

Problematizing sociolinguistic authenticity:

Considering power, oppression, and cultural appropriation in crossing

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Abstract

Although current analyses of linguistic crossing evaluate the immediate intra-speaker social consequences of crossing, the ways in which crossing reflects and reinforces broader social structures of power and oppression should also be taken into account, as the social meaning of crossing draws not only from immediate social interaction, but also from broader social projects. This study examines the appropriation of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) by Asian hip-hop group Far East Movement (FM). Using a dialect density measure (DDM), I show that FM uses AAVE at higher rates in sexualized party music versus nonsexualized ballads. I argue that this use of AAVE is a problematic subversion of Asian emasculation via the appropriation of Black masculinity.

Introduction

Crossing—the act of an out-group member using in-group linguistic forms—is a liminal act of identity that subverts traditional, essentialist categorizations of linguistic ownership and illustrates the emergent property of identity. By crossing between presupposed categories, such as race and gender, individuals demonstrate that the boundaries between these categories are not immutable but fluid. Acts of crossing, then, show that identity only takes on social meaning through interaction. Studies of crossing typically examine the meaning that crossing constructs within its discursive context, including how crossing indexes aspects of identity, such as ethnicity (cf. Chun 2001), or affiliation with an abstract group, such as urban youth culture (cf. Reyes 2005).

However, although linguistic studies of crossing typically focus on the immediate, intra-speaker consequences of crossing, they often do not consider the ways in which crossing reflects and reinforces broader social structures of power and oppression. These structures, however, still have social meaning and still inform the ways in which crossing gains meaning: crossing does not take its social significance solely from the immediate discourse, but rather also gains relative meaning from broader social projects. I mirror the term *social projects* here after Omi and Winant (1994)'s term *racial project*. According to Omi and Winant, “[a] racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines” (56). Omi and Winant further elaborate that racial formation relies on a network of racial projects, which mediate between identification and signification of race and institutional standardization of race (60). Although different aspects of social identity, such as gender, class, and sexuality, do not undergo the exact same formation as racial formation does, we can still expand from the term *racial project* to the term *social project* to cover similar processes across different domains of identity. These various social projects inform the ways in which crossing gains its meaning within intra-speaker discourse: the social repercussions that crossing indexes gain

currency from the social projects that construct these meanings. For instance, a discussion of how Asian American adolescents use African American Vernacular English (AAVE) slang to index toughness (cf. Reyes 2005) is remiss without a discussion of the racial project that indexes toughness onto Blackness in the first place.

In this article, I examine the crossing practices of Asian American hip-hop group Far East Movement. Far East Movement, created in 2003, is comprised of four Asian American men—Chinese and Japanese American KevNish, Korean Americans J-Splif and Prohgress, and Filipino American DJ Virman. Through analyzing their crossing and style-shifting practices, as well as the connection between their linguistic practice and the construction of racialized masculinity, I examine how Far East Movement appropriates racialized masculinity to subvert racialized emasculation. However, I also demonstrate that this subversion of Asian emasculation is problematic in its reliance on negative stereotypes of Black hypermasculinity. I discuss the racial projects that imprint hypermasculinity and hypersexuality on Blackness, as well as the racial projects that imprint emasculation on Asianness, and discuss how the cultural appropriation of Blackness and Black masculinity are both critical to understanding how this linguistic appropriation indexes masculinity and how this act is problematic.

The first section of this article overviews the theoretical background from which I am making my argument. The theoretical argument is broken up into sections that discuss identity, authenticity, and racialization. Subsequently, I describe my methodology, including both the dialect density measure (DDM) and other measurement methods for my data. Finally, I discuss my results and their implications. I conclude with a discussion that problematizes sociolinguistic authenticity and suggests the incorporation of discussions of broader social structure and social projects in understanding crossing and how crossing gains social meaning.

