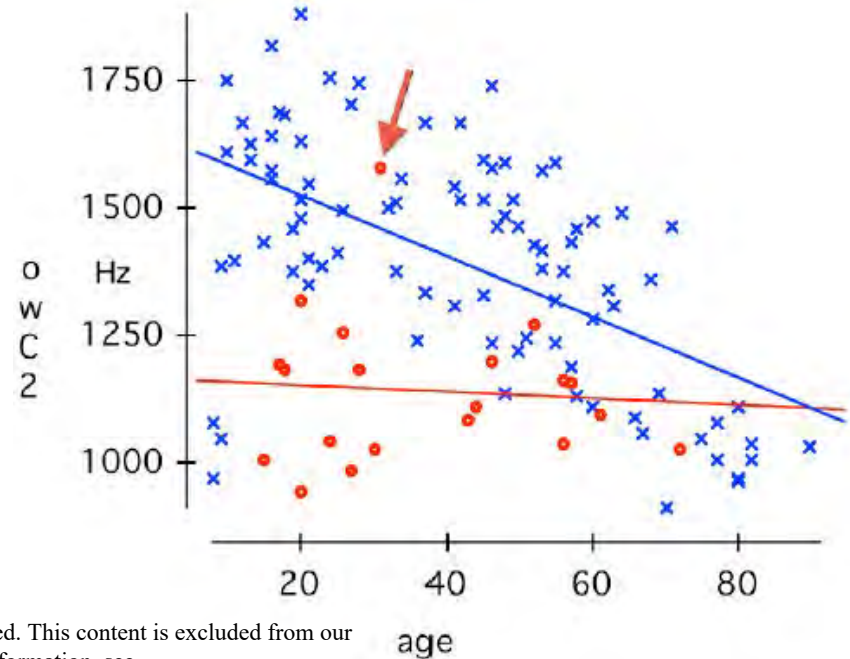
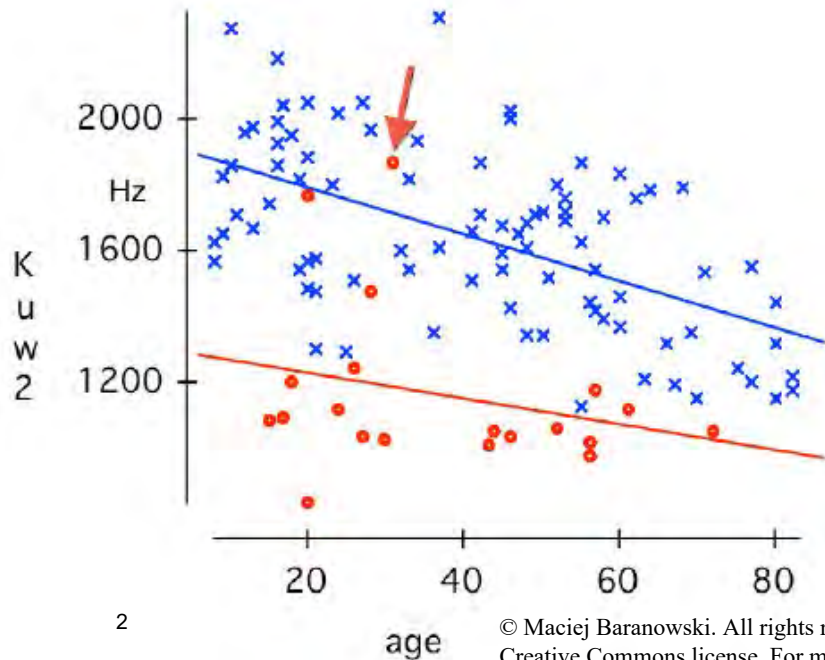


24.914

Social Variation

Age and social variation

- The GOOSE and GOAT vowels /u/ and /oʊ/ are fronting in the speech of white speakers in Charleston, S.C.
 - But not, or less so, in the speech of most African Americans (Baranowski 2013).
 - red circles: African American, blue crosses: White
- /u/ following non-coronals /oʊ/ in closed syllables



Social variation

- Different social groups in the same geographical area can have different accents
- In some cases this reflects the fact that language can change differently among different social groups
- What does this tell us about how language change operates?

