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ABSTRACT

This study examined the syntax of the naturalistic speech of 15 three-to-five-year-old urban, lower-class black children, to determine (1) their syntactic maturity compared to white middle-class children of the same age, as measured by mean utterance length, types of transformations used, and number of sentence-combining transformations per t-unit and (2) the range and nature of their nonstandard verb, question, and negation structures. The data were spontaneous speech samples volunteered by the participants, who were male and female children enrolled in a Head Start program in Harlem. Findings showed that the subjects' syntactic maturity was comparable to that of their white, middle-class counterparts. Syntactic differences were primarily due to omissions (usually of tense-bearing elements) and to different restrictions on transformations. There was no evidence to support suggestions of deep structure differences between standard English and black English vernacular. There was some evidence to suggest that young children do not produce as wide a variety of nonstandard forms as do their older counterparts. (Author/AA)

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Auxiliary Structure and Syntactic Maturity in the Naturalistic Speech of Lower-class Urban Black Pre-school Children

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Abstract

This study examined the syntax of the naturalistic speech performance of 15 three → to - five year old urban, lower-class, black children to determine their syntactic maturity compared to white middle-class children of the same age as measured by Mean Utterance Length, types of transformations standardly used, and number of sentence-combining transformations per t-unit and to determine the range and nature of their non-standard verb, question, and negation structures. The data were spontaneous speech samples volunteered by the participants, who were male and female children enrolled in a Head Start program in Harlem. They were chosen on the basis of regular attendance, status as monolingual native speakers of English, production of a minimum 50 t-units of speech, willing participation in the use of the tape recorder, and normal hearing and development. Findings show that the subjects' syntactic maturity is comparable to that of their white middle-class counterparts. Their syntactic differences from the standard patterns were primarily due to omissions, mainly omission of a tense-bearing element, and to different restrictions on transformations. There was no evidence to support suggestions of deep structure differences between standard English and Black English Vernacular. There was some evidence to suggest that young children do not produce as wide a variety of non-standard forms as do their older counterparts.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Although there have already been several major studies of the syntax of older speakers of black English, none has turned its attention to pre-school aged speakers. In his substantial study of the language of black adolescents in Central Harlem, William Labov set out to identify and analyze linguistic elements that contributed to reading difficulties in his population with an eye to understanding, and suggesting remedies for, the massive reading failure of such persons. He commented at the outset, however, that it was not yet known whether the syntax of adolescents such as the young people whose speech he studied is the same as that of children first entering school and embarking upon their formal training in reading and other language arts. Since 1968, when Labov's central Harlem study appeared, little substantial research has been done to fill the gap that he identified. This research, therefore, was designed to examine the syntax of a pre-school group of black English speakers with the intention of determining what syntactic maturity and skills such children have and might be expected to have upon entering school.

Furthermore, children such as those whose speech serves as the data for this study have been identified by William Stewart as "basilect" speakers. Basilect was defined by Stewart (1964) as the most "incorrect," that is, the most extreme, least socially acceptable, most non-standard form of black English spoken in a community. He said that it is spoken primarily by young children, "who have not yet been acculturated to the more prestigious dialect,"

but who are old enough to have mastered the basic grammar of their language. (Stewart, 1964, p. 53) The implication of Stewart's definition of basilect is that whatever structures have been shown to exist in black English in other contexts, they are likely to occur with more frequency and consistency in the speech of young children. Perhaps there is a suggestion, too, that young children use forms not used by older speakers in Stewart's reference to "the fact that many children use basilect when no one else in the family does...." (Stewart, 1964, p. 53). But, Stewart distinguished basilect from child language, saying that basilect becomes consistent only after the usual age for learning basic grammar. This, said Stewart, "suggests that there are language-learning stages for basilect, just as for any other kind of dialect." (1964, p. 53) Although Stewart made theorectical assumptions about the speech of young lower-class black children, there has been no systematic study heretofore made of presumed basilect speakers to determine exactly what their speech does consist of and how it actually differs from the speech of older speakers of the same dialect if, in fact, it does.

Finally, a variety of linguistic reasons have been postulated for the wide-spread failure of lower-class black children to learn successfully in school, ranging from the Carl Bereiter and Seigfried Englemann (1966) theory of language deprivation to Joan Baratz (1969) and Stewart's (1970) notion that dialect interference is at the root of the problem. However, although Labov (1972) suggested that young black children are highly verbal in situations conducive to speaking unselfconsciously, there has yet been no study of the syntax of black

lower-class inner-city speakers about to enter school, so there do not yet exist empirical data from which to determine whether such children do, in fact, suffer linguistic deprivation relative to their white middle class peers in the area of syntactic development or whether they possess a comparable but different range of syntactic forms that may interfere with their learning in the standard dialect. There have, however, been several studies that suggest that black lower class children entering school have language features that are different from features of standard English. (Osser, Wang, and Zaid, 1969; Levy, 1974; Nurss and Day, 1971; Strickland, 1971; and Cullinan and Jaggar, 1975).

The purpose of this investigation, therefore, was to examine the syntax of the casual speech performance of inner-city lower-class black pre-school children in order to consider the syntactic maturity reflected in such speech, the range and nature of its non-standard verb, question, and negation structures, and the relationships of analyses of those structures to analyses presented in studies of older speakers of Black English Vernacular.

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The data in this study consist of naturalistic speech samples from black 3- to 5 year old children, both male and female, who were enrolled in a Head Start program in Central Harlem. There were 56 children on the Head Start roster, but, due to a variety of factors, only 15 were retained as subjects. Subjects were selected on the basis of regular attendance, status as monolingual native speakers of English, production of a minimum of 50 t-units of speech, willing participation in the use of the tape recorder, and normal hearing and development.

The choice of an existing group and a subject-initiated data-gathering technique resulted in boys being dramatically underrepresented in the final subject group. This situation was due initially to the underrepresentation of boys on the program's roster: only 18 of the 56 enrolled children were male and some of those were Spanish-speaking, bilingual, children. Of the seven non-Spanish boys who spoke on tape, most did not seek out the activity often and so did not produce 50 t-units of data. Thus, finally, only two subjects were boys.

While this clearly creates an imbalance in the data, the boys who produced enough speech to qualify for the final analysis were finally considered along with the girls rather than as a separate group on the strength of findings by studies in child language that there were no significant differences between boys' and girls' development

of syntax. (Menyuk, 1963 ; Brown, 1973 ; Roy O'Donnell et al, 1967 ; and Kellog Hunt, 1970).

Data Gathering

Because it was suggested in Light (1971) and Labov (1972b) that the more familiar a figure the researcher became to the children being taped, the more relaxed they would be in the act of speaking, the researcher became a regular volunteer member of the Head Start staff. Thus, the children came to accept her as a familiar figure. She arranged, also, that whenever possible, taping was monitored by more long term members of the community, including teachers who had been part of the group during the entire year that it had existed as a group, as well as the children themselves and their visiting parents, siblings, and cousins.

Children were never asked to speak into the microphone but did so only at their own request or at the request of another child, so that the tape recorder was treated as much as possible as a toy to be used voluntarily and unselfconsciously. As the children became familiar with the recorder and its workings, they were left alone with it as much as possible in order to further its use as a toy and diminish self-consciousness. The researcher intruded only in the following situations: 1) to play back a recorded section of tape at the request of a child who had made a recording or 2) to ask simple questions of a child who had asked to use the recorder but then could not think of what to say into it. The first intervention situation was necessary because, although the children taped were able to operate the recorder adequately to make tapes,

they did not understand the replay procedure sufficiently to avoid erasing the portion of the tape they wished to replay, to their disappointment as well as that of the researcher.

The second intervention situation was necessary because many of the children seemed to become speechless after they took the microphone and so seemed grateful for a few questions to get them started. Questions that elicited the greatest language flow were about people whom the children lived with or stories that they knew, questions to which any child might be expected to have some kind of answer to help him get started talking freely.

Assessment of Subjects' Syntactic Maturity

Three different methods were used to determine, in speakers so young, which features of their speech that deviated from standard English were characteristic of child language, might occur in the speech of children learning various dialects, and could be expected to extinguish with maturity, and which were mature, established dialect features.

MLU as Index of Maturity. Brown (1973), in summing up his earlier work with Bellugi, Cazden and Fraser, lists the MLU's that he used, initially as target values, later as intervals, in designating five initial stages of development. Brown's last stage has an MLU of 4.00 and an upper bound or longest single t-unit of 13. Most of the speakers in this study are considerably beyond that stage (Table 1). Brown's figures are useful, however, in suggesting the stages of development that the children of this study have mastered, since Brown determined, for his three subjects, which of a

list of 14 morphemes analyzed each child had acquired at each stage.

By stage V, all three had control, that is, standard production of a feature 90% or more in obligatory environments, over the plural -s, over "on", "in" and over the present progressive and possessive morphemes. Two had reached criterion and the third was close (80% or better) for the use of articles, the past irregular, the past regular and the uncontractible copula by stage V. Brown concluded that "the developmental order of the fourteen morphemes is quite amazingly constant across these three unacquainted American children." (p. 272) Furthermore, in comparing his findings with those of other researchers in the field -- Menyuk, Leopold, Miller and Ervin, and himself and Fraser -- Brown concluded that there was widespread similarity in the order of acquisition and that "the order... is fairly independent of criterion of acquisition, children studied, and investigator." (p. 282)

It can be assumed, then, that children who have reached a comparable MLU to Brown's stage V might have quite regular control over the nine morphemes that Brown identified as being substantially mastered by then. It can further be assumed that, in the following analysis, production of these morphemes that differs substantially from standard adult usage, if it is in the speech of a child whose MLU is over 4, results not from immaturity but from the mature use of forms restricted to nonstandard grammar.

