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ABSTRACT

There is little or no argument these days that Black English Vernacular (BEV) is a reality and that it is stigmatized. There is still a need, however, in spite of many studies of spoken varieties of BEV, for teachers to know what governs its occurrence in writing. This study concentrates on the written manifestation of BEV, on explaining which features occur, how often they occur, why they occur, whether the occurrence of some features implies the occurrence of others, and why some individuals are more likely to write in the Vernacular than others. Major findings include: a wide divergence in linguistic performance; a lack of correlation between the occurrence of BEV features with extra-linguistic factors, including socio-economic status, mobility, and racial isolation; a lack of correlation between occurrence of BEV features and scores on a standardized college entrance examination; the existence of an implicational relationship between several key features, the most significant of which is that deletion of the copula/auxiliary "be" implies the use of all other BEV features; and, most importantly, the significance of the degree and kind of motivation individuals have in determining their ability to write in Edited American English. (Author)

BLACK ENGLISH VERNACULAR

IN THE WRITING OF YOUNG ADULTS

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There is no doubt that Black English Vernacular exists and that it is stigmatized. Whether we call it by this name, by older less sensitive names like "Negro Nonstandard English," or by newer barely veiled euphemistic names like "Community Dialect," its existence is a fact. Which is not to say that all Black Americans speak this Vernacular or that no other Americans speak it; there is nothing innate about it; its use is not genetically determined. It is simply a social reality, an economic reality, that results from distinct differences in our pasts. Furthermore, because of deep-seated prejudices, held by both blacks and whites, to speak Black English Vernacular is to be viewed by blacks and whites alike as being deficient, as commiting an error, and sometimes as being perverse.

Problems in communication between those who use the Vernacular and those who do not sometimes arise. They are both matters of blacks understanding and being understood by whites and problems of whites understanding and being understood by blacks. Ignorance is "reciprocal." (Labov 1972a:3-4) But because of the power structure in this country, what James Sledd has called "the linguistics of white supremacy," (1969) the problems in communication and consequently in education fall primarily upon blacks alone; they become obstacles which Black Americans must overcome. The widespread belief that "white English is 'better' than black English" results from this same power dynamic. The speech of Black Americans is considered

less refined, less acceptable, because it is the speech of persons less powerful, less respected.

The primary question, then, of any serious educator of black children or black adults becomes one of two alternatives: how to eradicate the differences between the speech and/or writing of blacks and whites (this translates into "how to make blacks speak and write like whites"; the reverse is never seriously considered) or how to encourage blacks to be proud of their linguistic uniqueness and at the same time bring about understanding, tolerance, acceptance, and respect by whites of Black English Vernacular.

One of the primary tasks to be accomplished in connection with either of these goals is that scientific, accurate descriptions of the differences between Black English Vernacular (BEV) and so-called "Standard" English (or Edited American English) must be made. In recent years much work has been done concerning spoken varieties of BEV,[1] but very few or very unreliable, and usually very limited studies have as yet been made of the writing habits of Black Americans.[2]

Purpose of this study/ Background of individuals studied:

To help eliminate this gap in our knowledge, I have done a study of the writing of a group of young black adults

from Dayton, Ohio. This group (ranging in age from 17 to 20) included 22 females and 20 males, all of them natives of Dayton's inner city or at least residents there during their "formative years," from the time when they began elementary school. Their families were representative of the socioeconomic make-up of the Dayton inner-city community as a whole. Most of the individuals were from working class or lower class backgrounds (several from welfare families); only a few were middle class. Thus, these individuals are typical of young black adults attending college in many cities in this country today.

Data/Linguistic variables studied:

At the time they wrote the more than 350 compositions which constitute the data upon which these findings are based,[3] these 42 individuals were attending a predominantly white post-secondary institution--all trying to "make it" in an essentially white, essentially middle class, and for the most part unfamiliar and even hostile environment . . . in other words, a world much like the "real" world outside that institution. They were, like most black students in our country, expected to speak (as much as possible) and write (whether possible or not) in "Standard" English.

I selected for intensive study a number of key linguistic variables which would reflect these students'

competence in the use of Edited American English. The great majority of these variables are known, from studies of spoken Black English, to be characteristic of black speakers.[4] The several other features are known as hypercorrections that black speakers make, presumably in their attempts to imitate the middle-class white norm.

Table I ranks these linguistic features--both the known BEV features and the hypercorrections--in descending order according to their frequency of occurrence.[5] More explicitly, column 1 on the left gives the mean percentage of the feature for the entire group of 42 individuals; column 2 gives the actual number of occurrences of the feature over the total potential occurrences for all 42 individuals; column 3 gives the number of individuals with at least one example of the feature; column 4 gives the mean percentage of the feature for those individuals with 5% or more of the feature;[6] column 5 gives the actual number of occurrences over the total potential occurrences among these same individuals; column 6 gives the number of individuals with 5% or more of the feature.

