VARIATION IN THE INTERPRETATION AND USE OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH PREVERBAL *DONE* CONSTRUCTION

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the variable judgments that African American English speakers in Wise, North Carolina, give simple preverbal *done* sentences modified by definite past-time denoting adverbials, as in *John done baked a cake yesterday*. A single speaker might judge this sentence as perfectly grammatical one day, only to judge the same or a similar sentence as fully ungrammatical the next. The article develops a synchronic analysis of this variability based on semantic type shifting. Additionally, that account is used to reconcile other researchers' reports of different judgments coming from different regions and to help explain previously published data regarding the construction's frequency of use. Further, the article proposes that the same syntactic and semantic mechanisms be used to account for a separate, although related, case of variation within the *done* construction. At issue here is whether adverbially modified *done* constructions such as *Mary done lived in Chapel Hill for three years* have perfect of persistent situation readings. Different researchers have answered this question differently, with a number reporting tentative and unclear judgments similar to the Wise data.

IN A RECENT ARTICLE titled "Sociolinguistic Folklore in the Study of African American English," Walt Wolfram (2007) argues convincingly that, although linguists have served society well by refuting folk theories about African American English (AAE), in an ironic twist, they have, at the same time, unintentionally participated in the construction of what he calls sociolinguistic folklore by creating their own myths about variation and change in AAE. As a part of his broader argument, Wolfram describes three such myths—the supraregional myth, the language change myth, and the social stratification myth—and uses a variety of types of data to dispute them. He finds unwarranted assumptions of homogeneity undergirding each of these myths. For example, while many of the primary structural features that distinguish the vernacular speech of African Americans from their European American neighbors are, in fact, shared by regionally disparate African American communities, the supraregional myth takes this observation and turns it into

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the unjustified axiom that AAE is a uniform variety that is immune to any significant regional variation. And, as Wolfram explains, if one presumes a uniform structure for AAE, little conceptual movement is required to arrive at the language change myth—the position that AAE has exhibited a unilateral path of change. Similarly, the false dichotomy introduced by the social stratification myth, which posits that poor African Americans speak AAE but middle-class African Americans do not, can be viewed as an unsupported and ultimately unhelpful homogenization of the actual facts. In this case, the homogenization is of AAE speakers' socioeconomic status and their relation to their speech rather than of the structure of their speech itself. To be clear, as Wolfram is quick to point out, regional, class, and other forms of variation within AAE have long been recognized. No serious variationist would embrace any of the myths he identifies without qualification. His argument, however, is that an all-too-common belief that the homogeneity of AAE almost invariably outweighs such variation has resulted in overstatements of the former and relatively little attention being paid to the latter. Because they may have something significant to tell us about language and its function in society, Wolfram's article challenges those of us engaged in the study of AAE to both acknowledge and analyze the wide ranges of variation that AAE and its speakers exhibit. Through his identification of the supraregional, language change, and social stratification myths, he invites us to reexamine the synchronic and diachronic variation that occurs between regional and social groups of AAE speakers, variation that many researchers, perhaps in their zeal to generalize and explain complex patterns of language structure and its use, have tended to minimize in importance. While Wolfram emphasizes particular types of variation that occur between regional and social groups, he does suggest that other kinds of variation exist and equally deserve our attention. The primary focus of this article, then, is a type of variation not captured by analyzing Wolfram's myths: variation in linguistic judgments that occurs at the individual speaker level.

Key to the discussion at hand are sentences such as (1), simple preverbal *done* sentences, such as *John done baked a cake*, that are modified by definite past-time denoting adverbials, such as *yesterday*, *at 5 o'clock*, and *on Friday* (when it is used definitely). The term "preverbal" is used here to distinguish the *done* in (1), which occurs in an auxiliary-like position, from main verb *done*, the second *done* in the sentence *He done done it*, for example. No further syntactic commitments are implied.

1. ?John done baked a cake yesterday/at 5 o'clock/on Friday. [AAE]

Examining the judgments of AAE speakers from Wise, a small rural community in Warren County, North Carolina,[1] I find a surprising degree

of qualitative variability within single speakers' judgments of these sentences. So by the question mark in (1), I mean not only to suggest that when such sentences are given out-of-the-blue, with little or no contextual support, Wise AAE speakers often judge them as somewhat degraded or slightly less than grammatical, but also to suggest that speakers are very inconsistent in their judgments. Asked to provide grammaticality judgments for AAE sentences, a single speaker might judge any of the sentences in (1) as perfectly grammatical one day, only to judge the same or a similar sentence as fully ungrammatical the next.[2] These judgments appear to be connected to the speakers' strong impression that while such sentences are used in the community, they are few in comparison to *done* sentences modified by present-time denoting adverbials such as *now* and *today*. This speaker-held impression is supported by quantitative work by Dayton (1996), who records just such a pattern for the AAE spoken in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Guided by the same impulse to engage in generalization and explanation that, left unchecked, led to the myths that Wolfram describes, we might be tempted to declare examples such as (1) ungrammatical in AAE and move on; or better, we might acknowledge their questionable status but leave them temporarily unanalyzed. While the second of these options may, at times, be necessary to move forward with productive theory building and analysis, as with Wolfram's myths, we must return to such placeholders if continual progress in our understanding of the data is to be made. We might draw an even closer connection between the critical examination of the myths Wolfram identifies and a concern over variable judgments at the single-speaker level in the following way: if such basic variability is overlooked, it becomes all too possible to miscategorize its patterns as other types of variation, say, regional or historical. Thus, in some cases, to adequately answer the question of whether or not we are witnessing regional, historical, or even social variation at the group level, we must first examine such cloudy and variable judgments at the single-speaker level. Such examination is the goal of the present work.

