *SAE*. But there was none of *SAE*’s superficial deference, and rather than being accepted by the speaker, fault was here attributed to the recipient.

Adolescent-adult conflict, however, was not a necessary element in Creole crossing with adults. Here is the second episode:

Extract II.16

Participants: Asif [Pa M 15], Kazim [Pa M 15], Alan [An M 15], BR, Jim [An M 15]



didn't upgrade them with any additional comments that would generate further talk on the topic. And finally, in line 18, Kazim was the first to show that he was back in the adult-adolescent participation framework.

Summarizing the account so far, it looks as though crossing in Creole was like SAE in its concern with transgression in adult-adolescent interaction. On the other hand, it was also like Panjabi in its involvement with concerns that were independent of the classroom – as already indicated in chapter 2, Creole was extensively involved in both playground and expressive youth culture. In this regard, Creole appeared to be more flexible than either of the other two, and this can be represented in the primary participation frameworks invoked by each code:

SAE	Panjabi	Creole
P P	P← → P	P← → P
↓		↓
T	T	T

At the same time, however, Creole was less well 'shielded' than either Panjabi or SAE. Creole crossing was protected from adults neither by superficial deference on the pupil-teacher dimension, nor by linguistic unintelligibility on the peer-peer axis. On these grounds, it is probable that when it was used oppositionally, it would be more likely to receive censure than SAE. Equally, it would be more vulnerable to intrusion when it was used autonomously between peers. On both counts, communicating in Creole, it would be harder to maintain distance from adults intent on taking control.

5.3 The correspondence between interactional and institutional organization

This difference between Creole on the one hand and Panjabi and SAE on the other can be related to Creole's local institutional position. At school, Panjabi, Urdu and Asian English (in the form of ESL) were treated as distinctive, educationally significant categories, and adults encountering them would know that their handling involved special instructional procedures. There were many more Asian than black pupils at the school, and it was these languages that were the focus for much of the debate about how to respond to cultural difference. In contrast, Creole figured much less prominently. It was not a distinctive category on the timetable, and it generally received a great deal less of the school's official attention. Institutionally,



there was comparatively little to single Creole out from the central flow of dialogue between pupils and teachers, school and community.

So relative to Panjabi and SAE, Creole was more flexible in terms of the people it could address, but it was less well provided with protective insulation at the levels of both interaction and institutional organization. In combination, these factors doubtless contributed to the fact that it was more closely incorporated into those elements of everyday discourse that were counterposed to the values associated with adult, white and/or class dominance.

5.4 Interactional evidence of Creole's incorporation with oppositional vernacular discourse

Evidence of Creole's integration with vernacular speech at oppositional moments can be seen in the next two episodes, where linguistic structure was managed more subtly, evoking Creole's disjunctive connotations in a less spectacular way than in the two extracts that we have just considered. In examining these episodes, it will become clear that more than in any other kind of crossing, language form suggested quite a close relationship between the speaker's everyday personality and their temporarily adopted symbolic 'voice'.

Extract II.17

Participants: Asif [Pa M 15], Alan [An M 15], Ms Jameson [An F 25+], and in the background, Mr Chambers [An M 25+]

Setting: 1987. Detention. A very short while after the episode cited in extract II.3. Kazim and Salim have left the room and frame play has been abandoned. Ms Jameson is saying why she arrived late for Asif and Alan's detention, and now she wants to go and fetch her lunch.

- 80 Ms J: I had to go and see the headmaster
- 81 Asif: why
- 82 Ms J: () (.) none of your business
- 83 Alan: a- about us ()
- 84 Ms J: no I'll be back
(l.)
- 85 Asif: hey how can you see the=
(f.)
- 86 = headmaster when he was in dinner (.)
- 87 Ms J: that's precisely why I didn't see him
(l.)
- 88 Asif: what (.)

- 89 Ms J: I'll be back in a second with my lunch [()]
 90 Asif: [NO [ɪ]=
 ((ff.))
- 91 = dat's sad man (.) (I'll b) =
 ((f.))
- 92 =I [had to miss my play right I've gotta go
 93 Alan: [(with mine)
 94 (2.5) ((Ms J must now have left the room))
- 95 Asif: ((Creole influenced)) I I:unch (.) you don't need no=
 ((f.))
 [I I: ʌntʃ]
 v v
- 96 = lunch [**not**'n grow anyway ((laughs))
 [natʔn gɹəʊ]
- 97 Alan: [((laughs))
- 98 Asif: have you eat your lunch Alan