Relative significance of the features:

It is obvious from this table that some features had a higher mean percentage of occurrence than others. This factor alone, however, is not sufficient to establish

TABLE 1

Ranking of Linguistic Features According to Frequency of Occurrence

	All Informants			Informants With > 5%		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Mean %	# Occur.	# Inf.	Mean %	# Occur.	# Inf.
Possessive 's absence:	22.3%	49/220	17	39.8%	49/123	17
3rd sg. s absence:	19.7%	222/1128	29	32.5%	216/665	24
a before vowels:	18.9%	53/281	25	28.5%	53/186	25
Plural was:	15.7%	49/312	14	31.8%	49/154	14
Adverbial s absence:	15.6%	26/167	10	48.1%	26/54	10
Inverted word order in embedded questions:	15.2%	28/184	16	24.6%	28/114	16
d absence:	14.5%	337/2318	37	23.1%	321/1392	29
Double negatives:	14.0%	25/178	12	30.9%	25/81	12
Regular noun plural s absence:	10.9%	403/3683	28	27.8%	385/1385	16
Object pronoun in plural subjects:	10.0%	5/50	5	50.0%	5/10	5
3rd pl. s presence:	9.9%	63/634	22	16.1%	61/379	20

TABLE 1 (continued)

Ranking of Linguistic Features According to Frequency of Occurrence

	All Informants			Informants With > 5%		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Mean %	# Occur.	# Inf.	Mean %	# Occur.	# Inf.
Irregular past forms as past participles:	8.9%	18/202	10	24.7%	18/73	10
Plural *is*:	7.6%	33/434	16	18.7%	32/171	15
Copula absence:	5.5%	80/1465	14	23.4%	74/316	12
Existential *it*:	2.5%	7/281	5	28.6%	6/21	4
Deleted *a*:	1.6%	34/2163	13	6.8%	23/340	6
Irregular noun plural *s* presence:	1.2%	7/564	4	7.8%	6/77	3
an before consonants:	1.1%	23/2129	11	10.4%	14/135	3
Singular *are*:	1.0%	14/1444	10	5.8%	7/121	4
Irregular past participles as past verbs:	0.7%	4/556	3	9.1%	4/44	3
Singular *were*:	0.6%	7/1096	5	5.6%	2/36	1

the relative significance of the different features. Other facts must also be taken into account.

Of great importance (and this is the reason for including columns 4 through 6) is the fact that some features take on much more significance than others when their mean percentage of occurrence is limited to individuals with 5% or more of the feature. Thus adverbial s absence gains in significance in view of its very high percentage of occurrence among the ten individuals who used the form without s as opposed to its percentage for the entire group of 42 individuals.

Another factor which must be considered is the total number of potential occurrences of the variable. Thus the fact that total potential d occurrences were over 2000 as compared with less than 200 potential adverbial s occurrences affects the significance of both items, giving d absence more weight. Similarly, the fact that 10 people out of the 42 were involved in writing the adverbial forms without s compared with 37 who sometimes wrote the regular past tense and past participle forms without d affects the relative significance of both items. Furthermore, the fact that the adverbial s suffix affects so few words whereas the d suffix affects hundreds of verbs again underlines the greater importance of d absence over adverbial s absence.[7]

Another factor which obviously affects the degree of significance which a particular feature has is the amount of stigma attached to it. Wolfram (1970:117) has stated that at least six of the items studied here are characterized by "sharp" rather than "gradient" stratification.[8] These features include d absence, third singular s absence, possessive 's absence, copula absence, multiple negation, and existential it.

Although I have no objective criteria for measuring the degrees of stigma of other BEV features,[9] it is probably safe to claim that features of BEV which are shared by large numbers of educated Southern whites carry less stigma than those which are particularly restricted among educated speakers of other dialects.[10] In this category I would include inverted word order in embedded questions, for some examples of this type of construction appear even in the writing of highly educated individuals.[11] The use of a for an before vowels is also of questionable significance, although if the prejudice against its use, which existed in the 30's, still exists today, it is among the top ranking features despite its common use in speech.[12] Some uses of plural is and plural was (e.g. after compound singular subjects or after expletive there) are also widespread and not necessarily heavily stigmatized. And even some instances of copula deletion (especially

are deletion after pronoun subjects[13]) occur commonly in the speech of many Americans.

