

BILINGUALISM AND DIALECT MIXTURE AMONG LUBAVITCHER HASIDIC CHILDREN

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HASIDISM (from Hebrew *hasid*, 'pious') is a pietist movement that spread through the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe during the eighteenth century. The Hasidim (adherents to Hasidism) are organized into tightly knit groups each centered on a highly respected rabbi, who is generally known by the name of the town in which he lives. There have been seven Lubavitcher rabbis since Hasidism appeared in Belorussia, although only four of them (the second through the fifth) resided and taught in Lubavitch, Belorussia. The name "Lubavitcher," however, has been retroactively applied to the first rabbi, and has followed the sixth rabbi, Joseph Isaac Schneersohn, from Lubavitch through Leningrad, Riga, and Warsaw to Brooklyn. The current (and seventh) leader of the community, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, son-in-law of his predecessor, is still known as the Lubavitcher Rabbi, and his followers are still the Lubavitcher Hasidim.

The informants interviewed for this study of Lubavitcher usage were all tenants vacationing during the summer of 1967 at a bungalow colony owned by my family. With one exception, all informants were Lubavitcher: A. B. is a Bobover Hasid, but his wife is of a Lubavitcher family, and their children go to Lubavitcher schools.

There follows a list of the informants who participated in the study. The initials used to identify them are not their own. The letters *gf*, *gm*, *fa*, *mo*, and *dau* stand for grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, and daughter, respectively. *Y*, *R*, *P*, *E*, *F*, *U*, *Geo*, and *G* stand for Yiddish, Russian, Polish, English, French, Ukrainian, Georgian, and German, respectively. It should be added that all the informants had studied Hebrew and that many, particularly the men and boys, could read and speak it quite well. Children below the age of six were not interviewed, nor were those (mostly teen-agers) who spent the summer elsewhere.

The informants are divided into three groups: grandparents, parents, and children—there were no single or childless informants above the age of eighteen. One set of grandparents (the A's) live in Albany, N.Y., and

<i>Informant</i>	<i>Family position</i>	<i>Year born</i>	<i>Birthplace</i>	<i>Spent childhood in</i>	<i>First language</i>	<i>Easiest</i>	<i>Other</i>
A.A.	gf	1909	Petrikov, Belorussia	same	Y	Y	R(E)
B.A.	gm (parents of B.B.)	?	?	?	Y	Y	RE
A.B.	fa	1915	Myślenice, Poland	same	Y	Y	PRG (FE)
B.B.	mo	1931	Klimovič, Belorussia	same and Uzbekistan	R	R	YFE
C.B.	son	1953	France	Cleveland and Brooklyn	Y	Y	E
D.B.	dau	1954	Cleveland	Brooklyn	Y	Y	E
E.B.	dau	1957	Brooklyn	same	Y	E	
F.B.	dau	1960?	Brooklyn	same	Y	Y	E
A.C.	fa	1915	Dołhinów, Poland (now Belorussia)	Vilna	Y	Y	PRE
B.C.	mo	1930	Kurzeniec, Poland (now Belorussia)	same and Samarkand, Uzbekistan	R	R	YE
C.C.	dau	1955	Brooklyn	same	Y	E	
A.D.	fa	1930	Nevel', Russian SFSR	same	Y	Y	(E)
B.D.	mo	1932	Nevel'	Central Asia	R	R	YE
C.D.	dau	1954	Brooklyn	same	Y	E	
D.D.	son	1955	Brooklyn	same	Y	Y	E
E.D.	son	1957	Brooklyn	same	Y	Y	E
F.D.	dau	1961	Brooklyn	same	Y	Y	E
A.E.	gm (mother of B.F.)	?	Čirkas, Ukraine	same	Y	Y	RU
A.F.	fa	1912	Klimovič	same	Y	Y	(RE)
B.F.	mo	1923	Krimenčug, Ukraine	Crimea and Caucasus	R	R	YE
C.F.	son	1949	Paris	Philadelphia and Brooklyn	Y	E	

<i>Informant</i>	<i>Family position</i>	<i>Year born</i>	<i>Birthplace</i>	<i>Spent childhood in</i>	<i>First language</i>	<i>Easiest</i>	<i>Other</i>
D.F.	son	1951	Paris	Philadelphia and Brooklyn	Y	E	
E.F.	son	1953	New York	Philadelphia and Brooklyn	Y	E	
F.F.	dau	1954	Philadelphia	Brooklyn	Y	E	
G.F.	dau	1956	Philadelphia	Brooklyn	Y	E	
A.G.	fa	?	Leningrad	Kazakhstan	Y	Y	RE
B.G.	mo	1935	Kaunas	?	Y	YR	FE
C.G.	son	1954	Paris	Brooklyn	Y	Y	E
D.G.	dau	1955	Paris	Brooklyn	Y	E	
E.G.	son	?	Brooklyn	same	Y	Y	E
F.G.	dau	1961	Brooklyn	same	Y	Y	E
A.H.	gf	1916	Lagóisk, Belorussia	Belorussia	Y	Y	R
B.H.	gm	1910	Głębkie, Poland (now Belorussia)	Belorussia	Y	Y	R(E)
(parents of B.I.)							
A.I.	fa	?	?	?	Y	Y	?
B.I.	mo	1933	Kharkov	Samarkand	R	Y	F
C.I.	dau	1956	Canada	Brooklyn	Y	E	
D.I.	dau	1959	Brooklyn	same	Y	Y	E
E.I.	son	1961	Brooklyn	same	Y	Y	E
A.J.	fa	1913	Rokiškis Lithuania	Georgian SSR	Y	Y	(E)
B.J.	mo	1924	Nevel'	same and Moscow	R	R	YE
C.J.	dau	1954	Brooklyn	same	Y	E	
D.J.	dau	1955	Brooklyn	same	E	E	Y
A.K.	fa	1923	Georgian SSR	same	Y	Y	Geo R
B.K.	mo	1933	Montreal	same	E	E	Y
C.K.	dau	1956	Brooklyn	same	E	E	Y
D.K.	son	1957	Brooklyn	same	E	E	Y
E.K.	dau	1960	Brooklyn	same	E	E	(Y)

another (the H.'s) live in Montreal. The remaining informants all reside in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn.

