COEXISTENT SYSTEMS IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN ENGLISH

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This contribution to the study of African American Vernacular English [AAVE] is an interpretation of the special linguistic features of this dialect in the light of its co-existence with other co-territorial dialects of English. It is far removed from the notion that AAVE can be seen as a system in itself, analyzed without reference to other dialects, which has been repeated theme of research in this area from the very beginnings to the present day. Although it must be admitted that this monolithic approach has often produced descriptions that are far removed from linguistic and social reality, it has also been a continued source of insights, bringing to our attention striking differences between AAVE and other dialects that would otherwise have been overlooked. In fact, this analysis I am presenting here is heavily indebted to two linguists who have attempted to extract an invariant core that is unique to AAVE, the earliest and the most recent contribution to the study of this dialect. One source is the work of Beryl Bailey, who brought to AAVE the insights from her description of Jamaican Creole English, drawn from her internalized knowledge as a native speaker. The recognition of my indebtedness to her work was the original motivation for this paper. The other source is the monumental study of the tense and aspect system of AAVE by Elizabeth Dayton, begun in the 1970's and only recently brought to completion. Dayton's meticulously transcribed observations are the product of many years of participation in the daily life of extended black families in Wet Philadelphia, Her data on the tense and aspect particles of AAVE, carefully noted in the midst of the social interactions that produced it, is roughly ten times as large as all the combined observations of all other researchers. In the original version of this paper, written five years ago, I drew upon a number of handouts form unpublished papers that Dayton had given throughout the years. In revising this paper, I have not attempted to re-incorporate the massive data and extensive analyses of her 1996 dissertation. I hope that the point of view developed here will continue to be useful in the years to come, when the linguistic community has begun to assimilate Dayton's data and her analysis of the AAVE system.

0. The heritage of Beryl Bailey

My first acquaintance with the issues raised in this paper came through my close association with Beryl Bailey, who was a fellow student with me at

Columbia.[1] Both of our dissertations were directed by Uriel Weinreich, who encouraged us to apply the tools of linguistics to the language of every-day life, and to set aside the barriers between linguistic analysis and dialectology. Beryl came from a school teacher's family and a school teacher's world. For many Jamaicans, that means cleaving to the standards and norms of school teachers, and never looking back at the life and language of ordinary people. Beryl wrote in her introduction that she wanted to

> explode once and for all the notion which persists among teachers
> of English in Jamaica, that the 'dialect' is not a language: and further
> that it has no bearing on the problem of the teaching of English.

She began work on Jamaican Creole English in 1956, made several return trips to Jamaica, and produced a language guide to Jamaica to help train Peace Corps volunteers. Her dissertation, *Jamaican Creole Syntax,* appeared in 1966; was the first comprehensive description of a Creole syntax. It is also an important point of reference for the structure of African-American Vernacular English [AAVE] in the U.S. To get some insight into Bailey's style, and the tradition she came from, one might simply cite her dedication:

> to the memory of my
> great-grandfather
> Henry Loftman
> whose passion for the
> rudiments of English grammar
> earned him the nickname
> 'syntax.'

Bailey's view of AAVE

Bailey's approach to AAVE is exemplified in her first paper on the topic, "Toward a new perspective in Negro English dialectology" (1965). Her insights into the nature of the dialect were motivated in part by her reaction against the dialectological view of AAVE as a collection of mistakes or deviations from Standard English. Outside of the school setting, Beryl was not a field worker, and her whole article was based on an examination of the speech of the narrator in

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[1]This paper was originally given at a session of the American Anthropological Association in Chicago in the fall of 1991, organized by Marcyliena Morgan, on "Racism, Linguistics and Language in Africa America: Papers in Honor of Beryl Loftman Bailey." I am much indebted to the contributions to my thinking of my colleagues at that meeting and in exchanges since with Guy Bailey, Walter Edwards, Michael Montgomery, Salikoko Mufwene, John Rickford, Gillian Sankoff, and Don Winford. Many references in this paper will show my special indebtedness to the contributions of John Baugh, and to my colleagues on the research project on "The Influence of Urban Minorities on Linguistic Change", particularly Sherry Ash, John Myhill and Wendell Harris. The support of the National Science Foundation for that project is gratefully acknowledged. It will be evident throughout this paper that the major data base used for the study of African-American tense and aspect is the result of the observations and analyses of Elizabeth Dayton, to whom I am most deeply indebted. Since much of her work remains unpublished, I have drawn primarily upon handouts of papers she has given at various meetings, but hope that in the near future the main body of her research will become generally available.

one novel, The Cool World. She apologized for this fact in words that are worth citing:

(1)   I was compelled to modify the orthodox procedures and even, at times, to adopt some completely unorthodox ones. The first problem that I had to face was that of abstracting a hypothetical dialect which could reasonably be regarded as featuring the main elements of the deep structure. This may sound like hocus-pocus, but indeed a good deal of linguistics is. A hocus-pocus procedure which yields the linguistic facts is surely preferable to a scientifically rigorous one which murders those facts.

Bailey's main theme is that AAVE must be understood as an independent structure in its own right. The most remarkable result of her analysis is the following set of three phrase structure rules for non-verbal predications:

[1](2) English predications

$$P \rightarrow be + \begin{Bmatrix} \text{Adj} \\ \text{Nom} \\ \text{Loc} \end{Bmatrix}$$

(3) Jamaican Creole predications

$$P \rightarrow \emptyset + \begin{Bmatrix} \emptyset + \text{Adj} \\ a + \text{Nom} \\ (de) + \text{Loc} \end{Bmatrix}$$

(4) Cool World predications

$$P \rightarrow \emptyset + \begin{Bmatrix} \text{Adj} \\ \text{Nom} \\ \text{Loc} \end{Bmatrix}$$

It should be clear that Bailey anticipated in this juxtaposition the long discussion of the AAVE copula to follow. The separation of the copula from the progressive auxiliary has since been recognized as a useful strategy (G. Bailey and N. Maynor 1989). Her abstraction from the Cool World data of a grammar with categorical absence of the copula did not prove to be characteristic of AAVE, but this type of structure has recently re-appeared in John Singler's description of the mesolect in Liberia (1991).[2] Most importantly, she identified a

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[2]Later developments showed that Bailey's Jamaican Creole copula rule may have been more relevant than she thought to the structure of modern AAVE, but this required the study of variable contraction and deletion before the different grammatical environments. The argument that this variation can be explained by the Jamaican treatment of the copula has been extensively developed by Holm (1984) and Baugh (1980). If the complete zeroing out of the copula that Singler found in some Liberian speakers is a typical mesolectal stage, it is not clear how the influence of the basilectal differentiation of the copula could determine modern AAVE structure. Winford shows that this is only one possible scenario of development, and demonstrates close parallels between the treatment of the copula in AAVE and the mesolectal Trinidadian English Creole.

family resemblance between AAVE and JCE which was the basis of most of the research that followed.

1. The recognition of separate systems

Though Bailey did not study every-day speech in JCE or AAVE, she was well aware of variation that did not fit within the rules of her grammar. Following the logic of her basic methodology given in (1), she assigned the variation of every-day speech automatically to interference from another language (or dialect), which one might call Standard English or Jamaican Standard English. This approach to the resolution of variation has been put forward frequently from the very beginning of studies of variation and change. It has been suggested as a way of handling the variation of constricted and non-constricted /r/ in New York City, or the variation of fricatives, affricates and stops for the interdentals (dh) and (th). The resolution into separate dialects is in fact the limiting case of the general solution to the problem of variation. One begins with a surface variation, say between [kA   d] and [kÆd], or between *He's tired* and *He tired*. The analytical task is to discover what this surface variation reflects in the organization of the grammar: mere phonetic variability, variation in a more abstract phonological rule, the variable insertion of a morpheme, the alternation of allomorphs, variation in the syntactic parsing or syntactic movements, or in many cases the combined effects of morphological and phonological variation (Guy 1981). The limiting possibility is that the surface variation is caused by the alternating use of two separate systems, each comprising in itself a complete and coherent grammar. The crucial question for the general study of variation is to decide what kind of evidence bears on the assignment of variation to what level, and what kind of evidence could justify the recognition of distinct systems, not simply competing rules.

The issue of where variability is located in the grammar has been given a new impetus by Mufwene (1992), in a general argument for the recognition of heterogeneity in linguistic systems. In discussing the AAVE copula, he attributes the variation found in the actual realization of Bailey's rule (4) not to phonological contraction or morphological insertion, but to a fundamental difference in the basic phrase structure rules of the grammar:

(5)   Unlike Standard English, BE allows both S —> NP VP and S —>
        NP PredP as alternative surface combinatoric rules in its non-
        elliptical clauses. . . . Those speakers producing copula-less
        sentences more frequently may be assumed to subscribe
        predominantly to the S —> NP PredP rules and the others to the S
        —> NP VP rule. There is undoubtedly individual variation among
        BE speakers regarding whether the second rule is favored when the
        PredP is headed by an adjective or by a preposition.[3]

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[3]As the last sentence of this quotation shows, Mufwene's proposals involve variation at the level of individual speakers as well as the assignment of variation to relatively abstract syntactic rules. We are concerned here only with the latter aspect of his analysis. As far as individual variation is concerned, I have

In arguing for such an assignment, and against contraction and deletion rules, Mufwene refers only to one set of constraints: the following grammatical environment. But the crucial evidence for the alignment of the AAVE auxiliary and copula with that of other dialects is found in parallel effects of the form of the subject. Both contraction and deletion are favored by subject pronouns as against full noun phrases, reflecting a long-standing pattern in the history of English (G. Bailey, Maynor and Cukor-Avila 1989). More importantly, contraction and deletion are inversely affected by the phonological form of the subject: vowel-final subjects favor contraction and consonant-final subjects favor deletion, as one would predict from the unmarked status of CVC syllables.[4] Phonological constraints of this type indicate that the object being acted on is in place at a higher level of abstraction, and that its alternation with zero is controlled by a phonological rule (Labov 1987). But if Mufwene's suggestion does not apply to the variation of finite **be** — which as we will see is a member of the general English component of AAVE — we will find other areas of the grammar where it does apply.

The major topic of this paper — the tense and aspect systems of AAVE and OAD — will show many differences that reflect a higher level variation comparable to that suggested by Mufwene. The questions to be addressed will concern contrasts like *He be tired* vs. *He tired*. There has never been any reason to believe that this is the result of a low level rule of phonological deletion of *be*. The issue is whether these two forms differ only by the optional choice of the aspect marker **be,** or whether the choice of invariant **be** vs. finite **be** reflects an alternation at a higher level that involving layered sets of rules.

The discussion to follow will pursue the suggestion of Labov 1971 that the recognition of a linguistic system as a separate entity depends upon the strict co-occurrence of sets of rules. In the simplest schema (6), a community may show variation involving two rules, A and B, which may apply or not apply in four different possible arrangements for various sub-groups:

		{1}	{2}	{3}	{4}
(6)	Rule A applies	yes	yes	no	no
	Rule B applies	yes	no	yes	no

If all four possibilities occur, then the choice of A is independent of the choice of B, and there is no evidence for a separate system. We can recognize two separate and independent variable rules. But if we find only possibilities {1} and {4} and never {2} and {3} then we can say that rules A and B are in some way dependent on each other or upon some more abstract choice. In this sense, they are linked systematically, and form part of a (possibly larger) separate system. It is

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not been able to locate evidence to support the existence of stable individual idiolects which are not based on communities defined socially or geographically (Labov 1975).

