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Stance

*Sociolinguistic Perspectives*

Edited by  
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## From Stance to Style

*Gender, Interaction, and Indexicality in Mexican Immigrant Youth Slang*

Mary Bucholtz

### Introduction: Indexicality and Identity in Sociolinguistics

The sociolinguistic study of identity has increasingly become the study of style. Traditionally, style has been understood within sociolinguistics as a unidimensional continuum between vernacular and standard that varies based on the degree of speaker self-monitoring in a given speech context (e.g., Labov 1972). However, recent theories offer a much richer view of style as a multimodal and multidimensional cluster of linguistic and other semiotic practices for the display of identities in interaction (e.g., Coupland 2007; Eckert and Rickford 2001; Mendoza-Denton 2002). This perspective also proposes a correspondingly more sophisticated theory of identity. Rather than assigning sociolinguistic meaning in a correlational fashion via a direct mapping between linguistic forms and social categories, as in earlier approaches to sociolinguistic variation, current theorists draw either implicitly or explicitly on the concept of indexicality, or contextually bound meaning (Silverstein 1976, 1985, 2003), in their understanding of stylistic practice (cf. Eckert 2000, 2003, 2008). In an indexical theory of style, the social meaning of linguistic forms is most fundamentally a matter not of social categories such as gender, ethnicity, age, or region but rather of subtler and more fleeting interactional moves through which speakers take stances, create alignments, and construct personas. Such an approach therefore demands that sociolinguists pay close attention not only to the patterning of linguistic variants but also their distribution and function in the performance of social actions within unfolding discourse. At the same time, styles are the product

of ideology, insofar as they are posited by speakers (as well as by analysts) as more or less clearly defined and socially specifiable collections of coinciding symbolic forms bound to particular social groups via metapragmatic stereotypes (Agha 2007). Contemporary sociolinguistic research on indexical stancetaking in interaction (e.g., Chun 2007; Coupland 2001; Johnstone 2007; Kiesling 2005; Mendoza-Denton 2008; Schilling-Estes 2004) illustrates the complex, real-time process whereby linguistic forms associated in the first instance with interactional stancetaking may come to be ideologically tied to larger social categories, as well as how linguistic forms that have become linked to particular categories may variously exploit or set aside such associations as speakers deploy these forms for their own interactional purposes.

This chapter seeks to contribute to this emergent body of scholarship by demonstrating how the relationship between stance, style, and identity is formed both from the bottom up, as it unfolds in local interaction, and from the top down, through the workings of broader cultural ideologies (cf. Bucholtz and Hall 2005). I examine this bidirectional process as it is constructed via the use of a single slang term popular among many Mexican and Mexican American youth, *güey* ([gwej], often lenited to [wej]). Although this term is frequently translated as 'dude', I argue, building on Kiesling's (2004) recent work on *dude*, that although these terms index similar stances they often participate in rather different styles of youthful masculinity. In my analysis, I draw on interactional data as well as media representations to argue that the semiotic multivalence of *güey* allows it to operate (often simultaneously) as a marker both of interactional alignment and of a particular gendered style among Mexican American youth.

### The Indexicality of Stance and Gender Style

The most extensive theoretical articulation of how indexical processes construct identity within interaction is found in the work of Elinor Ochs (1990, 1992, 1993, 1996). Although Ochs situates her discussion primarily in relation to the study of language socialization, her research on the role of indexicality in the social construction of gender has been particularly influential within identity studies. She notes that a fundamental challenge for researchers concerned with identifying gendered language use is that "*few features of language directly and exclusively index gender*" (1992: 340; original emphasis). Rejecting a correlational view of the connection between language and gender, she argues that only a semiotic perspective rooted in indexicality can account for the complexity of this relationship:

Knowledge of how language relates to gender is not a catalogue of correlations between particular linguistic forms and sex of speakers, referents, addressees, and the like. Rather, such knowledge entails tacit understanding of (1) how particular linguistic forms can be used to perform particular pragmatic work (such as conveying stance and social action) and (2) norms, preferences, and expectations regarding the distribution of this work *vis-à-vis* particular social identities of speakers, referents, and addressees. To discuss the relation of language to gender in these terms is far more revealing than simply identifying features as directly marking men's or women's speech. (1992: 342)

Ochs proposes that the indexical relationship between language and social meaning should be seen as involving two levels. At the level of direct indexicality, linguistic forms most immediately index interactional stances—that is, subjective orientations to ongoing talk, including affective, evaluative, and epistemic stances (cf. Du Bois 2007). At the level of indirect indexicality, these same linguistic forms become associated with particular social types believed to take such stances. It is at the indirect indexical level that ideology comes most centrally into play, for it is here that stances acquire more enduring semiotic associations. Over time, the mapping between linguistic form and social meaning comes to be ideologically perceived as direct, and the connections to interactional stance may undergo erasure or be backgrounded (cf. Irvine and Gal 2000). For example, a mitigated interactional stance may be ideologically associated with women, and hence linguistic forms used to take such stances may come to be seen as inherently “feminine.” The indexical perspective therefore suggests that gender is not the explanation for a speaker’s use of a particular linguistic form, but rather the indirect effect of using such language, a reversal of causality that underlies current social-constructionist thinking about language and gender. However, where many social-constructionist theories assume that semiotic resources such as language directly index gender, an indexical theory of gender posits an intermediate step that recognizes the multifunctionality of linguistic forms and hence is less deterministic.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, linguistic forms that may come to be ideologically linked to broader social meanings via indirect indexicality are generally associated not with broad social categories like women but rather with more specific sorts of social types and personas, such as child-oriented, middle-class mothers (Ochs 1992) or rebellious, “burnout” teenage girls (Eckert 2000), through the process of creating metapragmatic stereotypes. That is, indirectly indexical linguistic forms are markers of highly differentiated styles of identity that operate within a semiotic system in relation to other locally available—and often competing or contrasting—styles. A single feature, then, is typically insufficient to index a style; rather, styles comprise clusters of co-occurring semiotic elements, including both linguistic and nonlinguistic resources (Ochs 1990; Eckert 2003). As I show in my analysis of *güey*, this term gains part of its indexical meaning from the other symbolic practices in which its users engage while taking stances and building styles of identity.

