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Covert Linguistic Racisms and the (Re-)Production of White Supremacy

This article explores the potent role of covert linguistic racisms as practices critical for maintenance and transmission of white supremacy (Spears 1999, 2020). Though most Whites benefit from the structural violence of white supremacy, many disclaim their belief in racial hierarchies or participation in racist projects. Though they reject overt racism, they are more open to the effects of covert racism in reproducing racialized categories and naturalizing the patterns of political-economic stratification associated with white supremacy. Covert racism is a product of a language ideological assemblage (Kroskrity 2018) involving raciolinguistic ideologies (Alim 2016; Rosa and Flores 2017) of the "white listening subject" (Rosa and Flores 2020), his/her "folk theory of racism" (Hill 2008), and the deployment of such features as indexicality and anonymity. Two instances of covert racism directed at Native Americans--the academic pejoration of traditional narratives of the Indigenous Mono and Yokuts language communities of Central Cailfornia (Kroskrity 2015) and anonymous internet-circulating jokes about Indians (Meek 2013). The indexical consistency of these racializing practices over time and scales of circulation are linked to settler-colonialism and settler-capitalism (Speed 2018b) as part of the larger project of white supremacy. [covert linguistic racism, racialization of Native Americans, settler capitalism, white supremacy]

"It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have." James Baldwin, *No Name in the Street*.

Though anthropology has largely failed to adequately confront the "structural and pervasive" impact of white supremacy (Beliso-DeJesus and Pierre 2019), linguistic anthropologists including Arthur K. Spears (1999, 2020) have clearly identified its political–economic foundations in macro-global systems of social stratification and hierarchies of oppression. But while the terror, violence, and brutality of these systems are expressions of hegemonic institutions, and their apparatuses, within which race and language are co-naturalized and produced (Rosa and Flores 2020; Rosa and Diaz 2019), white supremacy comes to depend on the idea of race, and therefore, on language ideological processes of racialization to ensure its ongoing propagation. As Spears (2020, 54) observes, "the ideology of white supremacy is a complex of concepts promoting the idea that the 'white race' is the best one . . . for the purpose of social control, and the maintenance of wealth and power." But many, if not most white people would both deny beliefs in racial superiority or racial hierarchies and disclaim any active participation in racist projects. They would reserve "white supremacy" as a label for the actions of KKK members and neo-Nazis and not for the ongoing pervasive practice of systemic

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structural violence. If this is so, how are they so readily recruited to projects of racialization and white supremacy?

The answer is, at least in part: *covert linguistic racism*—understood as a complex of linguistic practices mediated by language ideologies that connect to political–economic structures (Kroskrity 2000, 2020). As Jane Hill (2008, 7) observed, "ordinary people who do not share white supremacist beliefs can still talk and behave in ways that advance the projects of white racism." Popular media sources prefer to label some of what has been and will be described here as covert linguistic racism as *implicit bias* and indeed both concepts do converge in their focus on a human tendency to unconsciously, or pre-reflectively, attribute particular qualities to an individual based on stereotypical associations of the group. Although I think it is useful for some readers to understand their conceptual overlap, I prefer to use covert linguistic racism because I feel it better directs a balanced attention not just to the psychology of perception but also to the political–economic structures from which bias emerges. Covert racist linguistic practices provide a key site of language ideological work (Gal and Irvine 2019, 22, 107) that promotes racializing differentiation, circulation of these categories in both private and public space, rationalization of racial stratification, and invisibilization—at least to most white people—of their promotion of white supremacy. While covert racist discourse is readily apprehended by many in racialized groups who suffer from its contribution to their oppression (e.g., Hill 2008; Reyes 2011), its reliance on unspoken assumptions and expectations (Deloria 2004) associated with a deeply naturalized hegemonic order, on indexicality (Hill 2008), anonymity (Meek 2013), deniability, and on other indirect and hedged forms of expression, makes it comparatively invisible, and excusable, to most whites. As used here, indexicality may be usefully understood as associational connections, say between words and their contexts of production. "Sir," as an address form, for example, may be associated with formality and social distance.[1] Anonymity is a discourse based on shared standards that are presumed to be self-evident or "what everybody knows." In tandem, these features work to produce forms of racism that are indirect, implicit, or deflected like "coded" language.