In Crown Heights, roughly half the inhabitants are black; the other half are Jewish. The Jews are often orthodox, and most of these are Hasidic. Although the Lubavitchers are the largest single Hasidic denomination there, they are nevertheless only one of several. Most Lubavitchers here immigrated in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Almost all came from the Soviet Union. The language of the community is the Northeastern (Lithuanian-Belorussian) dialect of Yiddish, hereafter *NEY*. The Lubavitchers are the only sizeable group in Crown Heights speaking this particular variant of Yiddish. Polish and Hungarian dialects of Yiddish prevail among the other Hasidim. The non-Hasidic Jews in the neighborhood are products of earlier waves of immigration and, generally, speak English rather than Yiddish. The Negroes, of course, speak English.

Among non-Hasidic Jews, Yiddish very commonly receded rapidly after the first generation in the United States. In addition, Jews from various parts of Eastern Europe mixed freely with each other, and dialectal peculiarities tended to be replaced by Standard Yiddish forms. The Lubavitchers, on the other hand, support an independent school system, and, since their school day is a long one, the children's opportunities for meeting non-Lubavitcher neighbors are reduced. They all worship at the Lubavitcher synagogue. The twenty-six children interviewed for this study all answered "yes" when asked the question "Are most of your friends Lubavitcher Hasidim?"

What is most striking is that education in secular colleges and universities is not encouraged. Boys, in particular, are discouraged from going to college. This situation is drastically different from the one that prevails among the non-Hasidic Jews in America. The Lubavitchers, of course, devote a great deal of energy to pursuing their religious training. The men in the community continue to study religious subjects in depth all their lives.

NEY was spoken in a large, relatively uniform dialect area that includes all of Belorussia, Latvia, Lithuania, and the Northeastern corner of Poland. It is separated from other dialects of Yiddish by a bundle of grammatical, phonological, and lexical isoglosses.¹ The vocalism of Standard Yiddish is closer to that of *NEY* than to that of any other Yiddish dialect, although the consonantism, vocabulary, gender system, and the like of *NEY* include

1. Uriel Weinreich, "The Geographic Makeup of Belorussian Yiddish," in *The Field of Yiddish: Studies in Language, Folklore, and Literature*. Third Collection, ed. by Marvin I. Herzog and Uriel Weinreich (= Proceedings of the Conference on Yiddish Dialectology, New York, June, 1965), pp. 4-5.

many nonstandard features. Moreover, despite the relative uniformity of *NEY*, there are some internal divisions, which are discussed below.

The first part of this study deals with the following questions about the Yiddish of Lubavitcher children: 1) Do the children exhibit as much diversity as their parents when speaking Yiddish or is there a general American Lubavitcher Yiddish developing? 2) If such a dialect is indeed developing, do the other Yiddish dialects heard in Crown Heights influence it? 3) Is the Yiddish of American-born Lubavitcher children closer to Standard Yiddish than to that of their parents? And 4) What role does English play in the Yiddish of these children?

My second concern is with the English spoken by these children. As noted above, the Yiddish of previous waves of immigration has receded rapidly in the United States. Most second-generation American Jews of Yiddish-speaking backgrounds speak Yiddish with difficulty, if at all. The situation is quite different among the Lubavitchers, whose children speak Yiddish fluently and well. If this is the case, do they speak English as well as Yiddish? If they do not, what types of interference are found? Do the children speak English with a New York City accent? And finally, does English show signs of replacing Yiddish, if at a slower rate than in non-Hasidic Jewish communities, or will it be maintained indefinitely, as Pennsylvania German has been in Lancaster County?

A century ago, Lubavitchers were by and large restricted to Northern and Eastern Belorussia. The Russian Revolution and the horrors of World War II, however, produced vast dislocations. Many informants who are now in the parents' generation spent their formative years in the Caucasus region or in Central Asia, particularly in the Uzbek S.S.R. Nevertheless, the Yiddish of the parents not only is *NEY* but often shows characteristics peculiar to Northern or Eastern Belorussia.²

Except for the problems involving sibilants and *rs* (see below), all the items the informants were asked about were suggested by Uriel Weinreich's article, already cited. Weinreich includes ten maps, which point out differences between Belorussian Yiddish and the rest of *NEY*, and discusses local variation within Belorussian Yiddish. I have chosen these items to show as many differences as possible between the dialects of the various adults and, thus, to determine how much dialect leveling has taken place among the children.

The area in Northeastern Belorussia that was the original home of the Lubavitcher Hasidim was part of a much larger area where no distinction between hushing and hissing sibilants and affricates was made.

