

Session on Quantitative Methods in Variation featuring a tutorial on Goldvarb

Gregory Guy, Sali Tagliamonte, Penny Eckert

- Wednesday, July 20
- 2:00-4:00
- Clare 207

Social Structure Social Practice Social Reproduction (today will be heavy on social theory)

- Structure and Agency
- Positivism and Social Constructionism
- The Habitus
- Structuration
- Communities of Practice
- Semiotics of Distinction

Why am I doing this?

- The route from macro-sociological correlations to local patterns and acts of indexicality isn't obvious.
- But it's important.
- It embodies a central question about the relation between social/linguistic structure and social/linguistic action. Or langue and parole.
- To know how change is embedded in linguistic practice, we need to investigate the relation between structure and human action.

Structuralism in Linguistics

- Langue – structure
- Parole – the collectivity of individual linguistic production

SAUSSURE, FERDINAND DE. 1916. Cours de linguistique générale.

- Is parole simply the output of langue?
 - Which would make it either irrelevant or data from which to infer parole.
- Or does parole reflect agency that feeds back into langue?
 - Which would make it central to theory.

- To what extent is individual activity simply the product of structure?
 - outliers and exceptions as noise
- To what extent does individual activity produce structure?
 - outliers and exceptions as meaningful and potential change

Structure and Agency

- **Agency:** The individual's capacity to act independently and to choose freely.
- **Structure:** A system, larger than the sum of its parts, that organizes human activity.
- **The Issue:** To what extent does structure constrain or determine individual agency?

A radical dichotomy

- **Structuralism** – the primacy of structure
 - Structure determines individual action
- **Individualism** – the primacy of individual agency
 - Structure is an epiphenomenon of individual action

Structuralism

- Goal of Sociology - to explain internal cohesion that allows societies to be stable.
- Society as a bounded relational construct (much like language)
 - Its parts (social institutions) work together, constituting social equilibrium.
 - Focus on institutions
 - Family, religion, media, schools, government ...
- Individuals as temporary inhabitants of enduring roles
 - The individual is significant not in and of him- or herself but in terms of place in the system.

Structuralism and Positivism

- Auguste Comte (1798-1857)
 - Human behavior can be studied by the same methods as natural phenomena.
- Émile Durkheim (1857-1917).
 - Social Science as distinct, but based in positivism.
 - Focus on structural categories

Positivism and social science

- Some social reality underlies our experiences.
- The only authentic knowledge of this reality is that which is based on sense, experience and positive verification.
- Scientific method is the best approach to understanding the processes underlying both physical and human events.

Some Issues

- To what extent are institutions
 - Natural: arising from human needs
 - Artificial: historically contingent and serving specific interests
- Science as control
 - Fordism and sociology as social engineering
 - Foucault, Michel. 1977. Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison. London: Penguin Press.

- Humans, unlike atoms, are reflective
- How objective are scientific observations?
 - error introduced when observers overemphasize phenomena they expect to find and fail to notice behavior they do not expect.
 - Applies not only to observations, but to hypotheses and even choice of topics and methods.

Latour, Bruno and Woolgar, Steve. 1979. Laboratory life: The social construction of scientific facts. Los Angeles, London: Sage.

Social Constructionism

- “Objective” knowledge does not emerge from natural forces, but is derived from, and maintained in, social interaction.
- People interact with the belief that their perceptions of reality are related. Acting on this understanding reinforces a sense of common knowledge, yielding a belief that their understandings are part of an objective reality.
- Over generations, those who have not been involved in the original process of negotiation view these understandings as *common sense*.

BERGER, PETER L. and LUCKMANN, THOMAS. 1966. The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

Or as Ian Hacking puts it

- (0) In the present state of affairs, X is taken for granted; X appears to be inevitable.
- (1) X need *not* have existed, or need *not* be at all as it is. X, or X as it is at present, is *not* determined by the nature of things; it is *not* inevitable.