Of the 15 children in this study, 13 were clearly beyond stage V in their language development. The two who have MLU's below 4 are among the oldest children in the group. MLU's for the

rest of the group are quite closely clustered around 5 and 6. Both of these factors suggest that, for a group of as short an age spread as this, MLU is a more meaningful measure of syntactic development than is age. There is, in fact, only a very slight, not significant, negative correlation between this group's MLU scores and its increasing age scores, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 also shows that most of the children range considerably beyond the upper bound of 13 morphemes that Brown would expect for stage V. This is in accord with Brown's conclusion that at stage V and beyond, children have access to such a wide range of structures that what the child wants to say and the context in which he is speaking have a greater impact on MLU than what the child knows, "so that the index loses its value as an indication of grammatical knowledge." (1973, p. 54). The high upper bounds provided by most of this group convey a sense that each child is capable of production far beyond his mean when motivated. Thus, although the MLU is useful in suggesting a certain minimum standard of maturity for this group, it is necessary to look at other aspects of the children's data to determine further what the nature of their maturity might be.

Use of Transformations as an Index of Maturity. Two indices of maturity based on children's use of standard transformations were used: 1) comparision with Menyuk's subjects in kinds of transformations used and 2) comparision with O'Donnell et al's kindergarten children's usage of generalized (what they call "sentence combining") transformations.

Table 1
Relationship of Increasing Age to MLU for Each Speaker's Overall Production.

Speaker	Age in Months	MLU for overall Production	Longest Utterance
12	36	5.42	16
32	46	6.28	31
8	46	4.99	10
2	48	5.72	16
14	49	5.66	18
17	50	6.22	15
6	52	6.88	18
34	57	5.22	21
26m	58	6.17	18
7	58	6.40	31
33	59	6.37	15
1	60	5.65	21
9m	62	3.85	10
15	66	3.94	21
13	67	5.72	18

$r = -.27$

$p > .10$

Menyuk examined performances on 26 structures and reported how many of her children were using each at least some of the time although she did not indicate the range of use of each structure for each speaker. Because her groups were considerably larger than this one, Table 2 compares the two bodies of data using percent of each group, rather than numbers of speakers, using each structure. Menyuk studied 48 preschool children and 48 first graders from the white middle class suburban community of Brookline, Massachusetts. The mean age of the preschoolers was 3 years 8 months, with a range from 3 years 1 month to 4 years, 4 months. Her first graders had a mean age of 6 years, 5 months, ranging from 5 years 11 months to 7 years 1 month. Thus, the preschool group in this study falls between Menyuk's two groups. Having a mean age of 4 years 6 months and an age range of 3 years to 5 years 7 months, however, it is closer to Menyuk's preschoolers than to her first graders. Scores for this group's use of structures, then, might be expected to fall between the scores for Menyuk's two groups. This is the case for many structures. Scores on others are similar for all three groups or even slightly higher for the Harlem children than for Menyuk's. The fact that only two sets of scores, pronominalization and reflexivization, show the Harlem children to be producing markedly fewer standard structures suggests that the group is generally comparable in its syntactic maturity to Menyuk's groups but may have dialect differences in those areas. This sense is underscored by the data in Table 3, which shows those same two areas to yield markedly higher numbers of restricted structures.

Table 2
Percent of Children
in Menyuk's Preschool and First Grade Groups and
in This Study Using 26 Standard Transformations

Structure	Menyuk's Pre-Schoolers	This Study	Menyuk's First Graders
1. Passive	48%	47%	85%
2. Negation	100%	100%	100%
3. Question (yes/no)	92%	86%	100%
4. Contraction	100%	100%	100%
5. Inversion	94%	93%	100%
6. Question (wh-)	98%	86%	98%
7. Imperative	73%	93%	87%
8. Pronominalization	33%	6%	54%
9. Separation	85%	86%	92%
10. Got	100%	73%	100%
11. Auxiliary			
a. be	100%	100%	100%
b. have	17%	20%	42%
12. Do	100%	100%	100%
13. Possessive	100%	100%	100%
14. Reflexivization	60%	6%	92%
15. Conjuction	85%	not considered in this study	100%
16. Conjunction Deletion	83%	100%	98%
17. If	25%	40%	63%
18. So	25%	53%	60%
19. Because	63%	67%	96%
20. Pronoun (in conjoined clauses)	100%	not considered in this study	100%
21. Adjectivialization	100%	93%	100%
22. Relative Clause	77%	93%	96%
23. Complement			
a. Infinitive	100%	100%	100%
b. Participle	40%	47%	65%
24. Iteration	10%	13%	27%
25. Nominalization	13%	27%	50%
26. Nominal Compound	100%	87%	100%

Table 3
Percent of Children in Menyuk's Preschool and First Grade Groups and in This study Using Restricted Structures

Structure	Menyuk's Pre-Schoolers	This Study	Menyuk's First Graders
1. Verb Phrase			
a. Omission	10%	.100%	0%
b. Redundancy	10%	. 73%	6%
c. Substitution	33%	. 93%	18%
2. Noun Phrase			
a. Omission	40%	. 93%	40%
b. Redundancy	50%	* 6%	83%
3. Prepositions			
a. Omission	29%	. 80%	6%
b. Redundancy	42%	33%	21%
c. Substitution	33%	. 60%	33%
4. Article			
a. Omission	33%	. 73%	4%
b. Redundancy	18%	6%	16%
c. Substitution	8%	. 13%	4%
5. Particle			
a. Omission	19%	13%	4%
b. Redundancy	4%	0%	2%
6. Inversion Restrictions			
a. Subject-Object	17%	* 0%	16%
b. Verb Number	35%	* 0%	25%
7. Double Negation	8%	. 73%	8%
8. Contraction Deletion	88%	* 60%	not scored
9. Question	32%	. 93%	4%
10. There Substitution	17%	20%	2%
11. Separation	8%	0%	0%
12. Reflexivization	21%	. 60%	17%
13. Tense Restriction	23%	. 80%	35%
14. Pronoun Restriction	25%	. 93%	23%
15. Adjective Restriction	31%	* 0%	4%
16. Relative Pronoun Restriction	10%	6%	8%
17. Verb Form			
a. Omission	60%	. 93%	42%
b. Redundancy	33%	27%	15%
c. Substitution	31%	* 10%	40%
18. Noun Form			
a. Omission	21%	. 80%	13%
b. Redundancy	19%	20%	8%
c. Substitution	10%	0%	4%
19. Possessive	16%	. 73%	0%

Code: * This study's score is from 12% to 44% lower than Menyuk's preschool group's score.

. This study's score is from 27% to 90% higher than Menyuk's preschool group's score.

Table 3 shows the comparative use of restricted structures in Menyuk's groups and the one used in this study. It shows 15 areas, marked by dots to the left of the figures for this study, in which the restricted output of this group is produced by from 27% to 90% more speakers (mean, 55%), suggesting that these may be areas in which non-standard rules are in effect. It also shows six areas, marked by asterisks, in which the percentage of this group producing restricted structures is from 12% to 44% lower (mean, 26%) than Menyuk's preschool group, suggesting that, in some areas where nonstandard rules are not in effect, this group is more regularly standard than the others. And, there are 11 areas, unmarked, in which the percentage of children producing restricted structures is no more than 12% different for the two preschool groups, suggesting that those areas in which both groups use largely standard structures with similar measures of control.

Table 4 indicates a pattern that this group's departures from Menyuk's group takes. Menyuk has calculated the frequency of occurrence of four general types of restricted structures per sentence in the total data for her two groups. The percent, as she points out, is very small. That is, her nursery and first grade children deviate from standard well-formedness very infrequently. For two kinds of departures from the standard rules, redundancies and substitutions, the data from this group is remarkably like that of Menyuk's. In short, the suggestion is that the small number of deviations of these kinds results from immaturity in both groups. There are substantial differences, though, in the percent of omissions and of failures to observe transformational restrictions, suggesting that

Table 4
Percentage of Occurrence Per Sentence (T-Unit) of Four Categories of Restricted Structures in Data for Menyuk's Preschoolers and First Graders and for the Children of this study

Category of Restricted Structure	Menyuk's Preschoolers	This Study	Menyuk's First Graders
Omissions	4%	80%	2%
Redundancies	3%	2%	4%
Substitutions	2%	6%	1%
Transformations-Failure to Observe Restrictions	7%	27%	4%

nonstandard structures used by this group depart from standard rules in those two general ways.

Another assessment of syntactic maturity can be made by comparing the speakers in this study with the slightly older, kindergarten children that O'Donnell et al studied. That group, consisting of 30 white middle class children enrolled in a private kindergarten in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, had a regularly higher MLU, a group mean of 7.07, ranging from 4.0 - 9.5. There are a number of possible reasons in addition to greater syntactic maturity, that could have contributed to the difference in these figures from the mean of the subjects of the present study, as presented in Table 1. The children of the Murfreesboro study were a year older, already in school, and speaking in a situation that was unmistakably a test of some sort, which is likely to have encouraged a white middle class group such as theirs to respond as fully as possible while, as Labov (1972b) pointed out, any sense that a test was being given by persons outside their community would have exactly the opposite effect on a black lower-class group. Thus, differing responses to the data-gathering situations may have had some effect on the difference in MLU scores recorded.

In addition, O'Donnell et al calculated MLU in words, rather than morphemes. It is not possible, therefore, to make more than a very general comparison of the two sets of MLU's, by saying that, while the Harlem children's MLU's are lower than the Murfreesboro scores, they aren't substantially enough lower to suggest any cause other than the effect of a year's development on maturity.

Data for these children give no particular indication in

any of the variety of comparisions made, that the children are functioning with substantially different syntactic maturity than that which can be expected of their white middle class equivalents. The subjects of this study have control over a wide range of standard structures. But, they deviate from the standard considerably in some areas, suggesting the presence of structures that are restricted, not to child language, but to mature nonstandard usage.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

A major controversy in the study of BEV, the resolution of which promises to have substantial impact on pedagogy for working with non-standard speakers, stems from the larger question of what a dialect of a language is and how it is related to the standard variety of that language. One position on the subject holds that a black English dialect differs from standard English in its deep structure, a position that is in direct contradiction to the more conventional notion which postulates only superficial differences between two varieties of a language.