[4] This effect has been replicated in a number of studies, culminating in Rickford et al. 1991. In the East Palo Alto data, contraction consistently shows the favoring effect of a preceding vowel. When deletion is analyzed as operating on the pool of contracted items, the effect reverses, though not when no connection between deletion and contraction is assumed (Tables 3-6).

just such linking or co-occurrence of properties that we will search for in re-opening the question of coexistent systems in AAVE.

2. The current consensus on AAVE.

Given the active state of research on AAVE, and the impeding impact of Dayton's work, any attempt to state a general consensus can only be momentarily successful; the following brief account is my own effort to update the effort of Labov 1982 in this respect.[5] For this purpose it will be useful to compare AAVE with all other dialects of English spoken in the continental U.S.: I will refer to these as Other American Dialects, or OAD. While there is considerable variation within this range of "other dialects", particularly within the Southern States, it can still be argued that they share many features in common and are differentiated as a whole from AAVE.[6] The term AAVE or African-American Vernacular English will be used to refer to what was earlier called the Black English Vernacular, as defined by Baugh (1983): the uniform grammar used by African-Americans who have minimal contact with other dialects in contexts where only speakers of that vernacular are present.

It is logical to group the findings that relate AAVE to OAD into three sets. One set shows a great area of similarity between AAVE and OAD; another set shows discrete and categorical absence in AAVE of certain elements of OAD; the third finds elements of AAVE that do not exist in OAD. In short, the common, the negative, and the positive.

The common area is by far the largest. The most striking features of AAVE syntax are shared by white Southern States dialects used by white speakers: negative concord, negative inversion, lack of inversion in embedded questions, double modals (Labov et al. 1968, Wolfram 1974, Feagin 1979, Boortien 1979, Di Paolo 1989). AAVE and OAD share most categorical rules, and for variable rules, differ only quantitatively, not qualitatively. In the noun phrase, there are no significant differences in the expression of person or number, and the category of possession is intact.[7] AAVE and OAD show no differences in the forms or

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[5]For the study of the phonology and morphological patterns, and syntax of AAVE, I will be drawing principally on Labov, Cohen, Robins and Lewis 1968; Wolfram 1969, 1974; Fasold 1972; Baugh 1983; Rickford et al. 1991; Rickford & McNair-Knox 1993. Evidence on the tense and aspect system of AAVE will be drawn from Labov et al. 1968; Fickett 1972; Fasold 1972; Dunlap 1977; Rickford 1973, 1980, 1986; Bailey and Maynor 1985a,b, 1987, 1989; Bernstein 1988; Myhill 1988; and above all from the papers and dissertation of Elizabeth Dayton. For evidence on earlier stages of AAVE and its development, I will be relying upon Poplack and Sankoff 1987, Poplack and Tagliamonte 1989, 1991; Singler 1991, Montgomery et al. (in press), Bailey and Maynor and Cukor-Avila 1989. For the relations between Caribbean Creoles and AAVE, I will be drawing upon Edwards and Winford 1991, For an overview of the history of work on AAVE, see Labov 1982, the Introduction to Montgomery and Bailey 1986 and G. Bailey 1993.

[6]OAD includes standard broadcast or classroom English, which is commonly used as a base for comparison with AAVE. It does not include Hawaiian Creole English in this OAD group, since its structure is far more different from OAD than AAVE is. Nor does it include the range of dialects spoken by Hispanic Americans. In general, the varieties subsumed under OAD are used by speakers on the mainstream side of the line that sharply divides American speech communities along racial lines.

[7]The -s of the plural is somewhat more consistent in AAVE than in OAD, since the zero plurals of *deer,*

semantics of the past tense, or the general present, and only small formal differences in the future. The past perfect is used regularly in AAVE, though its form is occasionally borrowed in preterit uses.

AAVE also uses the same basic set of aspects as OAD: the progressive **be** + **ing** and the present perfect, **have** + **en**. The only observable differences in the use of the progressive are some differentiation in the constraint on its use with stative verbs. In AAVE, the present perfect has an uncertain status in the positive, but is used consistently in negative sentences. The past perfect can be used in the same way as in OAD, but as it has appeared with increasing clarity, it is also extended to serve as a simple preterit (Labov et al. 1968, Rickford 1992, Cukor-Avila 1995, Dayton 1996).

AAVE shares with OAD the basic categories of mood--indicative, imperative, subjunctive, the same modals, and voice--active, passive, middle, causative, with only slight differences in form.

The second set of findings are concentrated in morphology, and those areas of syntax that intersect with morphology. The possessive morpheme in attributive position is absent. There is no third singular /s/ in AAVE and no subject-verb agreement, except for the copula.[8]

The third set of findings concern a series of auxiliary particles found in AAVE but not in OAD: **be, done, be done, been done, been, steady, come.** The semantics and syntax of those particles show only small overlap with elements found in OAD.[9]

There are several recognized ways of bringing these three sets of observations to bear on the present-day relations of AAVE and OAD.

a. AAVE and OAD can be seen as separate languages or dialects, and variation as code-switching between them. This is the position of Beryl Bailey cited in (1) above.

b. AAVE and OAD can be seen as systems that are distinct but interdependent. This is the notion of *coexistent systems* introduced by Fries and Pike 1967, who used it to characterize a phonological sub-set that had entered the language with Spanish loan words. In this concept, one of the two systems may not be a complete or independent entity, capable of generating a complete range of utterances, but merely a sub-set that is used to supplement or combine with the other.

c. AAVE can be seen as a mesolectal stage in the upper part of a Creole continuum, in which the standard variety of OAD is the acrolect(Bickerton 1975). In such a continuum, there may be an implicational scale that will rule out {3} in (6) above, but not {2}. Thus not all combinations of rules are permitted, but there is no strict co-occurrence rule that links rule A automatically to rule B.

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fish, sheep, etc. are regularized. The *-s* of the attributive possessive is absent, but in the absolute form it is consistent and regularized to yield *mines* as well as *hers*.

[9]In the case of *done*, it will appear that white Southern dialects show the basic use with a perfect meaning, but the semantics are considerably elaborated in AAVE.

d. AAVE can be viewed as a de-creolized dialect of English with the many persistent Creole-like features embedded in it. Descriptions of AAVE written from this perspective (Stewart 1971, Dillard 1972) did not as a rule consider variation, but follow implicitly the line of (a) above.[10]

One might argue for a more sophisticated combination of b, c and d, combining synchronic and diachronic perspectives (Rickford, p.c.). The hypothesis to be advanced here is focused directly on (b), the recognition of coexistent systems. It is proposed that AAVE consists of two distinct components. the General English [GE] component , which is similar to the grammar of OAD, and the African-American [AA] component . These two components are not tightly integrated with each other, but follow internal patterns of strict co-occurrence. On the other hand, they are not completely independent structures. On the one hand, GE is a fairly complete set of syntactic, morphological and phonological structures, which can function independently. Through the GE component, speakers of AAVE have access to the much the same grammatical and lexical machinery as speakers of OAD, and use it for the much the same range of grammatical functions. On the other hand, the AA component allows speakers of AAVE to construct sentence types that are not available in OAD. The AA component is not a complete grammar, but a subset of grammatical and lexical forms that are used in combination with much but not all of the grammatical inventory of GE in ways that to be explored below. In the end, we will see that the distinct positive features of AAVE in this AA component are free to develop a specialized semantics that is used primarily in highly affective, socially marked interactions.[11] Thus the AA component may be seen as an addition to the GE component, in some ways complementing the OAD elements that have been subtracted or were never present in AAVE. The GE component then serves as a set of default values for AAVE: when no AA element is supplied, the GE component is used. The AA component is concentrated largely in a set of aspectual particles and their semantic structures.

3. The African-American components of the tense-aspect system.

I will now examine briefly the development of the AA aspectual particles, following the work of recent scholars who have described with some precision their distributions, use and meanings within the social context of the vernacular African-American community. I will be drawing heavily on the long-term participant observation of John Baugh in Los Angeles and Elizabeth Dayton in Philadelphia. These grammatical particles cannot be studied in the same way as the closed sets of the GE component: [12] they are marked elements whose non-

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[10]A more refined view of the Creole character in AAVE is not inconsistent with the idea (b) that AAVE and OAD are distinct but interdependent systems. Creole influence in the early development of AAVE does not imply that its later history is simply one of decreolization (Winford, p.c.).

[11] That is not to say that all uses of the specific AAVE grammatical particles are engaged in this highly affective semantic Rickford has pointed out (p.c.), this would be a serious error.

occurrence is not easily quantifiable, and their use is concentrated in the kind of face-to-face interaction which requires direct observation of the participant-observer.[13]

These particles -- **be, been, done, come, steady** -- are all invariant forms, which are placed before the main verb of the sentence in the positions reserved for modals or aspectual markers in OAD. They are clearly grammaticalized markers and distinct from the homonymous main verbs or adverbs in several respects that are typical results of grammaticalization.[14] In these respects, they are typologically similar to the tense and aspect particles of Caribbean Creoles: Jamaican *a/de, (b)en, done;* Haitian *ap, pe, te.* (Spears 1990, Lefebvre et al. 1982). As we will see, they do not participate in any of the syntactic operations associated with INFL: auxiliary inversion, *neg*-placement, tag questions, or cliticization on the subject. In these respects, the AA particles share properties with the Afro-Caribbean grammars of Creole languages, and it was only natural for linguists following the Beryl Bailey tradition to see them as the direct continuation or the inheritance of a similar Creole grammar spoken on the U.S. mainland in the 18th and 19th centuries (Dillard 1972, Stewart 1967, 1971). However, the relation of BEV to Creole grammars of the Mediterranean appears in a very different light as the result of a number of the findings of recent research (G. Bailey & N. Maynor 1987, 1989, Rickford & McNair-Knox 1993, Dunlap 1977, Poplack and Sankoff 1987, Poplack and Tagliamonte 1989, 1991, Myhill 1988, 1991, Edwards 1991, Montgomery, Fuller and Paparone 1993). These various sources give varying degrees of support to the main thesis of Bailey and Maynor 1991, which can be summed up in two statements:

a. The particular form/meaning combinations of the AAVE particles are quite different from those found in the Caribbean.

b. The grammar used by African-Americans in the South in the 19th century did not show these patterns, but rather a grammar much closer to that of OAD.

The general conclusion that is emerging from studies of the history of AAVE is that many important features of the modern dialect are creations of the 20th century and not an inheritance of the 19th. The Creole affinities of AAVE and the Creole-like structural properties that we do observe are not to be accounted for by direct transmission, but by the more subtle process of substrate influence and by parallel drift or development. This view of the situation is presented as the best working hypothesis to date, certainly not one that is established beyond challenge. If we accept for the moment that AAVE has diverged in many respects

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[13]Baugh worked for four years as a lifeguard in a swimming pool in the African-American community of Pacoima, a suburb of Los Angeles. He eventually succeeded in recording interviews of a number of key individuals in four different social situations, but also made many linguistic observations directly in the course of his work. Dayton lived for four years in a section of Philadelphia that was almost entirely African-American, and became an intimate participant in family and friendship networks of people who had no other direct contacts with whites. None of her linguistic observations were recorded on tape, but were written down on paper with the surrounding circumstances as soon as possible after they occurred.

