Going Retro:
An Analysis of the Interplay between Socioeconomic Class and Age in Caracas Spanish

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1. Introduction

Socioeconomic class, whose definition in sociolinguistic studies often incorporates a range of variables such as education level, income, occupation, and residential area, amongst others, has been shown to be of profound importance in the patterning of sociolinguistic variation (Ash 2004, Labov 1972, Trudgill 1974). At the same time, researchers working within this paradigm have typically failed to account for the fact that individual variables within the socioeconomic class index may have differing degrees of importance among generations of the same community. For example, although education has often been argued to play a large role in the social stratification of sociolinguistic variables in the sociolinguistic literature, the influence of generational change in access to education has never been fully explored. Thus, while a socioeconomic index might capture linguistic behavior associated with the social stratification of a group of speakers, this way of defining social class may obscure changes across generational groups in a particular speech community.

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of socioeconomic class and age in the patterning of linguistic behavior in the Spanish spoken in Caracas, Venezuela. To this end we examine three variable phenomena of this variety: syllable-final /ɾ/ deletion (i.e. *cantar* 'to sing' [kantáɾ] > [kantá]), intervocalic /ɾ/ deletion in *para* 'for' (i.e. [páɾa] > [pá]), and intervocalic /d/ deletion (i.e. *cantado* 'sung' [kantáðo] > [kantáo]). In our analysis we focus on the participants' access to education and its relation to their use of the normative variants, those which are encouraged by the educational system. In particular, it will be shown that the younger members of the lower class use the normative variants considerably more often than the older members of the same class. This will be shown to coincide with increased access to education in the lower class: whereas the oldest members of the lower class only had access to an elementary education, the youngest members of the lower class now enjoy access to a secondary school education, thereby increasing their exposure to the normative variants and new occupational opportunities. We will show how participant access to education directly correlates with subsequent changes in occupation, and further that these variables offer remarkable explanatory power of language use when viewed together. Moreover, our study sets out to exemplify how an analysis of these variables in correlation with the traditional factors of age and socioeconomic class offer a more complete perspective of the linguistic behavior in the speech community surveyed. The research questions that guided our study are as follows: 1) What is the explanatory power of the traditional extralinguistic factors of socioeconomic class and age, particularly when seen in light of societal changes? 2) How do education and occupation interact with these traditional variables to predict the use of normative variants for intervocalic /ɾ/, syllable-final /ɾ/, and intervocalic /d/?

2. Previous Studies

The purpose of this section is to provide a brief introduction to studies examining socioeconomic class in the sociolinguistic literature. Given limitations of space a complete review of all relevant work is not possible. However, our introduction aims to discuss approaches to social class and consider how changes in society might not be captured by traditional conceptions of socioeconomic class in sociolinguistics. Guy (1988) argues that the position of an individual can be described in terms of status and power, where status refers to the respect and consideration that one receives from others and power refers to the material resources an individual can possess. Guy (1988) points out that social divisions of groups are based on "social prestige, wealth and power." Fundamentally, people from different walks of life speak in a way that conveys their associations within the speech community. As sociolinguists, the issue we are faced with is how to objectively define social groups and account for the ways these groups use language. According to Guy, the study of language and class entails issues such as the description of language use, the explanation of language change, and the connections of these areas with linguistic theory. All of these aspects are important for a thorough understanding of the sociolinguistic motivations of language variation and change. According to Guy (1988), the definition of social class most commonly used in western social sciences is one based on social unity and status. For example, the methodology proposed by Labov (1966) in his seminal investigation, *The social stratification of English in New York City*, is based on assigning speakers to different social groupings using demographic and sociological criteria, which included family income, education, and occupation. The idea behind observing socioeconomic class as defined by Labov (1966) is to capture linguistic differentiation among groups. In fact, Labov (1966:210) argues that this way of grouping speakers "seems more fundamental and more closely tied to the genesis of linguistic differentiation."

The corpus of the present investigation, *Estudio Sociolingüístico de Caracas* 'Sociolinguistic Study of Caracas' (Bentivoglio and Sedano 1993), employed a conceptualization of socioeconomic class based on social unity and status. There were seven factors taken into account to define the socioeconomic index of speakers: 1. occupation of the participant, 2. occupation of the participant's father, 3. occupation of the participant's mother, 4. education of the participant, 5. housing, 6. total income per family, 7. average income per family. The social index created to describe speakers certainly captures social stratification, but, as we intend to show in the present study, linguistic variation can also be affected by changes in society.

Regarding education as an explanatory factor of linguistic variation and change, authors frequently allude to its importance but without providing empirical evidence (Bentivoglio & Sedano, in press). Romaine (1984) is a key study which emphasizes the differences between the language spoken at home and at school. This observation reveals that: at school students are exposed to more formal registers and the normative linguistic variants of the speech community. In a study on the acquisition of sociolinguistic variables by children, Díaz-Campos (2006, 2009, in press) empirically backs Romaine's claim, showing that, by as early as 4.5 years of age children begin to adopt the more normative variants they are exposed to in their first year of schooling. Sociolinguistic studies typically incorporate education by lumping it in with their definition of socioeconomic class (Chambers 1995: 43-45). In our view this may obscure an important fact which should be taken into the analysis of language change over time: namely, that in many societies, access to higher levels of education changes generationally. In particular, our paper observes how changes in education and occupation can be useful in explaining differences in the linguistic behavior across generational groups of the same socioeconomic class.