The remainder of this article proceeds as follows. In section 1, I describe the methods used to collect the grammatical judgment data from AAE speakers in Wise, North Carolina. In section 2, I use the single-speaker nature of these data along with quantitative frequency data and further qualitative data collected by other researchers in other areas to argue against group-level explanations of the variability depicted in (1) and in favor of seeking an explanation internal to the grammar of Wise AAE itself. In section 3, I outline the various contextual readings of the preverbal *done* construction in Wise AAE, paying particular attention to their connection to the *done* construction's status as a present perfect, as current understanding of the

semantics of perfect constructions informs the analysis to come. In section 4, I demonstrate how the judgments in question can be sharpened before presenting a synchronic analysis of the variability based on the construction's status as a perfect and semantic type shifting in section 5. Section 5 also includes discussion of how this account (first suggested in Terry 2006b and formalized in Terry 2006a) can be used to reconcile other researchers' reports of apparent differences in judgments from different regions. In sections 6 and 7, I consider a separate (although I argue related) case of variation within the *done* construction. At issue here is whether adverbially modified *done* constructions such as that in (2) can describe situations that began in the past but persist into the present.

2. Mary done lived in Chapel Hill for three years. AAE

Can AAE speakers use (2) to mean 'Mary has lived in Chapel Hill for the past three years and still does'? Various researchers have answered this question differently, with a number reporting tentative and unclear judgments. Section 6 details my analysis of this reading of the *done* construction in Wise, and in section 7, I propose that the same syntactic and semantic mechanisms introduced to explain Wise AAE speakers' variable judgments of sentences such as those in (1) can be used to account for differences in researchers' reports of this reading of the construction as well. Section 8 concludes the paper with a few brief comments concerning variation and AAE as a variety of English.

1. DATA COLLECTION

Approximately 12–15 consultants provided the original data used in this article. All of the consultants were African American; all were born in Wise, North Carolina, a rural area in the northeastern part of the state, and all but one had lived their entire lives in Wise at the time they provided the data. The one exception was a 68-year-old woman who moved from Wise when she was 18 years old but made frequent visits to Wise and kept close contact with the Wise community throughout her life. The consultants' ages ranged from 32 to 68 years. Each consultant was read a number of AAE sentences by the analyst and judged their acceptability with respect to community standards of speech. They were explicitly instructed to consider the sentences in terms of community usage standards rather than traditional school standards. Judgments for no more than six sentences (including at least two test sentences and two fillers) were ever asked at a time, and each consultant was given at least two sets of sentences with a minimum of one full day in between their

presentations. Responses for sentences such as *John done baked a cake yesterday* varied from speaker to speaker and for single speakers. For example, a 52-year-old woman reported that this sentence was "perfectly fine" and "something you would hear in Wise" in her first session. Two days later she reported there was "something not quite right" about the very same sentence, adding that she did not think people in Wise would say it. Other consultants first judged such sentences as unacceptable only to report that they were acceptable in subsequent sessions, and still others reported that they could not tell. While quantitative figures on acceptability judgments were not tabulated, these patterns of consistency and inconsistency suggest a high level of single-speaker variation for this form within the grammar of AAE.

2. GROUP-LEVEL ACCOUNTS OF THE SINGLE-SPEAKER VARIABILITY

Earlier, I drew a contrast between individual-speaker level variation and the group-level variation highlighted by Wolfram's myths. Here I consider whether in the case of the variable judgments of (1), the former might be explained in terms of the latter. Might the individual-level variation illuminated by these judgments be explained by appealing to historical change (a process that is affected BY individuals, but occurs AT the group or population level) or perhaps by grammatical interference from a distinct language variety or social register within Wise AAE? I will use both the variability of the judgments themselves and the fact that while such sentences are spoken in the Wise community, they are relatively rare, to make the case that such explanations face serious enough problems to consider looking for a better explanation within the syntactic and semantic organization of these sentences and the contexts in which they are used. This approach to identifying the source of the variable judgments is in line with the view implicit in the work of Labov (1998), Dayton (1996), and others that quite often neither the collection of judgments nor the recording of frequency data alone is sufficient to analyze variation within a language variety. It is doubtful, for instance, that this individual-level variability would have ever come to light without asking for specific linguistic judgments. However, I contend that to fully interpret the variability and locate its source we must consider both the variability itself and the rareness of use of the sentences in which we find it.