[14]They show the five principles of grammaticalization set out in Hopper 1991: layering, divergence, specialization, persistence and de-categorization.

from OAD in recent decades, and is continuing to diverge, we tend to draw different conclusions about the structure of the dialect.

Non-finite BE.

        The particle **be** is the most frequent and the most salient of the AA elements in AAVE. Its morphology is clear: it always appears as /biy/ (and occasionally with an /s/ suffix[15]). It shows three syntactic properties that distinguish it sharply from GE auxiliary elements:

        a. It does not accept negative affixation (**ben't* or *be not). Instead, the negative particle precedes *be* and requires *do* support(*don't be...*).
        b. It does not form tag questions (*..., *be he?*).
        c. It does not participate in auxiliary inversion (**Be he doing that?)*

These three properties will be referred to as the *non-finite* syntax of **be,** a set of properties shared by all of the AA particles to be discussed below. This non-finite syntax of AA particles is the chief evidence to be advanced for the heterogeneous character of AAVE, since the central mechanisms of GE auxiliary syntax are missing, and with them much of the motivation for attributing the same structures to sentences with AA auxiliaries as GE auxiliaries.
        Further evidence for the non-finite character of **be** and other AA particles is found in their semantic behavior. Dayton has demonstrated that the AA particles **be, done, be done** are free of any limitation to past, present or future time. It is well known that **be** occurs in future contexts; in early work, these were set aside as indicating possible deletion of contracted *will:*

(7)   When June come, I **be** outta school and outta work.
                                                              [Dayton 1986].

Similarly, contexts with past habitual behavior were set aside as indicating a possible deletion of contracted *would*:

(8) When they used to tell us that the nipples **be** pink on pregnant women,
        we **b**e laughin'; we were laughin' 'cause it don't be like that.
                        [Dayton 1986]

However, Dayton gives many examples of such forms following noun phrases ending in consonants, where contraction is not possible, as in (9):

(9)   When my son was young, the women be givin' him money.
                                                              [Dayton 1986]

These and many other sentences all lead to the conclusion that non-finite **be** carries no tense information. Most sentences with **be** do co-occur with present

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[15]Though various suggestions have been made for a functional or semantic interpretation of *bes* vs. *be*, no clear evidence to support this view has emerged.

situations, since that follows from its aspectual characterization of 'habitual' behavior, but there is no bar to it appearing in any temporal context. The same argument will be repeated for all AA particles.

The non-finite syntax and semantics of AA auxiliaries might indicate continuity with or affinity with the Afro-Caribbean mesolectal grammars that share these properties. The evidence for discontinuity and divergence rests upon the particular combination of form and meaning involved. The central meaning of 'habitual' was recognized for non-finite **be** very early in studies of AAVE (Stewart 1967, Labov et al. 1968, Fasold 1972), and there is little disagreement about this. There has however never been any clear agreement on whether non-finite **be** is opposed to finite **be** as a privative opposition. If this were the case, "He talking about you" would mean 'at the moment' and could not mean 'habitually.' We often find a free alternation of non-finite **be** and finite *is/am/are.* For example, from the adolescent Jets in New York City:

(10) Like--...she **be** standin' with her hand in her pocket, and her friend is
      standin' there, and a man **is** messin' with her friend.
            [member of the Jets, 16; Labov et al. 1968]

When it was first realized that non-finite **be** had a habitual meaning, it was natural to connect this with the 'habitual' or 'iterative' aspect of Caribbean creoles.[16] However, comparatively few creoles have a specialized marker for habituals. Some use the same non-punctual marker to indicate both progressive and habitual, while others merge the habitual and the future (Taylor 1977, Holm 1988). Some English creoles show a specifically habitual marker **doz** in the present and **useto** in the pst*:* in Trinidad (Winford 1992), Guyana (Rickford 1980), Barbados (Burrowes and Allsop 1983), Mosquito Coast Creole English (Holm 1978). Invariant *be* is rare in the Caribbean, but is a common feature of Hiberno-English and other English dialects, sometimes in combination with **do** as **do be** or **does be**, but also alone. The 'habitual' meaning makes a direct link with the Irish habitual copula, or "consuetudinal **be**". Evidence on the origin of the invariant *be* form is not conclusive in either direction, and may indicate a convergence of several forms of contact. Rickford 1980 demonstrates a route by which Gullah *doz be* gave rise to a reduced *be* form, and Rickford 1986 sums up the evidence for early contact of black speakers with Irish laborers.

In any case, the historical origins of nonfinite **be** are not as relevant to the main theme of this paper, the current trajectory of AAVE, as the intricate semantic development of this particle in recent times. The semantic range reported by studies of the vernacular over the past twenty years is quite different from anything reported so far for Caribbean **a** or **de.** To begin with, it is now clear that the association of iterative and habitual, common in describing Caribbean Creole grammars, was mistaken. Dayton has conclusively demonstrated that there is complementary distribution in this respect between **be** and **done**. Adverbs that

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[16]While most general treatments of aspect distinguish sharply between habitual and iterative, there is a tendency in Creole studies to associate iterative with habitual without further comment (e.g., Holm 1988: 157, Bickerton 1980:6). As a result, early observations about BEV non-finite **be** tended to refer to both semantic features, though as shown below, Dayton found that the iterative expressions co-occur with **done**, not **be**.

indicate indefinite, habitual behavior like *always, all the time, every, sometimes,* and *steady* co-occur regularly with non-finite **be** in AAVE.

(11)   When you don't **be** talkin' about someone else all the time.
        [member of the Jets, 16; Labov, Cohen, Robins and Lewis 1968]

On the other hand, adverbs that indicate iterated behavior like *twice* and *five times* co-occur with **done** (see below). The differences are almost absolute in Dayton's extensive data.
        This specialization of the meaning of **be** is only one indication of the idiosyncratic semantic development found in AAVE. From the first observations of **be**, it was clear that there are some utterances that do not fit into the category of 'habitual.'

(12)   So you know it all don't **be** on her; it **be** half on me and half on her.
                                        [12-year-old girl, in Chicago, 1965]

While (12) might be interpreted as habitual behavior, it was not intended as such; rather, it dealt with the attribution of blame for a particular incident. Such utterances almost always indicate a durative state of affairs, usually accompanied by an intensive quality. This is particularly evident in (13), said by a woman in the University of Pennsylvania hospital to another woman in a conversation of an intensely religious character:

(13)   Her Father be your Father.

The steady state character of (13) is also found in (14), called out by a man leaning out of a truck in West Philadelphia to a woman on the sidewalk:

(14)   Hey baby, this be Heywood!

A fair number of such utterances collected over the years indicate that non-finite **be** has developed the capacity to refer to extended steady states, usually indicating a higher state of reality than normally predicated. This affective quality can be thought of as the super-real, or *surrealis*, as contrasted with the *irrealis* category that unites futures and modals as referring to a state of affairs that is less than real.[17] This *surrealis* feature is found in a number of AA elements, as will be evident in the discussion to follow. However, it should be noted that such highly affective utterances form only a part of the uses of invariant **be** that fail to show habitual or durative aspect. For this reason, Dayton argues that the semantic core of invariant *be* is stativity, opposed in this respect to *done* within the aspectual system.
        Before these special semantic developments of the nonfinite **be** occurred, one might suppose that there was a simple habitual, perhaps a habitual/iterative category that was the modern continuation of an Anglo-Irish or Caribbean category. This supposition is difficult to maintain, however, in the light of the

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[17] This was reflected in the greeting that became quite common in the early 1980's, *What it be like?*

evidence presented by Bailey and Maynor that the habitual feature of nonfinite **be** is a development of recent times, following the great migration of southern rural blacks to urban centers (Bailey and Maynor 1985a,b, 1987, 1989, Bailey 1993). Their repeated studies show that "children and teen-agers, especially those with urban connections, generally use [nonfinite **be**] +**V**+**ing** to mark durative/habitual actions while the older adults never do" (Bailey 1993:303). In the earlier pattern, reflected in the narratives of ex-slaves as well, nonfinite <u>be</u> appears to have been an alternate of finite **be**, with similar syntactic and semantic distribution. The work of Rickford and his associates in East Palo Alto shows a similar recent increase in the frequency of nonfinite **be** and its habitual pattern (Rickford and McNair-Knox 1993). Rickford 1992 argues that the change is primarily a quantitative one: that the sentences cited from older rural speakers show evidence of the habitual feature. However, Bailey 1993 demonstrates that the growth of habitual **be + ing** is a qualitative break: that use of invariant **be + ing** to mark habitual aspect is found among *all* urban speakers born after 1944 and rural speakers strong urban ties born after 1944, while *none* of the speakers born before 1944 use this feature. The demonstration that habitual **be** is a creation of the second half of the 20th century is typical of the many findings of sociolinguistics which completely reverse previous expectations. Despite the many objections that have been raised by those who cling to the older conception, the evidence brought to bear in Bailey 1993 is overwhelming; seldom has the case for abrupt linguistic change been more decisively argued.[18]

Thus the recent history of the first of the AA particles, nonfinite **be**, provides a sharp challenge to our understanding of the nature of modern AAVE. The farther we come from a common origin with the Caribbean Creole populations, the more similarity we find to Creole grammars in the tense and aspect system. But this similarity is not the precise correlation of forms and meanings that forms the essential evidence for historical linguistics. Rather it is a typological similarity of the sort that provides relatively weak evidence for historical reconstruction. This puzzling situation recurs in the study of other AA elements of the dialect.

Perfect DONE

AAVE has always possessed the perfect particle, **done**, which is found in both in white Southern States English and in Caribbean Creoles. In AAVE, **done** precedes a verb that makes reference to an action completed in the recent past. If that is a telic verb, which implies a change of state, **done** will indicate that the

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[18] The change of the normative pattern for tautosyllabic /r/ in New York City showed a similar abrupt character; Labov 1966 shows that 100% of those who were below 40 in 1963 showed positive evaluation of (r), while those over 40 gave almost random responses. World War II is implicated as a punctuating event in both cases, but the timing is different. The change in New York City affected those who were under 21 in 1944, while the growth of habitual *be* is found only among those who were born in 1944. Given that the population movements created by the war were instrumental, this difference follows logically, since the new (r) norm affects superposed dialects, learned later in life, while invariant *be* is a feature of the vernacular learned in early childhood.

action is completed. Thus in (15) and (16), the verb *use* must mean 'use up' in combination with **done:**

(15)   You don't have it 'cause you **done** used it in your younger age.
        [Isolated individual, 15, South Harlem, 1966]
(16)   It don't make no difference, 'cause they **done** used all the good ones
        by now.   [Baugh 1983]

The second common semantic feature of the perfect — relevance to the present — is usually implicit. But in both (15) and (16) current relevance is foregrounded, since **done** is attached to subordinate clause of causation which explicitly states that this event is a cause of the event of the main clause. In (17), this connection is implicit: *so* might be inserted before *le's run*.

