The Social Landscape and the Indexical Field

Christian Brickhouse
LING 255J Final Project
Stanford University

March 23, 2018

Introduction

Silverstein (2003) schematized the way in which an individual indexical act is articulated and understood, an it is this initial schematization that is augmented in Fig. 1. There are two main changes:[1] the renaming of metapgragmatics to the Indexical Field and the inclusion of the Social Landscape which is in a dialectical relationship with the ideologies articulating cultural valorizations. This paper will discuss the implications and justifications of these changes.

Eckert (2008)'s original proposal of the indexical field was an attempt to understand the entities and functions by which meaning is constructed. Principally Eckert is concerned with the construction of style: "The big question for the study of meaning in variation is how linguistic styles are constructed: what kinds of meanings can variables have, and how do they combine to yield the larger meanings of styles" (ibid., p. 458). It is this problem the indexical field attempts to solve, situated as a means of categorization and differentiation based upon personae, styles, and ideologies. However this sytem is a multiplicity, it is an amalgamation of subsystems each with their own semiotic function which contribute to the functioning of the whole process. Eckert (2008)'s indexical field incorporates aspects of indexical presupposition, indexical entailment, text-in-context, ideologies, and metapragmatics. This is why the concept has been so hard to pin down, it refers to a number of interrelated but distinct parts of the diagram in Fig. 1; it is for this reason that I argue these parts be considered separately, with the part most resembling the intent of the original indexical field retaining the name.

---

[1] A third change is the prepending of "indexical" to make clear that indexical presupposition and indexical entailment are under discussion
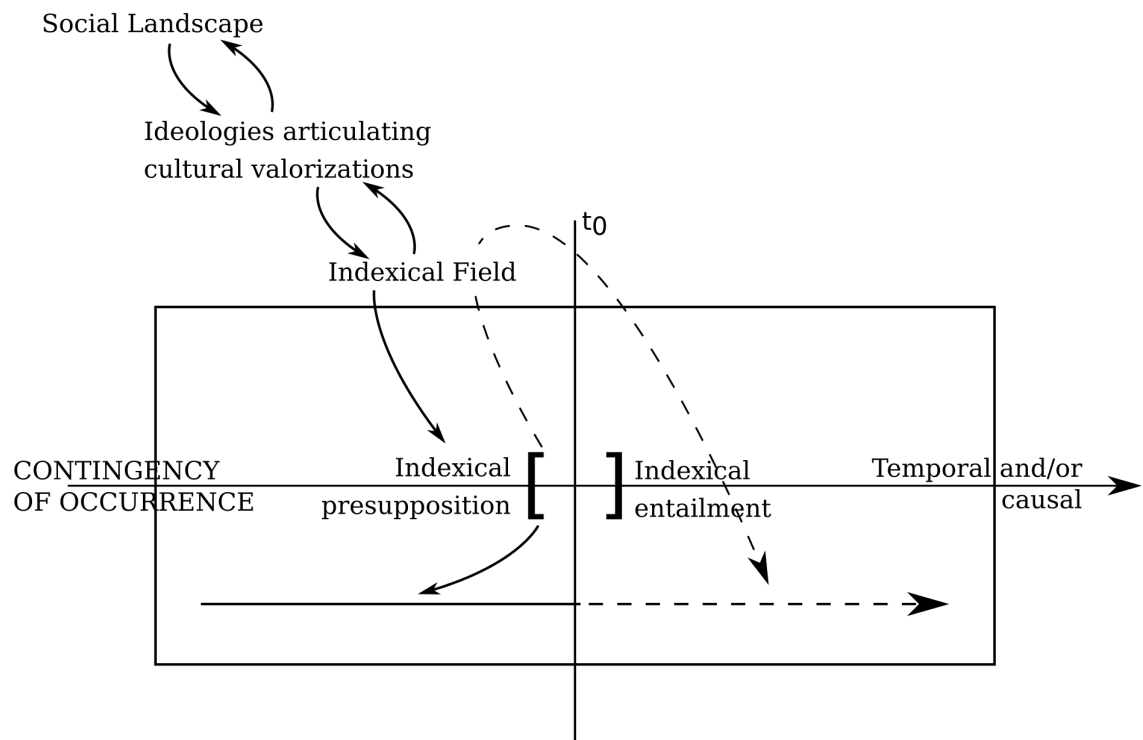
Figure 1: Schematization of indexical usage at time t_0. Adapted from Silverstein (2003)

