

**The ‘Gay Voice’ and ‘Brospeak’:
Towards a Systematic Model of Stance**

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ABSTRACT

Taking Elinor Ochs’s (1992) notion of indirect indexicality as a starting point, this chapter explores the significance of stance for studies of sexuality. Stance helps organize identity registers and is thus central in the creation and display of sexuality. After defining stance and reviewing ways in which it has been used in studies of language and sexuality, the chapter analyzes representations of two sexual identity registers: a ‘gay voice’ homosexual identity and a ‘brospeak’ heterosexual identity. The analysis reveals how these representations are based on different configurations of stances that in turn constitute differentially enregistered personae or characterological figures. The chapter concludes with an outline of the ways that the concept of stance may be used in further research, especially with respect to the analysis of sexuality in interaction.

Keywords: *stance; indexicality; gay voice; brospeak; enregisterment*

MOTIVATIONS FOR USING STANCE IN ANALYSIS AND THEORY

When the study of language and sexuality was beginning to flourish in the 1990s, theorists working on gender and sexuality more generally were coming to a consensus that masculinity and femininity were theoretically separate from male and female bodies. While fairly unremarkable in our current era, this view, founded especially on arguments put forth by Kessler and McKenna (1978) and Butler ([1990]2002), exposes how gender is performative in the sense that various social displays and behaviors are recognized in an indexical gender system and do not arise in any ‘natural’ or ‘essential’ sense from bodies. While the separation of ideology from body sex type was something already inchoate in Robin Lakoff’s (1975) pioneering *Language and Woman’s Place*, it was Elinor Ochs’s (1992) notion of indirect indexicality that was perhaps most instrumental in shifting language and gender/sexuality away from a research program focused on female-male comparison to one that considers how language creates the gender order more generally. Ochs argued persuasively that it is not the observation that women use some feature of language more than men that is theoretically important, but rather that language is used primarily to do other things such as take stances, perform speech acts, and index participation in particular activities (as also argued by O’Barr and Atkins 1980 vis-a-vis power, and less directly by Lakoff 1973: 48 in her argument that ‘women’s language’ “submerges a woman’s personal identity”). Crucially, Ochs argues that these stances, acts, and activities are *constitutive* of gender. Although language may index gender directly (such as when a speaker introduces themselves with a gendered address term, such as *Mr. Kiesling* or *Miss Kim* in English), this process is rare compared to the indirect indexing that comes through displays of stance in interaction. In other words, femininity and masculinity are not derived from female and male

bodies but are constituted through the doing of stances, acts, and activities that are seen as feminine or masculine (cf. West and Zimmerman 1987).

The important point is that gender is not derivative of a sex-categorized body that tends to use a particular linguistic feature; that is, linguistic forms do not index femininity or materialize as feminine simply because women use them more than men, and vice-versa. Rather, linguistic forms are gendered because of sociocultural ideologies about gender, a point that becomes especially clear when gender is viewed in terms of *masculinity* and *femininity* instead of *male* and *female*. This view of gender does not mean that one will never find patterns correlated with a speaker's body sex type; indeed, the whole point of ideological gender is to police the behavior of 'biologically' female and male bodies. But it is theoretically important to see that indexicalities do not flow directly from frequency of use; their use and use frequencies are in a dialectical relationship with language ideologies that give these indexical relationships meaning.

There are at least two important issues that this approach suggests for the study of language and sexuality/desire. First, stance is relevant to all culturally organized categories, so gender is only one dimension of identity that is involved in these kinds of indirect stance relationships. Ochs's insight is therefore really about indexing *identity* as much as it is indexing gender. Just as there are 'women who act masculine' (see Halberstam 1998), there are persons identified as having a white body who 'act black,' and vice versa (Bucholtz 2011). In both cases, there is an ideology of how various bodies should take stances and perform acts, and what activities they should typically do (see also King, this volume). Most importantly, there is also an ideological connection between ways of speaking and these stances, acts, and activities.

Second, if stance is indexed by linguistic forms and crucially constitutes gender, studies of language and sexuality need to have a strong theoretical and methodological model of stance. While stance has been used for a long time in linguistics (most traditionally in terms of epistemicity), there is a wide diversity of understanding and theory surrounding the term. Work such as Goodwin (2007) and Jaffe (2009) present typological categorizations of stance in an effort to refine definitions of the term, while DuBois (2007) emphasizes an interactional basis of stance. One goal for this chapter is to provide an outline of a systematic model of stance built on interactional/discourse theories that researchers in language and sexuality might draw on in order to connect stances with sexual identities. In what follows, I sketch a definition and model of stance that provides a resource for using it in studies of language and sexuality. I then draw on this model in two examples. The first is a speech style enregistered at a high order of indexicality (in Silverstein's 2003 terms) that I refer to as the 'gay voice.' Enregisterment (Agha 2007, Johnstone 2016, Johnstone and Kiesling 2008) refers to the ways in which linguistic forms become associated with a stereotyped style in the cultural imaginary. Enregisterment is thus an ideological construction even when based in some 'descriptive accuracy,' because the categories of speakers that are correlated with ways of speaking represent an ideological sorting of the community. This understanding of enregisterment is important to keep in mind during the discussion of the styles below, especially the 'gay voice' style, because I am not making a first order indexical argument. First order indexicality is simply descriptive: something like "gay men use this way of speaking." In contrast, I examine how this style of speaking is enregistered in the wider speech community, including and especially beyond a 'gay male' or 'queer' community (although it may be enregistered in similar ways there too). We can see a similar pattern with a