The more conventional position was upheld by William Labov when, in writing about the negative concord rule in Black English Vernacular, he concluded that the dialect difference was a surface one and had "nothing to do with the underlying logic of the sentence" (1972). A contrary assessment of the nature of dialect departures from the standard, held by creolists such as William Stewart, J. L. Dillard, and Marvin Loflin, claims that black English vernaculars and standard English vary more fundamentally. In fact, Stewart feels that the relationship of the more non-standard dialect varieties to standard English is more like diglossia than dialect variation. Thus, he has called such varieties "quasi-foreign" languages. It was this position that led Stewart and Joan Baratz to develop elementary reading texts written in black English.

Taking a position similar to Stewart's, Marvin Loflin's (1969) analysis of the auxiliary structure of the language of a

black adolescent informant led him to conclude that Black English Vernacular and standard English differ in their deep structures. Auxiliary structure has become, through Loflin's work, the one aspect of BEV that has been assessed in terms of its syntactic relationship to the standard language, and Loflin has described profound differences. Loflin and Labov have been the only scholars to present analysis of data to substantiate claims for a different, or identical, deep structure for BEV and standard English. Their conclusions, clearly, have been at loggerheads.

The work of both Labov and Loflin, as well as most other students of black English dialects, has concentrated on the auxiliary, suggesting that it is a major area of dialect difference. In considering the data collected for this analysis, it became clear that here, too, elements of syntax related to the functioning of the auxiliary stood out as departing from the standard forms and so became the focus of the study. This analysis falls into three major segments: tense formation, question formation and negation structures. In presenting findings about each segment, the study first assessed the extent of non-standard usage, then considered patterns of departure from the standard. At the same time, it included comparision with other researchers' findings whenever possible. Throughout, the charts present data by subject in order of ascending MLU, but, where this ordering did not suggest any trend related to increasing syntactic maturity, the syntactic patterns were considered to be those of mature BEV, an assumption based on the initial assessment of the subjects' syntactic matur-

ity that showed them to be generally producing mature structures.

Tense

The most prominent source of nonstandard auxiliary structures was variable deletion of the tense bearing element. Table 5, which shows results of considering past and present tense forms, excluding ain't, which is non-standard regardless of tense, and be, which will be considered independently, indicated that by far the greatest number of forms were present tense verbs that, in the standard, require no inflection and that are produced in their standard form by these speakers. Present tense forms requiring an -s inflection in the standard also appeared in the data, but somewhat less so than did such forms not calling for the -s. Of those requiring it, 45% realized the tense marker. Hypercorrection of -s forms did not seem to characterize the speech of these children, since, although it appeared in the speech of approximately half of the subjects, it occurred in only a mean .8% (range, .01% - 4%) of the subjects' total present tense usage.

For the past tense, Table 5 shows a similarly clear tendency toward standard production. By far the most common type of form is the irregular past standardly produced,

He went to da dentist. (13:9:31)

although more than a third as many irregular forms are nonstandard in that they appeared as standard present tense forms in situations where past was apparently meant.

He went to schoo. An he day (say) he was goin to poo (1).

An he ran out a house. (13:9:8:1)

Table 5

Standard and Non-Standard Present and Past Tense Formation

	Present Tense				Past Tense			
Speaker	Stand. No inflect.	Stand. -S	Non-St. ØS	Non. St. Hyper-S	Stand. Weak (-ED)	Stand. Strong	Non-St. Ø-ED	Non.St. Strong
9M	29%	6%	33%	-	-	19%	3%	3%
15	29%	4%	41%	-	-	3%	1%	3%
8	31%	6%	21%	1%	-	10%	.7%	11%
34	62%	16%	-	3%	2%	3%	-	2%
12	20%	6%	23%	-	-	22%	3%	6%
1	30%	20%	5%	1%	-	14%	8%	17%
14	54%	5%	33%	1%	-	3%	-	-
2	31%	7%	10%	1%	.5%	29%	5%	7%
13	29%	7%	9%	-	3%	38%	5%	4%
26M	20%	8%	7%	-	4%	41%	5%	9%
17	50%	8%	5%	-	5%	15%	2%	8%
32	34%	9%	10%	.7%	-	18%	6%	14%
33	6%	17%	5%	-	-	35%	2%	2%
7	32%	8%	5%	-	2%	27%	6%	13%
6	37%	7%	5%	4%	2%	20%	7%	11%
MEANS	33%	9%	14%	.78%	1.2%	19.8%	3.6%	7%

NOTE: The percentages in this chart are of total verb usage in each speaker's data. Since the chart omits all future forms, all copulae, and all uses of ain't, the percentages do not add up to 100%.

This may not be fully representative of a non-standard pattern, however, since many of these forms are not as clearly past in intention as the example cited; they come from stories which the speaker began in the past, then continued in the present. There was no way of knowing whether, in the mind of the speaker, the story was being shifted into the present for the sake of immediacy, as is not unusual in standard colloquial usage, or whether these were all genuine unmarked past tenses.

Perhaps the most interesting finding reflected in Table 5 is the absence of regular verbs, either standard or non-standard. While there are more than twice as many nonstandard weak (that is, uninflected) as standard weak forms, there are few of either, suggesting that the core verb vocabulary of this group of speakers consists predominantly of strong verbs. Hypercorrection of _-ed_ forms, like hypercorrection of _-s_ forms, does not seem to be a factor in contributing to non-standard usage in this group, occurring only in the speech of four subjects, and never in more than 1% of a speaker's output.

Future Tense Formation. Future tense formation for this group presents a radically different, if equally consistent picture. Future tense production seems to be a substantial source of non-standard forms. There are two categories of future formation, the use of 1) _will_, with or without a following verb, and 2) _be_ + _ing_), which appeared most often in conjunction with the main verb _go_ in one of its many variants, including _a-go_, _be go_, _gonna_, and _gon_, as well as _be going_. Only one future form,

or less than 1% of the total futures, consisted of the (be + ing) and a verb other than go.

I (t) coming down namorrow. (8:10:15:6)

Use of Will. Of the two prominent future formations, the structure calling for will is far less utilized, only appearing in the speech of 8 of the subjects for a total of 19% of the entire future data. And, when that structure is chosen, it is used non-standardly in 77% of the total instances of use. Eighty-six per cent of that non-standard usage can be accounted for by omission of will, the other 14 representing the usage by one subject of what appears to be an idiolectal structure I'd a, by which she seems to mean I would. Only 25% of the standard will futures produced by the group contain the word will, the other 75% represented instead by the negative won't. Thus, it is possible to conclude that, for this group, the standard use of will is quite rare.

Use of Be + Ing. The remaining 80% of future structures are formed with (be + ing). All 15 speakers used this form, and its use was predominantly non-standard. A mean of 74% of the use of this structure was non-standard. A portion of this non-standard usage (33%) is accounted for by the absence of forms of be, which will be discussed in the consideration of copula deletion that follows. But that phenomenon, in fact, is the least substantial contributor to the non-standard nature of this structure, both use of the particle a- and the juxtaposition of verb forms accounting for a good deal more.

The Sequent A-. Table 6 presents data regarding the use of a-,

Table 6

Group 'Sequent' Use
By Tense, Frequency & Duration,
Activity & Form

Total Number = 51

Tense:	Present	2%
	Past	4%
	Future	94%
Frequency & Duration:	Short	69%
	Habitual	4%
	Long	8%
	Atemporal	16%
	Ambiguous	4%
Activity:	Active	98%
	Stative	2%
Forms:	I'm a	90%
	Was a	2%
	I'd a	4%
	She a	2 %
	He a	2 %

This table utilizes the 'Semantic Classification Categories Developed by David Crystal (1966): Tense (Placement on a time continuum) Duration; Frequency..." (Henrie, 1969), and Henrie's addition to those categories, "Activity."

a phenomenon that Fickett (1970) has called the "sequent." Fickett considers the a- form to be a marker of "the sequent phase," occurring in the environment _____V and meaning "is about to be." These data support a notion that the a- is not meaningfully distinct from the full future from "I'm going to" for this group of speakers. To begin with, forms such as Fickett's example, "a-be," consisting of a + V, in which V≠go, occur extremely rarely in these data. They appear, in fact, in only two sentences, the first of which is neither a future nor interpretable by Fickett's definition as a sequent, but seems most likely to be an audible pause, given the apparent difficulty that the speaker is having in completing the sentence.

He huff an blow and a brow da dow, da house dow. (1:6:ii:6)

Teacha, she a break dis. (13:13:28:2)

In addition to these, there are three other sentences in which a- does not follow I'm, as in

Da buttafly was a gon a outside. (12:13:10:6)

Fickett also identifies a- as being part of a "sequential phasal," "she's a gonna sing", which does not occur at all in these data. In short, for this group, a- does not function as the independent, distinctly meaningful form that Fickett saw it to be. Instead, it exists only as a variation of one form, "I am going."

Furthermore, there is no indication that in these data the "sequent" form conveys any different sense of the future than any other future form. Although the form does seem to mean predominantly future action, which is in accord with what Fickett considers it to

mean, it does not seem to convey particular imminence. Usages such as the following do seem to support a sense that a- can convey imminence at least in some instances:

I'm a talk on nis...

Teacha, she a break dis. (13:13:21:7)

However, other usages of a- by the same speaker convey no similar immediacy:

I'm a go to my gramma's house... an I'm a (s)tay. (13:13:21:4)

Other speakers, too, fail to substantiate the interpretation of a- as a "sequent" form. One child says "I'm onna cut that on" (33:8:2:5) when she is just about to turn on the playback mechanism on the tape recorder, but "I'm a tell somebody in my family" (33:9:5:6) which, due to lack of proximity of her family at that point, could not have meant imminent action. In other conversation, she appears to use I'm a- and other future forms interchangeably:

Den I'm be five yeas ol. Now I'm foa. Den I'm gon be five. I'm a have a birthday party. (33:9:9:7-8)

Other examples of the element seem specifically not to refer to the imminent future:

I won't go to the moon because I'm a fall. (8:10:14:5)

I'm gonna pick do (se) flowa by myself. Ya tell, I'm a tell ya motha. (32:10:6:8)

Finally,

"I'm a wait till da man get in nea (there),"
(8:10:15:8)

seems quite clearly to indicate something expressly other than immediacy, especially considering that the speaker is awaiting the appearance of a man on the moon. Conversely, the utterance "I'm be it now. I'm put ma teef out." (8:10:17:7) seems to indicate immediate intention, but omits the proposed sequent a-.