Unlike public use of overt forms of racist language, like racial epithets, that is denounced by most people in all social groups, covert linguistic racism is not viewed as offensive by most whites, and less likely to inflame racialized groups to the point of explicit, public critique. Although clearly playing a significant role in the construction, transmission, and circulation of racializing practices, and therefore an integral part of white supremacist culture, the comparatively stealth qualities of covert racism allow it to be understood by most Whites not as a cultural product but rather as the more rational operation of their "common sense" (Gramsci 1971, 420; Urciuoli 1996; 53-4)—as what Barbra Meek (2013) terms the "voice of White reason." In so doing, seemingly innocuous covert racist linguistic practices promote misrecognition of the structural violence it propagates as an inevitable expression of a natural order.

In this brief article, I want to highlight the role of some covert racist linguistic practices and relate them to projects of white supremacy, past and present, in the United States. Types of covert linguistic racism treated here will include (1) a summary sketch of ideologies and practices of the White Listening Subject and (2) observations from a juxtaposition of the analyses of two very different examples of covert racism directed at Native Americans. These include "salvage" researchers' negative characterizations of the Indigenous narrative traditions of California Indians just prior to the mid-20th C. (Kroskrity 2013, 2015) and contemporary Internet jokes about Native Americans (Meek 2013). I will conclude with comments about the persistent role of covert linguistic racism both in contemporary academic treatments of Native American language endangerment and revitalization and end with a brief exhortation for scholars to move beyond the mere detection and disclosure of forms of covert linguistic racism.

The White Listening Subject

An appropriate place to begin is with the raciolinguistic ideologies and practices associated with hegemonic White culture (Alim 2016; Rosa and Flores 2017). Here I will hybridize what, following Inoue's (2003) influential study, raciolinguistic scholars have termed the "white listening subject" (Rosa and Flores 2020; Khan 2020) with what Jane Hill (2008, 5) has called the [White] "folk theory of racism." By White listening subject, I want to convey a hegemonic gaze that gets to define "others" and their language. By [White] folk theory of racism, I am attempting to explicate many white peoples' vernacular, taken-for-granted, common sense making beliefs and assumptions about race that can be gleaned from a combination of their own commentary and actual practice. Lacking the explicitness of professional theories of race by social scientists, folk theories of racism are largely implicit understandings that uncritically reproduce racial categories and hierarchies. Researchers who have studied language as embedded in whiteness and white supremacy (e.g., McIntosh 2021; Spears 2020) have emphasized the importance of understanding its foundation in a position of privilege within political–economic structures, forms of social stratification, and the hegemonic culture of civil society. Nevertheless, it is important to note that language ideologies of white culture detract attention from the role of political–economic factors and direct attention to the micro-culture of the individual. The hegemonic positioning of White culture both naturalizes a cultural system and invisibilizes it to those who are socialized into its beneficial embrace (Bucholtz 2011, 15; Rosaldo 1988).

This positioning of hegemonic whiteness transforms White culture from a social construction—just like other cultures—into a rational set of beliefs and practices embedded within a highly naturalized social order. In this "reality," the differentiation of races is not an ideological product; it is a biological fact (Hill 2008, 5). This folk view also emphasizes the individual as the source of racism and locates its origins in personal beliefs and feelings rather than in politically and economically grounded institutions and historically entrenched hierarchies of oppression. The net effect of ideologies of personalism (Rosaldo 1982) on language is a belief that "holds that the most important part of linguistic meaning comes from the beliefs and intentions of the speaker" (Hill 2008, 38). These interacting components of the language ideological assemblage (Kroskrity 2018; Meek 2020) associated with white supremacy are multiply consequential for the evaluation of language use. By language ideological assemblage (Kroskrity 2021), I mean the sum total of beliefs and feelings about languages that interact and inform language use. Combined with the belief that language is, or should be, a transparent medium of communication (Haviland 2003), the combination of these ideologies represents communication not as emerging from the interaction of speakers but rather as the product of serial monologues. The resulting effect regarding linguistic racism is that individual speakers are the definitive interpreters of their speech since they alone have access to their private meanings and intentions. This personalist focus on individual speakers recasts language use not as a socially contexted act of communication in which meaning is negotiated between interlocutors but rather, in a more cognitivist mode, as a means for the self-expression of thoughts and feelings. The language ideological assemblage of White supremacy thus magnifies the role of White speakers in assessments of racism while it simultaneously erases the relevance of any linguistic harm to those defamed by racist speech. This reduction of any sense of responsibility to others is an integral part of the covert racist discourse of "mock Spanish" and representations of Indigenous Californian narratives that will be discussed later in this article. The primacy of the white gaze and disinterest in alternative cultural perspectives is, of course, grounded in the political–economic power of white supremacy, and manifested in the asymmetrical treatments of language contact that critique Spanish accents in Puerto Rican English (Urciuoli 1996; Hill 1999) and promote the linguistic contortions of "inverted

