

CARRYING THE NEW WAVE INTO SYNTAX: THE CASE OF BLACK ENGLISH BÍN¹

JOHN R. RICKFORD

University of Pennsylvania

1. Introduction. Ever since the first conference on New Ways of Analyzing Variation in English was held in 1972, the abbreviated title--NWAVE--has become something of a rallying cry ('The New Wave') to those interested in the study of linguistic variation. The enthusiasm is doubtless justified. Uneasiness with categorical frameworks has been growing for some time, and the remarks made by C.-J. N. Bailey in the introduction to the papers from NWAVE I (Bailey and Shuy 1973) would probably be endorsed by a great many (though by no means all) linguists today:

I am happy to be rid of static homogeneous models and to be rid of the fudges represented by 'my dialect', 'performance component', 'optional', and the rest . . . (xiv)

However, as we move beyond initial revolutionary fervour, and begin a more sober stock-taking, certain weaknesses in our line of attack become increasingly clear. One salient limitation is the extent to which we have become preoccupied with morphophonemic and phonological variation to the exclusion of everything else. Syntax and semantics, for instance, have come to represent lone islands far out at sea, increasingly untouched by any waves--old or new.

The problem is particularly acute for those 'variationists' whose data consists of large samples of tape-recorded speech, covering as wide a range of stylistic contexts as possible (cf. Labov 1966, Bickerton 1972). While the advantages of this method in terms of 'accountability' etc. should be clear to most of us by now, it has a built-in

limitation in providing large masses of data only on those phenomena which show up with high frequency in natural speech. In most cases, these are phonological variables; hence the disproportionate number of variation studies in phonology.

It was precisely in response to this problem that Gillian Sankoff (1973) entitled her paper presented at the first NWAVE meeting 'Above and beyond phonology in variable rules'. There can be little doubt about the soundness of her primary thesis--that 'variability occurs, and can be dealt with, at levels of grammar above (or beyond) the phonological'. However, we can hardly fail to note that the pool of data examined in some of the studies she cited (for example, bai in Tok Pisin) is far smaller in the more customary studies of phonological phenomena. And that in others (Montreal que; cf. also the English copula as examined by Labov 1969) phonological features in the environment act as significant variable constraints. What of the other syntactic variables which show no or very little phonological conditioning? (We certainly know such cases exist.)

Finally, what of the other syntactic phenomena which tend to occur even less frequently than these--things about which not even the most basic linguistic facts are known, much less the kind of variation they display? Bickerton, in a recent issue of the *Linguistic Newsletter* (March 1973) complained about the 'reams that have been written about the different things Black speakers do with their D's and Z's', but the 'next to nothing that has been written about the different ways Black speakers organize their tense systems'. But this is again because of the low frequency with which many of the most interesting Black English tense and aspect markers (e.g. Invariant *Be*, Remote Bín) tend to show up in tape-recorded speech. This in turn is so not only because speakers have some awareness of the stigmatized nature of such forms, but also because the semantic conditions which they are normally introduced to express may occur rarely, if at all, in the course of a sociolinguistic interview.

Overcoming these limitations of tape-recorded data should certainly rank as one of the major challenges to riders of the 'New Wave'. But the problem has so far not received the attention it deserves. Innovations made in this area (cf. Labov 1972a) have not sparked off a chain of repeat performances (as many of Labov's innovations in sociolinguistic interview technique did in the 1960's). And issues of validity and reliability involved in such innovations still remain to be raised.

The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to some of the innovations in methodology which have already been achieved, and to demonstrate the application of two such methods to a syntactic case about which very little has been written so far--Bín in Black English. Let us first review some of the methods available for overcoming the

limitations of tape-recorded data with respect to syntactic and other low-frequency phenomena.

One possibility is the method of 'surreptitious' or 'candid' recording. As it has been demonstrated publicly and dramatically for us most recently, this method involves tape-recording what people say without their knowledge or permission. The hope of the strongest advocates of this method is that speakers, unhampered by the constraints of the typical interview situation, will produce more of those syntactic and other variables which are normally stigmatized. While this is certainly true to the extent that other aspects of the speech-situation (for example, nature of the participants) do not have a more powerful over-riding effect, it is simply the case that we cannot have our 'hidden tape-recorder' with us at all times. We will always be exposed to more speech than we shall ever have the opportunity to record. The other disadvantages of this method--poor quality of recordings, discovery and its consequences, quite apart from the ethics involved, are also well known. Together, they suggest that despite its devilish appeal, this possibility will be of limited utility.

Another method involves 'enriching the data of tape-recorded conversation' by including questions and topics which stimulate more frequent use of rare forms or environments than might occur naturally (Labov 1972b). The method works excellently in some cases. If you will pardon the use of a phonological example for effect, let me cite one case from recent studies at the University of Pennsylvania, of the tensing and raising of (æ). The problem was to elicit a natural production of the word 'sad'. One student discovered that a highly successful way of doing this was to ask interviewees if they had ever seen the movie 'Love Story'. Almost inevitably the word would crop up--repeatedly--in the ensuing discussion.

The method demands careful attention to the nature of everyday conversational interaction. But it demands more. Most of the crucial syntactic/semantic variables (like B. E. BfN) are extremely difficult to elicit, paradoxically, unless we already know a great deal about their meaning and use.

The final two methods are more immediately feasible to the researcher. Both move beyond the use of tape-recorded data, though in very different ways. The first has been used extensively by students of variation in 'abstract syntax', for example, those interested in syntactic features which have no clear regional or social roots. In its more sophisticated form, this method involves eliciting the intuitions of other people and analyzing the results for patterns of variation, increasingly, with the help of implicational scales (Elliot, Legum, and Thompson 1969; C. J. Bailey 1970; Baltin 1973; Carden 1971; Sag 1973). The method has been extended, with important innovations, to the study of syntactic variation which is governed by

regional and social factors (Labov 1972a), and is being hailed by others (Butters 1973) as the most promising methodology for overcoming the limitations of tape-recorded data. However, as mentioned before, issues of validity and reliability are most acute with this method, and as it is usually employed, no independent check on the results is available.

