# Race, Class & Social Network

LCD 205: Sociolinguistics
Queens College, CUNY

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# Outline

- Individual Speech

- Group Presentation

- Race

- Class

- Social Network

# Individual Speech

- Speech outline due today
- Draft speech on Wednesday
  - You will practice with a classmate tomorrow

# QUESTIONNAIRES

# Using Language

- What articles did everyone find?
- Summary of your findings
- What is the thesis for your presentation?
  - What is the story that you are telling?

- Bring draft tomorrow, Wednesday

# RACE

# Ethnolect

- article about an ethnolect
  - Glasgow-Pakistani Girls
    - What variable did they look at?
    - How did they define the group?
    - What did they find?
  - Your article
    - What ethnolect?
    - What variable did they look at?
    - How did they define the group?
    - What did they find?

# New Terms

- Community of Practice
- Indexing
- Locally salient

# CLASS

- Make a composite variable
  - What did you use?
  - What variables are most important?
    - Parent's education
    - Self education
    - Annual income
    - Occupation
- How does it work on me?

- What kinds of people prove difficult to classify?
  - Unemployed college graduate
  - Part-time barista with PhD in English
  - Broke aristocracy
    - Grey Gardens
  - PhD students & adjunct lecturers

- Other Problems:
  - Subjective weighting of scales.
  - Children & women usually classified via father or husband.

- Note also, that what class is varies from place to place.
  - Some South Asian societies (colonial Latin America) have caste rather than class systems.

- Mobility is the principle difference between caste and class
- Although class tends to be something you're born into
  - Political dynasties
  - People in grad school are children of academics
  - Trust fund kids

BHRAMIN
Priests, Academics

KSHATRYIA
Warriors, Kings

VAISHYA
Merchants, Landowners

SUDRA
Commoners, Peasants, Servants

UNTOUCHABLES
Outcast-Out of Caste. Street sweepers, latrine cleaners
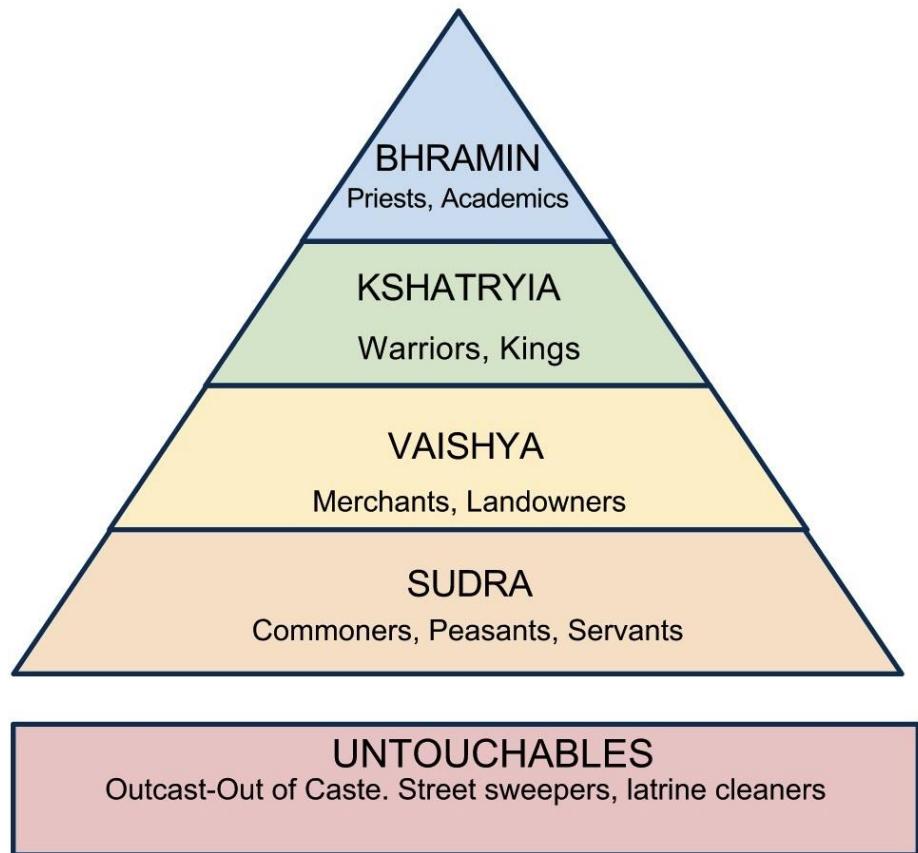
- Very difficult