Spanglish" (Rosa 2019) while freely flouting the English accents of Mock Spanish (Hill 2008).[2]

Nowhere is language regimentation more important for maintaining white supremacy than in the maintenance of seemingly benign "Monoglot Standard" English (Silverstein 1996)—the language that is "deeply implicated in the culture of White racism in the United States" (Hill 2008, 35). Like all forms of language standardization, it simultaneously elevates the variety of white middle and upper classes while lowering any alternative forms of speaking associated with other groups. As described by Silverstein (1996) and Milroy (2000), this language complex consists not just in the formal aspects of the linguistic register but also in the ideologies that surround its usage. Chief among these folk beliefs is a prescriptive insistence that Standard English is singularly correct and that all other languages and social dialects are inferior. This emphasis on the precision of the Standard vs. the inaccuracy and inefficiency of other registers is closely related to the role of Standard English in dominant state and hegemonic cultural institutions and to beliefs that its use is a prerequisite for an individual's success there. While the Monoglot American English Standard is a linguistic ideal that is not explicitly linked to racial categories, it is historically associated with the speech of middle-class Whites rather than other racial, ethnic, or class groups. Although comparative linguistics, a descriptive rather than prescriptive enterprise, informs us that double negatives occur in most dialects of English and in most languages of the world, it and other non-standard linguistic features are heard from within the folk view of the White listening subject as inherently inferior and as evidence of the lexical impoverishment or grammatical deficiency of other linguistic varieties. Thus, the gatekeeping role of English (without an accent), and linguistic stratification more generally, is not readily appreciated by Whites as enforcing a racial barrier based on White cultural norms. Although the standardizing linguistic projects of most nation states are positively represented as both a shared resource that promotes national integration and as omni-available to all citizens, these ideals are rarely, if ever, realized and the putatively unifying Standard is quickly repurposed as a means of stratification (Anderson 1991; Errington 2000). Although Standard English is not spoken in all homes and not uniformly available in apartheid-like public schools, "not to acquire the 'standard' is a sign of moral failing, or of an absence of proper ambition" (Hill 2008, 35).

In the language ideological assemblage of white supremacy, most Whites erase the unequal access to the Standard and are unaware of the way linguistic stratification contributes to racialization and racial hierarchies. For them, the real White racists wear white KKK sheets, wave Confederate Flags, wear Nazi insignias, and shout overtly racist slurs. These are expressions of racism that most Whites will freely and openly renounce.

But forms of covert racism, as Hill (1999, 2008) has conclusively demonstrated, do their ideological work "while passing unnoticed" by most whites (Hill 2008, 41):

> . . .they work by indexicality, and specifically by presupposition and entailment . . . since they are not overtly uttered they are invisible to referentialist ideology, with its focus on the meaning of words . . .these are not easily identified as the products of individual intentions, as required by personalist ideology.

While White folk theories of language emphasize language as a collection of names for things—the words in their denotative sense directly stand for the things to which they refer. Using indirect, associational meanings, indexicality enables racializing images to be conveyed and propagated by Whites who are often unaware of the offensive implications of covert racist discourses and the way they contribute to the racializing project of white supremacy. The lack of awareness is clearly promoted by language ideologies, but it is also a product of the political–economic position of the White listening subject who registers covert racism as unproblematic since it does not challenge the existing racial hierarchy.[3] In the next section, I will

build on Hill's insights about indexical contribution to forms of covert linguistic racism.

Covert Racism and the Racialization of Native Americans

Although much of the racism directed at Native Americans has been especially overt, taking the form of overt and even genocidal statements and acts (Madley 2017; Biolsi 2007), racial epithets (like "digger" and "redskin"; Hinton 1994, 165-179; Perley 2015), crude media stereotypes (Meek 2006), and more covert forms of linguistic racism continue to shape and define the particular array on what Étienne Balibar (1991, 40) has called the "spectrum of racisms" designed for Native Americans. Balibar's imagery of a racializing spectrum fits well with contemporary approaches that focus on historical racial formations targeting specific groups.

