

8. Social Varieties I

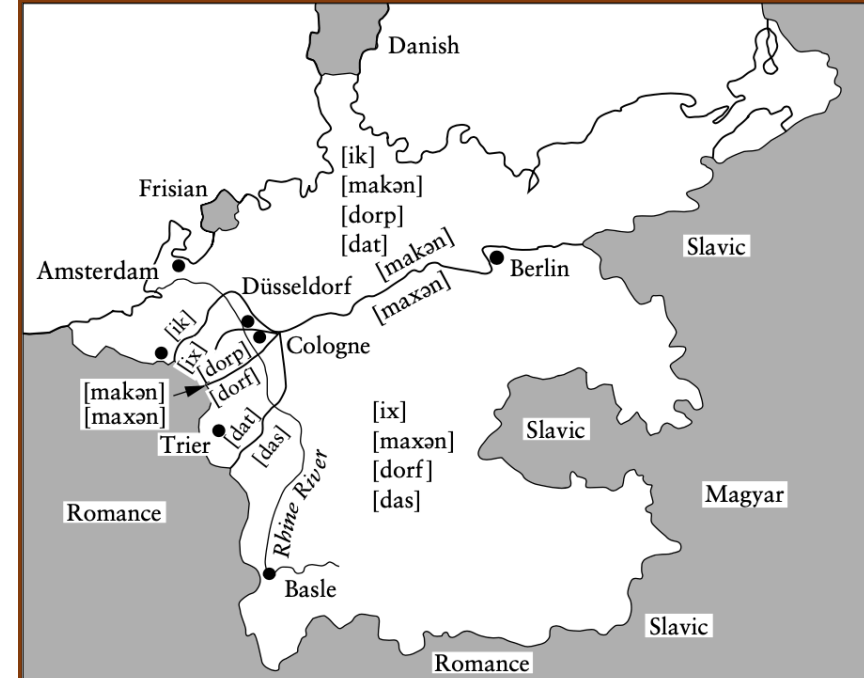
Ling 380/Soc 427 (Spring 2021)

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Variation

- Two basic types of variation: regional variation and social variation.
- Last week, we talked about *regional variation* and *dialect geography*.
- What is one of the potential limitations of dialect geography?
- It assumes that people within a given region are mostly consistent in their speech, which is often not true.
- In other words, it doesn't account for *social* differences.