One might try to explain both the variable judgments in (1) and the relative scarcity of such sentences in the Wise community by appealing to historical change. In an analysis of adverbial interaction with the *done* construction in Philadelphia, Dayton (1996) reports that fewer than 1% (3/624)

of her *done* tokens occur with *ago* (as in *two weeks ago* or *five days ago*), while 7% (42/624) occur with *now* and *today*. She concludes that, in the Philadelphia area at least, "*done* is not excluded by adverbs that have definite past time reference, but *done* is not favored by them either, particularly in comparison with adverbs of present time reference" (349). For Dayton, this constitutes evidence that preverbal *done* is undergoing historical change, moving from a marker of the perfect, behaving like the standard English (SE) present perfect *have -en* construction by resisting modification by definite past-time denoting adverbials, to a marker of the perfective or simple past, where such modification poses no problem. This distinction is demonstrated by the SE sentences in (3) and (4).

3. *John has baked a cake yesterday. [SE present perfect]
4. John baked a cake yesterday. [SE simple past]

As I understand it, in Dayton's account, historical change is used to explain both the scarcity and any variation in the judgments of AAE sentences like those in (1) within the Philadelphia area. It is unclear from her discussion, however, whether Dayton finds the variation she reports within single speakers or whether simply some of her speakers treat the combination as ungrammatical and others do not. This is, I believe, an important distinction, as seeing the kind of single-speaker variation represented in (1) leads one to question a historical change account of the mix of judgments; for while it is still possible that in some areas *done* is changing from a marker of the perfect to a marker of the perfective or simple past, one does not expect to see historical change operating at the level of the single speaker. Further, and perhaps more important, it is not clear that historical change (whether it is occurring or not) can EXPLAIN single-speaker judgments such as those in (1). Like biological evolution, language change is affected by individuals, but is a process that occurs at the level of populations. So while the judgments of individual speakers may help explain historical change, it is unclear to me how historical change can explain the judgments of the individual speaker. Thus, it is an insufficient explanation for the combined inconsistency in judgments and infrequent use of these sentences in Wise.

Likewise, single-speaker variation casts doubt on at least the simplest versions of accounts of the Wise judgments based on different judgments coming from different regional varieties of AAE. Examining the judgments of AAE speakers in southwest Louisiana, Lisa Green (1993) reports that preverbal *done* constructions do pattern with SE present perfect *have -en* constructions in that their combination with definite past-time denoting adverbials is disallowed; the sentences in (5) are all fully ungrammatical by her account.

5. *I done went back to visit two months ago/last weekend/yesterday. [AAE; Green 1993, 149]

It is certainly possible that some regional varieties of AAE behave as Green suggests, while others freely allow the combination of such adverbials with *done* constructions. Although most of the consultants I have queried have lived their entire lives in Wise, one might imagine a situation in which, similar to the grammar Green suggests, the grammar of Wise AAE does not allow sentences like those in (1) and (5), but a significant number of the consultants giving their judgments have moved to Wise from areas with grammars that do. This type of situation could lead to a mix of judgments and relatively few instances of such sentences occurring in the naturalistic data. One might expect, however, that single speakers would judge these sentences using one and not both of the hypothesized grammars, so this explanation appears unlikely in light of the single-speaker variability in the Wise data.

A possible objection to the above reasoning is that it relies on the debatable assumption that the two hypothesized grammars would exert little or no influence on one another within a single speaker. However, this may not be the case, and the idea that the Wise judgments can be explained by appealing to different varieties of AAE may not be so easily undercut by inconsistent single-speaker judgments. The variability in Wise speakers' judgments of sentences such as those in (1) and (5) might very well stem from consultants' confusion due to grammatical interference from another variety of AAE. While this is possible, here the frequency data make the explanation appear unlikely. Under this analysis one would expect to find distinct geographic regions in which each one of two grammars is dominant, and I know of no communities in which these sentences are more often than not judged grammatical or where the combination of the *done* construction with definite past-time denoting adverbials is as, or more, frequent than with those that denote present-time intervals. The same is true for different social registers within Wise. One could imagine different registers treating the *done* construction adverbial combination differently, but I know of no evidence that this is the case.

Another possible explanation is that grammatical interference from SE rather than another variety or register of AAE is the cause of the variable judgments depicted in (1). I consider what I believe to be the most plausible case for this type of explanation now. If, like Dayton, one analyzes the AAE *done* construction as a type of perfect construction (I will have more to say in favor of this classification later), preverbal *done* sentences and SE *have -en* sentences can be directly compared as different kinds of perfects, with the reasonable expectation that where the two constructions diverge, they will

likely do so along the lines of well-established typological splits. Continuing in this vein, as shown in (6) and (7), INDEFINITE past-time denoting adverbials such as *on a Friday* pose no problem for present perfect constructions in either dialect.