Theoretical background

Identity and authenticity

Numerous theories have arisen to address the questions of what identity is, how we define it, and what “authenticity” is with regards to identity. I will be focusing on the frameworks delineated by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) and Bucholtz (2003), as these frameworks synthesize many current sociocultural linguistic¹ approaches to identity. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) provide five principles for understanding identity in relation to sociocultural linguistics. These principles are: (1) emergence, which states that identity is not fixed in the individual’s mind, but the product of sociocultural interaction; (2) positionality, which states that the individual is comprised of multiple levels of demographic categories: (a) macro-level demographic categories, (b) ethnographically specific categories, and (c) temporarily specific categories (592); (3) indexicality, which states that a number of processes of indexing make up identity relations, including (a) overt mention of identity, (b) presuppositions regarding one’s own or others’ identity, (c) interactional orientations and footings to ongoing talk, and (d) use of structures associated with certain personae and groups (594); (4) relationality, which states that identity is constructed through a number of opposing relations called the *tactics of intersubjectivity*, which include adequation/distinction, authentication/denaturalization, and authorization/illegitimation; and (5) partialness, which states that identity is constantly shifting over the course of intersubjective discourse and also between different discourse contexts.

Although all five principles hold relevance for crossing, the principles of emergence, indexicality, and relationality are particularly important for understanding crossing, as crossing directly engages these principles through its subversion of traditional identity categories. I have already discussed the ways in which crossing exposes identity as emergent: crossing shows that categories previously

¹ “Sociocultural linguistics” here is an umbrella term for many varieties of linguistic research, including, but not limited to, sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and conversation and discourse analysis.

understood in essentialist, fixed manners are not in fact fixed or housed solely in the mind, but rather are categories constructed through interaction.

The principle of indexicality perhaps best encapsulates how we express identity as a whole, including how we cross. Bucholtz & Hall (2005), drawing from Silverstein (1976), define an “index” as “a linguistic form that depends on the interactional context for its meaning, such as the first-person pronoun *I*.” (594) Drawing subsequently from work by Ochs (1992) and Silverstein (1985), Bucholtz & Hall (2005) define *indexicality* as “involv[ing] the creation of semiotic links between linguistic forms and social meanings. In identity formation, indexicality relies heavily on ideological structures, for associations between language and identity are rooted in cultural beliefs and values—that is, ideologies—about the sorts of speakers who (can or should) produce particular sorts of language.” (594) This focus on ideology is particularly important for this paper: while studies of crossing often focus on the individual’s linguistic ideology and ideologies of identities, they often do not complicate or problematize these ideologies in relation to larger social projects.

Additionally, there are multiple perspectives on how we index ethnically-linked identity through language. One conception of the ways in which we connect ethnicity and identity is through the concept of an *ethnolect*, which Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (2006) define as “[a] variety of language which is strongly associated with a particular ethnic population, for example African American English, Cajun English, or Latino English.” (393) However, this concept is not without its faults—ethnolects do not adequately encompass interspeaker variability, nor do they consider the shifting boundaries of ethnicity and, subsequently, ethnolects. Eckert (2008) further problematizes the notion of an ethnolect, showing that ethnically-marked features can also index place and may not be solely restricted to a particular ethnicity. Benor (2010), in response to many of the problems of ethnolects, instead constructs the theoretical framework of an *ethnolinguistic repertoire*. Under this framework, individuals construct ethnic identity through drawing from a pool of available resources;

some ethnic groups have more distinctive repertoires than others. I draw from the ethnolinguistic repertoire in constructing my Dialect Density Measure; although individual features may be shared by a number of different groups (/r/- and /l/-vocalization in particular is common across various groups), the bulk collection of features tends to characterize AAVE. Additionally, when individuals cross, they may be drawing from an ethnolinguistic repertoire in constructing the forms they use.

Finally, the principle of relationality is also foundational in understanding crossing and identity as a whole. A critical concept in studying identity is the concept of *authenticity*. Here, I draw from Bucholtz (2003) in my understanding of authenticity. Rather than seeing authenticity as an “object to be discovered” (399), I follow Bucholtz (2003)’s guiding principles in defining authenticity as “[a] notion [...] available for analysis as the outcome of the linguistic practices of social actors and the metalinguistic practices of sociolinguists.” (399) Bucholtz (2003) refutes notions of linguistic isolationism, linguistic mundaneness, the linguist as obstacle to linguistic authenticity, and the linguist as arbiter of authenticity (404–407), and instead creates the notion of *authentication*, which is a subset of Bucholtz & Hall (2005)’s principles of identity. Authentication relies on the principle of relationality and is part of the tactics of subjectivity; these tactics are adequation/distinction, authentication/denaturalization, and authorization/illegitimation. These pairs are not necessarily mutually exclusive or opposite poles, but may mutually constitute themselves at the same time. *Adequation* is the process of becoming linguistically similar to another speaker, whereas *distinction* is the opposite process of becoming linguistically different from another speaker. *Authorization* is the claiming of a culturally powerful status, whereas *illegitimation* is the renouncement of such a culturally powerful states. *Authentication* is the assertion of one’s identity as true and real, whereas *denaturalization* is the opposite process of asserting one’s identity as untrue. Through authentication, speakers construct authenticity via constant negotiations of social practices.