Regional Dialects



Social Dialects



Men's dialect

Social Dialects



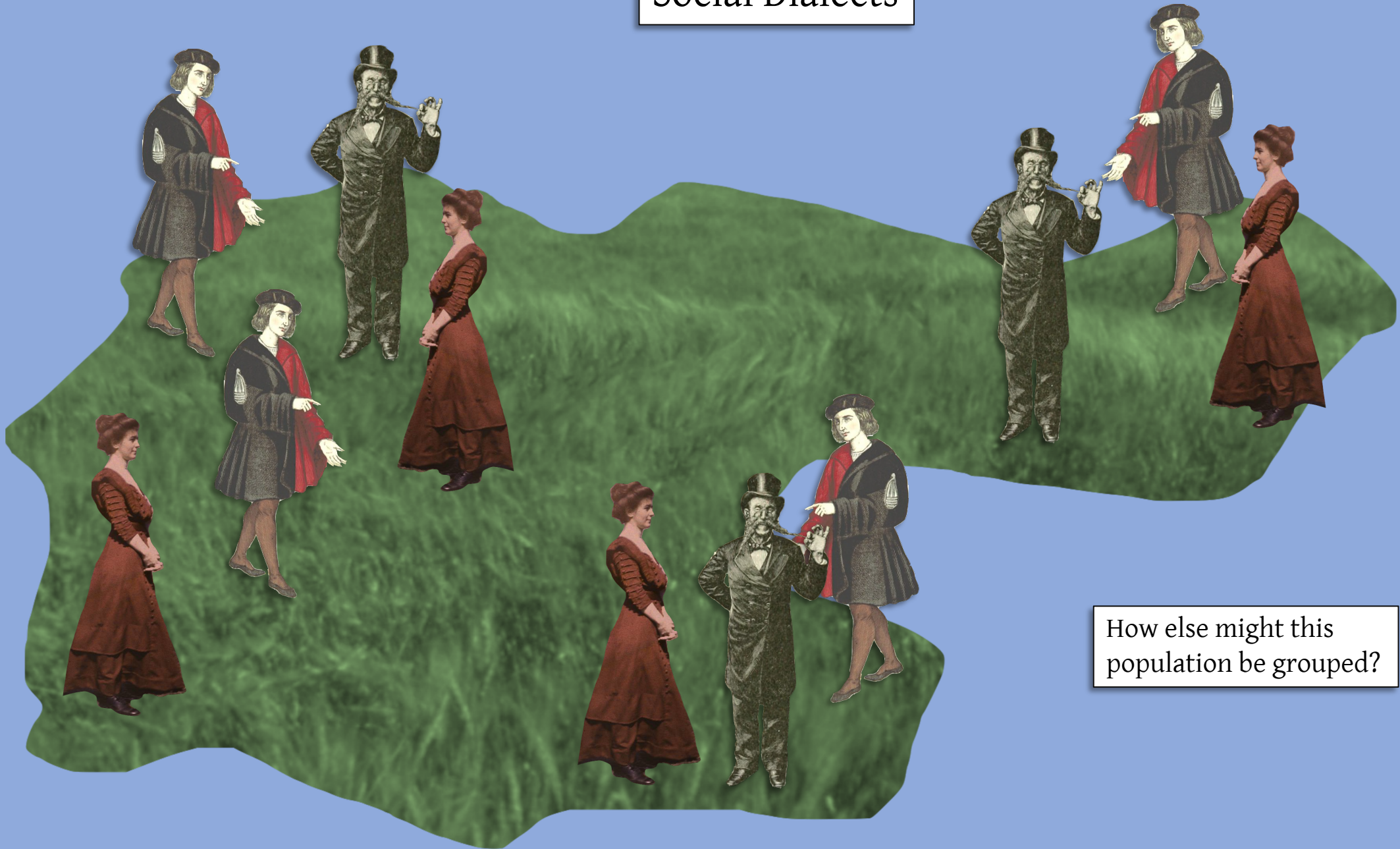
Women's dialect

Social Dialects



Moustache dialect

Social Dialects



How else might this population be grouped?

Social Variation

- What are some possible drivers of social variation?

