

Latino Language and Literacy in Ethnolinguistic Chicago

Edited by

Marcia Farr



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Preface

Marcia Farr

This book, along with its companion, *Ethnolinguistic Chicago: Language and Literacy in the City's Neighborhoods* (Farr, 2004), fills an important gap in research on Chicago and, more generally, on language use in globalized metropolitan areas. Although Chicago has been fairly well studied by scholars interested in ethnicity, including sociologists (Massey & Denton, 1993; Wilson, 1987) and historians (Holli & Jones 1977/1984/1995), few studies have focused on language and ethnicity in Chicago. This is so despite the well-known fact that Chicago, one of the most linguistically and ethnically diverse cities in the United States, often is cited as an archetypically American city. Certainly, Chicago is, and always has been, a city of immigrants (and migrants arriving from other parts of the United States). Moreover, language is unquestionably central to social identity because how we talk constructs for ourselves and others who we are.

The dearth of studies on Spanish-speaking populations in Chicago matches the overall lack of studies focusing on language and ethnicity in this city despite the fact that Chicago is a unique context for Spanish speakers, given its multicultural and multilingual history and the significant numbers of both Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in the city, as well as other Caribbean and Central and South American Spanish-speaking populations. Although Mexicans in the U.S. Southwest (Galindo & Gonzales, 1999;

- Moss, B. (2001). *A community text arises: Literate texts and literacy traditions in African American churches*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
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PART

I

INTRODUCTION

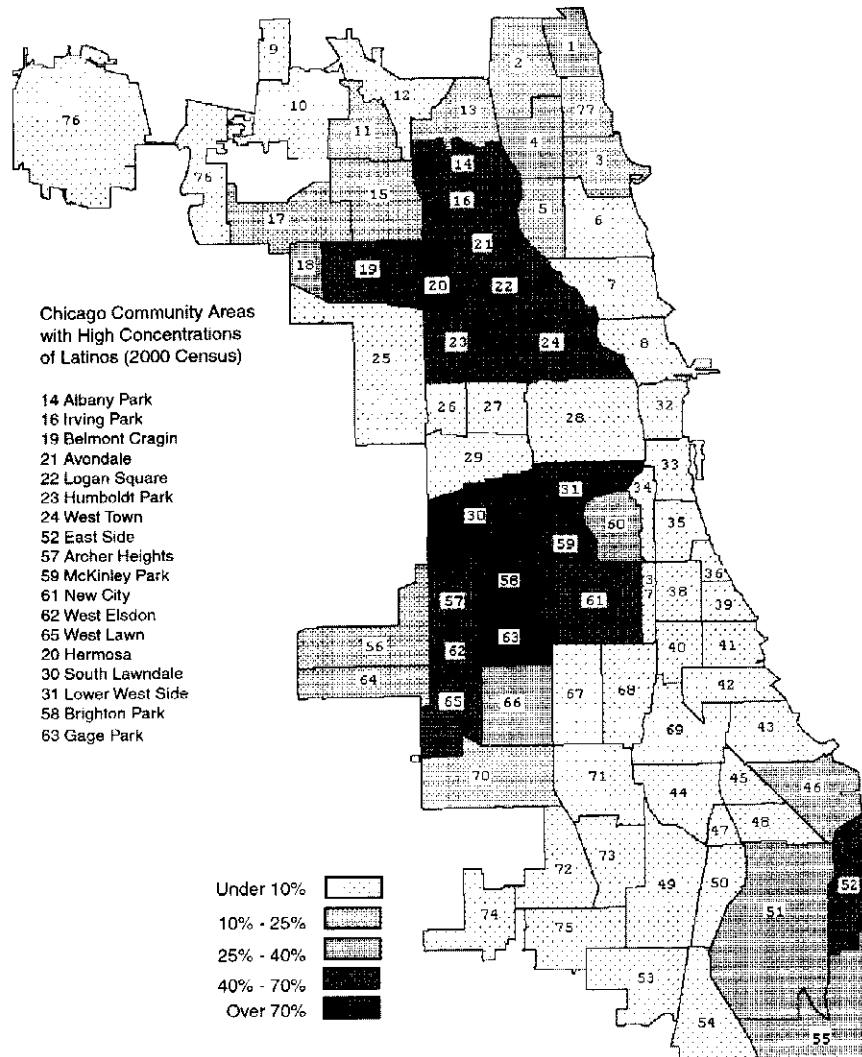
Latinos and Diversity in a Global City: Language and Identity at Home, School, Church, and Work¹

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Census data compiled by the University of Notre Dame, Institute for Latino Studies; map provided by the University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago Area Geographic Information Study (CAGIS).

