3 The social stratification of (r) in New York City department stores

[The department store study has received a great deal of attention, and many people have written to me for information about it who have no other knowledge of the New York City study. Of the year and a half spent studying New York City, a day and a half was spent in the three department stores. I have been concerned that people would not see past the method to the importance of the results. Yet the department store study has withstood the test of time. It has been replicated many times – twice in NYC department stores – with extraordinary fidelity, and it articulates with the larger study in remarkable detail, showing that the inquiry limited to the Lower East Side is valid for the city as a whole. It contributes to one of the most unexpected findings of this study: that the great metropolis is a geographic unity. Furthermore, rapid and anonymous studies have been established as an efficient and reliable tool of sociolinguistic research.]

So far in the investigation of the speech of New York City, we have been taking a very close view of the linguistic behavior of individuals. As a preliminary to extending this method to large numbers of speakers, it will be useful to consider a survey of the speech of New York City department store employees, conducted in the November of 1962. This survey was designed to test two ideas that arose from the exploratory interviews: first, that the variable (r) is a social differentiator in all levels of New York City speech; and second, that casual and anonymous speech events could be used as the basis for a systematic study of language. The study as carried out was a self-contained unit, and will be reported as a whole in this chapter.

We can hardly consider the social distribution of language in New York City without encountering the pattern of social stratification which pervades the life of the city. We will have ample opportunity to deal with this concept in Chapter 7; at the moment, we may refer to the definition given by Bernard Barber:[1] social stratification is the product of social differentiation and social evaluation. The use of this term does not imply any specific type of class or caste, but simply that the normal workings of society have

[1] *Social Stratification* (1957), pages 1–3.

produced systematic differences between certain institutions or people, and that these differentiated forms have been ranked in status or prestige by general agreement.

We begin with the general hypothesis suggested at the end of the last chapter: *if any two sub-groups of New York City speakers are ranked on a scale of social stratification, then they will be ranked in the same order by their differential use of (r).*

It would be easy to test this hypothesis by comparing occupational groups, which are among the most important indexes of social stratification. We could, for example, take a group of lawyers, a group of file clerks, and a group of janitors. But this would hardly go beyond the indications of the exploratory interviews, and such an extreme example of differentiation would not provide a very exacting test of the hypothesis. We would like to show that the hypothesis is so general, and the differential use of (r) pervades New York City so thoroughly, that fine social differences will be reflected in the index as well as gross ones.

It therefore seemed best to construct a very severe test by finding a subtle case of stratification within a single occupational group: in this case, the sales people of large department stores in Manhattan. If we select three large department stores, from the top, middle, and bottom of the price and fashion scale, we can expect that the customers will be socially stratified. Would we expect the sales people to show a comparable stratification? Such a position would depend upon two correlations: between the status ranking of the stores and the ranking of parallel jobs in the three stores; and between the jobs and the behavior of the persons who hold those jobs. These are not unreasonable assumptions. C. Wright Mills points out, in *White Collar*, that salesgirls in large department stores tend to borrow prestige from their customers, or at least make an effort in that direction.[2] In later chapters, we will show that a person's own occupation is more closely correlated with his or her linguistic behavior – for those working actively – than any other single social characteristic. In this chapter, we will give some evidence that the stores are objectively differentiated in a fixed order, and that jobs in these stores are evaluated by employees in that order. Since the product of social differentiation and evaluation, no matter how minor, is social stratification of the employees in the three stores, the hypothesis will predict the following result:

[2] C. Wright Mills, *White Collar* (1956), page 173. See also page 243: "The tendency of white collar people to borrow status from higher elements is so strong that it has carried over to all social contacts and features of the work-place. Sales people in department stores . . . frequently attempt, although often unsuccessfully, to borrow prestige from their contact with customers, and to cash it in among work colleagues as well as friends off the job. In the big city the girl who works on 34th Street cannot successfully claim as much prestige as the one who works on Fifth Avenue or 57th Street."

sales people in the highest ranked store will have the highest values of (r); those in the middle ranked store will have intermediate values of (r); and those in the lowest ranked store will show the lowest values.

If this result holds true, the hypothesis will have received confirmation in proportion to the severity of the test.

The three stores which were selected are Saks Fifth Avenue, Macy's, and S. Klein. The differential ranking of these stores may be illustrated in many ways. Their locations are one important point:

Highest ranking: Saks Fifth Avenue
at 50th St. and Fifth Ave., near the center of the high fashion shopping district, along with other high prestige stores such as Bonwit Teller, Henri Bendel, Lord and Taylor.