2. Three informants, A. B., A. E., and B. K., do not speak *NEY* but Central (Polish) Yiddish, Southeastern (Ukrainian) Yiddish, and Standard Yiddish, respectively. The phonology of B. K.'s Yiddish shows traces of interference from English.

This phenomenon, called *sábesdiker losn* in Yiddish, at one time covered most of the territory of NEY. It is

the confusion of the hushing series of phonemes (*š, ž, ě*) with the hissing phonemes (*s, z, c*), which are distinguished in all other dialects. The exact manner of rendition of the single set varies locally, but nowhere in this area is there an opposition of the two series in Yiddish. This dialect feature has come to be known as *sábesdiker losn* 'solemn speech' (literally 'Sabbath language'), a phrase which in general Yiddish is *šábesdiker lošn*, with two *š*'s and an *s*.³

Sábesdiker losn, although once widespread, is rare in contemporary Yiddish. "The derision with which this feature was regarded by other Yiddish speakers sent it reeling back under the impact of 'general Yiddish' dialects from the south."⁴ A few of the Lubavitcher informants would sporadically use a hissing instead of a hushing sibilant, or vice versa, on rare occasions. Only one informant, B.J., consistently lacked a distinction in one environment, albeit a very limited one: there was no */z ~ ž/* distinction before */i/*. Thus *zilber* 'silver' is pronounced */žilber/*, but */ž/* and */ž/* are distinguished before the other vowels, and the remaining sibilants are distinguished in all positions.

As might have been expected, there was no trace whatever of *sábesdiker losn* in the speech of the children. The disappearance of this stigmatized characteristic is analogous to the loss of */ʌy/* in items such as *bird* in the English of many New Yorkers.⁵

An apical trill [r] or flap [ɾ] is the common way of producing the phoneme */r/* in Belorussian Yiddish, although a velar fricative [ɣ], a uvular trill [ʀ], or a uvular fricative [ʁ] are widespread in Yiddish. Henceforth, all apical *rs* will be written [r], and all velar and uvular *rs* will be written [ʀ].

Of the five informants who were grandparents, two of them, A.E. and A.H., use [ʀ]. A.E. is not from Belorussia but from the Ukraine, where [ʀ] is more common. B.H., A.H.'s wife, uses [r], as does B.I., the daughter of the H's. A.E.'s daughter, B.F., also consistently uses [r]. I do not know what realization of */r/* B.F.'s father used, but it seems irrelevant, since B.F. states that her first language was Russian and that she learned Yiddish from her husband, A.F., who uses [r]. B.I. too feels that Russian is the easiest language for her. The remaining grandparents, A.A. and B.A., use [r], as do their children.

Our sample of grandparents is too small to permit us to draw any definite

3. Uriel Weinreich, "Sábesdiker losn in Yiddish: A Problem of Linguistic Affinity," *Word*, VIII (1952), 362.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 374.

5. See William Labov, *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* (Washington, D.C., 1966), pp. 337-42.

conclusions, but the scanty evidence present points to the fact that within the Soviet Union, perhaps because of Russian influence, [r] was replacing [ʀ].

If this tendency existed in the Soviet Union, it certainly was not transplanted to the United States. Three of the sixteen parents have [ʀ], as compared with eight of the twenty-six children.

The three parents who use [ʀ] are A.J., A.B., and B.G. A.J.'s children, C.J. and D.J., use [r], as does their mother. B.G.'s husband, A.G., and their daughters, D.G. and F.G., use [r]. The G.'s sons agree with their mother and use [ʀ].

A.B. is the one informant who speaks Central (Polish) Yiddish rather than *NEY*. The B. children speak the *NEY* of their mother. Except for the eldest child, C.B., who agrees with his mother in using [r], the remaining B. children who were interviewed use [ʀ]. The B. children are like the D. children in this respect: the eldest D. child interviewed, C.D., uses [r]; her siblings, D.D., E.D., and F.D., who were interviewed, and their little brother, G.D., who was too young to be interviewed, consistently use [ʀ]. This is somewhat surprising since neither D. parent was ever heard to say [ʀ]—the elder D.s always use [r].

As for vowels, the oldest pronunciation of what Max and Uriel Weinreich denominate vowel 54⁶ found in *NEY* is [u] in northern Belorussia. [uj], found in much of northern, eastern, and central Belorussia, is a later innovation, and [oj], which is also the Standard Yiddish realization of this vowel, is found in the southern and western parts of Belorussia and elsewhere in the *NEY* area.

Vowel 54 occurred in the following words on the questionnaire: *bojx* 'belly,' *bloj* or *blojer* (the latter before a masculine noun) 'blue,' *groj* or *grojer* 'gray,' *gedojern* 'to last,' *zojer* 'sour,' and *mojl* 'mouth.' The following pronunciations were recorded for these words. (If an informant volunteered two pronunciations in response to a question, they are both counted. This explains the uneven totals obtained for the different words.)

'Belly':	<i>bojx</i>	<i>bujx</i>	<i>bux</i>	<i>boex</i> ⁷
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i> ⁸
	6 9	13 16	1 0	1 0

6. Max and Uriel Weinreich have used a system of numbered subscripts to identify vowels etymologically with their Proto-Yiddish equivalents. These subscripts are listed by Marvin I. Herzog, *The Yiddish Language in Northern Poland: Its Geography and History* (Bloomington, Ind., and the Hague [= *International Journal of American Linguistics*, XXXI (1965), 2, Part III]) on p. 161 and are explained in n. 1, p. 228.