Although no distinct pattern appears from looking at the data on a- from Fickett's point of view, Labov's (1968) position on the subject seems a good deal more applicable. He considered I'm a to be a phonological variant of I'm going to, derived from a "reduction route," characteristic of colloquial standard English, that reduces /æmgo^{w}intu/ to /mmənə/ and then takes a BEV "subpath" that assimilates the stop /n/ to the nasal /m/, yielding /mə/. (pp. 251-252). Labov pointed out that all the intermediary forms in his hypothetical reduction route are present in his data, but that I'm a is by far the most common, a situation that is replicated in these data.

Labov acknowledged that:

> If it were not for the presence of these intermediate forms, the derivation of I'm a from I am going to would seem rather distant and unconvincing, but all of them are available to the analyst as well as the native speaker. (1968, p. 252).

Because, as Table 7 indicates, the primary environment --90%-- of a- is I'm _____, Labov's analysis seems to make a great deal of sense for this data.

Juxtaposition. The term "juxtaposition" is used here to refer to any situation in which two or more base forms of verbs, or a form of be and a base form of a verb, co-occur. It happens primarily, although not exclusively, in future formations and accounts for the non-standardism of the (be + ing) +V future that is not due to the a- element. Juxtaposition occurs in three areas: 1) where the standard dialect calls for be + ing and the data yields be + V as in "is bleed" or "was kiss," 2) where the standard dialect employs V+ infinitive and the data allows V+V, as in "try open," or "want talk", and 3) apparently a combination of the preceding two, where the standard dialect would require -ing + infinitive and the data presents V+V or Ø+V instead, as in "I'm put," "gon be," "go sneak", and "He's not go talk." Two constructions that yield juxtaposition, V+Infinitive and Ving + infinitive, do so with decreasing frequency as MLU increases. This leads to a conclusion that those two kinds of juxtaposition are functions of immaturity and not features of the mature dialect. Such a finding would account for the fact that no other studies of BEV syntax mention these juxtaposed structures as dialect features.

The third area, be + ing, seems to remain fairly constant as MLU increases, suggesting that it is, indeed, a feature of the dialect and one that is established quite fully even for the least mature speakers in the group.

Age Grading and Future Tense Formation. J. L. Dillard focused on the feature I'm a in his elucidation of the concept of age-grading as applied to BEV. He outlined a progression in the development of this form, saying that children up to the ages of five or six use "purposive futures like Im put." (1972, p. 234). At the age of seven or so, they acquire Ima put, then, a year or so later, Imo put, which, said Dillard, may remain the adult usage of a "low-status" individual and in the casual style of a "social climber." Children, suggests Dillard, don't acquire Imonna or I'm gonna until they are around fourteen. (1972, p. 234).

It is clear, however, that the age-grading that Dillard described does not occur in the present data. All the forms that Dillard cited and a good many more occurred in the present data. Forms analogous to Dillard's I'm put occur in only 11% of the forms. For this group, I'm a was by far the predominant form of I am going to future structures (48%). It was, then in full operation in this group long before the age at which Dillard would have expected to hear it.

Furthermore, I'monna (3%) and I'm gonna (12%), that Dillard would expect to develop around the age of 14, are present in 15% of the realizations of I am going to in these data, with the more standard I'm gonna by far the more dominant. Lastly, the entirely standard form I'm goin (g), which Dillard completely omitted from his consideration of age-grading, occurred in 14% of possible realizations. It would appear, then, that Dillard's analysis of age-grading, with respect to the future form I am going to (+ V),

does not apply to this group.

One must say for the future tense data of this study that, in agreement with Labov, "the grammatical category of the future is ... quite secure," (1972, p. 25) and that, while it sometimes occurs using a form of will, usually won't, it is most often found in some variation of be + going to. This form is the source of numerous non-standard forms, none of which affect indication of tense or aspect.

Durative be. One widely identified feature of Black English Vernacular is the uninflected be form. Loflin considered this be form to be an a-temporal aspect marker; on its existence hinged much of his argument for a different deep structure. If there is not widespread agreement, however, as to the structural import of this be form, there is still a good deal of agreement among students of the dialect on what, in general, it means. Labov, working with Harlem adolescents, Walt Wolfram, working with Detroiters, and Samuel Henrie, studying 6-year-olds in Los Angeles, all agreed that the form means "habitually," "generally," or "intermittently," although Labov added that the form is particularly tricky to analyze since it can also indicate instantaneous time.

Considering that this invariant be form has been so widely and similarly reported, it is of particular curiosity that the form appears extremely seldomly in the data of this study. Only 5.6% of the total forms of be tabulated contain the word be at all, and most of those, (65%), were not the invariant be but rather were in infinitives,

imperatives, or base forms following a modal. Only 11 instances of be, out of the 31 identified in the data, could be analysed as possibly representing invariant be, a scant 2% of the total use of be forms. In addition, there appeared to be no relationship between the few produced invariant be forms and maturity as measured by MLU. Finally, the forms fell into no very clear or expected pattern according to the tense or duration and frequency that they seemed to convey. But they did convey habitual aspect.

It does not appear that the widely identified invariant be form is fully productive for this group of speakers. Although some speakers use it, none uses it with the frequency found in more dialect speakers. This finding coincides with Labov's finding that, while invariant be is at the core of the dialect, it is spoken most frequently by pre-adolescent and adolescent speakers. The pre-school children here under analysis have presumably yet to acquire this feature of their dialect.

The Copula. Forms of be other than those interpretable as the invariant be show substantial correspondence between the language of this group of speakers and that reported for other groups. That is, this group uses, contracts, and deletes the copula in a pattern highly similar to that reported initially by Labov and substantiated for Detroit data by Wolfram (1969) and for independently-collected New York data by Jane Torrey (1972). Labov's analysis of copula use showed the copula to appear categorically under some circumstances, to be deleted categorically in others, and to appear variably in still others. Table 7, which records Ø, standard, and realized non-standard be forms, that is, forms that are non-standard due to their lack of

Table 7

Percentage of Ø, Present-Standard, and Present-Non-Standard Realizations for Four Potential Forms of Be.

Speaker	Is			Are			Am ('m)			Was			Were		
	Ø	Pres St.	Pres N-S	Ø	Pres St.	Pres N-S	Ø	Pres St.	Pres N-S	Ø	Pres St.	Pres N-S	Ø	Pres St.	Pres N-S
9m	74	26	-	100	-	-	14	86	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15	79	21	-	80	20	-	-	100	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
8	50	39	11	4	-	-	9	91	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
34	-	83	17	67	33	-	-	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	73	18	9	100	-	-	17	66	17	8	92	-	-	-	-
1	8	90	3	73	27	-	-	100	-	17	67	17	-	-	-
14	80	20	-	100	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2	35	63	2	100	-	-	29	71	-	-	67	33	100	-	-
13	30	70	-	100	-	-	8	92	-	-	100	-	-	100	-
26m	40	60	-	100	-	-	-	-	-	-	82	18	-	-	-
17	13	87	-	93	7	-	-	100	-	-	60	40	-	-	100
32	14	81	5	100	-	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	-	-
33	12	88	-	-	-	-	-	100	-	-	100	-	-	-	-
7	17	83	-	100	-	-	8	92	-	21	79	-	-	-	-
6	11	89	-	100	-	-	-	100	-	20	80	-	-	-	-
Mean %	36	61	3	94	6	-	6	93	1	6	84	10	33	33	33

Note: Percentages shown separately for each form.

'Present-Nonstandard' records items that appear, but that do not follow standard pattern of agreement with their subjects.

standard concordance with their subjects, shows a pattern in declarative sentences, that corresponds substantially with what Labov reports.

Are and were appear to be virtually non-existent in the data. Were, in addition, is realized as Ø only once; the rest of the time that it does not appear, was occurs in its place. This corresponds to Labov's findings that was predominates over were (1972a, p. 121) and that the deletion of are has reached such a high point that it is effectively zeroed out for many speakers. (1972a, p. 52) Here, the item occurs in only a mean 6% of possible environments in which the standard calls for are. Was, by contrast, is present in 84% of possible environments. An additional 10% of was is cited as occurring non-standardly because it has plural subjects and so was equivalent to the standard were.

The data of this study correspond with Labov's finding that be occurs categorically in infinitives and after modals. The form be occurred in all 16 infinitive constructions in which it was called for and in the five imperatives that required it as well. These numbers are quite small, as few constructions requiring the base form be occurred in the data. But, those that did appear are in accord with the categorical rule that Labov postulated. Finally, the form '-m is present in 93% of the environments in which it is called for.

By contrast to the highly consistent occurrences or deletions of the forms cited above, the form is presents a dramatically different picture. It appears in only 61% of the possible occurrences. Thus, these data correspond also with Labov's determination that the element of the copula that is variably deleted is is. For the deletion of is, these speakers appear to be following some, if not all, of the constraints

that Labov determined to be operating on the speech of his subjects.

Labov looked at the reduction of is in relation to its environment and determined that such deletion is clearly effected by the phonological and syntactic environments of the element. He determined that the most important influence on deletion is "whether or not the subject is a pronoun or some other noun phrase." (1972a, p. 85) The same principle holds for these data; the presence of a preceding subject noun phrase results in full realization of the copula in the predominant number of cases. In addition, presence of a preceding pronoun subject results almost exclusively in contraction or deletion; of the total 160 forms of is following a noun phrase that were recorded in the data, 48% are full forms, 17% are contracted, and 35% are deleted. By contrast, in the 126 environments following a pronoun, only 13% are full, while 57% are contracted and another 30% deleted.