Chicago is a global city. That is, its economy is linked globally to other world cities in an increasingly interconnected, globalized world. Globalization as a process, however, can mean many things: a push for free market economic practice across the globe, the spread of American cultural images through media and products, or a growing sense of Western responsibility for economic and political effects on people and the environment worldwide. Some treat “global” as a sociological term expressing the blended or hybrid nature of people, goods and cultural practices that has resulted from the dissolution of traditional boundaries in terms of gender, nationality, ethnicity, and politics. Yet globalization also appears to be realigning peoples into new ethnic, class, and religious groups. This volume focuses on Spanish-speaking peoples as ethnic groups in the United States, specifically Chicago. The companion volume to this book, *Ethno-linguistic Chicago: Language and Literacy in the City's Neighborhoods* (Farr, 2004), focused on a variety of other populations in this context.

This second volume is devoted to questions concerning Latino language use and its interface with identity construction in the context of the global city that Chicago has come to be. Chicago, in fact, now has the third largest Latino population in the country (U.S. Census Bureau, PHC-T-6, Table 4), and within this Latino population, those of Mexican and Puerto Rican descent are the most heavily represented. The prominence of these two groups, however, should not mask the presence of varied other Latino groups in Chicago (listed here according to the size of their population in the city) (2000 U.S. Census, QT-P9, Chicago city): Guatemalan, Ecuadorian, Cuban, Colombian, Spaniard, Salvadoran, Honduran, Peruvian, Dominican, Argentinean, Nicaraguan, Chilean, Panamanian, Costa Rican, Venezuelan, Bolivian, Uruguayan, and Paraguayan.

Despite of the variety of Latino groups in Chicago, little, if any, research has investigated their social, linguistic, and cultural differences. This volume, then, serves as a precursor to the type of research that can be done in relation to other Latino groups not included in this book. Such an effort may very likely expand the scope of what currently is considered the Latino experience in the United States by showing diverse conceptions and perceptions of ethnicity in relation to point of origin, migratory experience and transnational ties, educational attainment, economic class mobility, identity formation and group solidarity, and numerous other domains impacted by the social background of Latinos in the United States. In brief, research investigating the daily activities of the diverse Latino groups in a city such as Chicago may elucidate social practices that can inform a deeper understanding of such complex global phenomena as transnational migration, socioeconomic ties that span generations and national boundaries, and the confluence of systems of meanings some scholars have identified as the formation of hybrid cultures (García Canclini, 1989; Rowe & Schelling, 1991).

Despite these potential implications for understanding globalization, it is important to emphasize that the chapters in this book, like those in the earlier companion volume, are not specifically about globalization. Yet the worldwide processes that comprise globalization provide a backdrop, a context, within which the people represented in these chapters live their lives. More than globalization, however, much of the work in this book is embedded in transnationalism (see especially the chapters by Farr and Domínguez Barajas). Globalization often is contrasted with transnationalism. For some, the latter is a subordinate term, both chronologically and structurally (Kearney, 1995). That is, nation building is seen as preceding the transfer of goods and people across borders, so transnationalism is pre-

sumed to be a historical by-product of globalization. Transnationalism is seen as a small piece of global processes because deterritorialization involves “new kinds of political actors” among whom the economic and political intersections between ethnic groups and the state are recast (Kotkin, 1993, p. 5; Sassen, 1998). Thus people become “deterritorialized” as they move and work across nation–state borders. With worldwide air travel, telecommunications, and ever-more-rapid flows of information, the deterritorialization of national and ethnic groups becomes even more intense. That is, the movement of people across the globe increases (Giddens, 2000; Harvey, 1990). These large-scale migrations have been prefigured in Chicago, a city of immigrants (Holli & Jones, 1977/1995), making it a good site for studying the predicaments of deterritorialization (Basch, Glick-Schiller, & Szanton-Bpanc, 1994; Holtzman, 2000).