On the other hand, there is no denying the fact that most examples of lack of subject-verb agreement are heavily stigmatized. Consider, for example, J. Mitchell Morse's outburst in College English: "A person who has difficulty with the agreement of subject and verb can't think clearly." (1973:840) It is also undoubtedly true that the absence of other s suffixes, the deletion of final d (especially when it represents a separate syllable /ɨd/), and most examples of deletion of copula/auxiliary be are all heavily stigmatized. As for the use of double negatives, objective pronouns as subjects, irregular past tense verb forms as past participles: these features, which characterize the nonstandard speech of many whites as well as blacks, have also long invited heavy criticism.

Another important point of course is that often items which are considered "acceptable" or which go by unnoticed in speech are not tolerated in writing. McDavid makes this point (1973:266-267). After giving a lengthy list of so-called "nonstandard" locutions which "may be heard from Southerners whose social credentials are impeccable," he states, "These forms would never appear in writing, except by way of joking." If this is true, then all the features studied here are heavily stigmatized in writing.

Comparison of individuals by percentages:

Another important matter is the ranking of the individuals themselves: that is, how their total percentages of BEV features compare with one another. Table 2 lists all the individuals in an order determined by adding each person's percentages of each feature and then dividing by the total number of variables of which the person had at least one potential occurrence.

At the top of this list is one person--EJ--whose percentage total stands in sharp contrast to all others. What his total reflects is the fact that he averaged above 50% BEV feature on each of 14 different variables. There is no doubt therefore that this individual was closest to the Vernacular in his writing. Following EJ are 6 others--3 females and 3 males--whose percentage totals are close together. The totals of these 6 also reflect high percentages on a number of key variables. There is a sharp difference, however, between the writing performance of these 6 individuals and those who follow on the list. From #8 (PD) continuing downward on the list, there is a gradual decline in percentage totals until we reach JR, whose writing reflected no BEV features at all.

The big question of course is how to account for the difference in totals between those individuals at the top of the scale and those at the bottom, and particularly how to account for the sharp difference between

TABLE 2

Ranking of Informants by BEV Percentages

Rank	Inf.	Percentage	Rank	Inf.	Percentage
1.	EJ	50.98	22.	WM	6.69
2.	CB	37.50	23.	CR	5.45
3.	BD	31.28	24.	PJ	4.99
4.	RR	30.08	25.	HA	4.47
5.	FJ	27.32	26.	PH	4.38
6.	PM	27.25	27.	FI	3.94
7.	ED	26.73	28.	CG	3.63
8.	PD	16.45	29.	RE	3.48
9.	MB	16.13	30.	DL	2.78
10.	HJ	15.46	31.	RW	2.65
11.	ME	15.11	32.	JC	2.08
12.	GD	14.54	33.	MW	1.82
13.	LJ	12.79	34.	RJ	1.73
14.	CH	12.22	35.	AD	1.61
15.	DG	11.03	36.	CS	1.36
16.	CL	9.89	37.	WS	1.27
17.	DJ	9.08	38.	HS	0.95
18.	CM	9.01	39.	JW	0.91
19.	TA	8.43	40.	RO	0.43
20.	BT	8.18	41.	WJ	0.36
21.	MJ	6.85	42.	JR	0.00

the 7 individuals at the top of the scale and all the others. Previous sociolinguistic studies, such as Labov's (1968), Wolfram's (1969), and Fasold's (1972), have accounted for differences in linguistic performance in terms of various socioeconomic variables. Wolfram, for example, found that among his Detroit Negro informants social class differences were highly significant. "Social status," he wrote, "is the single most important variable correlating with linguistic differences." (1969:214)

Correlation between linguistic and extra-linguistic variables: socioeconomic status, mobility, and racial isolation:

This uniformity of the findings in other sociolinguistic studies prompted my measurement of the possible correlation between the use of BEV features and various extra-linguistic factors. I therefore ran the data on a multiple linear regression computer program. This program measures the degree of correlation between one dependent variable (in this case the BEV total percentages) and a set of independent variables (in this case, socioeconomic status, mobility, and racial isolation) on the assumption that the relationship between them is linear.[14] The program also calculates the F value statistic, which measures whether there is any significant relationship between the variables.

The program did not, however, show correlation of the BEV percentages with any of these three extra-

linguistic variables.[15] Instead of the sharp stratification between individuals of different social classes which Wolfram observed in Detroit, the Dayton individuals showed "no clear discontinuity between one class group and another." (Labov 1972b:242)[16]

This lack of correlation, though perhaps surprising, is not also negative. In fact, it is a very positive, hopeful sign; it reflects the ability of individuals to rise above class or racial distinctions; it shows that someone from the lowest social strata, the most depressed or "deprived" background, can overcome these limitations, can "endure" and even "prevail."