In this section, I want to juxtapose two vastly different representations of Native Americans to reveal continuities in how covert linguistic racist practices racialize their object in a particularized racism. One set of representations, dating from the 1940s, emerges from attempts by salvage linguists/folklorists to characterize the narrative traditions of two Central California Indigenous groups (Kroskrity 2015). The other set consists of anonymously authored, Internet "Indian jokes" collected and analyzed in the 21st C. by Barbra Meek (2013).

In the United States of the early 20th C. national Indian policy was one of imposed assimilation, and researchers like folklorist Anna Gayton and linguist Stanley Newman were charged with the responsibility of producing representations of the "vanishing" narrative traditions of two Central California Indigenous communities—the Yokuts and the Western Mono. Both languages were traditionally spoken in California's central San Joaquin Valley, where the Indigenous language communities had already experienced language shift due to the increasing influence of the settler state and its intolerant policies toward Native American languages. This massive language shift was imposed by hegemonic institutions that suppressed and stigmatized all Indigenous language use—including forms of verbal art.[4]

Much has changed in the 80 years since Gayton and Newman characterized what they called the "narrative style" of Yokuts and Western Mono myths and proceeded to supply a deficit image of these Central Californian Indigenous traditions (Gayton and Newman [1940] 1964). Gayton and Newman's (1940) *Yokuts and Western Mono Myths* became at least semi-canonical for the evolving subfield of linguistic anthropology since the monograph, in abbreviated and excerpted form, was included in *Language in Culture and Society* (Hymes 1964), arguably the first anthology in the evolving subfield of linguistic anthropology.

For more information on the two distinguished scholars whose research is briefly summarized here and some narrative data from Mono and Yokuts, readers should consult my earlier and more expansive treatments (e.g., Kroskrity 2015). Here I am more concerned with conveying a representative outline of their style of research and their conclusions. Both scholars offered a descriptive characterization that assumed a significantly ethnocentric set of contrastive ideals. Their collective description consists of seven relatively negative characterizations of Yokuts and Mono narratives. These include lexical deficiency, lack of figurative language, simplicity, redundancy, lack of explication, lack of variation, and lack of formal structure. Although it is easy to judge Newman and Gayton harshly for what looks like their English literacy-based judgments, a closer examination reveals that they may have been attempting a relativistic appreciation of distinct "narrative styles." Newman (Newman and Gayton 1964, 377), for example, wrote:

> But by the same token, the stylistic features of English cannot appeal to the intuitions of a Yokuts native. To him English must appear erratic, lacking in those qualities of restraint and consistency that he finds in his own language. He will see no uniformity in the pattern of English sentences. . . . Behind this unevenness of expression there seems to be a strident and

> feverish energy obsessed with the need of expressing nuances that could best be left to contextual inference.

Although Newman achieves a measure of relativism by attempting to see English speakers' literacy-based expectations from another's perspective, neither he nor Gayton ever succeeds in imagining a systematic alternative in which the cluster of normally dispreferred traits would make cultural sense. Nor do they make any effort to understand how the modality of verbal performance—the cultural norm for transmitting these narratives—would have an impact on how oral narratives would be entextualized as written "texts." Considerable attention was paid to recontextualizing these stories as text objects in the name of anthropological or linguistic science rather than attempting to understand their relationship to Mono or Yokuts cultural contexts of oral performance.

In other publications, I have confronted claims about "monotonous" repetition and lack of structural variation, lack of "richness of expression," and absence of explanation (Kroskrity 2011, 2013). Regarding repetition, I found that meaningful variation does exist but that there is a cultural preference for structural parallelism or what the authors negatively characterize as repetition. Under the influence of schooled literacy, Newman and Gayton failed to see that what may be a vice in written form can often be a virtue in terms of oral poetics. As for "richness of expression," it is true that Mono and Yokuts narrators do not employ "figurative language" like metaphors and similes though the very use of such a metric applied to verbal performance as a means of evaluating artistry seems questionable or at least ethnocentric. Narrators, using the affordances of the oral tradition, are more likely to direct their artistry into storytelling prosodics that contribute to the unfolding of the plot or the extensive representation of story characters in their constructed dialog. Regarding the absence of explanations, Gayton and Newman are partially correct. "We don't explain them!" Western Mono elder Rosalie Bethel told me concerning the idea that stories should be self-explanatory. But she was not admitting some imagined flaw in Mono stories, she was expressing a different aesthetic sensibility related to cultural contexts of performance. According to her, most hearers already know the traditional stories—the staples of linguistic text collection—so they would actually be offended by some didactic explanation. Those that did not know the story—young children, visiting relatives, and outsiders—were encouraged to engage in sidebar conversations with siblings, other relatives, or even the storyteller. Those were all culturally appropriate ways to learn and appreciate the stories. When explanations were truly necessary—as in Rosalie Bethel's improvisation of a traditional story to be told to the uninitiated who would later access it through her digitized performances on a CD-ROM (Kroskrity 2017)—she readily provided one and explicated why it was necessary now when very few Monos were either highly fluent or especially knowledgeable about the stories. In all these cases, what was described by the salvage researchers as deficiency is better understood as fitting an alternative cultural aesthetic pattern.