Lines 80-88 involved a verbal tussle in which Asif and Alan used questions to undermine the positions that Ms Jameson staked out in what she said. Asif's question in line 81 treated the account she gave of her late arrival as inadequate; her rebuttal of the legitimacy of his inquiry was then undermined by Alan (lines 82-84); and she was delayed in the departure she announced in line 84 by a question that upgraded the query over her initial excuse into an explicit challenge (lines 85-87). All this time, she was locked into the interaction by the adjacency structures set up by the boys' questions, but at line 89, she broke out of this pattern, ignored Asif's repair initiation (line 88), again announced her departure and evidently left without saying anything further. With the cooperative exchange structure now disrupted and Ms Jameson apparently disattending to him, Asif launched into explicit complaint, invoked his own sacrifice, and produced a similar announcement of intended departure, which, in its emptiness of any genuine capability, pinpointed the power inequality defined in their respective institutional roles (lines 90-92). In challenging the reason that Ms Jameson gave for leaving, and in elaborating this with a critical implication about her size in lines 95 and 96, Asif appeared to be engaged in what Goffman calls 'afterburn':

a remonstrance conveyed collusively by virtue of the fact that its targets are in the process of leaving the field... when one individual finds that others are conducting themselves offensively in their current dealings with him... he can wait until they have closed out the interchange with him and turned from the encounter, and **then** he can express what he 'really' feels about them... he may turn to a member of his encounter... and flood into directed expression. (1971:152,153)

Creole influences were present in what Asif said in lines 90 to 98, but their identity and location is sometimes difficult to determine. The origins of a form are often open to dispute among linguists, and as Hewitt stresses, there can be a good deal of variation in the extent to which adolescents themselves consider a form to be ethnically marked (1986:128-9). In line 90, Asif's annoyance-expressing click was more alveolar than dental, so it sounded much like vernacular Anglo (cp Hewitt 1986:134). Three items in line 91's 'dat's sad man' could be construed as Creole-influenced: on occasion, 'man' was identified as a black English term; Hewitt identifies this sense of 'sad' as Creole in origin (*ibid.*:129); and the same could be true of the plosive realization of TH. But all three were so widely used that such group marking could be lost, and indeed a case can be made for a different provenance for stopped TH (see below).

Once Ms Jameson had left however, in lines 95, 96 and 98, Creole marking was less ambiguous. The vernacular English back open vowel [ɒ] in 'not' was shifted forwards towards [a], a well-recognized Caribbean variant (cf e.g. Wells 1982:Ch. 7; Sebba 1993), and the initial consonant in 'lunch' was stretched and heavily voiced in a manner reminiscent of Hewitt's description (1986:134). Uninflected past participles such as 'eat' in line 98 were quite common in adolescent speech, and there are good grounds for suggesting that these were Creole-influenced (V. Edwards 1986:139; also however Hughes and Trudgill 1979:15). In addition, although the subject requires much more research, the very extensive elision of 'gonna' in 'not'n' grow anyway' produced a rapidity of delivery which was elsewhere sometimes associated with Asians and whites trying to use black speech.

From this pattern, it looks as though afterburn provided one way of reconciling the need to maintain workable pupil-teacher relations with the critical and disjunctive stance evoked by Creole. As with Kazim in Extract II.15, Asif's protest maintained a thematic link to issues of transgression and attributed fault – indeed injustice – to an adult in authority. But, there was also an important difference. Kazim's 'stop moving dat ting aroun' occurred in an ongoing session of energetic code-switching frame play. This didn't. The early period of play had been closed down (see Extract II.3), and rather than trying to start an argument up, these utterances came at the end of a run-in in which Asif had been defeated. Goffman's account of 'muttering' is pertinent here: "In muttering we convey that although we are now going along with the line established by the speaker (and authority), our spirit has not been won over, and compliance is not to be counted on" (1981:93). Especially in the 'afterburn' (to which 'muttering' bears functional resemblance), the assertive connotations of Creole helped Asif

to display his resilience and to repair an image momentarily damaged by Ms Jameson's abrupt departure. This overlap of symbolic evocation and personal concern suggests a strong degree of alignment between self and voice, 'principal' and 'figure' (Goffman 1974:Ch13, 1981:Ch3). It would be difficult to argue that Creole was unique in its capacity to support the expression of serious, unambiguous meanings – Alan's use of Panjabi to abuse Salim in Extract II.8 was located in what were now very hostile relations, and intentions involved in the Panjabi exchange between Kuldip and Peter in Extract II.9 hardly seemed playful. Nevertheless, in this episode, the incorporation of an outgroup code was more extensively woven into the user's ordinary speech style than in any previous extract. In previous extracts, the concentration of crossing in single, sometimes formulaic phrases and sentences suggested performance, with crossers stepping quite quickly in and out of roles that seemed semi-theatrical.

