

Introduction

■ *Sara Trechter*

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, CHICO

Mary Bucholtz

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

White Noise: Bringing Language into Whiteness Studies

Although the burgeoning field of whiteness studies encompasses a panoply of disciplines within the humanities and social sciences, including education (Fine et al. 1997), literary criticism (Morrison 1990), ethnic studies (Almaguer 1994; Lipsitz 1998), gender studies (Frankenberg 1993; Pfeil 1995), and history (Roediger 1991; Saxton 1990), it owes a special debt to anthropology. After all, the fundamental postulate of whiteness studies—that race is socially constructed—is based on extensive anthropological research extending back to Boas and continuing to the present moment (e.g., Harrison 1995, 1998). Moreover, as a phenomenon grounded in what Hill (this issue) calls the “culture of racism,” the racial project of whiteness is especially suited to anthropological study. Indeed, anthropologists have been at the vanguard of scholarship in the critical investigation of whiteness. The influential studies of such researchers as Karen Brodtkin (1998) and John Hartigan (1999) have enriched the field by demonstrating the importance of historical, geographic, and ethnographic specificity in understanding the workings of whiteness. It is important to acknowledge, too, that these insights, which

are currently getting renewed attention under the rubric of whiteness studies, have long been fundamental to the work of scholars of color in numerous disciplines, including anthropology. From W. E. B. Du Bois (1935) to James Baldwin (1985) to bell hooks (1990, 1992) and beyond, African Americans and other scholars of color recognized early on that race is a politicized social construction (see Roediger 1998 for an excellent compilation of such work).

Building on all these previous efforts to scrutinize the often invisible category of whiteness, this special issue extends the contribution of anthropology to whiteness studies in another way: by introducing the methods and theories of linguistic anthropology. In recognition of the fact that, as a social construction, race is a linguistic construction as well, the contributors to this issue make whiteness not only visible but also audible by calling attention to the production of white identities and ideologies in discourse.¹

Language in the Study of Whiteness

Current anthropological examinations of race now acknowledge the centrality of whiteness as an ideological pivot, the usually unmarked term in a series of hierarchically arranged racialized binaries such as white/black, white/Indian, Anglo/Latino, and Westerner/indigenous. Far less recognized is the fact that such linguistic binaries as standard/nonstandard, English-speaking/non-English-speaking, monolingual/bilingual, even formal/colloquial, literate/illiterate, and written/spoken also partake of this ideology, though often covertly, and that it is largely through language itself that such racialized binaries come to be produced and reproduced. As a result of this oversight, the longstanding anthropological view of race as a cultural fiction with powerful real-world consequences has led few scholars to a close examination of how racial categories, and especially those that tend to be ideologically unmarked, emerge from the details of linguistic practice and performance. Most studies of whiteness, to the extent that they consider language at all, focus solely on content and do not attend to linguistic form as social action that creates cultural meanings and constitutes racial realities. Many scholars use interview or textual data as evidence, but their analyses, nuanced as they are, rarely include the linguistic strategies and ideologies that shape such data. The aim of this special issue is therefore to engage with recent anthropological scholarship on whiteness in order to demonstrate that the production of whiteness as a racial identity and ideology involves a heretofore underexamined but crucial linguistic dimension.

But if research on whiteness is to be more critically reflexive than whites themselves have generally been throughout the history of their racialized existence, then linguistics must be understood as more than simply a *terra nova* to conquer and colonize in the name of whiteness studies. In fact, linguistic theory has already had a widespread if unacknowledged influence within whiteness studies: the concept of markedness. The theory of markedness, developed by Trubetzkoy and elaborated by Jakobson, extends the structuralist view of language as a system of differences by encoding, often in binary fashion, the sense of some linguistic features as more "basic" than others. Linguistic phenomena that are more "basic" are "unmarked," both

notationally and within the linguistic system itself (see Lee 1997 for an overview of the theory and its developments).