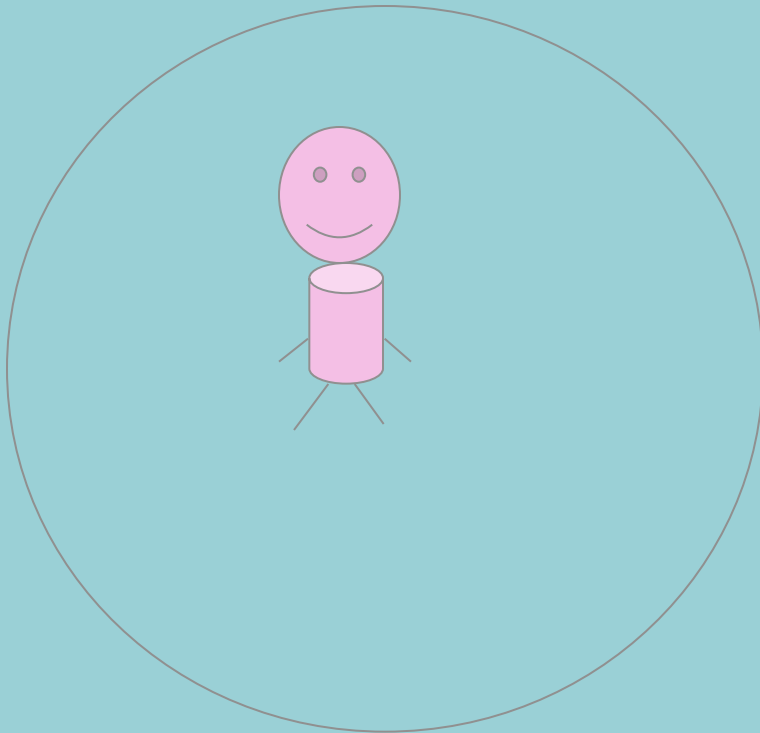
HACKING, IAN. 1999. The Social Construction of What? Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

How does the individual experience structure?

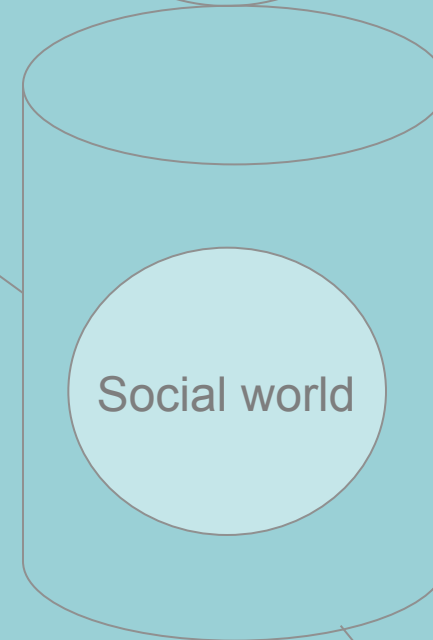
- The Habitus
 - Pre-existing social structure is internalized, and determines how an individual reacts to, and acts in, the world.

BOURDIEU, PIERRE. 1977. Outline of a theory of practice. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Social world



=



A disposition for social action is
conditioned by one's social position

Habitus

- Non-discursive knowledge – aspects of culture that are embodied in the daily practices of individuals, groups, societies, nations. Skills, tastes, automatic movements.
 - MAUSS, MARCEL. 1934. Les techniques du corps. Journal du psychologie, 32. (3-4).
- ...embeds what some would mistakenly call values in the most automatic gestures or the apparently most insignificant techniques of the body — ways of walking or blowing one's nose, ways of eating or talking...
 - BOURDIEU, PIERRE. 1984. Distinction: A social critique of the judgment of taste. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu's hyper-determinism

- Social agents *actively* determine, on the basis of these socially and historically constituted categories of perception and appreciation, the situation that determines them (Bourdieu 1992:136).

Giddens and Structuration

- All human action is performed within the context of a pre-existing social structure, hence is constrained or partly predetermined based on the varying contextual rules under which it occurs.
- The structure and rules are not permanent and external, but sustained by human action.
- Human action involves a process of reflexive feedback, sustaining and modifying the structure and rules.