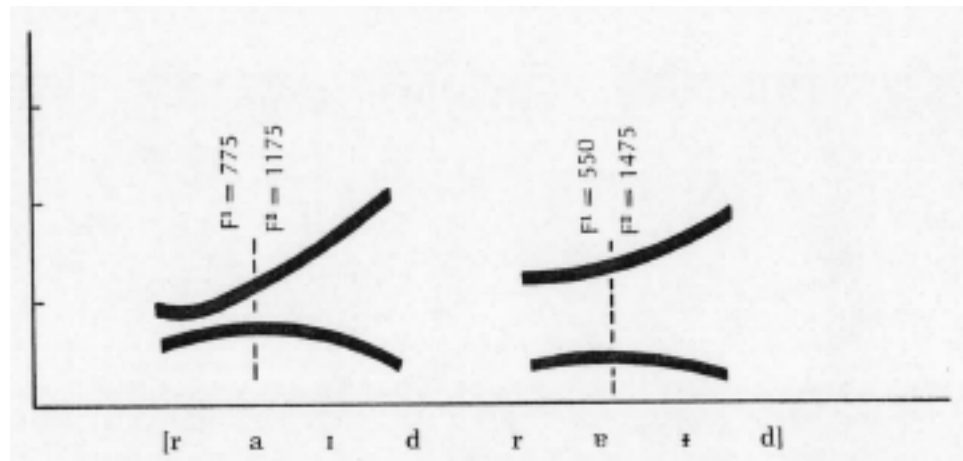
Social variation

- Centralization of diphthongs on Martha's Vineyard (Labov 1963).
- The English of Martha's Vineyard shows variation between PRICE /aɪ/ and MOUTH /aʊ/ vowels with higher or lower nuclei: [aɪ]~[æɪ]~[əɪ], [aʊ]~[æʊ]~[əʊ]
- 'But just as long as **I** draw the breath of **life I**'ll be down in **my** boat in the mornin', at six or half past six in the morning, bound somewhere, doing all that **I** can, as best as **I** can, to the best of **my** ability and knowledge . . . because **I** take a **pride** in doing that, somethin' **I** know, and **I** feel that **I**'m doing something . . . important.'

(audio at 6:45 in Labov's [Haskins Prize Lecture](#) video.)