Scholars of whiteness use these same structuralist concepts to understand how the white racial category operates. As a cultural sign, whiteness works much like a linguistic sign, taking its meaning from those surrounding categories to which it is structurally opposed, such as blackness, indigeness, and foreignness. As an element in each of these binaries, however, whiteness is not opposite and equal, but opposite and unequal. It is in its unmarked status that the power of whiteness lies. Ideologically, whiteness is usually absence, not presence: the absence of culture and color. Yet as numerous articles in this issue argue, in particular ethnographic contexts, whiteness can become unmoored from its unmarked position and float into seeing (and hearing) range. Alternatively, whiteness may cast itself ideologically as the only visible and audible racial category in a given situation, denying or erasing the presence of other racialized groups. This *whiting out* of other racialized subject positions is seen in the linguistic realm, for example, in assimilationist policies such as *English Only*, the eradication of Native American languages, and the demolition of bilingual education.

Despite the structuralist analogy, then, whiteness is not a set of unchanging structures but a set of dynamic strategies that draw on available resources to achieve and maintain racialized power. In some ways, a more apt analogy from linguistics might therefore be *optimality theory* (Prince and Smolensky 1993). Instead of fixed binaries as the basis of analysis, this theory proposes a set of universal constraints that state some truth about language, but are not true necessarily within every language (see Archangeli 1999 for a summary). Certain linguistic forms are still more common in general (across contexts). Nevertheless, to capture the variability from language to language, context to context, universal constraints are ranked differently to obtain the structures of an individual language. Consequently, some languages yield or highlight some outputs that may be “marked” in a cross-linguistic comparison, but not outside the proposed parameters or constraints. Likewise, the strategies of whiteness are often local, temporary, and self-contradictory; indeed, the logical cohesiveness of whiteness operates through its seeming admittance of diversity (see both McElhinny and Hill, this issue). Whiteness maintains its hegemony in diverse historical, political, and cultural contexts precisely because of its incoherence as a single *conceptual* category and its ultimate coherence as an *ideological* norm or macroideology. As the articles in this issue demonstrate, certain tropes of whiteness “compete” and are reformed in context, and, depending on the contextual circumstances, “win out” or are highlighted in opposition to others. Thus, contextual, semiotic associations can index different concepts or identities of whiteness, which are “marked” to varying degrees, while not necessarily challenging its overall hegemony.

Whiteness in the Study of Language

In bringing language into whiteness studies, the articles in this issue also bring whiteness into linguistic anthropology. This is not to say that language

and whiteness have never before been investigated together: scholars concerned with white identities occasionally discuss language, albeit briefly (e.g., Waters 1990), and linguistic issues are central to at least two works of literary criticism that focus on whiteness (Fishkin 1993; North 1994). There is also a recent collection of communication-based research on whiteness (Nakayama and Martin 1999). But in general these works do not have a linguistic sensibility, and the details of language use are rarely a central concern. Conversely, although numerous studies within linguistic anthropology and especially sociolinguistics examine the linguistic dimension of white speakers' identities in a wide array of contexts (e.g., Heath 1983; Labov 1966; Preston 1992), whiteness itself is not always foregrounded in these accounts (but see Barrett 1999; Hewitt 1986; Rampton 1995; Ronkin and Karn 1999). Those studies in linguistic anthropology that do emphasize whiteness are indicative of the range of topics that remain to be explored. One of the first scholars in the field to highlight both whiteness and language is Keith Basso (1979), whose work reverses the anthropological gaze by offering Native American perspectives on European Americans. Likewise, Marcyliena Morgan's (1991) comparative study of African American and European American women's interpretations of indirectness performs the valuable anthropological service of challenging the view of a particular kind of white pragmatics as coextensive with pragmatics itself. The most sustained work on whiteness within linguistic anthropology, Jane Hill's (e.g., 1993, 1995, 1998) studies of the racialized use of Mock Spanish by European Americans, underscores an issue that is central for Basso and Morgan as well: that whiteness is not merely an identity but more fundamentally an ideology. Finally, responding to an early sociolinguistic case study of a European American speaker of African American Vernacular English (Hatala 1976), a series of ethnographic studies has addressed the issue of white uses of black language (Bucholtz 1999; Cutler 1999; Jacobs-Huey 1996; Sweetland 1997). As different as these studies are, they all offer analyses that are simultaneously anthropological and linguistic to call attention to whiteness as a racial category whose unmarked status must be problematized, thereby ensuring that whiteness, in all its diverse manifestations, is not only seen but also heard.