Correlation between school type and BEV percentages:

An important related factor is the influence of integrated vs. segregated schooling. It is a fact that among the 7 individuals with the highest percentages of BEV features (Table 2) all but 1 (ED) had attended segregated high schools and even that one had spent only a short time in an integrated school (one and a half years) before returning to graduate from an all-black school. In contrast, of the 13 who had attended integrated high schools (including ED), 7 had a BEV percentage total which averages below 4%. It is notable in fact that the mean percentage of all 13 is 6.37, compared with a mean of 10.75 for all 42 individuals and 12.70 for all 29 who had attended only segregated high schools. There is

no denying, therefore, that attendance at an integrated school shows correlation with the suppression or reduction of BEV features in writing. This correlation is expected of course. Those students who had had to compete with whites before entering college had learned to adjust more completely to the white norm than those who had not.

Relationship between ACT scores and other factors:

It is also interesting and important to note the relationship between college entrance test scores (in this case ACT scores) and attendance at integrated schools. Table 3 lists the 13 individuals who had attended integrated high schools and gives the number of years each one spent in an integrated school as well as their ACT scores and their respective BEV ranks. The mean ACT score of the individuals who attended integrated high schools is 12.2, in comparison with 8.8, which is the mean for those attending only all-black schools. That is, there was a heavier concentration of higher ACT scores among individuals who had gone to integrated schools.[17] These facts are particularly noteworthy in view of two other findings:

1) ACT scores showed no significant correlation with the BEV percentages themselves. This was proved by running a multiple linear regression computer program

TABLE 3

Relationship Between Years Spent in Integrated School, BEV Rank, and ACT English Scores

Inf.	Years in Integrated School	BEV Rank	ACT Score
ED	1.5	7	8
LJ	2	13	13
CM	2	18	17
BT	2	20	9
AD	2	35	6
WM	3	22	11
CS	3	36	9
WS	3	37	--
DJ	4	17	19
CG	4	28	7
JC	4	32	15
RO	4	40	16
JR	4	42	15

which included ACT scores as one of the independent variables with which I attempted to correlate the BEV percentages as the dependent variable.[18]

2) ACT scores also showed no correlation with the other extra-linguistic factors--SES, mobility, and racial isolation. This also was proved by running the ACT scores (as the dependent variable) with these extra-linguistic variables (as independent variables) on the multiple linear regression program.

What these several findings reflect is that, while it is true that most of the individuals who scored high on the ACT test (and in this sample high means between 10 and 19 out of a possible 36) had low BEV totals; the reverse of this is not true: the lower scores do not necessarily reflect high percentages of BEV features in the individual's writing. In fact, individuals with low ACT scores had tremendously varying percentages and also quite diversified backgrounds. For example, the lowest scoring individual on the ACT test was RW, a male whose percentage total was very low (2.65%)--that is, he exhibited very few BEV features in his writing--and who was also one of the few individuals in the whole sample to have a combination of both high socioeconomic status and upward mobility. This is exactly contrary to what we would expect. And there are others--like FI, MJ, HA, and AD, four females who also scored very

low on the test (standard scores of 5 and 6)--whose BEV percentage totals reflect a similar lack of BEV features in their writing.

I have made a particular point of this matter because ACT (like SAT) tests are widely used in many universities in this country to place students in remedial English classes and to make judgments about those students' college prospects. The editors of Using ACT on the Campus in fact state that their test results "are pertinent to understanding differential abilities, estimating academic potential . . . and judging the appropriateness of educational and vocational plans." (1970:24) I have sought in including these test scores among the variables studied here to "neutralize the negative effects" caused by "using and trusting test results" (Students' Right 1974:13) and to offer proof that "standardized tests lead to erroneous inferences as to students' linguistic abilities." (Students' Right 1974:12)

The facts are very clear. The higher ACT scores among these individuals generally reflect attendance at white middle class schools. The lower scores encompass a great diversity of linguistic performance.

Implicational analysis:

Another kind of analysis which I performed in order to gain additional insight into the relationship between

the individuals and the linguistic variables was implicational scaling. Following methods employed by DeCamp (1971) and Fasold (1970), I examined my data to see whether the use of one feature might imply the use of another feature, which in turn might imply the use of a third, etc.

This implicational analysis does not reflect all the features I studied but only those for which the frequency of occurrence was high or relatively high and for which the data was full or relatively full for all 42 individuals.[19] There were seven features which fit these criteria. I determined first the following order of these features based on the number of persons using the feature vs. the number of persons not using the feature: 1) d absence, 2) a before vowels, 3) third singular verb s absence, 4) third plural verb s presence, 5) noun plural s absence, 6) plural is, and 7) copula absence.[20] See Table 4.