Asian American English

Research on Asian Americans, language, and identity within a monolingual framework of English has two primary branches—research that focuses on Asian American English as an ethnolinguistic entity, and research on the linguistic bricolage practices, including crossing, of Asian Americans and how Asian Americans use various linguistic resources to express ethnic identity. Research in the first of these branches has been relatively scarce; part of the difficulty of research into an “Asian American” variety is the diversity of languages spoken by Asian Americans, languages that can all influence the development of “Asian American English”—these languages come from a multitude of different language families and lend themselves to different influences on the resulting varieties of English spoken by Asian Americans. Attempts, however, have still been made to find a panethnic Asian American variety of English: Hanna (1997) and Newman & Wu (2011) have attempted to find characteristics of Asian American English that make individual speakers “sound Asian”; their results have been minimal, with Hanna (1997) identifying uptalk as a potential feature of Asian American English, and Newman & Wu (2011) identifying breathy voice, longer voice onset times for voiceless stops, and lower / ϵ/s^2 and / r/s as potential features of Asian American English. Other than these two studies, however, no other attempts have been made to establish a comprehensive set of features of Asian American English; the features of Asian American English remain relatively unknown as compared to AAVE or Chican@ English.³

The second branch of research on Asian American English examines the linguistic bricolage that Asian Americans construct in expressing ethnic and cultural identity. *Linguistic bricolage* here refers to the practice of creating new styles by combining pieces of pre-existing styles together (cf. Eckert

² I use symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) throughout to represent speech sounds.

³ Hawaiian Creole, or Pidgin, may serve as an interesting case study; however, while the speakers of Hawaiian Creole are generally Asian American and Pacific Islanders, the variety is not generalized and widely pan-ethnic across the United States in the same way that AAVE and Chican@ English are.

2000). Crossing becomes an important linguistic practice for Asian Americans to express identity, including ethnic identity, as crossing allows Asian Americans to draw from a large body of resources to construct identity. Chun (2001) examines the linguistic practices of Korean American male adolescents, finding that they appropriate AAVE to situate themselves as non-white people of color. Reyes (2005) found that some Asian American teens use AAVE slang to index toughness, affiliation with urban youth culture, and common shared identity as people of color. Finally, Bucholtz (2004) found that some Asian American youths use AAVE to index toughness. However, none of these studies problematize this indexing of Blackness with toughness or urbanness, a shortcoming which I address in my analysis, nor do these studies analyze the ways in which crossing indexes gender.

Racialization

Omi and Winant (1994) define race neither as “essence” nor as “illusion”, but rather see it as socially constructed: “[R]ace is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies” (55). As Omi and Winant attest, “[T]he concept of race continues to play a fundamental role in structuring and representing the social world” (55). This structuring and representation occurs through a network of smaller racial projects. These racial projects can act in macro-level social processes, and they may also act in micro-level social processes, as part of our everyday experience.

It is the contribution of crossing and crossing’s associated social structures to this everyday, micro-level assertion of racialization and racial projects that I am interested in. In understanding the way crossing indexes appropriated racialized masculinity, researchers must first understand the construction of racialized masculinities and what the racialized masculinities within this framework mean. However, rather than seeing racialization or gendering as solitary processes, I diverge from Omi and Winant and follow in the intersectional tradition of understanding social identity:

racialization cannot be separated from gender, nor can it be separated from other dimensions of social identity, such as sexuality. As such, discussions of gendering for Asian American men and Black men cannot be separated from discussions of racialization of Asian American men and Black men, nor can they be separated from a heterosexual discourse of sexuality and masculinity. Here, however, I focus more on the intertwining of gender and race in discussing the ways in which Asian American and Black men have been gendered.