The linguistic demarcation of habitual vernacular and borrowed outgroup speech styles is even less clear cut in the following episode, where Peter's use of 'afterburn' to complain about mistreatment was very similar to Asif's:

Extract II.18

Participants: Peter [An M 14 – wearing a radio microphone], Tony [An M 14], Iqbal [Pa M 14], Joginder [In M 30+], Ishmael [Pa M 14]

Setting: 1987. Peter and Tony are teamed up in a game of badminton, playing against Iqbal and Joginder, who is a voluntary youth worker. Ishmael is spectating. In line 4 Peter tries to stop the play, saying that the service was improper. But play continues and apparently, Peter and Tony lose the point.

- 1 Peter: your serve Iqbal
 2 ((shot))
 3 ((shot))
 4 Peter: hit the rope
 5 ((shot))
 6 Peter: ((f.)) hit the rope
 7 Iqbal: oh my word ()
 8 Ish: [come on now come on
 ((f.))
 9 Peter: it did
 10 Iqbal: (do you believe that) oi did you hear what he said
 11 : ()
 12 Peter: [JOGS IT HIT THE ROPE
 ((ff.))

- 13 Ish: IT DIDN'T
 14 Peter: IT COME DONE WIGGLIN
 15 Ish: IT DIDN'T HIT THE ROPE
 16 Iqbal: () see ((laughs))
 17 Peter: [i]
 18 forget it man (1.0)
 19 **shuttlecock** (1.) [don't start wigglin=
 20 ((shot: play has restarted))
 21 Peter: = for no reason (.) ((moves to return a shot))
 22 Jog.: (n all) (2.0) (aaah)
 23 Peter: cheat sad man
 24 Tony: they're just startin' () cheatin ()
 25 Peter: hit that rope anyone [can see it
 26 : (you)
 27 Tony: CHEA:TIN:

In line 12, after his opponents had won what he considered to be an invalid rally, Peter appealed loudly to Joginder who he might expect to be impartial in his capacity as youth worker. But Joginder kept quiet, and in view of the audible resumption of play in line 20, he and Iqbal were presumably preparing themselves for the next service around lines 15 and 16, thereby declaring the matter closed and the point legitimately won. After an alveolar click expressing disapprobation, Peter's 'forget it man' in line 18 probably referred to the service preparations then underway, and gave an explicit indication that his 'compliance [was] not to be counted on'. With his opponents' attention now redirected to the game, lines 19 to 25 look like afterburn, in which Peter restated the evidence for his original case to Tony, classified Iqbal and Joginder's conduct as transgression, and received Tony's support, who then forcefully readdressed their joint analysis to the others.

There are striking thematic similarities to the incident with Asif and Alan: transgression, rough justice dealt out by adults in authority, events assessed as 'sad'. But almost everything that Peter said was couched in his normal speech style, with the exception of 'shuttlecock don't start wigglin' for no reason' (line 18). There was nothing unusual about this phonologically, but it was grammatically distinctive in one of two possible ways. Due to the vernacular regularization of third person singular Standard English 'doesn't', Peter's generic statement can be translated as either 'a shuttlecock doesn't start wiggling for no reason' or as 'shuttlecocks don't start...'. In the first interpretation, he omitted the indefinite article, and in the second, plural 's'. Both zero forms can be identified



with Creole (cf e.g. LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985:88; Edwards 1986: 141; Sebba 1993; Sutcliffe 1984:234).

These data indicate proximity between Creole-influenced linguistic forms and local vernacular speech, which warrants more extended discussion. To do so, it is necessary to shift away from interaction analysis, and to turn instead to some general observations about language structure, as well as to number of interview reports. Before that, however, it would be sensible to review some of Hewitt's comments on this issue.

5.5 Creole and the local multiracial vernacular

The interpenetration of Creole and local vernaculars is an important element in Hewitt's analysis, and it is worth attending closely to his conceptualization of the relationship between them:

As I argued elsewhere: "There has developed in many inner city areas a form of 'community English' or multiracial vernacular which, while containing Creole forms and idioms, is not regarded as charged with any symbolic meanings related to race and ethnicity and is in no way related to boundary maintaining practices. Rather, it is, if anything, a site within which ethnicity is deconstructed, dismantled and reassembled into a new, ethnically mixed, community English. The degree of Creole influence on the specific local vernacular is often higher in the case of young black speakers but the situation is highly fluid and open to much local variation. There is, therefore, a two-way movement evident in the language use of black London adolescents in which a de-ethnicized, racially mixed local language is creatively being established alongside a strategic, contextually variable use of Creole... often employed as markers of race in the context of daily anti-racist struggle" ... Black ethnicity is, on the one hand, not so much *lived out* as constructed and used as a resource amongst other resources in daily political engagements; a political instrument, not a constraining, taken-for-granted medium subsisting through all interactions. If there is an 'ethnicity' that *is* lived in this non-reflexive way it is more likely to reside in the emergent hybrid culture [and language] of black and white urban youth... (1989b)