GIDDENS, ANTHONY. 1979. Central problems in social theory: Action, structure and contradiction in social analysis. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Back to langue and parole

- Language as habitus
 - The sense of the value of one's own linguistic products...is one of the fundamental dimensions of the sense of class position.
 - BOURDIEU, PIERRE. 1977. The economics of linguistic exchanges. Social Science Information, 16.645-68
 - As is one's understanding of meaning.

Is it just the individual vs structure?

- Communities of practice
 - Social aggregates defined by shared practice
 - Socially located
 - Sites for the development of the habitus

LAVE, JEAN and WENGER, ETIENNE. 1991. Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

WENGER, ETIENNE. 2000. Communities of practice. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Communities of Practice

- Communities of practice emerge as people respond to a mutual situation
- People come to engage in practice together because they have a shared interest in a particular place at a particular time.
- Thus communities of practice do not emerge randomly, but are structured by the kinds of situations that present themselves in different places in society.

Cs of P and Structure

- Categories like gender, class, and race emerge in clusters of experience, hence of kinds of communities of practice.
- Women are more likely than men to participate in secretarial pools, car pools, childcare groups, exercise classes.
- Working-class women are more likely than middle-class women to participate in bowling teams, neighborhood friendship groups, and extended families.

Cs of P and sense-making

- Communities of practice jointly orient to, and interpret, the world around them.
 - Jocks and Burnouts interpret themselves in relation to each other, and in relation to the world beyond school.
 - There are situations in which Jocks and Burnouts align towards/with each other in the face of something from outside.

The Habitus at work

- Why are Burnouts egalitarian and Jocks hierarchical?
- Why do Burnouts inhabit the back areas of the school and Jocks the front areas?
- Why do Jocks take academic subjects and Burnouts take vocational ones?
- Why do Burnouts hang out in the neighborhood and Detroit, while the Jocks hang out at school?

- An indexical order isn't random – it's a string/array of associations that mark out social life on the ground.
- Social differences between Jocks and Burnouts are attributable to class.
- Social differences between Detroit suburban and urban adolescents are attributable to class.

- When Burnouts use urban variables, which correlate with class, they're **most likely** indexing class **indirectly**.
- The path from working class status to Burnout status is a complex one.

An endless set of relations

Working Class

Institutionally
alienated

Urban

Tough

Street smart

Egalitarian

Burnout

Druggie

Troubled

Rebellious

Semiotic processes of linguistic differentiation

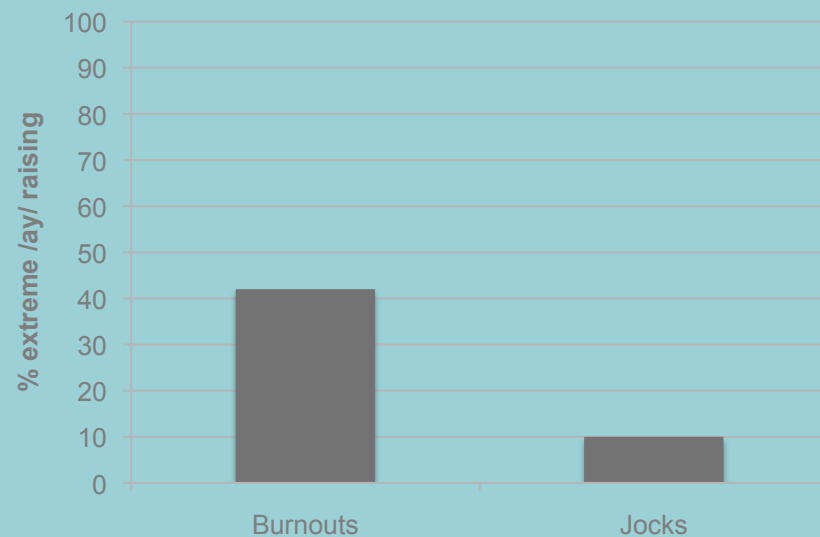
GAL, SUSAN and IRVINE, JUDITH. 2000. Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation. *Regimes of Language*, ed. by Paul V. Kroskrity, 35-83. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

- *Fractal Recursivity*: “involves the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level.”
- *Erasure*: “the process in which ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field, renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible.”
- *Iconization*: “Linguistic features that index social groups or activities appear to be iconic representations of them, as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group’s inherent nature or essence.”