2.1. Syllable-final /ɾ/

Variable production of syllable-final liquids is a topic that has received attention in descriptive dialectological work as well as some formal analysis in the 1980s. However, deletion of syllable-final /ɾ/ is not one of the more studied variable phenomena in the Spanish-speaking world. The study by D'Introno, Rojas, and Sosa (1979) of Caracas Spanish is of greatest relevance to the present study. The authors looked at both internal and external variables in predicting the deletion of /ɾ/. Word-

internally they found that a following /s/ favored deletion of the rhotic. Conversely, they found that word-finally a following /l/ favored deletion of the rhotic. The variable was also found to be subject to social stratification. Lower class speakers and male speakers were found to favor deletion of /ɾ/. Díaz-Campos and Ruiz-Sánchez (2008) also study syllable-final /ɾ/ deletion by presenting a comparison of the same phenomenon in Caracas and in Andalusia. Their findings show that a following sonorant, a pause, and a vowel favored deletion of syllable final /ɾ/. They also found that in both varieties deletion is more likely to be found in infinitives. In their analysis, they were able to show that highly frequent items are subject to experience more deletion of syllable-final /ɾ/.

2.2. Intervocalic /ɾ/ in para

Although mention of the reduction of the preposition *para* 'for, in order to' (*Mañana me voy para ~ pa Miami*) appears in a number of Spanish dialectal studies, to date relatively little empirical investigation has focused on this variable. One of the first studies to appear on this topic is García (1979). In this study, the author tested the perception of *para* usage among two Spanish speaking groups; Chicano speakers living in El Paso, Texas and Mexican speakers living in Juarez, Chihuahua. Although no firm conclusions are drawn other than the fact that both groups accepted the reduced form *pa* in a number of differing contexts, the study is one of the first to investigate *pa(ra)* usage. In her introduction, the author notes that "the reduction of *para* to *pa* is quite common all over the Spanish-speaking world" and the two forms "are commonly thought to be in free variation" (106).

Another study which analyzes *para* reduction is Hernández-Campoy and Jiménez-Cano (2003). In a real-time study of radio-broadcasts they measure the degree of standardization of Castilian Spanish in Murcian territory over a 26 year span. Among the linguistic variables studied was intervocalic /ɾ/ deletion in *para*. In describing the variable the authors state "the deletion of intervocalic /ɾ/ in *para* is also a widespread phenomenon in the casual speech of peninsular Spanish…it is subject to both social and stylistic variation, with a conscious use of the standard variant (full form) in formal contexts. In Murcia, it is also a marker, though its deletion is both stylistically and socially more extensive: the nonstandard variant is consistently found much more frequently in formal situations and more embedded in upper social classes in the Spanish of Murcia than in that of Old Castile." (331). Their results show that by 1985 the full variant *para* is produced 100% of the time in highly formalized broadcasts of politicians in Murcia. The authors did not include linguistic variables in their analysis.

To our knowledge the first study to look at *pa(ra)* alternation within a variationist sociolinguistic framework is Bentivoglio, Guirado, and Suárez (2005). The data of their study comes from 48 sociolinguistic interviews of the *Corpus sociolingüístico de Caracas* (Bentivoglio & Sedano 1993). In their survey of the previous literature, the authors reference a number of dialectal studies which propose various phonological and socio-cultural explanations for the phenomenon. They note that intervocalic /ɾ/ in *para* tends to reduce in many Spanish dialects (especially in frequent words and constructions, e.g. *para allá* > [payá]). The cultural component is that while both forms exist among the speech of all socioeconomic classes it is mostly associated with informal and colloquial speech.

For the analysis the participants were equally divided by age (30-45, 60+), socioeconomic level (upper, middle, lower), and sex (male, female). The linguistic factors these authors surveyed were: following phonological context (vowel vs. consonant) and preposition meaning (purpose, directionality, temporality). In total they analyzed 1599 tokens, with an overall distribution of 787 (49%) for the full form (*para*) and 812 (51%) for the reduced form (*pa*). The results obtained from the multivariate analysis conducted with GoldVarb indicate that lower socioeconomic level (.80), following consonant (.54), directionality (.66), and the 60+ age group (.54) favor use of the reduced form *pa*.

2.3. Intervocalic /d/

Descriptive literature about intervocalic /d/ deletion is abundant in all reference books dedicated to Spanish phonetics and dialectology or the history of Spanish, including Navarro Tomás (1999) and

Lapesa (1981), who document the phenomenon back to the 16th and 17th centuries. In his seminal handbook of Spanish pronunciation, Navarro Tomás (1999:101) states that /d/ is produced as a fricative in -*ado* participial forms in formal situations, while in spontaneous speech /d/ is weakened or deleted. Navarro Tomás argues that this phenomenon also extends less commonly to other participial forms in informal styles in varieties of Spanish spoken in Spain. The observations made by Navarro Tomás indicate that weakening of intervocalic /d/ is not new and that there is an uneven distribution across participial forms. Dialectological description of intervocalic /d/ of the Spanish in the Americas is also available. Henríquez Ureña (1921) makes observations about the broad extension of intervocalic /d/ weakening in varieties of Spanish, while also pointing out that Andean varieties in Ecuador and Colombia do not evidence this phenomenon.