The chapters in this volume take as their subject of inquiry the ethno-linguistic practices of Spanish-speaking people who experience deterritorialization as ethnic (im)migrant groups. Although theories of globalization assert that the new world order involves the erosion of ethnic group identities, the two population groups represented in this volume (Mexicans and Puerto Ricans) experience deeply felt ethnic affiliations. Those in the older generations struggle less with hybrid identities brought on by the demands of a new cultural context than with adaptive responses to the trials of life as immigrants whose practices and self-perceptions are outside the dominant mainstream (see, for example, Hurtig’s chapter on Mexican immigrant women’s storytelling practices). For the younger generations, especially those who experience schooling in Chicago, ethnic formation may include hybrid identities and the development of new ones that replace the old (see, for example, Cohen’s chapter on Mexican American high school girls). In either case, despite the movement toward a “global monoculture” implied and sometimes seen in studies of free market capital and international media marketing, another frequent response to globalization is the entrenchment of highly marked ethnic, class, and religious identities. The eloquent and complex ways in which people of varying class, ethnic, and racial groups (including “mainstream” groups) express their multiple identities in Chicago is a testament to how much more we need to study class and ethnic formation on the ground.

“Borderlands” studies focusing on the interface between peoples as they move across borders provide another relevant context in which to view the work in this volume. Extrapolating from the 2,000-mile U.S.–Mexican border, scholars now use the term “border” metaphorically: A border

exists wherever differing “social practices and cultural beliefs” confront each other “in a contemporary global context” (Alvarez, 1995, p. 448). Staudt and Spener (1998) viewed the border “as an ongoing dialectical process which generates multiple borderland spaces” (p. 2), some of which are quite distant from actual international boundaries. Rouse (1991), studying a transnational community located in Redwood City, California, and Aguililla, Michoacán, Mexico, saw “a proliferation of border zones” and the eruption of “miniature borders” throughout both Mexico and the United States (Rouse, 1991, p. 17).

Chicago evidences these multiple miniature borders both in contemporary and historical terms. It could be argued, in fact, that Chicago has always been a global city with transnational populations (Holli & Jones, 1977/1995) confronting each other, creating “miniature borders” all over the city. Certainly, Chicago is known for its cultural and linguistic diversity, its mosaic of ethnic neighborhoods, but just as clearly, this is a scene that now has become characteristic of many more U.S. regions and cities.

The chapters presented in this volume thus ask and begin to answer the following questions: How did Mexicans and Puerto Ricans come to live in Chicago? Have they maintained their “traditional” identities, the Spanish language (and its varying dialects), and their own ways of speaking? Alternatively, have they recreated or transformed these social and cultural practices, including linguistic ones (see, for example, Potowski, 2004)? How does language use change from one generation to the next? Why does it change across the generations, and what does this mean as the demographic and linguistic face of the United States continues to “Latinize”? How do social, economic, and political relations “back home” appear in Latino discourse in Chicago? How do Latino populations adapt their linguistic practices to aspects of globalization, including the worldwide women’s rights movement, the increasing use of English as a global language, and the English-only movement in the United States? Does the increasing compression of space and time through communication and travel technology affect language maintenance and group identity? What impact do different communicative practices have on people in multicultural work spaces, or in our public and private schools, and how can we be more intelligent about the issues that disrupt that communication and cross-cultural understanding?

By looking at the history, linguistic practices, and educational experiences of the Mexican and Puerto Rican populations in Chicago, this volume begins to characterize important details about Latino populations in

Chicago and the social dynamics at play within these groups, between them, and in relation to other non-Latino populations. The predominance of the Mexican-origin population among Latinos in Chicago, for example, does not simply mean that they are more numerous than any other Latino group. The numeric predominance of this group often translates into a default representation of Latinos in Chicago by the media. The local Latino television stations, affiliated with the national Spanish-language networks, and radio stations, for example, often orient their programming (e.g., newscasts, variety shows, telenovelas, weekend sports, commercials) primarily to a Mexican-origin audience. Local Spanish-language newspapers also clearly reflect this orientation by focusing frequently on Mexico when covering international news, sports, and entertainment.

Because the Mexican-origin population constitutes 70% of the Latinos in Chicago, this media orientation may be understandable. Nevertheless, the Puerto Rican-origin population, which constitutes 15% of the overall Latino population, and the variety of Latinos groups already mentioned certainly add another dimension to the general conception of a Latino identity. The two numerically dominant groups, for example, have historically shared essential characteristics of their migratory experience and immigrant orientation (i.e., view of initial migration as temporary), but have faced and continue to face different degrees of resistance to their integration into the mainstream.