Was this merely professional negligence or an act of covert linguistic racism? Describing someone's narrative traditions as simple, monotonous, artless, and pointless is certainly not engaging in an overtly racist attack. But is it an extension of a covert linguistic racist project?

There are several arguments for identifying these elite scholarly characterizations as covert racism. One, the White listening subjects here are too quickly satisfied with an ethnocentric evaluation that affirms both the superiority of their own culture and a negative glance at the other. No real effort, other than the speculation mentioned above, was made to understand the perspective of the other. It is relevant to remember that Newman and Gayton were not just describing Native cultures as everyday people or tourists, they were part of an academic elite charged with documenting Indigenous narratives of Central California. Two, as Beliso-DeJesus and Pierre (2019) suggest, we must contextualize analyses of race in power relations and restore the bigger picture. When we do this, we cannot help but see these academics

as representatives of a hegemonic institution of the settler state (Speed 2019a, b) documenting Indigenous narratives not for the communities themselves but as a form of natural history, as an act of incorporation into the national narrative. Three, although the evaluative criteria may be represented in referentialist language which is not overtly racist, these characterizations are also part of an indexical order (Silverstein 2003) that invokes racist stereotypes of Native Americans.

For Native Americans, the indexed stereotypes that feed covert racism are different from those directed at Latinos, African-Americans, and Asian Americans. Primitive, intellectually inferior, conquered, incompetent, violent, and vanishing into extinction are some of the most harmful features of the negative stereotypes. The lack of interest in attempting to understand Indigenous narratives or of writing for an Indigenous audience may be connected with the stereotypical image of groups like the Mono and Yokuts that assumed their cultures to be primitive and soon-to-be extinct. On a macro-level, this type of analysis—or indefinite postponement of an analysis—was predisposed by U.S. policies of imposed assimilation and its attempted erasure of cultural and linguistic difference.

This instance of elite covert racist discourse can be instructively juxtaposed to a very different but more contemporary example of Internet circulated "Indian jokes." Building on her earlier Native American research on the mock style of Hollywood Injun English, Comanche scholar Barbra Meek (2013) has analyzed email and Internet-circulated "jokes" that have stock Native American characters. Although the crude stereotypes of the genre invite an interpretation of overt racism, I would contend that the anonymous mode of telling and the generic feature of humor, as with the jocularity associated with Mock Spanish, conspire to make this a covert racist discourse.

Before exploring some of the relevant features of this mediatized genre, I want to better contextualize it across various sociocultural dimensions by contrasting it to the salvage era example. While the salvage era example represents an elite academic discourse that was circulating in early through mid-20th C., the Internet jokes are part of a vernacular online culture that currently exists in the 21st C. The academic elites produced authored works that moved through limited scholarly circles within the evolving fields of anthropology, linguistics, and folklore. The anonymously authored Internet jokes circulate widely in the more public space of the world wide web. In terms of tone and content, the academic discourse consists of serious studies produced within the professional standards of the day about the language and culture of Native American groups; the jokes are humorous fictions that deploy stereotypical Indian characters.

