

**When *get* got noticed: the emerging salience of *get*-passives**  
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Recent research on the use of the *get*-passive has suggested that it is rising in frequency at the expense of the *be*-passive both in spoken American English (Weiner & Labov 1983, Herold 1986, Kim 2012) and spoken British English (Collins 1996, Carter & McCarthy 1999, Kim 2012). Accounts of the variability between *get* and *be* have appealed to pragmatic and grammatical factors (Lakoff 1971, Chappell 1980) as well as the social factors of gender, age, and social class (Feagin 1979, Herold 1986). Previous studies also indicate that the *get*-passive is a stigmatized variant in American English (Labov 1975, Weiner & Labov 1983).

This paper adds to the growing body of research on the correlation of social factors with the rise of the *get*-passive. The data in question come from sociolinguistic interviews that comprise the Philadelphia Neighborhood Corpus (PNC). 596 tokens of eventive passive constructions from 144 speakers ranging in date of birth from 1888-1999 are analyzed. Income data is taken from interview reports and adjusted for inflation to reflect 2013 rates.

We find clear evidence for a rise in the use of the *get*-passive between 1888 and 1999 such that speakers with earlier dates of birth show a preference for *was* (Excerpt 1a), while speakers with later dates of birth prefer *get* (Excerpt 1b). A mixed-effects model shows a significant effect of Date of Birth on a speaker's likelihood of using *get* ( $p=.03$ ), indicating that it is a change in progress. As can be seen in Figures 1 and 2, there is no predictable effect of Gender or Income level until the 1950s. Beginning with speakers born around the 1950s, we see a significant effect of Gender ( $p=.001$ ), with males more likely to use *get*. Income does not reach significance, but trends toward speakers of lower and middle incomes being more likely to use *get*.

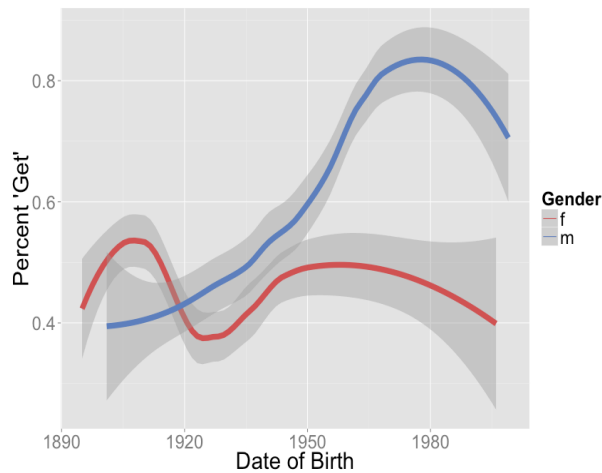
We argue that these results are in line with an interpretation of the *get*-passive as stigmatized. It has been noted that young women tend to lead non-stigmatized language changes (Labov 1990, 1994), while young men often lead stigmatized changes (Trudgill 1972). We therefore argue that the stigmatization of the *get*-passive did not take place until around the 1950s. Before this time, the *get*-passive rose in usage at equal rates across gender and income levels. After this time, however, we see a reversal in the use of *get* by women and by upper income speakers, which we argue is indicative of the *get*-passive becoming salient and stigmatized among speakers in the PNC.

Excerpt 1:

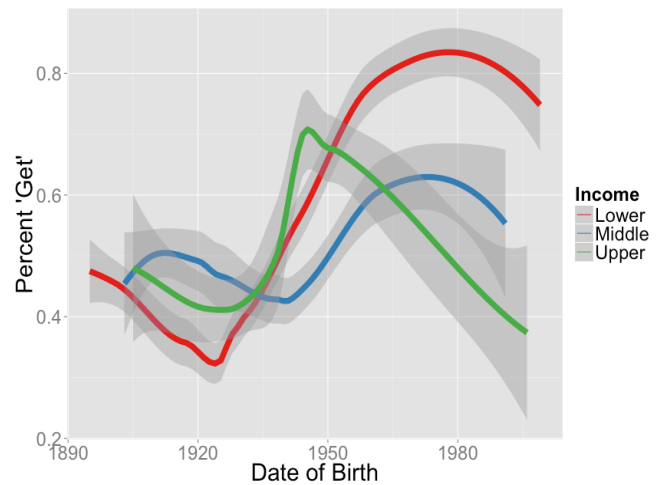
a. Where four cops were arrested in there the other night. Did you hear it on the news?  
(born 1957)

b. Like ten white guys got busted, like they all got arrested. Then they got like released the next day. (born 1999)

**Figure 1: male-led by the 1950s**



**Figure 2: lower-income led by the 1960s**



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