Racialized masculinities

In discussing the various archetypes and tropes surround Chinese American men, Jachinson Chan states, “Stereotypes effectively reduce the unfamiliar to the familiar and familiarity provides a convenient environment to minimize, or maximize, social conflicts.” (Chan 2001: 8) Racial stereotypes, and gendered racial stereotypes, are historically constructed and embody many of the social conflicts that social groups face in the United States. Asian American men, for instance, have alternately been painted as hypersexual and asexual, although the image of the asexual Asian American man is currently more prevalent. This asexuality manifests itself through a variety of tropes, from the “egghead” or nerd, to the ninja/samurai/warrior. The first trope positions the Asian American man as being virginal, awkward, unfamiliar or averse to sex, whereas the latter positions the Asian American man as having almost an ascetic asexuality. (Fung 1991: 148)

These racialized and gendered stereotypes have long roots in U.S. history. An overarching theme in the understanding of the gender and social standing of Asian American men is that of Orientalism—Orientalism paints the West as masculine, dominating, and strong; the East is subsequently gendered as feminine and associated with the negativity of femininity that permeates Western social thought: the East becomes weak, docile, receptive to invasion. So-called “Eastern” men, by association with Orientalist thought, subsequently also become Orientalized and feminized,

and subsequently emasculated. This distinction between feminization and emasculation appears in Ling (1997); Ling (1997) argues that feminization is one form of gendering of Asian American men, whereas emasculation as a whole is “the overall social consequence of the displacement of Asian men’s subject position.” (314) Additionally, Asians are assumed to accept the West–East hierarchy; Ling (1997) further argues that the model minority myth, which positions Asians as relatively superior to other people of color due to perceived intelligence, better work ethic, for example, is an iteration of this emasculation of Asians as a whole, as fighting back against the hierarchy, talking back to authority (here represented by White people), is seen as a sign of masculinity and “male potency” (315).

Orientalism, however, is not the sole historical origin of emasculation. Speaking specifically of Chinese American men, Chan (2001) discusses how exclusionary immigration laws and discriminatory socioeconomic practices both created bachelor societies of Chinese American men and forced Chinese American men into jobs traditionally considered as “feminine”, such as laundry work. These bachelor societies fostered the image of Chinese American men as sexless and unassimilable. Fung (1991) further notes that, although Asian American men of different ethnic groups have different sexualized stereotypes placed on them, Asian American men can be collapsed and reduced to an Orientalist generalization of the asexual Asian male (Chan 2001: xiii).

The emasculation of Asian American men contrasts sharply with the hypermasculinization and hypersexuality accorded onto Black men. Black men are stereotyped as aggressive; they are painted as deviant and suspicious by default: “At the center of the way black male selfhood is constructed in white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy is the image of the brute—untamed, uncivilized, unthinking, and unfeeling.” (hooks 2004: x) These stereotypes have their roots in slavery and plantation societies: Black men were, and continue to be, seen as threats to the “purity” of white women, and furthermore, the construction of the image of the Black man as brutish and simple allowed for the

containment of Black men and the erasure of Black revolutionaries seeking liberation (hooks 2004: x).

Asian American masculinities and Black masculinities, furthermore, are not mutually exclusive or opposing to one another—rather, they are mutually constituted. Here, I turn to Claire Jean Kim (1999)’s framework of racial triangulation in understanding how Asian American masculinities and Black masculinities are constructed with regards to each other. Kim (1999)’s framework of racial triangulation suggests that racial groups do not occupy different trajectories in their racialization, nor do they constitute a single, one-dimensional hierarchy. Rather, racial groups, in particular Asian Americans and Black people, are racialized against each other along at least two axes. The two relevant axes for Asian Americans and Black people are the axes of insider–foreign and superiority–inferiority. Under racial triangulation, while Asian Americans are seen as relatively superior to Black people, they are seen as more foreign than Black people, who gain insider status similar to White people. This indexing of Asian Americans as foreign allows for the civic ostracism of Asian Americans.