Building on such work, the contributors to this collection use the tools of linguistic anthropology to explore four central issues in whiteness studies and to locate these issues squarely within discourse. The first of these is the construction and circulation of ideologies and critiques of whiteness among those who do not identify as white, a perspective that remains surprisingly underdiscussed in much of the literature on whiteness (see Brown 2000 for a recent exception). Some of these are members of subaltern groups in contexts of postcolonialism, including Lakhota Sioux commenting on white intrusions into their world (Trechter) and Nigerian Hausa men discussing white gay men's sexual practices (Gaudio). Other groups, such as Korean American college students, are frequently classified as "model minorities" who are understood as sharing some of the benefits of white racial privilege, even as they reject this classification and take up discursive alliances with other people of color (Chun). Such hierarchical racial classification also connects

up with the second issue explored in these pages, the ideological consolidation of whiteness as an institutionally privileged racial category. Discourses about affirmative action among Pittsburgh police officers contribute to this project by placing white opponents of the policy “outside” of race (McElhinny). Ideologies also enable the production of local whitenesses out of broader cultural ideologies, the third issue addressed by these articles. Among the local white identities discussed are nerds as an “uncool” and hence hyper-white identity category in a California high school (Bucholtz) and the dominant white masculinity achieved through racialized discourse strategies in a U.S. fraternity (Kiesling). And finally, the volume investigates the boundaries of whiteness by considering the border cases of Jews in Washington, D.C. (Modan), and Melungeons in Appalachia (Puckett), an undertaking that raises questions about passing on the one hand, mixed-race identity on the other, and in both cases the individual and collective negotiation of whiteness as a category whose power can be turned against those individuals who may strategically and conditionally adopt it. The responses, by two leading scholars of whiteness, one a linguistic anthropologist (Hill) and the other a cultural anthropologist (Brodkin), point to new directions for the grounded study of the discourses whereby whiteness is formed, reshaped, and sometimes unmade.

The Anthropological Study of Language and Identity

There is no clearly delineated body of scholarship produced under the name of “language and identity,” yet the interrelationship between these two fundamental aspects of culture has long been an important issue within linguistic anthropology. Indeed, because language and identity are so intimately connected, identity may be considered the subtext of nearly all linguistic-anthropological scholarship. As it is understood in much linguistic anthropology, identity is not an interior, psychic phenomenon but a social and cultural process that is both displayed and enacted in discursive and other semiotic practices. Psychological models of identity that make little or no reference to society and culture are not only inadequate but may be dangerously misleading, for such models often participate in the cult of autonomous individualism that is a cornerstone of current ideologies of whiteness. An anthropological foundation ensures that research on identity does not retreat to an imaginary “pre-cultural” or “pre-social” mental space.

While early sociolinguistic studies took a mechanistic approach to the question of language and identity, correlating linguistic variables with demographically defined social categories such as race, gender, class, and age, ethnographically based research rooted in linguistic anthropology has made clear the necessity of examining identity and its attendant practices from the perspective of cultural members, a significant improvement on previous work. Yet correlational studies have also been a staple of much research within linguistic anthropology, an approach that can be reductively characterized as “Group A says X, Group B says Y.” Within linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics, critiques of such uses of identity have been issued with some frequency by scholars who note that generalizations of this kind

may miss both the range of variation within each group and the extent of overlapping practices across groups (e.g., Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992; Gal 1995; Morgan 1994). In addition, analyses that link particular kinds of speakers with particular linguistic practices may prematurely assign a fixed social meaning to this association: if Group A does X, then using X, it is often concluded, signals membership in Group A. But the social polysemy of linguistic form has been widely documented within linguistic anthropology; establishing a semiotic link between a linguistic form and a cultural meaning does not preclude the existence of other meanings connected to the same form, or other forms connected to the same meaning (see Urciuoli 1995 for a review of this literature). Many of the articles in this special issue complicate rigid one-to-one correlations of language and identity by demonstrating that, ultimately, it is the local context of language use that must be consulted to support any such association.