register like 'Pittsburghese' (Johnstone 2013); not all individuals associated with the identity indexed by the register (i.e. not all Pittsburghers) use it. Moreover, folk descriptions of the 'Pittsburghese' register are not accurate descriptions of Pittsburgh speech. The same is true of a register like the 'gay voice', which reflects a stereotype rather than the speech of gay men generally.

Registers are also implicated in indirect indexical systems. Although features in the 'gay voice' register may directly index a sexual identity, the register is more often and obviously created through stances that ideologically constitute a number of specific 'gay identities' (as shown by Podesva 2006 and elaborated by Eckert 2008). In what follows, I explore how a model of stance can help systematize the description of this enregistered stereotype and enable a better understanding of how the 'gay voice' style fits into a wider metapragmatic discourse about gender and sexual identity. I compare this 'gay voice' with a second but differently-enregistered 'heterosexual' example focused on the figure of the 'bro.' Bro is a stereotyped identity type in North America, even though the speech style associated with it is enregistered at a lower order than the 'gay voice'. Yet the stances associated with bro identity do appear to be densely enregistered even if there is no higher-order 'bro voice' analogous to the 'gay voice' (as suggested by the examples analyzed here). The two cases together demonstrate the diverse ways that stance comes to constitute stereotyped identities and thus facilitate the enregisterment of language varieties associated with sexual and gender identities. The concluding section of the chapter considers how researchers should locate social meaning in language and emphasizes the need to understand the layers of indexical strata involved in every use of a form within a particular community.

STANCE DEFINED

Ochs argues that stance is constitutive of gender, and furthermore, that linguistic forms index stances (see figure 1).

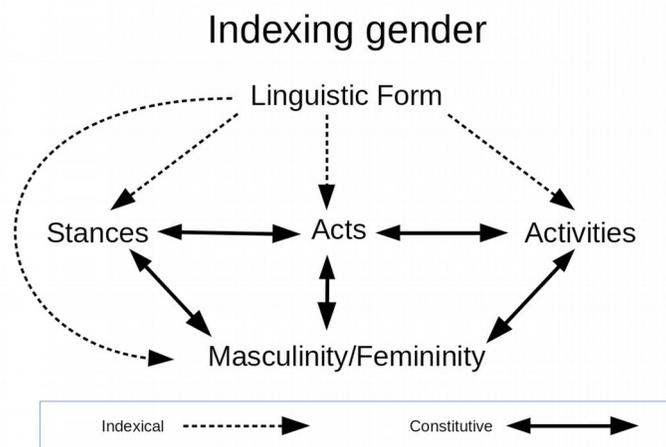


Figure 1. Schematic diagram of indirect indexicality of gender.

Credit: Adapted from Ochs (1992:342). (Creative Commons license Attributions-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. <http://sfkiesling.com/figures/creative-commons-figures/21481256>.)

It should be remembered that the links Ochs suggests are ideological constructs. So, for example, a stance suggesting 'refined' is constitutive of an ideological femininity in Japanese culture, indexed by the sentence final particle *-wa*. Here I explore briefly how stance can be understood theoretically and used in analytical practice. While a number of scholars have identified a number of different types of stance (Goodwin 2007, Jaffe 2009, Lempert 2008), in my view, work on stance should emphasize that such distinctions are dimensions of one connected idea: speakers create relationships in interaction. The various 'types' of stance arise because they each focus on a different kind of relationship that the speaker is trying to create. Drawing on Goffman (1981) and Kockelman (2004, 2010), among other theorists of interactional analysis, we can find three main relationships: evaluation, investment, and alignment. It should be stressed that these are relationships created in interaction and may or may not be intended, recognized, or even felt by the speakers themselves (this sort of psychological divination is unknowable in linguistics).

In this chapter, I define stance generally as the creation of relationships between the animator (following Goffman 1981) and some discursive figure (human or otherwise). This definition echoes that of Du Bois (2007) who argues that stance is at heart a speaker's evaluation of a stance object. However, the notion of *figure* (also following Goffman 1981) is a more flexible concept than that of object in that it may refer to any kind of entity brought into the discourse. In short, 'figure' may suggest less materiality than 'object'; note that in Du Bois's examples, all of the stance objects are material objects. The 'discursive figure' is thus deliberately unspecified in my definition because of the wide variability of relationships created in stances. Moreover, the important fact is that the entity that I call 'figure' may be local only to the talk in question – it is created by that talk, as Goffman shows. For example, in his paper on footing (1981:149-150), Goffman explains that each first person reference in the phrase "To the best of my recollection, I think that I said I once lived that sort of life" is a different figure represented in talk. We might expand on that insight by noticing that the animator has different relationships with each of these figures. The most embedded 'I' is a figure in the past, the one most distant from the animator in terms of current habit and responsibility. The 'I' of 'my recollection' and of 'I think' is closer to the animator, but note how a distance is created between the animator and accountability for the assertion in the lower clauses. Kockelman (2004) terms the imagined world of the animator the *speech event* and that of the discourse the *narrated event*, showing that much of epistemicity can be accounted for by various work to align and disalign figures in these two event types (see also Wortham and Reyes 2015).