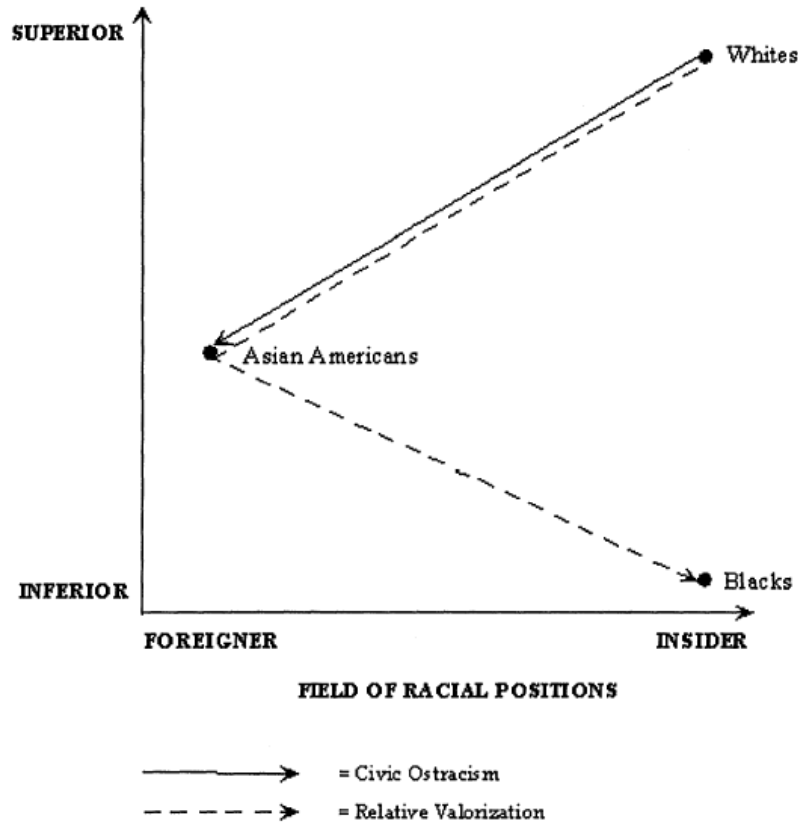


Figure 1. Racial triangulation. Taken from Kim (1999).

In my understanding of racialized masculinities of Asian American and Black men, then, the superior–inferior axis takes on a sexual component: Asian American asexuality is seen as superior to Black hypersexuality, which is devalorized. Both Asian American and Black sexualities are devalorized in comparison to white sexuality, which is seen as the norm and as desirable. Under this framework, then, crossing and the appropriation of Black masculinity and sexuality by Asian American men takes on a twofold role: not only is this appropriation a subversion of Asian American demasculinization and asexuality along the superior–inferior axis, but this appropriation is also a rejection of model minority myths of Asian American men as passive and as a non-threat along the foreigner–insider axis. This appropriation is, however, problematic, in that it relies on

reifying stereotypes of Black hypermasculinity, hypersexuality, and deviance in gaining its social force.

Hypothesis

This study is intended to test whether Far East Movement shows higher rates of AAVE in music traditionally associated with assertions of masculinity, versus music that is less traditionally associated with masculinity. Higher rates of AAVE would represent a crossing over into Black masculinity, whereas lower rates of AAVE would suggest less of a reliance on stereotypes and personae of Black masculinities.

Methodology

In this study, I examine songs from Los Angeles Asian hip-hop group Far East Movement's two most recent albums, *Free Wired* (2010) and *Dirty Bass* (2012). Far East Movement's earlier albums are difficult, if not impossible, to get a hold of, and also show a strong stylistic difference, with more rap influences than their later albums, which show more electronic influence⁴. The break between *Folk Music* (2006) & *Animal* (2009) and *Free Wired* (2010) & *Dirty Bass* (2012) may also be an important image shift for the group; examining Far East Movement's official YouTube page does not reveal any promotional material for *Folk Music* or *Animal*, suggesting that they may be attempting to dissociate from their earlier music. As such, I will only be examining their two most recent albums.

I divide their music into two categories, *party music* and *ballads*. The reason for this division is to create two bodies of music that represent different aspects of masculinity—party music represents a more hypermasculine image, one that focuses on heterosexuality and socialization, whereas ballads

⁴ I differentiate between rap music and electronic music here primarily via the criteria that rap music tends to feature more verbose lyrics with little repetition, whereas electronic music with vocals tends to have fewer lyrics that are more repetitive in nature; additionally, I also take into consideration differences in tempo, beat, and melodic hooks.

represent a less hypermasculine image, one that focuses on emotional relationships without a framework of strong sexuality. I make this division along traditional associations of sexuality, masculinity, and hypermasculinity to examine whether the use of AAVE differs between the two presentations of masculinity. In order to determine whether a song counted as party music or as a ballad, I totaled the number of references to alcohol (e.g. mentions of drinking, alcohol, brands of alcohol), sexuality (allusions to sex, discussion of sexualized body parts), and loud music (mentions of bass, turning the music up); if a song had five or more mentions from any of those three categories, then it counted as party music as opposed to a ballad. Additionally, I took differences in tempo into account, with party music tending to have a faster tempo, and ballads having a mid- to slower tempo.