Such difficulties in the study of identity are not unique to linguistic anthropology. In recent years the study of identity throughout the social sciences and humanities has been haunted by the specter of essentialism, which posits (with respect to identity) unity, stability, and homogeneity across all members of an identity category. For some commentators, *identity* is now all but synonymous with *essentialism*; and in fact, one linguistic anthropologist has gone so far as to advocate abandoning identity entirely as an area of linguistic inquiry (Kulick 2000). Most scholars, however, take a much less extreme position, continuing to find utility in the concept and offering ways of improving theories and methods for the study of language and identity. It is important to recognize, after all, that to invoke an identity category is not necessarily to fall into the trap of essentialism or reification. It may simply be sound anthropology. As scholars, we cannot do without identity categories because speakers cannot do without them. If we are to do ethnographic justice to the people we study, we must use the categories that are meaningful to them, not rejecting or ignoring such categories but accounting for them, historicizing them, and analyzing how they are put to work in interaction. Through careful analysis of this kind, the articles that appear here avoid potential pitfalls and offer examples of the kinds of theories and methods needed for the study of language and identity (see also Bucholtz in press; Trechter in press). Among the concepts they draw on are ideology, indexicality, practice, performance, and context.

Although the investigation of whiteness within linguistic anthropology may seem, at first glance, to contribute primarily to the study of language and identity, whiteness also has a powerful ideological dimension. This situation is not restricted to whiteness, however, as all identities are, in part, ideological. *Ideology*, as we use it here, is not the Marxist conceptualization of repressive commonsense beliefs whose distorting and mystifying effects ensure the complicity of subjects in their own subjugation (Althusser 1971; Gramsci 1971). Instead, we use the term to refer to the nexus of power and knowledge as productive forces, which Foucault (1972) called "discourse." Both identity and ideology are often most salient in the context of difference. Linguistic-anthropological research has frequently explored the formation of identities at the boundaries of nation, culture, and speech community

(e.g., Barth 1986; Blom and Gumperz 1986; Silverstein 1998), an approach also taken by the authors in this collection. Such work shows that difference is not the starting point of identity but its endpoint: differences are not found but made through the production of ideologies that support and sustain relations of alterity, often in hierarchical or unequal arrangements. Hence ideology is the *sine qua non* of identity, the basic tool for the elaboration of distinctive social categories (Irvine in press).

Yet real human beings rarely fit neatly into the classifications devised for them (including those that they themselves have helped to construct); identity, in practice, exceeds the idealized ideologies available to it and through which it becomes endowed with cultural meaning. It is ideology's failure fully to capture and contain identity, a failure highlighted by clashes between competing ideological systems, that admits the possibility of agency in the operation of identity. Identity is more than the outcome of the functioning of ideologies because ideology must always be renewed through cultural production, yet each cultural production also, potentially, threatens to undermine ideological positions. Language has an important role to play in this process for it is primarily in language that ideologies are produced, reproduced, and resisted, and language itself may be the focus of ideological work (Kroskrity 2000; Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998; Woolard and Schieffelin 1994).

The connection between identity and ideology is established through the process of indexicality (Ochs 1992; Silverstein 1976, 1979). The insight offered by indexicality is that linguistic forms do not express identities directly but in a mediated fashion. The regular use of a linguistic form by members of a particular group to perform a given social action may create an indexical tie between the form and the group; the mediating action, which established the link, becomes subordinated to the cultural association between language and identity. It is through such discursive routines that ideologies of language are produced and reproduced by stripping off other possible connections between form and meaning.

If the twin outputs of the indexicality function (Silverstein 1987) are identity and ideology, then its input is practice, the everyday activities in which language use is embedded. Like the theory of indexicality, practice theory within linguistics (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992) highlights social action as mediating between language and identity. Practice theory offers further development of the idea inherent in indexicality that language and action are not separable (see also Ochs 1996). Language is not privileged over other kinds of social practice; the social meanings that accrue to language also accrue to all forms of bodily hexis (Bourdieu 1977) and cultural life.

Theories of practice and indexicality cogently account for the formation of ideological positions within identity. Meanwhile, performance theory emphasizes the other aspect of identity, as creative, agentive, and potentially counterhegemonic (Bauman and Briggs 1990). Where practice is daily and habitual, performance is set apart from everyday life and, hence, identity performances, unlike identity practices, are often highly deliberate and strategic. The performance of identity has recourse, however, to ideologies and

indexical processes, for performances do their work precisely by referring to such culturally established associations.