Here Hewitt makes a basic distinction between (a) unself-conscious and habitual vernacular speech, which incorporates Creole influences in ways that are generally unremarked, and (b) strategic code-switching which is symbolically related to ethnicity/race and which is used politically in boundary maintaining practices. The second of these is the primary



concern in my research, while the forms and processes entailed in the first would generally fall within the interests of variationist sociolinguistics (e.g. Labov 1972a, Trudgill 1978, Bell 1984). The relationship between these two is highly complex. Hewitt very briefly suggests that “The existence of creole forms that are, in specific contexts, *unmarked* for ethnicity [= (a)]... is necessarily preceded by the use and absorption of these same forms, ethnically marked to some degree [= (b)]” (1986:148). Before a developmental connection of this kind could be accepted, however, there is a need for much fuller empirical investigation than either Hewitt or I provide. But whatever their relationship in processes of language change, Hewitt found that the shifting boundaries between these two contexts for Creole were very significant interactionally:

what is regarded by one group of black and white friends as unmarked with regard to ethnicity may, in another group in the same locality, be regarded as marked, and therefore possibly as the subject of special negotiations in interracial usage. If a white youngster wishes to use a certain word, therefore, he or she may have to make it appear ‘natural’ to their speech if they are to avoid the possibility of being challenged, or of being thought to be appropriating a language which they have no right to use. The existence of a vernacular which already contains a number of creole-derived features provides a useful alibi, a kind of smokescreen through which words may be smuggled into white speech. (ibid.:151)

My own research adds little to this discussion of the ways in which crossers could strategically exploit the ambiguous border zones between Creole and the local multiracial vernacular. However, Extract II.18 indicates just how subtle the line between them could be. Although it is hard to be sure that any sense of specifically inter-ethnic wrong-doing was involved, Peter’s zero forms protested about putative injustice and as such, they appeared to draw on Creole’s association with opposition to arbitrary official authority – a link that was structurally much more obvious in Extract II.17. In that regard, Peter’s usage can be construed as political and it conforms to Hewitt’s second context for the use of Creole. But clearly, this was achieved with only the slightest of linguistic adaptations.

In fact, in strictly linguistic terms, the origin of Peter’s omission of the indefinite article/plural marker isn’t necessarily even Creole. As Hewitt recognizes (1986:126), vernacular speech is receptive to a wide range of different instances, and in the locality I studied, a number of the variable features that one might ascribe to a Creole influence could also be derived from Panjabi, Indian English or second language learner interlanguage.

Grammatically, one or more of these could also serve as linguistic sources for: the omission of 's' in the possessive, in the plural and in the third person singular present tense; zero realization of the indefinite article; absent past tense and participle markers; and copula and auxiliary omission. The roots of the invariant question tag 'innit' could be traced to Indian English as well as to Creole, and phonologically so too could TH stopping, clear L, r-colouration, consonant cluster metathesis, as well as a relatively narrow range on the diphthongs in 'day', 'nose' and 'right' (narrow in comparison with Midlands and Southern English white working class accents – see Sutcliffe 1984:232 and Wells 1982:626). Change in standard patterns of word stress, fewer schwas, stepping intonation and a drift towards syllable rather than stress timing could likewise have Panjabi as well as Creole origins.¹

Hewitt is right to call this vernacular 'multiracial': a small quantitative study of phonological variation in the interview speech of these informants revealed that, for example, traditionally white L vocalization occurred among black and Asian adolescents as well, that white adolescents occasionally used Panjabi-influenced retroflexes, and that among Indian, Anglo and Caribbean youngsters, TH-stopping correlated positively with having Pakistani friends (Rampton 1987a, 1989). As Hewitt notes elsewhere, it was usually possible to tell a person's background from their ordinary speech, since there tended to be a greater incidence of forms deriving from their particular ethnolinguistic inheritance. Even so, to a very considerable degree, they spoke "a new **ethnically mixed** 'community English' created from the fragments" of a range of language varieties (1989a:139).

In spite of these 'objective' linguistic possibilities, however, informants generally credited black adolescents with the leading role in the multiracial vernacular, introducing elements that others subsequently adopted. In this way, for example, 'innit' was analyzed as being originally black, and youngsters most often ascribed Creole roots to new words in the local English vernacular.