I use a Dialect Density Measure (DDM) to measure the amount of AAVE used in each song. The DDM, originally created to apply to bodies of AAVE samples (cf. Craig & Washington 2004), counts the number of linguistic features from an established linguistic repertoire over the course of a sample and divides that number by the number of utterances or the number of words in the sample. Renn & Terry (2009), for instance, use a DDM with forty features. They showed that a subset of six features from those forty, namely, nasal fronting, copula absence, modal auxiliary absence, third person singular *-s* absence, multiple negation, and *ain't* for *is not* (381), can reliably be used to show style-shifting in their participant pool of 108 adolescents. I use a modified DDM in this study that examines ten features, five of which are phonological, four morphosyntactic, and one lexical. The ten features are as follows and are summarized in Table 1 with examples:

1. *Transformations of /θ/ and /ð/*. The sound /θ/, which occurs at the beginning of words such as *thigh* and *then*, and the sound /ð/, which occurs at the beginning of words such as *thy* and *those*, exhibit complex phonological realization in AAVE. They can occur as /t/, /d/, /f/,

/v/, or as themselves, /θ/ and /ð/. Green (2002) provides three generalizations for the phonological behavior of /θ/ and /ð/:

Generalization 1: /t/, /d/, /f/, and /v/ can occur where /θ/ and /ð/ occur.

Generalization 2: /t/ and /f/ occur in medial and final positions where /θ/ occurs in general American English.

Generalization 3: /d/ and /v/ occur in medial and final positions where /ð/ occurs in general American English.

(Green 2002: 118)

2. /r/ and /l/-vocalization. /r/, as in *round*, and /l/, as in *loud*, may be vocalized in AAVE, such that they are produced as unstressed vowels instead of as their liquid counterparts. This vocalization also follows a regular phonological rule; typically, they are vocalized after vowels within words. Green (2002) provides three generalizations for the phonological behavior of /r/ and /l/:

Generalization 1 & 2: /r/ and /l/ vocalize to /ə/ after vowel sounds (e.g., *brotha* for 'brother').

Generalization 3: /r/ and /l/ may be unstressed to the point where they are not produced at all (e.g., *toe* for 'tore').

(Green 2002: 120)

3. *Consonant cluster reduction.* During consonant cluster reduction, word-final consonant clusters, composed of at least two consonant sounds, are reduced to a single consonant sound. For instance, the final consonant cluster /st/ in *test* may be produced as just /s/, as in *Tess*. Consonant cluster reduction can also affect morphosyntactics in that the third-person past-tense marker *-ed*, often realized as [t] phonetically, can also be affected by consonant cluster reduction; thus, *missed* [mist] may be realized as *miss* [mis]. (Green 2002: 107–110)
4. *Nasalization of vowels.* The final nasal consonant in a syllable, such as the /n/ in *gone*, may be dropped and the preceding vowel nasalized, such that *gone* becomes *gõ*, with the tilde representing nasalization. (Fasold & Wolfram 1975: 60)
5. *Monophthongization of /ai/.* The glide in /ai/ may be deleted, so that a word like *fly* /flai/ would be rendered as *flab* [fla]. (Fasold & Wolfram 1975: 60–61) Cutler (2010) notes that this particular feature appears to be a salient marker of affiliation with hip-hop culture, particularly among white adolescents; although /ai/-monophthongization occurs in a high amount of pop music and rap music, a salient difference is the occurrence of /ai/-monophthongization in common speech among adolescents who affiliate with hip-hop culture.
6. *Copula deletion.* Copula deletion is one of the most salient features of AAVE and distinguishes AAVE from other American dialects of English. (Rickford et al. 1999) The copula, here defined as *be* and inflected forms of *be* (*is* and *are*) as well as the auxiliary *be* and its inflected forms, as well as its respective contractions, may be deleted, so that *What's up?* becomes rendered as *What up?* (Smitherman 2000: 13)
7. *Habitual be.* In addition to its copula and auxiliary functions, *be* may also serve as an aspectual marker in AAVE to indicate that an event occurs habitually. The same form—*be*—is used for all persons regardless of number, and never occurs in an inflected form;

additionally, it can occur before verbs, adjectives, nouns, prepositions, adverbs, *don*, and sentence-finally. (Green 2002: 47–52) Green (2002) provides the following contrastive examples to illustrate the use of habitual *be*:

- (1) a. Bruce run.
‘Bruce runs on occasions’ or ‘Bruce doesn’t have a problem with running’
- b. Bruce Ø running.
‘Bruce is running now’ or ‘Bruce is running these days’
- c. Bruce be running.
‘Bruce is usually running’ or ‘Bruce usually runs’

(Green 2002: 47)

Although these three examples may be read with habitual meanings, of these three examples, only (1c) is always and only read as habitual.