    6. John has baked a cake on a Friday/at some point in the past. [SE]
    7. John done baked a cake on a Friday/at some point in the past. [AAE]
       'John has baked a cake on a Friday/at some point in the past.'

Both dialects also allow definite past-time denoting adverbials to freely combine with past perfect and nonfinite perfect constructions. This is shown for SE in (8) and AAE in (9).[3]

    8. a. John had baked a caked yesterday/at 5 o'clock/on Friday. [SE]
       b. John must have baked a cake yesterday/at 5 o'clock/on Friday. [SE]
    9. a. John had done baked a cake yesterday/at 5 o'clock/on Friday. [AAE]
        'John had baked a cake yesterday/at 5 o'clock/on Friday.'
       b. John must have done baked a cake yesterday/at 5 o'clock/on Friday. [AAE]
        'John must have baked a cake yesterday/at 5 o'clock/on Friday.'

Where Wise AAE and SE do differ is in the combination of definite past-time denoting adverbials and their present perfect constructions. Unlike the highly variable judgments consultants from Wise give sentences such as in (1), repeated here as (10), SE speakers are far more clear in judging sentences such as those in (11) as ungrammatical.

    10. ?John done baked a cake yesterday/at 5 o'clock/on Friday. [AAE]
    11. *John has baked a cake yesterday/at 5 o'clock/on Friday. [SE]

Setting the more murky AAE judgments aside for a moment, while SE present perfects are clearly incompatible with this class of adverbials, it is well known and quite clear that this is not the case for Dutch, Icelandic, Italian, and German, all of which have semantically defined present perfect constructions, and all of which allow the combination[4] (Comrie 1976; Mac-Coard 1978; Dowty 1979; Klein 1992). Musan's (2002, 163) example in (12) illustrates this point for German.

    12. Arnim hat gestern gekocht. [German]
       'Arnim has yesterday cooked.'

We have, then, a well-established typological split that would seem to explain, or at least begin to explain, the contrast between (10) and (11). In

the end, however, this line of explanation, too, proves less than promising. Consider again Dayton's historical change explanation of the Philadelphia data. She contends that when her consultants avoid or judge as ungrammatical *done* sentences such as those in (10), it is because being present perfects, the AAE grammar rules them out in the same way that SE grammar does their *have -en* counterparts in (11). For her, the problem of ruling back in these normally ungrammatical sentences is solved by positing a change in the grammar in which *done* constructions begin to take on the meaning of the simple past rather than the present perfect. This explanation seemed unlikely to work for the Wise data due to the single-speaker variability in those judgments. If, however, present perfect constructions in Wise AAE pattern with those in German and other languages that allow them to be modified by definite past-time denoting adverbials, the problem changes from one of figuring out how to rule in normally ungrammatical sentences to one of figuring out how to rule out normally grammatical ones. Viewed this way, when such sentences are judged as ungrammatical or degraded by Wise speakers, it may be due to interference from SE grammar, a grammar in which very similar sentences, both syntactically and semantically, are ungrammatical. The account of the Wise data based on two different varieties of AAE suffers because it predicts AAE speaking communities in which sentences such as those in (10) are more often than not judged grammatical. Since nearly all AAE speakers are exposed to SE, this account based on interference from SE grammar avoids that prediction, and thus, the problem that no such communities have been identified. It does so at a cost, however. The level of interference required to explain the data may be too strong. It seems rather odd that more often than not AAE speakers would be making judgments about these sentences using SE rather than their own AAE grammar. And odder still is that this would occur with *done* constructions, but not other constructions within the variety, say, the invariant *be* construction. Again, the frequency data point us in another direction.

So while we cannot absolutely rule out historical change or grammatical interference as possible explanations for the variation in the Wise data, neither should we rule out the possibility that through a more thorough examination of the interaction between the syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of sentences such as those in (10), we might find a better explanation internal to the grammar of Wise AAE itself.

3. THE *DONE* CONSTRUCTION IN CONTEXT:
DONE SENTENCES AS PERFECTS

Before developing the kind of analysis suggested in the previous section, I first turn to the various contextual interpretations of preverbal *done* sentences available in Wise AAE, as these interpretations will inform the analysis to come. Related to this examination of the *done* construction's uses is the question of whether the construction itself is, in fact, a type of perfect as I assumed in a number of the scenarios presented in the previous section and as I will argue here. Currently there is debate within the AAE literature over whether the *done* construction is best characterized as a perfect or as a member of the more restrictive semantic category of completive. As this issue bears directly on the contexts in which *done* sentences are used, and therefore on the semantic and pragmatic portions of the forthcoming analysis, I take it up here, overlapping possible readings of the Wise AAE *done* construction with Comrie's (1976) manifestations of the perfect to show that the *done* construction fits his general definition of the present perfect in its expression the "continuing relevance of a previous situation" (Comrie 1976, 56). From there, I discuss how within a Reichenbachian framework of tense and aspect, such as the one I will adopt, the definition of perfect aspect as SITUATION TIME PRECEDES TOPIC TIME is consistent with Comrie's. This framework provides much of the background for the analysis to be developed in section 4. I postpone detailed discussion of Comrie's perfect of persistent situation and those readings of the *done* construction less clearly related to the construction's status as a perfect until section 5.