Race

Gender Identity

Sexuality

Ethnicity

Class

Socioeconomic Status

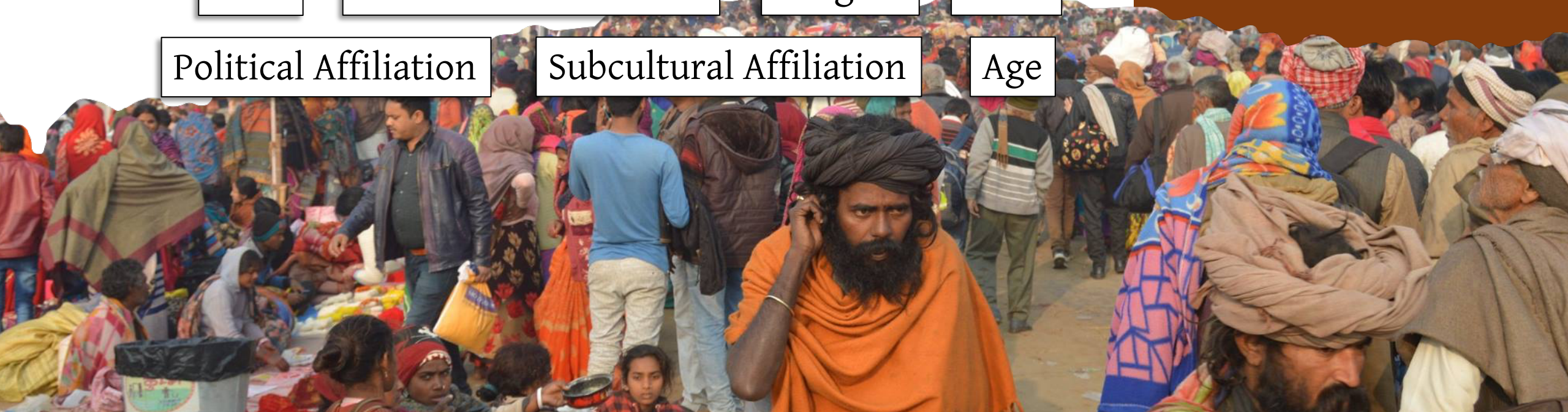
Religion

Caste

Political Affiliation

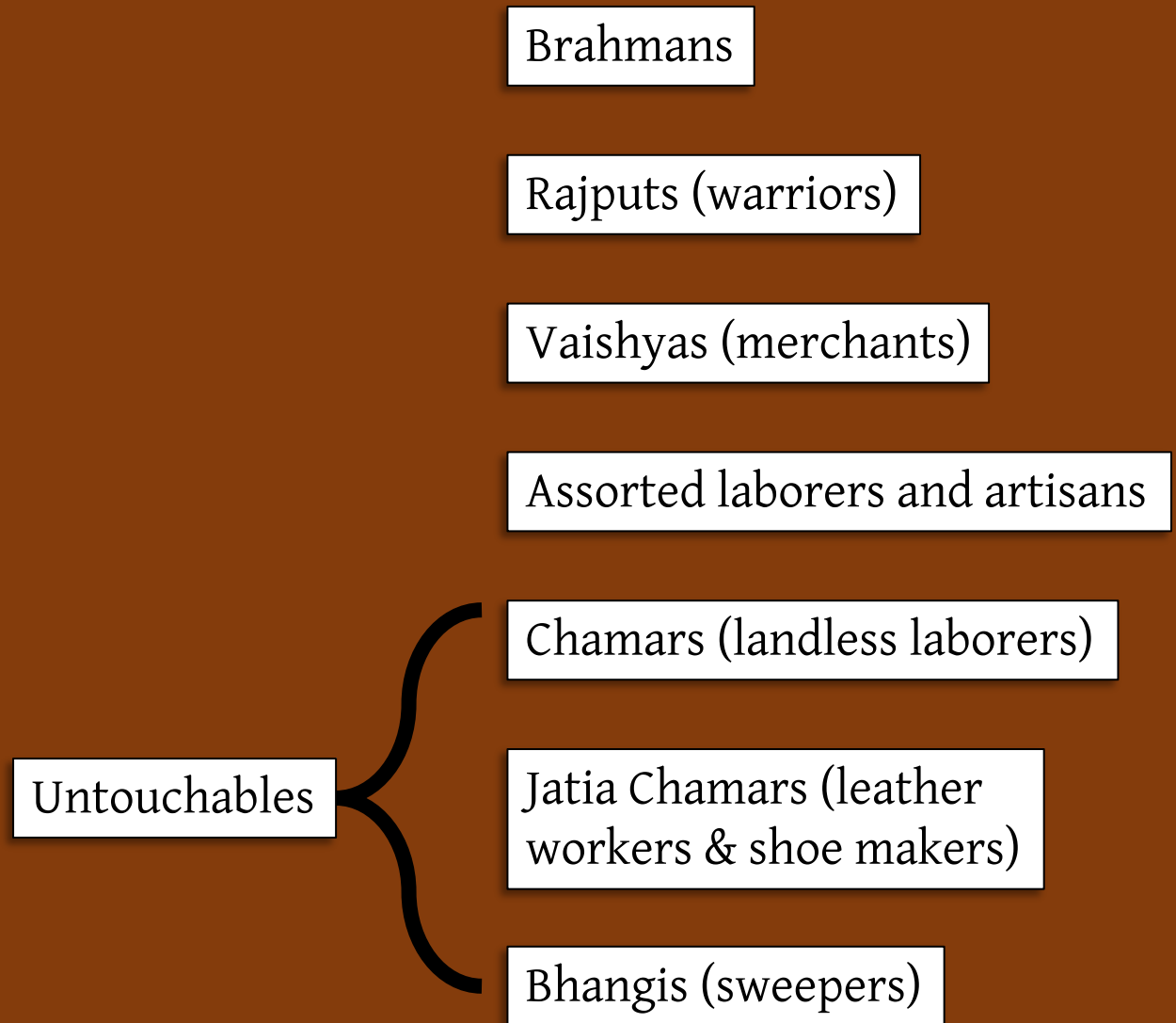
Subcultural Affiliation

Age



Gumperz (1958)

- Study done in Khalapur, India.
- Caste is the dominant social factor among the Hindu population (90% of Khalapur). The Muslim population (10%) is outside the caste system.
- Untouchables “are restricted to living in certain neighborhoods and have less freedom to move in the village than do members of the upper castes.”



Gumperz (1958)

“Bhangis do not make certain phonological contrasts that speakers of all the other castes make. Chamars and Jatia Chamars also lack certain phonological contrasts made by all others, and some, in attempting to make such a contrast, actually hypercorrect; that is, they over-extend a particular usage in trying to emulate others. Jatia Chamars have a characteristic pronunciation of words that end in [æ] in all other village varieties. Each of the three untouchable castes therefore has speech characteristics that clearly set it off both from the other two untouchable castes and from the touchable castes in the village.”

What is a phonological contrast?

What does Gumperz say about the speech of Muslims in Khalapur?

Brahmans

Rajputs (warriors)

Vaishyas (merchants)

Assorted laborers and artisans

Chamars (landless laborers)