(Fractal) Recursivity

“involves the projection of an opposition, salient at some level of relationship, onto some other level.”

Jock – Burnout opposition within the conurbation



Why Jock status isn't transportable

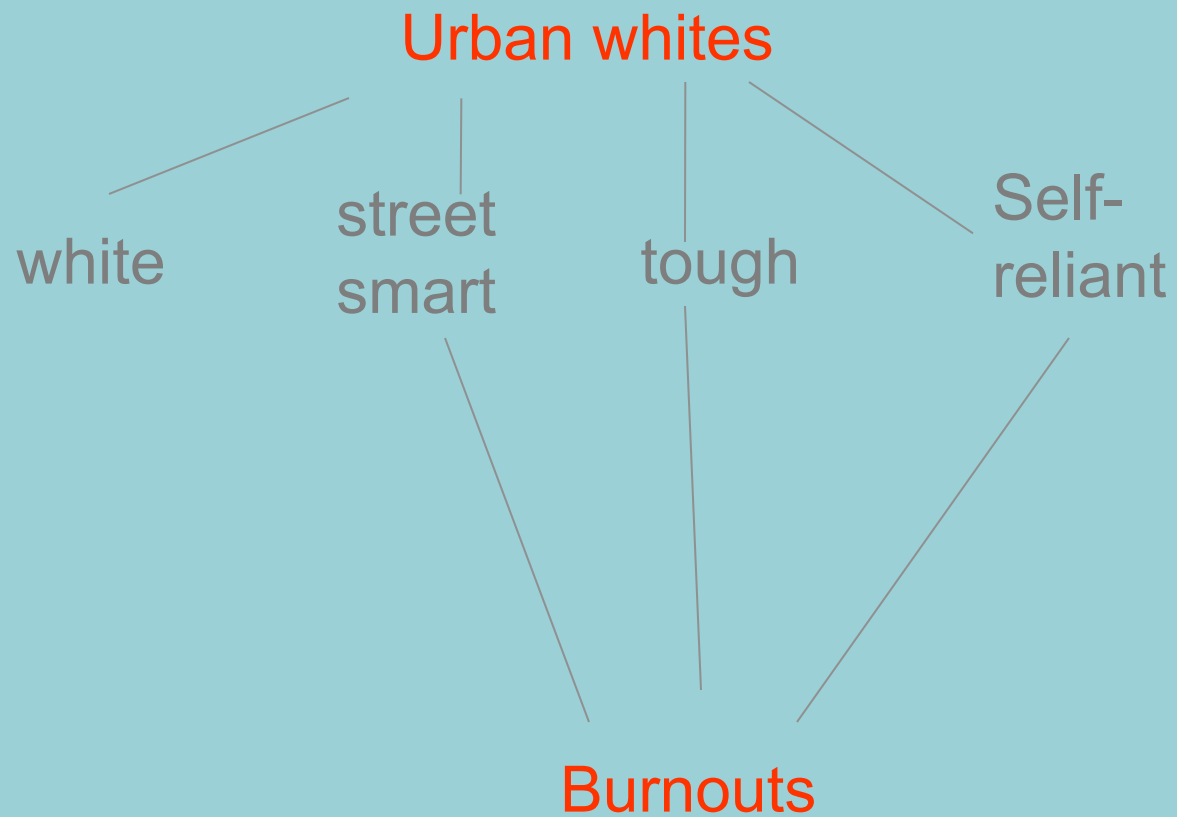
... all these short haired kids. My hair was long, it was really long, you know, and these people were, "well get your hair cut," you know. And they all had these Nike tennis shoes on. And that's what I remember. Nike tennis shoes. So I went home and said, "Mom, screw these Trax tennis shoes, I got to get some Nikes" you know. "We're moving up in the world." So I had to get Nike tennis shoes like the rest of them. You know, that's about the thing they all dressed like way nicer than in Garden City. Garden City was strictly jeans and tee shirts, you know.