Middle ranking: Macy's
Herald Square, 34th St. and Sixth Ave., near the garment district, along with Gimbels and Saks-34th St., other middle range stores in price and prestige.

Lowest ranking: S. Klein
Union Square, 14th St. and Broadway, not far from the Lower East Side; the other large store in the area, Ohrbachs, recently raised its price and advertising level and moved uptown.

The advertising and price policies of the stores are very clearly stratified. Perhaps no other element of class behavior is so sharply differentiated in New York City as that of the newspaper which people read; many surveys have shown that the *Daily News* is the paper read first and foremost by working class people, while the *New York Times* draws its readership from the middle class.[3] These two newspapers were examined for the advertising copy in October 24th through 27th, 1962 (see Table 3.1). Saks and Macy's advertised in the *New York Times*, where Klein was represented only by a very small item; in the *News*, however, Saks does not appear at all, while both Macy's and Klein are heavy advertisers.

We may also consider the prices of the goods advertised during those four days. Since Saks usually does not list prices, we can only compare prices for all three stores on one item: women's coats. Saks: $90.00, Macy's: $79.95, Klein: $23.00. On four items, we can compare Klein and Macy's (see Table 3.2).

[3] This statement is fully confirmed by answers to a question on newspaper readership in the Mobilization for Youth Survey of the Lower East Side, as described in Chapter 6. The readership of the *Daily News* and *Daily Mirror* (now defunct) on the one hand, and the *New York Times* and *Herald Tribune* on the other hand, is almost complementary in distribution by social class.

Table 3.1 *No. of pages of advertising October 24–27, 1962*

	NY Times	Daily News
Saks	2	0
Macy's	6	15
S. Klein	1/4	10

Table 3.2

	Macy's	S. Klein
dresses	$ 14.95	$ 5.00
girls' coats	16.99	12.00
stockings	.89	.45
men's suits	49.95–64.95	26.00–66.00

The emphasis on prices is also different. Saks either does not mention prices, or buries the figure in small type at the foot of the page. Macy's features the prices in large type, but often adds the slogan, "You get more than low prices." Klein, on the other hand, is often content to let the prices speak for themselves. The form of the prices is also different: Saks gives prices in round figures, such as $120; Macy's always shows a few cents off the dollar: $49.95; Klein usually prices its goods in round numbers, and adds the retail price which is always much higher, and shown in Macy's style: $23.00, marked down from $49.95."

The physical plant of the stores also serves to differentiate them. Saks is the most spacious, especially on the upper floors, with the least amount of goods displayed. Many of the floors are carpeted, and on some of them, a receptionist is stationed to greet the customers. Klein, at the other extreme, is a maze of annexes, sloping concrete floors, low ceilings; it has the maximum amount of goods displayed at the least possible expense.

The principal stratifying effect upon the employees is the prestige of the store, and the working conditions. Wages do not stratify the employees in the same order. On the contrary, there is every indication that high prestige stores such as Saks pay lower wages than Macy's.

Saks is a non-union store, and the general wage structure is not a matter of public record. However, conversations with a number of men and women who have worked in New York department stores, including Saks and Macy's, show general agreement on the direction of the wage

differential.[4] Some of the incidents reflect a willingness of sales people to accept much lower wages from the store with greater prestige. The executives of the prestige stores pay a great deal of attention to employee relations, and take many unusual measures to ensure that the sales people feel that they share in the general prestige of the store.[5] One of the Lower East Side informants who worked at Saks was chiefly impressed with the fact that she could buy Saks clothes at a 25 percent discount. A similar concession from a lower prestige store would have been of little interest to her.

From the point of view of Macy's employees, a job in Klein is well below the horizon. Working conditions and wages are generally considered to be less, and the prestige of Klein is very low indeed. As we will see, the racial and ethnic composition of the store employees reflect these differences quite accurately (see Table 3.5).

A socio-economic index which ranked New Yorkers on occupation would show the employees of the three stores at the same level; an income scale would probably find Macy's employees somewhat higher than the others; education is the only objective scale which might differentiate the groups in the same order as the prestige of the stores, though there is no evidence on this point. However, the working conditions of sales jobs in the three stores stratify them in the order: Saks, Macy's, Klein; the prestige of the stores leads to a social evaluation of these jobs in the same order. Thus the two aspects of social stratification – differentiation and evaluation – are to be seen in the relations of the three stores and their employees.