In judging the origin of these linguistic forms, to quite a degree youngsters may have relied on roughly the same kind of *pragmatic* analysis that I used in interpreting the origin of Peter's 'shuttlecock don't start wigglin'.² Here, folk analysis of the linguistic sources shaping the local multiracial vernacular probably drew on more general social and cultural stereotypes. It is likely that in assessing why 'innit', zero past tense and zero past participle marking should be attributed to Creole rather than Indian English, the local symbolic connotations of these two varieties were a central factor. Past tense and participle markers were most commonly omitted in



verbs describing conflict and energetic, sometimes illicit action – for example, ‘beat’, ‘catch’, ‘vex’, ‘whiplash’, ‘boost’, ‘thrash’, ‘slap’, and ‘fuck’ (also more obviously Creole ‘tief’).³ Some of these could be accompanied by other linguistically differentiating elements (cf Hewitt 1986:132-3 on the particle ‘up’), but more centrally, they were compatible with Creole’s resonances of street authority, not with SAE’s connotations of polite deference. More generally, Creole’s tough, cool associations probably meant that many adolescents would be happy to detect its influence on their speech. In contrast, the obvious linguistic distance between Panjabi and vernacular English probably inhibited the recognition of Panjabi influences in local English, and anyway, transfer from Panjabi was normally linked to stigmatized Asian English.

So whatever a professional linguist might say about the origin of linguistic forms, Creole was much more extensively linked with adolescent perceptions of their own vernacular speech than either Panjabi or Asian English. Creole and the local vernacular were also more extensively tied to a sense of youth and class identity – this emerged in patterns of correction that were produced or reported in interviews.

5.6 Correction by adults

Asian and Anglo informants sometimes commented on the inappropriacy of adults using words from the interface between Creole and the multiracial vernacular – ‘it’s just not on, is it, [when my mum says “wicked”, “hard”]’. And black informants themselves emphasized the differences between their own uses of Creole and the varieties spoken by adult relatives who had been brought up in the Caribbean (see also Hewitt 1986:103; Sebba 1986:155ff).

But the feeling that there was a specifically youth cultural variety of Creole-influenced speech came out most clearly in reports about the way that parents and teachers drew attention to certain aspects of the local adolescent vernacular. With Indian and Pakistani informants, Panjabi and Urdu were very commonly associated with politeness to older relatives, who, it was often said, were keen that the younger generation should make use of these South Asian languages. In contrast, it has been widely reported that black parents generally discourage Creole in their children’s speech.⁴ In Ashmead, several *Asian* and *Anglo* informants also reported adults taking exception to (actually or putatively) Creole features being used at home:

they [adults] use very sort of dated English, and we just- we have our slang words, like.. ‘ennit Richard ennit’... or ‘he got catch innit’ and



they say ‘no, he got caught’ ... my mum for example: ‘Eh mum, Chris got catch at school today’ and she goes ‘what sort of English is that?’ ... Probably they were brought up to it but it’s easier for us to use our language... especially when I want to get my mum angry... I just say to her to get her annoyed sometimes, I say ‘ah bootoo ((L2 Panjabi)), a rass you klaat’ or ‘cha na’ (Ian [An M 15])

[My dad] complained. He said, ‘you’re Indian, why can’t you speak like one’ and all this. I just said ‘blerd’ (Manjit [In M 15])

I’m always saying ‘innit innit’, and my mum and my sister take the mickey out of me cos they say it’s not proper English (Sally [An F 15])

It was often attendance at a specifically multiracial school that distinguished informants like these from their adult relatives. In fact, this kind of correction was just as commonly attributed to teachers:

Helen [AC F 14]: sometimes when we’re just having a good conversation, they just go ‘that isn’t- that isn’t proper English’ or something like that

Adrian [AC M 14]: yeh, we’re having our own conversation – they just join and say that’s not proper English... They just jump into the conversation and they just say ‘that’s not right’

Significantly, in a very similar vein, informants also reported adults correcting non-standard Anglo dialectisms:

we say ‘I aint’ and they go ‘I haven’t’, or ‘I’m no[?] goin [?]u’ and they say ‘noT goinG To’. (Ian [An M 15])

Mr Hibbert corrects. If I say ‘twenny’, he goes ‘twenty’, don’t he... well they’re right, but they’re fussy. He’s a maths teacher but he gives us lectures on English for 15 minutes sometimes... people take the michael out of him. (Pat An F 15)

Informants evidently regarded *both* Creole *and* vernacular South Midlands forms as targets for the corrective efforts of adults committed to cleaning up the spontaneous speech of the youngsters in their charge. At the same time, while accepting that these forms weren’t ‘good’ or ‘proper’, the stance of these informants was far from universally submissive. In fact, in highlighting a mix of Creole and vernacular Anglo features and in counterposing them to Standard English, it looks as though adult correction helped to invest these forms with a sense of multiracial working class identity distinctive to local youth.