The final method is one which has been used very rarely in studies to date. It involves careful and intense participant observation. Whether our interest is in Black English, Puerto-Rican English, British English, or more abstract varieties, we exploit our contacts with native speakers to record on 3-by-5 cards every possible use of the variable in which we are interested. At the suggestion of Bill Labov, several students at the University of Pennsylvania have been using this method for some time now. We never cease to be amazed at the frequency with which even the rarest variables begin to show up once we are constantly attending to them in this way. The advances of this method over the others are also clear. Not only are we able to gather the most reliable data--from natural conversation--but we can gather it anywhere, anytime, without the need of any technical equipment. (Note too that permission to scribble away in the midst of on-going conversations is more easily extended than permission to run a tape-recorder, partly because it is less potentially damaging to participants.)

My own studies of B. E. BfN have depended largely on a combination of the last two methods. The 'intuitive data' consists of the responses of a sample of twenty-five Black and twenty-five White subjects to a questionnaire designed to explore their ability to interpret, predict, and evaluate the use of BfN. This questionnaire, entitled Q-SCOM-IV, was an extension of similar ones (Q-SCOM-I to III) which had been developed and used by Bill Labov and other members of a research group in which I participated two years ago (cf. Labov 1972a). In Q-SCOM-IV, several more aspects of BfN usage were attacked, and the questions about other variables served principally as 'distactors'. The subjects were drawn from very diverse geographical backgrounds (including Pennsylvania, New York, California, North Carolina, and Massachusetts), and were interviewed individually. [I should like to thank here Angela Rickford and Karl Reisman for their help with this time-consuming process.]

Participant observation was carried out in two widely separate Black communities--one in West Philadelphia, the other in the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina. Living in these communities, I was able to draw on a wide range of conversational encounters in which BfN, supposedly rare, was frequently used. Although I heard many more than I was able to note down, I was able to gather about sixty-six sentences with stressed BfN. Most of my sentences, it

should be noted, come from adults over the age of twenty-four--providing strong contradictory evidence to the frequently voiced claim that the central syntactic structures of Black English are regularly used only by young Black children or adolescents.

It is clearly impossible to present all the findings of this research in the time available to me today. I shall consider only three central aspects about BIN on which there seems to be disagreement or limited information in the published literature: (A) The significance of stress (i. e. $\text{B}\dot{\text{I}}\text{N} = \text{b}\dot{\text{I}}\text{n}$?); (B) Meaning and Use; (C) Productivity--Cooccurrence Relations. I shall try to maintain a balance between substantive findings about BIN itself and theoretical questions about the two methods employed. In particular I shall be interested in the internal consistency of the intuitive responses, and the extent to which they are supported by data from participant observation.

2. Three issues in the study of Black English BIN

A. The significance of stress (i. e. $\text{B}\dot{\text{I}}\text{N} = \text{b}\dot{\text{I}}\text{n}$?). The been which we are interested in is the form which has been mentioned in the literature as signaling some 'remote' past tense or perfective aspect.² We shall explore the precise meaning of the form in the next section. Here we simply want to know how significant stress is to the remote function with which the form has typically been associated.

Previous researchers have been quite divided on this point.³ Stewart (1965), the first to draw attention to the form, indicated that stress was obligatory. Fasold and Wolfram (1970) feel that stress on been is an optional element only, its function being to 'doubly emphasize the total completion of an action'. Fickett (1970) shares their view on the optionality of stress, but for her its function is to distinguish been as a Phase Auxiliary (with remote function) from been as the auxiliary of a passive. The latter, in her analysis, never receive stress.

Dillard (1972) suggests that there may have existed two systems all along: one in which stressed BIN is a remote, and unstressed $\text{b}\dot{\text{I}}\text{n}$ a recent perfective; and another in which been (regardless of stress) is remote, and done a recent perfective. He adds that the latter system 'has had most widespread influence in the U. S.' but that the former 'still survives in some forms of Black English'.

When we turn to the intuitive responses of Black subjects on this point, we find similar divisions and ambiguities. (1) below indicates the questions relevant to this is Q-SCOM-IV:

- (1) 17b. Could you say 'I $\text{b}\dot{\text{I}}\text{n}$ know it' (unstressed) and mean the same thing as 'I $\text{B}\dot{\text{I}}\text{N}$ know it' (stressed)? Yes ___
No ___

- 9a. He $\text{B}\dot{\text{I}}\text{N}$ had one. 9b. He $\text{b}\dot{\text{I}}\text{n}$ had one. Same ___
Different ___
15a. He $\text{B}\dot{\text{I}}\text{N}$ sick. 15b. He $\text{b}\dot{\text{I}}\text{n}$ sick. Same ___
Different ___

Question 17b for instance, was asked after subjects had responded to the meaning of stressed BIN, usually with tremendous agreement on the remote function of this form. The question was whether one could say the unstressed form $\text{b}\dot{\text{I}}\text{n}$ and mean the same thing. Nine said yes, ten said no. Similarly, twelve felt that 9a and 9b were the same, and ten that they were not.