(17)   We **done** got this far; le's run!
        [member of the Oscar Brothers, 15, South Harlem, 1966]

When **done** modifies a punctual verb like *tell*, the sense of 'completion' is neutralized; one does not 'completely tell' someone something. It is then equivalent to 'occurrence in the recent past, with effects on the present', and can be translated as 'already.' Indeed, **done** commonly co-occurs with **already.** (18) and (19) were spoken by the same person on the same occasion.

(18)   I **done** told you on that.
(19)   I **done** told you already.
        [member of the Jets, 13, South Harlem, 1966]

Among adults, one often finds **done** alternating with the GE present perfect **have + en,** showing that for some AAVE speakers this GE form can be an equivalent. The meaning of 'effect on the present' characteristic of the present perfect then emerges, not only for *tell* in (20) but also for *get wet* in (21), which can accept the meaning of 'completive.'

(20)   But you **done** tol' em, you don't realize you d--you **have** told 'em
        that.   [South Harlem, 39, 1967]
(21)   Buff, I **done** got wet twice goin' to the store. (What?) I **have** gotten
        wet twice; that's how hard it's rainin'. [Dayton 1984]

When **done** is used with iterative adverbs like *twice* , the 'completed' meaning can be suspended for each individual event; in (21), the speaker need not have gotten thoroughly wet and dried out each time. The 'completeness' of the action is translated into its iterative character; it is not so much the completeness of the action as the high degree of change of state that has an effect on the action.
        This use of **done** with *twice* illustrates an important development which Dayton discovered in the semantics of this particle. As mentioned above, **done** co-occurs with iterative adverbs like *twice, five times*, but **be** does not. Thus it is reasonable to oppose AAVE **done** to **be** as [+definite] to [-definite].

In AAVE, as in many languages of the world, perfect aspect develops an 'intensive' meaning. In (22), **done** shows the stereotypical use of intensive **done** where the sense of 'completion' is pushed into the background.

(22)   Well, we useta get into trouble and . . . y'know . . . like . . . if Pop'd
         catch us,, he say, "Boy--you **done** done it now.

                                        [Baugh 1983]

Done is frequently used with other verbs that do not easily accept the notion of 'completed.' The verb *win* is such a punctual act; (23) does not gracefully accept a translation with *completely.*

(23)   After I **done** won all that money.
                 [Member of the T-Birds, 12, South Harlem, 1965]

In (24) , the action of *get the works* is in itself completive, and **done** is best seen as carrying an 'intensive' meaning. From the speaker of (18) and (19):

(24)   After you knock the guy down, he done got the works, you know
         he gon' try to sneak you.
                 [Member of the Jets, 13, South Harlem, 1966]

We find in addition that AAVE has developed new uses of **done** which cannot be characterized as either a 'completed' meaning or 'intensive'. **Done** can precede a verb that refers to a socially defined act that cannot be done completely or intensively:

(25)   He **done** slept with Francine and he **done** slept with Darlene... and
         he supposed to be a good friend of Henry [Darlene's husband, from
         W. Philadelphia.]

Sleeping with someone is an action that is defined by society as either done or not done: it can't be done partially or completely, intensively or moderately, so the meaning of **done** is not transparent in this case. A similar problem is found in (26), which also concerns a man who was cheating on his wife. In this case, **done** is used as a modifier of the socially punctual action of going to work.

(26)   So he went to where she was. . . and got the nerve to lie to me . .
         talking 'bout he **done** went to work. [Baugh 1983]

What is the meaning of **done** in (25) and (26)? Speakers of AAVE generally agree that **done** here resonates with the sense of moral indignation, and can be translated by the phrase 'had the nerve to', which appears explicitly in the matrix sentence in (26). This interpretation also applies directly to (25). But in (26), moral indignation is not directed to the act of going to work but to lying about going to work; we then have to assume that **done** is associated with the higher verb *talk* in the underlying form, and has been lowered to its present position before *went*.

Whenever we find such extended meanings of a grammatical particle, one must consider the possibility that they are "contextually pragmatic interpretations" (Winford, p.c.), and not meanings within the grammatical system. There is no general criterion for deciding when a particular interpretation has been grammaticalized and is now a part of the fundamental meaning of the particle. However, we must be prepared to describe, at least informally, the rules of interpretation that take us from 'completed' or 'intensive' to 'moral indignation.' I do not know of any pragmatic analysis that would carry the **done** of (25) from 'intensive' to 'morally undesirable' rather than to 'thoroughly', 'magnificently' or 'spectacularly'. One might say that the presence anywhere in the context of moral disapproval, no matter how generally derived, will select the 'moral indignation' sense of **done**. If such a rule operated generally on any particle meaning 'completed' or 'intensive' it would produce such an interpretation from "he told her he already went to the office" or "he told her he really went to the office." In the absence of any evidence for such a rule, we must assign 'moral indignation' as one of the selectable elements of the meaning of **done** in AAVE.

Since **done** is used in Caribbean English-based Creoles as well as in AAVE, we can benefit from the opportunity to contrast the syntax and semantics of the particle in AAVE and a particular Caribbean comm. Edwards 1991 provides a penetrating and insightful review of the semantics of **done** in Guyana, based on his own recordings in 1974 and a review of the literature.[19] He recognizes the arguments of Feagin (1979) and Wolfram and Christian (1976) that AAVE **done** is related to the **done** of white Southern States English. But he maintains that the semantic similarities of the Guyanese and AAVE form lead to the conclusion that "preverbal **done** is a decreolized variant of Caribbean creole preverbal *don*." (p. 253). He provides a set of observed sentences that show Guyanese *don* translatable as 'already,' referring to a state of affairs in effect prior to the moment of speaking, and still in effect at the moment of speaking, as in (27):

(27)   Bai taim mi lef de fu kom hee som a dem *don* marid.
        'By the time I left there to come here some of them were already married.'
(28)   Dem *don* gat di koolii-man rom.
        'They already have the Indian man's rum.'

Another type can be glossed as 'be finished.'

(29)   Somtaim wen you *don* wok yu go an bai a dringk.
        'Sometimes when you [are] finished working you go and buy a drink.'

Edwards' over-all portrait of the semantics of Guyanese *don* shows a marker of perfect aspect that embodies location in the past, completion and current relevance. In these respects, it resembles AAVE **done**. But Edwards also points out many features of Guyanese *don* that are quite different.

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[19]This is the **done** that occurs with moderate stress, not the unstressed **done** that occurs in Guyanese creole.

•Guyanese *don* occurs with statives as well as non-statives; sentences of type (27-28) occur with statives, sentences of type (29) with non-statives. But AAVE **done** occurs only with non-stative verbs.

•Guyanese *don* also functions as a non-stative main verb with the meaning of 'finish'; though some of these sentences are equivalent to AAVE forms with deleted copula, others cannot be so translated.

(30)   Yu kyan *don* baut trii, akaadin to hau yu plant.
        'You can be finished around three, according to how you plant.'

When main verb *don* combines with preverbal *don*, we get

(31)   He *don* don. 'He is/has already finished.'
(32)   Mi bin *don* don wen Jaan kom.
        'I had already finished when John came.'

Though these are formally similar to AAVE (22), the meanings are quite different. While (31) and (32) show aspectual particles, dealing with contour in time, (22) displays a modal meaning, best translated as 'really' rather than 'already'.

•Guyanese *don* receives stress, in some cases less than the main verb, in others, like (31-32), more than the main verb. AAVE **done** is always unstressed, frequently reduced to [dn] or a nasal flap.

Edwards puts into question the status of Guyanese *don* as an auxiliary, arguing that it has many properties of a main verb, and concludes that it may best be regarded as a serial verb. Below we will see reasons to question the status of AAVE **done** as an auxiliary, but for completely opposing reasons: it might well be classed as an adverb rather than an auxiliary. Edwards views these differences as changes that have taken place since the transition from the Caribbean to the mainland.

(33)   [AAVE **done**] has lost its strong stress, has become more integrated
        into the auxiliary system of [AAVE], and has followed the paths of
        cliticization and grammaticalization similar to that followed by *i, em*
        and *baimbai* in Tok Pisin. (p. 253).

Edwards' treatment also contains a rich set of observations of AAVE **done** from Detroit, made by himself and the Rev. Fido Giles. In these extracts we can see the semantic features that were recognized as parallel to the Caribbean, but also the new semantic features that are not reported from the Caribbean. One set shows the meaning of 'recent event affecting the present', co-occurring with or translated by 'already':

(34) He already **done** tried to kill me.
(35) This dude **done** already tried to kill me.
(36) He **done** turned the corner.

Other sentences are best translated as 'completely', where past location is backgrounded, and the thoroughness of the action is what affects the present. This sense of completeness may be quantitative:

(37) These children **done** ate all the candy.

or more often, qualitative, in the sense of 'the highest degree of the state'; that is, 'intensive':

(38) You **done** made me mad.
(39) These people **done** gone crazy.

But other sentences do not easily translate as either 'already' or 'completely' or 'intensive'. Typical of these are sentences with *tell:*

(40)   This motherfucker **done** told me I gotta go.

Here the completion of the act of telling is not the relevant predication, nor its location in the recent past. The term *motherfucker* echoes the sense of 'moral indignation' which illustrates the similarity with (25) and (26).

    Though every perfect has the potential for being used as an intensive, the extension to a modal of moral indignation in (25), (26) and (40) does not seem characteristic of Caribbean grammars.[20] One of Edwards' most insightful observations is the contrast between the emotional character of the AAVE examples and the Guyanese examples. His Guyanese sentences range over the full range of every-day life situations; a few are emotional but many are matter-of-fact. Edwards notes that in his own, and Baugh's data that most of the examples were negative in force. He speculates that "preverbal **done** in [AAVE] serves the pragmatic function of signalling disapproval from the speaker's viewpoint." Myhill (1988, 1991) comes to the same conclusion on several AAVE particles: that they serve to communicate disapproval. Before we can assign this meaning to **done** without reservation, it would be necessary to find out what proportion of the interview or recorded materials express disapproval, sarcasm, envy and exasperation and what proportion express more positive feelings. One might conclude, as with the two following particles, that this negative discourse matrix provides the raw material out of which the new grammatical meanings are forged. The semantic bleaching characteristic of grammaticalization will usually reduce such rich discourse context to more abstract features like 'intensive', 'sequential' or 'inevitable.'

    In sum, Edwards' analysis of the Guyanese situation shows how AAVE **done** has followed a different syntactic trajectory from Guyanese *don*, and his observations in the United States have confirmed our view of the rich semantic development that has carried the dialect further away from its Caribbean relative.[21]

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[20] The difference between the Caribbean *don* and this AAVE use is shown in the reaction of one Guyanese woman who said that she understood (26) to mean that the man said he went to work and had returned: that is, the process of going to work had been completed. No African-American speaker has provided this interpretation.

[21] Other treatments of Caribbean **done** show the same pattern of similarities and differences from the AAVE development. See Herzfeld 1983 for Limon and Panamanian Creole and Shepherd 1984 for Antiguan Creole.

Sequential BE DONE.