In addition to the fundamental effect of the grammatical category of the preceding subject, it is clear that, just as in Labov's data, a preceding vowel favors contraction whereas a preceding consonant favors deletion. (1972a, p. 105) Thus, here, of 104 instances of contracted is, 67 (64%) are preceded by a vowel, whereas of 89 items of deleted is, only 37 (42%) are preceded by a vowel.

Labov also considered the effect of various preceding phonemes on contraction and deletion of is, finding fewer full forms after noun phrases ending in vowels than in consonants, a "small but distinct tendency for more full forms to occur after voiceless consonants than after voiced," (1972a, p. 102) and virtually no contracted forms but a good many deleted forms after silibants, leading him to

Table 8

Effect of Preceding Phonological

Environment on Realization of IS

	Silibant	Voiceless Consonant	Voiced Consonant	Vowel
Full	100%	14%	55%	6%
Contracted	-	55%	11%	60%
Deleted	-	32%	33%	33%
# of Forms	17	44	114	111

Table 9

Effect of Following Grammatical

Environment on Realization of IS

	_NP	_PA	_LOC	_V+ing	_Gon
Full	41%	13%	16%	11%	7%
Contracted	32%	73%	32%	37%	37%
Deleted	27%	13%	52%	53%	57%
# of Forms	116	30	25	19	30

consider that deletion is "practically categorical after silibants." (p. 102) Table 8 shows that the effect of the preceeding phoneme is generally parallel for these data.

Here, too, as Table 8 shows, there are far fewer full forms following vowels than following consonants. (p. 105) Considering the effect that different consonants have on reduction, however, a different pattern seems to emerge than Labov saw. While Labov's data show considerable deletion following silibants, for these data a full form is realized in all cases. This finding is even more contradictory when one recognizes that, of the 17 elements preceding is and ending in a silibant, 16 were the item dis, which appears not to have the effect Labov might expect of it either due to its status as a pronoun or its final silibant.

Voiceless consonants, too, show a different tendency in these data than in Labov's, for here they result in far fewer full forms than do voiced consonants. Only 14% of the 44 voiceless consonants that precede forms of is yield the full form, while 55% are followed by contracted is and 32% by deleted is. Also, for these data so few contracted forms occur after voiced consonants -- 13 out of a total of 114, or 11% -- that it appears this preceding factor yields primarily full forms, 55%, or deleted forms, 33%.

Labov's analysis suggests, also, that the following grammatical element has an effect on how is is realized, that a following noun phrase yields the highest number of full forms, a following predicate adjective or locative has similar but not as consistent effect, and following v+ing or, specifically, a form of going to

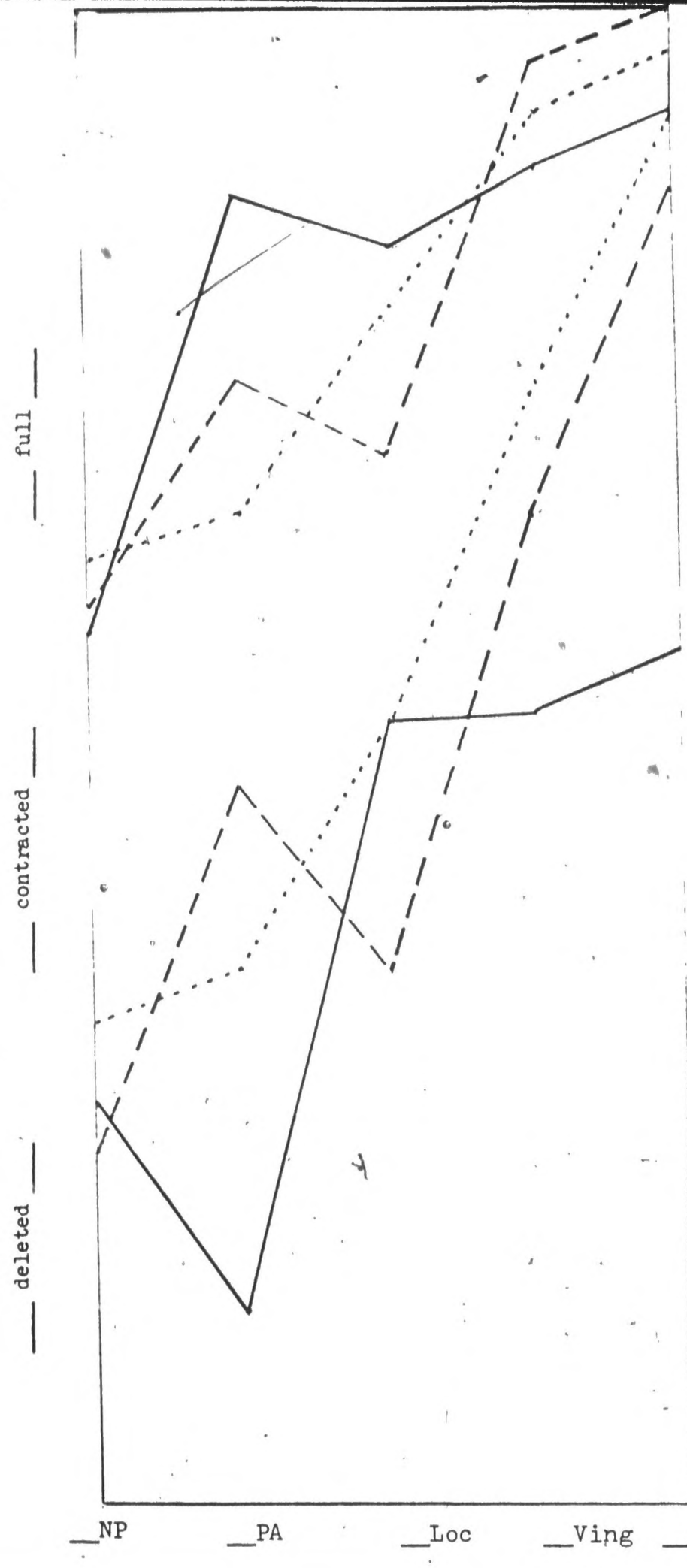
yields practically no full forms at all.

Data in this study (Table 9) follow roughly the same pattern, as Labov's findings regarding his preteen group, the youngest of his informants, aged 9-13, and one teenaged group, aged 10-17. (1972a, p. 86-87) It is true of this group, as of Labov's, that less reduction takes place before nouns than before any other grammatical element. It is also true for all three groups that a following verb, particularly a form of going to, yields the most reduction. There is a good deal of difference, though, between the pre-school children and Labov's subjects in their tendency to contract or delete. Labov sees deletion as an extention of the contraction process, considering all deleted forms to have first undergone contraction. It is clear from Graph 10 that his subjects utilize the deletion process far more than do the pre-schoolers, who have substantially more contraction and less deletion in their speech than do Labov's subjects. The grammatical element that contributes the most to this greater contraction is the following predicate adjective, which yields both fewer full forms and fewer deleted forms than it does in Labov's data.

Question Formation

The nature of question formation has not been widely considered by previous researchers on the nature of BEV. Only four studies devoted any attention to it, and they reported widely divergent findings. The findings of this study, in turn, echo none of the previous findings, but correspond to some of them in ways that will be outlined.

Analysis of the question structures in the data of this study



Graph 10

Full, Contracted, and Deleted is in Five Syntactic Environments: A Comparision of Data from This Study and from Two of Labov's Harlem Groups.

_____: This Study

--------: T-Birds* (aged 9-13)

.....: Jets* (aged 10-17)

* (Labov 1972a, pp. 86-87)

substantiates Labov's hypothesis that absence of a tense marker is a major source of non-standard question structures. It also suggests rather different tendencies toward non-standard production depending on the type of question structure and the particular tense-bearing element that a structure's standard equivalent would require.

Types of Question Structures. In considering the present data consisting of 233 questions, one can discern four structurally distinct kinds of questions:

126 wh- questions:

Whea's you motha? (12:12:8:6)

44 type I yes/no questions, of the sort that require, in the standard dialect, inversion of the tense-bearing element and the subject:

Or, is ha (her) gon kiss a you hin? (2:9:12:5)

47 type II yes/no questions, those that are declarative or imperative in their syntax and are signalled as questions by intonation:

He ate it already? (26m:7:10:8)

16 embedded wh- questions:

I don know whe' he snuck. (32:1:3:9)

The formation of "embedded question" being drawn upon here is to be found in Roderick A. Jabocs and Peter S. Rosenbaum, (1968), which regards wh- questions to be questions about noun phrases and the wh- question transformation to replace the Q constituent in the underlying structure with a NP in which the noun carries

the feature +wh. (p. 153) When such questions are embedded, the interrogative transformation is blocked, but the wh- question transformation replacing the Q constituent with a wh- word still applies. (p. 181) Jacobs and Rosenbaum distinguish embedded question wh- clauses and their initial interrogative pronouns from relative clauses having initial relative pronouns that are identical in their form to the interrogative wh- words. Embedded wh- questions are recognizable as noun phrase compliments while relative clauses are not. Jacobs and Rosenbaum's cleft sentence test for determining noun phrase compliments makes this distinction clear. A sentence such as " I don't know where he snuck" can be transformed to "What I don't know is where he snuck." But, a sentence like "I am going where he snuck" cannot be transformed *"What I am going is where he snuck." This indicates the wh- clause in the first sentence to be a noun phrase compliment and so an embedded question, while the wh- clause in the second sentence relates to the deleted NP "to the place," making it a relative clause.