5.7 Summary

From the interaction, report and other data considered in this chapter, it seems as though Creole was more closely linked with the everyday speech of Ashmead adolescents than either Panjabi or SAE. To say that this was due to its dialectal proximity to English would reveal relatively little (and anyway, while obviously true in relation to Panjabi, this might be hard to argue in connection with SAE). Lesser structural difference might sometimes be a factor, but social influences on its perception and use by white and Asian youngsters were obviously important.

In situations where adults were a relevant presence, Creole was more flexible than either of these other codes, being available for both peer-peer and adult-adolescent talk. At the same time, its linguistic form provided it with less protection from adult intrusion than Panjabi, and its more overtly oppositional symbolic and pragmatic value made it more vulnerable to reprimand than SAE. There was also less to set it apart in terms of the organization of the school curriculum. As a distinctive symbolic voice, Creole seemed capable of closer fusion with the expression of a crosser's genuine concerns in his or her daily dealings with teachers and parents. It was sometimes hard to separate utterances which drew on Creole to add weight to the speaker's ordinary voice from those in which Creole forms had become 'naturalized', carrying no obvious extra resonances.

These linguistic, interactional and institutional reasons for seeing Creole as more intimately connected with ordinary vernacular speech than either of the varieties studied in chapters 3 and 4 were matched in interview discussion. In actual fact, everyday adolescent speech was receptive to a wide range of linguistic influences (and of course also included more than just the three languages analyzed here). But informants generally prioritized Creole in their accounts of the local vernacular, and in doing so, they were no doubt affected by its quite extensive symbolic congruence with vitality and the kinds of concern that are quite frequently identified as typically youth cultural. Reports of the way that adults corrected adolescent speech also appeared to establish quite a strong association between Creole and traditional non-standard Anglo forms.

In all, a number of local social processes and arrangements helped to differentiate Creole from the practices and values associated with 'educated' Standard English, as well as aligning it more strongly than either Panjabi or Asian English with local vernacular speech.



5.8 Conclusion to Part II: Crossing, youth subculture, and the development of political sensibilities

To conclude this part of the book, I shall first summarize the central points that have emerged from this and the two preceding chapters. After that, it is worth comparing the approach taken here with some influential sociological work on youth culture and resistance – specifically, research in the tradition established by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS).

This part of the book set out to explore the political aspects of multiracial adolescent code-switching in the presence of adults, and it has suggested that the interactional structures and processes clustering around SAE, Creole, and Panjabi can indeed be seen as small but significant building blocks for the kind of collective interracial sensibility that Gilroy interprets in terms of the new urban social movements.

‘Resistance’ can be difficult to spot in everyday behaviour – most adolescents didn’t appear to want direct confrontation with their elders, and people are generally very good at repairing interactional difficulty. The argument has been, however, that acts of code-switching and language crossing foregrounded certain kinds of micro-social relationship, and that through processes of symbolic evocation they invited extrapolation to wider fields of political contestation.

To make these connections, analysis first focused on participation frameworks. Two were basic. The first involved an engagement between adults in superior institutional positions and adolescents in subordinate ones. The second involved interaction between adolescent peers. These then generated a third interactional relationship, in which institutionally powerful adults acted as bystanders to adolescent talk. When they were used, SAE and Panjabi generally entailed different participation frameworks: stylized Asian English normally occurred in adult-adolescent interaction, while Panjabi was used between peers with adults looking on. Creole could involve either.

Boundary negotiation was the second micro-interactional issue that regularly featured when any of these three varieties were used. The boundaries in question varied. Code-switches into SAE were most often occasioned at moments when adolescents came under greater adult influence. Creole seemed to express concern at transgression of the norms of decent conduct. In this chapter, nothing was said of the ritual functions that Panjabi might serve between peers, but its use in arenas where the dominant activity was adult-directed did invite the people in charge to declare whether or not they regarded it as an *illegitimate* addition to the



communicative flow.