Viewing stance as a single process that focuses on different relationships created between animator and figures in talk allows for a more consistent model of stance in interaction that can flexibly capture the various categorizations proposed by other researchers. By viewing interaction in this way and focusing on the figures in an interaction, three general relationships emerge in the literature on stancetaking, although these three dimensions are usually thought of as different types of stance rather than as different dimensions:

- relationships of the speaker to the content/objects of the talk
- relationships of the speaker to the talk itself
- relationships of the speaker to other animate beings in the interaction

I conceive of these three relationships as interrelated but separable dimensions of stance, and I refer to them as evaluation, investment, and alignment, respectively. I want to stress that each is a dimension and not 'a stance.' A stance is the composite of all of these dimensions. I suggest that types of stance such as 'cooperative' or 'epistemic' or 'affective' can coordinate together as dimensions of a unified stance. Although I have attempted to describe these dimensions in such a way that they do not engender too much confusion with other stance terms, overlap will inevitably occur.

John Du Bois (2007) grounds stance in the relationship of interactants to an entity in discourse, which Du Bois calls the “stance object.” In Du Bois’s model, this object is then evaluated as the most basic stance-taking move, so that stance is roughly the same as assessment or evaluation. That is, at its most basic, stance-taking in this model answers the question: “Is the stance object good or bad?” This assessment is a fruitful place to start building the analysis of stance because the stance object is created in discourse: When a noun phrase is uttered, that noun enters into the imagined discourse model that speakers work with to establish intersubjectivity (see Schiffrin 1987, Kockelman 2004, 2010). This process can be generalized to any type of evaluation that a speaker expresses regarding entities in talk.

Yet the view of stance as assessment, while useful, captures only one dimension of stance. I adopt an expanded understanding of this perspective and refer to it as the stance dimension of “evaluation.” I understand ‘high evaluation’ to mean the positive assessment of a discursive figure and ‘low evaluation’ to mean the negative assessment of a discursive figure. The dimension of evaluation is prominent in the stance literature, whether characterized as judgment and appreciation (Martin and White 2003), assessment (Goodwin and Goodwin 1992), or evaluation (Faircough 2003) (Jaffe 2009:6 provides a useful overview).

Du Bois argues that interactants further align or disalign by agreeing or disagreeing (not always explicitly) with their interlocutor's assessment of the stance object. Du Bois characterizes this as a speaker's *alignment*—the second of the relationships I am proposing—to other interactants. However, alignment can be accomplished in other ways, including situations in which one turn at talk agrees, repeats, or cooperates with a previous turn. The alignment dimension argued for here thus includes not only expressing the same or similar evaluation for a stance object, but also answering a question, repeating phrases, and so on. Since there are multiple simultaneous patterns of interaction in discourse (turn-taking, adjacency pairs, acts, and so on; see Schiffrin 1987 for a model of different discourse functions), the opportunities to create alignment or disalignment (which I refer to as *high alignment* and *low alignment*, respectively) are multitudinous. For instance, interactants may disalign when they refrain altogether from participating in the speech activity of assessing. Take the example of a compliment given on an article of clothing. There is an imputed alignment between the complimenter and the complimentee in that presumably the person receiving the compliment agrees that the article looks nice; otherwise, they wouldn't wear it. However, even if the complimentee deflects the compliment ("oh I just happened to pick this up on sale") or overtly disagrees with the evaluation ("oh this looks terrible"), the very act of responding suggests some degree of alignment with the interlocutor. For example, the person receiving the compliment could ignore the compliment entirely, which would be extremely disaligning.

The third stance dimension is *investment*. Investment, roughly, answers the question: “How strongly is the speaker representing their responsibility for the proposition being uttered?” This dimension implicates modality, since modality relates to certainty and strength of obligation. For example, the statements “I might come to your party” or “I’ll probably come to your party” (with modal auxiliary and modal adverb, respectively) both have a lower investment than “I *have* to come!” or “I will *definitely* be there!” But investment also relates, for lack of a better term, to *enthusiasm* (see also Tannen’s 1982: 228 enthusiasm constraint). Intensifiers, for example, modify to differing degrees a speaker’s investment in an assessment. Paul Kockelman (2004) provides a useful way of thinking about investment within a broader theory of meaning in interaction. He identifies at least two linked, parallel events in any utterance: the *speech event* and the *commitment event*. The speech event involves a locutor who speaks/signs/writes/types the utterance, while the commitment event involves a principal who takes responsibility for the denotational content of the utterance (see Goffman 1981). The question becomes: To what extent is there synchrony between the animated utterance and the animator’s principalship? This synchrony relies on both epistemic certainty (the more certain, the more the animator is principal) and enthusiasm investment, in which highly intensified and enthusiastic utterances also produce a closer match between animator and principal. This dimension, when discussed as a type of stance, has been variously called *epistemic stance* (Goodwin 1986), *affect* (Martin 2000), and *modulation* (Halliday 1994), among other terms.