### Stance, Style, and Gender in Slang

Within language and gender research, slang has been a topic of interest since the early days of the field. On the one hand, researchers have investigated whether sexist asymmetries exist in slang terms referring to each gender (e.g., Braun and Kitzinger 2001; Cameron 1992; de Klerk 1992; James 1998; Sutton 1995). On the other hand, a rather smaller body of work has documented the frequency and strength of slang and other taboo terms used by speakers of each gender (e.g., de Klerk 1990, 1997; Hughes 1992; Risch 1987). Such studies rely primarily on surveys and other elicited data in order to compare the slang repertoires of female and male speakers, an approach that assumes that self-reports accurately capture actual language use. This assumption is

questionable, however, in an ideologically fraught area of language such as slang. Moreover, although the focus in such research on cross-gender comparison importantly allows scholars to identify gender differences and especially asymmetries, this approach also obscures the possibility that slang terms ideologically associated with one gender or the other may in fact be shared in practice. More recent work on gender and slang demonstrates the important mediating roles of ideology (e.g., L. Miller 2004) and interaction (e.g., Stenström 2003) in constructing the gendered meaning of slang. Such research suggests that the social meaning of slang cannot be read off directly from its semantics or the demographic distribution of its use. Rather, slang, like all linguistic resources, gains its semiotic value only within the sociocultural context in which it is used. Indexicality is therefore a fundamental concept in understanding how slang—or indeed any linguistic form—comes to be associated with gender and other social categories.

Thus, to discover what is left out of metapragmatic representations of discourse and what is put in, it is necessary to examine linguistic items that index stances—and hence build styles and identities—in local interactional contexts. I offer two illustrations of how gendered youth styles are indexically built up in interaction in part through the use of slang: Kiesling’s (2004) discussion of *dude* and my own analysis of the use of *güey* among Mexican immigrant youth in the United States. I then turn to how *güey* has been taken up ideologically through niche marketing within commodity capitalism in the U.S. context, which reproduces and reinforces the gendered dimensions of its semiotics.

### Stance and Masculinity in the Use of *Dude*

Kiesling’s (2004) analysis of the term *dude* offers a detailed example of how a slang form can operate at multiple levels of indexicality. Kiesling notes that the contemporary use of *dude* as an address term originated among African Americans and was later appropriated by European Americans, especially young men. Based on the distribution of the form in observational and self-report survey data, he argues that *dude* is currently used primarily (though not exclusively) by younger white male speakers. But unlike in most sociolinguistic studies of slang, Kiesling goes beyond an examination of the social patterning of the form across speakers to its use in interaction as well as its representation in the popular media. Drawing on discourse data among university fraternity members, he argues that interactionally *dude* creates an intersubjective alignment of friendly nonintimacy. Thus the direct indexicality of the term is to project a “stance of cool solidarity” (2004: 282), and this stance is often linked via indirect indexicality to masculinity and male speakers. As Kiesling puts it:

The term is used mainly in situations in which a speaker takes a stance of solidarity or camaraderie, but crucially in a nonchalant, not-too-enthusiastic manner. . . . The reason young men use this term is precisely that *dude* indexes this stance of cool solidarity. Such a stance is especially valuable for young men as they navigate cultural Discourses of young masculinity, which simultaneously demand masculine solidarity, strict heterosexuality, and nonconformity. (2004: 282)

He goes on to argue that the term's indexical meaning in the social realm derives from its various discourse functions in the interactional realm, which include serving as a marker of discourse structure, an exclamation, a mitigator of confrontational stance, a marker of affiliation and connection, and an agreement marker.

Examples (1a) through (1c), which are taken from Kiesling's data on American fraternity men, illustrate some of these functions in the speech of a particular man, Pete. In example (1a), Pete and Hotdog, both European Americans, are conarrating a story about getting lost in an African American inner-city neighborhood. Pete uses *dude* in line 40 to introduce a high-affect exclamation in the evaluation of a key moment in the narrative:

(1a) *Dude* as exclamation (from Kiesling 2004: 294)

- 40 PETE: **Dude** it was like boys in the hood man ai:n't no: lie:  
 41 HOTDOG: And they're all they're fucked up on crack, wasted  
 42 they're all lookin' at us they start comin' to the car,  
 43 so Pete's like FLOOR IT.  
 44 so I take off (.) and (.)

In example (1b), Pete and Dave are playing the board game Monopoly. Pete uses the term *dude* first in line 44, to mitigate his initial unmitigated command to Dave to give him a piece of property, and then in line 47 as part of an improvised ditty that plays with the phonological similarity between *dude* and Dave's (real) name:

(1b) *Dude* as mitigator of conflict/marker of affiliation (from Kiesling 2004: 294)

- 44 PETE: Fuckin' ay man.  
 45 Gimme the red Dave. **Dude**. (1.0)  
 46 DAVE: No.  
 47 PETE: Dave **dude, dude** Dave hm hm hm hm  
 48 DAVE: I'll give you the purple one  
 49 PETE: Oh *that's* a good trade

In example (1c), Dan offers a strongly affective evaluation of a drinking game he enjoys; Pete's response, using *dude*, undercuts Dan's enthusiasm by suggesting that the game is widespread and hence unremarkable:

(1c) *Dude* as part of a cool stance (from Kiesling 2004: 295)

- DAN: I love playin' caps.  
 That's what did me in last-| |last week.  
 PETE: |that's-|  
 Everybody plays that damn game, **dude**.

As I demonstrate in the following analysis, a number of the characteristics of *dude* identified by Kiesling are shared by *güey*, although there are important differences as well. On the one hand, *güey* is not simply, as popular belief would have it, "the

Spanish word for *dude*." On the other hand, it is certainly true that both English-speaking and Spanish-speaking young people, especially but not exclusively young men, find that terms like these are vital to their interactional projects of stancetaking, style, and identity. I illustrate this point in detail with an analysis of ethnographic discourse data of Mexican immigrant teenagers at a California high school.

### The Use of *Güey* in Interaction

In 2004–2005, I conducted a year of fieldwork in the Migrant Student Program at Orchard High School, a predominantly Latino public school in a traditionally agricultural community in Southern California.<sup>2</sup> The study yielded approximately 150 hours of video data involving over 40 students in beginning and advanced English as a Second Language (ESL) classes as well as a bilingual world history class. The data I analyze here are taken from a single day of fieldwork, a class field trip to the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. The trip was part of a unit on the Holocaust in the world history class, but because beginning and advanced ESL were also taught by the same teacher, students in those classes were included as well. The data analyzed in the following examples are taken from interactions between three boys who were seated near each other on the bus on the drive down to Los Angeles from Orchard High. All three boys are from Mexico; two of them, Chris and Chilango, are close friends. The third, Dragon, who happened to be seated near them, is not part of their friendship group, although he is on friendly terms with both of the other two boys. (All three boys chose their own pseudonyms.)