MEXICANS IN CHICAGO

The Mexican-origin community has a history in Chicago that dates to the early 1900s. According to Padilla (1985, p. 22), “The Mexican revolution of 1910 accelerated the large-scale immigration of Mexicans to the United States,” primarily to the Southwest. A cohort of these immigrants followed the path of employment “to farmwork in the Midwest, or to the packing-houses of Kansas City, or to railroad track labor in various cities, and finally to the industrial areas of Chicago” (Año Nuevo-Kerr, 1976; quoted in Padilla, 1985, p. 22), whereas another cohort consisted of immigrants “directly recruited by employers and shipped to Chicago via railroad cars” (Padilla, 1985, p. 23).

The recruitment of immigrant labor quickly turned to forced repatriation of entire Mexican families—despite the status of many as U.S. citizens and legal immigrants—during the Great Depression (Padilla, 1985, p. 26). This was a severe blow to the coherence of an emerging Mexican American

community in Chicago. Nevertheless, the employment pendulum swung again in favor of Mexican laborers as the onset of World War II brought about labor shortages in the agricultural and industrial sectors. To counteract those shortages, the United States and Mexico signed an international labor agreement in 1942. The Bracero Program, as the agreement is commonly known, guaranteed the supply of Mexican laborers until 1964. Thus, sanctioned and unsanctioned migration, coupled with migrant influxes from the southwestern states, increased the numbers of the Mexican-origin population in Chicago for the first half of the 20th century. The dramatic rise of this segment of the population in the past four decades followed a similar pattern despite the demise of the Bracero Program. Chain migration supported by social networks (see Farr's chapters in this volume), the adaptability of Mexican laborers to changing labor demands (e.g., a shift from industrial labor to entry level service and light manufacturing positions), and factors contributing to the potential for upward mobility (e.g., improved educational opportunities, less residential segregation, and evolving perceptions of race and ethnicity) may prove to be a boon for the continued rise of the Mexican-origin population in Chicago.

PUERTO RICANS IN CHICAGO

Like their Mexican counterparts, Puerto Rican immigrants came to Chicago in search of economic betterment. But unlike the preceding Mexican immigration, the Puerto Rican migration was spurred by U.S. transformation of the island's economy. With the end of the Spanish American War, the United States, ignoring the status of independent state granted to the island by Spain in 1897, assumed control over Puerto Rico.

After the takeover of Puerto Rico, the new "colonial masters" transformed Puerto Rico's multicrop agricultural economy into a technologically based, single cash-crop industry; several decades later it was changed again and built around a factory system which was capital—and not people—oriented. Because of their nature, these economic changes failed to provide jobs for an ever-increasing population, resulting, in turn, in a large-scale uprooting and forced exile of hundreds of thousands of people from their native land because of urgent economic needs. (Padilla, 1987, p. 6)

Three decades after the United States took control of Puerto Rico, large-scale migration to the mainland's Northeast became an established

reality, and by the 1940s the migration extended to other parts of the United States. Puerto Rican migration to Chicago began in the late 1940s and reached its peak in the 1960s (Padilla, 1985, p. 38). Unfortunately, this influx of laborers came at a time when manufacturing jobs were waning as the result of technological advances, and for Puerto Rican immigrants this meant being relegated to "nonindustrial, poorly paid, menial, dead-end jobs" (Padilla, 1985, p. 43).

In addition to such low-income employment, the Puerto Rican community faced harsher housing discrimination than other Latino groups after reaching a critical mass in Chicago (i.e., becoming a noticeable presence). Massey and Denton (1989) have traced a pattern of housing discrimination directed at Puerto Ricans that persisted from 1960 to 1980 in many U.S. metropolitan areas. As in many of the major U.S. cities Massey and Denton examined, Puerto Ricans in Chicago were highly segregated from Anglos during this period, whereas Mexicans and Cubans were considerably less so.

Yet, unlike the Puerto Ricans in other cities, those in Chicago also were highly segregated from African Americans and Asians. This suggests that the residential areas of Puerto Ricans in Chicago remained highly insular as late as 20 years ago, which speaks to the persistence of a solidified ethnic identity based on the isolation of the ethnic neighborhood (Padilla, 1985, p. 52). Massey and Denton's (1993) more recent study of Chicago, however, has indicated that although Mexicans are more integrated into White neighborhoods than Puerto Ricans, the higher rates of segregation for the latter are accounted for by the fact that "Black" Puerto Ricans are more segregated than "White" Puerto Ricans and live closer to African Americans.