In the model I propose in this chapter, every utterance conveys a stance that includes all three dimensions: evaluation, investment, and alignment. An utterance might bring one of the dimensions into focus at the expense of others, but there is no stance without, for example, evaluation; it is just that the evaluation might be neutral rather than high (positive) or low (negative). I suggest that these three dimensions can serve as a heuristic to analysis. One way this could be used profitably is to specify and compare across languages how evaluation, investment, and alignment can be accomplished in discourse. This type of comparison is beyond the scope of this chapter; I look instead at two examples of how stance dimensions become enregistered into stereotyped identities. For this constitutive relationship to take place, there needs to be an ideological representation of the identity in question – that is, an enregistered identity. Such identities tend to be specified for things such as style, in the nonlinguistic sense, but also for stance and sometimes speech as well.

The two examples I provide are enregistered opposing sexual identities: the gay identity indexed by the 'gay voice' and the heterosexual identity indexed by the 'bro.' Even though the 'gay voice' indexes a type of gay identity fairly directly, certain stances are typically associated with the stereotyped style (see also Podesva 2004, 2007; Eckert 2008: 468-470). Even more importantly, the 'gay voice' is likely to have become enregistered historically through the linking of certain linguistic forms to particular stances associated with a specific stereotype of gay persona. Because hegemonic categories tend to be erased or unmarked in discourse, the bro identity, in contrast, is not usually indexed directly through linguistic form but through dress, activities, and topics of talk (which are often heterosexist and male-privileged). Nevertheless, there is evidence that here too certain stances are being linked to a way of speaking that is undergoing enregisterment as a 'bro' identity.

The 'gay voice'

A focus on the 'gay voice' has a long history in language and sexuality research. Indeed, Deborah Cameron and Don Kulick (2003) show how the search for the 'gay voice' was for a long time a main preoccupation of research in language and sexuality. While initially this search focused on the linguistic features produced in gay men's speech, researchers soon moved to a perceptual examination of the linguistic features that cause speakers to perceive a man as gay. This shift directed attention to the linguistic features that index 'gayness' and thus brought focus to ideology (as described by Gaudio 1994 and Leap 1996). The shift happened in part because of the recognition that the 'gay voice' as a stereotype did not correlate to actual usage. It was observed that not all gay men speak with a 'gay voice' (most gay men's speech is not perceived as indicating a 'gay' identity), and conversely, that some straight men speak with a 'gay voice' (and may, for example, be perceived as gay based on their speech alone). Clearly, then, there must exist a set of linguistic features that index a gay identity through ideological means. I use the term 'gay voice' for this set of features instead of "gay men's English" (cf. Leap 1996) or some other descriptor quite deliberately. I take the term to mean the enregistered ideological speaking style that one would find, for example, by asking someone to imitate a gay man (or by listening to a performer creating such a character). In short, this style need not be 'authentic' or 'real' or describe the speech of every gay man (which it does not); rather, it is recognizable in performance. The performance of this style may occur in slurs if the goal is to evoke discriminatory stereotypes, but if used by the right animator, the performance may also be viewed as resistant, celebratory, or even authentic. With attention to the register's indexical cycle or layering (Kiesling 2011a: 114), I suggest that this identity-oriented indexicality must be historically related to stance in two ways. The first flows from generalizations about the linguistic features that index the 'gay voice' and the

broader indexical meanings of these features (i.e. the meanings that exist in contexts with no reference to gay identity). The second flows from the characterological figures that serve as the basis for the stereotyped persona indexed by the 'gay voice'. In other words, the enregisterment of the 'gay voice' involves linguistic features indexing specific forms of stance coming together to reflect a persona that is expected to perform particular types of stance.

I turn first to the purported features of the 'gay voice' style. Both popular stereotypes and sociolinguistic research (Munson et al. 2006, Munson 2007, Podesva et al. 2002, Podesva 2004, 2006) suggest a set of repeated linguistic features that typify an enregistered 'gay voice' style. As we will see, many of these features have also been identified as indexing types of stance. A summary of the forms associated with the 'gay voice' is found in a review of the film "Do I Sound Gay?" published in *New Republic* (Nicholson 2015):

As the film develops, it becomes apparent that much of what we identify as a gay voice is a characteristically feminine voice spoken by a man. The stereotypical affectations we associate with gay men (what linguists call micro-variations) are: clearer and longer vowels, long S'es, clearer L's, and over-articulated P's, T's, and K's. These are also typically characteristic of women's voices.