I wasn't really, I, I don't know why, they didn't like me a lot. Like ... all the cool super jocks. They really didn't like me....It was just, ah, they copped an attitude before they met me.

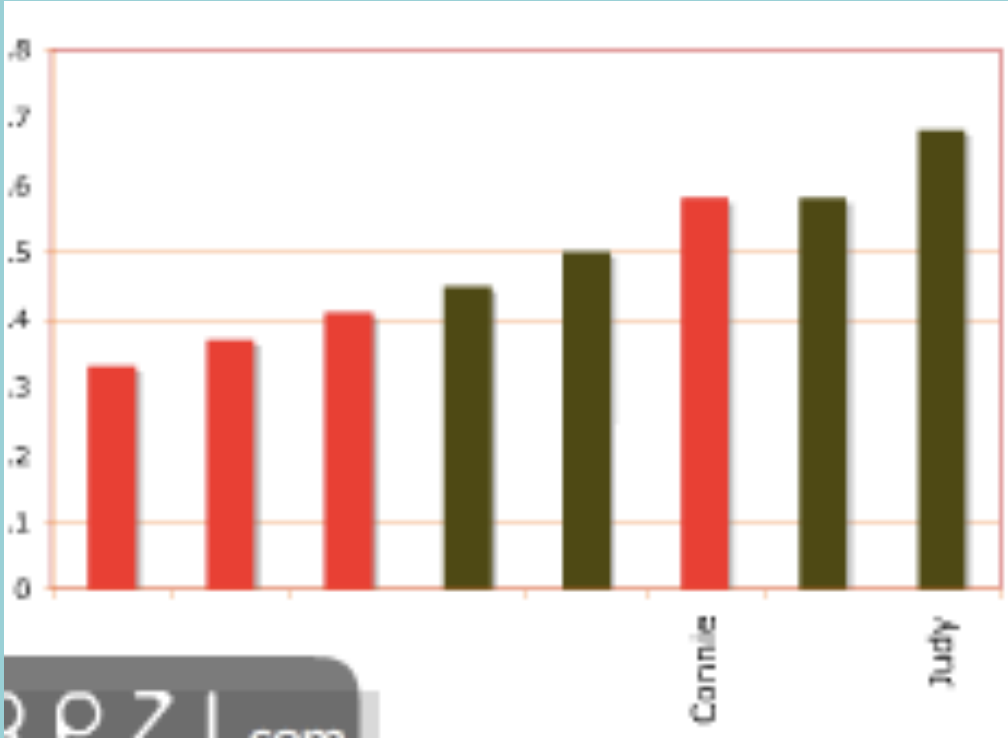
Erasure

“the process in which ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field, renders some persons or activities (or sociolinguistic phenomena) invisible.”

Erasure



Erasure



Iconization

“Linguistic features that index social groups or activities appear to be iconic representations of them, as if a linguistic feature somehow depicted or displayed a social group’s inherent nature or essence.”

Urban speech as ‘tough’, ‘disrespectful’
Standard language as ‘correct’, ‘educated’

Back to Randall

- Elements of the style
 - Female
 - Anti-binary, anti-heteronormative
 - “Honey Badger don’t care”/New York
 - Counter-cultural
 - Reclamative
 - In your face
 - Youthful
 - Anti-serious (anti-heteronormative)
 - Not bound by convention

Style is the embodiment of ideology.

... decoration and shape distinction may relate not so much to the existence of social categories but to a concern with those categories.... Where social groups are threatened or contradicted, or are otherwise concerned with self-legitimation, 'stylistic behaviour', in the form of numerous contrasts and variations in pottery, stone, metal and other types, may be most marked. Stylistic behaviour is not linked directly to group size but to ideologies and strategies of legitimation.

Ian Hodder (1982). The present past. London: Batsford

...