Finally, all of these concepts underscore the vital importance of context in the study of identity. Recent accounts of the role of context in language use (e.g., Duranti and Goodwin 1992) make clear that language and context are mutually constitutive. Identity is both mobile and multidimensional, and the contextualization of identity is a crucial step in avoiding essentialist analyses. Yet delimiting context is a notoriously difficult task and analysts differ on what should count as admissible contextual information. This problem is compounded in the study of whiteness, an identity that operates in large part by erasing its own tracks. Hence whiteness is contextually visible and audible only when it becomes contextually marked or when it marks a racial Other. Getting at such elusive identities in their subtlest manifestations is a challenge that linguistic anthropologists will continue to confront.

Researchers make varied use of these different and interconnected perspectives on identity—ideology, indexicality, practice, and performance—and of the levels of context to which they primarily attend, from the microlevel of interaction to macrolevel cultural systems. Yet all are grounded in a commitment to the close analysis of interaction as the starting point for formulating the relationship between language and identity. And because identity is many-stranded, the authors in this issue also investigate the interplay of racial identity—whiteness—and other dimensions of social subjectivity, from class to ethnicity to sexuality. Crucially, such investigation often involves the researcher's own subjectivity, in a reflexive and sometimes self-critical analysis. This move toward greater scholarly reflexivity is one of the many ways that the collaboration between linguistic anthropology and whiteness studies furthers both fields.

Identity and Ideology in Language

The authors in this issue draw on eclectic resources—linguistic anthropology, conversation analysis, sociolinguistics, cultural studies, and critical discourse analysis—to analyze the linguistic performance of identity and the indexing of ideology. Depending on the goals and the subjectivities of both the researcher and the researched, certain methodological emphases are more appropriate to the ethnographic context and are therefore highlighted in the following discussion. In any case, the analytic tools employed point to the reflexive nature of any research on race (and on other dimensions of selfhood such as class, ethnicity, and sexuality) as well as the contingent nature of the data. The first group of articles addresses ideologies of whiteness and representations of the Other. In addition, in the first two articles, the researcher is a representative of the white Other, whose sexual proclivities (in the first instance) and acquisitive nature (in the second) are being negotiated. Indeed in each of the articles, the language of the data, the native language of the researcher as well as the researcher's age, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and other factors affect the nature of the

conversational data as the consultants and researcher interact across and through these identity categories.

Trechter offers a detailed example of the white Other in discourse through her analysis of the Lakhota discursive construction and critique of whiteness at Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. She focuses the reader on grammaticalized evidentials and quotatives as they parallel speakers' constructions equating Lakhota identity with a community orientation (Hill and Irvine 1993). By co-indexing whiteness and rampant individualism at the beginning or end of a conversational move, interlocutors create what Trechter refers to as "dialogues with whiteness," in which some person's behavior or style (sometimes Trechter's) is characterized as being self-seeking and without regard for community. In a reflexive move, Trechter further demonstrates how similar dialogues with whiteness are constructed by white participants interacting with the Lakhota and in studies of university students.

Gaudio explicitly addresses the association of whiteness in postcolonial Hausaland with heteronormative sexual practices, technological sex, and (post)colonial exploitation. In so doing, he acknowledges his responsibility to consider his own subjectivity; his reflexive analysis examines the role of his own sexual and racial positioning in the enactment of racial difference in his data. In Hausa conversations with "men who seek men," Gaudio and his interlocutors use lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical resources to transform talk about individual sexual practices into ethnosexual generalizations. These discursive transformations construct an indexical relationship between the sexual and racial identities of the participants and their relationship to hegemonic norms; as Gaudio asserts, "talk about sex is talk about race."

Chun's sociolinguistic analysis of Korean American conversational use of what "sounds like" African American Vernacular English (AAVE) demonstrates how the ideological borders of race and other aspects of identity established in the first two articles are negotiated in the discourse identity of a Korean American man. In an analysis of an English conversation, Chun emphasizes sociolinguistic variation to show how appropriation of AAVE phonological features and lexicon are resources for resistance to the presupposition that Asians are "honorary" whites or model minorities. At the same time, the use of sexist vocabulary places the speaker on the top of a heteronormative hierarchy. Although the linguistic use of AAVE phonology is similar to that displayed by the white fraternity members discussed in Kiesel's article in the second half of this collection, the appropriation indexes the Korean man's alliance with African American resistance to "whiteness" rather than functioning, as in the fraternity, as a performance that leaves the hegemony of whiteness firmly intact.