Silverstein (2003) explains that the indexical meaning of a given sign is composed of two parts: its indexical presuppositions and its indexical entailments. Indexical presuppositions are the "indexical 'appropriateness-to"' of a given variable at t_0 (Silverstein, 2003, p. 195), or they can alternately be conceptualized as the result of stance accretion (see Eckert (2008, p. 469) citing Rauniomaa (2003)). In utilizing particular stylistic resources to construct a personal style, that personal style (i.e., a persona, existing in relationship to archetypes in the indexical field) becomes an expectation, a habitus that structures the expectations and parsable moves of interlocutors (Bourdieu, 1977). Indexical entailment, on the other hand, are the ideologies "brought into being" by the use of the stylistic resource (Silverstein, 2003, p. 195).

Both indexical presupposition and indexical entailment are, as their containment within the diagramatic rectangle shows, part of language in context rather than something existing outside the communicative pair. This is to say, if a speaker meets someone new, the pair shares little to no indexical presuppositions; what context

they do share (or presume to share) is based upon some enduring understanding of general social and ideological relationships: the indexical field. It is for this reason that the arrow from the indexical field in Fig. 1 arcs down to indexical presupposition. Similarly, the indexical entailments, the associations one is committed to (brings about) by an indexical act are themselves the result of the indexical field's mediation of indexical presuppositions. In naive states (those with unknown interlocutors or ideological associations), since the presuppositions are mostly based upon broad generalizations imported from the indexical field rather than from robust previous discourse, the entailments are similarly constrained due to the lack of context. However as conversation continues, the local indexical presuppositions and resulting entailments become more robust and normative, stances slowly transform into "permanent qualities" relating to a particular individual (Eckert, 2008). This then (and all the while) contributes to the formulation and reformulation of the indexical field as it incorporates this new information into its representation of wider social relationships.

This also separates the indexical field from the cultural ideologies which shape it (and as I explain later, a cognitive process). Implicit in Eckert (2008) is that while indexical relations are based upon the recognition of stochastic patterns in the world (i.e., the social landscape) what patterns are picked up and made to be meaningful is dependent upon ideology: "[T]he very fact of distinction of social groups entails evaluation, and by its ideological nature, linguistic practice entails an evaluative linguistic difference." (p. 473, note 2). While the indexical field is fundamentally a representation of the social landscape, it is not a direct relationship, rather it is a representation mediated by ideology. There is no line connecting the indexical field and the social landscape because there is no way to bypass ideology: it is entirely possible that relationships in the indexical field precede their existence in the social landscape. This is the incorporation of Inoue (2004)'s critical insight on indexical inversion and simulacra in understanding the ways by witch ideology mediates the relations in the indexical field regardless of the social landscape.

Indexical cartography

But the question remains just how the indexical field serves to mediate the interpretation of a text balanced between indexical presupposition and entailment; how it turns a text into a text-in-context. I propose the conceptualization of the indexical field as a map whereby ideological and indexical reltionships are transformed into cartographic relationships.

The indexical field as a map is not a new idea but rather an articulation of an

3

implicit understanding. The potential for the indexical field to be conceptualized as spatial relationships is foundational, in developing the indexical field Eckert (2008) devoted two figures to a diagramatic representation of the indexical relations and potentialities of (ING) and /t/-release. And subsequent investigations leveraging the indexical field have likewise used similar diagramatic principles to convey ideological and indexical relationships spatially. But what exactly these diagrams are mapping have not been well understood. It has not been clear whether these representations exist in the minds of speakers, out in the world, or are merely an abstraction of the researcher for understanding these relationships but not coterminous with them.

Just as traditional maps are cartographic representations of physical landscapes, so too is the indexical field a cartographic representation of the social landscape. The social landscape, it must be said, is not a metaphor; the social landscape is as much a landscape as the physical landscape. It is the physical world as experienced through the individual senses, sensory inputs that rise above a certain level to become consciously recognized. Individual psychological variation would likely play a role here. It is this landscape of ideological units which the indexical field maps.