7. Here and below in the transliteration of Yiddish forms the character *x* represents the voiceless velar fricative.

8. These abbreviations stand for *adults* and *children*.

The *bux* and *boex* forms were produced by A.E. and A.B., respectively. Both of these informants speak a dialect of Yiddish other than *NEY*.

'Blue':	<i>bluver</i>	<i>blo(er)</i>	<i>blow</i>	<i>bloj(er)</i>	<i>bluj(er)</i>	<i>blui(er)</i>
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
	1 0	9 0	1 0	12 23	0 1	1 1

A.E. and A.B. said *bluver* and *bluer*, respectively. One child, C.G., said *blu*.

'Gray':	<i>ser</i>	<i>gro(er)</i>	<i>groj(er)</i>	<i>grej(er)</i>	<i>gru(er)</i>
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
	1 1	3 0	11 10	1 12	1 1

As was the case for *blu(er)*, A.B. and C.G. produced *gru(er)*; *ser* is of Slavic etymology.

'To last':	<i>gedowern</i>	<i>gedoern</i>	<i>gedujern</i>	<i>gedojern</i>	<i>geduern</i>	Ø
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
	1 0	2 0	6 4	8 14	3 0	0 8

A.B. produced *gedowern*, and eight children did not know the word at all.

'Sour':	<i>zowe</i>	<i>zujer</i>	<i>zojer</i>	<i>zuer</i>	<i>zuver</i>	<i>zover</i>
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
	1 0	8 18	7 7	5 0	1 0	1 0

A.B. produced *zowe* and A. G. *zover*.

'Mouth':	<i>mowel</i>	<i>mujl</i>	<i>mojl</i>	<i>mul</i>
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
	1 0	9 15	9 8	2 3

A.B. produced *mowel*.

The forms listed above indicate two clear tendencies. Firstly, [u] and [o] as realizations of Proto-Yiddish Vowel 54 are relatively uncommon among adults and decidedly rare among children. The type [o] does not occur among the children at all. And secondly, particularly in the words for 'sour' and 'mouth,' the children do not favor Standard Yiddish [oj] over [uj]. It is also interesting that eight children do not know the word *gedojern* and that twelve children but only one adult say *grej* for 'gray.' It is evident in these cases that English has a stronger effect on the Yiddish of Lubavitcher children than does Standard Yiddish.

The modern reflex of Proto-Yiddish Vowel 42 is normally /ej/ in *NEY* and /oj/ in Standard Yiddish. In the word *ojx* 'also,' there seems to have been confusion with and contamination by Vowel 54.⁹ The pronunciations

9. Herzog, *Yiddish Language*, p. 201.

/o:x/ and /owex/ in Central Yiddish indicate the existence of two separate Proto-Yiddish forms: one with Vowel 42 and one with Vowel 54.¹⁰ Perhaps this is the reason that *ojx* as well as *ejx* is heard among the Lubavitchers. The alternate forms *ojxet* and *ejxet* also exist.

'Also':	<i>ojx</i>	<i>ojxet</i>	<i>ejx</i>	<i>ejxet</i>
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
	6 1	0 3	13 7	1 15

Two facts are apparent from these data: The children differ from the adults in preferring the forms ending in *-et*, and the standard pronunciations with /oj/ are less common among the children than the adults.

In the word for 'public' the results are slightly different.

'Public':	<i>ojlom</i> or <i>ojlem</i>	<i>ejlom</i> or <i>ejlem</i>
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
	5 9	18 10

The reason for this difference becomes clear when we learn that six children (but no adults) were totally unfamiliar with this word as Yiddish, and knew it only as a Hebrew word meaning 'world.' *NEY* speakers traditionally say [ejlom] or [ejləm] even when speaking Hebrew, but the standard Ashkenazic Hebrew pronunciation seems to be gaining among the young.

In northern Belorussia, final unstressed vowels are reduced to /e/, which is realized as [ə].

'Public':	<i>ejlom</i> or <i>ojlom</i>	<i>ejlem</i> or <i>ojlem</i>
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
	18 12	5 7

'Sheet':	<i>lajlax</i>	<i>lajlex</i>
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
	3 8	16 17

In the case of 'public,' there is no evidence to show the spread of standard /-om/ over /-em/. Standard *lajlax* is less uncommon among the children than among the adults, but the evidence is inconclusive.

The word *gix* 'rapid,' probably in origin a hypercorrect form that spread from the Southwest, has replaced *gex* in much of Belorussia. Perhaps this should be considered a case of lexical rather than phonological variation.

'Rapid':	<i>gix</i>	<i>gex</i>
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
	13 12	10 15

10. I am indebted to Max Weinreich for this insight.

The children show less preference than the adults for the prestige form *gix*.

One child, C.D., regularly uses [-un] rather than [-n] or [-ən] for her infinitive endings: thus [esun] rather than [esn] 'to eat.' Another child, E.I., said *nejvun* for 'pot cover,' apparently from *an ejvn* 'an oven' (see below). No other informant ever produced final unstressed [-un], although Max Weinreich tells me that this form does exist in Belorussian Yiddish.

In summation so far, it may be said that in pronunciation, Lubavitcher children, by and large, show loyalty to the regional forms of northern Belorussia. The only exceptions to this pattern were the abandonment of /u/ or /o/ for Vowel 54, which were already rare among the adults, and the lack of *sábesdiker losn*, which was almost dead among the adults. The presence of speakers of other Yiddish dialects in Crown Heights (or even within their own group, e.g., A.B., A.E., and B.K.), and the influence of the Yiddish radio have had no effect upon the phonology of the children, unless the change [r] > [ʀ] is the result of dialect contact. The occurrence of /ej/ in the word for 'gray' is an indication of contamination from English.