In switching to symbolic voices that inevitably evoked connotational fields that stretched beyond the matter on hand, adolescents invited participants 'to read acts as symptoms' and to take a larger view. In this way, the particular participation frameworks and boundary negotiations involved in any one case of language crossing could be reinterpreted in terms of a wider set of political relations. Interactions between particular adults and adolescents could be reconstrued in terms of the domination of one social group by another. Adolescent-adolescent discourse could be taken to instantiate intra-group solidarity. And specific incidents involving subordination to adult influence, unfair treatment, or unwelcome interruption could be contextualized in a wider social order in which ethnic groups suffered disproportionate injustice, were accepted only in inferior positions, or had to struggle for recognition of their independent traditions.

It seems fair to say, then, that interactional code-crossing provides a productive site for the analysis of informal political processes among youth in a multiracial urban setting. The connection with sociological discussion of social movements has already been pursued quite closely, especially in chapter 3. But there is at least one other area of sociological research with obvious relevance to the present study, and it is worth briefly reviewing the kind of contribution that a fairly broadly based interpretive sociolinguistic analysis can make to this.

Work on youth 'subcultures' carried out in the tradition established by the Birmingham CCCS in fact forms a significant part of the background to my own research, and there is a very clear overlap in several central themes. Several commentators suggest that the most important CCCS contribution was to interpret the distinctive activities and 'focal concerns' of youth as a form of *ideological* contestation. Considerable weight was attached to the symbolic significance of style, dress, argot, ritual, activity and music, and it was through these that youngsters were seen as partially interrupting, adapting, resisting (but finally coming to terms with) the possibilities and meanings offered to them by the dominant society (P. Cohen 1972; Hall and Jefferson 1976; Mungham and Pearson 1976; Willis 1977; Hebdige 1979; Connell 1983; Frith 1984; Brake 1985). Culture was examined as a political activity closely linked to the conflict of social interests, and an attempt was made to develop modes of analysis which could show how the creativity of active human agents fitted in with the larger processes through which social stratification was reproduced (Willis 1977; Giroux 1983a, 1983b).

It has now been widely recognized, however, that during the 1970s (and sometimes later), work in this tradition contained a number of fairly



serious conceptual and methodological problems. In a number of respects, Gilroy's 1987 study represents a major development beyond these. But as I have already suggested, Gilroy provides relatively little systematic discussion of language use. In order to bring out the specific contribution of the kind of sociolinguistic discourse analysis involved in my own research, it is worth summarizing some of the most important of the difficulties that CCCS research encountered.

1. Scholars in the CCCS 'paradigm' attached considerable importance to ethnography as a way of studying youth's active reinterpretation of the specific local and historical conditions of domination in which it found itself, but the adequacy of their fieldwork and of their interpretative procedures has been questioned (A.Hargreaves 1982:114; Connell 1983:224). In practice, studies often fell short of the requirements for an adequate symbolic analysis, moving too rapidly away from the description of concrete instances and local interpretations into accounts of their wider sociological significance (S.Cohen 1980:xvi; Turner 1974:21). Indeed, in spite of its inclusion in the title of a seminal CCCS publication – *Resistance through Rituals* – very little sustained theoretical consideration was given to the concept of ritual.
2. These weaknesses in the empirical treatment of youth culture fed into at least two major conceptual problems: what kinds of activity actually qualified as resistance, and what were its targets? Ethnographies of schooling outside the CCCS tradition describe a number of different ways in which pupils express a lack of interest in classroom business – daydreaming is just one example (cf Woods 1979; Pollard 1979, 1985) – and if one interprets everything except willing and joyful compliance as a form of resistance, the concept's connection with ideas of collective social transformation gets lost (A Hargreaves 1982:113). Undifferentiating use of the term 'resistance' can obscure moments in cultural expression when autonomy and alternative identity have priority over active opposition, and there is also a risk of the kind of reductionism which construes minority experience exclusively in terms of antiracism (Hewitt 1986:214; Gilroy 1987:150, 159).
3. At least in early CCCS work on subculture, these problems of interpretation were partially resolved in the view that class relations were always the fundamental issue, regardless of the apparent complexities of everyday life and of the interpretations that actors themselves might put on their conduct. As many later commentators noted, this led to the neglect of race and gender.



4. In order to explain the gap between ostensible conduct and the targets which they suggested it was directed against, scholars often described action as 'oblique', 'ambiguous' and 'displaced' in its meaning, engaged in struggles that were 'magical' and 'imaginary' rather than explicit or well-focused. They also emphasized the contradictions within youth culture, frequently using the phrase 'accommodation and resistance'. But this idiom carried a number of risks: *self-conscious* resistance could be obscured, participants could be seen as inarticulate mired in a set of contradictions that blocked their vision, and indeed analysts might be tempted to mistake their own confusion for their subjects'.
5. In CCCS work on subculture, a view of the many identities comprising a person's subjectivity was generally underdeveloped. As a result, members of subcultures and class groups were often treated as more homogeneous and more synchronized in their interests than one would now regard as empirically warranted. The boundaries around membership were seen as unrealistically clear cut, and the opposition between youth and school was over-simplified (Connell 1983).