The social landscape

If one wished to differentiate the social landscape and physical landscape, we must first understand what the physical landscape is. At its most basic it can be understood as only geological features: mountains, oceans, hills, lakes, and so on. But our understanding of landscapes is more robust. Often included in the idea of landscapes are living organisms: ecosystems, biomes, forests, grasslands. And included too are the implications of living organisms: roads, bridges, buildings, settlements—things that are not human but index a human presence.

But this definition hides the relationship between humans (indeed all organisms) and the landscape we inhabit. Humans exist in the landscape; we have spatial relationships not only to geological features but other organisms in space as well. And these relationships, all of them, are mediated by ideology (the arrow arcing upwards to the social landscape in Fig. 1). This is obvious given light scrutiny. What was the effect of apartheid if not to manifest white supremacy as a spatial relationship? What was white flight but a classist and white supremacist fleeing from proximity to the poor and non-white? What is the purpose of borders and border walls but to regiment the movement of human bodies across the landscape, to convert the relationship between nationalist ideologies into spatial relationships within the landscape.

The connection between social distance and physical distance is not coincidental,

it is at play in individual interactions as well. Goff, Steele, and Davies (2008) found that white participants placed chairs farther apart if they knew they would be talking about race with black people than if they were going to be talking about love and relationships with black people. Similarly, they found that modifying the evaluative framework (i.e., the ideologies articulating cultural valorizations) also modified the physical distance participants placed between themselves and their interlocutors: those for whom the conversation was articulated as a learning experience sat closer because of a reduced anxiety about being negtively perceived as racist. Avoidance as a coping mechanism characteristically manifests in physical distance. Indeed segregation has been a common means of combating ideological threats and relieving anxiety over the blurring of distinctions between them. Apartheid and anxiety over maintaining racial purity, segregated bathrooms and anxiety over maintaining gender ideology, the suburbs and anxiety over maintaining a class and racial distinction.

Like all of these, the indexical crisis in Japan described in Inoue (2004) represents a linguistic segregation. As girls began to become a more prominent sight as the result of modernization, their transgression of typical cultural boundaries came to associate them and their speech with negative cultural stereotypes. These linguistic ideologies were created to segregate them linguistically based on their speech style, to mark them linguistically as an out group in order to maintain the ever blurring distinction in previous indexicalities. It raises a particularly important point about the ways that the indexical shapes the real, and argues effectively for understanding these indexicalrelationships not only as products of the real but as themselves constituting and shaping the real.

Being recognized is part of the dialectic and the social landscape is the result of that. It is the physical landscape and objective stochastic patterns as understood and recognized through ideologies about the input being received. The information is separated into groups based on ideology—race, gender, class, and other macrosocial information and those same ideologies bias perception in favor of information that supports those ideologies.

Everything indexed is produced by a process of erasure; there are no categories without erasure because categories are an inscription of ideology upon an original undifferentiated mass. The first is the earth itself. Where a river ends and a bay begins is an ideological construction because they are a single, unquantized flow, a continuous gradient of mutual becoming. When do foothills stop being foothills and start becoming mountains? What density of trees marks the end of a forest? In defining these we come up with competeing arbitrary denotations to mask the fact that these are continuous rather than discrete phenomena. Then, based upon this constructed reality, a *hyperreality* as Baudrillard (1994 [1981]) refers to it, these

ideologies become inscribed upon the earth creating a self justification (Deleuze and Guattari, 2009 [1977]). These boundaries become enforced: you may only dam up this flow of water but not that one, polute these but not those, strip mine this hill, cut down those trees but not this forest; nevermind their continuity.

This process is similarly at work on human bodies as well. Nationalist ideologies are inscribed upon the earth as borders coding and regimenting the flow and free movement of human bodies, quantizing them and allowing for them to be labeled and segregated: Mexican are from this plot of land and Americans are from this plot. Nevermind that Mexico is on the American continent, America as coterminous with the United States has become the superior myth. Nevermind the border towns where bodies move freely, where the regimented boundaries break down. Nevermind indeed, for these bodies which threaten ideology's claim to naturalness will be made to be irrelevant. Nevermind the multitude of configurations for the 23rd human chromosomal pair; there are only two sexes and if you dare be born with genitalia that don't reaffirm that ideology then you will be modified to fit it.

