

“I be done left the windows down an’ it be done rained all over it”:  
An analysis of sequential *be done* in rural AAVE

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The use of pre-verbal *done*, as in *Your daddy done tol’ you about leavin’ that light on in there*, can be traced back to Middle English as one of three competing auxiliaries, along with *be* and *have*, that was used in present perfect constructions (Tagliamonte 2000). Contemporary variation with these auxiliaries as perfective markers still exists with *have* used as the standard form, *be* used infrequently, and *done* as the form used most often by speakers of Southern American English (SAE) and African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Up until recently, sociolinguistic research on pre-verbal *done* has primarily discussed this feature in one of the following ways: (1) its distribution in SAE (cf. Wolfram and Christian 1976; Feagin 1979), (2) its distribution in AAVE (cf. Labov 1968; Wolfram 1969; Baugh 1983; Myhill 1995), or (3) its relationship to the use of a similar pre-verbal marker in Creole grammars (cf. Edwards 1991; Edwards and Winford 1991; Winford 1992). More recent research on pre-verbal *done* in AAVE (Dayton 1996; Labov 1998), however, has expanded the analysis to include its function, including an innovative use implying moral indignation, similar to the meaning proposed for other AAVE auxiliaries (Myhill 1988, 1991; Spears 1982).

Another, less studied, pre-verbal construction found in AAVE that may be derived from pre-verbal *done* is the use of sequential *be done*, as in *My ice cream’s gonna be done melted by the time we get there* (Dayton 1996). Labov (1998) notes that the combination of tense and aspect in most sequential *be done* constructions patterns similarly to the future perfect *will have* (i.e., *My ice cream will have melted by the time we get there.*) by providing information on sequencing of the events relative to their completion in the future. A second use of sequential *be done* described by Labov (1998) as a future resultative lacks the sequencing information on tense inherent in the future perfect and instead refers to inevitable results (consequences) in time. Examples such as, *They be done spent my money before I even get a look at it* (Baugh 1983) illustrate this use.

Most of the data on pre-verbal *done* and sequential *be done* have come from apparent time recordings of urban AAVE speech. The present study expands the data base on these two features with a real and apparent time analysis of pre-verbal *done* and sequential *be done* in the speech of rural AAVE speakers born between 1892-1996 from the community of Springville, Texas. The analysis of *done* and *be done* encompasses (1) a cross-generational comparison of their distribution in Springville speech, (2) a semantic comparison of these constructions with data from previous studies, and (3) a real-time analysis of the acquisition of innovative uses of these features. Preliminary analyses of the data reveal that not all innovative uses of pre-verbal *done* imply moral indignation. In addition, real time data suggest that the use of *be done* changes over time as younger generations acquire the future resultative use of this construction that is not found in older generations of Springville speakers.