The normal approach to a survey of department store employees requires that one enumerate the sales people of each store, draw random samples in each store, make appointments to speak with each employee at home, interview the respondents, then segregate the native New Yorkers, analyze and re-sample the non-respondents, and so on. This is an expensive

[4] Macy's sales employees are represented by a strong labor union, while Saks is not unionized. One former Macy's employee considered it a matter of common knowledge that Saks wages were lower than Macy's, and that the prestige of the store helped to maintain its non-union position. Bonuses and other increments are said to enter into the picture. It appears that it is more difficult for a young girl to get a job at Saks than at Macy's. Thus Saks has more leeway in hiring policies, and the tendency of the store officials to select girls who speak in a certain way will play a part in the stratification of language, as well as the adjustment made by the employees to their situation. Both influences converge to produce stratification.

[5] A former Macy's employee told me of an incident that occurred shortly before Christmas several years ago. As she was shopping in Lord and Taylor's, she saw the president of the company making the rounds of every aisle and shaking hands with every employee. When she told her fellow employees at Macy's about this scene, the most common remark was, "How else do you get someone to work for that kind of money?" One can say that not only do the employees of higher status stores borrow prestige from their employer – it is also deliberately loaned to them.

and time-consuming procedure, but for most purposes there is no short cut which will give accurate and reliable results. In this case, a simpler method, which relies upon the extreme generality of the linguistic behavior of the subjects, was used to gather a very limited type of data. This method is dependent upon the systematic sampling of casual and anonymous speech events. Applied in a poorly defined environment, such a method is open to many biases and it would be difficult to say what population had been studied. In this case, our population is well defined as the sales people (or more generally, any employee whose speech might be heard by a customer) in three specific stores at a specific time. The end result will be a view of the role that speech would play in the overall social imprint of the employees upon the customer. What is surprising about the method, is not only the simplicity and economy of the approach, but the high degree of consistency and regularity in the results, which will allow us to test the original hypothesis in a number of subtle ways.

The method

The application of the study of casual and anonymous speech events to the department store situation was relatively simple. The interviewer approached the informant in the role of a customer asking for directions to a particular department. The department was one which was located on the fourth floor. When the interviewer asked, "Excuse me, where are the women's shoes?" the answer would normally be, "Fourth floor."

The interviewer then leaned forward and said, "Excuse me?" He would usually then obtain another utterance, "*Fourth floor*," spoken in careful style under emphatic stress.[6]

The interviewer would then move along the aisle of the store to a point immediately beyond the informant's view, and make a written note of the data. The following independent variables were included:

the store
occupation [floorwalker, sales, cashier, stockboy]
floor within the store[7]
sex
race
age [estimated in units of five years]
foreign or regional accent, if any

[6] The interviewer in all cases was myself. I was dressed in middle class style, with jacket, white shirt, and tie, and used my normal pronunciation as a college-educated native of New Jersey (*r*-pronouncing).

[7] Notes were also made on the department in which the employee was located, but the numbers for individual departments are not large enough to allow comparison.

The dependent variable is the use of (r) in four occurrences:

(casual)	(emphatic)
fourth floor	*fourth floor*

Thus we have pre-consonantal and final position, in both casual and emphatic styles of speech. In addition, all other uses of (r) by the informant were noted, from remarks overheard or contained in the interview. Following the notation of Chapter 2, *1* was entered for each plainly constricted value of the variable; for unconstricted schwa, lengthened vowel, or no representation, *0* was entered. Doubtful cases or partial constriction were symbolized "d" and were not used in the final tabulation.

Also noted were instances of affricates or stops used in the word *fourth* for the final consonant, and any other examples of (th-2), (th-3), (dh-2), or (dh-3), used by the speaker.

This method of interviewing was applied in each aisle on the floor as many times as possible before the spacing of the informants became so close that it was noticed that the same question was asked before. Each floor of the store was investigated in the same way. On the fourth floor, the form of the question was necessarily different: "Excuse me, what floor is this?"

Following this method, 68 interviews were obtained in Saks, 125 in Macy's, and 71 in Klein. Total interviewing time for the 264 subjects was about six and one-half hours.

At this point, we might consider the nature of these 264 interviews in more general terms. They were speech events which had entirely different social significance from the point of view of the two participants. As far as the informant was concerned, the exchange was a normal salesman-customer interaction, almost below the level of conscious attention, in which relations of the speakers were so casual and anonymous that they may hardly have been said to have met. This tenuous relationship was the minimum intrusion upon the behavior of the subject; language and the use of language never appeared at all.