My analytic decision to focus on *güey* was not an arbitrary one. In fact, I first heard about the term before I heard it in students' talk. On my first day of fieldwork, I explained to the primary ESL teacher, Ms. Rivera, and her classroom aide, Ms. Sánchez, the kinds of linguistic issues of interest to me. When I mentioned slang, both women reacted dramatically, jointly warning me against students' use of "bad words" from Mexican Spanish in the classroom. Ms. Rivera, a native speaker of Castilian Spanish, recounted how in her first days of teaching, students openly used "bad words" in the classroom but because she was not familiar with Mexican Spanish slang she did not recognize them; it was only when Ms. Sánchez, a native speaker of Mexican Spanish, overheard students using such words that Ms. Rivera learned what they meant and banned them from her classroom. The only example of a "bad word" from Mexican Spanish that the two women provided was *güey*; they explained to me that it originally meant 'ox' and that it functioned as a vulgar insult.

I was therefore primed to look for *güey*, but as it happened I did not need to exert myself very strenuously to find it. As the following data make abundantly clear, what is immediately striking about much of the peer interaction among migrant students at Orchard High School, and particularly boys, is the frequency with which *güey* occurs: a rough count of an hour's worth of recorded data from the interaction analyzed here, for instance, yielded 347 tokens of *güey*, or 1 nearly every 10 seconds. Much like other frequently used colloquial terms, such as *like* in English (D'Arcy 2007), *güey* is often perceived by its critics as being no more than verbal filler and hence as damning evidence of the inarticulateness of youth. However, the term is in fact highly expressive, performing a range of functions within discourse. Among other uses, it may act as an

address term, as an insulting or noninsulting reference term, and as a discourse marker indicating emphasis or focus. In addition and related to these discourse functions, it also supports the performance of a stance of cool solidarity, especially during face-threatening social action such as self-aggrandizement or disagreement. Apart from referential uses of the term, in my data set *güey* overwhelmingly occurs at the ends of intonation units and thus also participates in the organization of discourse structure. The following analysis demonstrates each of these functions.<sup>3</sup>

The function of *güey* that is most widespread is its use as an affiliative address term, comparable to *dude*, *bro*, and similar slang items. This meaning is illustrated in example 2, in which *güey* is used as a noninsulting term for greeting a friend (see chapter appendix for transcription conventions):

(2) *Güey* as address term

<Chilango's phone rings. He takes it out of his pocket, puts it to his ear.>

- 1 CHILANGO: ¿Qué pedo, *güey*? (2 sec.)  
What's going on, *güey*?
- 2 ¿Qué pedo, *güey*?  
What's going on, *güey*?
- 3 <Chilango lowers the phone.>
- 4 CHRIS: ¿Quién era?  
Who was that?
- 5 <Chilango switches to speaker phone and addresses the caller.>
- 6 CHILANGO: ¿Qué onda, *güey*?  
What's up, *güey*?
- 7 CALLER: #
- 8 CHILANGO: ¿Qué onda?  
What's up?
- 9 CALLER: (A::h.)

Chilango uses the term *güey* repeatedly in the initial greeting sequence of this phone call. Importantly, thanks to caller ID technology, he is aware of the identity of the caller from his very first utterance. Because cell phones establish person-to-person rather than station-to-station communication, they eliminate the identificatory preliminaries of the land-line phone call openings that were analyzed in depth by conversation analysts before the advent of caller ID (e.g., Schegloff 1979). Thus Chilango's greeting is designed not simply for callers in general but for this caller in particular. It is evident that *güey* here operates primarily as an address term, both signaling Chilango's awareness of the caller's identity and inviting the initiation of the interaction. In line 2, Chilango's repetition of ¿Qué pedo, *güey*? appears to be due to the caller's failure to respond to the question the first time, for in the repetition he uses the same intonational contour, as if uttering the question for the first time. Likewise, when he switches to speaker phone so that Chris can hear the caller, he again uses *güey* in line 6 to reestablish the interaction, which he has temporarily suspended in order to alter its participation framework. Once the caller produces a response to the greeting, Chilango abandons the address term, at least momentarily.

The use of *güey* as a friendly or neutral address term coexists with its function as an insult, although the pejorative meaning occurs typically (but not exclusively) in reference rather than address, for obvious reasons of face and social decorum. The use of *güey* in a negative context is seen in example (3), in which Chilango criticizes the poor driving of a motorist he spots through the bus window:

(3) *Güey* in insulting reference

- 1 CHILANGO: Ora, babo:so. (5 sec.)  
Hey, idiot.
- 2 Este *güey* no puede ir aquí.  
This *güey* can't go here.
- 3 Debe de ir a la derecha.  
He has to go on the right.

Here *güey* is used in something closer to its derogatory sense of 'idiot'. In fact, in line 1 Chilango uses the term *baboso*, another term used to deride another's intelligence. The use of *güey* here may be understood at best as a noninsulting reference term; in any case, it clearly lacks any of the affiliative connotations it carries as an address term between friends.

If the insulting sense of *güey* may be less frequent among younger speakers, it may also be preserved in fixed idiomatic expressions, as in line 7 of example (4), *a lo güey*, 'like a *güey*; without thinking', in which the individual lexical item *güey* seems to retain the meaning 'idiot' but the expression as a whole generally has no negative connotations. In this example, Dragon is showing Chris his digital camera, and they are discussing how many photos its memory cards will hold:

(4) *Güey* as discourse marker

- 1 CHRIS: ¿Traes dos memorias?  
You have two memories?
- 2 DRAGON: ¿Y agarra cien, cien ocho, *güey*?  
And it takes a hundred, a hundred and eight, *güey*?
- 3 ¿Cada una, *güey*?  
Each one, *güey*?
- 4 Mira <[ira]>, *güey*.  
Look, *güey*.
- 5 <shows Chris the memory card>
- 6 CHRIS: Son como las que le caben a ésta.  
It's about as many as fit on this one.
- 7 DRAGON: Por eso voy a tomar a lo *güey*:y,  
That's why I'm gonna take <pictures> like a *güey*,  
<i.e., without thinking, automatically>
- 8 nomás.  
just like that.

In addition to this fixed expression, Dragon uses *güey* three times with nonreferential function in lines 2, 3, and 4. These uses resemble in structure the address-term function seen in example (2), but they are unlikely to be simple address terms given their repeated use in the middle of ongoing discourse. The function of *güey* here, as in several of the following examples, appears to be both to highlight important information and to maintain solidarity. This balancing of functions is especially important when taking a self-aggrandizing stance, as Dragon does here. Before this example begins, Chris has already indicated that he is impressed by the fact that Dragon has brought no fewer than three cameras on the field trip, and in line 1 he shows interest in the details of their capabilities. Thus Chris has invited Dragon to show off, which he willingly does in lines 2 through 5, culminating in a visual display of the camera's memory card. Each line is punctuated by *güey*, lest Chris fail to notice the impressive qualities of his camera; it also, and equally importantly, works to sustain interactional alignment. However, Chris soon ceases to act as a willing audience for Dragon's boasting; in line 6 he counters Dragon's claim that his memory card holds over a hundred photos by commenting that his own camera's memory holds the same amount.