In the specific case of Venezuelan Spanish pronunciation, Lipski (1994: 349) maintains that there is no major study, rather partial investigations from which some of the principal traits of the dialect can be considered. Lipski mentions intervocalic /d/ deletion in rapid speech among the relevant traits to describe this variety.

Beyond the pure dialectological descriptions, there have also been sociolinguistic studies of intervocalic /d/ deletion in varieties of Spanish spoken in Spain (Samper Padilla 1996, Hernández-Campoy and Jiménez-Cano 2003, Blas Arroyo 2006) and, most relevant for our study, in Venezuelan Spanish (D'Introno and Sosa 1986, Díaz-Campos and Gradoville in press). Samper Padilla (1996) examines the weakening of intervocalic /d/ in the educated norm of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. He found that deletion was not widespread in educated speakers and that the most favoring context involves the past participle -*ado*. The phenomenon also shows conditioning according to gender with men favoring deletion and women disfavoring deletion.

The previously mentioned study by Hernández-Campoy and Jiménez-Cano (2003) found in an analysis of radio speech a tendency for politicians and non-politicians to eliminate features associated with vernacular Murcian Spanish including deletion of intervocalic /d/.

Blas Arroyo (2006) examined the influence of structural and stylistic factors in intervocalic /d/ deletion in Castellón in the Valencian Community. His findings indicate that the bilingual background of the speakers (i.e. Catalan vs. Spanish) influences rates of deletion with Spanish-dominant speakers favoring deletion as in other areas of Spain. His results also show that past participles ending in -*ado* favor deletion more than any other lexical category. Blas Arroyo argues that stylistically colloquial items are more likely to have instances of /d/ deletion than formal items in the Spanish dominant population.

Studies analyzing intervocalic /d/ in Venezuelan Spanish include D'Introno and Sosa (1986) and Díaz-Campos and Gradoville (in press). D'Introno and Sosa distinguish three variants of the intervocalic /d/ variable: retention, transition (a weakened or approximant production), and deletion. They found that in formal styles upper and middle class speakers favored retention more than the lower socioeconomic group. They also found that deletion occurs in the lower socioeconomic class more than in any other socioeconomic group. Their data also show a trend according to which males favor deletion, while women disfavor it as was found in the Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. Díaz-Campos and Gradoville (in press) examine frequency effects in explaining intervocalic /d/ deletion. The findings of their analysis present empirical evidence showing that lexical frequency as well as type frequency are relevant in accounting for rates of intervocalic /d/ deletion.

3. Methodology

The data of the current study come from the corpus *Estudio sociolingüístico de Caracas* (Bentivoglio and Sedano 1987). In its entirety the corpus is comprised of 160 semi-directed Labovian-style sociolinguistic interviews, all of which were conducted between 1987 and 1988. All participants included in the corpus were born and raised in Caracas with the additional inclusion criterion that their parents were also from Caracas. These speakers were evenly stratified by age (14-29, 30-45, 46-60, 61 and over), gender (male, female), and socioeconomic group (upper, upper-middle, middle, lower-middle, and lower). The determination of each participants' socioeconomic status was made by the researchers who developed the corpus based on a formula by Contasti (1980), the components of

which were previously enumerated. From the corpus, we selected a sample of participants who were evenly divided among three age groups (14-29, 30-45, 61+), both genders and three social classes (the lowest, highest and middle)[1].

For the analysis, three dependent variables were analyzed:

1) Retention vs. deletion of syllable-final /ɾ/ (i.e. [kantáɾ] vs. [kantá] 'to sing')
2) Retention vs. deletion of intervocalic /ɾ/ in *para* 'for' (i.e. [páɾa] vs. [pá])
3) Retention vs. deletion of intervocalic /d/ (i.e. [kantáðo] vs. [kantáo] 'sung')

These linguistic variables were analyzed for their correlation with the sociolinguistic variables of socioeconomic class and age. The linguistic behavior of each social group was then analyzed with respect to the education level and professional activities of its members in order to observe how societal changes in education and occupation have an effect on linguistic variation. The statistical analysis was organized as follows: first, an analysis of the independent variables of age and socioeconomic class was performed using GoldVarb X (Sankoff, Tagliamonte and Smith 2005). Second, a detailed analysis of the behavior of each generational group by socioeconomic class was performed in order to account for differences across generations. This second analysis was done with GoldVarb X and chi-squared tests to determine the statistical significance of relationships in the data.

4. Results

4.1. Multivariate analyses

This section presents the analysis of the variables of socioeconomic class and age as selected by GoldVarb X, a program that uses a form of logistic regression to provide a model with corrected probabilities and determines the statistical significance of the independent variables (factor groups) in predicting the dependent variable. A factor weight greater than .5 indicates that the factor favors the application value (in this study, retention of intervocalic /d/, syllable-final /ɾ/, and intervocalic /ɾ/), while a factor weight less than .5 indicates that the factor disfavors it[2]. The range of the factor group is calculated by subtracting the maximum factor weight of the factor group from the minimum factor weight.