Table 11 shows that, for each of the four types, standard items occur. In fact, for yes/no questions, the structures are predominantly standard. Even leaving out type II yes/no questions, which are uniformly standard in their question formation because their syntax does not alter to produce the question, the type I yes/no questions are still 66% standard. Wh- questions are more generally non-standard: 62% are non-standard, generally due to absence of the inverted tense bearing element. The non-standard

Table 11

Incidence of Standard and Non-Standard Use of Four Types of Question Structures

Speaker	Wh- Questions		Type 1 Yes/No		'Type 11 Yes/no		Embedded Wh-	
	Standard	N-S	Standard	N-S	Standard	N-S	Standard	N-S
9m	1	18	-	2	2	-	-	-
15	-	3	1	2	9	-	1	-
8	1	-	4	3	2	-	-	-
34	22	31	2	-	-	-	1	-
12	4	2	1	-	2	-	-	-
1	15	12	-	2	5	-	-	2
14	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
2	8	10	4	-	3	-	-	-
13	2	4	-	-	-	-	-	1
26m	1	-	-	2	6	-	-	-
17	-	13	2	1	3	-	-	3
32	10	7	3	-	3	-	4	-
33	NO QUESTIONS							
7	9	16	8	-	8	-	3	-
6	1	1	3	-	2	-	1	-
Totals	54	88	29	15	47	-	10	6

nature of wh- questions is even more sharply outlined when one separates out the wh- question structures in which a tense bearing element independent of the main verb is not standardly required:

How come you put dis fing right down hea?
(32:10:6:4)

An wha happened den? (7:1:10:8)

Included in the wh- question category are 4 how come questions:

Ha come dis got tape? (32:10:5:7)

Ha come it byoken (broken)? (32:10:5:9)

How come you put dis fing (thing) right down hea?
(32:10:5:10)

An how come you put a tape on it? (32:10:5:10)

Probably due to its status as an informal variation of the wh- question using why in the standard dialect, this structure has not received consideration in transformational analyses of questions. Thus, there is no scholarly precedent to follow in identifying it. This researcher has chosen to consider it a wh- structure for want of a more specifically appropriate designation and because it realizes an initial wh- element and does not request verification of a proposition, as do yes/no questions. Yet, it differs from other wh- questions in that it does not require the question-inversion transformation in any dialect.

Of the 67 wh- question structures not requiring an independent tense-bearing element, 54% were in a standard form, or considerably more than the percent of standard formations in

the total wh- question data. The degree of non-standard production in these structures is more similar to that in the total question data, which further substantiates the sense that absence of the tense-bearing element is a critical factor in production of non-standard questions, since 96% of the non-standard structures in utterances not requiring separation of tense is due to absence of the tense-bearing element:

Who dis? (passim)

Table 11, in presenting data ranked by ascending order of MLU, suggests that non-standard type I yes/no question structures decrease with linguistic maturity, while standard use of structures increases. The difference is not accounted for by use of an increased amount of type II yes/no structures, which increases far less with increasing maturity. By contrast, non-standard formation of wh- question structures remains quite constant with increasing maturity.

In accord with Labov's data, the major source of non-standardism for these speakers is absence of the tense-bearing element. For wh- questions requiring be, 55% deleted it, while a similar 59% of required be was absent in yes/no structures; do is almost categorically absent from these data, occurring in only 7.5% of total structures that require it in standard literary English. (Excluded from consideration are questions that eliminate do in a way that standard colloquial English also allows: "You want some?"). The low incidence of do is particularly due to wh- structures, where that element occurs in only 3% of the environments

Table 12

Occurrences of Auxiliary Do in

Wh- And Yes/No Questions

	Wh-		Yes/No	
Speaker	Do	Ø Do	Do	Ø Do
9M	-	3	-	1
15	-	2	-	7
8	-	1	3	3
34	-	2	-	1
12	-	-	-	3
1	-	4	-	2
14	-	-	-	-
2	-	1	3	2
13	-	4	-	-
26M	-	-	-	6
17	-	2	-	1
32	-	2	3	-
33	-	-	-	-
7	-	8	3	7
6	1	-	-	4
Totals	1	27	12	37
%	3	97	24	76

that would call for it in the standard; by contrast, do occurs in 24% of yes/no structures that require it. Appearance of this element, in fact, may account for the increase of standard yes/no questions with maturity. As can be seen in Table 12, do more rarely occurs in the yes/no structures of speakers whose MLU's are below the mean. Similarly, do occurs extremely rarely in wh- questions in these data; the item that contains it is produced by the most mature speaker. Although there are not enough data on this subject to draw any significant conclusion, it appears possible that do- support is just beginning to emerge in questions for this group, and that it is emerging slightly earlier for yes/no questions than for wh- questions, thus accounting for the increase of standard yes/no structures with increased maturity but the constancy of non-standard wh- question structures, which are, as yet, largely untouched by the appearance of do. Both kinds of questions, however, yield question structures standardly calling for do in the speech of 93% of the speakers. The remaining 7%, one speaker, produced no taped questions.

Sources of Non-Standard Structures. Labov (1968) presents three alternative hypothetical explanations of the Ø tense marker in yes/no questions that seem extendable to the consideration of the same phenomenon in wh- questions as well. These are: 1) that the questions underwent the question inversion, received do-support where necessary, and then underwent do deletion, 2) that do-support is not provided, so that the "isolated tense-marker simply disappears like any abstraction," (1968, Vo. I,

p. 292), and 3) that the question inversion never occurs.

There is considerable evidence in these data to discard, as Labov did, alternative #3, since some question inversion structures appear with some regularity.

In order to realize this, however, one must first recognize that question inversion involving the use of be, that is, not requiring do, is fully controlled by these speakers but is obscured in many instances by copula deletion. Of the 111 questions requiring the use of be, 56, or 50%, involved deleted forms of is, are, and, in one case, was. In 53 of such cases, the resulting utterance provides no information about whether or not the inversion occurred before deletion took place:

Yon gon come ova hea? (34:12:10:9)

The 50% of question structures requiring be and realizing a form of be, however, reflect a good number of inverted question structures. Forty seven, or 69%, of those contain standard question inversion using either is or are.

Are you finish? (15:6:17:5)

Of the 29% that do not use the standard inversion, 75% decline to do so under circumstances where the standard language can, and sometimes must, also retain declarative syntax. That is, they are either in embedded questions, they have a wh- element in subject position, or the lack of inversion results in declarative questions.

You know what da is? (15:11:3:5)

Whas youa name? (32:11:2:5)

Erything's all right? (17:13:2:8)

The end result of combining the figures for inverted and non-inverted questions using be is to discover that 91% of questions not deleting be are standard structures, using, or not using, the question inversion according to standard patterns.

Further indication that the question inversion indeed is a productive rule for these speakers comes from looking at questions usings modals. While only 7 of these occurred, 5, or 71%, were inverted according to the standard rule:

Can I hold it? (34:8:4:12)

Would you stop repeating what I say? (34:8:7:2)

Ple(ase), cou I ha(ve) da gum? (2:13:22:9q)

Can I keep dis? (32:1:3:6)

May've dis ice cream fo five cent? (6:1:4:5q)

One, a question requiring will, deleted the auxiliary in a delarative question in accordance with the will-deletion pattern discussed in earlier consideration of the future tense.

I see ya lata, k? (1:12:6:4)

The remaining question used won't, also in a declarative structure:

I won hea my burse in hea? (8:11:5:7)

Although it is clear that question inversion is productive for these speakers, the status of do in questions is not so clear. Part of this lack of clarity results from the scarcity of realized auxiliary do. It occurs in only 13 question structures, or 22% of the total questions that could realize do in standard dialect. Of these 13, one is used in place of the main verb:

Who say hello to me? You did? (32:12:8:1)

Five auxiliary do's occur with negatives in declarative questions:

Don' mess it up? (8:13:15:4)

Dem don't broke? (8:12:16:3)

You don't be big? (8:10:17:1)

You don memba my baby? (2:13:10:5)

You don know it? (2:13:12:5)

One auxiliary do occurs with a negative in an embedded question not requiring inversion:

Das ha come he don' wanna stay to da paak. (32:10:7:1)

Another example involved do with a negative and inversion, but it is in a quotation from a song and so may not reflect the speaker's own grammar:

He go like, "ma, ma, pra, don't cha see me? (2:13:12:1)

One other, also tied to a negative element, is inverted in the speakers' own structure:

Diten I say, "go da be(d)?" (32:10:6:2)

Only four consist of inversion and do-support without an additional negative element:

Do you know what? (7:12:13:1)

Do you eva know my name? (7:12:19:2)

Do you got do(se) wicked eye? (7:9:3:6)

Big Bad Russell, what does he did? (6:7:14:7)

In sum, of the 13 realized do auxiliaries, only 6, or 46%, are inverted. All 6 are produced by speakers at or above the mean MLU. Only 4, or 31%, are independent of negative structures, in which do occurs regularly. This might suggest that do-support

is not productive for questions at all, but that it occurs as part of the negation structure, instead. It is clear that absence of do from questions is the norm, and that negation is a major environmental influence favoring its realization.

Two additional yes/no questions, one produced by a speaker above the median MLU and one below, do not contain do-support but nevertheless lend some credence to a suggestion that do-support has begun to develop for this group.

These questions:

He go and get an onge? (26m:7:9:8)

You break it? (9m:12:17:2)

are, by context, clearly in the past tense. Their verbs, being strong, would be likely to appear in the past for this group. The fact that they do not suggests that tense may already have been separated from the verb in these utterances. But, these are the only examples in the data that might lend clear support to Labov's suggestion that a floating tense element, not receiving do-support, has simply evaporated. In the light of the 5 utterances in which tense does receive do-support, these utterances are more reasonably interpretable as lending support to Labov's first alternative, that do-support occurs, but that do is subsequently deleted. Thus, there is some slight suggestion that standard do-support may be developing in these data, although the limited data and small numbers of speakers providing it make this suggestion extremely tentative.