A similar use of *güey* also occurs in example (5). In this interaction Chris has pulled out his own camera and is showing Chilango photos of members of his soccer team. What is immediately striking about the example is the heavy use of *güey* as a noninsulting term of reference, roughly equivalent to *guy* or to *dude* in its referential sense:

(5) Referential use of *güey*

- 1 TEACHER: <to student teacher> Just keep an e:ye on tho:se ki:ds.  
 2 CHRIS: <looking at his camera> ¿Este **güey**?  
*This güey?*  
 3 AIDE: ¡Los alum[nitos! ]  
*The students!*  
 4 TEACHER: [Those are] [[you:r ]] ki:ds today.  
 5 CHRIS: [No es ] [[muy {bueno, el **güey**.}]] (creaky voice)  
*He's not very good, the güey.*  
 6 CHRIS: Es pura banca.=  
*He's total bench.*  
 7 =¿Este **güey**?  
*This güey?*  
 8 Yo lo dejo en la banca,  
*I leave him on the bench,*  
 9 y me meten a mí, **güey**.  
*and they put me in, güey.*  
 10 CHILANGO: <looking at Chris and smiling> <tongue click> <[ã::]>  
 11 <Chris looks at Chilango and smiles, then looks back down at camera.>  
 12 CHRIS: Este **güey**:y,  
*This güey,*  
 13 está madreado,=  
*he's fucked up,*  
 14 =este **güey** es titular.  
*this güey is titular <i.e., a "chaired" player>.*

- 15 Este **güey** no está bien pesado,  
*This güey isn't very good <lit. 'heavy'>,  
 16 este **güey** es bien bue:no, **güey**.  
*this güey is really good, güey.*  
 17 Buenísimo que es ese **güey**.  
*He's very good, that güey.*  
 18 Éste es el Alejandro, **güey**.  
*This is Alejandro, güey.**

The interpretation of this use of *güey* as noninsulting in valence is supported by the broad range of evaluations that Chris makes of the athletic abilities of each of the soccer players referred to as *este güey*. In addition to this referential function, Chris uses *güey* as a stance marker in lines 9, 16, and 18. In line 9 it is used in Chris's self-flattering evaluation of his own soccer talent, and Chilango responds to this blatant self-praise with playful derision. In the other two uses, it is more subtle. In line 16 Chris uses it in praising another player rather than himself, and in line 18 he uses it to introduce one of the players by name; in the interaction that follows the example Chilango claims to know the player as well. Thus even without openly boasting Chris is able to bask in the reflected glory of these two players: they are on *his* soccer team, captured on *his* camera, and he has primary epistemic authority (Heritage and Raymond 2005) in relation to them. As with Dragon in the previous example, Chris's use of *güey* to accomplish this boasting allows him to maintain a solidary alignment with his addressee, in this case relatively successfully.

The next two examples illustrate in greater detail the use of *güey* while taking a boastful stance, as well as offering additional insights into these boys' pragmatic deployment and metapragmatic understanding of the term. In each case, Chris is bragging to Chilango, who is variously receptive to and skeptical of some of Chris's wilder claims.

Example (6) finds Chris bragging once again, but this time, Chilango is more dubious, and in taking this stance he illustrates another interactional situation in which *güey* occurs in these data, in conjunction with a stance of mild disalignment. Whereas in previous examples *güey* worked to preserve intersubjective alignment during the self-elevation of the speaker, here its affiliative function also serves to counterbalance Chilango's disaligning stance toward Chris's claims. In both cases, the solidary stance indexed by *güey* has a mitigating function during a face-threatening moment that jeopardizes (albeit briefly and nonseriously) the friendly tenor of the interaction. Immediately before this example, Chris has been claiming that during one year of high school in Mexico he missed 360 classes:

(6) *Güey* in conjunction with a stance of disalignment

- 1 CHRIS: Ahí tengo todavía la boleta, [**güey**.]  
*I still have the report card, güey.*  
 2 CHILANGO: ¿Trescientos sesenta, **güey**?  
*Three hundred and sixty, güey?*  
 3 CHRIS: Como lo de un año, {**güey**.} = <creaky voice>  
*About a year's worth, güey.*

- 4 =*[Faltas.]*  
*Absences.*
- 5 CHILANGO: *[Por eso] digo, güey.*  
*That's why I'm telling you, güey.*
- 6 No mames.  
*Come on. <lit., 'Don't suck'>*
- 7 Ya casi— *¿Fuiste cinco días a clase, [o qué]?*  
*Almost— Did you <only> go to class five days, or what?*
- 8 CHRIS: *[No, güey.]=*  
*No, güey.*
- 9 =*Pero, ya ves que son ocho clases.=*  
*But, you know there are eight classes.*
- 10 =*Osea, hay cuántas.=*  
*Like, how many are there.*
- 11 =*Y en todas esas clases, en:—*  
*And in all those classes, in—*
- 12 *Tuve trescientas y sesenta y algo faltas.*  
*I had three hundred sixty something absences.*
- 13 *Pero iba a los concursos.=*  
*But I used to go to the competitions.*
- 14 =*Y una clase, güey?=  
And one class, güey?*
- 15 =*Iba a Puerto Vallarta, güey,*  
*I used to go to Puerto Vallarta, güey,*
- 16 *a, a las playas a concursar, güey.*  
*to, to the beaches to compete, güey.*
- 17 *Y llegaba,*  
*And I would get there,*
- 18 *y todos los profes me ponían mi {diez:, güey,} <creaky voice>*  
*and all the profs would give me my ten <points>, güey,*
- 19 *bien chingón.*  
*really cool.*
- 20 CHILANGO: @

As before, most of the boastful assertions—lines 1, 3, 15, 16, and 18—are foregrounded with *güey*, and once again the audience for this braggadocio is not consistently admiring. In lines 2 and 5–7 Chilango openly and repeatedly challenges Chris's claim that he missed over 300 classes in a single school year, and he does so using the marker *güey*. Chris's response in line 8, which also involves disagreement, likewise includes *güey*. In such instances, as in some of the uses of *dude* analyzed by Kiesling (2004), the affiliative meaning of the term serves to soften the blow of disalignment.