Since the focus in this chapter is on an enregistered variety, evidence from non-academic sources is important to the argument. Johnstone (2013, 2016), for instance, suggests that meaning is created in the metapragmatic imagination through the cultural circulation of multiple pop-genres (radio, t-shirts, dolls, bumperstickers, among others). Likewise, stereotypes of the ‘gay voice’ circulate through repetitions of the stereotype in popular culture (see also Hill 2008 on the racist stereotypes of Latinxs indexed in popular uses of Mock Spanish). Even if the features named in the *New Republic* review might be “also typically characteristic of women’s voices,” as claimed in the article (a sweeping claim I would take issue with for a host of reasons), they carry other important associations in the realm of stance (see Eckert 2008). Most critically, the features mentioned in this passage are all examples of articulations that are iconically associated with standard written language, exemplifying a kind of production sometimes called *hyperarticulation*. This association makes them ripe for the performance of a variety of stances in interaction.

Hyperarticulations—especially released /t/ in American English—have been investigated substantially in sociolinguistics beyond work on the 'gay voice' (see, for example, Bucholtz 2001, Podesva, Roberts, and Campbell-Kibler 2002). The association of these hyperarticulations with a broad network of social meanings — or as Eckert (2008) would call them, an *indexical field* — suggests an alternate conception of their use in the 'gay voice' beyond simply “talking like a woman.” Indeed, Eckert (2008) focuses on /t/ hyperarticulation to outline a potential field of relations between stance and identity. Her evidence is based on the work of diverse scholars who have written about the articulation of /t/. Benor (2001), for instance, shows how released /t/ can be an index of integration into an American Orthodox Jewish community where it displays a quality of learnedness. Mary Bucholtz (2001) discusses released /t/ among white girls in a California high school in terms of a ‘nerd girl’ style. Finally, Podesva, Roberts, and Campbell-Kibler (2002) and Podesva (2006) crucially show that a more noticeably articulated /t/ is associated with a stereotyped gay style in various ways. The speaker identified as Heath in Podesva’s studies uses, for example, a highly articulated /t/, especially in his most markedly gay style, which Podesva calls Heath's 'gay diva' style.

Yet the notion of stance is also important to all of these studies. In each case, there is an ultimate indexicality of some sort of clarity that connects the speaker closely to the statement; this investment is seen in the precision and certainty associated with variables like released /t/. Metaphorically, the released /t/ creates an isomorphism between the written form (which is ideologically the most accountable form) and the spoken word because the released /t/ makes clear the presence of the written 't.' Eckert's indexical field for this variable accordingly includes the interactional stances associated with it along with the more permanent qualities and kinds of identities that eventually come to be linked to this feature. These stances, qualities, and social types together form the semiotic network that Eckert discusses as the indexical field. The indexical field of released /t/, as identified by Eckert (2008: 469), includes stances such as *clear*, *formal*, *polite*, *careful*, *effortful*, *emphatic*, *annoyed*, *exasperated*, and *angry* in addition to "permanent qualities" such as *elegant*, *educated*, *articulate*, and *prissy* (the latter quality points out the minefield of calling some things stances and others permanent qualities; it is not clear why prissy is categorized as a quality rather than a stance). All of these stances describe high investment in the action being performed in some way, even while the degree of evaluation and alignment vary. The stances *exasperated* and *angry*, for example, suggest low evaluation of the figure being evaluated as well as low alignment with an interlocutor. The systematicity of the stance model used here thus begins to come in to focus, with the three dimensions of investment, evaluation, and alignment able to combine in multiple ways.

I suggest that this stance description of high investment combined with low alignment is connected to ideologies of the 'gay voice.' In order to make this connection, we need to investigate the enregistered characterological figure (Agha 2007: 177; see also Johnstone 2013) that forms the reference stereotype for the style and gives the particular 'gay voice' use of hyperarticulation its indexical force. Here I recall a frequently cited persona associated with gay identity, discussed by Podesva as the 'gay diva' persona. I suggest that this stereotype is associated with a particular set of stances that may have facilitated the enregisterment of the 'gay voice'. In the review of the documentary *Do I Sound Gay?* discussed in the previous section, for example, Malcolm Thorndike Nicholson (2015) describes this gay persona:

Sounding feminine, however, doesn't account for other well-known stereotypes: the aristocratic, lovable dandy, for one. He's the wise queen who wears white gloves, sips martinis, and watches marital strife from an aloof distance. Oscar Wilde, Noel Coward, Cecil Beaton, Quentin Crisp, and Truman Capote are his progenitors. There's also the erudite villain who uses his wiles and queerness to sow dissent and havoc among the naïve world of heterosexuals. George Saunders as Addison DeWitt, Robert Walker and Bruno Anthony, Clifton Webb as Waldo, and Tom Ripley are all part of his lineage. *Do I Sound Gay?* knows this heritage, places it in the context of film history, and ties it to the vocal inspiration for well known early gay voices on TV such as Liberace and Paul Lynde. (Nicholson 2015)

Nicholson's description offers a stereotyped indexing of gay men by referencing particular kinds of qualities (*aristocratic, loveable, wise*) and practices (*wearing white gloves, sipping martinis, sowing dissent*). But notice also that these descriptions align with many of the characteristics of Eckert's field for released /t/. For instance, the field's permanent qualities of *elegant, articulate, prissy, and educated* would be appropriate descriptors for the "aristocratic, lovable dandy" who is "wise." In addition, many of the field's stances, among them *annoyed, exasperated, and angry*, suggest a lack of alignment with interlocutors. The stereotyped gay persona is imagined as one who is easily annoyed, angry, and confrontational. We see this stereotype in Nicholson's description of the "erudite villain" who "watch[es] the marital strife from an aloof distance" and "sow[s] dissent and havoc among the naive world of heterosexuals." Described in stance adjectives, these stereotyped 'dandies' create an air of confidence, distance, and superiority.