As Table 1 indicates, the number of informants who were consistent in their responses on this issue is even smaller:

TABLE 1. Consistency response of Black subjects to 17b, 9 and 15 in Q-SCOM-IV

N	Positive responses			Negative responses		
	Yes to 17b	Yes 17b Same 9	Yes 17b Same 15	No to 17b	No 17b Diff 9	No 17b Diff 15
19	9	8	6	10	7	7

Positive responses are those which suggest that $\text{B}\dot{\text{I}}\text{N}$ and $\text{b}\dot{\text{I}}\text{n}$ are equivalent. Negative responses, that they are different. While there are only six informants who consistently see the two forms as equivalent, and seven who consistently see them as different, note again what an even split this is. This is the pattern that is repeated regularly, no matter how the question of BIN = $\text{b}\dot{\text{I}}\text{n}$ is put, nor how the answers are analyzed. This might be taken to suggest that Dillard (1972) is right--that there are two systems for signalling 'remote' tense. In one the stress on been is significant, in the other it is not. As variationists, there should be nothing uncomfortable about this conclusion. But before we accept it, let us turn to the data gathered in participant observation. From a total of sixty-six BIN sentences, and over two hundred with unstressed $\text{b}\dot{\text{I}}\text{n}$, the data is quite clear and conclusive on this point. Only stressed $\text{B}\dot{\text{I}}\text{N}$ can signal remote function by itself, as is clear from the contexts in which it is used. Unstressed $\text{b}\dot{\text{I}}\text{n}$ occurs frequently with temporal adverbs or 'specifiers', as in

- (2) I $\text{b}\dot{\text{I}}\text{n}$ playing cards since I was four. (BF 38, Pa)⁴

Since this is often the case, it is possible to see how one might arrive at the mistaken impression that unstressed $\text{b}\dot{\text{I}}\text{n}$ signals remote

aspect. However, it is the time adverbial that signals the function in these cases, not the unstressed bɪn form. Not only are such time-adverbials unnecessary with stressed Bɪn, they are restricted from co-occurring with it. This syntactic consequence of the semantic difference between the two forms is illustrated most strikingly when the two follow close upon each other in the discourse:

- (3) I Bɪn know you, you know. I bɪn knowing you for years.
(BM 59, Pa)

The only case in which time adverbials appear to co-occur with Bɪn is in utterances like (4):

- (4) He Bɪn home--since last week. (BM 41, Pa)

However the time adverbial here does not, as in (2) or (3) occur as part of a single 'sentence intonation pattern'. It is separated from the main clause both by pause and by falling intonation on home. And in fact an analysis of (4) as derived from (4') seems quite sound:

- (4') He Bɪn home. He bɪn home since last week.

There is other evidence that Bɪn and bɪn are different. Note the following sentence:

- (5) He bɪn doing it ever since we was teenagers, and he still doing it. (BM 41, Pa)

The conjoined qualification 'and he still doing it' would be redundant if Bɪn+V-ing were used. As we shall see in a moment, the meaning 'Remote Phase Continuative' would be implicit in the form itself.

Although most of the examples with unstressed bɪn are not preceded by forms of have, there are a few which are, and seem nevertheless to carry the same semantic force. For instance:

- (6) Cause I've bɪn through it. I've bɪn through them changes.
(BM 26, Pa)

On the basis of this, it may be possible to describe most instances of B. E. bɪn for Philadelphia, at least, as 'Present Perfects'. This is not the case with stressed Bɪn.

There are also several cases of unstressed bɪn with done as first auxiliary, as in:

- (7) Get to work, start talking to them girls, they done bɪn locked up fifteen times! (BF 38, Pa)

There is a rare occurrence of Bɪn + done, as in the Sea-Island sentence:

- (8) Boy, if we had shrimp, we'd a Bɪn done got us some fish!
(BM 11, SI)

but none whatsoever of done + Bɪn.

In the Sea-Island data, stressed Bɪn and unstressed bɪn must also be separated on syntactic and semantic grounds. One difference between the two forms, here as in Philadelphia, is the possibility of treating many instances of bɪn as 'Present Perfects'. But there are other differences here. Unstressed bɪn is sometimes used as a straight equivalent of was, indicating simple past tense. Note the close alternation between the two forms in (9):

- (9) I don't know if that snake bɪn coil, or either was stretch out or what. (BM 52, SI)

Used before a verb-stem, unstressed bɪn has the additional ambiguity of signalling either 'Past' or 'past before the Past':

- (10) But the real medicine what I bɪn want fuh get fuh Joo-Joo
... (BF 78, SI)
'But the real medicine which I had wanted to get for Joo-Joo ...'

Finally, bɪn but not Bɪn occurs before continuative a:

- (11) How bout that thing wuh B bɪn a tell you? (BM 67, SI)
'How about that thing which B was telling you?'

These uses of unstressed bɪn are of course well known in other creole areas (cf. for Jamaican Creole, B. Bailey 1966; for Sierra Leone Krio, Jones 1968; for Guyana Creole, Bickerton 1974). The point here is not to pursue the use of bɪn in any detail, but simply to indicate the ways in which it differs from Bɪn in semantic function and syntactic co-occurrence restrictions.

Enough has been said so far to demonstrate the point with which I started out, that on the basis of the participant observation data, Bɪn and bɪn must be distinguished. In the light of this, what are we to make of the intuitive judgments of Black respondents, who, as indicated above, were evenly divided on this issue? It may be that those

who claimed the forms were equivalent were speakers of some 'other' dialect which has simply not been tapped in my own participant observation. This is possible, but I think, unlikely. First of all, the respondents were, as we shall see, in unanimous agreement on the meaning and interpretation of stressed BÍN. Secondly, I know that at least one of the respondents who suggested that the two forms were equivalent, consistently distinguishes them in his everyday speech. I am more inclined to think that what we are dealing with here is a weakness of the 'intuitive method' itself.

Let me mention two possible sources of error which have already come to light. One is the real difficulty which some subjects had in hearing 'unstressed' forms of bín. They would repeat question 9b, for instance, with lighter stress on bín than the stress on BÍN in 9a, but it would still be primary in that sentence.