In addition to the boastful and referential uses of *güey* already seen, example (7) features an illustration of metapragmatic commentary about the term emerging within interaction. Previous to this example, the two boys have been reminiscing

about the benefits of membership in soccer teams in Mexico. Here Chris is matching one of Chilango's stories:

(7) Metapragmatic commentary on *güey*

- 1 CHRIS: *Pero, es que, esos güeyes tienen feria a lo {cabró:n, güey.} <creaky voice>*  
*But, the thing is, those güeyes had a lot of money, güey.*
- 2 *Como el presidente,=*  
*Like the mayor,=*
- 3 *=fíjate, güey,=*  
*look, güey,*
- 4 *=¿el pinche presidente?*  
*the freaking mayor?*
- 5 *Pagaba to:do, güey.*  
*He paid everything, güey.*
- 6 *¿Un pedo?=  
A problem?*
- 7 *=¿Te metían al bote?*  
*They threw you in jail?*
- 8 *Y, y salías a los diez minu:tos.=*  
*And, and you were out in ten minutes.*
- 9 *=Y a mí me metían #,*  
*And they used to throw me #,*
- 10 *¿me metieron dos veces?*  
*they threw me <in jail> twice.*
- 11 *Y {qué:.} <creaky voice>*  
*And what.*
- 12 *Pues <[pus]>, yo ando acá, "Ay, usted me con-"  
Well, I'm like this, "Oh, you <know> me"*
- 13 *=Le decíamos el Gordo, güey.*  
*We called him Fatso, güey.*
- 14 *Todos nos llevábamos bien chingón.*  
*We all got along really cool.*
- 15 *<smiling, putting hand on Chilango's shoulder>*
- 16 *Hasta le hablábamos de güey, güey.*  
*We even called him güey, güey.*
- 17 CHILANGO: *<smiling> "¿Qué pe:do, güey?"*  
*"What's going on, güey?"*
- 18 CHRIS: *"Ey, güey."*  
*"Hey, güey."*

As shown in previous examples, Chris uses *güey* along with other linguistic resources to mark for Chilango the parts of his narrative that are especially impressive: that the mayor paid for the team's meals (lines 2–5), that the team members were on a nickname basis with this distinguished personage (line 13), and, most importantly both for Chris

and for present purposes, that they “even called him *güey*” (*Hasta le hablábamos de güey*; line 16).<sup>4</sup> This latter statement, itself marked by *güey* and highlighted by Chris’s friendly touch on Chilango’s shoulder, both enacts and comments on the signification of *güey* as an affiliative term. Chilango offers uptake of Chris’s claim by smiling and using quoted speech to imagine the improbable scenario in which a *presidente municipal* could be greeted with ¿*Qué pedo, güey?*, and Chris joins in with his own enactment of hypothetical quoted speech addressed to the mayor.

As noted above, linguistic indices do not operate in isolation but as part of a cluster of semiotic resources that collectively create stances and styles. Chris’s use of *güey* in this excerpt, as in several previous examples, co-occurs with extensive use of creaky voice and other expressive prosody, especially lengthening of the vowel of the penultimate stressed syllable of the intonation unit. In this context, Chris’s voice quality and prosodic style seem to iconically contribute to the directly indexical stance of cool, casual nonchalance that he constructs both through the content of his talk and through the use of *güey* and other slang terms. This stance is closely akin to what Kiesling (2004) describes for *dude*. Moreover, as with *dude*, *güey* is used in my data set more often by and to male than female interlocutors, and it is often indirectly indexical of masculinity.<sup>5</sup>

Importantly, these two slang terms are tied not to a generalized version of masculinity but to particular gendered personas, especially within the ideologically saturated representations of each term as constructed in the popular media. These ideologized personas are not only gendered but often ethnoracially specific as well (although in the linguistic practices of ordinary speakers both terms transcend such categories). For its part, *dude* embodies what Kiesling calls “counter-culture, nonserious masculinity” (2004: 288), as seen in Hollywood in such iconic figures of white masculinity as the California surfer and the drug-addled slacker, an association that emerges both in his survey data and in media representations. By contrast, as I discuss further in the next section, to the extent that it features in U.S. media representations, *güey* is primarily associated with a hip urban Latino identity.

### Metapragmatic Stereotypes in Media Representations of *Güey*

Ideologies about language circulate through both explicit metapragmatic commentary and implicit metapragmatic representation. Ideologies of *güey* and its (in)appropriateness in particular contexts are seen not only in Chris and Chilango’s brief skit enacting the unlikely use of the term to a high-status official in example (7) but also in their teachers’ admonishment to me to beware of this “bad word.” These ideologies are indexically built on the use of *güey* in interaction; however, they oversimplify this interactional ground by regimenting the complexity of pragmatic practice—the diverse interactional uses and social meanings of *güey*—through metapragmatic typification (Agha 2007). The process of typification occurs not only in everyday interaction but also within wider-reaching cultural vehicles such as the media. Recent representations of *güey* in U.S. advertising reveal further ideologization of the term through the exploitation of the interactionally constructed stances

and styles exemplified above. The typifications represented in these ads construct an idealized *güey* user along parameters of gender, age, ethnicity, and social class that restrict the broader semiotic field in which *güey* circulates in interaction. The ad campaign at issue projects a young, ethnicized yet safely upper-middle-class, urban masculinity to market a quintessential masculinized product, beer.

The media representations I examine below participate in a widespread marketing trend whereby heterosexual masculinity is reinscribed in the popular media but at a safely ironic distance (cf. Benwell 2003). This sort of marketing does not simply project a stance of cool solidarity onto the characters in ads but also claims it for companies themselves through its use of a deadpan *cinéma vérité* style that offers a humorously exaggerated representation of young masculinity rather than an earnest pitch for a product. At the same time, viewers are cast as knowing consumers who will catch and appreciate the ironic tone of such commercials and identify with the hipster world they portray, in a process of lifestyle branding that has been extensively analyzed and critiqued (e.g., Klein 2002; cf. Bucholtz 2007).

Both the direct and indirect indexicalities of *güey* make it particularly well suited for deployment in this sort of marketing. In May 2004, Bromley Communications, the self-described “country’s largest Hispanic advertising agency” (Bromley Communications 2006), featured the term in a commercial for Coors Light beer produced on behalf of its client, Coors Brewing Company, and aimed at the Latino market as well as trendy urbanites more generally. The spot was an intertextual riff on Budweiser’s award-winning “Whassup?” advertising campaign, which had already spawned a wealth of viral video parodies following the airing of the first ad, titled “Whassup?: True,” during the 2000 Super Bowl. Featuring four young, hip, upper-middle-class African American men at leisure, the original “Whassup?” ad evoked the aimless linguistic interaction that stereotypically characterizes friendship among heterosexual American men.<sup>6</sup>

#### (8) Budweiser’s “Whassup?: True” ad

- 1 <Male 1 is watching TV. Phone rings.>
- 2 MALE 1: Hello.
- 3 MALE 2: Hey hoo. 'Sup?
- 4 MALE 1: Nothin', B. Just watchin' the ga:me, havin' a Bu:d. Whassup wit' you? <[wit'u]>
- 5 MALE 2: Nothin'. Watchin' game, havin' a Bud.
- 6 MALE 1: True. True.
- 7 MALE 3: <entering room behind Male 1> Whassu:::p!
- 8 MALE 1: Whassu:::h!
- 9 MALE 2: Yo, who's that?
- 10 MALE 1: Yo! Yo, pick up the phone.
- 11 MALE 3: <goes to kitchen, picks up phone> Hello?
- 12 MALE 2: Whassu:::h!
- 13 MALE 3: Whassu:::h!
- 14 MALE 1: U:::h!
- 15 MALE 3: Yo! Where's Dookie?