From the point of view of the interviewer, the exchange was a systematic elicitation of the exact forms required, in the desired context, the desired order, and with the desired contrast of style.

Overall stratification of (r)

The results of the study showed clear and consistent stratification of (r) in the three stores. In Figure 3.1, the use of (r) by employees of Saks, Macy's, and Klein's is compared by means of a bar graph. Since the data for most informants consist of only four items, we will not use a continuous

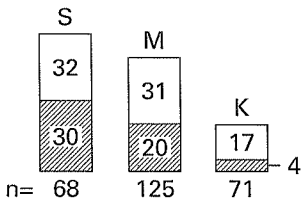

Figure 3.1 Overall stratification of (r) by store (S=Saks, M=Macy's, K=S. Klein. Shaded area= % *all (r-1)*; unshaded area= % *some (r-1)*)

numerical index for (r), but rather divide all informants into three categories:[8]

all (r-1):	those whose records show only (r-1) and no (r-0)
some (r-1):	those whose records show at least one (r-1) and one (r-0)
no (r-1):	those whose records show only (r-0)

The shaded area of Figure 3.1 shows the percentage of *all (r-1)*; the unshaded area of the bar shows the percentage of *some (r-1)*. The remainder, not shown on the graph, is the percentage of *no (r-1)*. The figure underneath each bar shows the total number of cases.

Thus we see that a total of 62 percent of Saks employees used all or some (r-1), 51 percent of Macy's, and 21 percent of Klein's. The stratification is even sharper for the percentages of all (r-1). As the hypothesis predicted, the groups are ranked by their differential use of (r-1) in the same order as their stratification by extra-linguistic factors.

Next, we may wish to examine the distribution of (r) in each of the four standard positions. Figure 3. 2 shows this type of display, where once again the stores are differentiated in the same order, and for each position. There is a considerable difference between Macy's and Klein's at each position, but the difference between Macy's and Saks varies.

In emphatic pronunciation of the final (r), Macy's employees come very close to the mark set by Saks. It would seem that *r*-pronunciation is the norm at which a majority of Macy employees aim, yet not the one they use most often. In Saks, we see a shift between casual and emphatic pronunciation,

[8] The notation outlined in Chapter 2 will be adapted here to distinguish between a variable and a particular value of the variable. The symbol (r) is the variable, symbolizing the entire range of variation within the community which occurs in the specified positions in the linguistic sequence – in this case, the points where historical *r* is found in pre-consonantal and final position. The symbol (r-1) or (r-0) means a particular value of the variable – in this case, a constricted central glide-consonant or the absence of such a consonant respectively. An underlined r refers to the spelling, which coincides with the position of the historical consonant.

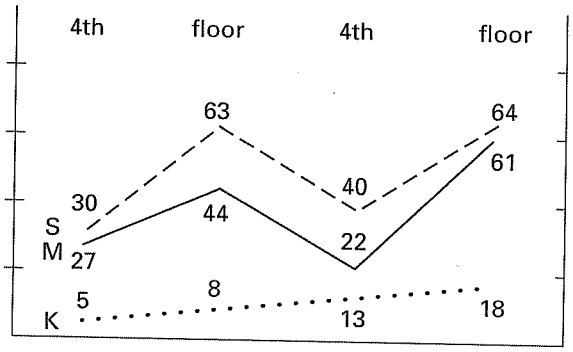

Figure 3.2 Percentage of *all (r-1)* by store for four positions (S=Saks, M=Macy's, K=S. Klein)

but it is much less marked. In other words, Saks employees have more *security* in a linguistic sense.

The fact that the figures for (r-1) at Klein are low, should not obscure the fact that Klein employees also participate in the same pattern of stylistic variation of (r) as the other stores. The percentage of *r*-pronunciation rises at Klein from 5 to 18 percent as the context becomes more emphatic: a much greater rise in percentage than in the other stores, and a more regular increase as well. It will be important to bear in mind that this attitude – that (r-1) is the most appropriate pronunciation for emphatic speech – is shared by at least some speakers in all three stores.

Table 3.3 shows the data in detail, with the number of instances obtained for each of the four positions of (r), for each store. The symbol "d" indicates indeterminate, partially constricted forms not used in the percentages of *all (r-1)*, *some (r-1)*, or *no (r-1)*. It may be noted that the number of occurrences in the second pronunciation of *four* is considerably reduced, primarily as a result of some speaker's tendency to answer a second time, "Fourth."