Table 5 then lists the individuals in an order determined by their use of all these seven features.[21] This table does not of course result in the perfect scalability of Fasold's "hypothetical" model (1970:562) or DeCamp's Jamaican English scale (1971:355-357).[22] However, despite the fact that there are a number of cells (32 in fact) which deviate from the expected order of an implicational scale (an order which would be represented

in the table by +'s always being to the left of any 0's), there is a significant degree of scalability. Out of 294 cells, 262 (or 89%) are in the expected order. Furthermore, 18 of the 42 individuals (42.9%) fit the expected pattern exactly, and 17 others (40.5%) deviate from the pattern in only one cell.

TABLE 4

Ordering of Seven Key BEV Features on the Basis of the Number of Individuals Using the Feature Vs. the Number Not Using the Feature

	# Using	# Not Using	# Whose Data Insufficient
1. d absence	35	7	0
2. a before vowels	25	9	8
3. 3rd sg. s absence	25	15	2
4. 3rd pl. s presence	22	12	8
5. Noun pl. s absence	22	20	0
6. Plural is	16	19	7
7. Copula absence	12	30	0

Table 5, then, can in one sense be viewed as an actual illustration of Labov's "stages in the acquisition of Standard English" (1964). In another sense it can also be viewed as an illustration of how close each individual is to the Vernacular in writing. Furthermore, what this table tells us about the individuals and the features which they use has important implications for

TABLE 5

Implicational Relationship Between Seven Key Features

Inf.	-d	a/an	-s3sg.	+s3pl.	-sNoun pl.	Pl. is	-Copula
EJ	++	++	++	+	+	++	+
BD	++	+	++	+	+	+	+
RR	++	++	++	--	+	--	+
PM	+	+	++	+	+	+	+
ED	+	++	++	+	+	+	++
GD	+	--	+	--	+	+	+
CB	+	++	++	+	+	0	+
FJ	+	+	+	+	+	0	+
ME	+	+	+	+	+	0	(+)
DG	+	+	+	+	+	0	+
PD	+	0	++	0	+	0	+
CR	+	+	(+)	(+)	0	0	+
CH	+	+	+	+	+	+	0
HJ	+	+	+	0	++	+	0
RE	(+)	+	+	0	(+)	+	0
CM	+	0	+	++	+	+	0
PH	+	0	+	+	+	--	0
MB	(+)	0	+	+	0	+	0
LJ	+	+	+	+	+	0	0
DJ	+	+	+	+	+	0	0
CL	(+)	+	+	+	0	0	0
BT	+	--	--	+	0	--	0
WM	+	+	+	+	0	0	0
RW	+	--	+	--	0	--	0
PJ	(+)	+	+	0	0	+	0
AD	+	0	+	0	0	0	0
MJ	+	+	0	+	0	+	0
WS	(+)	+	0	(+)	0	(+)	0
FI	+	+	0	0	0	0	0
RJ	+	+	0	0	0	0	0
JC	(+)	+	0	--	(+)	0	0
HS	0	+	0	--	(+)	0	0
HA	+	--	0	0	0	+	0
TA	+	0	0	0	0	+	0
CS	+	0	0	+	0	0	0
WJ	(+)	--	0	--	(+)	--	0
CG	0	--	--	0	0	+	+
MW	0	+	0	--	0	--	0
JW	0	0	0	+	(+)	0	0
DL	0	--	0	0	0	0	0
RO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
JR	0	--	0	--	0	--	0

Key to symbols: ++ = 50% or more use of the feature; + = 5 to 50% use of the feature; (+) = 0 to 5% use of the feature; 0 = nonuse of the feature; -- = insufficient data to determine use or nonuse.

the education of Black Vernacular speakers. It illustrates, for example, that persons who delete the copula in their writing are very likely also to use all the other Vernacular features to the left of the deleted copula in this table.[23] What this means for those who would teach these Vernacular speakers to write in Edited American English is that the task ahead of them--both teachers and would-be learners--is formidable. At best what can be accomplished is probably no more than an imperfect learning of some of the features to the left of copula absence in the table.[24]

This I discovered myself in my attempts to teach various linguistic features to several of the individuals at the top of Table 5. One of these was PM. At the time she first became my student, she had just completed her first quarter of college English. One of the major Vernacular features which appeared frequently in her writing was the absence of the noun plural s suffix. For the eight papers she had written during her first quarter, her percentage of noun plural s absence was 60.4% (55 out of 91 potential occurrences). Early in the second quarter I talked with her about this feature in particular, and thereafter she concentrated specifically on reducing her percentage of noun plural s absence. For the seven papers which followed, her percentage of noun plural absence was in fact reduced to 21.2% (11 out of 52 potential

occurrences). This was a considerable change for her, though the feature was still quite evident in her writing. In contrast, her use of the third singular s suffix (a feature which she also attempted to master) did not change radically. In her first quarter the absence of third singular s was semi-categorical for her (1 occurrence of the s out of a potential 24). In the second quarter she managed to produce only two forms with the s, and also in her last paper (which was an evaluation of the course she was completing) she wrote the remarkable sentence "When the subject is singular, the verb have an 's' on it." This demonstrates her passive knowledge of a grammatical rule which she did not in fact actively use.