Of the total question structures requiring do, although

a fairly small number of utterances contain that element, a far more substantial number, 31, or 41%, omit sentence-initial do in situations where standard colloquial dialects also omit that element:

You wan it? (34:12:11:4)

You wan a sing it down in the gym? (1:8:1:6)

Ninety-two percent of these occur before you or before a deleted you, as in:

Wan me ta talk? (6:1:16:2)

A few appear before other subject elements:

Dis record say, "I'm a kill you?" (15:6:8:1)

There are so few examples of do-absence before elements other than you that one might suspect a following you of contributing to ∅ do. However, a simpler explanation, supported not only by the dirth of data on do preceding elements other than you but also by the amount of do # you data, is that the direct interpersonal conversation that the data-collection strove to capture yields more questions addressed to and inquiring about a second person than regarding a third person. All that can be reasonably determined from these data, then, is that a substantial portion of the omitted do is omitted in accord with standard colloquial usage and is not particular to the dialect of these speakers.

Another 39% or ∅ do, however, exhibits a clear non-standard pattern; do appears to be categorically absent from wh- questions that would require it in the standard dialect. It is, in fact, absent in 97% of the 30 such questions in that data:

Why he do like dat? (9m:5:6:5)

How you get dis off? (8:12:16:2)

Why you speak to me bad? (1:3a:8:6q)

An what he did? (32:1:3:1)

The extremely high consistency of this pattern indicates that do-support does not exist for this group of speakers in wh- questions. The one speaker who attempts it, the most mature speaker in the group, clearly indicates that she does not have command of the rule for its use. She inserts do, but leaves tense on the base verb:

Big bad Russel, what does he did? (6:7:14:7)

These data have exhibited a far greater tendency toward use of non-standard forms than either the data analyzed by Legum et al (1971) or that of Henrie's (1969) study: both of these studies used slightly older speakers. The extent of its difference from their findings is not calculable, since they did not distinguish both types of question structures and types of non-standard structures.

But, the fact that both of those studies report substantially standard use of do in questions clearly distinguished their findings from these. One possible explanation of these differences is that they result from regional dialect variation. Another, supported by the suggestion in these data that do-support may be developing for this group, is that it may be an aspect of the dialect grammar that becomes productive at a fairly late point in the developmental process.

This analysis has also extended beyond Labov's work on question structures, in considering his three hypothetical

explanations of do absence and seeing distinct patterns of that phenomenon that differ with type of question structure.

Tag Questions. It is of some curiosity that, in these data from speakers whose question structure non-standardness is tied so substantially to Ø be and Ø do, there is a total lack of the kind of information regarding be and do that linguists studying standard dialects have sought in tag questions. This is not to say that tag questions do not exist in these data. Although they are quite scarce, in only 3% of the total question data, there are 6 examples, using 4 different tags: right?, o.k.?, (or k?), yes?, and huh? Although Labov reported tag questions, without indicating their frequency in his data, and said that in those in which the standard dialect required be, "the finite forms of be are required" for his BEV speakers, clearly the group in this study has an alternative formula, one that entirely skirts the questions of be and do status and of the syntax of question formation.

Negation

Multiple negation is considered by several scholars who have studied BEV to be a prominent characteristic of the dialect. Henrie (1969), for example, reported that his Oakland, California kindergarten subjects used double negatives with indefinites-- "I don't want none."-- 71.4% of the time that they used indefinites in negative utterances

Wolfram's (1969) Detroit data, drawn from 48 Negro

informants equally divided into three age groups, 10-12, 14-17, and 30-35, showed that for lower working class Negroes, whose class designation roughly corresponds to that of the families of the Harlem children, the percentage of realized multiple negation including occurrences in indefinites, determiners, auxiliaries and adverbs was a mean 77.8%.

Similarly, Light (1971), using Bengt Loman's (1967) data from five Washington, D.C. children aged 6 to 11, found 83% realization of negative concord--attraction of a negative on an auxiliary to indefinites and pronouns--in potential environments. And, Legum et al (1971), working with Los Angeles children in grades K-3, found 66% of negation to be involved in multiple structures when an interviewer was absent, 44% when one was present. Negative concord occurring with a negated tense marker and a following indefinite noun phrase was even higher: 100% if an interviewer was absent, 60% when one was present.

In his discussion of negative concord, Labov (1972a), presented a number of figures for use of negative concord by various groups of Harlem pre-teens and teenagers, as well as by preadolescent speakers in West Philadelphia, all of which hover close to 100%, leading him to suggest that "the negative is attracted to indeterminates generally." (1972a, p.51) Furthermore, Labov reported that in addition to "the transfer of negatives to indeterminates, we also have the possibility of negatives appearing in the usual preverbal slot as well." (p.148)

Finally, Labov contended that it is possible, though rare, for a negative in a main clause to transfer to a subordinate clause without taking on independent meaning. His examples of this, "It ain't no cat can't get into no coop," he translated as meaning that "there isn't any cat that can get into any (pigeon) coop." (p. 131)

Labov considered that in BEV, "in the major environment, within the same clause, negative concord to indeterminates [any, ever, and either] is obligatory," (p. 180) not optional, and that "consistent use of negative concord is the characteristic of core speakers of BEV." (p. 181)

The data for the present study are similar to studies of mature production of BEV negative utterances. All 15 subjects produced negative utterances, with a group mean of 13.8 utterances and a range from 5 to 39. The mean percent of total production of each speaker consisting of any kind of negative utterance was 13.4% with a range of from 6% to 22%.

Negative Concord. Although a very small percentage of the negative utterances in these data contained multiple negation (a mean 15% of speakers' negative utterances), three speakers produced no multiple negatives at all, those that used it did so in complete accord with the rules for negative concord set forth by Labov. The greatest number of examples involve negative elements on the auxiliary and post-verbal indeterminate. These data support Labov's identification of negative concord as obligatory in the main environment, since

they contain no negative utterance of one clause that contains an indeterminate that is uninvolved in the negation. In fact, in the whole body of data, there is only one utterance that contains a positive indefinite, and it is not a negative utterance: "Anyfing you want"? (17:13:4:3) This obligatory attraction of negatives to the indeterminates any, ever, and either,

I on wan no moa. (14:10:8:2)

accounts for 66% of the group's multiple negation.

The structure involved in multiple negative next most frequently (15%) is negative attraction to a post-verbal pronoun:

I ain doin nothin again, Steffon. (34:7:11:3)

A few instances (6%) of a negative concord involved attraction to a preverbal pronoun:

Nobody don't wa answa. (2:13"7:3)

A similarly low percent (9%) of multiple structures involved inversion of negative auxiliary and negative subject:

Ain nobody hea. (17:13:1:5)

There are two more elements that, according to Labov's formulation of negative concord, could attract a negative. These are 1) pre-verbal indeterminates and 2) auxiliaries and indeterminates in subordinate clauses. Neither of these multiple structures is used by these children, despite the fact that 5.3% of their total utterances containing negation also contained subordinate clauses that would have allowed for cross-clause multiplication of the negative element. No preverbal indeter-

minates occurred in the data, hence no negatives were attracted to that element.

The most likely explanation for the difference in the two bodies of data stems from the difference in syntactic maturity of the subjects. The pre-schoolers clearly use the obligatory negative concord rule. That they have more limited production of three optional aspects of the rule and no production of two others suggests that those are elements of the dialect that these speakers may not yet have mastered. The suggestion is, then, those those kinds of negative concord may be elements of the dialect that develop after the basic rules of negative concord have been mastered.

Ain't. One negative element that appears in some quantity in these data but that has been little analyzed in other studies is ain't. Labov simply said of ain't, in passing, that it is rarely used for didn't by adults. (1972a, p. 284) Wolfram recorded the presence of ain't in examples drawn from his data, but did not analyze its use. Henrie found ain't in 12.5% of the negative forms he analyzed as forms of be and 3.5% as a substitute for past tense do. (p. 74) In these data, however, ain't is more strongly represented. In 223 items of negation attached to the verb, ain't appears 15% of the time, 9% in the present and 6% in the past. Its use reveals a clear pattern: It is used in the present tense 20 times and seems to be roughly equivalent to be 60% of the time, to have 20% of the time, and to do 10% of the time, with one instance, "ain kid you," untabulated because it's

standard translation might be either do or be, as in "I don't kid you," or "I'm not kidding you,". In the past tense, by contrast, ain't appears to be used exclusively in environments where the standard language would call for didn't. Co-occurring with the choice of ain't over one of its standard equivalents is a tendency toward negative concord. In the present tense, 22% of the uses of ain't are in utterances with the multiple structure. In the past, 31% are so involved. By contrast, the use of past tense didn't occurs with multiple negation only 15%, or almost exactly the amount (14.9%) that such negation occurs in the overall negative data. The small numbers of items, (33) upon which this analysis is based made this finding quite speculative. But it is in accord with Labov's (1972a) explanation of the semantics of negative concord which seems to be extendable to the distinction between ain't and its equivalents. He considered negative concord to be a "strongly emphatic character." (p. 177) Labov took some support for this from Jesperson, whom he credited with holding that the "cumulative character of negative concord... seems to put strong emphasis on the negation itself." (p. 177) Labov further suggested that, due to its obligatory nature, "negative concord had lost its emphatic character in BEV in the major environment." (p. 193) Therefore, emphatic negation is attained through other means, which Labov listed as being:

> the introduction of more quantifiers (She ain't in no seventh grade), free floating negatives (but not my physical structure

> can't walk through that wall), negative inversion (ain't nobody in the block go to school), and the involvement of concord with new quantifiers (don't so many people do it). (1972a, p. 173)

It would appear that the dominant way of expressing emphatic negation for this group is through substitution of ain't for an equivalent verb form, since this occurs in 33% of the instances of multiple negation. Less frequent forms of emphasis are two of those that Labov cites: negative inversion, "ain' nobody else," (2:3b:25:2) which occurs in 6% of the multiple negative utterances, and introduction of more quantifiers "Don't throw no nothing no more," (26m:7:10:3) which also occurs 6% of the time.

Summary of Results

Comparision of the use of restricted forms by the children of this study and Menyuk's preschoolers showed a disproportionately high tendency toward omission and failure to observe transformational restrictions in the data here under analysis. This suggested that dialect features in the speech of the children here studied might have those two relationships to the standard language.