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[1] The data from the syllable-final /ɾ/ deletion and intervocalic /d/ deletion come from previous investigations by one of the authors and comprise 36 speakers. The data for intervocalic /ɾ/ deletion comprises 72 speakers.

[2] Tagliamonte (2006: 145) explains that "[f]actor weights obtained from a multivariate analysis can be values anywhere from 0 to 1. When a factor is closer to 1, it is interpreted as 'favoring' the application value, whereas if it is closer to zero it is interpreted as 'disfavoring' the application value. In some places in the literature you will find analysts saying that anything over .50 favors the application of the rule and anything under .50 disfavors. While this is generally true, it is not the most accurate way to conceive of factor weights. Instead, it is the *relative* position of factor weights, vis-à-vis each other, that is the relevant criterion for interpreting the results."

Table 1. Multivariate analysis of factors favoring retention of syllable-final /ɾ/.

	Weight	%	N
N	7200		
% [ɾ] retained	67.4		
Input	.708		
Age/Socioeconomic class			
30-45/Upper	.780	89.6	716/800
61+/Upper	.773	89.2	714/800
14-29/Upper	.686	84.1	673/800
61+/Middle	.626	80.2	642/800
30-45/Middle	.578	76.9	615/800
14-29/Middle	.528	73.1	585/800
14-29/Lower	.259	45.9	369/800
30-45/Lower	.221	40.8	326/800
61+/Lower	.130	26.6	212/800
Range	65		
Log-likelihood = -3742.313; p ≤ 0.001			

The analysis of syllable-final /ɾ/ is based on a total of 7200 tokens, 67.4% (4852/7200) of which show retention and 32.6% deletion (2348/7200). As can be seen in Table 1, the upper- and middle-class speakers favor the normative variant, while lower-class speakers disfavor it. In particular, the highest rate of retention is found among the upper-class speakers in the 30-to-45-year and 61-or-older age groups. Contrary to this tendency, the older lower-class speakers evidence the lowest factor weight (.130), most strongly disfavoring retention. By observing the weights and percentages we can see that while social stratification is very strong, there are differences within each socioeconomic class according to age which is not uniform between classes. This finding is further discussed below since the variable rule analysis only evidences an overwhelming effect for socioeconomic class in the distribution of the data.

Table 2. Multivariate analysis of factors influencing the retention of intervocalic /ɾ/ in *para*.

	Weight	%	N
N	2891		
% [ɾ] retained	.561		
Input	44.7		
Age/Socioeconomic class			
61+/Upper	.855	88.3	189/214
30-45/ Upper	.804	84.0	199/237
14-29/Middle	.730	77.3	211/273
30-45/Middle	.700	74.9	164/219
14-29/Upper	.691	74.0	268/362
61+/Middle	.687	73.7	168/228
14-29/Lower	.540	60.0	189/315
30-45/Lower	.198	23.9	114/477
61+/Lower	.141	17.3	98/566
Range	71		
Log-likelihood = -1525.047; p ≤ 0.001			

The analysis of intervocalic /ɾ/ in *para* is based on a total of 2891 tokens, 44.7% (1291/2891) of which show retention and 55.3% deletion (1600/2891). As we can observe in Table 2 there again is a clear division by socioeconomic level. Upper- and middle-class speakers show strong tendencies favoring the non-reduced form of *para*. The younger lower-class speakers also show a favoring

tendency toward the non-reduced form, while the middle-aged and older speakers of the lower class disfavor the non-reduced variant. The strongest favoring tendencies are found in the older and middle-aged upper-class speakers, while the weakest are found in the oldest lower-class speakers.

Table 3. Multivariate analysis of factors favoring retention of intervocalic /d/.

N	7200		
% [ð] retained	89.9		
Input	.921		
	Weight	**%**	**N**
Age/Socioeconomic class			
30-45/Upper	.672	96.0	768/800
30-45/Middle	.665	95.9	767/800
14-29/Upper	.665	95.9	767/800
14-29/Middle	.651	95.6	765/800
61+/Middle	.583	94.2	754/800
61+/Upper	.556	93.6	749/800
30-45/Lower	.306	83.8	670/800
14-29/Lower	.282	82.1	657/800
61+/Lower	.180	72.0	576/800
Range	49		
Log-likelihood = -2123.885; p ≤ 0.001			

The analysis of intervocalic /d/ is based on a total of 7200 tokens, 89.9% (6473/7200) of which show retention and 10.1% deletion (727/7200). The general tendency found in the analysis of intervocalic /d/ shows that upper- and middle-class speakers regardless of age favor retention, while lower-class speakers disfavor it. Certain differences are found in terms of weights and percentages in all groups. The strongest favoring factor is that of the 30-45-year-old upper-class speakers (.672), while the strongest disfavoring factor is that of the 61-or-older lower-class speakers (.180). While all lower-class speakers disfavor retention, within this group there is a considerable difference between the younger and middle-aged groups on the one hand and the older speakers on the other, the latter much more strongly disfavoring retention.