This difficulty may have been the result of a second factor. For some informants, unstressed bín + V-ed (non-passive) is not a real possibility at all. These informants accept and say 'I BÍN had that' but not 'I bín had that'. Faced with the latter, they cannot see it as contrastive, may not even hear the difference in this environment. Note that when BÍN and bín are contrasted in another environment in which both are possible for all informants, as in question 15: He BÍN sick vs. He bín sick, five of the twelve informants who had seen them as equivalent in 9 now saw them as different. It is clear that in any repeated version of this questionnaire serious attempts to overcome these difficulties will have to be made. What is demonstrated here, in this very first issue about BÍN, is the value of data from participant observation in challenging and qualifying the data from intuitive responses.

B. BÍN--meaning and use. Previous researchers have applied a variety of labels to the Black English form BÍN (I ignore henceforth the issue of stress): 'Complete Perfect' (Stewart op. cit.) 'Remote Past' (Fasold and Wolfram 1970), 'Remote Perfective' (Dillard 1972) 'Perfect Phase' (Fickett 1970). What they are all trying to express via these different labels is essentially the same. That BÍN places the action in the distant past (relative to the present axis) and/or that it expresses 'total completion of the event'. One Standard English paraphrase that has been used frequently to register this fact is the time adverbial 'a long time ago'. This is perfectly appropriate for some of the BÍN sentences which I collected in Philadelphia and the Sea Islands, for instance (12):

- (12) She ain't tell me that today, you know. She BÍN tell me that. (BF 32, SI)
'She told me that a long time ago'

However, this gloss, and the semantic notion of a totally completed action in the distant past, is appropriate only for a subset of the Participant-observation data--those in which BÍN is followed by non-stative verbs. With stative verbs, or with either kind in the progressive, the function of BÍN is different. Instead of expressing completion of the associated process (a cover term for action or state) it asserts only that it began in the distant past and is still very much in force at the moment of speaking. In both of these cases, a better S. E. paraphrase would be 'for a long time', e.g.:

- (13) I BÍN had this. (BM 6, Pa)
'I've had this for a long time'
(14) I BÍN treating them like that. (BF 25, Pa)
'I've been treating them like that for a long time'

The similarities and differences between BÍN as used with non-statives on the one hand, and statives and progressives on the other, is more graphically illustrated in (15)

(15)

Statives	Remote Anterior	Anterior	Point of Orientation
Non-statives	X-----	-----	-----
Progressives	XY-----	-----	-----

In (15), X indicates the initiation of the 'process' and Y the end-point. If we wish to formulate a conjunctive definition for BÍN we would have to say that it places the initiation of a process at some point in the distant past. 'Remote Phase' is perhaps the most appropriate label for this function.⁵ It could then be extended (Remote Phase Continuative, Remote Phase Completive) to describe the particular effect of using the form with statives and progressives as against non-statives. It should be mentioned here that almost all the examples given by previous researchers involve non-stative verbs. This may be one element in their failure to perceive the more comprehensive nature of BÍN. This failure in turn is reflected in the labels they chose for the form--all of which suggest a Remote Phase Completive function only. Let us now turn to the intuitive responses on the meaning and use of BÍN to discover the extent to which they support or qualify the above analysis. In (16), the main questions in Q-SCOM-IV relevant to this issue are presented. Note that they go beyond simply asking what the form means, and try to get subjects to look through the grammar into the real world (cf. Labov 1972a).

(16) Q-SCOM-IV questions on the meaning of BÍN:

1. Someone asked, 'Is she married?' and someone else answered, 'She BÍN married'. Do you get the idea that she is married now? Yes ____ No ____
3. Bill was about to be introduced to this guy at a party, but when he saw him, he said, 'Hey, I BÍN know his name!' Which of these three things do you think he's most likely to say next:
 - a. Give me a minute and I might remember it.
 - b. He's John Jones. I saw his picture in the papers yesterday.
 - c. He's John Jones. I've been hearing about him for years.
- So, what do you think Bill meant when he said, 'I BÍN know his name?' Choose the one that is closest to what you think:
 - d. Used to know.
 - e. Already knew.
 - f. Know, but can't quite remember.
 - g. Know right now.
 - h. Have known for a long time, and still do.
 - i. Other ____.
16. Frank asked his friend if he had paid off the bill on his new stereo, and got the answer, 'I BÍN paid for it'. Does he mean:
 - a. I've already paid for it.
 - b. I was paying for a long time, but I'm finished now.
 - c. I paid for it long ago.
 - d. I've been paying for it for a long time, and haven't finished yet.
 - e. Other ____.

The responses appropriate to a 'Remote Phase' interpretation of BÍN were: Yes to 1, (c) and (h) to 3, (c) to 16. If we multiply the number of responses by the number of individuals in each group, we derive a total of one hundred possible responses. From the start, the difference between Black and White respondents on this issue is clear. For the Blacks, 87 percent of the responses were appropriate to a 'Remote Phase' interpretation. Only 37 percent of the White subjects' responses were.

The overwhelming agreement among Black respondents and their difference from White subjects on this issue is demonstrated even more clearly in Table 2, which displays the number of consistent Remote Phase interpretations:

TABLE 2. Consistent 'Remote Phase' interpretations to Q's 1, 16, 3

Group	N	Yes to 1	Yes to 1 (c) to 16	Yes to 1 (c) to 16 (c) to 3	Yes to 1 (c) to 16 (c) to 3 (h) to 3
Blacks	25	23	21	19	15
Whites	25	8	4	1	1

Note that while fifteen of the Black respondents end up giving completely consistent 'Remote Phase' interpretations, only one of the White respondents manages to do so. As it turns out, he is a native of Greensboro, North Carolina, who claims to have extensive contact with Blacks throughout his life.