Following Edwards (1991, 2001), Déchaine (1993), Dayton (1996) and others, I contend that the AAE preverbal *done* construction as it has been described in the literature, and as it is used in Wise, is best classified as a type of perfect. Comrie (1976) discusses four manifestations or primary uses of the perfect—the perfect of persistent situation, the experiential perfect, the perfect of result, and the perfect of recent past. Languages differ in how many of these USES are grammaticalized and thus constitute READINGS of their perfect constructions. Comrie's "perfects" serve, however, as possible readings against which to test the range of meanings a perfect construction within a language allows. In the perfect of persistent situation, a present perfect is used to describe a situation that started in the past but persists into the present. These readings are only available to sentences whose main verbs are either lexically stative or interpreted as habituals. The reading of the SE sentence *Mary has lived in Chapel Hill for three years* in which Mary has lived in Chapel Hill for the past three years and still does is a perfect of persistent situation reading.

As I noted earlier, different researchers have given different answers to the question of whether or not AAE preverbal *done* sentences such as the sentence introduced in (2), *Mary done lived in Chapel Hill for three years*, allow these readings. In contrast to the perfect of persistent situation, the experiential perfect, which simply indicates that a situation took place or held at some time in the past, can carry a strong sense of completion, signaling that an event is over or that a state no longer holds. And in Comrie's perfect of recent past, temporal closeness to the present is the focus rather than completion. Here the perfect is used to indicate that a past situation is very recent. Finally, in the perfect of result, some present state is referred to as being the result of a past situation.

Wise AAE speakers prefer the sentence *John arrived for his interview, but he just left* to its *done* construction counterpart *John done arrived for his interview, but he just left*, which is judged by many as somewhat odd. This appears to indicate a perfect of result reading of the *done* construction, as there is nothing odd about saying *He done arrived for his interview*, and any oddness seems to come from the fact that the result of John's arrival, his being here, no longer holds. Consider now the AAE sentence *I done lost my job*. In Wise, this sentence might be spoken, quite naturally, in either of the following scenarios: Upon opening an envelope and discovering a pink slip informing him that he has been fired, a worker might exclaim "I done lost my job." An appropriate SE translation would be *I have JUST lost my job*; consistent with Comrie's perfect of recent past, the use of the *done* construction here seems to add a sense of recent completion not necessarily found in the sentence *I lost my job*. The same preverbal *done* sentence can, however, be used as an experiential perfect. Several years into the future, having found another job, when asked by a friend "Have you ever lost your job?" the same worker might answer "Yes, I done lost my job. Who ain't lost his job at one time or another?" (An even better response might be "Yes, I done lost a job"). In this circumstance, the use of a *done* construction makes plain that the speaker is referring to a past experience without implying any more specific a time for its occurrence than that it was in the past. Here, the SE translation *I have lost my job before* is appropriate.

That Wise AAE speakers use *done* constructions to express all of Comrie's "perfects" is strong evidence that the construction is indeed a form of the perfect.[5] With some qualifications regarding the perfect of persistent situation, Edwards (1991, 2001) makes essentially the same argument using data from Detroit AAE. As Comrie makes clear, not all languages that have perfect constructions have forms that exhibit the full range of perfect meanings that he discusses, so the lack of clear data regarding the perfect of persistent situation does not deter Edwards from concluding that in line

with Comrie's general definition of the perfect, *done* constructions express the "continuing relevance of a previous situation" (Comrie 1976, 56) and, therefore, warrant that label.

Consistent with this, I adopt an indefinite past definition of perfect aspect largely inspired by the work of Klein (1992). Indefinite past theories of the perfect (e.g., Montague 1973; Inoue 1979; Klein 1992) treat the core semantics of the construction as saying that the clause under the scope of the perfect is true at some past time. Take, for example, Reichenbach's (1947) treatment of what he calls the perfect tenses: he argues that to capture the meaning of a sentence such as (13), we must refer to three time periods: the event time (the time at which Marie's going to church takes place), the utterance time (the time at which the sentence is spoken), and a reference time. The reference time of (13) can be made more salient with the use of a *when*-clause as in (14). In (14), the reference time is the time of Esther's arrival.

13. Marie had gone to church. [SE]
14. Marie had gone to church when Esther arrived. [SE]

In past perfects such as (13) and (14), these intervals are ordered as follows: event time precedes the reference time which precedes the utterance time. The proposition "Marie go to church" is true at an interval that precedes the reference time. Like the past perfect, the present perfect in Reichenbach's account also requires that the event time precede the reference time. In the case of the present perfect, however, the reference time is cotemporaneous with the utterance time. Klein (1992, 1994), argues that such reference times are present in all sentences. He takes them to be the times about which sentences make assertions, or the times they are "about."[6] They are in this sense topics; and Klein therefore refers to them as topic times.