Such differences in integration into the mainstream are vexing given the similarities in the migration histories of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago. The major differences are clearly that the Puerto Rican community started growing after World War II, whereas the Mexican community established itself 40 years earlier, and that Puerto Ricans were free to come and go to the United States as a result of their citizenship status, whereas Mexicans were not. These differences, however, seem to dissipate given the more recent history of the two groups. By the 1970s, for example, the two groups coalesced under the emergence of a Latino ethnic identity in response to discrimination against Spanish-speaking minorities and their marginalization in Chicago (Padilla, 1985). In addition, the *va y ven* (to and fro) pattern of migration noted among Puerto Ricans (Padilla, 1987, pp.

69–70) also is now commonplace for many Mexicans in the United States (Farr, 2000, forthcoming; Rouse, 1991, 1992).

The continuous movement to and from the homeland, however, takes a psychological toll because it involves “repeated ruptures and renewal of ties, dismantlings and reconstructions of familial and communal networks in old and new settings” (Rodríguez, Sánchez-Korrol, & Alers, 1984, p. 2), and this toll presumably intensifies with the length of a sojourn in a given community. Despite this toll, the reluctance to sever ties with the homeland appears to characterize the first generations of Mexican and Puerto Rican migrants to Chicago. The desire to maintain such connections may be renewed continuously by the enduring flow of Mexican immigration to Chicago. The same may not be true for the Puerto Rican community in Chicago, given that its population increments in no way suggest the massive migration influxes that are the hallmark of the Mexican population in the past 40 years. Moreover, the Puerto Rican population in the city actually decreased between 1990 and 2000 according to census figures.

Whether other Latino groups maintain an orientation to transnational ties similar to that of the Mexicans in Chicago is another subject for future research. There may be a variety of reasons why other Latino groups do not have such an orientation. In the Southwest, for example, the lack of transnational ties among some, but not all, people of Mexican origin is the result of their nonmigratory history vis-à-vis the United States. These people of Mexican origin did not come to the United States; rather, the United States came to them via the 1848 Treaty of Hidalgo. The U.S. annexation of their homeland was the direct result of that treaty, and this left them, in effect, without a Mexican homeland to which they could return. Although it could be assumed that Puerto Rico’s historical lack of national sovereignty may lead Puerto Ricans to adopt a similar perspective, this does not seem to be the case. Moreover, the distance between the island and mainland as well as the prominence of Spanish in the national and cultural heritage may continue to challenge this assumption.

To address internal differences within what is now the largest minority population in the country, research into the formation of an ethnic identity and the role language plays in it is crucial. The maintenance of Spanish as a primary and as a heritage language (see the chapter by Potowski) reflects more than linguistic ability for the Latino groups included in this volume and those whose voice is yet to be recorded. The complex bond between language and culture and the values that are forged, transmitted, and maintained through culturally embedded language use, directs any

research involving Latino groups in general to consider the prominence and the impact of linguistic issues in their communities.

NON-ENGLISH TONGUES AND THE UNITED STATES

Despite a multilingual and multicultural history that dates back to the founding of the country, the United States has had an ambivalent relationship with cultural diversity in general, and with non-English languages (and nonstandard English dialects) in particular. Although nation building has been entwined with insistence on the official status and dominance of English, non-English languages nevertheless have been used regularly throughout U.S. history in government agencies, courts, newspapers, schools, and other public contexts (Ferguson & Heath, 1981). Current national debates over such diversity invoke and repeat earlier debates in the second half of the 19th century over German language and culture, and in the early 20th century over heavy migration from Eastern and Southern Europe. Some claim that the fervor in recent decades against non-English languages and their speakers is intensified by the experience of language loss by earlier generations of European immigrants, especially by the numerous German speakers in this country up until World War I (Baron, 1990; Judd, 2004), after which time German was quickly dropped by its speakers and in school curricula. Yet because of the broad range of ethnic groups and their relative numeric strengths in the history of Chicago, conflict over linguistic and cultural diversity has been more muted there than elsewhere in the United States, at least in recent years. Consequently, Chicago presents an interesting contrast to states such as California, Arizona, or Florida, where such conflict is more publicly salient. The recent debate over bilingual education in Chicago, for example, questioned the length, not the existence, of bilingual programs in the public schools (official policy now limits bilingual education to 3 years). Moreover, as of 1998, Chicago had 10 dual-language schools (see the chapter by Potowski).