Almost identical to one discussed by Meek (2013), the following joke, dated April 15, 2015, appears on a Facebook post by a Midwestern trade union as its "joke of the day." I reproduce the joke text in its entirety:

> A Native American man walks into a cafe with a shotgun in one hand and a bucket of buffalo manure in the other. He says to the waiter, "Me want coffee."
>
> The waiter says, "Sure chief, coming right up." He gets the Native American man a tall mug of coffee, and he drinks it down in one gulp, picks up the bucket of manure, throws it into the air, blasts it with the shotgun, then just walks out.
>
> The next morning the Native American man returns. He has his shotgun in one hand and a bucket of buffalo manure in the other. He walks up to the counter and says to the waiter, "Me want coffee." The waiter says "Whoa chief! We're still cleaning up your mess from the last time you were here. What the heck was that all about, anyway?"
>
> The Indian smiles and proudly says, "Me in training for upper management. Come in, drink coffee, shoot the shit, and disappear for the rest of the day."

These stereotypical Indian figures are crudely cartoonish and often represented as speaking a register that Barbra Meek (2006), in her earlier study of the constructed language of Native characters in film and television, identified as Hollywood Injun English (HIE). Typical of this register is the routine use of patently ungrammatical forms, for example, "Me want coffee" (Meek 2013, 349).[5] Like other features of HIE, the abuse of object pronouns in subject position contributes to the image of a speaker in the register of "foreigner talk," an ironic yet purposeful achievement of settler colonial popular culture. Although erasing indigeneity (cf. "foreigner talk") does significant discursive damage, Meek considers these anonymously authored yet widely circulated jokes to be a form of covert racism analogous to Mock Spanish.

In Meek's analysis, the anonymous authorship produces two related effects. Lacking a specific author, these joke texts are no one's direct responsibility though those who host them or circulate them can be viewed as having an indirect messenger's responsibility for their content.[6] Curiously, the lack of authorship not only makes it difficult to assign responsibility but actually seems to confer the authority of anonymity (Woolard 2017) to those who are prepared to rely on the presupposed stereotypical knowledge of "what everyone knows" about Native Americans. "Getting" the jokes, as in the "humorous" use of Mock Spanish by Whites, requires an audience ready to deploy its knowledge of stereotypes or one ready to enter this racializing imaginary.

Representing what Meek calls "White" reason and reasserting the social centrality of Whites, these jokes re-inscribe tropes of domination as in jokes about "playing Cowboy and Indian." She views the jokes as a means of interpellating a readership that is prepared to engage with a certain mapping onto indexical fields that will make the jokes meaningful (Meek 2013, 341-2). As representations of Indians, these joke texts both presuppose and entail a mostly negative set of indexical connections: to "'noble' respectable yet vanquished," partially assimilable, inherently violent, backward, uncivilized, primitive, and vanishing (into extinction) others (Meek 2013, 345-352). So in the example above, when an Indian character is attempting to "shoot the shit," he shows a defective understanding of the idioms involved and actually uses a shotgun, illustrating both the indexed backwardness and his tendency toward violence. Although presented in an overtly jocular stance (similar to Mock Spanish) and metapragmatically labeled as a "joke," the circulated stereotypes not only re-inscribe White domination but they also contribute to an ongoing project of racializing Native Americans as subordinated, inferior others by circulating these racialized differentiations to new audiences in what appears to be a harmless fashion. White audiences who would be repulsed by overtly racist representations of Native Americans might even be tempted to send or repeat these covertly racist but comparatively less harmful jokes.

So why do I juxtapose the covert racist practice of former academic elites with contemporary vernacular online jokes? One is to note the consistency of the indexical fields they draw on over time, across diverse audiences, and different scales of circulation. A second is to observe this consistency in a particularized racism tied especially to the needs of the settler colonial and settler capitalist (Speed 2019a, b) societies to marginalize and erase Indigenous people, their languages, cultures, and competing histories. A third is to interrogate the role of the powerful White supremacist elites and their interests as the Goffmanian (1981) *principal,* or the person responsible for the message, behind the covert discourses of these elite authored and anonymous vernacular covert racist discourses. As mentioned above, the indexical fields that are required to understand these characterizations of a narrative tradition as inadequate or these jokes as funny is remarkably similar. Both characterizations are conveyed largely through indexicalities, with their attendant presupposed and entailed stereotypical tropes of the conquered, failing, disappearing, primitive, unassimilable, violent, and locked-in-the-past Native. Both racialize Indians and rationalize their dispossession, marginalization, and erasure. Certain indexical features such as violence, primitiveness, treachery, and drunkenness also appear in

the representation of black (Smalls 2018, 2020) and brown bodies (Hill 2008). However, the foregoing indexical features can be added into a larger set including "noble but conquered," "inevitably disappearing," and incompatible with modernity, as identified by Dakota historian Philip Deloria (2004, 10) and discussed more recently by Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson (2018, 175). All of these indexical features unmistakably combine in a racial formation with a particularized racism directed at Native Americans.