Since the *No data* entries in the fourth position are larger than the second, it might be suspected that those who use [r] in Saks and Macy's tend to give fuller responses, thus giving rise to a spurious impression of increase in (r) values in those positions. We can check this point by comparing only those who gave a complete response. Their responses can be symbolized by a four digit number, representing the pronunciation in each of the four positions respectively (see Table 3.4).

Thus we see that the pattern of differential ranking in the use of (r) is preserved in this sub-group of complete responses, and omission of the final "*floor*" by some respondents was not a factor in this pattern.

Table 3.3 *Detailed distribution of* (r) *by store and word position*

	Saks				Macy's				S. Klein			
	Casual		Emphatic		Casual		Emphatic		Casual		Emphatic	
	4th	*floor*	*4th*	*floor*	*4th*	*floor*	*4th*	*floor*	*4th*	*floor*	*4th*	*floor*
(r-1)	17	31	16	21	33	48	13	31	3	5	6	7
(r-0)	39	18	24	12	81	62	48	20	63	59	40	33
"d"	4	5	4	4	0	3	1	0	1	1	3	3
No data[9]	8	14	24	31	11	12	63	74	4	6	22	28
Total	68	68	68	68	125	125	125	125	71	71	71	71

Table 3.4 *Distribution of* (r) *for complete responses*

		Percentage of total responses in		
		Saks	Macy's	S. Klein
all (r-1)	1 1 1 1	24	22	6
some (r-1)	0 1 1 1, 0 0 1 1, 0 1 0 1, etc.	46	37	12
no (r-1)	0 0 0 0	30	41	82
		100	100	100
		[N: 33	48	34]

The effect of other independent variables

It is possible that other factors, besides the stratification of the stores, may explain the regular pattern of *r*-pronunciation seen above, or that this effect may be the contribution of a particular group in the population, rather than the behavior of the sales people as a whole. The other independent variables recorded in the procedure will enable us to check such possibilities.

Race There are many more African–American (AA) employees in the Klein sample than in Macy's, and more in Macy's than in Saks. Table 3.5 shows the percentages of AA informants and their responses.

When we compare these figures with those of Figure 3.1, for the entire population, it is evident that the presence of many AA informants will contribute to a lower use of (r-1). The AA subjects at Macy's used less (r-1)

[9] The "no data" category for Macy's shows relatively high values under the emphatic category. This discrepancy is due to the fact that the procedure for requesting repetition was not standardized in the investigation of the ground floor at Macy's, and values for emphatic response were not regularly obtained. The effects of this loss are checked in Table 3.4, where only complete responses are compared.

than the white informants, to a certain extent; the AA subjects at Klein were considerably more biased in the *r*-less direction.

The higher percentage of AA sales people in the lower ranking stores is consistent with the general pattern of social stratification, since in general, AA workers have been assigned less desirable jobs. Therefore the contribution of AA speakers to the overall pattern is consistent with the hypothesis.

There are other differences in the populations of the stores. The types of occupations among the employees who are accessible to customers are quite different. In Macy's, the employees who were interviewed could be identified as floorwalkers (by red and white carnations), sales people, cashiers, stockboys, and elevator operators. In Saks, the cashiers are not accessible to the customer, working behind the sales counters, and stockboys are not seen. The working operation of the store goes on behind the scenes, and does not intrude upon the customer's notice. On the other hand, at Klein's, all of the employees seem to be operating on the same level: it is difficult to tell the difference between sales people, managers, and stockboys.

Here again, the extra-linguistic stratification of the stores is reinforced by objective observations in the course of the interview. We can question if these differences are not responsible for at least a part of the stratification of (r). For the strongest possible result, it would be desirable to show that the stratification of (r) is a property of the most homogeneous sub-group in the three stores: native New York, white, saleswomen. Setting aside the male employees, all occupations besides selling itself, the AA and Puerto Rican employees, and all those with a foreign accent,[10] there is still a total of 141 informants to study.

Figure 3.3 shows the percentages of (r-1) used by the native white saleswomen of the three stores, with the same type of graph as in Figure 3.1.

