

# Social Stratification of (r) in New York City Department Stores



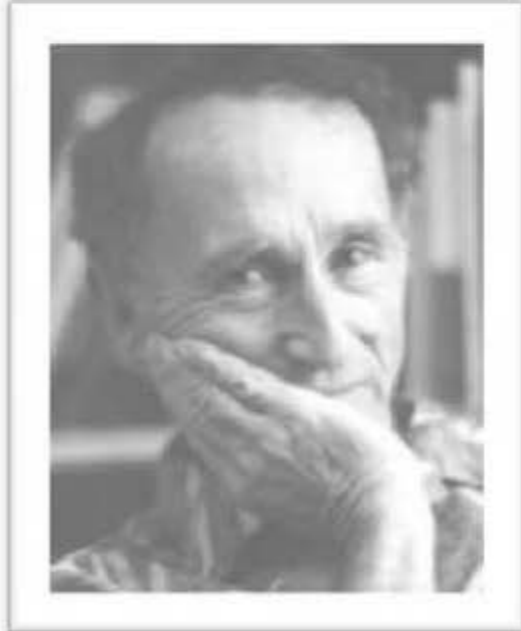
WILLIAM LABOV



# William Labov

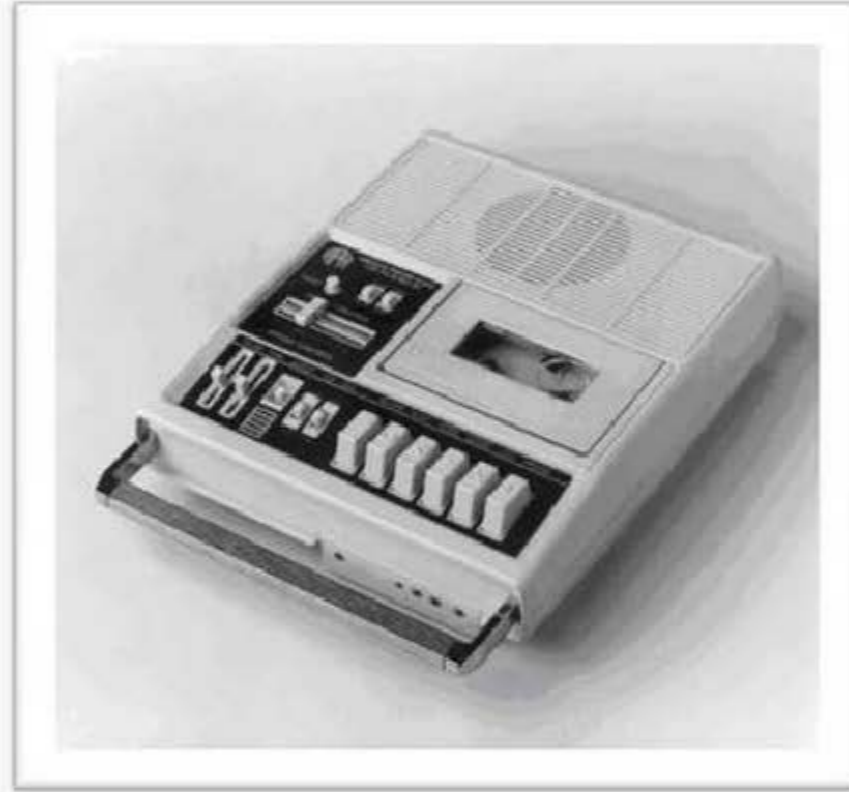


- Is known for...
  - Attention to dialects
  - “Logic” of African American English
  - Reduce reading gap for African American Children



# Gathering Data Through Observation

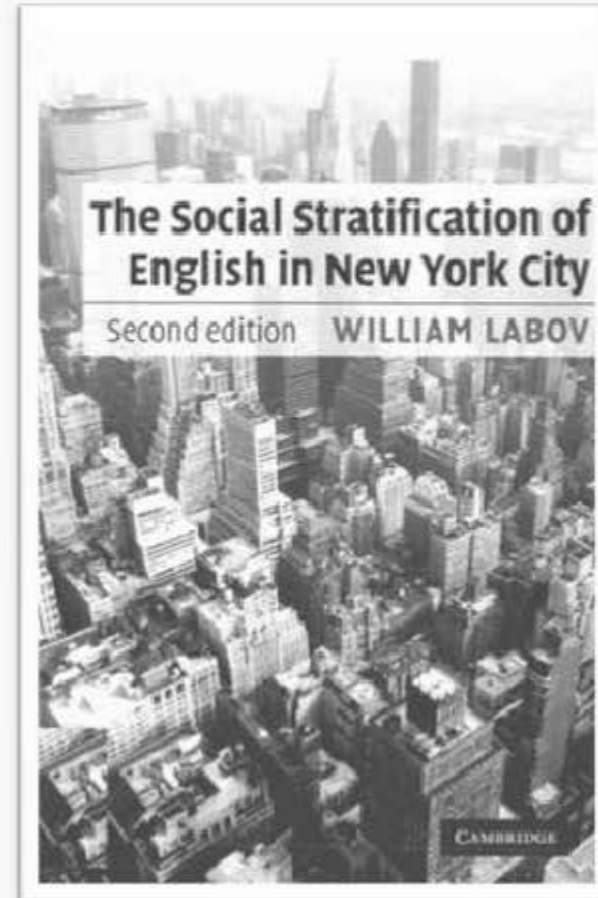
- Tape recorded interviews
  - Speech is formal
- Alternatives
  - Natural social context
  - No explicit observation