The situation was similar for BD. In her first quarter in college English her percentage of third singular s absence was 93.3% (14 out of 15 potential occurrences). Her percentage for the second quarter, after much work, was still very high--80% (20 out of 25 potential occurrences).[25]

It is easy but unfortunate for me to say now in retrospect that trying to teach PM and BD to use the third singular s suffix was a mistake and a waste of time for them and for me. More seriously, the "psychic damage" done to them and to others by me and by other well-intentioned teachers is immeasurable.[26] This is not to say that Edited American English cannot be taught at all to Black Vernacular speakers. However, I have serious

doubts of any real possibility of teaching speakers like BD, PM, EJ, ED, and RR, whose writing is virtually loaded with BEV features, and who are past what Labov calls their "linguistic puberty" (1972b, 325), to write in Edited American English.[27]

Motivation: integrative vs. instrumental:

There is of course a force which if it exists within an individual, particularly at an earlier age, can override great obstacles--motivation. And there is no doubt that the 42 individuals I have studied here varied tremendously in their motivation to acquire Edited American English or to assimilate to the middle class norm. It is important, however, to distinguish here between what Spolsky (1972) has termed "integrative" and "instrumental" motivation--between learning in order to become identified as part of a culture and learning in order to get a better job, a bigger house, a bigger car, etc.

Among the Dayton individuals, WJ, JW, and WS are examples of persons with "integrative" motivation--a motivation to disassociate themselves from their black peers and to identify with the predominantly white middle class.

WJ typifies these individuals. In telling of his experiences in high school, he describes his close association with a white male counselor--a man he called "a good teacher, counselor, fencing coach, a beautiful person

and most of all . . . a good friend." In his description of his relationship with this counselor, WJ wrote, "Before he became a counselor he was an English teacher and whenever you were around him you had to use standard English or else he wouldn't talk to you. That is how I learned to talk." Although the latter sentence is very likely an exaggeration, there is no reason to doubt that WJ's speech and his writing were heavily influenced by this man, who was his "good friend." An equally revealing statement by the same young man explains his alienation from his black peers. He wrote, "the people that I went to school with, there were many of them that I did not particularly care for."

WJ's experience was certainly common to others, for example JW, who very frankly stated, "I didn't like my peers; they didn't like me," and WS, who in the middle of the ninth grade refused any longer to attend an all-black school and went on her own initiative and with no support from her family to seek out a white girls' school to attend instead.

On the other side we see in persons like EJ and ED and CB "instrumental" motivation--a desire for the material benefits of the middle class and at the same time a rejection of the middle class cultural values themselves. ED, for example, wrote "I want the same

opportunities as the whites" and in another breath rejected the "man's" way of attaining those opportunities. Of college he said, "they tell you what they want you to take . . . Just think, I have to pay two to four hundreds [dollars] for courses that I not interest in . . . why should I take something that I don't need?" CB also complained about "the system" and at the same time explained her motivation for continuing in college: "I am not going to give up not now, because this school have to much of my money, and I plan on getting my money out of this damn school." EJ's motivation is classic. He said, "If I do well in school I'll be able to get a good job and a big white Cadillac, and a big old house in the country."

This desire to get a good job, which probably is a primary motivation for many students attending college, is permeated for black students by their realization of the inequities that exist between job opportunities for blacks and opportunities for whites. Some feel these inequities more intensely than others. ED, for example, questioned "How many of the blacks are on welfare, doing janitorial work or working these black lung factory jobs?" and EJ described the plight of the Black man reaching for success in the business world as a "long, hard struggle because he is Black and alone . . . and powerless."

The desire for material benefits and the accompanying recognition of being deprived of them is then not enough motivation to change an individual's language habits. Furthermore, chances for success in changing language habits--in learning "Standard" English features and in unlearning Vernacular features (it is highly doubtful that the one activity can go on without the other)[28]--are even more formidable if this lack of "integrative" motivation is coupled with outright hostility towards the white middle class itself.