The social landscape is all of this as understood by a particular subject. It is the result of ideological, psychological, and subjective differentiation of a subject's sensory input into ideological units. It is the result of the filtering of sensory input through both socio-ideological and ideosynchratic cognitive differences. There is evidence, for example, that individual personality and the level of "autistic" traits a person exhibits has an effect both on linguistic perception (Stewart and Ota, 2008) and phonetic production (Yu, Abrego-Collier, and Sonderegger, 2013). So the stochastic patterns physically in the world would not be uniformly perceived across a group due to individual variations in personality. The social landscape is this sensory input as mediated and understood by ideologies articulating cultural valorizations. Whereas the physical landscape is "the great unengendered stasis, the element superior to production that conditions the common appropriation and utilization of the ground", the social landscape is the result of the inscription of ideology on the physical landscape, the sociushooked up to the original body without organs (Deleuze and Guattari, 2009 [1977], p. 141). The world as if it had been constituted by the map, rather than the map as constituted by the world. The hyperreal constructed by ideology and whose superimposed divisions the indexical field appeals to and utilizes (Baudrillard, 1994 [1981]).

The indexical field as a map

The indexical field then is a map of this social landscape: it is the map which constitutes (and is constituted by) the hyperreal by the machinations of ideology. It

6

operates only by appeal to the categories and lines of differentiation inscribed upon the physical landscape, all together constituting the social landscape.

This is to say that the dialectical changes in the indexical field are possible because the territorializations of the social landscape are imperfect, there always is some *desert of the real*, a gap between the unengendered earth and the ways in which it is quantized and cut up by ideology. If the world and the whole of humanity were perfectly divisible into distinct categories a priori there would be no indexical agency. The reason a person can change their gender is because it is not an a priori category, but one socially constructed through performance an use of indexes, including linguistic indexes. If gender were a category a priori, if it were not socially constructed through performance, then indexical moves would only serve to differentiate within an already differentiated group. Anything that it indexed would also carry not the index but the entailment of their a priori category membership, and so would always and an yieldingly index membership in that category. The result of this is the exact state of affairs Eckert (2008) wrote against: "Speakers' agency in the use of variables has been viewed as limited to making claims about their place in social space by either emphasizing or downplaying their category membership through the quantitative manipulation of markers. But clearly, women (and men) are not saying 'I'm a woman' when they use a 'female-led' change, nor are they saying 'I'm not a woman' when they do not" (Eckert, 2008, p. 455).

Were categories existant a priori it would be possible to determine membership without and in spite of indexical moves. Indexes would be perfect, they would be coterminous with the entity they indexed, and use of the wrong variant would be apparent. Usage of an index associated with the other group would not make any meaningful claims about affiliation in the alternate group, and it would not claim a lack of membership in their own group because, since the categories exist a priori, they are still a member of the group regardless of their indexical act and their stylistic moves could not modify that positionality. Conceptualizing the categories and ideologies as existing a priori rather than as ideological divisions of an a priori unity is fatal to the dialectical understanding of these concepts as a whole. Indeed, this is why Hegel rejected Kantian dualism,[2] why Marx rejected treating scarcity as a natural phenomenon, and why Deleuze and Guattari rejected rejected lack as a fundamental psychic force (Deleuze and Guattari, 2009 [1977], p. 28). A dialectic requires unity as its foundational unit.

Theorizing the social landscape then not as an original thesis, but as the antithe-

---

[2]"This original unity is a unity that must not be conceived of as the product of opposites, but rather as a genuine necessary, absolute, original identity [equivalence] of opposites" (Guyer, 2006, quoting Hegel)

sis of the original continuity and gradience of geography and human society then allows for indexical moves to be meaningful. Bricolage becomes possible as the synthesis of these differentiations, a product of the ability for humans on the ground to transgress these boundaries and mark not membership but gradient affiliation, position in a network of ideologies. The Palo Alto High School students discussed in Eckert (2008) were able to appropriate aspects of new wave style because preppy was neither an a priori nor monolithic style. Because it itself is constructed, they are able to stake claims to its denotation and modify its boundaries by their actions. Because preppy does not naturally pick out traits in the world and because these girls are not in the group of preppies by necessity, they are able to appropriate indexes of alternative groups and ideologies. Toughness though not already part of the ideological associations of preppy can be, and likewise these girls, by staking their claim to ideological toughness, challenge the territorialization of preppiness. To maintain them as members of the group, the denotation must be reterritorialized to incorporate these new ideologies brought in by these indexical moves. The boundaries are maleable and indexicality variable precisely because they are arbitrary and map not to a priori categories but to those continuously defined and redefined by actors on the ground in successive communicative acts.