- Class/status is therefore best operationalized in view of <span style="color:green">locally</span> relevant meanings and distinctions.

- What is relevant in NYC that might be different in other places?

# Social Class

- More than just the traditional high, middle, and lower classes
  - The chattering classes: people with metropolitan values, attitudes, and spending patterns
    - The Counter-Cultural: Young and mobile people in their twenties and thirties. Live on their own or in transient relationships. Many associated with the gay scene. Thoughtful, well educated. Tend to live in areas with a diverse mix of people
    - The University Challenge: Typically a student. Lived in rented accommodation in areas that come to live in the evening. Displays a strong belief in informality and authenticity.

- ***Operationalize***: To define a concept in a way that allows for its measurement.

- An exploratory study of the social stratification of (r) in New York.
  - Got at class/status through department stores patronized by different clienteles.

# Class and status



Sak's dept. store

- Sak's - high status

- Macy's - middle status

- Klein - lower status

# Class and status



Macy's dept. store

- Sak's - high status

- Macy's - middle status

- Klein - lower status

# Class and status



Klein's dept. store

- Sak's - high status

- Macy's - middle status

- Klein - lower status

- Asked where are the "socks"?
  - Elicited the response fourth floor from different employees in each store.
- Asked, excuse me,
  - to get a more careful, emphatic response.
- Once away from his unwitting informant, noted the responses along with the informant's sex, age race and job.

# Class and status

| | Saks | Macy's | S. Klein |
|---|---|---|---|
| All [r] | 32% | 31% | 17% |
| Some [r] | 30% | 20% | 4% |
| No [r] | 38% | 49% | 79% |
| Number | 68 | 125 | 71 |

Adapted from Labov (1972:51)

- Holmquist's (1985) study of Uciceda.

  - Raising of word final mid vowels.

    – 'milk' lech[e]> lech[i]
    – 'well' poz[o]> poz[u]

# Class and status

• Holmquist's (1985) study of Uciceda.
<u>Sex, by social groups</u>

| Sex and social group | Mean closure val. |
|---|---|
| With Mt. Animals | |
| Men | 227 |
| Women | 186 |
| With dairy animals | |
| Men | 178 |
| Women | 112 |

(Source: Holmquist 1985: 200)

- What variables would you look at in the city?
  - What variables are associated with class/status
- How would you operationalize class in the city?
  - Stores
  - Neighborhoods

# Class and status

- In understanding the role of socio-economic differences on language we might do better by moving beyond coarse categories of 'class'.

- We can examine the specific effects of an individual's life style by analyzing the network of social contacts that person has.

# SPEECH COMMUNITY

# Speech Community

- Who exactly are we talking about when we talk about speakers of X variety?

- Linguists have traditionally answered this question using the concept of the speech community.

# Speech Community

- Bloomfield 1926
  - Speech community defined (exclusively) by linguistic practice. Speakers of Yorkshire English, say, are those speakers united by certain linguistic practices— definite article reduction, summat, for example— which other varieties lack
- Labov 1972
  - Speech community=shared linguistic practice + shared norms
  - co-members of a speech community share not just linguistic practices but also attitudes about these practices

- What is your speech community?

- Are you a member of more than one?

- Are you 'more' a member of one than another?

- To better address these issues, we can talk instead about
  - Networks
    - all the people we have contact with
    - influence patterns of behavior
    - conform to the pattern of the group.
- The more centrally located an individual is in a network the more that individual tends to observe group norms.