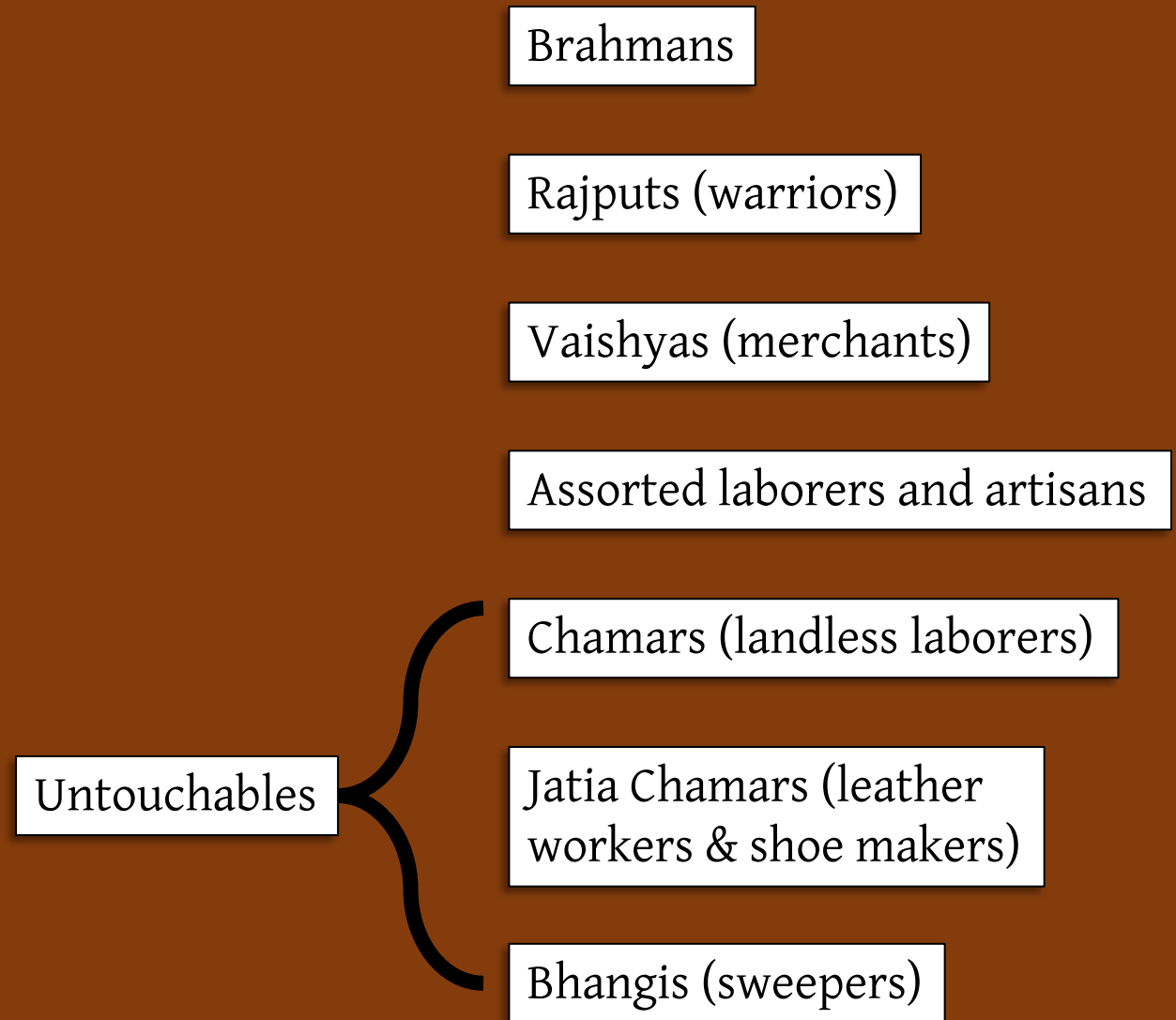
Jatia Chamars (leather workers & shoe makers)

Bhangis (sweepers)