Clearly, then, there are a number of issues that have arisen in debate about CCCS research that any study of the politics of youth cultural practice now needs to reckon with, and my own work tries to move past each of these difficulties by means of a broadly based sociolinguistics. In the analysis presented so far, the interpretation of ritual and symbol has involved a close reading of particular interactional sequences, informant comments and reports, and some detailed theoretical discussion of ritual and symbolism themselves (cf 1 above). In the process, it has become clear that 'resistance' is much too crude a term to capture the different political problematics made momentarily available in these code-switchings into Creole, Panjabi and SAE (cf 2). The research here gives particular emphasis to race, but the difficulties of isolating this from class, neighbourhood and generation have become very apparent, particularly in the chapter 5 (cf 3 above). We have encountered 'ambiguity' in the symbolic meaning of, for example, SAE, and in many of the code-switches that have been examined, there was an obvious contradiction between the speaker's usual self-presentation and the particular persona that they momentarily projected. But rather than indicating the adolescent actor's confusion, contradiction and uncertainty at the level of interpersonal action seemed to be resources which the participants *skillfully* exploited (4).

Finally, the analysis has been underpinned by the assumption that individuals have many identities, and that differences in one of these can be



attenuated by similarities in another (cf 5). Code-switching has, for example, been studied as practice that assists the political socialization of friends, classmates and others *across* the boundaries of ethnic difference (e.g. chapter 4.5). Overarching patterns of group stratification certainly can't be denied, but they don't have to be oppressive in every local context, and through examination of actions and their responses, one can see how solidarities can develop between those who produce switches and those who merely receive them, in spite of the fact that they may be divided by major differences in institutional power. Unlike approaches which identify social or subcultural groups as the basic unit in their accounts of resistance (e.g. Willis 1977), the analysis of interactional practices doesn't prescribe who the proponents of these politics should be. Of course, not just anyone could use Panjabi, SAE or Creole, and in Part III, constraints on who could use which code will be discussed much more fully. Nevertheless, it is clear that given particular kinds of friendship and/or shared institutional position, whites could for example use Creole or Panjabi and evoke political relations that, in cultural or ethnic absolutist analyses, would only be available to the inheritors of those languages.

On a number of counts, interpretive sociolinguistic analysis of interactional practices avoids a crude determinism, and provides scope for understanding how urban communities can start to develop broadly shared political commitments in spite of their diverse constituency. How far this collective sensibility could develop, and what direction its political mobilization could take, are not questions which this mode of analysis can answer. Important issues of that kind would require investigation of a far wider range of larger social processes, as well as a much fuller examination of local and national discourses about class, race and community. Even so, the analysis of interaction may play an important part in providing a view of the everyday understandings that lie at the roots of larger movements.

Notes

1. On Creole, see e.g. Sutcliffe 1982, Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985, Edwards 1986, Sebba 1986, 1993. On the English of people with Indian backgrounds, see e.g. Agnihotri 1979, Nihalani *et al.* 1979, Gumperz 1982a, Shackle 1987. On both, see Lander 1981, Wells 1982, Romaine 1983.
2. Up to a point, the folk attribution of a black origin to common vernacular terms could be based on attention to lexis. Some of the words and idioms that Hewitt lists as Creole features in white South London speech also had interethnic currency in Ashmead – for example, 'wicked', 'hard', 'bad'



(all meaning ‘excellent’), ‘sad’ (which Hewitt glosses as ‘pathetic’), ‘shame’ (‘[v] to shame or be shamed, and [n] state of disgrace’) ‘bahty’ (‘buttocks’), ‘facety’ (‘cheeky’), ‘tief’ (‘to steal, a thief’), ‘cha’ and tooth-sucking (both exclamations of annoyance), ‘guy’ (as a term of address), ‘rass’ (buttocks), ‘soff’ (weak, ineffective), ‘wa appen’ (‘friendly greeting’). Whether or not they preserved the same forms and meaning that Hewitt ascribes to them is a question that would require much fuller and more systematic examination than I have been able to give them.

3. See Cheshire 1978 on similar verbs, which in Reading, served as a site for the preservation of older dialectal forms rather than for the introduction of new ones.
4. Sutcliffe 1982:152-3; Hewitt 1986:105; Edwards 1986:105-6; Dalphinis 1991:49; though cp Sebba 1993:Ch. 6.