Although White elites who direct the institutions of White Supremacy use covert linguistic racism to "preserve deniability about racist views while simultaneously reproducing them" (Hill 2001, 79) and conform to the "growing prevalence of egalitarian norms and increased sensibility regarding at least the overt manifestation of [ethnic and racial] bias" (van Dijk 1993), they are the principals and the authors of these racist projects. This racializing project is very much directed by agents of white supremacy who would prefer to ideologically erase a contemporary presence of Native Americans, and their alternative histories, which would require Whites to confront genocides, removals, displacement, the dishonor of broken treaties, imposed socioeconomic deprivation, and cultural intolerance. Although settler colonialism morphs into settler capitalism and physical violence becomes structural violence, the need to minimize or erase White brutality toward Native Americans remains a constant need (Wolfe 1999; Speed 2019b) for a hegemonic culture attempting to be the heroic agent of its own narrative of nation-building.

In his *Indians in Unexpected Places*, Deloria (2004) examines US popular culture of the 20th C. and its recurring ideologically driven "expectation" that Indians were incompatible with such modern activities as driving a car, going to beauty parlors, or playing professional baseball. But this informal regime of temporalization, as Fabian (1983) has observed in his *Time and the Other*, was also extended to academia and to the trope of anthropology's "ethnographic present," which analytically removed Indigenous groups like Native Americans from the modern period and constructed the anthropological "other" as properly existing in a time not contemporary with our own. This was one of the professional technologies for "erasing" the Indigeneity of Native American subjects (Simpson 2018, 167), ignoring the social injustice of white supremacy, and ultimately rationalizing a racialized system of astounding inequalities. This was one of many failures of anthropology to identify its own entanglement in the culture of White supremacy (Beliso-DeJesus and Pierre 2019, 65).

Conclusions

I want to conclude this brief article by further confronting covert linguistic racism in two ways. One, I want to question whether what I have called the covert racism of the salvage era is only an artifact of the past or whether contemporary anthropologists and language scientists still perpetuate it in some form today? We see from the "Indian jokes" that popular culture still circulates racializing tropes but what about academic culture? And two, I want to end with an exhortation to scholars to not only continue to disclose covert racism but also to engage in more outreach efforts to make its pernicious effects more apparent to more people.

One area involving linguistic research in which covert racism still takes shape is in some of the research that occurs in the name of language documentation and revitalization—a major enterprise for language scientists since the 1990s. Although she did not explicitly link the "expert rhetorics" of (community-)external language advocates to covert racism, Jane Hill (2002) was among the first scholars to critique the argumentation of researchers who often bypassed heritage speakers' language ideologies in favor of appealing to such tropes as "universal ownership," "enumeration" (the dwindling number of speakers), and "hyperbolic valorization" (praising typically exotic linguistic features like complex verbs or finding capitalist value in botanical knowledge encoded in Indigenous languages). These images ignored the values of Indigenous communities that often associated their languages with

spirituality and healing (Hinton 2002) or with counterhegemonic resistance (Greymorning 2004). The tropes also helped construct, as Cameron (2007) has argued, a sense of linguistic emergency that required the rescue efforts of outside linguists, producing an image of the linguist as hero and representing Indigenous language shift more as the product of Indigenous communities' failure to appreciate and maintain their heritage languages rather than as an outcome of their oppression. Even the potentially valuable notion of the "language rights" of Indigenous people assumed a neo-colonial form by insisting on a "one size fits all" model of language documentation and revitalization that some groups, like the Hopi, would find incompatible with their culture (Whiteley 2003). Resisting this depiction of passive, child-like communities, Indigenous scholars such as Wesley Leonard (Myaamia) and Bernard Perley (Maliseet) have called for a decolonization of these linguistic projects, and a recognition of contemporary Native agency in appreciating the work of contemporary Native communities to reclaim their languages (Leonard 2017) and produce "emergent vitalities" (Perley 2011) rather than concede language death.