- 16 MALE 2: Yo, Dookie!  
 17 <cut to Male 4 at computer; he picks up phone>  
 18 MALE 4: Yo.  
 19 MALE 2: <higher pitch> Whassu::h!  
 20 MALE 4: Whassu::h!  
 21 MALE 2: U::h @!  
 22 <quick cuts to all four men, all shouting "U::h!">  
 23 MALE 3: @@@  
 24 <intercom beeps>  
 25 MALE 3: Hold on. <presses intercom button> Hello?  
 26 MALE 5: Whassu::p!  
 27 <quick cuts to all five men, all shouting "U::h!"; then quick cuts to Male 2 and Male 4 hanging up>  
 28 MALE 1: So whassup, B?  
 29 MALE 2: Watchin' the game, havin' a Bud.  
 30 <cut to black screen with Budweiser logo and the word "TRUE">  
 MALE 1: <voice-over> True. True.

(Source: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikkg4NobV\\_w&feature=relate](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ikkg4NobV_w&feature=relate))

As the campaign unfolded, Budweiser's ads created complex intertextual links to the original "Whassup?" ad, in the process demonstrating a remarkable metapragmatic sophistication, a savvy understanding of the American ideology of African American cultural authenticity that underwrites the campaign (cf. Cutler 2003), and an ironic stance toward masculine homosociality (for further discussion of the cultural significance of the "Whassup?" ad campaign, see Watts and Orbe 2002). As *Advertising Age* reporter Bob Garfield explained at the time: "'Whassssupppppp?' doesn't mean, 'Pray, have you any news you'd care to impart?' It means, 'You are my friend, and if you are doing anything interesting—interesting being defined as watching football and swilling beer—I'm in favor of doing it together.'"

This parodic representation of inarticulate male bonding was also central to the Coors Light ad, which aimed at the same key young adult male demographic as the Budweiser commercials and echoed both their cool, casual style and their linguistic humor, but with a twist. The Coors Light spot did not hinge on the African American English greeting *Whassup?* (i.e., 'What's up?' or 'What's going on?'), the linguistic appropriation of which by young Americans of all races and ethnicities was fostered by the Budweiser ads. Rather, the Coors ad focused on the equally ubiquitous but less widely familiar *güey*, which was at the time and still remains much less well known outside the community in which it is used, even among Spanish speakers. The Bromley agency sought to bridge this linguistic gap with a brief gloss of the term at the end of the spot, which allowed versions of the commercial to play on both Spanish-language and English-language television. Example (9) is a transcript of the English-language version, which portrays the interlinked interactions among several casually but elegantly dressed light-skinned young men in a bar as they drink beer, play pool, and admire women:<sup>8</sup>

## (9) Coors Light's "Güey" ad

- 1 <In a bar>  
 2 MALE 1: ¿Qué onda, güe:::y?  
*What's up, güey?*  
 3 MALE 2: Nada, güey.  
*Nothing, güey.*  
 4 <They embrace; Male 2 sits at the bar next to a bucket of Coors Light bottles>  
 5 MALE 2: ¿Quieres una, güey?  
*Do you want one, güey?*  
 6 MALE 1: Güe::y. <Male 2 passes him a bottle; he gestures across the room>  
 7 ¡Güey!  
 8 MALE 3: <glancing up from pool table> ¿Qué onda, güey?  
*What's up, güey?*  
 9 MALE 1: <looking at his beer bottle, whispers> ¡Güe::y!  
 10 MALE 4: <at pool table, to Male 3> Güey, güey, güey, güey, güey, güey!  
 11 <Two women walk across the room>  
 12 (MALE 3?): Ay.  
 13 (MALE 4?): ¡Güey!  
 14 MALE 3: <looking up from pool table> ¡Ay, güe:y!  
 15 <Male 1 looks at Male 2, smiles, and raises his eyebrows; Male 3 moves to bar>  
 16 MALE 2: <to Male 3> Agarra una, güey.  
*Take one, güey.*  
 17 MALE 3: <taking a beer bottle, gestures with head, whispers> ¡Güey!  
 18 <Two other women approach the pool table; Male 4 kisses each in greeting>  
 19 ? : ¡Uu::m!  
 20 ? : <creaky> {¡Güe:y!}  
 21 <Male 1 lifts bottle in toast toward another pair of women, who look and smile>  
 22 MALE 2: ¡A[y, güey:::! ]  
 23 MALE 1: [¡Ay, güey:::!]  
 24 <Both men exchange glances and smile>  
 25 <Cut to black screen reading "GÜEY = DUDE">  
 26 <Cut to can of Coors Light being opened>  
 27 VOICE-OVER: Unleash the Rocky Mountain cold taste of Coors Light.  
 28 <Cut to black screen with stylized mountain logo with the superimposed words "ROCK ON">

Although within the industry the commercial was quickly heralded as a master stroke in reaching its target demographic (Wentz 2004a), it stirred up negative reactions among some Spanish-speaking viewers, who complained, like the teachers at Orchard High School, that the term *güey* derives from the Spanish word *buey* ('ox')

and is a derogatory term meaning 'idiot' (James 2005; Latino Pundit 2004; Sánchez 2006; Wentz 2004b). Indeed, the advertising agency was not unaware of this etymological account and even played on it in a separate billboard campaign in the Los Angeles area during the same period. The first billboards, reading simply, "What's the wave, ox?" generated considerable interest among non-Spanish-speaking motorists, who interpreted the question as a puzzle. Two weeks later, Bromley added to the billboards the Mexican Spanish colloquial greeting of which the English phrase is a calque: "¿Qué onda, güey?" This greeting is seen in example (2) above as well as in the Coors Light spot.