# Social Networks

## Differences in network structure: density
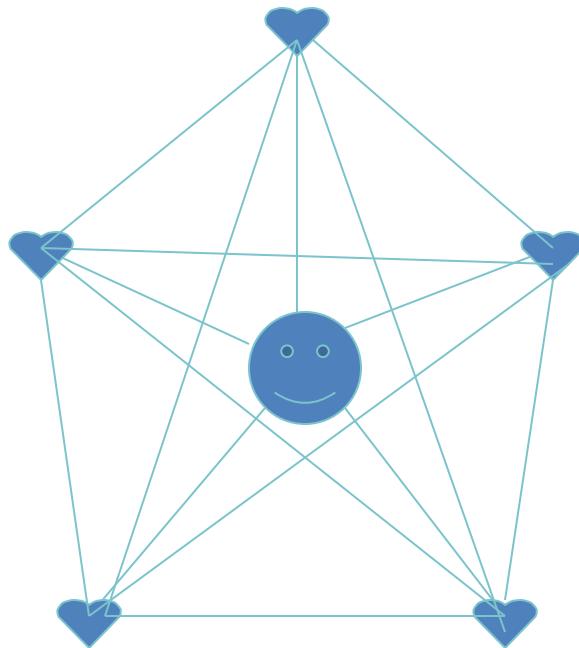


Dense network
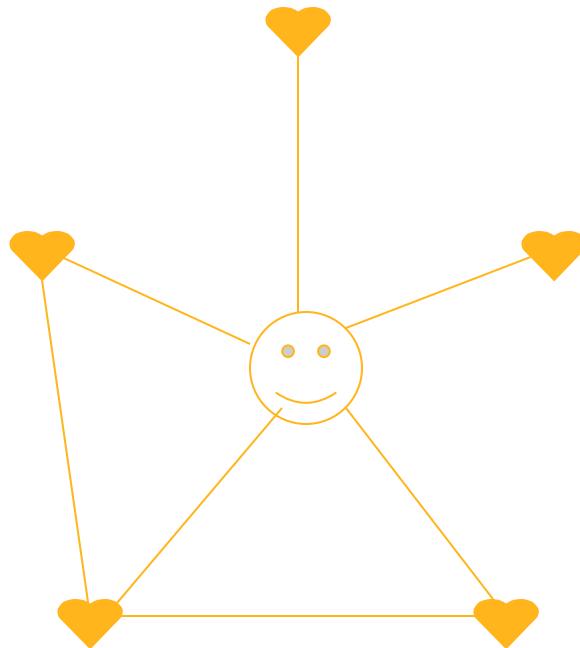
Loose network

# Social Networks

**Differences in network structure: multiplexity**
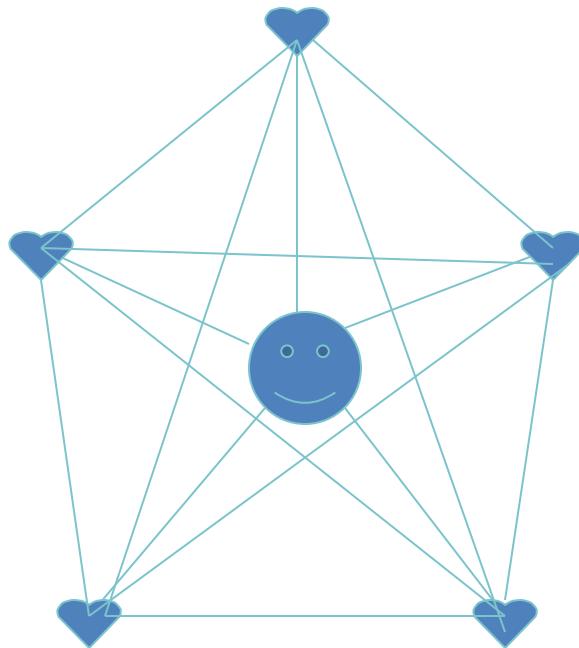


Multiplex ties ___
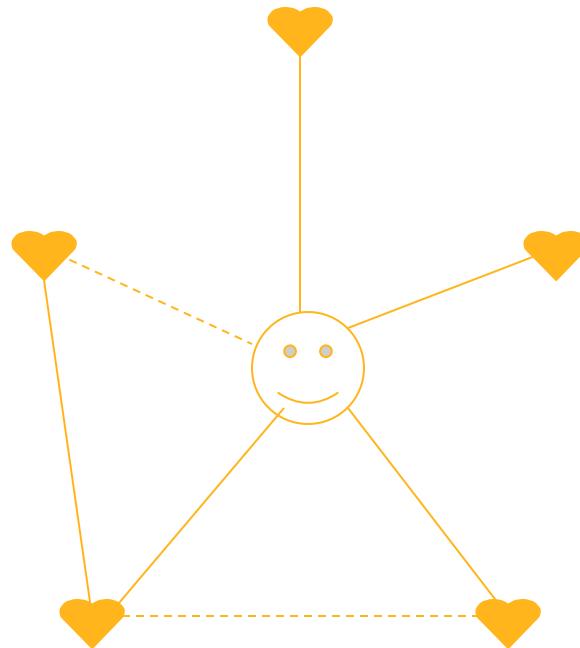
Weak ties -----