# Social Stratification



- “The product of social differentiation and social evaluation”—Bernard Barber
- Social Construction



# Labov's Classic Study of New York City Department Stores (1962)



- Speech corresponding to that of their social class
  - Speech Continuum
  - “Standard” American English
  - Predictable, Quantifiable, and Explainable
- Preliminary studies led to (r)

# Hypothesis



- Differential use of (r) directly
- corresponds to ranking in
- social stratification
  
- Fine social differences
- as well as gross ones



# Three Large Department Stores



- Differential ranking
  - Location
  - Advertising
  - Price of goods and emphasis on price
  - Physical plant
- Saks Fifth Avenue (Highest)
- Macy's (Middle)
- S. Klein (Lowest)



# Stratification of Employees

- Prestige of store
- Working Conditions
- Not wages





# The Method



- Interviewer is customer
- “Fourth Floor”
- Ask to repeat
- Data entry
  - (r-1)
  - (r-0)



# Variables

- Independent

- The store
- Floor within the store
- Sex
- Age
- Occupation
- Race
- Foreign or regional accent

- Dependent

- Casual: fourth floor
- Emphatic: fourth floor

# Overall Stratification of (r)



- **Three Categories**

- All (r-1)
- Some (r-1)
- No (r-1)

- **Results**

- 62% Saks
- 51% Macy's
- 20% Kleins

- **Emphatic Results**

- (r-1) is most appropriate for emphatic speech
- Linguistic security

# The Effect of Other Independent Variables



## Race

- African Americans
  - Kleins
  - Lower use of (r-1)
  - General pattern of social stratification

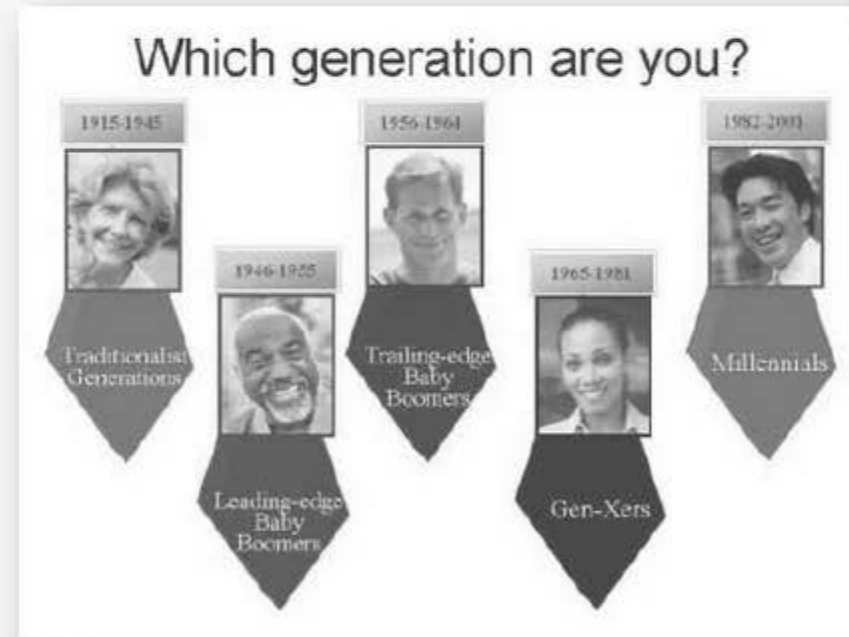
## Occupation

- Floorwalkers
- Sales people
- Cashiers stockboys
- Elevator operators

# Differentiation By Age of the Informants



- Estimated within 5 year intervals
- Expect a rise in (r-1) in younger sales people
- Compared with Lower East Side Data
- The explanation



# Experiment Limitations



- More systematic sampling
- Data not tape recorded
- Method used to elicit emphatic speech
  
- Sources of error offset by
  - Three subsections
  - Size of sample
  - Availability for rechecking

# Future of Rapid and Anonymous Studies



- Control the interactive effect of the observer
- Nonreactive experimentation
- Most important experimental method