The responses can be just as dramatically reviewed the other way around. In Table 3, the consistent Non-'Remote Phase' interpretations of Blacks and Whites are tabulated:

TABLE 3. Consistent Non-'Remote Phase' interpretations to Q's 1, 16, 3

Group	N	No to 1	No to 1 ~ (c) to 16	No to 1 ~ (c) to 16 ~ (c) to 3	No to 1 ~ (c) to 16 ~ (c) to 3 ~ (h) to 3
Blacks	25	2	1	0	0
Whites	25	17	14	12	10

Note that there are only two Black respondents who give Non-'Remote-Phase' interpretations to 1 to begin with, and by the time non-remote interpretations to 1, 16, and 3 are combined, none of the Black respondents are involved. By contrast, seventeen of the White respondents gave non-remote interpretations to 1, and ten maintained the same interpretation throughout.

Considering that a certain amount of chance error may always be present in investigations of this type, the tremendous regularity that is revealed here is highly significant. Both the 'participant observation' and the 'intuitive' data converge strongly to endorse a 'Remote Phase' interpretation for Black English BÍN. In addition, both data sources suggest that Black and White speakers are sharply divided in their abilities to use and interpret the form. The only other feature which has ever been shown to differentiate the two groups so sharply and reliably is their ability to understand the African-derived forms

'Cut-eye' and 'Suck-Teeth' and enact the non-verbal behavior to which these refer (cf. Rickford and Rickford 1974).

Finally, we may consider the overt responses of Black and White subjects to questions designed to explore their familiarity with and use of BÍN. The results are tabulated in Table 4.

TABLE 4. Positive responses to familiarity and use questions

Group	Have you ever heard BÍN?	Do you say BÍN yourself?
Blacks	24/25 = 96%	17/25 = 68%
Whites	16/24 = 67%	3/22 = 13%

Insofar as these results indicate what we would have suspected from participant-observation anyway, that more Blacks have heard and use BÍN than Whites, they seem generally valid. But the details are questionable. Sixteen Whites claim to have heard BÍN, and three to use it themselves. But in view of their responses on the 'meaning' questions reported on above, these claims are at least suspect.

Interestingly enough, of the three Whites who claimed to 'say BÍN' themselves, two gave consistent Non-'Remote-Phase' interpretations to all four meaning-questions, and the other one gave a similar interpretation to two out of four. It is probable that these particular subjects were trying to claim familiarity with what they perceived as a 'Black' idiom because it was in some sense fashionable to do so.

The reverse process undoubtedly operated in the case of some Black subjects. Some of those who claimed not to say the form themselves modified it in subsequent discussion to 'at least not anymore'. For them, BÍN as a non-standard feature had a stigma which they would just as soon avoid.⁶ In any case, the almost unanimous claim of Black subjects that they had at least heard the form is more credible, in the light of the high percentage of 'Remote Phase' interpretations on the meaning questions.

I might only add that BÍN is understood by a range of Black subjects considerably wider than is normally associated with the Black English vernacular. I once informally asked a few of the 'meaning' questions at a dinner party. The lone Black informant in this group, a Philadelphia judge, was rather surprised to discover that he was immediately distinguished from the other 'subjects' by his ability to give the 'correct' Remote-Phase interpretations. From his normal level of speech, one would hardly have classed him as a speaker of 'Black English'. But his ability to interpret BÍN in the same way that other B.E. speakers do, indicates the deep-seated sensitivity and exposure to this form that exists among Black Americans, of all levels, and suggests a possible creole history. It also raises the crucial issue of whether linguistic grammars should be written on

the basis of 'productive' or 'receptive' competence. To explore this issue at any further length is clearly beyond the scope of this paper.

C. The productivity of BÍN--co-occurrence relations. The final issue which I shall take up is the productivity of BÍN in the grammar of Black English. The only environment in which earlier investigators found BÍN to occur was before V+ed. Dillard (1972) also found it before V-ing. But the picture that emerges from the participant-observation data is that BÍN is far more productive in Black English than this. In addition to V+ed and V-ing, it can be followed by:

- (a) Locatives:
(17) Oh, it BÍN in this house. (BM 6, Pa)
- (b) Adverbs:
(18) Them crab BÍN off. (BM 46, SI)
- (c) Verb-Stem alone
(19) She BÍN quit school. (BM 15, SI)
- (d) Passive Participles (contrary to Fickett 1970's claim), both with and without got:
(20) My hair BÍN cut. (BM 29, SI)
(21) He shoulda BÍN got shot. (BM 25, Pa)
- (e) Modal or Done + Verb-(ed):
(22) I BÍN could walk on them stilts. (BF 16, SI)
(23) Boy, if we had shrimp, we'd a BÍN done got us some fish. (BM 11, SI)

Finally, as some of the examples here have already indicated, BÍN is frequently preceded by the modals coulda, shoulda, and woulda.

In order to discover the reliability of co-occurrence patterns which showed up in the participant-observation data and to discover the status of patterns which had not been attested at all, we included a series of sentences (a-n) in Q-SCOM-IV, and asked subjects to indicate whether they found them acceptable ('Given that you could say "I BÍN know that", could you also say . . . ?'). The sentences themselves are reprinted in Table 6 which displays the results in the form of an implicational array. First, however, we want to consider the extent to which Black and White groups differed in their acceptability ratings in general. This data is tabulated in Table 5.