Following Klein (1992, 1994), I treat tense and aspect as relations between intervals of time. Tense is the relation between a sentence's topic time and its utterance time. Aspect, on the other hand, is the relation between a sentence's topic time and its situation time, the equivalent of Reichenbach's event time. I take perfect aspect to be the indefinite past relation SITUATION TIME PRECEDES TOPIC TIME. In a present perfect sentence, the present tense relation assigns the topic time a present time interval while the situation time is located at some time before the present. With the aid of pragmatic principles involved in tense and aspect selection, this configuration is consistent with Comrie's definition of the perfect that Edwards adopts for the meaning of *done*: present relevance of a previous situation.

Where advocates of indefinite past theories of the perfect face the most difficulty, and where most need to say something special, is in accounting for the perfect of persistent situation. One must either qualify a definition such as SITUATION TIME PRECEDES TOPIC TIME or supplement it with some other mechanism in the perfect construction to allow the event described by the verb in a present perfect sentence to extend from the past into the present. To this end, in section 4, where I take up the perfect of persistent situation in detail, I will make use of Kamp and Reyle's 1993 result state analysis of the SE perfect to account for the perfect of persistent situation reading of the AAE *done* construction. According to result state theories (e.g., Parsons 1990; Smith 1991), the core semantics of the present perfect is the assertion that a state that results from the past event indicated by the verb phrase holds at the present moment. While I contend that *done* constructions make use of perfect aspect as I have previously defined it, I will argue that this information is carried by the ending on the verb that follows *done*, and that *done*'s role in the construction is to introduce a resultant state—a particular type of result state, the state of having *done* something—into the sentences in which it is found. In addition to making possible perfect of persistent situation readings, I will also argue that the introduction of this state helps explain preverbal *done* sentences in which the use of *done* seems to signal intensity of action and moral disapproval.

4. SHARPENING THE SINGLE SPEAKER JUDGMENTS

I return now to the variable judgments Wise speakers give *done* constructions modified by definite past-time denoting adverbials. An important first step in analyzing this variation is finding ways to make the judgments sharper so that the factors governing the variability can be brought into better focus. The judgments of the speakers I have interviewed in Wise can be sharpened in two ways: First, preposing the temporal adverbial of a sentence such as (15), as shown in (16), generates clearly unacceptable sentences.

15. ?John done baked a cake yesterday. [AAE]
16. *Yesterday, John done baked a cake. [AAE]

I have found no AAE speaker, in Wise or anywhere else for that matter, who considers sentences such as (16) to be grammatical despite widespread acceptance of sentences such as (17).

17. Today, John done baked a cake. [AAE]

Sentence (17) is the same as (16) save for the fact that the preposed adverbial, today, denotes a present rather than past time.

Second, leaving the adverbial in the postposed position while providing a carefully constructed context produces clearly acceptable sentences. The sentence in (15), *John done baked a cake yesterday,* is perfectly acceptable as part of the discourse in (19) when it is supported by the context in (18).

> 18. CONTEXT FOR (19) AND (20)
>   Mary and Sue are in a supermarket making decisions about what to buy to take back to the apartment where they both live with John. Mary picks up a banana cream pie and puts it in the cart.
> 19. SUE: You don't need to buy that pie now! John done baked a cake yesterday. We have plenty of sweets at home. [AAE]
>   'You don't need to buy that pie now! John has baked a cake; he just did it yesterday. We have plenty of sweets at home.'

As shown in (20), the context in (18) cannot, however, save (16)—the same sentence as (15) with the adverbial in the preposed position.

> 20. SUE: You don't need to buy that pie now! *Yesterday, John done baked a cake. We have plenty of sweets at home. [AAE]

Together with the highly variable judgments of sentences like (15), these new facts can be thought of as three pieces of a single puzzle: (1) The behavior of definite past-time denoting adverbials is different from that of other temporal adverbials in simple preverbal *done* sentences. In out-of-the-blue sentences, the former are more often than not judged unacceptable, but the judgments are not clear. (2) Preposing the adverbial makes these sentences clearly unacceptable. And (3) something about the context in (18) makes the sentences with postposed adverbials clearly acceptable. The challenge is to tie these three pieces of the puzzle together in an explanatory fashion.

5. PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

Taking them in reverse order, Terry (2006b) puts the three pieces of this puzzle together as follows. The context in (18), it is argued, makes sentences such as (15) acceptable by doing two things: First, it makes clear that the topic time of a sentence such as *John done baked a cake yesterday* is a present time interval; it is 'now'. Second, the context provides a reason for additional time specification of the event described by the verb. In (15), the event occurred yesterday. This is particularly relevant because of yesterday's proximity to the now.