In summary, the review of the three linguistic variables included in our analysis reveals that socioeconomic class is the factor that has the strongest effect in the data. The general tendency for all linguistic variables analyzed indicates that upper- and middle-class speakers favor normative variants, while lower socioeconomic class speakers disfavor normative variants. Even though socioeconomic class shows a clear trend of social stratification of the variants, important distinctions are found across age groups of the same socioeconomic class. These differences are further analyzed in the next section.

4.2. A closer look at socioeconomic class and age

We now turn to a more detailed investigation of age and socioeconomic class to further explore two interesting issues that the previous multivariate analyses prompted: 1) amongst younger speakers, differences in rates of retention appear to be narrowing, and 2) the lower class evidences a markedly distinct pattern from the other classes. In order to test these observations, we performed a series of statistical analyses specifically aimed at uncovering differences regarding age within the same socioeconomic class[3]. Table 4 shows three different runs of GoldVarb X comparing age groups within each social class for syllable-final /ɾ/.

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[3]   The reader will note that for each variable we provide: (1) factor weights taken from GoldVarb X binomial regressions and (2) chi-squared tests. Our aim in doing so is two fold: (a) to remain consistent with the analysis of the previous section and (b) to offer additional, and in some instances more detailed, statistical support for the factor weights regarding the tabulation of class and age. It is important to keep in mind that for each variable three separate binomial regressions were run with GoldVarb X, resulting in a separate log-likelihood for each class, and statistical evidence of significant differences between age groups of each class.

Table 4. GoldVarb X analysis of syllable-final /ɾ/ retention within each socioeconomic class.

Socioeconomic class & Age	Weight	%	N	Log likelihood
Lower				
14-29	.587	45.9	369/800	
30-45	.535	40.8	326/800	-1556.979
61+	.378	26.6	212/800	
Middle				
14-29	.450	73.1	585/800	
30- 45	.500	76.9	615/800	-1295.769
61+	.550	80.2	642/800	
Upper				
14-29	.423	84.1	673/800	
30-45	.544	89.6	716/800	-889.565
61+	.534	89.2	714/800	

What Table 4 reveals is that retention of syllable-final /ɾ/ is favored amongst the 30-45 and 61+ age groups of the upper class, while it is disfavored by the youngest speakers of this class. Regarding the middle-class speakers, we can see that the oldest members favor retention (.550) relative to the other age groups of this same class. At the same time the 30-45 age group of the middle class neither favors nor disfavors retention (.500), while the youngest generation slightly disfavors retention (.450). Finally, the lowest socioeconomic class reveals an effect for retention as speaker age decreases. This trend is graphically represented in Figure 1 below, and further corroborated with additional statistical analyses.
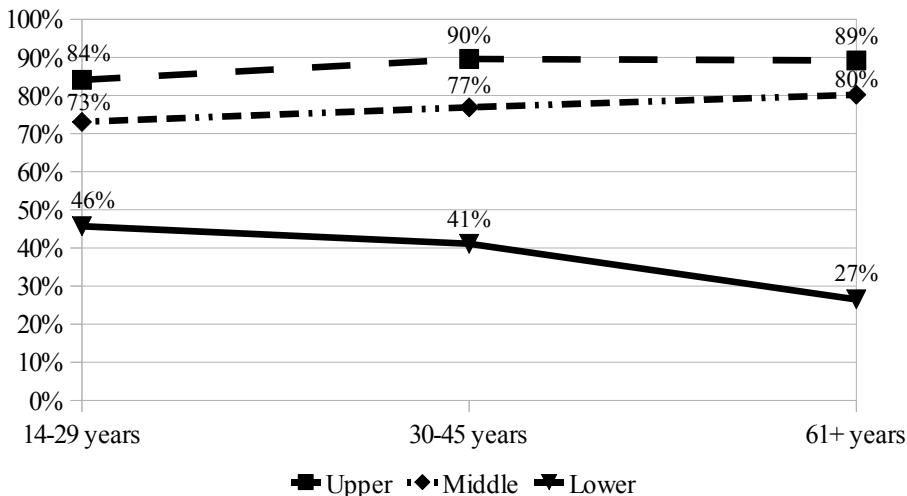
Figure 1. Rates of retention of syllable-final /ɾ/ in Caracas Spanish by age and socioeconomic class.

Figure 1 reveals that as participant age decreases, so do the retention rates of the middle and upper classes, particularly in the youngest group (Middle: $\chi^2 = 11.39$, df = 2, p ≤ 0.01; Upper: $\chi^2 = 13.927$, df = 2, p ≤ 0.001). On the other hand, in the lower class there is a very strong tendency for an increase in retention rates as the participants get younger ($\chi^2 = 68.45$, df = 2, p ≤ 0.001). In all age groups there continues to be a difference between the social classes (14-29 years: $\chi^2 = 286.582$, df = 2, p ≤ 0.001; 30-45 years: $\chi^2 = 474.115$, df = 2, p ≤ 0.001; 61+ years: $\chi^2 = 813.3$, df = 2, p ≤ 0.001), although these differences are certainly reduced in younger generations. Table 5 shows three different runs of

GoldVarb X comparing age groups within each social class for intervocalic /ɾ/ in *para*.