AAVE also shows the combination of **be** and **done** as **be done**. This can frequently be translated as equivalent to the GE future perfect, equivalent to 'will have done.' This is explicit in the alternation of *be done* with *will be done* as in the contracted from *I'll be done... .*As an equivalent of the future perfect, it is not simply an aspect marker but a combination of tense and aspect which indicates both completion and location in the future. The future perfect is attached to the first of two successive events in the future, and asserts that the first action will occur and be completed before the second. This relationship is prototypically indicated by the phrase *by the time*.

(41)   My ice cream's gonna **be done** melted by the time we get there.
            [25-year-old woman; Dayton 1984]
(42)   So they can **be done** ate their lunch by the time they get there.
            [30-year-old woman at vacation Bible school; Dayton 1984]
(43)   I should **be done** lost 70 pounds by the time we get there
                            [25-year-old woman; Dayton 1984]
(44)   'Cause I'll **be done** put--stuck so many holes in him he'll wish he
            wouldna said it. [member of the Jets, 16; Labov et al. 1968]
(45)   We **be done** washed all the cars by the time JoJo gets back with the
            cigarettes.   [at a church car-wash; Baugh 1980]

The semantic interpretation of (41-45) is shown in Figure 1. Along the time line, the time of speaking is indicated by "0", and two events in the future by "A" and "B." When **be done** is attached to the first of the two future events, it indicates that this event will be completed before the second one occurs. Like the GE future perfect, this gives information on location in future time as well as the completed character of the first event.

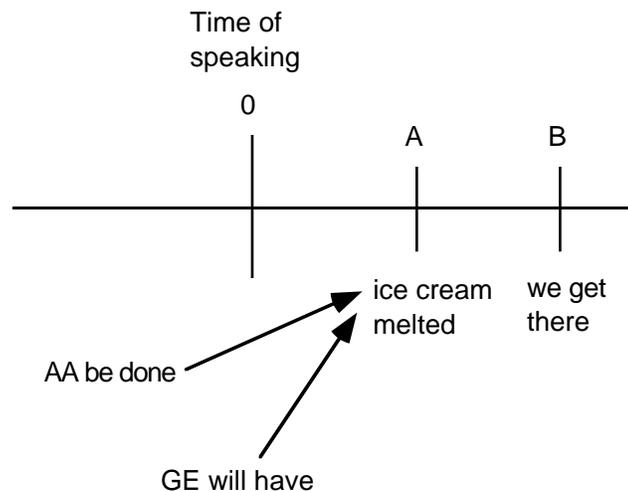"My ice cream's gonna be done melted by the time we get there."

Figure 1. AA **be done** as a future perfect tense, attached to the first of two future events.

The formal relationship with *will have + en* is strengthened by the fact that **be done** is followed by a past participle form. In a number of cases, the regular *-ed* form is neutralized by the following context, but whenever there is a vowel following, or an irregular past, we find the past form of the participle realized. We do not find forms like *We be done wash all the cars. . .*

A first indication that AA **be done** is not equivalent to GE *will have* comes from utterances that are not located in the future. Both (46) and (47) are not located at any particular time, and refer to a general condition, so that translations with *will have* are misleading.

(46)   They **be done** spent my money before I even get a look at it.
                                                            [Baugh 1983]
(47)   It stink in there. You **be done** spit up before you order.
                        [of a Chinese restaurant, Dayton 1981]

A number of examples show that AAVE **be done** is distinct from the GE future perfect in that it does not locate events in the future; in fact, it is free of any reference to absolute location in time. In both (48) and (49), the first event is firmly located in the past, the second in the present.

(48)   Here I am talkin' shit. You **be done** slapped me by now.
        ['you would have usually walked away from me by now',
        Dayton 1981]

(49)   I coulda **be done** ran up the steps by now. [Dayton 1981]

A radically different meaning of **be done** appears in (50). Here the aspect marker is attached to the second of two events, and it cannot be translated by the General English future perfect.

(50)   I'll **be done** killed that motherfucker if he tries to lay a hand on my
        kid again.   [Baugh 1980]

The interpretation of this utterance depends upon an understanding of the exact circumstances in which it was said. During the summer, a number of young men called "Cool Aids" were employed at the pool to keep order. One of them had apparently restrained one of the boys swimming at the pool in a way that his father thought was too rough. He was very angry, and came to the pool for a confrontation. (50) was his summary statement of the situation. Here **be done** is attached to the second of two events that follow the time of speaking, as shown in Figure 2.

This is a new use developed in AAVE. The meaning that can best be assigned to it combines relative location in time with 'inevitable result', and might then be termed a *future resultative.* It is then a member of the modal system rather than the aspect system, since it deals with the degree of reality attributed to an event. Dayton traces its development as a separate sense of **be done** in a large number of examples. Most of them, like (50) are threats or warnings. Dayton points out that although **be done** does not in itself carry the meaning of a threat, the speech act of threatening is the discourse matrix from which this meaning has arisen.

(51) He [a nephew] knows best not to talk back to me 'cause I **be done**
        slapped the little knock kneed thing upside the head.
                    [19-year-old woman; Dayton 1981]

(52) Get outta my way or I'll **be done** slid you in the face!
      [to a dog, barking; 25-year-old woman; Dayton 1981]

(53) Don't do that 'cause you **be done** messed up your clothes!
        [to cousins 4,5,6 running up and down steps, 27-year-old woman;
        Dayton 1981]

        Among the observations of AAVE made by Rev. Giles, reported by Edwards (1991), there are three examples of **be done**. Two are single clauses that do not provide enough context to assign them to the types of Figures 1 or 2. The third gives more context:

(54)   Stop it dammit before I **be done** lay down my religion.

This sentence is plainly a threat that the speaker will abandon his usual peaceful conduct and become violent. The aspect marker **be done** is assigned to the second of two events. Though Edwards states that "this construction is used in [AAVE] as a future perfective", a translation with *will have* will not do. This example, recorded from Detroit, reinforces the observations made in Los Angeles, New York and Philadelphia which indicate that the resultative construction is quite frequent in AAVE use, and demonstrates again the homogeneity of AAVE throughout the United States.

"I'll be done killed that motherfucker if he tries to lay a hand on my kid again."
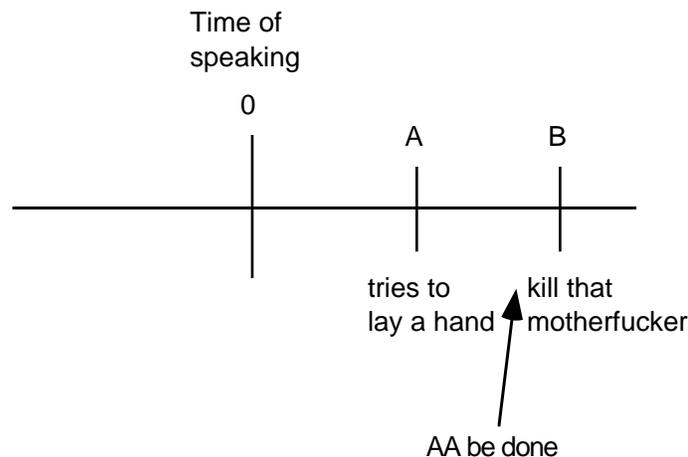

Figure 2. AA **be done** as a resultative aspect, attached to the second of two future events.

The typical future location of the two events may reflect the historical origins of **be done** and its connection with threats and warnings. But Dayton points out that like other AA elements, **be done** resultative does not essentially carry tense information, and it can be used to refer to inevitable consequence in past, present or future. We find **be done** used in observations about a general conditions, as in (55):

(55) I don't pay them no attention, child. If you pay them attention, you **be done** went batty.   [Dayton 1981]

In (56) and (57), the first event is not located in the future, but in the general present, while the second is an event that will follow in the future.

(56) I don't want no silver dollars in my possession because I **be done** dropped them in the machines.
                    [West Philadelphia woman, 25, Dayton 1984]
(57) If you love your enemy, they **be done** eat you alive in this society.
                    [Dayton 1981]

If this is the case, this second **be done** should be termed simply the *resultative*. Its relation to its origin in the future perfect is signaled by the fact that the past form of the participle is still retained although the semantics do not focus on the completion or terminal state of the second event to which **be done** is attached.
        The resultative **be done** is also free of any reference to a specific location in time in relation to the moment of speaking. (58) shows **be done** attached to the second of two events. Both are contrary-to-fact conditions; the first fact that is hypothetically contradicted is clearly located in the past, while the consequent holds generally for all succeeding times.

(58)   If she wasn't spaded, she'd **be done** got pregnant 'cause she gets out. [Dayton 1981]

A full account of **be done** in Dayton's data must deal with the extension of this form to cases where only a single event is involved, but the sense of 'inevitability' or 'high probability that the event did or will occur' remains. In some ways, this extension of **be done** is parallel to the extension of **be** to 'intensive steady state.' In (59), **be done** expresses the inevitably of both events; in (60) of a series of events; in (61), of a single event, which has already occurred.

(59)   I'm gonna **be done** hafta went back and finished in eight years.
        [30-year-old woman; Dayton 1984].

(60)   The readin' of the scriptures, all that's gonna **be done** done.
                                    [40-year-old woman; Dayton 1984]

(61)   A: Where's Willy?
        B: He **be <u>done</u>** left.   [36-year-old woman; Dayton 1984]

A complete account of **be done** must also consider its compositional character. Do the individual meanings of **be** and **done** survive in the combination, and can this combination be used to derive its meaning? First, it is apparent that the 'habitual' meaning of **be** does not appear in **be done**, which normally refers to a single event, not an indefinite series of events. We have seen that the 'completive' feature of **done** does survive in the future perfect **be done**, but not in the resultative **be done.** The intensive meaning of **done** does appear in both uses of **be done**, and particularly in the resultative, but since we also find this feature in **be**, it may be a parallel development rather than one inherited from **done**. The feature of moral indignation, which we found the only semantic characteristic for some uses of **done**, is often found with **be done** in combination with other meanings, but never alone, and it may be regarded as a general characteristic of this type of discourse rather than one specific to **be done.**
I have referred here to "two uses" of **be done** rather than two different aspectual particles. They are in complementary distribution rather than contrast, since the interpretation depends on whether **be done** is attached to the first or second of two successive events. The general interpretation is that of a sequence of two events, one completed before the other begins, and we may therefore refer to *Sequential **be done*** in AAVE.

Non-recent perfective <u>BEEN</u>

In the development of the African-American component of AAVE, one can follow the trajectory of a number of particles from the meanings typical of a Creole grammatical system to a set of highly marked meanings not found in Creole systems. Typical of this trajectory is **been,** which began as an unstressed, past or anterior pre-verbal particle.[22] In modern AAVE, we do not find this

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[22]Unstressed **been** appears to be quite different from stressed <u>**been**</u>. Rickford 1975 found almost unanimous agreement on the semantic features of stressed <u>**been**</u>, but no agreement at all on the stressed particle. During his research in West Philadelphia, Rickford observed over 200 examples of unstressed **been**

unstressed **been,** but instead a stressed, low-tone **<u>been</u>**, with three semantic components:

> {1} a condition referred to was true in the past
> {2} it has been true for a comparatively long time (non-recent)
> {3} it is still true.