Non-standard Features as Omissions. The predominant contributor to production of non-standard structures in the data of this study was omission, particularly omission of the tense-bearing element. This was seen in third person present -s and past tense -ed

omission, will deletion, contraction of the full form be going to, copula deletion, and deletion of do in yes/no questions, which diminished in frequency as MLU increased.

Non-Standard Features as Related to Transformational Restrictions. Deletion of do in wh- questions, which did not diminish with increased maturity, may be an example of failure to observe a transformational restriction or of extension of a transformational restriction. That is, in standard wh- question formation, (Jacobs & Rosenbaum, 1968, p. 153) the wh- question transformation replaces the question constituent with a noun phrase marked +wh and moves it to the front of the sentence. Then, the question inversion transformation applies, shifting the auxiliary to in front of the subject noun phrase, yielding such structures as "What are you doing?" The restriction on that transformation is that the subject noun phrase not contain the wh- element, so that questions like "Who is going?" do not get shifted to *"Is who going?" This restriction seems to be extended in the questions analyzed in this study, so that movement of the wh- element to the front of the sentence blocks the question inversion in all cases, yielding such questions as "What you're doing?" Along with this pervasive non-standard structure, the analyzed question data showed embedded wh- questions to be consistently standard. They were question structures in which application of the question inversion transformation is standardly blocked by the embedding process. This suggested an alternative to the possibility that wh- movement blocks question inversion, that alternative being that the restriction blocking question

inversion in embedded questions is extended, generalizing that blocking to all wh- questions. There was no evidence in the data collected to support one of these explanations over the other.

A second variation in observation of a transformational restriction can be seen in the operation of negative concord. Where the standard negation rule restricts negative placement to a tense-bearing element or an indeterminate, negative concord allows placement on both, and requires it when the indeterminate is post-verbal.

Non-standard Features as Signs of Deep Structure Differences from Standard English. It has not been the purpose of this study to assess the deep structure of the dialect as represented in the data. It is, nevertheless, possible to determine that the auxiliary forms upon which Loflin (1969) based his conclusions that the deep structure of BEV differed from that of standard English do not exist in the data of this study.

To begin with, Loflin postulated four tenses, all of which have one form, regardless of person. These are present, realized by ∅; a-temporal, realized by be; definite past, in the form was; and indefinite past, realized as been. (p.88) Two major problems posed by the data of this study for Loflin's formulation are 1) the extreme scarcity of an a-temporal be, and 2) the virtual absence of the auxiliary form been. A third problem is apparent in Loflin's considering the present tense to be realized as ∅. This is simply not the case for the data of this study. Even in the most casual

speech, 'm occurs regularly. Its presence does not appear to be a function of selfconscious shifting to the standard.

While there do not seem, in these data, to exist forms that would justify postulating a different auxiliary structure, it remains to be seen whether the standard English auxiliary structure formulation that Loflin discards (1969) must be discarded, as well, for the data of this study. Loflin works with the following analysis, taken from Fillmore (1963).

$$\text{Aux} \rightarrow \text{Aux}_1 \ (\text{Aux}_2)$$

$$\text{Aux}_1 \rightarrow (\text{M}) \ \text{Tense}$$

$$\text{Aux}_2 \rightarrow (\text{Perf}) \ (\text{Imperf})$$

$$\text{Perf} \rightarrow \text{have} + \text{en}$$

$$\text{Imperf} \rightarrow \text{be} + \text{ing}$$

$$\text{Tense} \rightarrow \begin{Bmatrix} \text{Pres} \\ \text{Past} \end{Bmatrix}$$

Loflin discarded this because he did not find have +en in his dialect information and because Fillmore's formulation did not allow for the durative be. It is also true that have +en is not to be found in the data of this study, although structures demanding it begin to appear in the speech of the most mature speakers. For Menyuk's speakers, too, the perfect structure is highly undeveloped. Thus, its absence from the data of this study may be interpreted as being due to immaturity. The data of this study, then, do not shed light on the status of have +en for older speakers of BEV, but neither do they support Loflin's rationale for eliminating Fillmore's analysis of the English auxiliary structure. Fillmore's analysis seems to fit the data here analyzed better than do Loflin's modifications.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to analyze the syntactic maturity of a group of lower class urban black pre-school children and to determine the range and nature of non-standard negative, verb, and question structure in their naturalistic speech. The study also sought to relate the analyses of those structures to analyses presented in studies of older speakers of BEV, and to other young speakers.

The subjects were drawn from a group of 56 children enrolled in a Head Start Program in Central Harlem. They were selected on the basis of their regular attendance in the program, their status as monolingual native speakers of English, their production of 50 t-units of speech, their willing participation in the use of the tape recorder, and their normal hearing and development. These selection criteria resulted in a sample of 15 children ranging in age from three years to five years, five months.

A comparision of the data in the present study with findings from pre-school and first grade children studied by Menyuk (1963) and first graders studied by O'Donnell et al (1967) indicated that the children in this study were quite similar in their syntactic maturity to white middle-class children. The percentages of children in this study closely matched the percentages of Menyuk's preschoolers making standard use of 24 transformations. In 10 transformations, highly similar or identical percentages of subjects produced standard forms; in 10 transformations, a greater percentage of children in

this study than in Menyuk's pre-school group produced standard forms. Only in 4 transformations did the children of this study show substantially greater non-use of standard forms.

When looking at non-standard, or what Menyuk called "restricted" forms, it was clear that children in this study produced substitutions and redundancies at rates quite similar to Menyuk's subjects. Deviations from the standard due to omissions and failure to observe transformational restrictions, however, were far more pervasive in this group than in Menyuk's.

A comparision of MLU's for this group and for that studied by O'Donnell et al showed this group to have somewhat lower MLU's but not substantially enough lower to suggest that the difference was due to any factor other than the differences in age and amount of education of the two groups.

In the present analysis of negation, only 14% of the total negative utterances were found to contain non-standard structures. Only two kinds of non-standard negative structures occurred. These were negative concord, which occurred regularly in possible environments in the data, and ain't which appeared to be used as an emphatic variation equivalent to be, do, and have + Neg in the present tense, but only to didn't in the past.

Non-standard verb structures were created by a variety of factors, the most frequent being the variable deletion of the copula or other tense-bearing element. Nevertheless, it was clear that tense is firmly established in the verbs of the speakers studied. Another non-standard verb structure observed was the use of a- as a phonological variant of be going to. Finally, the often-

cited non-standard be durative form was not present in the data of this study with any substantial regularity.

Analysis of question structures showed far greater use of non-standard wh- questions than non-standard yes/no questions. In both, the non-standard structure resulted from absence of an inverted tense-bearing element. It was clear, however, that question inversion is present in the repertoire of the children in this study.

Thus, many of the non-standard question structures were due to deleted copula, will or do forms. Do was deleted from yes/no structures with decreasing frequency as the MLU rose, but was consistently absent from wh- questions. Furthermore, tag questions provided no information regarding the tense-bearing element, because the tag questions used uniformly avoided requiring either be or do.

Suggestions for Further Research. This study, in analysing some elements of syntax considered to be central to the difference betweeen BEV and standard English and assessing the degree and nature of that difference in the speech of young children, has provided information regarding the kind of syntactic performance such children might be expected to produce upon entering school. But, it has given rise to some questions as well, the answers to which will be important in understanding the development of the dialect and its effect on the academic progress of school children.

A number of questions remain regarding the population of pre-school dialect-learning children. One results from the limits

imposed by the data-collection techniques utilized in this study. In recording and analysing casual, unselfconscious speech, the present study has provided information regarding the performance of the children studied. But it can make no claim to providing information about their competence. Such information can only be provided by a further study that would test the conclusions of this study through use of controlled tasks.

A second research question raised by this study regards the relationship of the performance recorded in the data of this study to the performance of older children. Some similarities and differences have been noted in these pages between the syntax analyzed in separate studies. But, the comparisions are necessarily loose due to the range of data collection and analysis techniques used from study to study, the various regions from which data were drawn, and the different goals of the separate studies. A study that could assess patterns of dialect development by analyzing the same elements of the syntax of children of a range of ages living in the same area, or a longitudinal study of the same group of speakers over a period of years, could draw more carefully controlled conclusions than were possible here.

A third research question that has been raised by the comparative analyses done in this study regards the extent to which the dialect of lower class black speakers varies from region to region. Scholarship done to date assumes that the dialect variation is quite uniform across the United States. Wolfram's (1969) and Torrey's (1972) replications of Labov's (1972a) findings regarding copula deletion provide some concrete

evidence that this is so. But, differences between the findings of this study and those of Henrie (1969) with reference to *do* in question structures, those of Fickett (1970) regarding the sequent *a-*, those of Legum *et al* (1971) regarding direct question structures and regarding *ain't*, which they did not find at all in their data, suggest that some regional differences may exist. A study of demographically similar speakers in different regions of the country might, then, be fruitful.

A fourth subject for which this study raises research possibilities is that of hearer attitudes toward BEV and the effects of those attitudes on school children. If, as this study suggests, the actual syntactic differences between BEV and standard English are not as pervasive or as regular as some other scholars have suggested, it may well be necessary to look elsewhere to determine the causes of scholastic problems that have, in the recent past, been attributed to language differences. A place to begin would be a consideration of the responses of teachers to their students' sounding different at least some of the time and the effects on the children of those responses.

Implications for Education

The extent to which the children of this study have control of standard English syntax, and the fact that they do not produce, perhaps have not yet developed, several distinctive elements of the dialect, suggest that differences in the syntax of standard and non-standard dialect speakers may not have the extreme impact on children's early progress in school that some scholars have

postulated. The findings in this study echo, in that regard, the conclusion of Legum et al (1971) that the extent of non-standard syntax is not great enough to account for the massive academic difficulties that lower class black school children often encounter in school. Studies assessing the effects of phonetic differences, stylistic differences, as well as non-linguistic differences on the school's perceptions of children may shed light on factors contributing to low achievement in school.

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