Martha's Vineyard

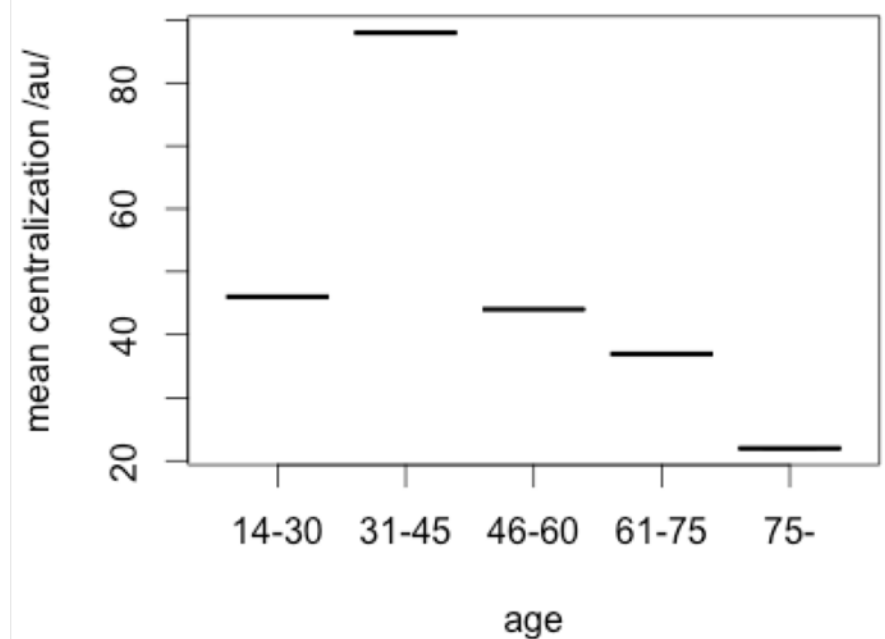
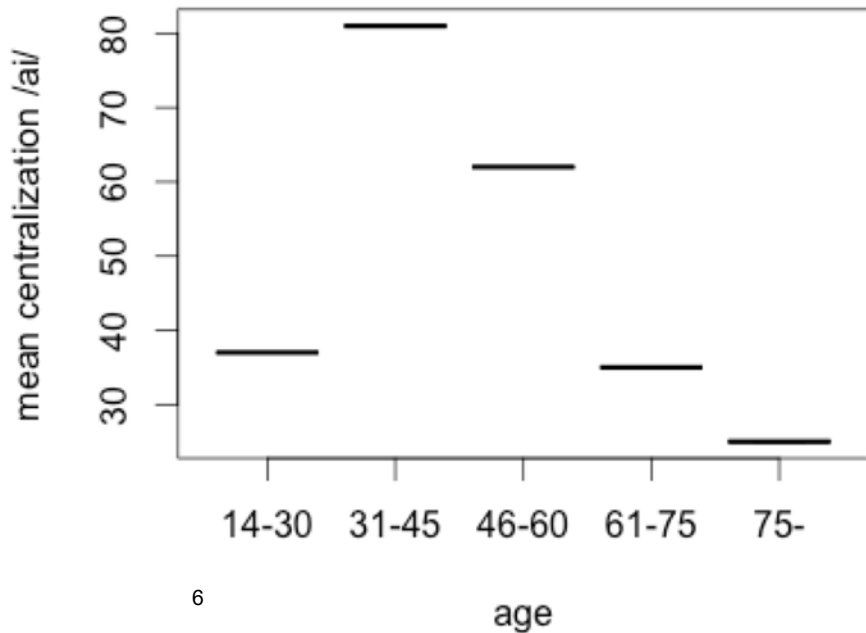
- [aɪ]~[ɪa]~[əɪ], [aʊ]~[ʌʊ]~[əʊ]
- Transcribed on a scale from (lowest/back) 0-4 (highest/front)
 - Verified that the scale largely reflects formant frequencies



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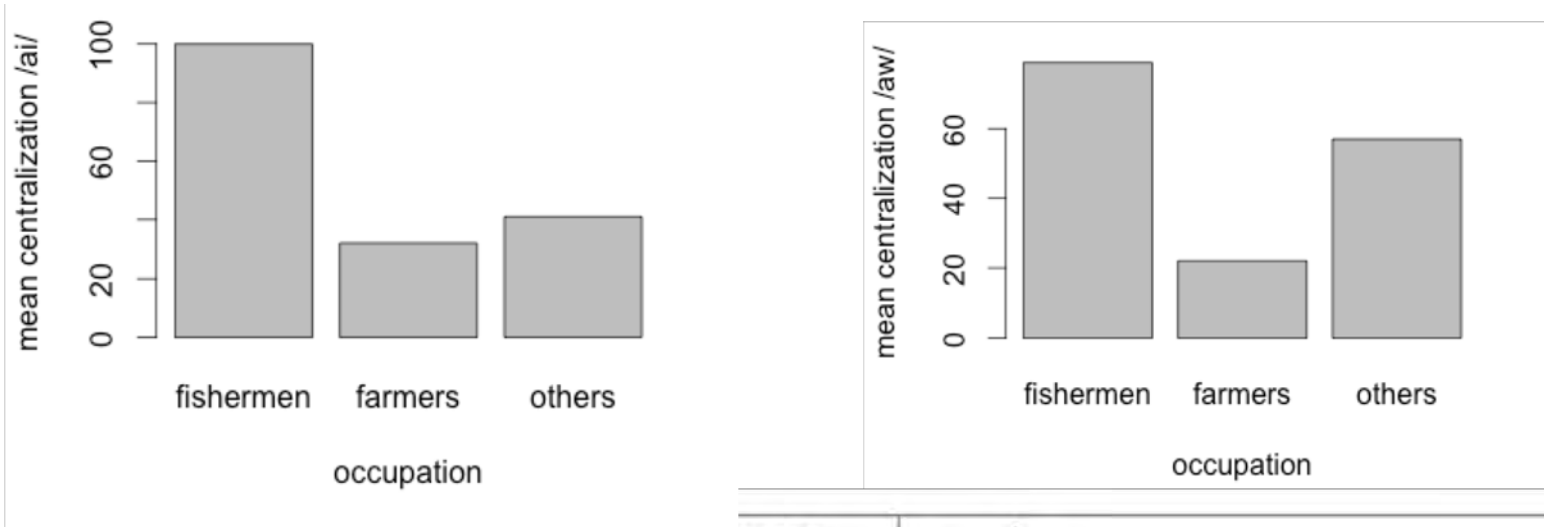
Age-Related Variation