All three semantic components are prominent in utterances such as:

(62)   They **<u>been</u>** called the cops, and they're still not here
                                                          [Baugh 1983]

(63)   She **<u>been</u>** told him she needed the money.   [Baugh 1983]

This use of **<u>been</u>** always precedes a preterit form of the verb, which in itself may be considered to carry the past tense information {1}. Semantic features {2} and {3} are information conveyed by **<u>been</u>** itself. When the form with *-ed* is ambiguously a participle or a preterit verb, then **<u>been</u>** itself can be heard as equivalent to GE *has been* with the *'s* deleted. This is apparently the interpretation made most commonly by whites of expressions such as

(64) She **<u>been</u>** married.

Rickford 1973 investigated the interpretations of (64) by blacks and whites through the question "Is she still married?" The characteristic white response was "No", since *has been* without a temporal modifier of duration implies the completion of the action. The majority of blacks responded "Yes", consistent with {3} above. In this situation, **<u>been</u>** is said to be *camouflaged* (Spears 1982). However, the simple cases of (62) and (63), and the great majority of other instances of **<u>been</u>** to follow are unambiguously AA elements. The special AA character of **<u>been</u>** is particularly evident where it precedes *be + ing*

(65)   I **<u>been</u>** been knowing Russell.   [Baugh 1983]

In other cases, **<u>been</u>** may follow *have* (or its equivalent), but cannot be interpreted as a form of *have been* because it is followed by an active preterit form with the same agent and a different patient, as in *They shoulda **<u>been</u>** realized that.* The GE interpretation is possible for *they shoulda been told,* or *they shoulda been instructed.*

The semantic feature of an extended period of time{2} is frequently the foregrounded aspect of the meaning. In (66), **<u>been</u>** is used first by A to assert that people have left.[23] B asks for confirmation, using the perfect adjective *already* to

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in natural speech, as against 66 stressed **<u>been.</u>** Most of the unstressed particles appeared to function as English present perfects, and could be interpreted as reduced forms of the OAD **have + been** (*I been playing cards since I was four.*). The present discussion therefore deals only with the aspectual marker stressed **<u>been,</u>** which is unique to AAVE.

[23]Here the action of leaving is presented as completed, but the sense {3}, that the situation is still true,

convey doubt that their leaving is complete at the present time A responds with a re-assertion of **been**, which here contrasts the 'non-recent' sense of **been** with the 'recent' sense of *already*.

(66)   A: They **been** left.
        B: They left *already?*
        A: They **been** left.   [Dayton 1986]

The term 'nonrecent' is simply the negation of the idea that the event is 'new', or 'hot news' in the sense that it can be reported as a current observation. Dayton points out that **been** is frequently used for cases where a very short period of physical time is psychologically (or socially) long. Stressed **been** can be used to assert that the speaker has quit a game or made a move in a game directly after he or she has done so.

(67)   A: You gonna quit?
        B: I **been** quit.   [Member of the Jets, 16, South Harlem]

One consequence of Dayton's long term participant-observation is that we can observe the discourse matrix in which the current semantics of **been** have arisen. A very common use of **been** occurs after A notices that B has a new possession. Such observation can play the role of a pre-request for a loan, given the fact that B has just displayed that he or she has resources available. Here the use of **been** signals (by semantic feature {2}) that the situation observed is not new; that the acquisition has been made some time ago. The inference that new resources are available is negated.

(68)   A: New glasses, Ron?
        B: I **been** had 'em, man.   [Dayton 1986]

(69)   A: Are those new earrings?
        B: I **been** had 'em.   [Dayton 1986]

Again, it is important to note that the frequency of such a discourse context does not imply that it represents the *meaning* of **been**, but that the current meaning has developed in that context, just as the resultative **be done** arose in the context of threats and warnings. Stressed **been** is of course used in many contexts where no loan is expected or no new resources are involved.

(70)   A: That's a new coat, Eddie?
        B: I **been** had that for weeks.
              [15-year-old boy to WL, West Philadelphia, 1978]

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holds for the condition that results from the action. This is a common situation with change of state verbs, both accomplishment and achievement.

(71)   A: This is Bill.
        B: I **been** know your name.
                        [6-year-old to WL, West Philadelphia, 1979]

(72)   A: Is Carol woke?
        B: She **been** woke.   [Dayton 1986]

(73)   A: Look how fat she's gettin'.   [Dayton 1986]
        B: I **been** fat.

There is often a further social connotation of **been** that is similar to the use
of **done** to register moral indignation. When someone has just made an
observation that they think reports a recent state of affairs, which is actually not
recent, the denial can carry a criticism of that person's competence as an observer
of the social scene. In (74), C uses **been** to assert that this state of affairs has been
true for such a long time that if A was a competent member of the group, he or she
should have known it.

(74)   A:. . 'cause JH is our vice president [of the Gospel Preamble.]
        B: You mean y'all *finally* realize that?
        C: They shoulda **been** realized that.

                                            [Dayton 1986]

4. An over-all view of the recent development of the AA component.

•   The recent development of the AA component is sketched in Figure 3. At
top are shown the GE tense and aspect elements. Below these are the elements
reported for early stages of AAVE that can be considered to have been inherited
from a Creole-like grammar, aligned with the GE element that mostly closely
corresponds to them. The first row of AAVE elements is assigned the
characteristic semantics of Creole systems. Anterior unstressed **been** corresponds
roughly to the GE past, invariant **be** to the general present copula, perfect **done** to
present perfect **have**+**ed** and future perfect **be done** to future perfect **will
have**+**ed**.

GENERAL ENGLISH

TENSE   *ASPECT*

```
┌──────────┐  ┌──────────┐     ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────────┐
│  PAST    │  │ PRESENT  │     │ PROGRESSIVE  │  │ PERFECTIVE   │  │ FUTURE PERFECT   │
│  -ed     │  │  0/s     │     │  be...ing    │  │  have...ed   │  │  will have...ed  │
└──────────┘  └──────────┘     └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘  └──────────────────┘
```

```
 ╭──────────╮  ╭──────────╮                      ╭──────────╮  ╭──────────────────╮
 │ ANTERIOR │  │ PRESENT  │                      │ PERFECT  │  │ FUTURE PERFECT   │
 │  been    │  │  0/be    │                      │  done    │  │   be done        │
 ╰──────────╯  ╰──────────╯                      ╰──────────╯  ╰──────────────────╯
```

```
 ╭────────────╮  ╭──────────╮                                  ╭──────────────────╮
 │ NONRECENT  │  │ HABITUAL │                                  │ RESULTATIVE      │
 │ PERFECTIVE │  │   be     │                                  │   be done        │
 │  been      │  ╰──────────╯                                  ╰──────────────────╯
 ╰────────────╯
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```
              ╭──────────╮  ╭──────────╮  ╭──────────────╮
              │ INTENSIVE│  │ INTENSIVE│  │ SEQUENTIAL   │
              │   be     │  │   done   │  │   be done    │
              ╰──────────╯  ╰──────────╯  ╰──────────────╯
```
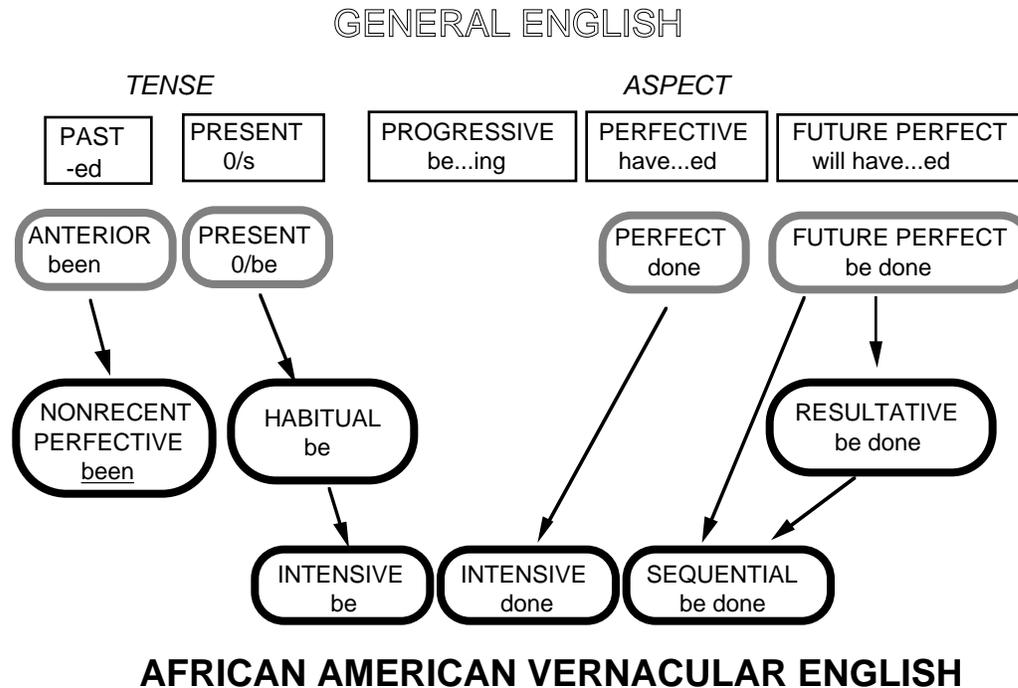
AFRICAN AMERICAN VERNACULAR ENGLISH

Figure 3. An overall view of the development of AAVE in the 20th century.

Figure 3 shows the following developments:

   •anterior **been** has developed to the nonrecent perfective stressed **been.**
   •general present invariant **be** has developed to habitual **be** and then added the sense of 'intensive steady state.'
   •perfect **done** with the meaning of 'completive' has added the sense of 'intensive' **done,** and then the modal sense of 'moral indignation'
   •future perfect **be done** has added the 'resultative' sense, which may be combined with the future perfect as a single 'sequential 'use of **be done**.
This is not intended as a complete view of the AA components of AAVE; I have not included in this picture the role of the modal **come** in the grammar (Spears 1982), nor the combined form **been done** (Dayton in progress), nor the grammaticalized adverb **steady** (Baugh 1984). However, the trajectories shown by the four AA elements discussed here should provide a basis for the fundamental argument to be presented: that AAVE contains two parallel systems with different functional and formal properties.

5. Evidence for coexistent systems in AAVE.

        In section 1 we considered the simplest possible approach to the resolution of variation: to assign each variant to an invariant rule of a separate language or dialect. This analytical device is attractive in that it reduces many different kinds of variation to a single kind: the choice of system A or system B at a given point in the utterance. But at the same time, it removes the variation from any further linguistic analysis based on system-internal relations. All variation would then be

a form of *code-switching*, where the system is assumed to be intact, and analytical problems are reduced to finding the set of possible choice points for switching.

The same situation would prevail for the case of coexistent systems, unless we can constrain in some way the choice of one system or the other. What kinds of evidence would tend to support or reject the establishment of two separate systems? The argument of Fries and Pike 1949 depends upon the lack of integration of Spanish borrowings into the phonology of the original language: in other words, the symmetry and simplicity of the phonology can best be maintained by assigning the new elements to a separate, coexistent system. Four conditions that favor the recognition of coexistent systems can be identified:

CONDITION
I. THE SEGREGATION OF VARIANTS.
The variants of linguistic variables are not evenly distributed across texts or situations, but concentrated in long runs of the same value, so that extended stretches of speech show one value rather than the other.
II. HETEROGENEITY OF CONSTRAINTS.
Variables at the same level of linguistic structure are constrained by radically different types of linguistic factors
III. ABSENCE OF PHONOLOGICAL CONDITIONING.
A variant alternates with zero or with another variant without any evidence of phonological conditioning.
IV. STRICT CO-OCCURRENCE.
Rules show strict co-occurrence, so that one never applies without the other.