Where the preceding three articles construct whiteness as Other, McElhinny's contribution to this special issue shows how whites may discursively deny the role of racialized differences in access to employment opportunities. Utilizing the resources of critical discourse analysis and conversation analysis, McElhinny draws attention to the pauses, hesitations, and silences of Pittsburgh police officers as they speak with her about affirmative action. By connecting hegemonic ideologies to details of linguistic

form (see McConnell-Ginet 1989), McElhinny demonstrates how practice, even when silent or euphemistic, indexes racial ideologies through a series of cultural presuppositions about what is appropriate to say to a researcher about race and merit. These hegemonic ideologies in turn serve to erase differences in identity (class, race, gender, and sexuality) and, through the invocation of a system of meritocracy, to highlight an individual's identity as a police officer.

The second group of articles addresses the differential formation of identities of whiteness through performances of the self. Both Bucholtz and Kiesling are concerned with the resources young white speakers use to construct distinctive white identities. They draw on discourse analysis and sociolinguistic analysis to demonstrate how sociolinguistic variation may culminate in the creative performance of a white identity. In each case the speakers ostensibly draw on a racial ideology that equates the use of non-standard English (especially AAVE) with cool, youthful masculinity. However, the comparison stops here. Bucholtz's consultants are self-identified teenage nerds. Through their linguistic performance and metalinguistic comments, they oppose vernacular forms appropriated by trendy white youth. Kiesling's consultants in a U.S. college fraternity perform and construct a different racial landscape populated by frightening blacks, and hence their identity moves and oppositions are different. As trendy youth, however, they also appropriate AAVE, especially in the context of sports discourse. Drawing on similar ideologies that equate standard English varieties with intelligence and AAVE with physicality, these young white speakers nevertheless perform and identify differently.

Although most of the articles in this issue (with the exception of Chun's and Puckett's) explore whiteness in dichotomous terms, Modan and her consultants, Jews in an ethnically diverse Washington, D.C., neighborhood, problematize the binary opposition of black and white and the subsequent racial categorization and assimilation of Jews into whiteness. In a sense, uptake of cultural performance is also at the crux of this misunderstanding. By focusing on the lexical construction and metaphors that her interlocutors use when talking about oppositional categorization, Modan demonstrates the assimilative power of "whiteness." She also shows that despite "white privilege" or outward signs, such as light-colored skin, her consultants metaphorically construct themselves as not wholly white.

Puckett's article further addresses the assimilative power of whiteness, asking why whiteness continues to be reproduced among mixed-race peoples such as the Appalachian Melungeons. Utilizing recent work in anthropology on the process of entextualization, Puckett focuses on the circulation of ethnonyms in producing Melungeonness as a marked but not entirely nonwhite identity. The revaluation of Melungeonness draws on culturally valued verbal genres such as Christian witnessing. Yet the public acknowledgment of Melungeons requires the subordination of nonwhite origins to whiteness. Puckett's article thus recognizes the continuing ideological force of racial binaries even among those whose own genealogies challenge such dichotomous thinking.

Linguistic Making and Unmaking

In each of these contexts, diverse as the participants are in terms of region, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation, it becomes strikingly obvious that ideologies of whiteness, though they may be unmarked, are not unremarked or unarticulated. Mike Hill (1998), in fact, criticizes whiteness studies as too often perpetuating self-indulgent narcissism that is too comfortable with the minor goal of making whiteness visible—or, as in this volume, audible. By appropriating the long-standing insights and critiques of people of color from Du Bois to hooks, such work replicates socioeconomic privilege, reproduces the status quo, and at its best laments the perks of middle-class whitedom without committed action to revoking these advantages. Certainly, a linguistic examination of whiteness could run a risk of such ineffectual lament because of the simultaneous focus on minute representational or contextual details and how these reveal macroideologies of whiteness, without extensive attention to real-world socioeconomics and white privilege. It is thus important to emphasize how these areas are implicated in the linguistic study of whiteness and why linguistic performance is a vital component to understanding race and ethnicity as a whole.

In this issue, Brodtkin alludes to the fact that constructions of race in particular locations can be quite different from those contextualized by ideological, political, and economic movements. A focus on the larger context and consideration of local manifestations are equally valid and necessary. For instance, Hartigan (1999) has demonstrated that “white” is not always the unmarked category in the pair black/white in his ethnography of class, cultural, and educational struggles in the local context of urban Detroit neighborhoods. His detailed ethnographic work flies in the face of most whiteness studies that consistently position white as unmarked and invisible (see Giroux 1997). Yet one central question for whiteness studies remains—how a local manifestation of whiteness, that may not match those in other contexts, both constructs and is constructed in part by macroideologies.