This alienation is expressed in ED's criticism of "this unequal white goverment" and his description of college as a "racket . . . just out to make money . . . ripping off studert." It is most vividly illustrated, however, in EJ's intense distrust of all whites. In a conversation with another black male,[29] EJ was asked "Do you hate white people?" He answered, "Hate 'em? Mmm. Well, I get along with some of 'em. Hate 'em? (Pause) I don't <u>like</u> 'em!" And he continued, "They ain't no different, you know, ain't <u>no</u> different in a bad hunky an' a nice hunky. They both hunkies. They both <u>think</u> the same." And even when asked to consider a situation where a "gray" person (i.e. white) was trying to help a black person, EJ countered with "That gray person helpin' you for some kin' a reason. That gray person she make some'em out of it for helpin' you, you know. She <u>gained</u>! She

ain't doin' it on her wheels. She gain or some'em, you see. She jus' as bad as a other one that keep from startin' to help you. She gain!"

I submit then that this overriding distrust and alienation--this lack of "integrative" motivation--is the strongest deterrent to an individual's being able to acquire a standard dialect. Individuals like EJ, while earnestly desiring the material benefits of being middle class and believing also that "education is the passport to my future," have no respect for those who are middle class and cannot therefore reject their own native culture (including their language) in order to identify with the middle class. The ability to acquire new language habits then comes not as a result of being at a certain status level or of being upwardly mobile or even of being less racially isolated than others (though certainly these all are contributing factors, especially the latter), but primarily of being of a particular inclination--of being motivated to be like whites and unlike most blacks. Alienation from the peer group is a heavy price to pay for "possible" success, but it is the surest way to bring about change in a person's language habits.

NOTES

[1]See, for example, Labov et al, 1968; Wolfram, 1969; Fasold, 1972.

[2]See, as examples, Sternglass, 1974; Crystal, 1972; Reed, 1973; Wolfram and Whiteman, 1971.

[3]The compositions were written in the college classroom. I have not included in my analysis forms corrected in response to instructors' comments nor of course forms quoted from another writer.

[4]The primary source for this selection was the article by Fasold and Wolfram, dated 1970.

[5]No doubt most of these features are self-explanatory. To explain those few that might not be obvious: Copula absence (the absence of _am_, _is_, and _are_) also includes the absence of auxiliary _be_ forms; for example, "I going to take some more math," "she not afraid," and "they now becoming quite unruly." Existential _it_ refers to the use of _it_ for _there_, as in "it is about 300 people living in the Residence Hall." Inverted word order in embedded questions refers to direct question word order in indirect questions, for example "I asked him where was my chicken." "Regular" in reference to noun plurals means those nouns which in Edited American English end in _s_ (e.g. _things_, _plants_, and _dishes_). Irregular noun plurals are those like _feet_ and _men_ which have no final _s_ in Edited American English. "Irregular," with respect to verb forms, is used here to include those verbs which do not add (_e_)_d_ to form the past tense and past participle forms and which also do not have identical past and past participle forms (e.g. _came_/_come_, _saw_/_seen_).

[6]My selection of 5% as the lowest percentage at which a variable is significant is of course arbitrary. It is based upon Labov's distinction between variable and semi-categorical rules (1970:28-29) and is therefore an attempt to eliminate from the count any persons whose use of the feature may be due to chance.

[7]For other examples of features affected by this factor, see Wolfram's discussion of the "generality of rules." (1970:110)

[8]Wolfram defines "gradient stratification" as "a progressive increase in the frequency of occurrence of a variant between social groups without a clearly defined difference between contiguous social groups," and "sharp," he says, "indicates a sharp demarcation between contiguous social classes." (1970:107)

[9]I could of course refer to studies such as Sterling Leonard's "Current English Usage" (1932) or Margaret Bryant's Current American Usage (1962), but the Leonard study in particular is dated and Bryant's work is certainly no longer "current" either. Furthermore, these and other succeeding studies of the status and acceptability of various grammatical structures (for example, Pooley 1974) have never been geared specifically to incorporate Black Vernacular features (though of course some characteristics of BEV were included in them because they are shared with other dialects; e.g. a before vowels). Therefore, degrees of stigma attached to various BEV features have yet to be determined.