In gender, *NEY*, unlike the other dialects of Yiddish, lacks the neuter category. Only A.B. and B.K., who are not *NEY* speakers, ever used the neuter article; none of the children was ever heard using it. Although the lack of the neuter is common to all *NEY*, in Belorussian Yiddish there are additional words with nonstandard genders, for example, *di teler* 'the plate,' *di fencter*¹¹ 'the window,' and *der mojl* 'the mouth.' In other dialects, *teler* is masculine, *fencter* is masculine or neuter, and *mojl* is feminine. Our informants use the following genders in these words.

'Plate':	masc.		fem.		neuter	
	<i>ad</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>ad</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>ad</i>	<i>ch</i>
	6	10	14	16	0	0
'Window':	masc.		fem.		neuter	
	<i>ad</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>ad</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>ad</i>	<i>ch</i>
	3	8	14	14	2	0
'Mouth':	masc.		fem.		neuter	
	<i>ad</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>ad</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>ad</i>	<i>ch</i>
	18	11	3	14	1	0

Thus, the majority of the adults use the Belorussian Yiddish genders. The children's results are not clear unless we consider the results obtained from the word *bord* 'beard.' This word is feminine everywhere in Yiddish

11. Here and below in the transliteration of Yiddish forms, the character *c* represents the voiceless dental affricate.

except for the extreme northwestern corner of the *NEY* territory—an area that none of our informants comes from.

'Beard':		masc.		fem.		neuter
		<i>ad</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>ad</i>	<i>ch</i>	<i>ad</i> <i>ch</i>
		0	11	20	15	0 0

Since *der bord* is nonstandard and uncommon in Yiddish and since no adult in the group says it, there is no reason for eleven children to use this form. There can be only one explanation. About two-fifths of the children seem to use the masculine, and three-fifths the feminine, no matter what the historical gender may be. Let us see how many informants use only the masculine, or only the feminine, for each of the four words in question.

All masculine		All feminine	
	<i>ad</i> <i>ch</i>		<i>ad</i> <i>ch</i>
	0 6		1 13

Since there are only four words involved, the fact that a given informant considers them all masculine or feminine is in itself of no importance. What is striking, however, is the discrepancy between the number of adults (1 out of 21) and of children (19 out of 47) who exhibit this pattern. It is probable that except for the words for male and female beings, where everyone seems to make a distinction, most of the nineteen children who used only one gender in these words do not distinguish gender in nouns at all. One child, G.F., says *di mojł*, *di teler*, *der fencter*, and *der bord*. Her parents, A.F. and B.F., say *der mojł*, *der teler*, *di fencter*, and *di bord*. It is likely that G.F. has little if any feeling for gender. If gender is indeed disappearing from the children's Yiddish, it is a remarkable finding, and one worthy of further investigation. Unfortunately, I did not anticipate this result and did not include enough items on the questionnaire to test it. I did not remark the consistent use of only one gender until I examined my notes when the summer was over and the informants had gone home.

The following are the data obtained from the items on the questionnaire concerning idiomatic and lexical variation.

'It hurts me':		<i>s'iz mir tut vej</i>	<i>s'tut mir vej</i>	<i>s'tut vej mir</i>
		<i>ad</i> <i>ch</i>	<i>ad</i> <i>ch</i>	<i>ad</i> <i>ch</i>
		7 12	12 12	1 1

The Standard Yiddish form is *s'tut mir vej*. If anything, it is more common in the adults' generation.

'Floor':	<i>padloge</i>	<i>brik</i>	<i>pol</i>	<i>dil</i>	<i>flor</i>	<i>ø</i>
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
	7 0	11 8	4 9	3 0	0 4	0 5

The fact that nine children simply said *flor* (obviously from English 'floor') or could not think of a Yiddish word probably indicates that some of the parents themselves use *flor* when not being questioned. At least four different words for 'floor' are current among the adults. This no doubt causes confusion or misunderstanding, and thus explains the decline of some of the Yiddish words. The words *dil* and *padloge* do not exist among the children at all.

'Ceiling'									
<i>lubi</i>	<i>dax</i>	<i>baltn</i>	<i>balkn</i>	<i>patalók</i>	<i>sufit</i>	<i>stol'e</i>	<i>stel'e</i>	<i>ruf</i>	<i>ø</i>
<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
1 0	1 6	7 0	3 3	8 6	1 0	4 2	4 0	0 2	0 7

In this case, eight different words were produced by the adults. Four of these, *lubis*, *sufit*, *baltn*, and *stel'e*, seem to have vanished among the children. The word *dax* is Yiddish for 'roof,' not 'ceiling.' One adult, as opposed to six children, gave this response. He immediately corrected himself and changed his answer to *stol'e*. If we add the *dax*, *ruf* (= 'roof') and zero columns, we find that a total of fifteen children did not think of a Yiddish word for 'ceiling.' William Labov tells me that words for 'ceiling,' 'floor,' 'porch,' and other peripheral parts of a house are unstable in a great many other immigrant languages, and are replaced by the English terms.

'Pot cover': Only three responses other than *dekl* were made for this item. A child, E.I., said *nejvun* (see above), and two adults, A.A. and A.B., said *kriške* and *štercl* respectively.