TABLE 5. Positive acceptability ratings for sentences in Q, 18, Q-SCOM-IV

Group	N	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n
Blacks	25	23	23	18	18	19	8	15	15	15	18	19	23	22	5
Whites	23	17	14	17	18	13	8	12	17	10	15	14	11	14	7

There are one or two striking differences in the acceptability ratings given to particular sentences by members of the two groups: twenty-three Blacks but only eleven Whites endorsed (18i): 'They B1N ended that war'; twenty-two Blacks but only fourteen Whites endorsed (18m): 'I B1N knowing that guy'. But these are sentences which were already well-documented from the participant observation data. On the acceptability ratings of lesser attested or unattested sentences, the difference between the two groups are virtually identical (cf. ratings for (18d) and (18f). This is surprising, in view of the overwhelming difference between the two groups which was registered in their interpretations of the meaning of B1N. This equivalence in the ratings of the two groups is the first piece of evidence to suggest that there is more random variation here; that somehow, in this section of the questionnaire, we have failed to elicit the richer knowledge of the syntactic relations of B1N which Black speakers must certainly possess in order to understand and use it as consistently as we know they do. Many different interpretations for our failure here suggest themselves. Part of the difficulty may lie in the technique of asking subjects to rate a string of sentences all at once. But Labov's (1971) remarks on idiosyncratic judgments made by informants to extremely rare alternants undoubtedly also apply here. Labov suggested that these might not be part of *langue*, but rather some kind of intuitive *parole*, and 'if so, we need techniques that will enable us to stop short of (such) intuitive judgments' (1971:447-448). Finally, it may be that both groups predict the extension of B1N to other points in the grammar on the basis of their knowledge of the syntactic possibilities with Standard English unstressed *been*. If this is so, we have again failed to get at the true set of possible co-occurrence patterns with Black English B1N, for as indicated in section A above, these can be quite different from *b1n*.

I have not yet identified the real source of the problem here, nor have I attempted as yet any workable solutions. However, the data remains useful--if only for demonstrating the kinds of difficulties which we might encounter in asking for acceptability ratings for sentences. There are more. Disregarding the questions Table 5 has already led us to raise concerning the reliability of the data we are getting here, let us go on to squeeze it, as is usually done, for all that it is worth.

Table 6 represents the results of the acceptability ratings of Black subjects in the form of an implicational array. As usual, what this 'implicational scale' implies is: (a) sentences to the left are more generally acceptable than sentences to the right; (b) if a subject finds a certain sentence acceptable, he will also find all sentences to the left of this (in the implicational array) acceptable.

In general, the hierarchical ranking of these sentences in terms of acceptability can be supported somewhat by the participant observation data. As already indicated, the two sentences most acceptable (furthest to the left) are well represented in the data from actual speech. And the three least acceptable (or furthest to the right): (h) He done B1N locked up, (f) He B1N bin gone, and (n) I have B1N had that, have never been attested. The two next least acceptable sentences, including *B1N-could* and *B1N-done* have been attested only rarely, and only in the Sea-Islands. Since none of the respondents were from this area, their low acceptability rating is understandable. However, there are a few striking surprises. For instance, 'He B1N got messed up', a pattern represented in the Philadelphia data, is ranked much further down the line than we would expect. And the B1N-NP pattern represented in (a) He B1N the leader, is ranked as third most acceptable, but has never been attested. Thus the ranking of the sentences cannot be simply taken at face-value either.

To continue the discussion at this level would be to miss the whole point of the methodology of 'implicational scaling' as it is usually applied to linguistic behavior or intuitions (cf. Bailey 1970, Bickerton 1973). Implicational scales are less valuable for the ranking of particular sentences (we could achieve more or less the same results just by noting percentages of positive responses) than for isolating the 'lects' (and their membership) which they may be taken to define. If we follow the solid line as it cuts upward and to the right across the table, separating mainly 'positive' ratings from mainly 'negative' ones, we find that no less than eleven different 'lects' are found to exist among these twenty-five different subjects. (For instance, B15 and B5 share lect 1, the most 'liberal' lect; and B1 is the only representative of lect 11, the most 'conservative' one). This by itself seems highly questionable. If we could find so many 'lects' among only twenty-five speakers, what would happen if we increase both the number of sentences, and the pool of subjects, to any significant extent? Would we truly be prepared to accept the proliferating number of 'lects' as having any solid basis in reality?

Furthermore, there is absolutely no evidence in the participant-observation data for these eleven different lects. Obviously, the method here is telling us far more than we can reasonably assume to be true. Its results are not supported by any of the independent evidence presently available. All this is the more striking because of the

TABLE 6. Implicational array for Black subjects' acceptability ratings to BÍN sentences in question 18, Q-SCOM-IV (Deviations circled, Scalability = 88.9%)

	__Ved	__Ving	__NP	've __had	__Pass.	__knew	got __Pass.	__have	__Adj.	__Modal	__done	done __	__bin	have __had
Subjects	They BÍN ended that war.	I BÍN knowing him.	He BÍN the leader.	I've BÍN had that car.	The chicken BÍN ate.	I BÍN knew your name.	He BÍN got messed up.	I BÍN have that.	She BÍN nice.	I BÍN could do that.	He BÍN done gone.	He done BÍN locked up.	He BÍN bin gone .	I have BÍN had that.
	l	b	a	m	d	k	e	j	c	i	g	h	f	n
B 15	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	⊕	+	+	+
B 5	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	⊕	+	+	+	+	+
B 19	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
B 8	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
B 21	⊕	+	+	+	⊕	+	+	⊕	+	⊕	+	+	+	+
B 12	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
B 3	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
B 24	+	+	+	+	⊕	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
B 4	+	+	+	+	⊕	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
B 22	+	⊕	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
B 25	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
B 6	⊕	+	+	+	+	⊕	+	+	+	+	+	+	⊕	+
B 11	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
B 16	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
B 23	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
B 13	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	⊕
B 14	+	+	+	+	+	+	⊕	+	+	+	+	⊕	⊕	+
B 7	+	+	⊕	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	⊕	⊕	+
B 17	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	⊕	⊕	⊕	+
B 18	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	⊕	⊕	⊕	+
B 2	+	+	+	+	+	+	⊕	+	+	+	⊕	⊕	⊕	+
B 20	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	⊕	+	⊕	⊕	⊕	+
B 9	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	⊕	⊕	⊕	+
B 10	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	⊕	⊕	⊕	+
B 1	+	+	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕	⊕