8. *Multiple negation*. AAVE exhibits negative concord: multiple negation markers can be used simultaneously to indicate that the sentence overall is negative. Negation can occur both on auxiliaries, such as *don’t*, and indefinite nouns, such as *anybody* and *anything* (Green 2002: 77). Green (2002) provides the following examples of multiple negation (excerpted):

- (2) a. I sure hope it **don’t** be **no** leak after they finish. (Bm, 60s)
‘I hope there won’t be a leak after they finish.’
- b. If you **don’t** do **nothing** but farm work, your social security **don’t** be **nothing**. (Bm, 60s)

‘If you only do farm work, then your social security isn’t usually very much.’

c. I **ain’t never** seen **nobody** preach under announcements. (Bm, 50s)

‘I have never seen anyone preach while they’re giving announcements.’

(Green 2002: 77)

9. *Lack of singular third-person present inflection (-s)*. The number distinction between singular and plural verbs is neutralized in AAVE (Green 2002: 99), resulting in the lack of third-person singular *-s* in verb inflections. Thus, *she walks* in general American English would be rendered as *she walk* in AAVE. (Fasold & Wolfram 1975: 67)

10. *Use of AAVE lexical items*. I mark each instance of the use of an AAVE lexical item—whether a standard AAVE term or an AAVE slang term—as a token in my DDM. For example, one use of the word *booty* counts as a single token in my DDM; if the word is repeated multiple times, I count each repetition as a separate token.

Feature	Example
<i>Phonological</i>	
Transformations of /θ/ and /ð/	<i>that</i> → <i>dat</i> , <i>with</i> → <i>wit</i>
/r/- and /l/-vocalization	<i>brother</i> → <i>brotha</i> , <i>tore</i> → <i>toe</i>
Consonant cluster reduction (CCR)	<i>test</i> → <i>tes'</i> , <i>missed</i> → <i>miss</i>
Nasalization of vowels	<i>gone</i> → <i>gõ</i>
Monophthongization of /ai/	<i>fly</i> → <i>flab</i>
<i>Syntactic</i>	

Copula deletion	<i>What's up?</i> → <i>What up?</i>
Habitual <i>be</i>	Bruce be running. 'Bruce is usually running' or 'Bruce usually runs'
Multiple negation	I ain't never seen nobody preach under announcements. 'I have never seen anyone preach while they're giving announcements.'
<i>Morphosyntactic</i>	
Lack of third-person singular <i>-s</i>	<i>She walks</i> → <i>she walk</i>
<i>Lexical</i>	
Use of AAVE lexical items	E.g. <i>booty, crib</i>

Table 1. Features used in the Dialect Density Measure.

All phonetic coding was done impressionistically, as analyzing the material with spectrograms would have been difficult given the background music and extraneous sounds in the music.

Results and discussion

Of the seven songs I examined, four (“Girls on the Dancefloor”, “Like a G6”, “Dirty Bass”, and “Live My Life”) fell into the party music category, whereas the other three (“Rocketeer”, “Fighting for Air”, and “Little Bird”) fell into the ballad category. Of the party music, “Girls on the Dancefloor” had the highest DDM, with 108 tokens of AAVE features in 546 words of the song, making for a DDM of 0.1978. “Dirty Bass” followed “Girls on the Dancefloor”, with a DDM of 0.1908; “Like a G6” came next, with a DDM of 0.1815, and “Live My Life” showed the lowest DDM, with a DDM of 0.1769.

“Rocketeer” led the ballads with a DDM of 0.1475, followed by “Little Bird” with a DDM of 0.1313, and “Fighting for Air” with a DDM of 0.1099. The songs I coded were as follows, with the DDM measures attached:

Title	Tokens	Words	DDM
<i>Party</i>			
“Girls on the Dancefloor”	108	546	0.1978
“Like a G6”	45	248	0.1815
“Dirty Bass”	50	262	0.1908
“Live My Life”	52	294	0.1769
		Average	0.1868
<i>Ballad</i>			
“Rocketeer”	41	278	0.1475
“Fighting for Air”	40	364	0.1099
“Little Bird”	52	396	0.1313
		Average	0.1296

Table 2. DDM results.