The conception of the indexical field as a map is likewise critically important for the functioning of its own dialectic transformations: it cannot be a copy of the social landscape but rather must be a representation (simulation) of it as mediated by ideology and experience. Hence its position in Fig. 1; the indexical field is constituted not only by the social landscape as mediated by ideology but also the micro-context in which the individual indexical acts occur. It is the social landscape mediated not just by ideology (which may be personal as well as societal) but by individual subjectivity: no one can view the whole of the social landscape just as no one can view the whole of Earth without mediation (i.e., a map). The map is a particular perspective of the landscape; the landscape as mediated through cartographic subjectivity.

Similarly the indexical field is a particular perspective of the social landscape. No one can see all social and ideological relationships at once, and the uptake of this information is itself ideologically determined. Eckert (2008) points out that "the style itself will be noticed in the form of features that the stylistic agent separates out for notice" (p. 457). This is the critical point of Inoue (2004): the items a stylistic agent separates out for notice is not (necessarily) a function of reality, of actual empirical phenomenon, but rather one mediated by ideology. This is supported too by evidence from social psychology: Eberhardt et al. (2004) found, in a sample of undergraduate students and police officers, that when participants were shown an image of a black

man's face for 30ms primed participants to more quickly recognize "crime-related objects" like weapons, and longer to recognize objects that were not crime related. We are primed to notice particular stylistic features in particular groups because of dominant cultural ideologies. Japanese schoolgirls were saddled with particular linguistic indexicalities not because of their own rates of use but because they represented a threat to existing social order, and so if they *are* corruption, their language must itself be corrupted. The camera obscura. This is not a particularly new insight into linguistics either. There is evidence that top-down effects of ideology are present in lexical access (Cabeza and Lennartson, 2005), phonetic production (Hall-Lew, Starr, and Coppock, 2012), and speech perception (Strand, 1999). It is a small step then to the proposal here that top-down knowledge impacts the uptake and construal of indexical features.

Interpreting the indexical field as a map opens it up to more rigorous examination and theorizing including the problem of where the indexical field is. The problem so far has been that the indexical field is an individual map, an agent's perspective of the social landscape. Linguists, however, have rarely probed this aspect of the indexical field, rather attempting to get at the possible indexical associations and potentialities within a community. This is a fruitful line of work but must be properly situated in the dialectic. These conceptions are not the indexical field, but rather are a perspective of multiple indexical fields; a perspective of perspectives.

Just as multiple maps can be stitched together to create a fuller picture of the landscape than any particular map does, so too does the researcher stitch together indexical fields to create a fuller picture of the social landscape than any individual speaker has. But critically this is not an indexical field (or, rather, it is not in the sense of the term I am proposing). It is in fact situated above the indexical field in the realm of ideologies articulating cultural valorizations.

The researcher is not outside this process, but situated within it. The scientific method and empiricism writ large as *the* epistemic system is a particular cultural ideology. The choice of populations and variables of interest are ideologies situated within particular ideologies of fields and subfields. Analysis of results is mediated by what statistical methods are in vogue at the time. It is no coincidence that in the decade since the development of the indexical field many studies have set out to investigate its claims using empiricism. It is no coincidence that sociolinguists tend to focus on phonological variation. It is no coincidence that VARBRUL is rarely used for data analysis. All of these mark particular ideologies within the field of sociolinguistics that contributes to the subjective mediation of these generalized indexical fields.

These generalized indexical fields are also functionally different from the indexical

field proposed here. Fundamentally these generalized indexical fields are the articulation of cultural valorizations. No speaker appeals to this generalized indexical field in making indexical moves in micro-realtime, rather they are part of the ideological mediation of the indexical field and the social landscape. And this is apparent from asking the most trivial questions of these diagrams: what do they do? Their purpose is to convey the ideological and indexical associations of a particular group of people believed to be a cohesive cultural unit. Literally, to articulate cultural valorizations.