This brings us back to stance as a configuration of evaluation, investment, and alignment. Most centrally, the representation of the 'gay diva' outlined in both popular and academic texts depends on the stereotyped use of negative evaluation of stance objects/figures. In other words, the stereotype indexed by the 'gay voice' becomes enregistered through repetitions of representations in which the 'gay voice' serves to produce stances involving negative evaluations. These repeated negative evaluations serve to position the (stereotyped) 'gay' persona in direct opposition to mainstream heteronormative society, so that he regularly conveys negative evaluations of everyday objects/figures typically associated with the 'mundane' realm of the heteronormative. At the same time, this stereotyped 'gay diva' is represented as taking stances suggestive of high investment, as seen in descriptors such as *emphatic*, *exasperated*, and *angry* (Eckert 2008). Finally, the 'gay diva' is associated with low alignment, or even disalignment, through descriptors such as *aloof*. Granted, a three-way characterization of the stereotyped 'gay voice' as involving low evaluation, high investment, and low alignment omits much regarding the specific richness of its materialization in particular social contexts (as described especially by Posdesva 2006). For instance, while a speaker such as Podesva's Heath might draw on the 'gay diva' stereotype to produce an authentic-sounding enregistered identity, another speaker might employ the same stereotype as an insult. As Hill (2008) powerfully shows, linguistic stereotypes can easily insult, depending on the animator and the context, even when speakers lack the 'intention' to be racist, sexist, classist, homophobic, or transphobic. Thus, although we should not lose the richness of 'analog' adjectival descriptions, I suggest that the etic grid of the interlinkages between stance and identity that I have proposed provide a useful heuristic for making comparisons across styles. I attempt just such a comparison in the next section.

Brospeak

The 'bro voice' is not enregistered at the same level as the 'gay voice'. That is, 'brospeak' is at a relatively lower order of indexicality in the US. This is probably due to its relative unmarkedness: the 'bro voice' indexes the stereotyped young, white, cisgendered, heterosexual, middle class American man – the most hegemonic category. Because hegemony works partially by being 'invisible' or 'unaccented,' hegemonic categories often escape enregisterment (see Kiesling 2001). The bro, however, is clearly an enregistered persona – a characterological figure – on the American media landscape. This persona is copiously described on the internet as one of comfortably entitled dominance – a stereotyped persona who relishes in the lack of concern afforded by straight white male privilege (see McIntosh 2016). Representations of the 'bro' persona often involve attributes such as expressing misogyny, drinking, partying, and being a member of a privileged male group such as a fraternity or sports team. Here are typical descriptions of the bro, taken from the online Urban Dictionary's most popular definition:

Obnoxious partying males who are often seen at college parties. When they aren't making an ass of themselves they usually just stand around holding a red plastic cup waiting for something exciting to happen so they can scream something that demonstrates how much they enjoy partying. Nearly everyone in a fraternity is a bro but there are also many bros who are not in a fraternity. They often wear a rugby shirt and a baseball cap. It is not uncommon for them to have spiked hair with frosted tips.

One rough heuristic for determining whether a persona has become widely enregistered is the existence of quizzes that ask for social practices in order to diagnose whether the quiz-taker fits the stereotype. By this measure (see for example, the “How ‘Bro’ are you?” quiz from BuzzFeed), the bro is enregistered or stereotyped. Satire also demonstrates enregisterment. A recent episode of the satirical comedy South Park featuring “PC Bros” (Politically Correct Bros) (<http://knowyourmeme.com/memes/pc-bro>) lends more evidence that the persona, if not the speaking style associated with it, is enregistered at a high order, meaning that the stereotyped figure is widely known and easily referred to in popular media without elaboration. More importantly, the ‘bro persona’ is often represented in opposition to the ‘gay persona’, especially as engaging in a homosociality that is stereotypically homophobic. In fact, some descriptions add that bros are fond of using gay epithets and even gay-bashing, as in the seventh most popular definition on Urban Dictionary:

And speaking of penises, Bros have also brought the concept of homophobia to a new level. You see, they love play fighting, tackling their mates, and joke incessantly about each other's wieners. But they will claim that there is no connection whatsoever between their overuse of the term "faggot", their intense desires for close physical kinship with their pals, and their own closeted Bromosexuality.

The question then is how stereotypes involving stance serve to position the ‘gay’ and ‘bro’ identities in opposition to one another. In other words, we can see how the ideological division between ‘gay’ and ‘straight’ personas is (re)produced through the interaction of evaluation, alignment, and investment within the stances associated with these two opposing stereotypes.