Table 5. GoldVarb X analysis of intervocalic /ɾ/ retention in *para* within each socioeconomic class.

Socioeconomic class & Age	Weight	%	N	Log likelihood
Lower				
14-29	.797	60.0	189/315	
30-45	.450	23.9	114/477	-738.092
61+	.375	17.3	98/566	
Middle				
14-29	[ ]*	77.3	211/273	
30- 45	[ ]	74.9	164/219	-407.432
61+	[ ]	73.7	168/228	
Upper				
14-29	.392	74.0	268/362	
30-45	.529	84.0	199/237	-370.834
61+	.630	88.3	189/214	

* [   ] = the analysis did not reveal significant differences for age among this class.

What can be seen in Table 5 is that retention is significantly favored by the oldest (.630) and middle-aged (.529) speakers of the upper class, while it is disfavored amongst the youngest speakers (.392). Within the middle class, age was not selected by GoldVarb X. This indicates that there are no significant differences in rates of retention amongst middle-class speakers, at least regarding age. Finally, in the lowest socioeconomic class, retention of intervocalic /ɾ/ in *para* is strongly favored by the youngest speakers (.797), while speakers in the age groups 30-45 (.450) and 61+ (.375) disfavor retention. Again, we turn the reader's attention to Figure 2 where this information is visually presented along with the relevant chi-squared tests for further corroboration.

Figure 2. Rates of retention of intervocalic /ɾ/ in *para* in Caracas Spanish by age and socioeconomic class.
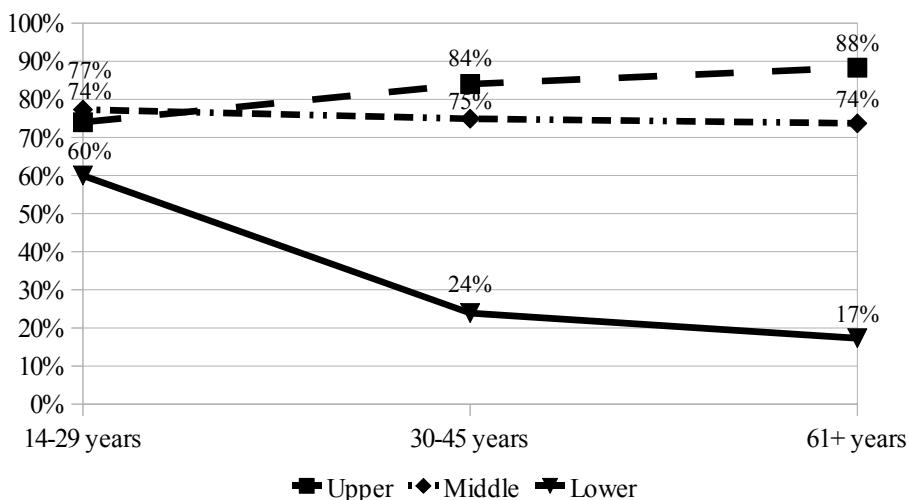
In Figure 2, we first call attention to the fact that while the middle class largely remains at the same retention rate ($\chi^2 = 0.919$, df = 2, p ≤ 1), the upper class again shows a lesser rate of retention in the younger generations ($\chi^2 = 19.918$, df = 2, p ≤ 0.001). Like in the case of syllable-final /ɾ/, the lower class shows a progressively greater retention rate in the younger generations ($\chi^2 = 188.394$, df = 2, p ≤ 0.001). As before, there are significant class differences in all age groups, although these differences

are considerably reduced in the youngest generation and, in fact, the relationship between the middle and upper classes inverts slightly (14-29 years: $\chi^2 = 24.817$, df = 2, $p \leq 0.001$; 30-45 years: $\chi^2 = 293.279$, df = 2, $p \leq 0.001$; 61+ years: $\chi^2 = 413.09$, df = 2, $p \leq 0.001$). Turning now to our last variable, Table 6 shows three different runs of GoldVarb X comparing age groups within each social class for intervocalic /d/.

Table 6. GoldVarb X analysis of intervocalic /d/ retention within each socioeconomic class.

Socioeconomic class & Age	Weight	%	N	Log likelihood
Lower				
14-29	.539	82.1	657/800	
30-45	.567	83.8	670/800	-1204.991
61+	.396	72	576/800	
Middle				
14-29	[ ]*	95.6	765/800	
30- 45	[ ]	95.9	767/800	-457.291
61+	[ ]	94.2	754/800	
Upper				
14-29	[ ]*	95.9	767/800	
30-45	[ ]	96	768/800	-464.588
61+	[ ]	93.6	749/800	

* [ ] = the analysis did not reveal significant differences for age among this class.