Recall Comrie's perfect of recent past. This is the use of the present perfect (instead of the simple past) to suggest the temporal closeness of an event to the now. Wise AAE allows perfect of recent past readings of the preverbal *done* construction. Compared to the simple past sentence *The Sox won the series,* the preverbal *done* sentence in (21) is the better choice if one means to say that the Sox have JUST won the series.

21. The Sox done won the series! [AAE]
   'The Sox have (just) won the series!'

The context in (18) invites something like a perfect of recent past reading of the preverbal *done* construction, where the temporal closeness of the event is underscored by the adverb *yesterday*.

Moving to the preposing/postposing facts, there are, in principle, two ways that a temporal adverbial such as *yesterday* can end up in the preposed position shown in (16). First, the adverbial may be base-generated in that position from the start. As shown in figure 1, the preposed position, then, suggests an attachment site for the adverb that is high in the syntactic structure. This is where one would expect modification of a topic time. The postposed position, on the other hand, at least allows for a low (perhaps at the verb phrase [VP] level) attached adverbial. Here one might expect additional time specification of the past event without topic-time focus.

The second way an adverbial might end up in the preposed position is to begin elsewhere (again, perhaps at the VP level) and be moved to that preposed position by some syntactic transformation. It is often assumed that

FIGURE 1
Adverbial Attachment Sites
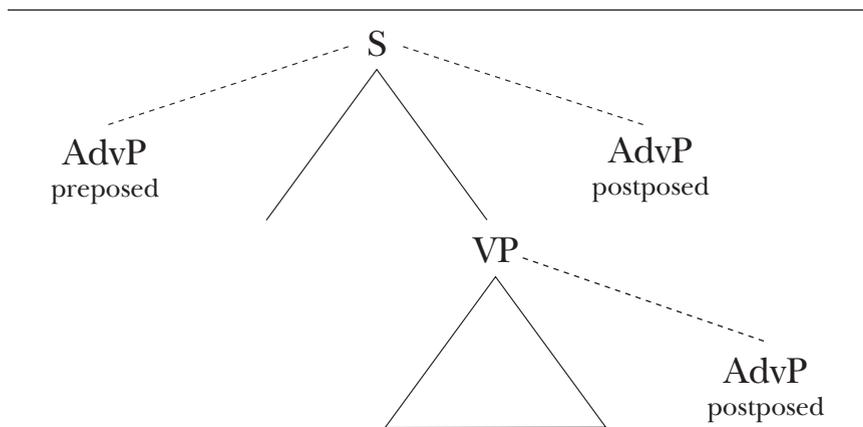
this movement, commonly referred to as "topicalization," occurs so that the adverbial can receive something like topic time focus. If, as suggested previously, the topic times of present perfect *done* sentences are present times, then specifying a past-time denoting adverbial as the topic time, either by generating it in the preposed position or by topicalizing it, would be at odds with the meaning of the construction. This explanation for the unambiguous ungrammaticality of sentences such as (16), *Yesterday, John done baked a cake*, has the added benefit of being consistent with and connected to the previous explanation of the force of the context in (18). It is also supported by the following facts: as shown in (22) and (23), in the postposed position, indefinite past-time denoting adverbials such as *on a Monday* are perfectly grammatical in *done* constructions; when preposed, however, they, like their definite counterparts, produce ungrammatical sentences.

22. John done baked a cake on a Monday. [AAE]
    'John has baked a cake on a Monday.'
23. *On a Monday John done baked a cake. [AAE]

This suggests a common reason for the ungrammaticality in Wise AAE of sentences such as (16) and (22). The "pastness" of their temporal adverbials fits the bill, especially since present-time denoting temporal adverbials such as *today* in (19), *Today John done baked a cake*, pose no problem in the preposed position.

The final piece of the puzzle that must be accounted for is where the discussion began—the variability in judgments of sentences such as (15), repeated here as (24).

24. ?John done baked a cake yesterday. [AAE]
   'John has baked a cake yesterday.'

How might definite past-time denoting adverbials such as *yesterday* be distinguished from indefinite adverbials such as *on a Monday* so as to account for the contrast between (24) and (22) and the variability they represent? Importantly, whatever the crucial property of the adverbials is, in line with the rest of the puzzle, it must be able to change with context. This would seem to rule out the most apparent differences. For instance, an appeal to definiteness as being the determining factor (as, say, Klein 1992 makes for similar SE facts with his P-definiteness constraint)[7] will not work. Providing a context such as that in (18) can make (24) acceptable, but it is hard to see how it could make *yesterday* any less definite.