Conversely, one can say that the intimate mixing of variants, parallelism of constraints, the presence of phonological conditioning, and the absence of strict co-occurrence favors the recognition of a single system. Before elucidating the application of these conditions to the recognition of coexistent systems, it will be helpful to state what is meant by the term *system*. That concept is in fact defined by Principle IV, where systematicity and co-occurrence are coextensive. A *minimal system* is then a simple combination of two rules, which show the behavior indicated in (6) above. The recognition of a systematic relation here is equivalent to inserting a node in the set of branching rule decisions that eliminates the separate decisions to choose rule A or rule B. For such a specification to be meaningful, A and B must be potentially independent, and not linked by a bleeding or feeding relationship. The clearest cases of such small sub-systems are found in place names which have two competing pronunciations drawn originally from two different languages. Thus the town of *Saint Lambert* in Quebec is usually pronounced in English as [se$nt'lE$mb], but local residents may also use in English the French pronunciation [sˇlA'bEr]. No intermediate combinations are possible: [sentA'bEr], [sˇ$'lE$mb t], [se$ntlE$mbɛr] are never heard. Here seven features of pronunciation are combined in two co-occurring sets. Once the decision to use the French pronunciation is taken, no further decision points are available. The assignment of the combined variants to the choice of the French subsystem or the English subsystem is obviously an efficient form of description. Furthermore, it captures a generalization about the language

that would be difficult to recognize if one did not have available the rules of French pronunciation.[24]

Condition I is the simplest and most obvious condition for the recognition of coexistent systems. If speakers are capable of segregating the values of a number of variables according to the context or topic, the simplest way to describe their behavior is to say that a given style, dialect or language has one set of variants, and another has a different set. We can then say that in one situation, a person speaks French; in another, English. The popular approach to the use of AAVE applies this intuitively: "I can speak Black English or I can speak Standard English." However, empirical study of speakers' behavior has never justified the application of this condition; instead, we find a continuum of styles and an intimate mixing of different values of the variants (inherent variation).[25]

Condition II applies directly to the AAVE variables that we have been discussing. Finite **be, will, would, have** appear at the same level of linguistic structure as non-finite **be, been, done, be done**. They all occur as first members of the verb phrase. But the environments that govern the appearance of the AA elements have little to do with the environments that favor the appearance or non-appearance of the finite GE elements of the auxiliary. There is no evidence that the fine-grained control of finite **be** by the preceding and following environment applies to the AA elements, or that the semantics of the AA elements is reflected in the use of GE **would** or **have**.

Condition III also applies to the recognition of coexistent systems in AAVE. As noted above in the discussion of contraction and deletion of finite **be**, the presence of phonological conditioning is a critical condition for the assignment of variation to a given level of linguistic structure. It is not obvious *a priori* that phonological constraints could not affect the variable insertion of morphemes. But many empirical studies converge to show that phonological conditioning applies only to elements that are regularly present in underlying form, while variable insertion of a morpheme does not show such conditioning (Labov 1987).[26] As far as we know, the AA elements in AAVE show no phonological conditioning.[27]

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[24]Extensive variation in the pronunciation of *Volkswagen* in English fails to show the same kind of strict co-occurrence. While some combinations such as [foksvœg´n] may be ruled out, it is difficult to find two sets of pronunciations that must co-occur, and the best one can establish is an implicational scale. This may be the product of the fact that the rules of German pronunciation are not generally available to the English-speaking population in the way that the rules of French pronunciation are available in Quebec.

[25]We can recognize a tendency to segregate the AA component according to the audience. Except for habitual BE, the AA tense and aspect forms are rarely heard in public discourse, mass media, situation comedies, and the like. But even when the AA component is used most freely, among vernacular speakers and vernacular audiences, the AA elements are interspersed with GE elements, since they do not form a complete linguistic system in themselves.

[26]The phonological conditioning of variables like English (t,d), (r), (l), French (l) and (que), Spanish and Portuguese (s) and (n) is associated with other properties that indicate the presence of a constant underlying form. In contrast, we find no phonological conditioning for the variation of the English relative pronoun and complementizer (which/that/0), nor of (ing), AAVE third singular -s or **be**. This statement applies to the variable insertion of morphemes, but not of course to the variable insertion of phonemes like English /t/ in *prince* [prints] or French /t/ in *a-t-il*.

[27]Phonological conditioning frequently depends on the reduction processes of casual speech. Some of the AA elements like **be** and **been** have full or stressed vowels, are not easily reduced even in the most rapid

Condition IV is the principal basis for the present proposal for the recognition of two parallel systems in AAVE, which depends upon rules of strict co-occurrence between the AA and GE components.

In the preceding section, evidence was presented that in the AA component, there is no semantic feature of tense: no reference to absolute location in time. But it is not simply the semantic feature of tense that is absent from the AA component. Sentences with these particles do not have the syntactic behavior that is characteristic of GE auxiliaries. The three elements of non-finite syntax mentioned above can be enlarged to a list of six. AA elements are not involved in:

•auxiliary inversion
•tag question formation
•negative placement
•cliticization on the subject
•subject-verb agreement
•verb phrase deletion.

The absence of these syntactic behaviors from all clauses with AA auxiliary elements contrasts with the clauses that have finite tense markers and follow the patterns of GE syntax. One could attach each of these sets of properties to the dictionary entries for the individual AA elements. But it seems more efficient and realistic to create an AA *category* and attribute this behavior to membership in this category. The recognition of coexistent systems is equivalent to recognizing a new lexical category in the grammar with associated syntactic and phonological properties. It is not therefore different in kind from the recognition of a category of factive or stative verbs. The crucial difference is that the insertion of this category into the AAVE grammar makes it qualitatively different from the grammars of OAD, where there are no elements that behave with this set of semantic and syntactic properties. We are therefore close to the kind of solution advocated by Mufwene (1992) that recognizes different grammatical options for AAVE from other dialects.

The nature of the strict co-occurrence in AAVE can be sketched in this way. If a speaker of AAVE selects an AA element as the first member of the auxiliary (**be, done, be done, been, been done, come**), then a wide range of syntactic options are excluded. On the other hand, if the first element of the auxiliary contains a finite tense marker, then those syntactic possibilities are activated.

One might think of this situation as a crimp in the productivity of syntactic rules comparable to the fact that auxiliaries like *can, will* do not show subject-verb agreement and that others like *must* do not show tense marking. But the division of AAVE into an AA component and a GE component is more general and sweeping than this, since the two components appear to have two distinct structural analyses. It is not the purpose of this paper to resolve all the problems

speech. Others like **done**, **be done** and **come** can be reduced so far that they are difficult to detect in the stream of speech. But since they are all relatively infrequent marked elements whose absence cannot be consistently detected quantitatively, the study of phonological conditioning is difficult.

necessary to arrive at a formal description of the two structures involved.[28] At first glance, it appears that the AA component has fewer of the structures that would motivate the attachment of auxiliaries to nodes higher than the verb phrase itself, so that simpler structures are needed to generate sentences with AA auxiliaries. However, there are a number of issues that must be resolved before a well-motivated decisions can be made in this area.[29]

•Though the AA elements may be independent of tense semantically, it is not clear whether they are independent from the syntactic framework that involves tense. Several of the AA elements are closely coupled with formal makers of tense: **be done** is frequently preceded by the contracted future marker [l] and is almost always followed by an element with the past participle marker, frequently indistinguishable from the preterit (see examples 20-35); **done** is always coupled with a following preterit form. AA elements do not occur in non-finite positions, in infinitives or gerunds (although habitual **be** and finite **be** are neutralized in those positions.)

•**Done**, like **steady**, has many of the formal properties of an adverb rather than an auxiliary, except for its fixed position at the beginning of the verb phrase. Unlike *already*, it does not move into other adverbial positions. It is reasonable to ask how the other AA elements like **be** or **been** differ from adverbs.

•Although the syntactic behavior of the AA elements does not require their attachment to a higher node, their semantic content generally modifies the entire verb phrase, a situation that is normally projected from an IP node. We need to know more about the semantic scope of the various AA elements in order to assign them their position in the syntactic structure.

•The fact that **be, done, been,** and **be done** do not occur in questions and tag questions may not be a reflection of their status in the syntax so much as their semantic character. These are highly emphatic, foregrounded elements that are incompatible with expressions of doubt or ignorance. In a scale of modality, they are opposed to irrealis as *surrealis*: they express a higher state of reality than normal. As far as negation is concerned, habitual **be** is the only one that normally occurs with negation, where it requires do-support: see (11), (12).[30]

In all of these considerations, it appears that habitual **be** is closer to normal auxiliary status than the others. It is the only one that is negated and receives **do-support** in negatives and tag questions. It accepts the *-s* verbal inflection, though there is not yet any clear agreement on whether the *bes* form is other than a stylistic variant of **be**.[31] It may well be identified with the invariant **be** that occurs in non-finite positions in GE. There is no reason to think, therefore, that the AA elements are homogeneous in their structural or semantic behavior. Like any grammatical system, the AA component shows prototypical members that possess

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[28]Just as the final version of this paper was completed, my attention was drawn to a paper given by Green at the 1994 CLS meeting, which addressed this question.

[29]I am grateful to Sabine Iatridou for raising some of these questions and indicating their potential significance for a syntactic analysis.

[30]When the negative *ain't* precedes **been,** it is always the unstressed equivalent of the OAD present perfect. If stressed **been** or **done** are negated, the effect is one of a meta-statement, indicating that the use of that AA element was inappropriate.

[31]On the other hand, *steady* (Baugh 1984) is the only AA element that does not have a fixed position in the verb phrase, and in other respects is the most adverbial, consistent with its etymological origin.

all the defining properties, and marginal members that share only some of these properties. In this sense, **been** and **be done** are prototypical. While habitual **be** shares some properties with the GE auxiliary, and **done** and **steady** share some properties with the GE adverb, these two are the most easily recognized as distinctively different from any grammatical category in OAD.

Despite these differences, members of the AA component can be characterized together as invariant particles that occur as first members of the verb phrase, convey aspectual and modal meanings but no semantic information on tense, and do not enter into any movement or placement rules of the GE component. They together form a system that is distinct from but coexists with the GE elements of the grammar. From this point on I will therefore refer to the *AA system* and the *GE system* of AAVE.

6. The GE system of AAVE

Let us now turn to the GE system of AAVE, which is not by any means to be identified with the GE component of OAD. The majority of the research reports on AAVE, dating from the 1960's, deal with the differences between the AAVE and OAD treatment of consonant codas, liquid vocalization, finite **be**, the possessive and verbal *-s* inflections, auxiliary inversion, negative concord, the relative pronoun. The results of this work show that in almost every area, the AAVE version represents a difference in degree rather than kind, that the rules are cut from the same template but in the AAVE version they are extended one or two steps further than the OAD version.