‘Short’: Everyone answered *kurc* except for A.B., who used Central Yiddish *korc*, and A.E., her granddaughter G.F., and another child, D.I., who said *kirc*, a form found in a narrow strip just south of the *NEY* area. The geographical distribution and history of this and other pronunciations of *kurc* are discussed in detail by Max Weinreich.¹² D.I. immediately corrected herself to *kurc*, which she said she liked better. Since D.I.’s parents are both *NEY* speakers, *kirc* is an unlikely form for her.

'Hanukkah top':	<i>drejdl</i>	<i>gor</i>
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
	15 23	6 1

12. "The Dynamics of Yiddish Dialect Formation" in *The Field of Yiddish: Studies in Language, Folklore, and Literature*. Second Collection, ed. by Uriel Weinreich (New York, 1965), pp. 73-86.

Seven adults and twelve children who had answered *drejdl* responded affirmatively when asked if they recognized *gor* as a synonym. The word *gor* is a northern Belorussian form.

'Store':	<i>klejt</i>	<i>krom</i>	<i>gevélb</i>	<i>gešéft</i>	<i>stor</i> or <i>ø</i>
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
	6	2	14	15	2
			0	3	1
				0	12

The results here are analogous to those found for 'floor' and 'ceiling.' All the adults and most of the children are aware that *stor* is an English loan, but the feeling that Yiddish should be kept pure is apparently not very strong.

'Duck':	<i>entl</i>	<i>kačke</i>	<i>ø</i>
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
	13	2	12
		13	0
			3

The word *entl* is an eastern Belorussian form. In this case, as was also true for 'Hanukkah top,' the Standard Yiddish words are overwhelmingly favored by the children.

'Cows':	<i>behejmes</i>	<i>ki</i>	<i>fi</i>	<i>ø</i>
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
	19	20	5	4
			1	0
			1	1

'To love':	<i>lib hobn</i>	<i>holt hobn</i>	<i>libn</i>	<i>glajxn</i>
	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>	<i>ad ch</i>
	17	16	5	3
			3	2
			2	7

In Belorussian Yiddish, the everyday word for 'cows' is *behejmes*, as opposed to general Yiddish *ki*. Although *holt hobn* is found in all the *NEY* area, it is not favored by our informants. A.H. said that *holt hobn* was for objects and *lib hobn* for things. A.C. said that as a child he used only *holt hobn*, but now uses *lib hobn* for people.

It appears, then, that lexical forms that are rare among the adults are even more uncommon among the children. Thus, items such as *dil* 'floor' were not found among the children; other lexical items such as *gor* 'Hanukkah top' and *entl* 'duck' are on their way out. As for gender, there can be no doubt that at least some of the children are unsure in their handling of many nouns. It would be most interesting to study this question in detail some years from now.

Summing up all my results, so far I would judge that Standard Yiddish has had no effect on the Yiddish of Lubavitcher children, although the elimination of rare lexical items necessarily favors standard forms. But interference from English is unmistakable.

The question, "Which language is easiest for you?" elicited the following responses:

<i>Grandfathers</i>	<i>Grandmothers</i>	<i>Fathers</i>	<i>Mothers</i> ¹³	<i>Sons</i>	<i>Daughters</i>
<i>Y R E</i>	<i>Y R E</i>	<i>Y R E</i>	<i>Y R E</i>	<i>Y R E</i>	<i>Y R E</i>
2 0 0	3 0 0	8 0 0	1 5 1	6 0 4	5 0 11

These data show a marked discrepancy between the answers of the male and female informants. The majority of the males find Yiddish easier; the females lean toward Russian and English, depending upon where they were born, although the three grandmothers find Yiddish easier. The religious education of the boys is much more extensive and profound than that of the girls. All the boys below roughly the age of thirteen attend a Lubavitcher primary school where the language of instruction is Yiddish and the curriculum wholly oriented toward the study of the Bible and the Talmud. Upon graduation, the boys enter the Lubavitcher High School, where Yiddish is the language of instruction during the morning when religious subjects are taught, and English, for the first time, is used in the afternoon for secular studies. The English-speaking teachers of the afternoon session are not necessarily members of the Lubavitcher community. The girls, on the other hand, attend Lubavitcher schools where religious education in Yiddish during the morning and secular classes in English after lunch is the pattern from the very beginning. Thus, the girls encounter English as a language of instruction some eight years before the boys do.

Except in the K. family, where B.K. is a native speaker of English, Yiddish is the first language the children learn. The boys often speak Yiddish to each other; but the girls definitely prefer English and invariably use it when speaking to each other. This is perhaps surprising, since they always use Yiddish when speaking to their parents, to preschool children, and occasionally to their brothers. It seems reasonable, however, to assume that the next generation of Lubavitcher children will learn English as their first language.

The fact that five mothers but no fathers found Russian easier than Yiddish reflects an analogous pattern of education that must have existed in the preceding generation. Women occasionally use Russian when speaking to each other, but always address their husbands in Yiddish. (None of the informants, incidentally, can speak Belorussian.)

Solomon Poll found a similar situation among a group of Hasidim of

13. B. G. is not counted among the mothers: she could not say whether Russian or Yiddish was easiest for her.

Hungarian origin who live in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. "Hungarian is used much more frequently among women than among men."¹⁴ The group Poll studied differs from the Lubavitchers in some important ways. For example, he states that "the Hassidim feel that the establishment of the State of Israel represents a great threat to their ultra-Orthodox beliefs."¹⁵ This statement is totally untrue as far as the Lubavitchers are concerned. They are both emotionally and intellectually committed to a strongly pro-Israel policy. There is, in fact, a Lubavitcher settlement called Kfar Chabad in Israel.