The average DDM for party music was 0.1868, whereas the average DDM for ballads was 0.1296. Using a t-test, I determined that the DDM for ballads was significantly lower than the DDM for party music.

The higher DDMs for party music versus the lower DDMs for ballads show that Far East Movement uses a higher rate of AAVE in party music versus in ballads. Party music, by my

definition, shows stronger ties with traditional displays of masculinity, such as sexuality. I argue here that Far East Movement's increased use of AAVE represents not only a linguistic appropriation, but also a cultural appropriation of productions of Black masculinity. By using a hybrid form of English that combines AAVE with general American English, Far East Movement undergoes a distinction process that differentiates them from other representations of Asian American men. This distinction seems to align with the processes that Reyes (2005), Chun (2001), and Bucholtz (2004) describe.

By distinguishing themselves from other representations of Asian American masculinity, and specifically by using AAVE to index masculinity and sexuality, Far East Movement draws from stereotypes that figure Black men as hypersexual and, to a lesser degree, deviant. Drawing from this persona of the hypersexual, deviant Black male, however, is problematic—it reiterates and perpetuates these stereotypes, which are based on long histories of oppression.

Questions of authenticity and authentication become problematic when we consider these long histories of oppression that are often associated with particular linguistic varieties. Smitherman (2000: 28) notes that “not all Black people are flattered by this imitation [i.e., crossing].” As Smitherman further notes, “[White people] don't have to pay no dues, but reap the psychological, social, and economic benefits of a language and culture born out of enslavement, neo-enslavement, Jim Crow, U.S. apartheid, and twentieth-century hard times” (32). As Asian Americans profiting from the masculinity indexed by AAVE, it is difficult to say whether Far East Movement is in the same way reaping these benefits and not paying their dues—Asian Americans cannot be said to have the same history and relationship to Black people as White people do, in that Asian Americans have not constructed the same kind of institutional racism as White people have. However, it is the case that Far East Movement, in using AAVE to index masculinity and to perform hip-hop subculture, is profiting off of the use of AAVE in their image; however, it is difficult to say whether they pay the

same dues of linguistic and cultural discrimination resulting from AAVE usage that other authenticated speakers of AAVE do.

Authentication and authenticity in sociolinguistics concern themselves with the practices of the speakers and not with the implications of their actions. While Far East Movement may authenticate themselves as speakers of AAVE, is that authentication similarly accepted by other authenticated speakers of AAVE, particularly those who suffer more from the negative consequences of knowing AAVE? In framing identity as arising from intersubjective interactions, we run the risk of losing the implications of the broader social framework of oppression that is attached to particular linguistic varieties. hooks (1992: 7), for instance, notes that “[c]ommodification of blackness has created a social context where appropriation by non-black people of the black image knows no boundaries. If the many non-black people who produce images or critical narratives about blackness and black people do not interrogate their perspective, then they may simply recreate the imperial gaze—the look that seeks to dominate, subjugate, and colonize.” We, similarly, need to interrogate our theories of authentication and authenticity, of identity and crossing, or run the risk of replicating colonial and imperialist gazes in our understandings of appropriation and language use.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have examined the linguistic practices of Far East Movement and shown that Far East Movement uses AAVE at higher rates in party music than in ballads. This particular usage of AAVE indexes masculinity: in songs that have more thematic content that indexes male potency, usage of AAVE increases. By using AAVE to index masculinity, Far East Movement draws on stereotypes of Black hypermasculinity to reject notions of Asian American asexuality and emasculation, as well as reject the model minority stereotype through both that affiliation with sexuality and partying subculture.

Instances of crossing illuminate the fluidity of identity and its status as emergent from intersubjective interactions. At the same time, however, instances of crossing also cannot be divorced from the broader social axes of oppression on which they are located: in crossing, and in drawing from stigmatized linguistic varieties and the stereotypes attached to them, speakers perpetuate these stereotypes and the histories of oppression that are attached to them. This perpetuation of stereotypes is in itself problematic and should be examined when we consider crossing and how crossing gains its social meaning from broader social projects.

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