Even local examinations of race must be selective in the kinds of details and ideologies that are deemed relevant to local racial interpretations. We sometimes hear about the role of class or gender in whiteness, but not of how gender constructs class and whiteness (see Brodtkin 2000 and Hill 1998 for a critique of this situation). Brown (2000) in her study of the ideology of race in Liverpool demonstrates that such relationships are often ignored both by people who cannot see beyond their position in the immediate, local context, and theorists who project simplistic global interpretations, such as black versus white, into all local events. Such theoretical and practical separation of the global from the local misses the crucial point of how each is (re)produced at the nexus of ideology and practice. Inevitably, the details of focused ethnography at the local level are taken up as more “real” and global considerations are viewed as more “abstract” (Brown 2000). Local contexts and analysis of detailed interaction, however, can be a reconstruction site for global hegemonies of whiteness, just as viewing a local context through the lens of detailed interaction may disrupt given understandings of racial categorization.

Like light passing through media of varying densities, global ideologies are refracted or even obscured in context. By focusing on the points of refraction, the linguistic examination of whiteness can blur the boundaries between local and global and demonstrate the production process of ideology in the mouths of its speakers. Despite refractive differences, however, several common tropes of whiteness emerge from the articles in this issue, and it is to these tropes that we wish to draw the attention of the reader. Because only through disrupting the connections to macroideologies can whiteness potentially be reproduced differently, we point to how such interference might be created and why, considering the trope-ic construction of whiteness, it is difficult.² The tropes that emerge from these articles also demonstrate macroideologies of whiteness that at times come into conflict: white is privileged; white is intellectual and technologically oriented; white is homogeneous and culturally bland; and ironically, white is also individualistic. Given the combination of the tropes of blandness and individualism, it is no wonder that white privilege in this volume appears as appropriation and commodification of another's language and culture particularly in the cases of AAVE (Kiesling), American Indian styles (Trechter), and by those seeking cultural distinctiveness and symbolic capital by claiming a distinctive, yet white, Melungeonness (Puckett). And because whiteness can be understood as typically lacking distinctive characteristics, it is not surprising that the assimilative, economic power that whiteness wields is equally hard to recognize.

Each of the above tropes is worth exploring in some detail, especially as they develop historically to include and exclude different groups. The simple equation "white = intellectual" serves to demonstrate how a trope invokes macroideologies and refracts them in different contexts. The trope associates middle-class "standard" ways of speaking with whiteness; it associates vernacular, physical/emotional ways of speaking with marginal whiteness or nonwhiteness. This simplistic trope thus masks a variety of contextual possibilities for interpretation as well as resistance. For instance, a Pittsburgh police officer in McElhinny's study remarks on the inability of "colored" people to perform simple, standard English tasks (such as spelling) needed for writing police reports. Because of the "simplicity" of such tasks (one learns them in grade school), the officer implies that "those" people are unintelligent and unprofessional. College-educated Korean American men in turn draw on AAVE features to resist categorization as professional, model-minority, wannabe whites (Chun). Conversely, white fraternity men appropriate AAVE features in competitive basketball talk because they index masculinity (Kiesling). And, finally, high school nerds distance themselves from youth cultural trends and AAVE appropriation by using linguistic features marked as "superstandard" or formal (Bucholtz), potentially reinforcing the ideological connection between standard features of language, intelligence, and whiteness. Gender and class privilege are involved, as well, but these are masked, especially when participants focus on more salient, racialized effects in their own context. Given the powerful circularity of this trope and its embeddedness within white privilege, resistance to the indexical connections of the "white = intellectual" trope may seem

futile. When we look closely, however, we see that resistance for different purposes is both relevant and apparent here and in the other tropes of whiteness in that such varied resistances potentially generate and index different meanings in context.