This is not to say these methods are to be abandoned, rather, now that they are situated within the dialectic, we can begin to understand the production of indexical value. This generalized indexical field is not the end in-and-of itself. Knowing that these associations are in conversation with ideology and the social landscape we can begin to probe the machinations that lead to these indexical associations. We know that certain stylistic components including linguistic components can be used to construct femininity, homosexuality, etc. but how are these same components used to enforce these categories? When do indexical moves fail? How do they fail and why?

Silverstein (2003) made clear that the indexical entailment is the indexical move's "effectiveness-in context" which presupposes that indexical moves are not equally effective. Yet the study of indexicality has so far treated the indexical agent as one whose indexical moves are the end in themselves, ignoring the ways in which their moves are interpreted by their interlocutors. Eckert's Palo Alto High School girls pegged their pants to appropriate and make an indexical claim on toughness, but is that how the other preppies interpreted the move? Was it accepted immediately? Rebuffed initially but accomodated after a dialectic competition of ideals? Rejected entirely? Did the Lambda League's lawyer in Podesva, Roberts, and Campbell-Kibler (2002) actually come off as sounding more gay to the listeners of the radio program? A corollary to all these questions: what are the societal structures and ideologies which make a particular indexical move effective in context? The indexical field constructs and is constructed by a dialectical process, and without a robust understanding of the indexical effectiveness in context our understanding of the indexical field is a shadow of itself. It focuses on the indexical presuppositions without understanding the way in which those presuppositions come to be nor the way an indexical move is taken up and influential upon the indexical field.

Locating the indexical field in the minds of speakers

Whereas the social landscape has been located within the physical landscape, ideologies in individuals, and indexical acts in time and space, I have so far left open the

location of the indexical field. In this section, based upon the arguments of Camp (2007)[3], I propose that the indexical field is in fact a cognitive representation of the social landscape by which speakers reason about the relationships between objects in that space.

Camp (2007) takes thoughts as the object of her inquiry, writing against the hypothesis that all thought occurs in language. She separates this language of thought (LOT) hypothesis into the weak- and strong-LOT, articulating a system of thought which relies upon spatial reasoning rather than overt linguistic reasoning to satisfy weak-LOT but not strong-LOT (thus disproving the hypothesis that all thought occurs in language).

Weak-LOT is comprised of three premises:

1. There are systematic relations among the contents that a thinker can represent and reason about.

2. Systematic relations in content must be reflected by correlative structure in a thinker's representational and reasoning abiblities.

3. Structured representational abilities require a system of representational vehicles which are composed of recurring discrete parts combined according to systematic rules.

Strong-LOT extends these, adding a fourth premise which claims any such system which satisfies the first three is a language. Camp (2007) argues that cartographic systems satisfy the first three premises but are fundamentally not a language and thus falsify strong-LOT. The nuances of this critique are not important here, rather, it is Camp's theorization of the ways in which cartographic systems are able to be used to consciously reason about objects in space.

As has already been shown, the indexical field is a map of the social landscape which is itself a spatial representation of socio-ideological relationships. For this reason I focus only on the schematization of how the indexical field as a cognitive faculty would work in practice. Indeed, Camp (2007) points out that cartographic systems are incredibly varied, ranging from augmented pictures of the landscape (like Google Maps' sattelite view) to highly abstract (like subway maps). I can not yet make claims as to where on this spectrum the cognitive indexical field falls, rather, like Camp, I intend only to show that a cognitive representation of the indexical field is possible by treating it as akin to more familiar representational maps.

Firstly I argue that a cartographic representation is likely because it is a more efficient mode of representing the spatial relationships in the social landscape. Most

---

[3]I am incredibly grateful to Zion Mengesha for recommending this article to me.

importantly to this argument is the fact that maps, by virtue of their combinatory rules, provide relational data for free. The cognitive work in understanding these relationships is in the construction of them, while reading them gives relational information at a relatively limited cognitive cost. This meshes well with the dialectic schematization presented earlier. In running speech these operations on the indexical need to be fast, intuiting the relationship between variables and the things they can index both in production and perception must be readily attainable. The reencoding can be done more slowly as an offline process or at a temporal lag, and this is perhaps more beneficial as it allows for feedback from the effectiveness in context to be incorporated not at the moment of utterance but later in the discourse.