high scalability (88.9%) which this table manages to achieve.⁷ Scalability figures like these are often included in the literature, supposedly to represent the 'statistical reliability' of the implicational array. But the evidence suggests that in this case, and perhaps others, such figures may mean very little. Far more work remains to be done in developing reliable statistical and linguistic measures of the reliability and validity of implicational arrays.⁸

3. Conclusion

The weaknesses in the intuitive data revealed at various points in the preceding discussion of BÍN merit serious attention. For it is precisely the same method, eliciting judgments of the equivalence or acceptability of various sentences, and arranging the results in implicational arrays, which, as mentioned before, is most frequently used in the study of abstract syntactic 'squishes', and is winning devotees among those interested in social and regional variation. The results revealed in this paper, along with other limitations previously noted (Labov, Hindle, and Baltin [to appear]) should give us pause. They should also force us to consult, perhaps for the first time, a handful of research which has already explored in some detail various issues involved in the elicitation of linguistic judgments (Bolinger 1968, Gleitman 1967, Quirk and Svartvik 1966). I discovered these too late to affect the course of my own elicitations. But most work involving the study of linguistic intuitions seems equally uninformed by the insights and suggestions represented in this tiny literature. We might indicate in closing one way in which the work on BÍN discussed in this paper seems to relate to some of this work on 'intuitive judgment methodology'. Bolinger (1968:39) had suggested:

Perhaps we are not asking the right question when we inquire whether a given sentence or sentence-type is grammatical--we should ask instead whether it has a meaning, (and) determine what the meaning is . . .

The highly successful results of our 'intuitive data' on the meaning of BÍN, contrasted with the far more ambiguous and questionable results on the acceptability of BÍN sentences, suggests that Bolinger may well be right on this point. (Cf. also the successful investigations of the meaning of 'Cut-Eye' and 'Suck-Teeth'--Rickford and Rickford 1974). But this again is exactly the opposite of what is being done in the growing number of variation studies employing 'intuitive' data.

It is clear that we shall have to be far more critical about the use of elicited intuitive data than we are presently. Intuitions can be

invaluable resources. But, contrary to past and present expectations, they are not necessarily or universally so. What questions we can ask, what answers we can accept, and what we can do with such answers, are things that remain very much to be worked out, both in general, and for specific cases. There is much work to be done here, and much work to be done also in developing other methods, like participant observation,⁹ which can serve as independent 'checks and balances'.

The prospects for overcoming the limitations of tape-recorded data and carrying the 'New Wave' into syntax, seem promising but not easy. However, there is no reason to limit our goals and methods to those that require the least effort and/or imagination. This is no way to run a revolution.

NOTES

1. This paper is full of references to the work and influence of William Labov. It is not inordinately or accidentally so, however, for he has been in the forefront of innovations in (socio-) linguistic methodology for the past ten years. I welcome this opportunity to thank him for provoking me to a critical awareness of the importance of 'methodology' and for stimulating my own work both by example and suggestion.

2. As used in this paper, *been* is an abstract form in which stress is not distinguished. It is introduced primarily to facilitate discussion of the work of previous researchers. *BĪN* and *bĭn* are more concrete--the former referring to the stressed form, the latter to the unstressed.

3. The work of Loflin (1969) is omitted in the body of this paper. This might be surprising to some, since Loflin does discuss *BĪN*, and his paper is often cited as a high point in the formal analysis of Black English. But we must not be 'snowed' by apparent applications of the transformational-generative framework to the field of 'sociolinguistic variation'. Loflin 'accounts' for *BĪN* by 'postulating a formative E of emphatic stress which could be given in the rule rewriting VP and which could be converted into appropriate realizations, e.g. E+V+ed \Rightarrow *BĪN*+V+ed'. In recognizing the obligatory nature of stress, Loflin is justified. But his rule for generating the form is totally ad hoc and unmotivated, most seriously because the meaning of the form is not discussed at any point. Loflin's methodology, drawing on the intuitive reactions of an isolated fourteen-year-old informant, has also received widespread criticism.

4. The notation in parentheses following each sentence records in this order the following information: race, sex, age, and geographical community of the speaker.

5. We cannot explore here in any depth the fascinating issue of how 'remote' the initiation of a process must be to justify the use of *BĪN*. One thing is certain--no absolute distance in objective time from the point of orientation can be set. What *BĪN* expresses is the speaker's subjective feelings about the event and the 'time' involved. Thus an old woman stepping out of a dentist's office she had entered only a few minutes before said, 'He finish so quick. I ask him was he finished, and he say "I *BĪN* finished".'

There are, however, 'consensus definitions' of how 'remote' the initiation of a process must be, relative to certain cases. And there is a rich arena for research in the use of *BĪN* contrary to such 'consensus' definitions for dramatization and self-aggrandizement, or 'styling'. Thus a young woman who was complimented on the fine dress she had bought only the day before replied nonchalantly, 'Oh, I *BĪN* had this!' This 'styling' use of *BĪN* is open to challenge, however.