- Mean of centralization levels for all tokens for each age group, multiplied by 100.
- Little centralization among the oldest speakers, steadily increases to 31-45, then drops back among the youngest speakers.

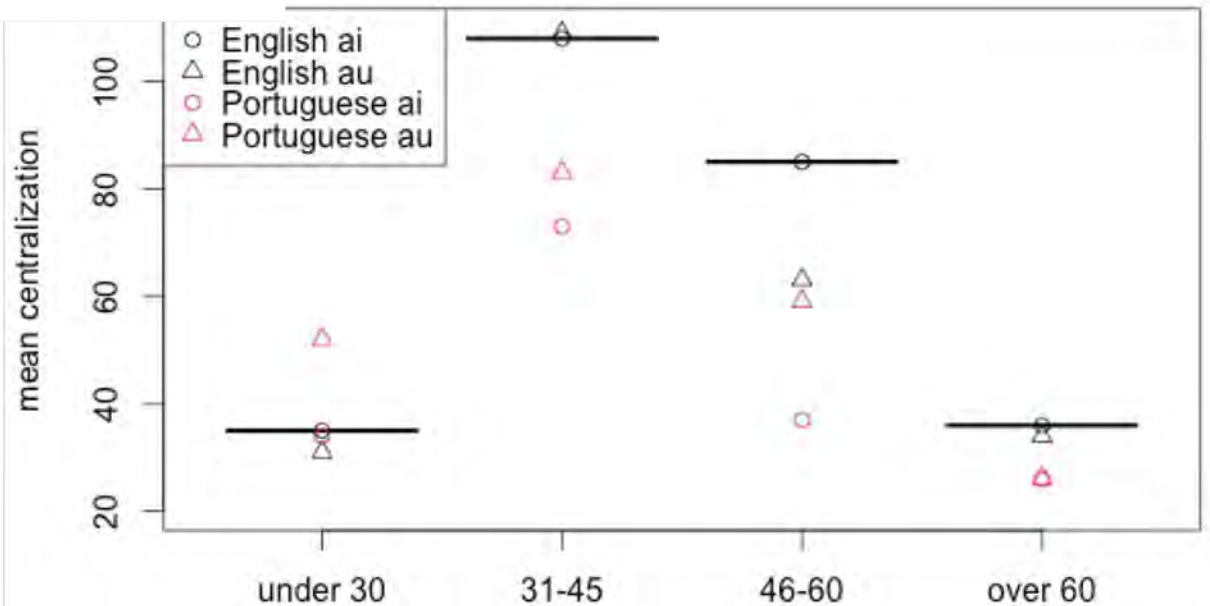


Social Variation

- There is also variation by occupation



- And ethnicity



Phonological conditioning

- There is also phonological conditioning of centralization (pp. 18-21)
 - Primarily following context:

Not favoring centralization

sonorants
nasals
voiced
velars
fricatives

zero final

labials

Favoring centralization

obstruents
orals
voiceless
apicals
stops

- Most favorable to least favorable following contexts:

/t, s: p, f: d, v, z: k, θ, ð: ø: l, r: n: m/

Social Variation

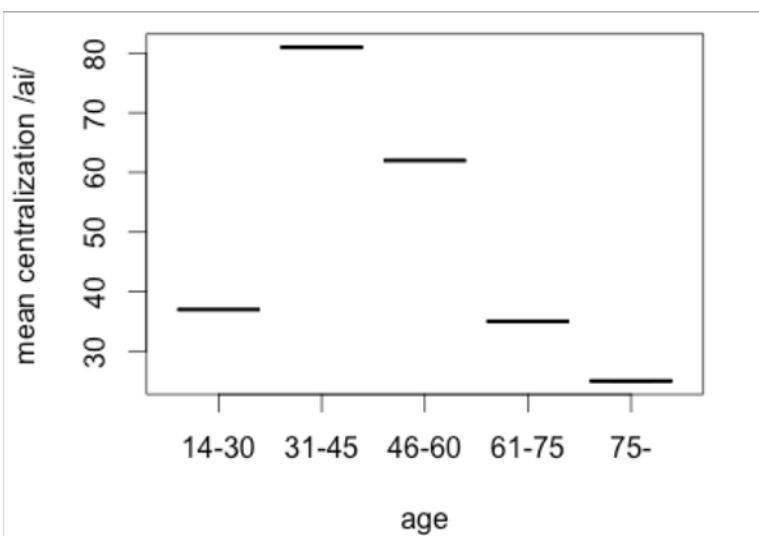
- Labov's interpretation:
 - centralization marks identification with the Vineyard as opposed to the mainland
 - The more a speaker identifies as a Vineyarder, the more they centralize their diphthongs.
 - Other features may serve the same purpose,
 - identification with the Vineyard tends to vary by age, ethnicity and occupation
 - the more a speaker identifies
- Adoption of variants, and hence participation in a sound change, can depend on speaker attitudes and the social meaning of those variants.

The social context on Martha's Vineyard

- In the 1960's it was hard to make a living on the island – no industry, fishing had declined, farming was uncompetitive, unemployment was high.
- The economy was becoming dependent on summer visitors and the tourist trade
 - the labor force ‘is heavily occupied with service trades’
 - houses are being bought up as vacation homes by mainlanders.
- ‘The gradual transition to dependence on, and outright ownership by the summer people has produced reactions varying from a fiercely defensive contempt for outsiders to enthusiastic plans for furthering the tourist economy’ (p.28)

Age-related variation on Martha's Vineyard

- General trend to increasing centralization over the years with increasing conflict with the influence of the mainland.
- Labov claims that Vineyard identity is strongest among 30-45 age group because people from that age group who are less committed to the island have left.
 - Many young people leave the island for college.
 - Many stay on the mainland in pursuit of better jobs.
 - ‘ “You know, E. didn't always speak that way...it's only since he came back from college. I guess he wanted to be more like the men on the docks...” (p.31)