Secondly a cartographic representation provides the most efficient process for updating a cognitive indexical field. Following from the previous point, linguistic cognitive systems do not provide relational information for free, rather it must be explicitly articulated. Articulating this point, Camp (2007) quotes Dretske (1981):

> "If I simply *tell* you, 'The cup has coffee in it,'[...y]ou are not told *how much* coffee there is in the cup, how large the cup is, *how dark* the coffee is.... If, on the other hand, I photograph the scene and show you the picture, the information that the cup has coffee in it is conveyed in analog form. The picture tells you that there is some coffee in the cup by telling you, roughly, how much coffee is in the cup, the shape, the size, and the color of the cup, and so on." (italics original to Camp [2008])

To convey this information requires numerous, perhaps infinite, linguistic utterances to convey all possible relations between entities in the scene. Not only is this difficult to store, but any changes to the indexical field would require reevaluating and updating all of these associations. Any changes to the an entity threaten to destroy the structural relationships as articulated linguistically. For an indexical field which is constantly being updated with new information, this is taxing.

The benefit of a cartographic representation, however, is that updates to the indexical field are cognitively cheap. In a map, any entity can be moved, reoriented, replaced, or removed without destroying the relationships between other objects. Similarly, because relational information is cheaply recoverable from cartographic representations, these updates are readily available and instantly reorient themselves to other entities in the map, whereas modified entities in a linguistic representation of these relationships would need to be reasoned about explicitly.

Finally a cartographic representation of the indexical field is cognitively reasonable. Camp (2007) cites a number of studies in support of her claim that bees, rats, and other animals utilize cognitive maps to navigate the world. Indeed it is a

common trait of mammals that "the spatial structure of neural firing" in response to sensory stimuli "reflects the physical or psychological structure" of the mammals body; proprioceptive information is stored in mammalian brains cartographically (Camp, 2007, p. 173). Humans being mammals, this same faculty is available to us, and the presence of a cartographic representation opens the possibility for a cartographic semiotic system to have developed as well. This conclusion is further strengthened by evidence that the relationship between tones in Western music are represented topologically in the human cortex (Janata et al., 2002).

Locating the indexical field as a cognitive faculty raises a number of important issues, most importantly is the veracity of this claim. Such a conjecture allows for the creation of testable hypotheses not only related to whether such a structure exists but how it exists in relation to other cognitive faculties. It also makes more important the questions raised at the end of the previous section relating to the interpretation of indexical moves. Camp (2007), in response to an expected critique from informational equivalence, points out that the veracity of this claim when compared to another can be tested by its failure conditions:

> "If a bee regularly sets out on the most efficient route home when released in a new spot, or if one illusory experience ramifies error throughout the thinker's behavior, or if dissorientation prevents a rat from taking any sort of action, then this gives us some reason to believe that the thinker is employing something like a cognitive map." (Camp, 2007, p. 171)

By focusing not only on the indexical presuppositions, but on the entire indexical process, we can begin to investigate these breakdowns not only to better understand the process hermeneutically (as we have already been doing) but whether this cognitive conception is empirically grounded.

Conclusion

Understanding the indexical field requires understanding it as an object in multiple dialectic conversations at once. It is itself the enduring result of continual practice, mediating our expectations and influencing our interpretation of indexes in practice. Indeed, it necessitates thinking of human agency not as *the* productive force of meaning making but one of many forces mediating the decisions of human actors.

Conceptualizing it as a cognitive map of the social landscape serves not only to make testable hypotheses but to firmly situate it in the realm of subjectivity. As a cognitive faculty it is a process (one of many) that mediates the relation between the

subjective agent and the objective world outside of them. As a mediated perspective of the landscape rather than a tracing of the landscape, it opens new lines of inquiry into how speakers make rational choices given partial information. It suggests that our models based on generalized associations need to be more atomistic, taking into account the ways in which an individual's own ideologies and personality traits mediate the degree to which their individual perspective of these cultural ideologies is reflective of that generalized model.