Chicago has a long history of economic vitality and diversity, and it remains an attractive destination for people ready to work in a variety of industries. For example, Lithuanians, Poles, and African Americans came to work in the stockyards at the turn of the 20th century, and Mexicans arrived by the thousands in the 1920s to sustain the iron and steelworks located in south Chicago. Today, highly educated Africans, South Asians, and East Asians are vital to the western suburban technology corridor, and other ethnic groups are part of the long trajectory in which Irish, Germans, Greeks, Poles, Italians, and others have contributed to the city built by immigrants.

If the numerous ethnic groups in Chicago's historic neighborhoods have created a somewhat more tolerant ambience toward diversity, or at least a more realistic acceptance of it, they also have anticipated the cultural and linguistic diversity now evident across the entire United States, especially, but not entirely, in urban areas. As noted earlier, an increasingly globalized world economy has fomented migratory streams all over the world (Rosenau, 1997; Sassen, 1998; Wallerstein, 1974). In this hemisphere, the United States is the primary destination for these migrant labor forces, followed by Canada and Argentina (United Nations, 1988). Atlanta and other southern locales, for example, now host a substantial number of Mexicans, disrupting the traditional Black-White racial dichotomy (Murphy, Blanchard, & Hill, 1999). Such populations increase not only because of economic "push-pull" factors (e.g., the wage differential between Mexico and the United States, pressures from U.S. businesses for minimum wage workers), but also through the reconstituting, over time, of virtually entire villages in the United States (Farr, 2000, forthcoming; Rouse, 1992).

A number of the chapters in this volume arose from ground level studies within social networks. Transnational social networks (i.e., groups of family and friends both "back home" and at the destination site) facilitate the communication that feeds transnational movement and growth. Migration to the United States probably has always proceeded through family networks and transnational communication. For example, the massive German migrations throughout the 19th century were stimulated at least in part by family networks, letters, emigration handbooks, and newspapers (Kamhoefner, Helbich, & Sommer, 1991; Trommler & McVeigh, 1985).

Furthermore, once settled in American neighborhoods, families rely on social networks to carry out ethnic socialization of youth born in the United States, with some groups maintaining a sense of heritage and a network of cross-border social ties that last for several generations—a phenomenon that we are only beginning to understand (Constantakos & Spiridakis, 1997; Gans, 1999, p. 1304). Our understanding of ethnic formation or "ethnification" is something that may change as jet travel and telecommunications facilitate constant contact between ethnic groups and their home countries. Indeed, the fact that transnational mechanisms are markedly more extensive now than a century ago may cause significant changes in how ethnic formation comes about in the United States (Friedman, 1999). Even so, the contemporary diversity in the United States has its origins in U.S. history, although apparently unique in pace and heterogene-

ity, with people now coming from all over the world. The studies in this volume explore this diversity through a focus on language use among ethnic Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in a city that is both diverse and archetypical of the larger United States.

As already noted, this volume is the second of a pair. The first volume (Farr, 2004) focused on ethnolinguistic variation among groups with origins in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. Because of the recent intense growth in Spanish-speaking populations, this volume focuses entirely on Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, the two largest Latino groups in Chicago and in the United States. The studies in both volumes together contribute to our understanding of ethnolinguistic diversity by showing how it is woven into the fabric of daily life in Chicago, both historically and currently, and how it is an inevitable aspect of human life. Although important work has documented the history of various ethnic Chicago enclaves (Holli & Jones, 1977/1995), and although sociologists have abundantly studied numerous "community areas" (Chicago Fact Book Consortium, 1995), the role of language, either oral or written, in these diverse communities has not yet received systematic attention. Garcia and Fishman's (1997) *The Multilingual Apple: Languages in New York City* is a notable exception, although it does not address variation within languages, only between them. Although the field of sociolinguistics has long studied regional and social dialect variation (see, for example, recent work on African American Vernacular English in Baugh, 1999; Baugh, 2000; Rickford, 1999; Rickford & Rickford, 2000), ethnographic approaches to this kind of variation have been fewer (but see Zentella, 1997). These two volumes begin to address this lacuna by presenting "slices of language life" involving both multilingualism and within-language variation in specific home and community settings.

LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

González (2001) has eloquently portrayed the intensely felt tie between language, emotion, and identity in her study of Mexican-origin women and children in Arizona's "borderlands." These families were headed by either native-born or immigrant parents, who primarily used English and Spanish, respectively. Although González noted the use of Chicano English, most studies of language and identity do not make such differentiations, but define language as an entire "language" such as Spanish or English (e.g., Fishman, 1997). In this sense, variation in language use refers to bi- or