Although the *güey* billboards were generally considered clever, the *güey* television commercial drew complaints, especially from older Mexican American viewers who were familiar with the term only as an insult. Younger Chicano audience members, however, responded positively, apparently recognizing themselves in the linguistic practice represented in the ad. As the reporter for *Advertising Age* who covered the controversy noted, "For many young Hispanic males, 'güey' has crossed over into everyday speech between men. In the Coors Light spot, the word is delivered with different inflections and intonations that convey greetings, offers of beer and appreciation of attractive women" (Wentz 2004b).

This brief brouhaha (as it were) offers a clear illustration of the ideological dimension of indexicality as well as the complex relationship between stance and style constructed by the advertiser. To begin with, the commercial relies for audience recognition on metapragmatic stereotypes of *güey* use and *güey* users. These stereotypes include social categorization by age, gender, and ethnicity, as well as the social acts and interactional stances that can be performed through the use of *güey*, including greeting, agreeing, summoning, and conveying such affective states as satisfaction and lust, as well as the more enduring stance of casual hipness that accrues to *güey* users. Presumably recognizing that these ideologies would not be immediately shared by the largely monolingual English-speaking audience, the ad agency established intertextual links to Budweiser's earlier ad campaign via ironic representations of male bonding through linguistic minimalism. By means of such intertextuality, the semiotics if not the semantics of *güey* became intelligible to a wide range of media-saturated viewers, who could be expected to catch the allusion. Thus the stance of cool solidarity and upper-class urban sophistication displayed by the actors in the ad positioned viewers as likewise sophisticated and equipped with the semiotic resources to decode the message, even if they lacked the linguistic resources to interpret *güey* itself without assistance (and of course, the final "translation" of the term as 'dude' carries its own set of assumptions about viewers' familiarity with American English youth slang). At the same time, despite such measures, the intended metapragmatic stereotype was not in fact shared by the entire audience, and the lack of a shared interpretation of *güey* sparked controversy among Mexican Americans. In part this gap was due to the advertisers' focus on monolingual English speakers, rather than older Spanish speakers, as the group most in need of linguistic instruction.

In both the Coors Light ad and the Budweiser campaign, the linguistic practices of subordinated ethnoracial groups are used to sell products to speakers of the hegemonic language. The linguistic gap produced by such advertising techniques is bridged by inviting the audience's identification based on youth, hipness, urban-

ity, and masculinity, as well as by portraying idealized ethnic and racial minority speakers as comfortably middle-class—a representation that is quite remote from the working-class and underclass realities of Mexican migrant youth like Chris, Chilango, and Dragon.<sup>9</sup> However, such representations are by no means restricted to mass media corporate advertising. Even the niche advertising of small, politically progressive companies targeting Latinos may draw on many of the same indexicalities seen in the Coors Light ad to produce similar metapragmatic stereotypes, this time for consumption by Latinos rather than a wider market.

My final example of the indexical and ideological work accomplished by *güey* focuses on the term's circulation on a widely sold T-shirt produced by NaCo, an edgy California-based clothing company that bills itself as "the authentic Latino clothing brand." NaCo was founded by a pair of Mexican American art school graduates to produce casual clothing that combines a hipster sensibility with Latino pride; its name derives from the Mexican slang term *naco*, a derogatory term for a lower-class Mexican, and the company's founders' stated aim is to rehabilitate this term by celebrating "naco" as an expression of nonconformist identity. The term *güey* appears on a popular NaCo T-shirt in which the bilingual pun *ONE GÜEY* is inscribed on the familiar logo of a "one-way" street sign.

Figure 7.1, which comes from an online distributor of NaCo's products that shares the company's commitment to making "authentic" urban Latino commodities



FIGURE 7.1 "One Güey" T-shirt produced by NaCo clothing company. (Source: Surropa.com.)

available to consumers, presents the imagined wearer of this shirt as a representative of the same cool masculinity seen to be associated with *güey* in other contexts. The model's pose and expression are cool and affectless, an embodied stance that corresponds with the interactional and ideological functions of *güey* seen above (not to mention the reigning aesthetic of high-fashion photography). This youthful representative of *güey*ness is light-skinned, and he sports an upper-middle-class urban bohemian bourgeois style, as evidenced by his retro soul patch and sideburns, his trendy distressed jeans, and the soulful-looking golden retriever that accompanies him. These signifiers stand not only in contrast to the decidedly lower-class aesthetic that the term *naco* often derides but also to the bodies and financial circumstances of the majority of Mexican Americans, who are generally darker-skinned and considerably less well-to-do than the idealized Latino represented in this ad. It is probable that this image, given its producer, is intended to foreground the diversity of Latino identities, yet the indexical embedding of *güey* in this version of cool, youthful, urban masculinity is more closely aligned with the representation in the Coors Light ad than with most real-world users of *güey*.

As these examples from advertising show, when indexicalities enter the highly ideologized space of the media, they rapidly undergo simplification and erasure. Thus although *güey* retains its directly indexical link to a stance of cool solidarity, its indirect indexical associations become restricted to a middle-class form of masculinity that excludes many of *güey*'s users. In this way, the youth-cultural style that Chris, Chilango, and Dragon enact through their use of *güey* and other semiotic resources becomes stylized as it enters the media domain. Coupland (2001: 345) defines stylization as "the knowing deployment of culturally familiar styles and identities that are marked as deviating from those predictably associated with the current speaking context." Although his analytic focus is on how stylization "dislocates" speakers and their utterances from the immediate discourse context, stylization, as a form of metapragmatic typification, also enables the displacement of some indexical associations in favor of others—a simplification of the indexical field, in Eckert's (2008) sense.

Yet despite the indexical narrowing that is characteristic of metapragmatic stereotypes, ideological representations are not entirely rigid. Indeed, advertisers often rely heavily on the indeterminacy and ambiguity of semiotic markers in order to reach the widest possible audience. In some cases, such as the outcry over the Coors Light ad, the multivalency of linguistic indices like *güey* may lead to outrage from nontarget viewers, but more often mediated ideologies depend on the flexibility and highly contextualized nature of indexicality for their success.

## Conclusion

This chapter calls attention to the need for sociolinguists to examine both interactional practices and ideological representations in investigating the relationship between the linguistic and other semiotic features that directly index stances and the styles and identities—or personas or stereotypes—that they may also indirectly index. Much of the previous research on slang attempted to read off social meaning directly from the semantics or the demographic distribution of slang terms, but as the

preceding analysis demonstrates, slang gains its semiotic value only within the socio-cultural context in which it is used. Indexicality is therefore a fundamental concept in understanding how slang and other semiotic resources come to be associated with social categories such as gender. As the work of Ochs and Kiesling shows in different ways, the indexicality of gender involves (at least) two semiotic levels: at the level of direct indexicality, linguistic forms are associated with interactional stances or orientations to ongoing talk, whereas at the level of indirect indexicality, these stances calcify into more enduring ways of being—that is, styles or identities—that are in turn ideologically associated with particular social groups (see also Inoue 2004). An indexical view of slang allows for a richer analysis than is possible in taxonomic or correlational approaches, by enabling researchers to link slang both to stancetaking and to other sociolinguistic and semiotic phenomena that cluster together as part of styles. Sociolinguists must therefore become more attentive to the contexts of slang's use and representation, including both interactionally grounded and ethnographically specific research and analyses of larger metapragmatic stereotypes. Such a dual perspective allows analysts to take into account the narrowly regimented ideologies of slang that circulate via the media and other channels as well as the far more complex linguistic practices of stancetaking and stylistic display that speakers use in daily interaction to carry out their social goals.