This then has implications for style, pointing to a need for a firm understanding of the cultural dispositions as well as material relationship of a speaker. The issue of agency is one to be taken far more seriously. Speakers make stylistic decisions based upon incomplete and ideologically mediated data. Broad overviews of indexical associations in particular communities are important work, but equally important for an understanding of indexicality is how speakers themselves subjectively and ideosyncratically interpret those indexical associations, and how is it affected by the mediated experience of stochastic patterns as well.

Investigations of style then must include more than just agency, the fullfulment of a desire to be seen as associated with some sort of ideology. Rather it requires seeing that agency and desire as a productive force in the world, and taking seriously the coconstructed nature of persona and style. If persona and style are truly coconstructed and performative, our understanding of the system should take seriosuly the role of individuals—with their particular ideological, phsychological, and material context—and integrate that in a conversation with the large social and emergent phenomena.

Style and individual indexical agency should then be viewed not just as a constructed phenomenon, but *co*-constructed. Stylistic practice as the result of all these individuals constantly in conversation with each other. In contrast to stylistic practice as the supremacy of the radically free agent, it casts style as the product of an interconnected system of individual speakers producing, evaluating, curating, and then reproducing particular ideological categories tht constrain the kinds of choices available.

References

Baudrillard, Jean (1994 [1981]). *Simulacra and Simulation*. Trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser. University of Michigan Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1977). *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge university press.

Cabeza, Roberto and Roger Lennartson (2005). "False memory across languages: implicit associative response vs fuzzy trace views". In: *Memory* 13.1, pp. 1–5.

Camp, Elisabeth (2007). "Thinking with maps". In: *Philosophical Perspectives* 21.1, pp. 145–182. DOI: 10.1111/j.1520-8583.2007.00124.x.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari (2009 [1977]). *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. Penguin Books.

Dretske, Fred (1981). *Knowledge and the Flow of Information*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Eberhardt, Jennifer L et al. (2004). "Seeing Black: Race, crime, and visual processing." In: *Journal of personality and social psychology* 87.6, p. 876.

Eckert, Penelope (2008). "Variation and the indexical field". In: *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 12.4, pp. 453–76.

Goff, Phillip Atiba, Claude M Steele, and Paul G Davies (2008). "The space between us: stereotype threat and distance in interracial contexts." In: *Journal of personality and social psychology* 94.1.

Guyer, Paul (2006). "Absolute idealism and the rejection of Kantian dualism". In: *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*. Ed. by Karl Ameriks. Cambridge University Press, pp. 37–56.

Hall-Lew, Lauren, R Starr, and Elizabeth Coppock (2012). "Style-Shifting in the U.S. Congress: The foreign (a) vowel in "Iraq(i)"". In: *Style shifting in public: new perspectives on stylistic variation*, pp. 45–64.

Inoue, Miyako (2004). "What Does Language Remember?: Indexical Inversion and the Naturalized History of Japanese Women". In: *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 14.1, pp. 39–56.

Janata, Petr et al. (2002). "The cortical topography of tonal structures underlying Western music". In: *science* 298.5601, pp. 2167–2170.

Podesva, Robert J, Sarah J Roberts, and Kathryn Campbell-Kibler (2002). "Sharing resources and indexing meanings in the production of gay styles". In: *Language and sexuality: Contesting meaning in theory and practice*, pp. 175–189.

Rauniomaa, Mirka (2003). *Stance accretion*. University of California, Santa Barbara.

Silverstein, Michael (2003). "Indexical order and the dialectics of sociolinguistic life". In: *Language and Communication* 23, pp. 193–229.

Stewart, Mary E and Mitsuhiko Ota (2008). "Lexical effects on speech perception in individuals with "autistic" traits". In: *Cognition* 109.1, pp. 157–162.

Strand, Elizabeth A (1999). "Uncovering the role of gender stereotypes in speech perception". In: *Journal of language and social psychology* 18.1, pp. 86–100.

Yu, Alan CL, Carissa Abrego-Collier, and Morgan Sonderegger (2013). "Phonetic imitation from an individual-difference perspective: Subjective attitude, personality and "autistic" traits". In: *PloS one* 8.9, e74746.