White Kids

In *White Kids*, Mary Bucholtz investigates how white teenagers use language to display identities based on race and youth culture. Focusing on three youth styles – preppies, hip hop fans, and nerds – Bucholtz shows how white youth use a wealth of linguistic resources, from social labels to slang, from Valley Girl speech to African American English, to position themselves in their local racialized social order.

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in a multiracial urban California high school, the book also demonstrates how European American teenagers talk about race when discussing interracial friendship and difference, narrating racialized fear and conflict, and negotiating their own ethnoracial classification. The first book to use techniques of linguistic analysis to examine the construction of diverse white identities, it will be welcomed by researchers and students in linguistics, anthropology, ethnic studies, and education.

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Language, Race, and Styles of Youth Identity

Mary Bucholtz

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For Jon

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Preface

The origins of this book lie in California, where I did my graduate work and where I am now a professor, but the issues I confronted there stayed with me when I took my first academic post in Texas. In both places historical divisions between black and white are obvious, yet they take different forms in each. In California, the construction in the post-World War II era of the three interstate highways that converge in West Oakland (not far from the bungalow in South Berkeley that I rented while I attended graduate school) disrupted the surrounding neighborhood and its largely low-income African American residents. The new throughways formed a transportation corridor that further facilitated so-called "white flight" from Oakland to the surrounding suburbs. In Texas, State Highway 6 (which runs through College Station, home of Texas A&M University, my first employer) divides the small town of Calvert, separating the black descendants of tenant farmers from the white descendants of landowners in ways that are still starkly visible today.

Such dividing lines are a central issue of this book. While it is clear that the binary separation of black and white is as socially and culturally artificial as it is biologically baseless, academic theories of multicultural diversity and postmodern fluidity have had little impact on American racial ideologies, even in states with large and diverse populations such as California and Texas. Roads are imaginary lines that have real consequences for where people go and how they understand their position. Roads can be crossed, they can be jackhammered into dust, but their foundations are laid in the earth and their traces are not easily eradicated. The following pages examine how the imaginary lines of race, so deeply inscribed in American society and culture, shape young European Americans' experience of being white and how this experience is articulated in their social practices, especially their use of language.

This book is the product of many years of work, thought, and discussion, and it could not have been written without the generosity of many people. Above all, I thank the students, teachers, parents, staff, and administrators at Bay City High School, who trusted me enough to let me enter their lives during a period in the school's history when such trust did not come easily. Sue Ervin-Tripp, Leanne Hinton, Robin Tolmach Lakoff, John Rickford, and Barrie Thorne provided

invaluable help at the earliest stages of this book's development. I am especially appreciative of the support and encouragement that Robin has given me throughout my career. For comments on various parts of the manuscript and suggestions at different stages I thank Asif Agha, H. Samy Alim, Penny Eckert, Kira Hall, Marcyliena Morgan, and an anonymous reviewer, as well as countless audience members and interlocutors at conferences and colloquia over the years. Since 2002 my colleagues and students at the University of California, Santa Barbara, particularly Pat Clancy, Jack Du Bois, Sandy Thompson, and the members of the Language, Interaction, and Social Organization Research Focus Group, have inspired me with their unflagging encouragement, interest, and insight. Special thanks are due to Pat for her crucial support as my writing partner, sounding board, and mentor in the final months of this project. I am also indebted to Stefan Gries for sharing his statistical expertise.

For financial support and research leave time, I gratefully acknowledge the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research; the Academic Senate, the College of Letters and Science, and the Department of Linguistics at the University of California, Santa Barbara; and the Center for Humanities Research, the College of Liberal Arts, and the Department of English at Texas A&M University. Indispensable assistance at various points with transcription, digitizing, references, coding, and data management was provided by Megan Barnard, Brendan Barnwell, Laura Carroll, Mackenzie Chapman, Jennifer Garland, Michael Godwin, Annette Harrison, Mara Henderson, Jonathan Himes, Andrea Milon, Kyung-Ae Oh, Rebecca Quiles, Katherine Rushton, and Stephanie Stanbro. I am indebted to Maura Jess and Rich Ayling for their help with the figures. I thank Sarah Green and Andrew Winnard at Cambridge University Press for their patience as this project took shape, Adrian Stenton for his care in copy-editing the manuscript, and Christina Sarigiannidou for shepherding it through production.

Finally, I am grateful to my family – my mother, Barbara Bucholtz, my siblings, Annie Tomecek, John Bucholtz, and Mike Bucholtz, and my nieces and nephews Sarah, Katie, Molly, Sammie, Cole, Seth, and Jackson – for their faith in me and for keeping me grounded in the real world. My greatest debt is to my partner, Jon McCammond, who has shared my life since before this project began and who made it possible in countless ways. This book is for him.

Transcription conventions

All names in transcripts are pseudonyms; some identifying details have been changed. Each line represents a single intonation unit (a chunk of discourse bracketed by brief pauses and marked by a single intonation contour), except when the purpose of the transcript is to illustrate content rather than interactional structure. Phonetic details are included when they are relevant to the analysis; otherwise spelling is normalized.

.	end of intonation unit; falling intonation
,	end of intonation unit; fall–rise intonation
?	end of intonation unit; rising intonation
!	raised pitch and volume throughout the intonation unit
↑	pitch accent
underline	emphatic stress; increased amplitude; careful articulation of a segment
:	length
=	latching; no pause between intonation units
–	self-interruption; break in the intonation unit
-	self-interruption; break in the word, sound abruptly cut off
(.)	pause of 0.5 seconds or less
(n.n)	measured pause of greater than 0.5 seconds
@	laughter; each token marks one pulse
n@	nasal laughter
h	outbreath (e.g., sigh); each token marks one pulse
.h	inbreath
[ ]	overlapping speech
[$_1$ $_1$]	overlapping speech in proximity to another overlap
( )	uncertain transcription
#	unintelligible; each token marks one syllable
< >	transcriber comment; nonvocal noise
{ }	stretch of talk to which transcriber comment applies
<[ ]>	phonetic transcription
“ ”	reported speech or thought
boldface	linguistic form of analytic interest
. . .	omitted material

Phonetic symbols

The following charts provide a rough approximation of the value of the International Phonetic Alphabet symbols used in the text, based on General American English pronunciation. The symbols are arranged roughly according to place of articulation.

Vowels and diphthongs

[i]	beat	[u]	boot
[ɪ]	bit	[ʊ]	book
[ej]	bait	[oʊ]	boat
[ɛ]	bet	[ɔ]	bought (Eastern US accent)
[æ]	bat	[ɔj]	boy
[a]	buy (Southern US accent)	[ə]	but (unstressed)
[aj]	buy (nonSouthern US accent)	[ʌ]	butt
[aʊ]	bout	[ɑ]	robot

Consonants

	bilabial	labiodental	interdental	alveolar	postalveo
voiceless stop	[p] pie			[t] tie	
voiced stop	[b] buy			[d] die	
nasal	[m] my			[n] nigh	
voiceless fricative		[f] file	[θ] thigh	[s] sigh	[ʃ] shy
voiced fricative		[v] vile	[ð] thy	[z] zoo	[ʒ] vision
voiceless affricate					[tʃ] chin
voiced affricate					[dʒ] gin
approximant	[w] wide			[ɹ] rye [l] lie	
flap				[ɾ] city	

Diacritic symbols

ː	vowel lengthening
ʰ	aspiration
˜	nasalization
̪	dental