Let’s begin with the lexical item that baptized the category: *bro*. The word has no doubt been used in English in spoken language as an abbreviation for *brother* for at least a few centuries. From the representations displayed in the Urban Dictionary, it seems that in the popular imagination, *bro*, like *dude* and *man*, circulates through stereotyped stances of high alignment. It is a member of a set of address terms in American English that index non-sexual closeness, most of which arise from closely bound homosocial groups of men. As I have argued in my research on *dude* (Kiesling 2004), this particular kind of closeness is produced through low investment (although *bro* appears to involve slightly more investment than *dude* or *man*). The alignment and investment aspects of the ‘bro persona’ are thus directly opposed to what we find in stereotypical representations of ‘gay voice’ personas, which describe low alignment and high investment.

The ‘bro’ persona is also enregistered in a different sense. This enregisterment is based on the productivity of ‘bro’ to be a morpheme of description, which can be prefixed or portmanteaued onto a relatively wide range of types of lexical items: *bromance*, *bro ho*, *bro out*, and of course *bro-speak*. Although many of these lexical items are simply a way of masculinizing a term (as in *broga* for yoga used by men or *brosseire* for a men’s bra), others associate practices with the ‘bro’ persona (as in *bro-speak* for language used by bros), terms more often link the root word to stereotypes associated with the ‘bro’ identity. These stereotypes include nonsexual solidarity (as reflected in *bromance*), misogyny (*bro ho*), or homosociality (*bro out* – to participate in activities with other bros). While these “bro- words” are not speech styles, they reflect a stereotyped ‘bro persona’ linked to specific types of stance. The persona described by the term *bro* is marked by stances involving high alignment, particularly in terms of interactions involving other ‘bros’ (through indexing things like solidarity or homosociality that by definition involve high alignment). Just as the low alignment in the stereotype of the ‘gay voice’ serves to position gay men ‘outside’ of mainstream normative society, this high alignment reflects the positioning of the ‘bro’ at the center of hegemonic white straight male identity.

When we turn to representations of speech styles associated with the enregistered ‘bro’ persona, we find that lower investment is also an aspect of the enregistered ‘bro voice’. For instance, Example 2, extracted from a web post titled “A beginner’s guide to bro-speak,” suggests that bro-speak should not be very exacting. The guide consists of three “lessons” on how to speak like a bro. While Lesson 1 focuses on the use of “bronouns” such as *dude* and *chick* and Lesson 3 on the use of the term “partying” as the subject of every sentence, Lesson 2, reproduced below, focuses on vagueness:

Example 2:

Lesson 2: Vague=good.

In bro-speak, identifying specifics in a story is considered time consuming and unhelpful. Often, bros choose to identify specifics in a story using more vague terms. Locations become amorphous and indistinct, people often become unclear, and most importantly, if clarification is needed, it is given in the form of a description, instead of a title. A bro does not say they went to 'the mall' when asked for a specific location, they say they went to 'the place with that awesome pizza joint, and all the lights and stuff.' That's because in bro-speak, vague answers are considered good.

Descriptions of bro-speak such as this suggest that the 'bro voice' involves stances of low investment. As a stance, vagueness indexes less accountability, and in fact less connection, between speech event and commitment event (see Kockelman 2007 on commitment event). The sample of speech reproduced in Example 3 below, taken from entry 21 for *bro* on the Urban Dictionary, suggests lower investment through shortened syntax. Even though the represented style is characterized by high (positive) evaluation ("they're mad chill;" "she's a legit 10"), it also suggests low investment through the effortlessness associated with the use of basic syntax and elided elements ("You goin' to that party tonight?"). I have provided explanations or 'glosses' in square brackets.

Example 3

====Everyday speech====

<Bro 1>: Wassap bro?

<Bro 2>: Not much bro, I'm chillin. You know me.

<Bro 1>: Sweet bro. You goin to that party tonight? Me and the bros will be drinkin beers and smashin queers [gay bashing].

====At a party====

<Bro 1>: Hey bro will you wingman me on that babe over there? [wingman means to go along]

<Bro 2>: Damn straight bro. Get on that ish, she's a legit 10. Like mad hot. [very beautiful]

====In a mall====

<Bro 1>: Hey bro, did you see that chill new salmon-colored destroyed pique-polo over in Abercrombie? ['chill new salmon-colored destroyed pique-polo' is a shirt, 'chill' is a positive evaluation, 'destroyed' is a shirt style, and Abercrombie a store]

<Bro 2>: Cheah bro. It was sweet. It was mad chill. [very good]

====Dicussing music====

<Bro 1>: Hey bros, you hear that new single from Oasis? [Oasis is a band]

<Bro 2>: Cheah [=yes] bro, but I still like Wonderwall. [Wonderwall is a band]

<Bro 3>: I've been too busy listening to Wiz Kahlifa and Lil Wayne recently... they're like mad good, bros. [Wiz Kahlifa and Lil Wayne are hip hop artists]

<Bro 4>: Cheah damn straight bro. [I agree wholeheartedly] Have I told you bros that I'm totally in love with blink-182 right now? Adam's Song is, like, really deep.