[10] In the sample as a whole, 17 informants with distinct foreign accents were found, and one with regional characteristics which were clearly not of New York City origin. The foreign language speakers in Saks had French, or other western European accents, while those in Klein had Jewish and other eastern European accents. There were three Puerto Rican employees in the Klein sample, one in Macy's, none in Saks. As far as sex is concerned, there were 70 men and 194 women. Men showed the following small differences from women in percentages of (r-1) usage:

	men	women
all (r-1)	22	30
some (r-1)	22	17
no (r-1)	57	54

Table 3.5 *Distribution of* (r) *for African–American employees*

	Percentage of responses in		
	Saks	Macy's	S. Klein
all (r-1)	50	12	0
some (r-1)	0	35	6
no (r-1)	50	53	94
	100	100	100
	[N: 2	17	18]
[% of AA informants:]	03	14	25

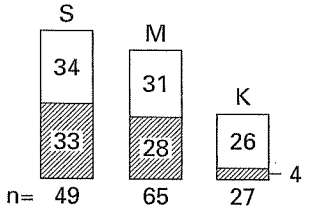

Figure 3.3 Stratification of (r) by store for native New York white saleswomen (S=Saks, M=Macy's, K=S. Klein. Shaded area= % *all (r-1)*; unshaded area= % *some (r-1)*)

The stratification is essentially the same, though somewhat smaller in magnitude. The greatly reduced Klein sample still shows by far the lowest use of (r-1), and Saks is still ahead of Macy's in this respect.

We can therefore conclude that the stratification of (r) is a process which affects every section of the sample.

We can now turn the heterogeneous nature of the Macy's sample to advantage. Figure 3.4 shows the stratification of (r) according to occupational groups in Macy's: as the discussion of the initial hypothesis indicated, this is much sharper than the stratification of the employees in general.

The floorwalkers and the sales people are almost the same in the total percentage of those who use all or some (r-1), but the floorwalkers have a much higher percentage of those who consistently use (r-1).

Another interesting comparison may be made at Saks. This store shows a great discrepancy between the ground floor and the upper floors. The ground floor of Saks looks very much like Macy's: a great many crowded counters, salesgirls leaning over the counters, almost elbow to elbow, and a great deal of merchandise displayed. But the upper floors of

Table 3.6 *Distribution of* (r) *by floor in Saks*

	Ground floor	Upper floors
% all (r-1)	23	34
% some (r-1)	23	40
% no (r-1)	54	26
	100	100
	[N: 30	38]

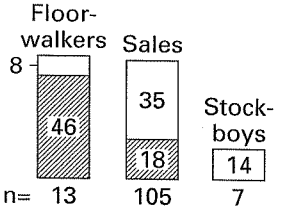

Figure 3.4 Stratification of (r) by occupational groups in Macy's

Saks are far more spacious; there are long vistas of empty carpeting, and on the floors devoted to high fashion, there are models who display the individual garments to the customers. Receptionists are stationed at strategic points to screen out the casual spectators from the serious buyers.

It would seem logical then, to compare the ground floor of Saks with the upper floors. By the hypothesis, we should find a differential use of (r-1). Table 3.6 shows that this is the case.

In the course of the interview, information on another variable was also collected: the (th) variable, particularly as it occurred in the word *fourth*. We have already seen this variable as a social differentiator in the individual cases of Chapter 2. The percentage of speakers who used stops in this position was fully in accord with the other measures of social stratification which we have seen:

Saks	00%
Macy's	04%
S. Klein	15%

Thus the hypothesis has received a number of semi-independent confirmations. Considering the economy with which the information was obtained, the survey appears to yield rich results. It is true that we do not know a great deal about the informants which we would like to know: their birthplace, language history, education, participation in New York culture, and so on. Nevertheless, the regularities of the underlying pattern are strong enough to overcome this lack of precision in the selection and identification of informants.

Table 3.7 *Distribution of* (r) *by estimated age*

	Age groups		
	15–30	35–50	55–70
% all (r-1)	24	20	20
% some (r-1)	21	28	22
% no (r-1)	55	52	58

Differentiation by age of the informants

The age of the informants was estimated within five-year intervals, and these figures cannot be considered reliable for any but the simplest kind of comparison. However, it should be possible to break down the age groups into three units, and detect any overall direction of change.

At various points in this discussion, it has been indicated that (r-1) is one of the chief characteristics of a new prestige pattern which is being superimposed upon the native New York City pattern. We would therefore expect to see a rise in *r*-pronunciation among the younger sales people. However, the overall distribution by age shows no evidence of change (see Table 3.7).

This lack of direction is surprising. For further discussion and clarification, the material to be presented in Chapter 9 will be required. It may be illuminating, however, to examine the breakdown for each store, as shown in Figure 3.5. Here the expected increase in (r-1) pronunciation is seen in Saks. However, Macy's shows a contrary direction of change, and no particular direction can be seen for Klein.