The position of Yiddish is apparently stronger within the group that Poll studied than it is among the Lubavitchers. "Presently only Yiddish is cultivated as the vernacular. It is used in almost every aspect of the lives of the ultra-religious Jews. Thus it is and will remain a tool of communication among the ultra-religious group in America for the foreseeable future."¹⁶ Poll's conclusion probably is generally valid for the Lubavitchers too, but at least one segment of the Crown Heights community—girls between the ages of seven and twenty—prefer speaking English, and, as a consequence, in the next generation Yiddish may become the second rather than the first language.

William Labov's *The Social Stratification of English in New York City* supplied the English part of the questionnaire used in this study. The children and one adult (B.K., who was born in Montreal) read the word list, the list of minimal pairs, and "When I was nine or ten, . . ." found in the appendix of Labov's work.¹⁷ Two minimal pairs were altered for the present study—*tin* ~ *ten* and *pin* ~ *pen* were replaced by *ten* ~ *tan* and *pen* ~ *pan* respectively. (Since the adults, except for B.K., are not native speakers of English and all have foreign accents to some degree, they were not given the English part of the questionnaire.) I have divided the children into four categories as follows: no foreign accent, possible accent, little accent, and unmistakable accent. I am not sure what criteria were involved in making these judgments, which were impressionistic and subjective. But my wife, who like myself is a native speaker of American English, fully agrees with these evaluations. In the following list, boys' names are followed by asterisks, and the year of birth is included.

Four or five of the nine children (E.G., who looks about eight or nine, did not know his age) in the *unmistakable accent* column were born in 1959 or after; only two of the seventeen children in the other three categories were born in or after 1959. Except for D.J. and the three K. children

14. "The Role of Yiddish in American Ultra-Orthodox and Hassidic Communities," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Studies*, XIII (1965), 135.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

17. Labov, pp. 596-97.

No accent		Possible accent		Little accent		Unmistakable accent	
C.C.	1955	C.D.	1954	C.B.*	1953	E.B.	1957
F.F.	1954	C.F.*	1949	D.B.	1954	F.B.	1960?
G.F.	1956	E.F.*	1953	D.F.*	1951	D.D.*	1955
C.K.	1956	D.G.	1955			E.D.*	1957
E.K.	1960	C.I.	1956			F.D.	1961
		D.I.	1959			C.G.*	1954
		C.J.	1954			E.G.*	1959?
		D.J.	1955			D.I.	1959
		D.K.*	1957			E.I.*	1961
Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
0	5	3	6	2	1	5	4

interviewed, Yiddish was the first language of the children. Their English improves as they grow older. Most of the informants, including E.B., were also tenants during the summer of 1966. At that time, E.B. consistently used a uvular [ʀ] in English. I was startled to hear her use nothing but an American *r* when I saw her again in July, 1967. Despite this radical improvement, E.B. remains on the *unmistakable accent* list.

Five of the younger children had difficulty with the questionnaire because they had not yet fully mastered the art of reading English. Of the remaining twenty-one, only one, D.D., did not pronounce normal American *r*'s in preconsonantal position. D.D., moreover, did not have [ɜ] in words such as *verse* or *hurt*, which he pronounced [vœs] and [hœt]. Prevocalic *r* is a source of greater difficulty. Five children consistently use [ʀ] and one [r] here. Three or four of the other children produce a normal [ɜ], even in casual conversation.

The omission of /r/ before consonants is best dealt with in terms of the five styles distinguished in Labov's study: *A*-casual speech; *B*-careful speech; *C*-reading style; *D*-word lists; and *D'*-minimal pairs.¹⁸ The consonant, he found, is least likely to be dropped in style *D'* in New York City English.¹⁹ This observation also holds true among Lubavitcher children. Except for D.D., all the children distinguished between *dock* and *dark*, and between *cod* and *card*, by pronouncing [ɹ] in the second word of each pair. D.D. and three others, however, pronounced *sauce* and *source* as homonyms. In Style C the results also remain consistently in agreement with Labov's findings. Eight children always pronounce *r* in this style, but twelve fluctuate between the presence and absence of this sound. D.D., of course, has no preconsonantal *r*.

I have no data on the remaining styles, but casual observation leads me to believe that *rs* are increasingly dropped as the style becomes increasingly

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-98.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

informal. There seemed to be no child, however, who was totally *r*-less, even in the most casual speech. In fact, while the pattern of using more *rs* in formal speech agrees with Labov's findings, the Lubavitcher children use *rs* to a greater extent in all styles than do most young New Yorkers.²⁰

The vowel /eh/ in the noun *can* (e.g., a tin can) is phonetically realized as [ɪə], [ɛə], [æ+ə], etc. It is, in the speech of most New Yorkers, phonemically different from the /æ/ in the verb *can*. Since the /eh/ vowel is stigmatized, particularly when realized as a high vowel, it is rarer in more formal styles. Labov found low vowel realization of /eh/, or replacement of /eh/ by /æ/, to be particularly prevalent among Jews.²¹

A failure to distinguish between /ɛ/ and /æ/ or /eh/ is classically typical of a Yiddish accent in English. Four children did not distinguish *ten* from *tan*, and two confused *pen* and *pan*. But the pair *said* ~ *sad* caused no such difficulty.