<Bro 1>: True dat. [You are correct.]

The bro persona represented in this speech is a specific – one might say distilled – form of hegemonic masculinity in American culture – one which few men actually fulfill. The emphasis on homosocial alignment (“wingman,” “me and the Bros”), homophobia (“smashin queers”; note also orthographic representation of alveolar pronunciation of *-ing*, see Kiesling 1998), and male dominance are each important facets of hegemonic masculinity in America (see Kiesling 2005).

One other notable aspect of these fabricated interactions is the lexical items and features that index a persona associated with African American men. Perhaps there is a connection between stereotyped representations of 'bro' masculinity and Black masculinity; for instance, there exists a widespread stereotype of the 'cool' Black man (see Majors and Billson 1992). In fact, this 'cool pose' is a generalized characterological figure enregistered in the Black community: "By cool pose we mean the presentation of self many black males use to establish their male identity. Cool pose is a ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing, impression management, and carefully crafted performances that deliver a single critical message: Pride, strength and control" (Majors and Billson 1992:4). Further, "cool pose may also be a kind of 'restrained masculinity': emotionless, stoic, and unflinching" (Majors and Billson 1992: 4-5). This suggests that the stereotyped persona of Black masculinity in the US also relies on stances of low investment through this cool pose. I therefore suggest that representations of bros as using aspects of Black language involve not just linguistic appropriation but also 'stance appropriation.' In this case, cool stances associated with Black masculinity are appropriated to emphasize the low investment of 'brospeak.' Put differently, low investment stances associated with Black masculinity are appropriated to index a general lack of concern associated with white cisgender heterosexual privilege.

CONCLUSION

The tripartite stance model allows a systematic comparison of how different forms of masculinity are produced semiotically—forms that must at least implicitly be in dialogue with the hegemonic form. The model’s comparison of 'brospeak' vs. the 'gay voice' illuminates a contrast between the hegemonic bro-form and the marginalized 'gay voice'. While the stereotyped 'gay voice' co-occurs with low evaluation, high investment, and low alignment to create a stance that is ideologically recognizable as stereotypically ‘gay,’ the stereotyped ‘bro stance’ involves high evaluation, low investment, and high alignment. The contrast is shown in Table 2.

| <u>Persona</u> | <u>Evaluation</u> | <u>Investment</u> | <u>Alignment</u> |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Gay voice | <i>Low</i> | High | <i>Low</i> |
| Bro | High | <i>Low</i> | High |

Figure 2: Comparison of stance dimensions for the two personae.

This descriptive, etic observation compels us to go further to explore why these stances might be associated with these particular sexual identities. There is no dearth of possibilities. One explanation might posit the idea that stances associated with the 'gay voice' are feminine and thus ideologically ‘opposite’ to the masculinity of the ‘bro’. But this misses the question of *why* a particular stance is identified as more feminine, once again failing to problematize the hegemonic category (as defined by Connell 1987, 1995; see also Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Why would the bro persona be high evaluation, low investment, and high alignment? My partial answer is to look at how these dimensions might index aspects of American hegemonic masculinity. Low investment indexes a kind of entitlement that people in power express. High

alignment stances (especially within group) and positive evaluation stances likewise echo and protect this entitlement through the solidarity of homosocial closeness. (This closeness is also expressed by the phrase “bros before hoes,” representing the idea that one’s male friends come before any intimate heterosexual relationship). If the 'gay voice' is represented without these kinds of solidarity stances, it makes sense that it may also be represented as isolated and critical of other people, as we saw in *The Guardian* review. But what is viewed as criticism from a dominant perspective may be viewed elsewhere as resistance—in this case, perhaps resistance to dominant stereotypes of how to be a man in American society. The modeling of stance delineated here allows us to make these kinds of connections.

For a few decades, researchers in sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and sociocultural linguistics have been converging on a model of language and identity that includes an ideological layer that enregisters identities with specific forms of language use (Ochs 1992, Irvine and Gal 2000, Silverstein 2003, Bucholtz and Hall 2004, Eckert 2008, Johnstone and Kiesling 2008). The focus of these approaches expands the relationship of language and identity beyond a simple view of correlation between identity and linguistic behavior (what Silverstein 2003:197 calls “billiard ball sociolinguistics”) and argues that speakers have much richer and detailed imaginings of figures associated with particular identities (Agha’s “characterological figures”) that include specific behaviors, beliefs, activities, acts, and stances. This view argues that these imaginings are mediated by the representations of identities found in various performance genres, from 'high' to 'mundane' (see Coupland 2007:146). Stance, in one guise or another, has occasionally been part of descriptions of characterological figures, but many classifications of stance-taking do not consider the ways that identities are connected to language

via stance. The analysis in this chapter is thus meant to begin a conversation around what such a systematic, etic heuristic for describing and comparing stance across studies of language and identity might look like, providing a test case for exploring the potential for such an approach.

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