This is a puzzling result, especially in the light of the clear-cut evidence for the absence of (r-1) pronunciation in New York City in the 1930s, and the subsequent increase in the records of Hubbell and Bronstein. Although the numbers of the sub-groups may appear small, they are larger than many of the sub-groups used in the discussion of the previous pages, and it is not possible to discount these results.

The conundrum represented by Figure 3.5 is one of the most significant results of the procedures that have been followed to this point. Where all of

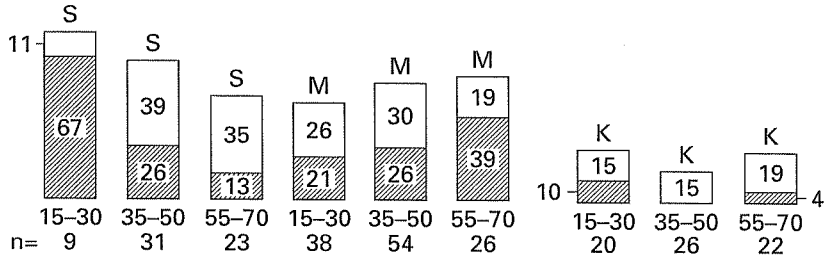

Figure 3.5 Stratification of (r) by store and age level (S=Saks, M=Macy's, K=S. Klein. Shaded area= % *all (r-1)*; unshaded area= % *some (r-1)*)

the other findings confirm the original hypothesis, a single result which does not fit the expected pattern may turn our attention in new and profitable directions. From the data in the department store survey alone, it was not possible to account for Figure 3.5 except in speculative terms. The following quotation is from the evaluation of the original report on the department store survey, written shortly after the work was completed:

> How can we account for the differences between Saks and Macy's? I think we can say this: the shift from the influence of the New England prestige pattern [r-less] to the mid-Western prestige pattern [r-ful] is felt most completely at Saks. The younger people at Saks are under the influence of the r-pronouncing pattern, and the older ones are not. At Macy's, there is less sensitivity to the effect among a large number of younger speakers who are completely immersed in the New York City linguistic tradition. The stockboys, the young salesgirls, are not as yet fully aware of the prestige attached to r-pronunciation. On the other hand, the older people at Macy's tend to adopt this pronunciation: very few of them rely upon the older pattern of prestige pronunciation which supports the r-less tendency of older Saks sales people. This is a rather complicated argument, which would certainly have to be tested very thoroughly by longer interviews in both stores before it could be accepted.

The analysis of the pattern of Figure 3.5 will be resumed in Chapter 9, as we study the distribution of the data from the Lower East Side survey through various age levels of that population.

Some possible sources of error

The method followed in this study is not without many sources of error. Some can be reduced, while others are inherent in the nature of the procedure.

Table 3.8 *Percentage of all* (r-1) *for each position*

Casual		Emphatic	
fourth	*floor*	*fourth*	*floor*
23	39	24	48

The approach to sampling might well have been more systematic. In future studies, it would be preferable to select every fifth sales person, or to use some other method which would avoid the bias inherent in selecting the first available person. As long as such a method does not interfere with the basic unobtrusiveness of the speech event, it should improve the accuracy of the procedure without seriously decreasing its efficiency. However, there is no apparent bias in the present procedure which would seriously affect the comparison, since the same procedure was followed in all stores.

Another limitation is that the data was not tape recorded, as was done in most of the procedures described in this study as a whole. The transcriber, myself, knew what the object of the test was, and it is always possible that an unconscious bias in transcription would lead to the doubtful cases being recorded as (r-1) in Saks, and as (r-0) in S. Klein. On the other hand, the phonetic detail was not complex, and the precaution was taken of discounting entirely all doubtful cases, as noted above. Further, there is the unusually favorable factor that the sample is always available for rechecking, and this can be done by anyone in the course of a few hours. Thus the data is actually less subject to suspicion than many studies of speakers long since disappeared.

Another limitation is in the method used to elicit emphatic speech. Figure 3.2 indicates that the effect of stylistic variation may be slight compared to such a phonological alternation as pre-consonantal vs. final position. The total percentages for all three stores bear this out (see Table 3.8).

The problem may lie in the fact that a simple request for repetition is not an effective means of contrasting casual speech with a more formal style. In Chapter 4 more attention will be given to this problem.