Untouchables

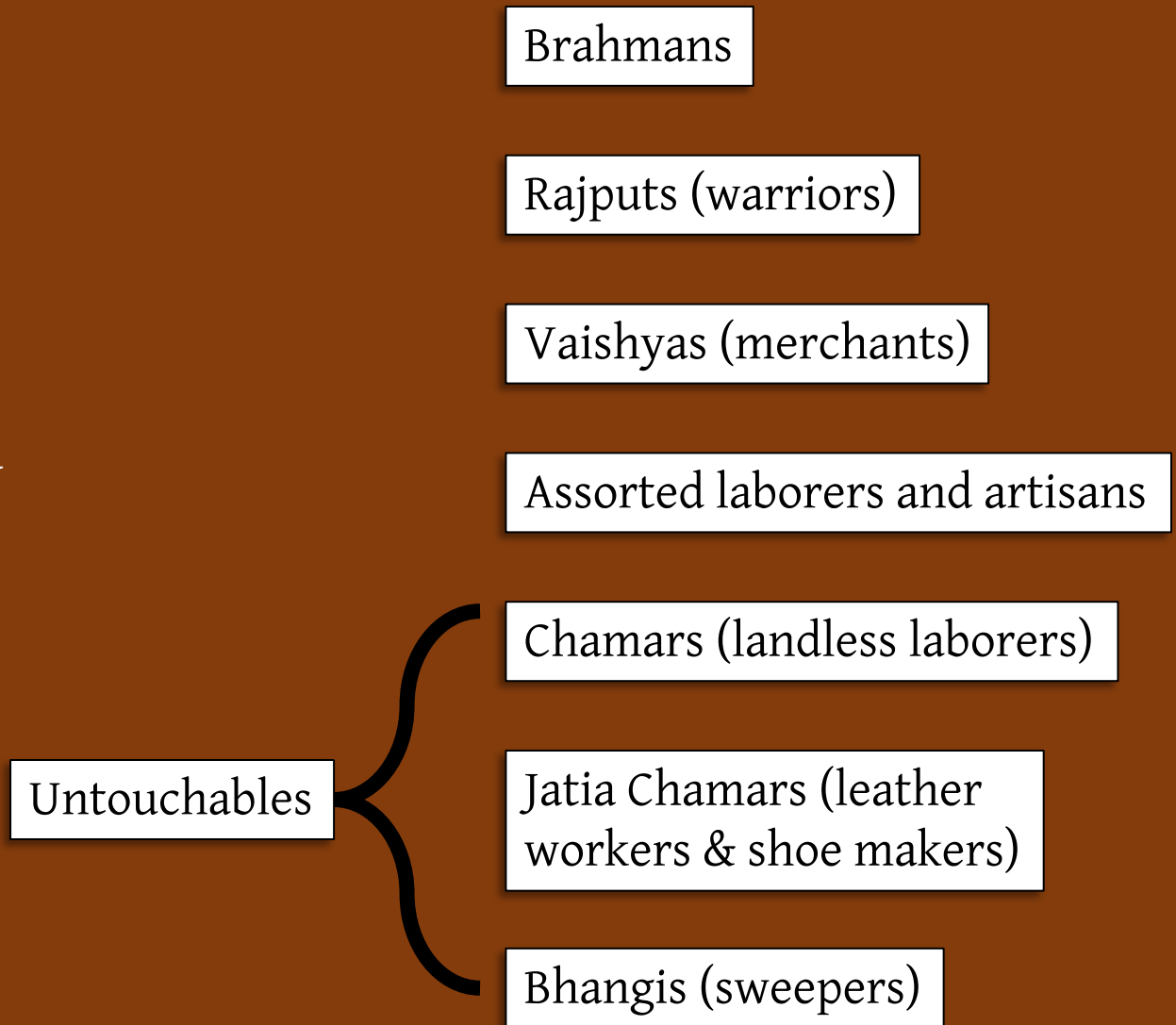
Gumperz (1958)

- Interesting social phenomenon: the Bhangis' speech is "closest to the dialect of the region in which Khalapur is situated."
- Touchables want to emphasize their difference from untouchables.
- Untouchables want to reduce that distinction.
- As a result, what happens?



Gumperz (1958)

- Upper caste people “are forced to innovate away from the regional variety.”
- Since the untouchables generally adopt the traits of UC speech, this means *everyone* is moving away from the regional variety, but for different reasons.



Social variation

- Gumperz's study shows a clear correlation between a social factor (caste) and several linguistic variables (phonological contrasts).
- But most of the world doesn't *have* a system as clearly stratified as caste.
- So, while we might find speakers whose linguistic variables differ, it can be hard to tell what social factors that correlates with.
- In other words, why might one person say *singin'* and another *singing*? *He go* vs. *he goes*? *He doesn't know anything* vs. *He don't know nothing*?

Social variation

“Once a linguistic variable has been identified, the next issue becomes that of collecting data concerning its variants in such a way that we can draw certain conclusions about the social distribution of these variants. To draw such conclusions, we must be able to relate the variants in some way to quantifiable factors in society, e.g., social-class membership, gender, age, ethnicity, and so on.”

- Some New Yorkers say “you guys” when others say “y’all.” Can we relate these variants to any social groups?
- Some New Yorkers say “thank you” when others say “good looks.” Can we relate these variants to any social groups?
- Some New Yorkers say “you’re welcome” when others say “no problem.” Can we relate these variants to any social groups?
- What are some other linguistic variables we can associate with certain groups?

Class

- Class is “the most complicated factor of all.”
- Sociologists use “a number of different scales” when deciding how to identify someone’s social class.
- What is an occupational scale? (p.148)
- What about an educational scale?
- How about income level?
- Because there’s no standard method of identifying one’s class (especially in a post-feudalist society), “the resulting social-class designation given to any individual may differ from study to study.”