The main interest for the present discussion is in those generalizations that can be extended across the GE and AA systems, differentiating the GE of AAVE from the GE of OAD, and indicating the mutual influence of one AAVE system on the other. We begin with the observation that many syntactic and morphological operations in the GE of OAD depend upon the location of the first member of the finite auxiliary, which contains an obligatory element with whatever tense information is available for that clause. For all speakers of English, the location of this element appears to be problematical when there is no overt expression of the past/present distinction, as with the invariant modals *must* and *ought*, and the reduced colloquial forms of *is supposed to, has got to*. In the colloquial forms of OAD, *must* and *ought* appear freely in declarative sentences Thus *He must've/musta [mUst«v/mUst´] done it* is common, but auxiliary inversion and negative placement with these modals are confined to more elevated styles. *Must he do it?* and *He mustn't do it* are colloquially realized as *Does he hafta/gotta do it* and *He doesn't hafta/gotta do it*. The non-standard forms *He don't /'posta do that* and *He don't gotta do that* reflect the difficulty in locating a tense marker when the *is* of *is supposed to* and the *has* of *has got to* are elided consistently in colloquial speech.

These irregularities in the location of the tense marker are shared by AAVE and OAD. But AAVE speakers show a far more extended set of syntactic phenomena that reflect the difficulty or the impossibility of locating a tense marker in the first member of the auxiliary.

Learners of AAVE therefore have a distinctly different problem than learners of OAD when faced with invariant elements of the English auxiliary,

which show no surface realization of the tense marker. This can be seen prominently in the case of double modals. For Southern States English as spoken by whites, there are two modals, and the first element contains the tense marker (Boertien 1979, Di Paolo 1989). In AAVE, the first element appears to function as an adverb without a tense marker. This is shown in (75), where the *might* of *might could* is parallel to the *might* in the second clause. If *might* functions here as an adverb without a tense marker, we can understand why the negative requires separate *do*-support in the second clause.

(75)   You might could go to the church and pray a little, but you--that
        still might don't help you.
                    [12-year-old member of the T-Birds, South Harlem, 1965]

In (76), *useta* appears to be an adverb in the double modal *useta couldn't* . In the first sentence*, useta* is shifted to the front of a declarative sentence, like the adverbs *formerly* or *frequently* in formal styles, or *lots of times* in colloquial styles. Here it plainly does not carry the tense marker.[32]

(76)   Useta they looked just alike, but now you can't tell the difference. I
        useta couldn't figure out which one was Richie and which one was
        Eddie.
        [16-year-old member of the Jets, South Harlem, 1966]

The same difficulty in recognizing tense markers can be seen with single modals. Sentences (77) is produced by the GE system, where a tense marker is supplied for the past progressive. But the tense information, inaudible in *useta*, is placed on the second element of the auxiliary.

(77)   He useta was workin'.
                            [11-year-old member of the T-Birds, South Harlem, 1965]

In OAD, the tense information in *useta* is implicitly recognized:

(77a) He useta be workin'.

In (78-81), the same difficulty in locating the tense marker in the invariant form *might* is shown in *do*-support for the negative.

(78)   They might tell you sump'm and you might don't know.
                            [12-year-old boy in Chicago, 1965]
 (79)   I might don't understand all of it.
                            [12-year-old boy in South Harlem, 1965]
(80)   She still might don't even like the thing.
                            [12-year-old boy in South Harlem, 1965]

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[32]Though it should be noted that the presence of the *-ed* of the tense marker in *looked* is an inference rather than an observation, given neutralization before the initial affricate of *just*. There is no syntactic operation available in AAVE or OAD that would place the finite member of the auxiliary in this position in a declarative sentence.

The same situation prevails for *must*. In place of *mustn't* we have *must didn't* and *must don't*.

(81)   Father: Didn't you read the note?
        Son: I read it.
        Father: Well you must didn't read it too good!
        [Conversation overheard in elevator at 3784 10th Ave., 10/3/67]
 (82)   I mean--I ain't seen they wardrobe; but if they gon' walk around the
        street with holes in they pants, they must don't have too much in
        they wardrobe; right?
                            [member of the Oscar Brothers, 17, South Harlem, 1966]

There is no doubt that the past/present opposition is as strong in AAVE as in OAD. The difficulty in (81-82) has nothing to do with the semantics of tense, but rather the location of the syntactic tense marker. That difficulty is not limited to the sentence types given in (75-82), but extends to all the sentences types given in (7-74); for these, it is not merely difficult but impossible to find a tense marker. Thus a generalization that extends across the GE and AA systems of AAVE might be stated as:

(83)   The tense marker in AAVE is optional, not obligatory.

The term "tense marker" cannot be given a precise syntactic definition at present, given the unanswered questions concerning the formal structure of AAVE outlined above. But (83) captures the common characteristic of the two systems of AAVE, which must be represented in one way or another in the description of the grammar. A second common features of (7-74) also extends to the GE system of AAVE. Given the invariant character of the AA aspect/mood particles, there is no possibility of subject-verb agreement. A large body of research on the GE system of AAVE indicates that subject-verb agreement is marginal. It is fairly consistent in the use of *am* and *is* with 1st singular and 3rd singular subjects.[33] Elsewhere, there appears to be no special mark on the third singular, so that the *-s* which often appears is inserted variably as a morphological entry associated with superposed dialects.[34] A second common generalization across systems is therefore:

(84)   AAVE shows no subject-verb agreement, except for finite **be**.

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[33]This is one respect in which AAVE appears to have converged with OAD, since forms like *they is* and *he am* are reported in earlier forms of AAVE.

[34]The evidence for this statement includes the absence of phonological conditioning in the vernacular, the presence of irregular and unsystematic assignments of *-s*, inability to use the 3rd singular *-s* for semantic interpretation (Torrey 1983), and the very low levels of *-s* use found as we approach closer and closer to vernacular speech. At the same time, it must be noted that all studies of verbal *-s* show a statistically significant preference for placement in third singular position as compared to other positions. This appears to be due to the fact that knowledge of the GE component in OAD penetrates all speakers of AAVE who have any degree of personal contact with speakers of OAD: the use of verbal -s in the third singular drops below 5% only with core members of the AAVE community who have no such contacts (Myhill and Harris 1986).

7. The current trajectory of AAVE

The most distinctive feature of modern AAVE is the rich development of semantic possibilities in the AA system, possibilities that are unavailable and unknown to speakers of OAD. This semantic efflorescence of the AA system appears to be connected with the fact that the main work of the grammar is done by the GE system of AAVE. The assignment and realization of tense is almost entirely handled by the GE system. This is also true of the main constituents of the aspect system: the progressive and the perfect. The optional AA component can then be said to be freed from the drudgery of every-day grammatical work, and can be specialized to develop the highly colored semantics of social interaction that we have reviewed. This process is the opposite of the semantic bleaching that is typical of grammaticalization: it may be thought of as grammatical colorization.

The social matrix in which this development has taken place is the asymmetric position of African-Americans in American society. White speakers live in one linguistic world, continually illuminated and informed by borrowings and partial glimpses of African-American lexicon and idiom, but with almost no input from the AA system of AAVE.[35] African-Americans live in two worlds. Even if they have no face-to-face contacts with speakers of OAD, they have inherited a GE system that is solidly rooted in the history of English, and indeed preserves many earlier features of English grammar and lexicon that have disappeared in OAD. Even among core members of the AAVE community who have the least contact with OAD, there is continual contact with African-Americans who have been influenced by OAD grammar. Though this may not reduce the further divergence of the AA element, it reinforces those parts of the GE system of AAVE that are held in common with OAD.

One can observe here a parallel with the development of phonology in AAVE. As speakers of AAVE moved to the Northern and Midland cities, they dropped most features of Southern States phonology and merged the rest into a general Northern AA phonology, a phonological koiné. [36] But some features of Southern States phonology have been retained as optional markers of style. Thus monophthongization of /ay/ in free position is a constant, unmarked feature of most Southern States dialects. But in Northern varieties of AAVE, monophthongization is affective, as in the contrast of a *high* [hai] *building*, and *getting high* [ha::].

Much of the discussion of the current trajectory of AAVE concerns the issue of divergence and convergence of AAVE with OAD (Labov and Harris 1986, Bailey and Maynor 1987, 1989, Fasold et al. 1987, Butters 1989, Denning 19).[37] The major facts about convergence are well established, through studies of

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[35]It is an extraordinary fact that until now, no observations have been reported of the use of the AA system in literature or the mass media, except for habitual **be**. The writers of situation comedies centered on African-American families have captured many aspects of phonological and grammatical style shifting within the GE component, but there appears to be an unconscious barrier against the perception or recognition of the AA component.

[36]This process of shift away from Southern towards northern traits is well documented for the case of final unstressed -*i* in *happy, silly*, etc. by Denning (1989).

[37][37]This issue has produced a large literature on the "divergence controversy," and even references to

the use of finite **be,** the pronominal system, and derivational morphology (Vaughn-Cooke 1986). The evidence for divergent processes is accumulating at a considerable rate. Though our first evidence for this dealt with the re-interpretation of verbal -*s* within the GE system of AAVE in Philadelphia (Myhill and Harris 1986) this has not yet been reported elsewhere. The most important body of evidence on divergence concerns the AA system. The strongest real time evidence concerns the development of habitual **be.** There is some reason to believe that **steady, come** and **done** have long-standing roots in the Caribbean: when their semantic use in Caribbean grammars is described with a detail comparable to that available for AAVE, we will be better able to judge how recent these developments are. The most spectacular semantic developments are found in the prototypical AA aspect forms, **been** and **be done.** The inference that these are recent developments is based on the fact that they have not been reported earlier or elsewhere. Given their concentration in highly interactive social exchanges, it is not likely that we will obtain from past records a body of data comparable to that acquired by Baugh and Dayton, but research in Caribbean communities may produce that kind of material and might well modify our current views.

There is much more to be said about the recent history of AAVE. The role of camouflage, as developed by Arthur Spears (1982), plays an important role in these developments. The relations between Gullah and other forms of AAVE must be examined more closely. The presentation here is designed simply to sketch the main lines of development that center on tense and aspect in the AA system and the creation of coexistent systems within the grammar. At present, we have no reason to believe that such coexistent systems existed in the 19th century. To the extent that this description of the past and present forms of AAVE is accurate, the realization of a separate AA system represents the most general form of divergence between AAVE and OAD.

The developments of the past 25 years of research on AAVE have not been unrelated to the original insights of Beryl Bailey, especially her observation of the family resemblance between AAVE and Jamaican Creole, and her insistence on a structural analysis of the relations between dialects. Though the picture I have given is incomplete, I believe that it follows the direction of her thinking in the concluding statement of her 1965 paper:

(85)   I have been able to show that subsystems can be abstracted—
        subsystems which are so ordered as to make it possible to ignore
        certain categories which are basic in English.

Thus Bailey clearly foresaw the two themes of this paper: that there is a distinct AA system, and that this system acts on the grammar as a whole to modify certain generalizations of general English grammar.

"divergence theory." I do not think that there is a major issue of theory involved here, but merely questions of fact. As our knowledge of the grammars spoken by African Americans in the 19th century grows, and our knowledge of the semantics of the tense and aspect systems of the Caribbean grows, we will have new facts to contribute to the recent history of AAVE.

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