But more than images of heritage language communities as helpless, silent, childlike, or incapable of taking on the tasks of documentation and revitalization, perhaps the strongest connection to the covert racism of the salvage period comes in the form of a preoccupation with "last speakers." While the compelling image of a last speaker makes tangible to many the unfathomable—for speakers of national or global languages—loss of a language, it also draws on the image of Native Americans as inevitably disappearing and otherwise incapable of existence in the present or future. As Chickasaw scholar Jenny Davis (2016, 110) has duly noted the "last speaker" focus serves the interests of settler colonial society's desire to erase an Indigenous presence and is the linguistic version of a well-established tradition of *lasting* noted by historian and Native Studies scholar Jean O'Brien (Ojibwe) (2010). O'Brien notes this as a process of promoting the vanishing of Indians by monitoring blood quantum—in the case of 19th C. New England—to disqualify and "count down" tribal members who were not "full blood." As a linguistic resistance to this strategy of counting down, Davis (2016, 110) advocates an alternative "counting Speakers up and out—ultimately recognizing the continued connections Indigenous people have to their languages—and to language revitalization endeavors more generally."

To briefly conclude on my final point, covert linguistic racism warrants not only additional scholarly attention but also a more activist monitoring by scholars of public discourse in which it is deployed (Cramer 2020). Its ubiquity and seeming harmlessness, in jokes and jocular registers, conceal and camouflage its pernicious reproduction and circulation of racialized images and the hierarchies they compose. As researchers, our responsibility does not end with the detection of coded messages. We should, where possible, call out the sources of these images in the political–economic structures and resulting structural violence of the complex of White Supremacy. Beyond this, linguistic anthropology is well-positioned to engage in a public outreach and intervention (Avineri et. al. 2018) designed to reshape White (and other) folk theories of racism so as to make tangible the harm of images designed to promote and perpetuate structural violence and social injustice of White Supremacy. Returning to the epigraph with which I began, linguistic anthropologists may not be well-suited to equalize power relations; but, we certainly are able to diminish forms of ignorance, and to extend our efforts in doing so.

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Notes

1. At the request of the editors and reviewers, I am attempting here the first of many relatively vernacular definition of relatively technical terms used in the literature on raciolinguistics, especially that informed by an explicitly language ideological approach. In these definitions, I will attempt to avoid metalinguistic jargon as well as scholarly citation in order to promote accessibility.

2. Here I want to agree with Rosa (2019, 144) in understanding the population that is stigmatized by Mock Spanish as the populations racialized as US Latinx rather than Hill's suggestion of a more general targeting of speakers of Spanish.

3. Awareness, or level of consciousness, ranging from practical to discursive, is neither an on/off switch nor a uni-directional flow into greater awareness. This lack of awareness that many whites have regarding covert racism stems from an inattention to detail, a partial or complete failure to engage in a reciprocity of perspectives with racial others, and/or a partial awareness that does register potentially offensive speech but views it as immunized by deniability.

4. The attacks on the heritage languages and their oral traditions of Indigenous peoples throughout the world are widely recognized apart from the rarified realm of academic scholarship. This is indeed so much the case that it is explicitly mentioned in the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People. I thank Barbra Meek for pointing this out to me. Interestingly, the United States is one of only four nations which voted against the declaration. For information on the contemporary Central California communities, see Kroskrity (2020).

5. See Meek (2006) for examples of the large inventory of linguistic differences that have been consistently used in the highly constructed Hollywood Injun English register—including pronoun deletion, lack of appropriate tense markers, marked pausing, and stereotypical vocabulary.

6. A comparison of this version to other versions of this joke reveals at least three variable details. Two are especially relevant here. (1) The location of the joke setting in a coffee shop rather than a bar, as in other versions, does suggest an attempt to avoid at least one stereotypical association for Native Americans, as does (2) the preference for what is often perceived as the politically correct alternative for "Indian." Of course, the other indexicals are fully on display producing an image of a person who is violent, foreign, lacking in intelligence, and primitive. The third variation is making a particular profession the "butt" of the joke—here upper-level management types—a predictable target for a 20,000 member labor union. A comparison of this version to other versions of this joke reveals at least three variable details. Two are especially relevant here. (1) The location of the joke setting in a coffee shop rather than a bar, as in other versions, does suggest an attempt to avoid at least one stereotypical association for Native Americans, as does (2) the preference for what is often perceived as the politically correct alternative for "Indian." Of course, the other indexicals are fully on display producing an image of a person who is violent, foreign, lacking in intelligence, and primitive. The third variation is making a particular profession the "butt" of the joke—here upper-level management types—a predictable target for a 20,000 member labor union.

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