Class

- Do people really see themselves as members of classes divided up in this way?
- What do you think? What classes would you say there are?
- What do the following mean to you:
 -
 -
 -
 -
- How do you identify what class someone belongs to?



Class

- Often, we use a number of different scales when assigning someone to a particular class, controlling for local factors.
- What makes someone “upper class” in West Virginia may not be the same as what makes someone “upper class” in London.
- Some factors almost always taken into account are education, professional training, job, money, where one lives, race, and ethnicity. These different factors are then given different weight.
- These classifications may not correspond to classes that people actually recognize.

Labov (1966)

In his study of linguistic variation in New York City, Labov (1966) used the three criteria of education, occupation, and income to set up ten social classes. His class 0, his lower class, had grade school education or less, were laborers, and found it difficult to make ends meet. His classes 1 to 5, his working class, had had some high school education, were blue-collar workers, but earned enough to own such things as cars. His classes 6 to 8, his lower middle class, were high school graduates and semi-professional and white-collar workers who could send their children to college. His highest class 9, his upper middle class, were well educated and professional or business-oriented. In this classification system for people in the United States about 10 percent of the population are said to be lower class, about 40 percent working class, another 40 percent lower middle class, and the remaining 10 percent fall into the upper middle class or an upper class, the latter not included in Labov's study. In his later study (2001) of variation in Philadelphia Labov used a socio-economic index based on occupation, education, and house value.

Class

- What are some of the problems with class discussed in this way?

[Sociologists] treated class as a key independent variable, with variations in speech dependent upon class variations, yet they never considered the meaning of the independent variable. In consequence, they seldom attempted anything like a theory of why class should have an impact, and even more rarely examined their measures of class to see if they were methodologically defensible. (Bainbridge 1994)

As we have seen, at any particular moment, an individual locates [themselves] in social space according to the factors that are relevant to [them] at that moment. While [they] may indeed have certain feelings about being a member of the lower middle class, at any moment it might be more important to be female, or to be a member of a particular church or ethnic group, or to be an in-patient in a hospital, or to be a sister-in-law. That is, self-identification or role-playing may be far more important than some kind of fixed social-class labeling.

Sociolects and idiolects

- What is a sociolect?

The speech characteristics of members of a social group.

- What is an idiolect?

The speech characteristics and linguistic behavior of an individual.

- How does the reality of idiolects create a problem for linguistic fieldwork?

Class: U and non-U English

- Alan S.C. Ross (1954) identified the differences between the sociolects of the upper class (U) and upwardly-aspirant upper-middle class (non-U) in England.
- He finds that many words and pronunciations which were U in 1954, were non-U (or irrelevant) 160 years prior.
- Take a look at his article, posted on our class website.

able to an extent which makes them capable of expansion beyond the limits of their original function.

Since the recent war, two developments have taken place which should have a bearing on the future of Finnish. In the first place, attention is being directed for the first time outside purely linguistic and literary circles to considerations of style. Recent articles in *Ylioppilaslehti*¹ bear witness to the fact; the first hand-books on style have also made their appearance. Secondly, German has now been displaced — by English — as the first foreign language (Swedish is of course one of the two official languages), and a long tradition of German academic and cultural influence has thus to some extent been interrupted. It will be interesting to observe the outcome.

NORMAN DENISON

LINGUISTIC CLASS-INDICATORS IN PRESENT-DAY ENGLISH²

To-day, in 1953, the English class-system is essentially tripartite — there exist an upper, a middle and a lower class. It is solely by its language that the upper class is clearly marked off from the others. In times past (e. g. in the Victorian and Edwardian periods) this was not the case. But, to-day, a member

¹ See e.g. 'Tyylitalto muotivitsausko?' by Matti Hako in Issue No. 36, 1952, p. 8 — apparently inspired by Martti Rapola, 'Äidinkielen tyylitaidon opetuksesta', *Suomalainen Suomi* 7, 1951, p. 310 — and the unsigned article in *Ylioppilaslehti* 40, 1952, p. 8.