These considerations are not totally irrelevant to the methodological issues with which we are concerned in this paper. For instance, Gary M. of New York hesitated before giving the 'Remote Phase' interpretation to question 3 in Q-SCOM-4 (see (15) below), because, in his words 'I don't know if he bin know that guy. A lot of dudes go around running off at the mouth bout how they *BĪN* know this and they *BĪN* know that. Ain't nothing but a bunch of jive!'

6. This section may be taken to illustrate the general principle that questioning people on their own use of linguistic forms or varieties which have high social effect (either positive or negative) is likely to produce unreliable results unless checked against other evidence.

7. The scalability figure is arrived at by the formula:

$$100 - \left(\frac{\text{No. of deviations}}{\text{No. of cells}} \cdot \frac{100}{1} \right)$$

In this case: $100 - (39/350 \cdot 100)$.

8. The whole question of what is to be retained, what modified in borrowing techniques like 'sociometric scaling' from social-survey methodology is quite problematic. For instance, 'factors' which are marked by a high number of 'deviations' are often omitted in psychological and sociological work. But so far no one has suggested in linguistic circles that sentences like 18g should be thrown out of consideration altogether. (I am thankful to Wolfgang Wölck for raising this issue.) The closest anyone has come to this is Labov (1971), see page 176 above.

9. At the risk of being accused of descending to the trivial or ephemeral, let me suggest here one or two methods for extending

the method of participant-observation to include information on the frequency of pre-coded variables which occur more often than B1N. The art is to develop idiosyncracies like doodling or breaking matches in half. With each occurrence of a variant (for example gue vs. ø) one makes the appropriate 'doodle' on a handy napkin or whatever, or puts the broken half of a matchstick in the appropriate pile. So long as one remembers to collect the napkins, or put the matchstick pieces into different pockets, these 'extensions' can prove extremely informative and reliable. Needless to say, however, they put a tremendous strain on the 'participant-observer' of natural conversation, and require some practice.

REFERENCES

- Bailey, B. L. 1966. *Jamaican Creole syntax*. London, Cambridge University Press.
- Bailey, C.-J. N. 1970. Using data variation to confirm, rather than undermining, the existence of abstract syntactic structures. *Working Papers in Linguistics* 2. 8:77-86. Honolulu, University of Hawaii.
- _____, and R. W. Shuy, eds. 1973. *New ways of analyzing variation in English*. Washington, D.C., Georgetown University Press.
- Baltin, Mark. 1973. A reanalysis of quantifier-negative dialects. *Mimeo*. University of Pennsylvania.
- Bickerton, Derek. 1972. The structure of polylectal grammars. In: GURT 1972. 17-42.
- _____. 1973. On the nature of a creole continuum. *Lg.* 49:640-669.
- _____. 1974. Bin in the Atlantic Creoles. In: *Journal of African Languages*, Special Issue devoted to the English Pidgins and Creoles. Edited by I. Hancock.
- Bolinger, D. 1968. Judgments of grammaticality. *Lingua* 21:34-40.
- Butters, R. 1973. Acceptability judgments for double modals in Southern English. In: Bailey and Shuy (1973). 276-286.
- Carden, G. 1971. A note on conflicting idiolects. *Linguistic Inquiry* 1. 3.
- Dillard, J. L. 1972. *Black English—Its history and usage in the United States*. New York, Random House.
- Elliot D., S. Legum, and S. Thompson. 1969. Syntactic variation as linguistic data. In: *Papers from the Fifth Regional Meeting, Chicago Linguistic Society*. Edited by Binnick, et al. Chicago, University of Chicago. 52-59.
- Fasold, R. W. and W. Wolfram. 1970. Some linguistic features of Negro dialect. In: *Teaching Standard English in the inner city*. Edited by R. W. Fasold and R. W. Shuy. Washington, D.C., Center for Applied Linguistics. 41-86.
- Fickett, Joan G. 1970. Aspects of morphemics, syntax, and semology of an inner-city dialect. West Rush, New York, Meadowbrook Publications.
- Gleitman, Lila R. 1967. An experiment concerning the use and perception of compound nominals by English speakers. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania.
- Jones, E. D. 1968. *Some tense, mode, and aspect markers in Krio*. *African Language Review* 7:86-89.
- Labov, William. 1966. *The social stratification of English in New York City*. Washington, D.C., Center for Applied Linguistics.
- _____. 1969. Contraction, deletion, and inherent variability of the English copula. *Lg.* 45.4:715-762.
- _____. 1970. The study of language in its social context. *Studium Generale* 23:30-87.
- _____. 1971. Linguistic methodology. In: *A survey of linguistic science*. Edited by W. O. Dingwall. College Park, University of Maryland. 412-497.
- _____. 1972a. Where do grammars stop? In: GURT 1972. 43-88.
- _____. 1972b. Some principles of linguistic methodology. *Language and Society* 1:97-120.
- _____, D. Hindle, and M. Baltin. [To appear] For an end to the uncontrolled use of intuition in linguistic analysis.
- Loflin, M. 1969. On the structure of the verb in a dialect of American Negro English. *Linguistics* 14-28.
- Quirk, R. and J. Svartvik. 1966. *Investigating linguistic acceptability*. The Hague, Mouton and Co.
- Rickford, John and Angela Rickford. 1974. Cut-eye and suck-teeth. In: *Journal of African Languages*. Special issue devoted to the English pidgins and creoles. Edited by I. Hancock.
- Sag, Ivan. 1973. On the state of progress on progressives and statives. In: Bailey and Shuy (1973). 83-95.
- Sankoff, Gillian. 1973. Above and beyond phonology in variable rules. In: Bailey and Shuy (1973). 44-61.
- Stewart, William A. 1965. Urban Negro speech: Sociolinguistic factors affecting English teaching. In: *Social dialects and language learning*. Edited by Roger W. Shuy. Champaign, Illinois, The National Council of Teachers of English. 10-18.