[10]See Wolfram's use of "regional versus general social significance." (1970:113-115)

[11]William Labov himself uses the pattern in his writing; e.g. "we cannot state at the moment what was the total population of utterances" (1968:293) and "we have to see what are the underlying rules." (1972a:41)

[12]In Leonard's 1932 study "a before vowels" was one of the few items to receive a unanimous rating of "illiterate" from all 218 judges. (Marckwardt and Walcott 1938:98)

[13]McDavid gives examples of this phenomenon among educated Southern speakers. (1973:266) Wolfram, too, states that "there are certain types of constructions in which the absence of a copula is much less socially significant than others." (1970:110)

[14]It is important to emphasize also that the program "measures only the strength of linear relationships . . . it does not necessarily imply a cause-effect relationship." (Freund 1973:426)

[15]This lack of correlation does not conflict, however, with Marilyn Sternglass's findings regarding the writing of black and white college students in the Pittsburgh area, for she found "no statistically significant correlation between socioeconomic class and the production of nonstandard forms." (1974:279) I reject, however, Sternglass's suggested explanation for this lack of correlation. She states that the individuals she studied "were characterized by some form of language deficiency." (279) The "pre-selection process" which she mentions as determining this "deficiency" was for many of her informants

a standardized test on which the students scored low. Standardized tests are not a reliable means of testing "language deficiency."

[16]This lack of correlation may be due to several factors: Most notably, the Dayton individuals were not "evenly distributed" among different social class groups, as for example Wolfram's Detroit informants were (1969:15). Also the socioeconomic status rating (or SES) of the Dayton individuals reflects only one factor--the occupation of the head of the household--rather than being a multiple factor index, such as the one designed by W. Lloyd Warner and his associates. (1960)

[17]In fact 58.3% (7 out of 12) of the individuals who took the ACT test and attended integrated schools had a score of 10 or above, but only 34.6% (9 out of 26) of those who took the test and attended segregated schools had a score of 10 or above.

[18]I repeat that "independent" and "dependent" do not "imply a cause-effect relationship." Even if the ACT scores had shown correlation with the BEV percentages, it could simply mean that both factors were results of still another factor, not stipulated, not that they were causally related.

[19]By full I mean that there were few if any individuals with absence of the feature due to a complete lack of data or even to potential occurrences less than 5. For example, I did not attempt to use the absence of possessive 's in this implicational analysis because for 19 individuals the data was insufficient on this feature.

[20]I also attempted to determine the placement of the other major linguistic features (those for which the data was not as full) along this continuum. Though my decisions are tentative, these features appear to fit in the following order: inverted word order in embedded questions apparently belongs adjacent to a before vowels but to the right of d absence; the absence of the possessive 's falls between noun plural s absence and plural is, and so apparently does the use of irregular past tense verb forms as past participles and double negatives. Plural was is immediately adjacent to plural is, and the absence of adverbial s has a distribution similar to the deleted copula; that is, its absence is restricted to a few individuals whose writing was also characterized by all or almost all the features studied.

[21]Whenever two or more individuals appeared to be at the same level in the continuum, I ranked them according to the previous order given in Table 2.

[22]Bickerton (1973:642) has criticized the "unsystematic selection of items from different linguistic levels" which was used by DeCamp and which I have used also here. Undoubtedly he is right that implicational scales are best suited to items which are very closely related linguistically. If I had failed to attempt an implicational scale analysis, however, I would have missed some important insight into the relationships between the quite different features which I have studied here.

[23]In fact they very likely use most of the other features which I studied as well. This is true of the first ten informants on Table 5, whose writing was characterized by use of all the most common features as given in Table 1 with the exception that two who did not use plural _is_ also did not use plural _was_.

[24]Which ones could most easily be learned would depend not only on how far left of copula absence the feature is but also on the degree to which the feature is used. Thus plural _is_ and the third plural _s_ ending on verbs might more easily be unlearned than other features because their overall percentage of occurrence is lower than the other major features. (See Table 1.)

[25]Four of the five forms with an _s_ occurred on her very last paper of the second quarter.

[26]This term I have ironically borrowed from Marilyn Sternglass, who writes "There appears to be no 'psychic' damage when the contrasting patterns are identified from the actual writing produced by the student, particularly when the student himself produced both the standard and nonstandard form in the same piece of writing." (1974:283) I question how Sternglass can know this, how she has measured this lack of "psychic damage."

[27]Learning to _speak_ Edited American English at this point is of course an even more unlikely possibility.

[28]I am not completely denying the possibility of bidialectalism, particularly for individuals who begin acquiring a second dialect at an earlier age, but I am extremely dubious that it is a realistic goal for individuals to begin work on as young adults.

[29]These remarks occurred in a taped conversation between EJ and Andrew Taylor, a young black from Columbus, Ohio, who was employed by R. Terrebonne and myself to collect interviews with some of his fellow dorm residents. The project was sponsored in part by an NSF grant.

[30]Sternglass's recent work has led her to the conclusion that the writing of college-age blacks and whites is not significantly different and therefore "separate language materials for white and black students are not needed." (1974:282) Unfortunately, her evidence for these conclusions is both unreliable and spurious, being as it was, based on one out-of-class writing sample per informant.

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