As was the case with *r*, Lubavitcher children favor the more formal variants. Only four children distinguished between the stressed vowels in *I can* and *a tin can* when reading the list of minimal pairs. Six children never used /eh/ and thus showed no /æ ~ eh/ distinction in styles *C*, *D*, or *D'*. Of the nineteen children who kept /æ/ separate from /eh/, fifteen of them produced a non-native vowel, usually [ɛ:], for /eh/. Seven of these fifteen did not always produce a normal [æ], the vowel tending to be too high. The six children (all girls) with no /æ ~ eh/ distinction, however, all produced perfect [æ]'s.

There was no one who produced a good /eh/ who had trouble with /æ/. Yet Yiddish has neither sound. Lubavitcher children have adopted the /æ/ of General American speech, but young members of the Lubavitcher community have not learned the /eh/ of their neighbors.

The four children who have an /æ ~ eh/ distinction and who nevertheless pronounce both sounds without foreign interference are four of the five F. children interviewed. The youngest child, G.F., on one occasion had slight difficulty with /eh/, but generally pronounces the vowel as well as her elder siblings. The F. family lived in Philadelphia for some years, where an /æ ~ eh/ distinction also exists. Yet in other respects the F. children sound like New Yorkers and not Philadelphians. They occasionally drop *rs*, and their /ow/ and /æw/ phonemes have none of the [əw] and [æ+ɹw] quality of Philadelphia speech. Thus the F. children have lost their Philadelphia accents, but in moving to New York they have retained a distinction that most New Yorkers possess although it is lacking in the Crown Heights Lubavitcher community.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 342-45.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 295-301.

In New York City speech, *bored* and *bawd* are very commonly both pronounced /bohd/. According to Labov, the /oh/ phoneme is realized as something between [uə] and [ɔə]. In the speech of young New Yorkers, he finds, the /oh/ and /uh/ phonemes are merging.²² Effects of the merger are noticeable among the Lubavitcher children. Nine children make a distinction between *sure* and *shore*; eight do not. Only three, however, distinguish between *poor* and *pour*.

The high /oh/ vowel common in New York City speech is somewhat stigmatized and is certainly as foreign to the phonemic system of Yiddish as /eh/ is. Yet fourteen of the children consistently used /oh/ wherever it might be expected. Three of the F. children departed from this pattern in the word *chocolate* in whose first syllable /a/ occurred. This no doubt reflects the Philadelphia pattern, where high /oh/ is common, but where /a/ is the stressed vowel in *chocolate*.

Three children occasionally use [ʊ] rather than [oə]. One of these is C.C., who favors prestige pronunciations; the other two were members of the K. family. A third K. child, D.K., had no /oh/ or /ɔ/ phoneme at all—*caught* and *cot* are both /kat/ in his speech. D.K. agrees with his mother B.K. in this respect. B.K. is from Montreal, where no /a ~ ɔ/ distinction is made. Finally, four children produced a non-native sounding [ɔɪ] instead of /oh/. This is a smaller number than had difficulty with /æ/ and /eh/.

To turn to another feature of pronunciation that is a mark of group affiliation in New York City, ten children always pronounced the *th* sounds as fricatives. Twelve children used fricatives most of the time, but sometimes used stops /t, d/ or affricates /tθ, dð/. One child, C.G., had a majority of stops and only produced fricatives when he was being especially careful. And one child, E.I., used only stops and had no /θ/ or /ð/ in his speech.

A few matters may be noted briefly: *a.* In a process analogous to the merger of *poor* and *pour*, *beer* and *bear* are becoming homophonous in the speech of young New Yorkers. Only three children distinguished between these words. *b.* The words *mirror* and *nearer* rhymed for nine children and did not for twelve. *c.* *Voice* and *verse* were always distinguished. The stigmatized /ʌy/ is unknown among the Lubavitcher children. *d.* The sequences /ay/ and /aw/ are realized as [ɔɪ] or [ɔɪ] and [æu], respectively. This is typical of the speech of many young New Yorkers. *e.* *Finger* and *singer* rhymed in the speech of all the children. *f.* *Which* and *witch*, and *do* and *dew*, were always homophonous.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 54, 359–64.

To sum the whole matter up, Lubavitcher children are as fluent in English as they are in Yiddish. Their English pronunciation improves as they grow older, and girls above the age of eight speak English with little or no foreign accent. Boys, whose education is much more religiously oriented, have more trouble with English. The fact that girls prefer English and boys Yiddish is precisely analogous to the situation among the parents, where the women prefer Russian and the men Yiddish.

Despite the relative isolation of the Lubavitcher community and the fact that none of the parents was born in New York, Lubavitcher children speak English with a New York accent, with the reservation that prestige markers are more prevalent. Yet the F. children show traces of Philadelphia speech, and the K. children reflect the Montreal pronunciation of their mother. Children's pronunciation after the earliest years in general mirrors the speech of their peers, not that of their parents. Yet it is only natural that the K. children, whose mother is the single native speaker of English among the adults, should model their speech after their mother's. The speech of Lubavitcher children is probably particularly subject to non-New York influences because there is no native English-speaking adult population to provide a counterinfluence.

The teen-age girls who will be the mothers of the next generation speak English very well. There is no doubt that in another generation the English of Lubavitcher children will be absolutely native. Religion, however, is the central fact in Lubavitcher life, and religious education and discussion is exclusively in Yiddish. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the Lubavitcher community will remain bilingual indefinitely.