Table 6 reveals that the only socioeconomic class group which shows a significant effect for retention by age cohort is the lower class. That is, GoldVarb X did not select age for either middle- or upper-class speakers, as showing a significant change in rates of retention. But, amongst the lower-class speakers, the factor weights display a favoring effect for retention as the speakers move down in age. This information is supported by the additional analyses which follow, and displayed in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3. Rates of retention of intervocalic /d/ in Caracas Spanish by age and socioeconomic class[4]
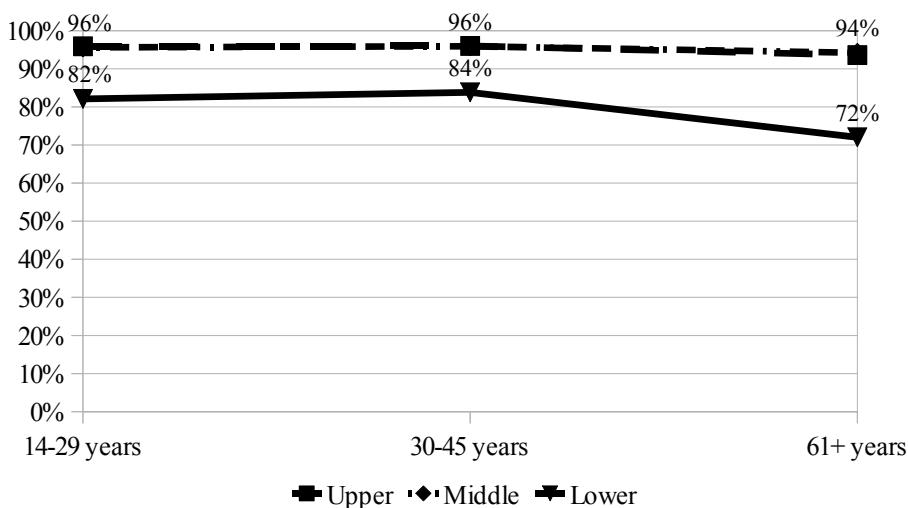
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[4]   Given the upper and middle classes have identical (rounded) percentage rates, they are overlapped in the graph.

The middle and upper classes remain relatively constant from generation to generation with a slight increase in retention from the 61+ group to the 30-45 group (Middle: $\chi^2 = 2.708$, df = 2, p $\leq$ 0.50; Upper: $\chi^2 = 6.214$, df = 2, p $\leq$ 0.05) and are, basically, indistinguishable from each other. As before, younger generations of the lower class have higher rates of retention than the older generation ($\chi^2 = 39.5$, df = 2, p $\leq$ 0.001). As with the other variables, there continues to be a difference between the lower class and the other classes, although that difference is again reduced in younger generations (14-29 years: $\chi^2 = 123.502$, df = 2, p $\leq$ 0.001; 30-45 years: $\chi^2 = 106.131$, df = 2, p $\leq$ 0.001; 60+ years: $\chi^2 = 221.667$, df = 2, p $\leq$ 0.001).

5. Discussion

In the previous section, we showed an effect for social class, particularly between the lower class and the other two social classes. In every case examined, the lower class expectedly used less of the normative variants than either of the other classes. However, we also noted that in all cases, the lower class increased its use of the normative variants in the younger generations, thereby closing the gap between themselves and the other social classes. Naturally, an explanation of this shift is warranted.

If we examine Figure 4, we can see the education levels of the participants in the sample organized by social class and age. For the lower class, we observe that in the oldest generation none of the participants had a high school education. In the middle generation, 25% of the participants had a high school education. By the youngest generation, all of the participants in the lower class have a high school education.

Figure 4. Education levels of participants by social class and age[5]
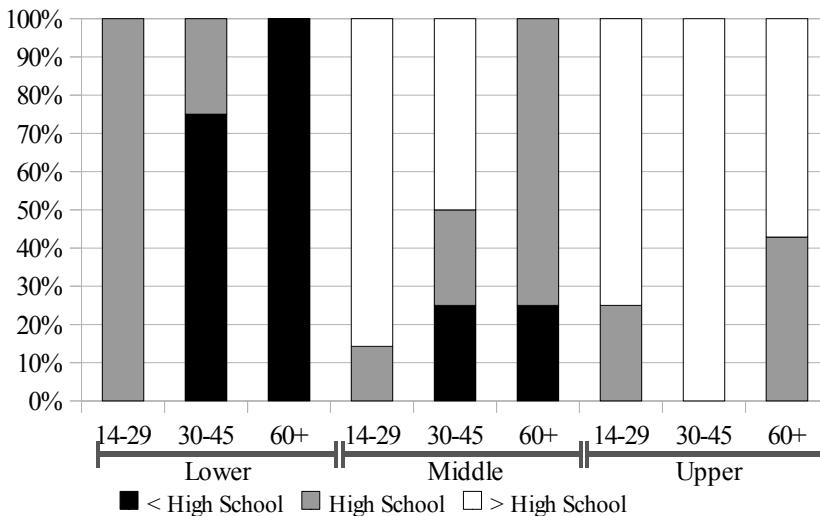
In fact, there is also an increase in the education level amongst the middle class. In the oldest generation, 25% of the participants had less than a high school education and 75% had a high school education. While the proportion of participants without a high school education does not change in the middle generation, a full half of this generation managed to obtain education beyond high school. By the youngest generation, 86% of the middle class has greater than a high school education.