Likewise, resistance to the privileged notion of individualism in order to emphasize community belonging and responsibility makes one (in the eyes of the dominant racial group) inept, lazy, and unable to succeed in the capitalist environment without the assistance of such programs as welfare or affirmative action (McElhinny, Trechter). The “white = individualistic” trope also serves to associate assistance programs primarily with people of color in the popular view even though these are not the majority of beneficiaries. Perhaps this is why the white officers of McElhinny’s study invoke a notion of individual merit that they can claim by doing well on tests. But they also verbally disparage notions of diversity with comments like “I don’t care if they’re purple faggots” and claims that police officers underlyingly are “all blue.” If whiteness is individualistically oriented, then, it is also a homogenized mass for strategic purposes, a point that Gaudio makes as well. In discussions of sexual practice with his Hausa consultants, he was horrified to discover himself participating in sweeping generalizations about “what white gay men do.” His experience shows that the tropes of whiteness can trip up even the most critically conscious researcher.

Together, these tropes in context may appear to operate rather like the Borg, a pale alien race in the “Star Trek” television series, whose mantra and perhaps most articulate utterance is “Resistance is futile.” Technologically enhanced, rather dull, and therefore extremely scary, they “assimilate” everything of useful distinctiveness in their path. The Borg are unable to recognize meaningful resistance to anything but their overt act of assimilation. It is simply not relevant.³ This assimilative power of whiteness is the final thread uniting the articles in this issue. To resist the stigmatization of being mixed-race, a degree of assimilation to whiteness is one of the few choices for the Melungeons (Puckett). They may also choose Indianness, but as we see from Lakhota discourse, white encroachment and assimilation in Indian territory already has a long history (Trechter). Such assimilative power is directly referenced by one of the participants in Modan’s study, who suggests that Jews are considered white because they are “assimilable.” Jews, in this interviewee’s interpretation, are not the agents of their own assimilation, but undergo a process that attempts to subsume their distinctiveness within culturally bereft blandness. In fact, such a clearly articulated view of the ideological effects of whiteness by nonwhites in varied and numerous contexts makes it recognizable, hearable, and hence resistable.

Conclusion

Because whiteness is most often articulated when the overt topic of conversation is not race or ethnicity, its linguistic examination can be especially useful in understanding the relationship between particular and individual constructions and their negotiation within the larger subtext of the United States or the world. Linguistic analysis can expose the connection between

a situational negotiation of the ideology of race through language and draw attention to the reciprocal relationship between local and global ideologies. As a result, a simple model of marked versus unmarked is problematized, while its hegemonic influence is simultaneously exposed. This is accomplished by highlighting the indexical connections between linguistic practice and social identity, between discursive performance and cultural ideology in different contexts.

As a group, these articles trace the representation, ideological reproduction, and discursive formation and negotiation of whiteness. In calling attention to the privileged role of discourse in this process, they make audible the linguistic construction of white identity and ideology as a crucial part of whiteness as a racial project. They also point the direction to possible sites of resistance to hegemonic whiteness while underscoring the difficulties of such resistance due to macroideologies and tropes. Yet the combined murmurs of micro- and macrophenomena are difficult to identify and impossible to separate entirely; it is therefore not easy to take on the task of hearing whiteness in linguistic anthropology. The authors in this issue offer a valuable beginning to this challenging work. Much more needs to be done, however, to break the silence that enshrouds the many discourses of whiteness.

Notes

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1. Because the selection and representation of racial and ethnic terms is not merely a stylistic decision but also a political and theoretical one, we have left it up to each author to choose her or his own terminology and orthography. Hence the articles in this issue vary in the use and scope of such terms as *African (Afro) American*, *European (Euro) American*, *black*, and *white*. In addition, some contributors have chosen to capitalize both *White(ness)* and *Black(ness)*, others capitalize one and not the other, and still others use lowercase for both. Each choice reflects a slightly different position on the theoretical status and political utility of these racialized categories.

2. Unlike Ignatiev and Garvey (1996) and others who maintain that whiteness is only white privilege and hence should be abandoned by whites, we do not think that an anthropologist could responsibly call for the elimination of all manifestations of a cultural/ideological category. Of course, it should be obvious from this special issue that there are varieties of whiteness that would benefit from a dissociation with white privilege.

3. For a different interpretation of the Borg's relationship to whiteness, see Bernardi 1998:87–88.

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Sara Trechter

Department of English
California State University
400 West First Street
Chico, CA 95929-0830
strechter@csuchico.edu

Mary Bucholtz

Department of English
Texas A&M University
TAMU 4227
College Station, TX 77843-4227
bucholtz@tamu.edu