² *Phonetic notation*. Length is indicated by a suffixed colon ([ka:d] *card*), stress by a prefixed (closing) inverted comma (*increase* is ['inkrijs] as a noun, [in'krijs] as a verb). In rare cases, a difference between primary and secondary stress is indicated by two, as against one, (closing) inverted commas. Symbols: — [ŋ] as *singer*, [θ] as *thought*, [ð] as *breather*, [ʃ] as *fisher*, [ʒ] as *leisure*, [j] as *yacht*, [i] as *beat*, [ɛ] as *bet*, [ei] as *paid*, [æ] as *cat*, [eə] as *there*, [ɔ] as *hot*, [ɔ:] as *lord*, [ou] as *bone*, [uw] as *boot*, [a] as *cut*, [ə:] as *turn*, [ai] as *ride*, [au] as *found*, [ɔɪ] as *boil*, [ə] as *china*, — and the rest self-evident.

Class: U and non-U English

- What does Ross say about class in England?

To-day, in 1953, the English class-system is essentially tripartite – there exist an upper, a middle and a lower class. It is solely by its language that the upper class is clearly marked off from the others. [...] To-day, a member of the upper class is, for instance, not necessarily better educated, cleaner or richer than someone not of his class. Nor, in general, is he likely to play a greater part in public affairs, be supported by other trades or professions, or engage in other pursuits or pastimes than his fellow of another class.

Class-distinction is very dear to the heart of the upper class and talk about it is hedged with taboo.

Class: U and non-U English

- On page 35, Ross discusses spoken English.
- What are some of the linguistic variables he mentions?

Linguistic Class-indicators

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	U	non-U
<i>acknowledge</i>	[ək'nɒlɪdʒ]	[ək'nouɪdʒ] ¹
<i>Catholic</i>	(['kɑ:θɪk]) ²	['kæθɪk]
<i>either</i>	['aɪðə]	['ijðə]
<i>extraordinary</i>	[ək'strɔ:dɪnri]	['ɛkstrə'ɔ:dɪn(ə)ri]
<i>forehead</i>	['fɔrɪd]	['fɔ:hɛd]
<i>geyser</i>	['geɪzə]	['gɪzə]
<i>handkerchief</i>	['hɛnkətʃɪf]	['hɛnkətʃɪf], ['hɛnkətʃɪv]
<i>hotel</i>	([ou'tɛl])	[hou'tɛl]
<i>humour</i>	(['juwmə])	['hjuwmə]
<i>mass</i>	([ma:s]) ²	[mæs]
<i>medicine</i>	['mɛdsən]	['mɛdɪsən]
<i>a nought</i>	[ə / nɔ:t]	[æn / ɔ:t] ³
<i>tortoise</i>	['tɔ:təs]	['tɔ:tɔɪs], ['tɔ:tɔɪz] ⁴
<i>vase</i>	[va:z]	[vɔ:z], [veɪz]
<i>venison</i>	['vɛnzən]	['vɛnɪzən]
<i>W.</i>	['dæbəlju]	['dæbɪju] ⁵
<i>waistcoat</i>	['wɛskət]	['weɪstkout] ⁶

Discussion!

- Do you think the following expressions are U or non-U, according to Ross's study?

chamber pot

jerry (meaning 'chamber pot')

to take a bath

to have one's bath

corsets

stays (meaning 'corsets')

bike

cycle

motorcycle

motorbike

lunch (meal at midday)

dinner (meal at midday)

greens ('vegetables')

ill

sick

sick

mirror

looking-glass

jam

preserve (for 'jam')

rude ('indecent')

wealthy

rich

studying for an exam

working for an exam

For next week...

- You will be sent quiz #3 tonight (or early tomorrow)!
- Please read pp. 162–180 in the textbook by next week's class.