Participants in the upper class evidence the highest overall level of education. In the older generation 57% of participants had greater than a high school education. By the middle generation this reaches 100%, but in the youngest generation this bounces back to 75%, due to the fact that some of these participants had not completed their university education at the time of the interviews because of their age.

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[5]   Participants for whom there was no data on education were excluded from these calculations.

Figure 5. Occupation types of participants by social class and age.
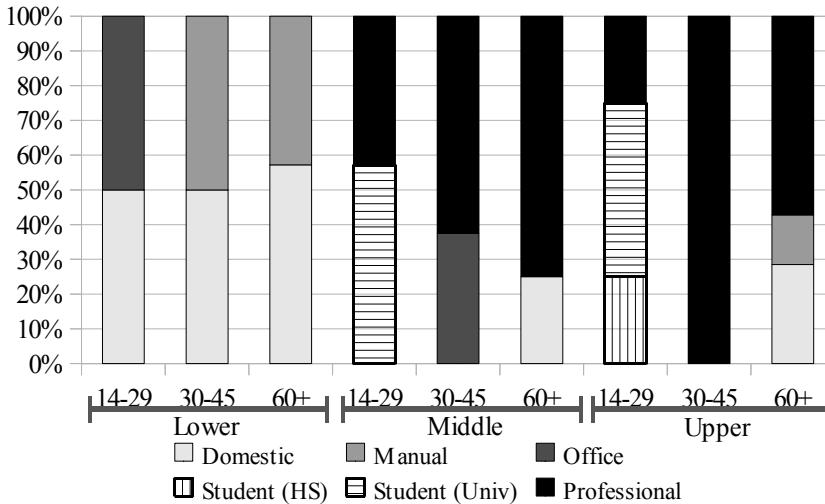
When we look at the corresponding occupation types of the participants in Figure 5, we see that there is a change in occupation in the lower class from the older generations to the youngest. While the lower class does maintain a comparable level of domestic occupations throughout the generations, we see that the two older generations occupy manual labor positions, whereas the youngest generation now takes up office positions.

In the middle and upper classes, we can see that most individuals occupy professional positions in all age groups. However, we observe a shift in that middle-aged and younger speakers hold more office and professional positions than their older-aged counterparts, as well as less domestic and manual labor positions.

We argue that these changes in the linguistic behavior of the younger lower-class people have to do with a societal change in Venezuela according to which access to education has led to changes in occupation and use of normative variants. The changes in access to education are reflected in Table 7, which shows that high school and university students have come to represent larger proportions of the student enrollment in Venezuela.

Table 7. Number of students enrolled by level of education in Venezuela (Source: Ministry of Education, Venezuela).

Years	Elementary		High School		University		Total
	N × 1000	%	N × 1000	%	N × 1000	%	N × 1000
1950-51	503	91.9	37	6.8	7	1.3	547
1960-61	1244	85.7	181	12.4	26	1.9	1451
1970-71	1824	75.8	498	20.7	84	3.5	2406
1975-76	2511	69.8	831	23.1	255	7.1	3597

The increased enrollment at the high school and university levels shows that the population is no longer as restricted to an elementary school education. Velásquez (1979: 797) states "the improvement of human capital by way of education has been one of the greatest achievements of Venezuela" (translation our own). This historical data further corroborates the tendencies observed in the demographic information concerning the participants of the actual corpus of Caracas analyzed in our study.

To summarize, an overall increase in education level is observed within the sample, which certainly coincides with greater access to education in Venezuelan society throughout the second half of the 20th century. This increased access to education has led to a shift in occupations with an

increased number of people holding jobs in the office and professional categories. The increased penetration into the professional market also raises participant contact with the normative variety of Venezuelan Spanish. Change in Venezuelan society has led to greater use of the normative variants of the variables predominantly in the youngest generations of the lower class, given that these are the groups who have primarily enjoyed new access, in comparison with the middle and upper classes which already enjoyed higher access to education. In a sense, the younger generation of the lower class has gone *retro*, as they are now using with greater frequency the retained variants, which are certainly ancestral to the deleted variants. In this way education appears to be pulling back changes that existed in the speech community (final /ɾ/ deletion, intervocalic /ɾ/ deletion in *para*, intervocalic /d/ deletion). It remains to be seen if these effects are permanent, as the younger generations of the middle and upper classes showed lesser rates of final /ɾ/ retention than their predecessors, and the younger generation of the upper class showed a lesser rate of intervocalic /ɾ/ retention than its predecessors. A deeper understanding of these patterns may emerge once we learn more about the sociolinguistic perceptions associated with these variants.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this investigation reveal that upper and middle class speakers are more likely to use normative variants of all three variables than the lower socioeconomic class speakers in the speech community. This behavior of the upper and middle class in contrast with the working class in Caracas Spanish can in part be explained as a consequence of changes in access to education and occupation. Furthermore, as access to education increases in younger generations, a sharp rise in the use of the normative variants is reflected in the lowest socioeconomic class. This paper contributes to our understanding of the normative behavior of the upper and middle classes, as well as young adults from the lower class. The observation of the intersection of age and socioeconomic class, along with speaker level of education and occupation, are key to explaining changes in linguistic behavior that coincide with societal changes in Venezuela during the latter half of the twentieth century.

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