# Social Networks

• How to we measure network effects?  Typically through *reciprocal naming*.

• Labov (1972b) looked at network strength of different gangs in New York City.

•In studying one gang, the Thunderbirds, Labov (1972b) asked members: "Who are all the cats you hang out with?"
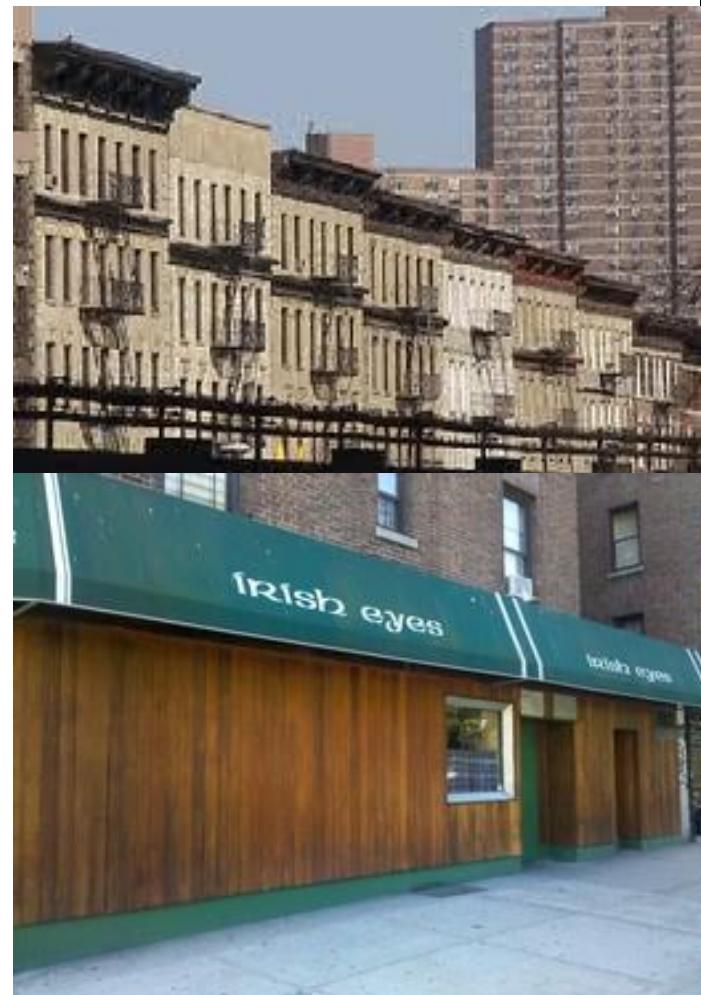
# Social Networks

- Network diagram for the Thunderbirds (Labov 1972b).