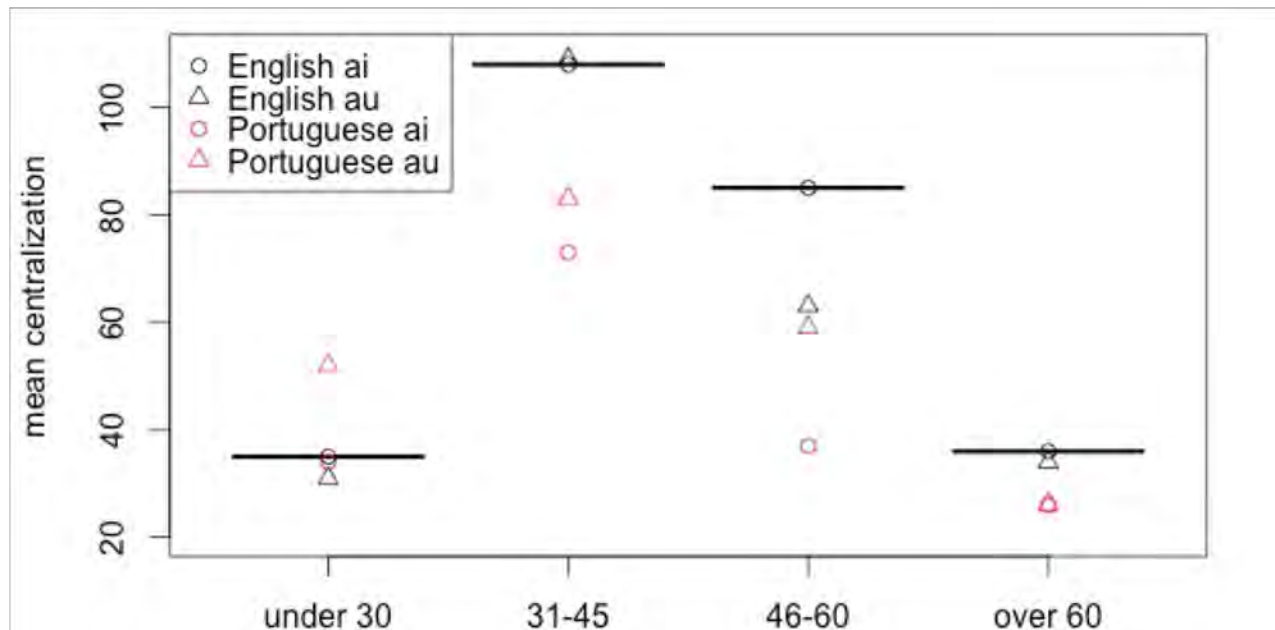
Social variation on Martha's Vineyard

- The youngest speakers vary in their commitment to the Vineyard – some are planning to leave.
- Four 15 year old students: ‘the two down-islanders who intend to leave for careers in business and finance show little or no centralization [0-40]; the two up-islanders who hope to go to college and return to make their living on the island show considerable centralization [90-119]’ p.32
- Fishermen are attempting to maintain a traditional Vineyard occupation, hence tend to wish to project an island identity.



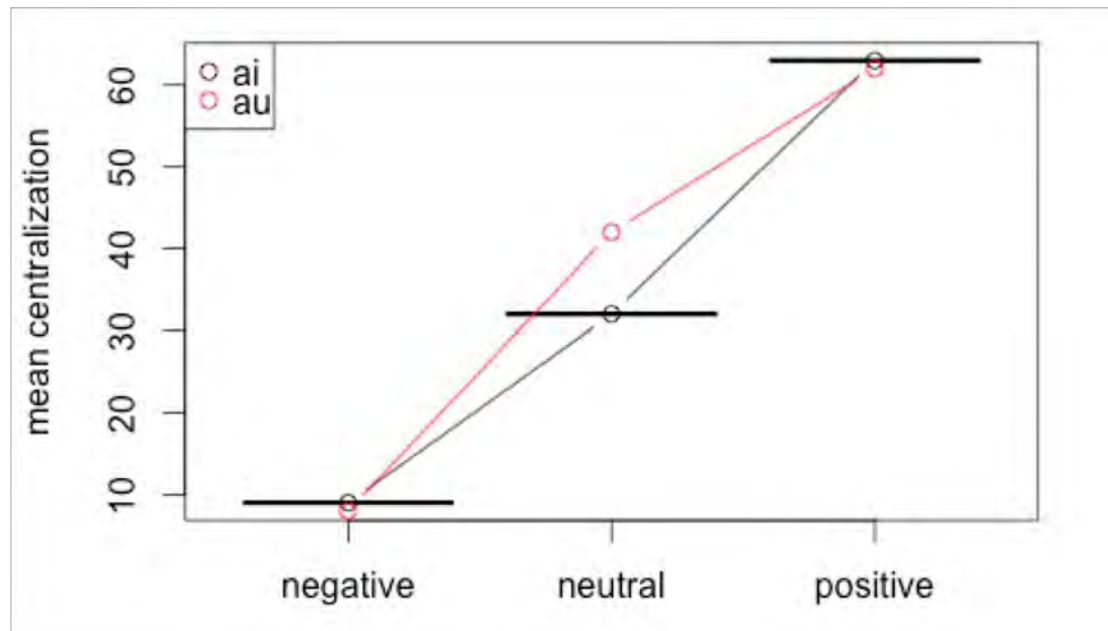
Social variation on Martha's Vineyard

- Labov argues that residents of Portuguese descent are different – they do not typically leave for college, they stay on the Vineyard to work.
- He identifies the main social dynamic as increasing integration into the mainstream, with accompanying convergence with the speech of residents of English descent.



Social variation on Martha's Vineyard

- The most straightforward correlation involving centralization is with orientation towards Martha's Vineyard.
 - Categorized based on interviews.
 - No presentation of unaggregated data, or measures of variability.



- Implications for the mechanisms of sound change and its propagation?

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24.914 Language Variation and Change
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