As interactional and ethnographic analysis demonstrates, Chris, Chilango, Dragon, and other Spanish-speaking students at Orchard High School did not use *güey* because they were male, as correlational approaches to language and gender would argue. Nor did they use *güey* in order to directly construct a masculine identity, as many social constructionists would maintain. Rather, the term, in co-occurrence with other available semiotic resources, such as prosody, gesture, posture, clothing, topics of discourse, and material objects such as telephones and cameras, allowed these boys to do something of much greater immediate importance: to interact with one another, to greet their friends, to brag, to undercut a friend's boasting—in short, to establish both status and solidarity in relation to their social group—and to index a cool, nonchalant stance all the while. In turn, the habitual use of these practices by male speakers to perform these and other interactional and social actions could create an indirect indexical link to masculinity—and the evidence of advertising suggests that in some contexts, in fact, this is precisely what takes place. But not everyone who offers a metapragmatic stereotype regarding *güey* focuses on masculinity: for the ESL teachers at Orchard High, what was most salient was not the gender of the speaker but the perceived vulgarity of the term; for Chris and Chilango, imagining themselves addressing the *presidente municipal* as *güey*, what was most salient is the term's equalizing pragmatic force. Thus both interactional use and metapragmatic stereotypes work together to create styles as sets of indexical meanings that tie linguistic forms to the speakers who (are thought to) use them.

The introduction of stance into sociolinguistic analysis, especially in conjunction with the field's retheorizing of style, moves the sociolinguistic study of identity into fruitful new directions. As sociolinguistics increasingly shifts toward an indexical view of linguistic variation, the notion of stance becomes a critical mediating concept between linguistic forms and larger social structures. At the same time, sociolinguistics has a great deal to offer other scholars interested in stancetaking in discourse, through its careful

attention to the range of linguistic resources available to mark speakers' interactional moves and their broader distribution across social categories and situations. These developments suggest on the one hand that the study of language variation must be equally attuned to the details of interactional context and to wider ideological formations, and on the other hand that the study of stance needs to consider not only the interactional subjectivities of interlocutors but also the more enduring subject positions and social categories they take up or have thrust upon them. By combining the insights of these complementary perspectives, the emerging sociolinguistics of stance provides a firm and fertile empirical ground for investigating the linguistic construction of social identity.

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### Appendix: Transcription Conventions

.	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
<u>underline</u>	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
@	laughter; each token marks one pulse
[ ]	overlapping speech
[ [ ] ]	overlapping speech in proximity to a previous 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

### Notes

1. Ochs's framework focuses on two basic levels of indexicality in order to demonstrate the relationship between stance and social identity, an analytic convenience I follow here; however, it is clear that there are multiple levels of indexicality—what Silverstein (2003) calls “indexical orders”—each reliant on an ideologically “prior” level for its semiotic force.
2. All names and other identifying information have been changed.
3. It is important to note that this analysis is not exhaustive of *güey*'s function. For example, the fact that the boys are seated near one another and are constantly available as interlocutors means that the attention-getting functions of *güey* found in other interactional contexts are not seen here.
4. Interestingly, Chris's remarkable claim to have been in jail twice before the age of 15, his current age, is somewhat downplayed, perhaps to support the reenactment of his purported nonchalance at the time or perhaps to avoid a challenge from Chilango. As example (6) above demonstrates, such challenges are forthcoming when Chris's stories veer too directly into the realm of implausibility.
5. In fact, a number of Mexican and Mexican American girls and women use *güey* to varying degrees, but the particular styles of femininity displayed by most of the girls in the present study were incompatible with frequent *güey* use, and it rarely occurs among female speakers in my data.
6. The four men are in fact best friends in real life; one of them, Charles Stone III, is a filmmaker whose short film *True* was the inspiration for the ad campaign.
7. Cited in the Advertising Mascots feature of the TV Acres website ([http://www.tvacres.com/admascots\\_whassup\\_guys.htm](http://www.tvacres.com/admascots_whassup_guys.htm)). I have been unable to locate the June 26, 2000, *Advertising Age* article to which the website refers.
8. I have not been able to obtain a copy or a description of the Spanish-language version, but it is likely that it omits the gloss and the use of English.
9. The fact that these teenagers, whose families faced often serious financial struggles, used and displayed to one another the latest electronic gadgets—cameras, cell phones—is indicative of the semiotic importance of such commodities in indexing contemporary youth styles.

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## Style as Stance

### *Stance as the Explanation for Patterns of Sociolinguistic Variation*

Scott F. Kiesling

At the heart of the sociolinguistic enterprise is the search to explain why speakers choose one linguistic form over another. In the chapters in this volume, the focus of that explanation is stance: How do speakers use linguistic form to create stances, why do they take these stances up, and how are forms associated with stances? The search for the motivation of linguistic choices is also the focus of studies of variation and change, but whereas much of the focus on determining stance is more qualitative and syntax- and discourse-oriented, variationist studies are generally quantitative and focus on morphophonological phenomena. Variationist studies proceed mainly by finding correlations between a linguistic variable and either some other linguistic element (so-called internal factors) or some nonlinguistic factor (so-called external factors or sometimes, social factors). The kinds of factors included in the latter are almost always based on identity: age, gender, race, class, and so on. But Labov showed early on (1966) that there are other factors—which he placed under the general term “style”—that are not correlated with a speaker’s identity, but rather with speech activity: careful and casual. In this chapter I explore how stance can be used in variationist sociolinguistics, specifically, how stance is related to the variationist conception of style.

The study of style in sociolinguistic variation has had renewed interest in recent years. Contemporary sociolinguistic work on style, including Schilling-Estes (1998), Eckert (2000), and the edited volume by Eckert and Rickford (2001), has explored style in a more speaker-centered, interactional vein than in much earlier style-focused analyses. Even so, the relationship between these style and identity meanings in variation has not been explored as much as we might expect. Rather, style and identity patterning have usually been seen as reflecting orthogonal meanings. In the earliest style work, Labov (1966) seems to suggest that it is the *social group*