Conclusion

The hypothesis with which this chapter opened has been confirmed by a severe test within a single occupational group, and we may conclude that (r) stratification is an integral part of the linguistic structure of the New York City speech community. An equally important aspect of this study is that it

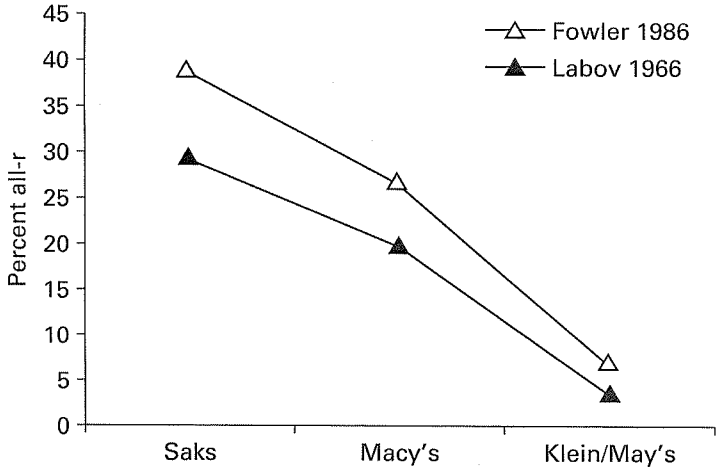

Figure 3.6

has accomplished the aim suggested at the conclusion of Chapter 2: to study language apart from the bias of the formal linguistic interview. The results of this study should terminate any suspicion that the pronunciation of (r-1) in New York City is limited to a narrow group of speakers, or that it is a phenomenon which occurs only in the presence of linguists and speech teachers.

[A precise replication of the department store study was done by Joy Fowler of NYU in 1986. Fowler retraced my steps as carefully as she could, substituting May's for S. Klein, which had gone out of business. Each of the dimensions of stratification outlined in this chapter were preserved, at a slightly higher rate of *r*-pronunciation. Details are reproduced in Labov 1994. Figure 3.6 compares the two studies for the overall rate of all-r. The stratification of the stores is well preserved, and the rate of importation of r-pronunciation is small. Over 23 years, the rate of r-pronunciation had increased an average of 7 percent, but this was not distributed evenly. Saks and Macy's showed a proportional increase of 1.3, while Klein/May's almost doubled, at 1.75. The actual percentage of increase was of course greatest for the highest status store.

The Fowler study was remarkable in preserving the patterns of age distribution reported above. Saks showed a negative correlation with age, and Macy's a positive correlation, indicating that it is the younger upper middle class speakers who are acquiring the new norm, but among the lower middle class, this increase is not found until middle age.

The general term for this kind of sociolinguistic research is a "rapid and anonymous" survey, or "R&A." A great many other studies have been

carried out since 1963. MacDonald restudied the NYC department stores in 1984. Gardner Chloros studied language selection and switching in a study of department stores in Strasbourg (1991).

The general design involves a request for "free goods," a term of Goffman. The chief free goods one may ask for are directions and time (and a cigarette light in former times.) A typical R&A study is carried out, not within a store, but on the street. The investigator locates a street name that involves a critical phonological form, and asks for directions with a wrong street designation. Over the past five years, a number of R&A studies have been carried out in Philadelphia where /r/ is normally constricted. A target word *Market* is found in *Market Street*. The field workers will typically ask, "How do I get to Market Avenue?" This strategy increases the number of stressed repetitions of the target word by the subject. If the form of interest is in a number between 1 and 12, requests for time of day are used. Labov and Baranowski both investigated the monophthongization of /ay/ by asking for the time around five o'clock in Columbia and Charleston, SC (Baranowski 2006). Clopton (2005) studied the alternation of /θ/ and /s/ in the Spanish of Barcelona by asking for the time around 5 and 10 o'clock, yielding *cinco* and *diez*.]

Chapter 4 will turn to the problem of stylistic variation, which was only a marginal consideration in the department store survey. The next step towards the systematic study of all the variables will be the isolation of a range of contexts and styles, to represent the speech of the informant in many social contexts. But directly before us lies a contradiction. The study of stylistic variation under controlled conditions requires that the axis of social variation be defined as well, and held constant while stylistic variation is charted. This can only be done in a series of formal linguistic interviews of individuals whose social characteristics are well determined. Yet the formal interview itself is a context which normally requires formal speech; more generally, any style of speech used in a formal interview is biased towards the formal end of the spectrum of behavior. Chapter 4 will be devoted to the problem of obtaining the full range of stylistic variation within the bounds of the formal interview, and the definition of distinct styles as they emerge.