This situation calls to mind the kind of "packaging" discussed by Emmon Bach (1986). As an example, the mass noun *beer* may be packaged as the

quantized predicate *a beer*. In such a case, what constitutes *a beer* is highly dependent on context; it might be a bottle, a can, or even several bottles or cans when used in a sentence such as *Let's go out for a beer*. If one assumes, as is often done, that uninflected verb phrases denote sets of possible events and further that aspectual operators convert them into sets of possible times (Kratzer 1998), the various parts of this puzzle can be brought together in the following way: Temporal adverbials such as *yesterday, today, on Monday*, and *on a Monday* are treated as properties of times. As such, they attach above the VP level where, as previously discussed, they interact with topic times. At least some AAE speakers, however, allow a contextually conditioned semantic type-shift that can repackage these temporal adverbials as properties of events. In this form they are constrained to VP-level attachment. As a property of events, the adverbial *yesterday* can only modify a verb phrase and thus can only add additional specification to the time of the event described by the uninflected verb in a present perfect *done* construction; it cannot modify the topic time. These attachment sites are shown in figure 2.[8]

Earlier, I entertained a number of explanations of the single-speaker variation that is brought to light by Wise AAE speaker's inconsistent judgments as a by-product of various types of group-level variation. These explanations all faced significant problems. By locating the source of the inconsistency within the synchronic grammar of Wise AAE, the explanation just introduced avoids these problems. This explanation has other benefits as well. For example, it explains why the inconsistency in judgments is neutralized in the

FIGURE 2
Adverbial Attachment Sites with Semantic Properties of the Adverbs
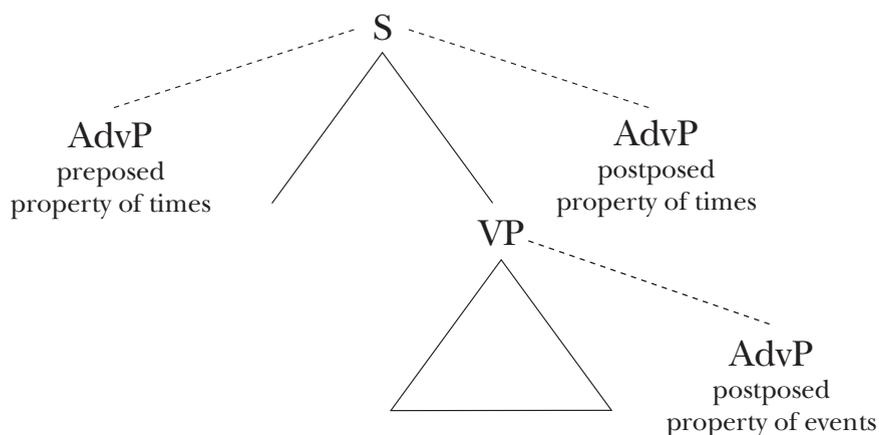
discourse context described and in the context of a fronted adverbial. Also, by locating the source of the variation in judgments within the adverbials in the construction, it explains the different judgments in terms of variation within lexical items, where one might already suspect such variation to occur and where it appears to be needed for other purposes. Further, it has the potential to reconcile the reports of other researchers. The same account can be used to explain the variation Dayton (1996) finds in her Philadelphia data, and even if further investigation shows that the judgments in Green's (1993) southwest Louisiana data are as strict as she reports, the account provides a way to explain why southwest Louisiana speakers of AAE, on the one hand, and Philadelphia and Wise speakers, on the other, differ in their judgments. Still further, the same syntactic and semantic mechanisms used in this account may also be useful in explaining reported cases of variation in perfect of persistent situation readings of the *done* construction.

6. THE PERFECT OF PERSISTENT SITUATION IN WISE AAE

Returning to the topic of the *done* construction and Comrie's perfect of persistent situation, recall that in this manifestation of the perfect, an adverbially modified present perfect is used to describe a situation that started in the past but persists into the present. These readings are, as I noted, only available to sentences whose main verbs are either lexically stative or interpreted as habituals. So at issue is whether *done* constructions such as that in (2) (repeated here as 25), in which the main verb is the lexically stative *live*, have such readings. Can AAE speakers use the sentence in (25) to mean that Mary has lived in Chapel Hill for the past three years and still does?

25. Mary done lived in Chapel Hill for three years. [AAE]
     'Mary has lived in Chapel Hill for three years.'

Previously, I used the fact that such readings are available for AAE speakers in Wise as a part of my argument that *done* constructions, at least as they are used there, are present perfects. However, the argument does not stand or fall based on these readings alone. Overlap of the use of *done* sentences with the rest of Comrie's manifestations of the perfect—the experiential perfect, the perfect of result, and the perfect of recent past—is strong evidence that *done* constructions are, indeed, perfects, and still more evidence in favor of this classification is presented in Terry (2004).

Although establishing whether or not *done* sentences admit perfect of persistent situation readings is not essential for classifying the construction as a perfect, I do not take the question to be a trivial matter. As I see it, there

are at least two good reasons to take it seriously. The first is interest in varia-
tion. Different researchers have reported different judgments regarding
the grammaticality of these readings; so if, as Wolfram suggests, we are to
take variation within AAE seriously, then they deserve a second look. The
second, they provide a key to developing a compositional analysis of the *done*
construction that not only distinguishes the meaning contributions of each
of its parts, but also provides a way to account for additional readings of the
construction that I have yet to introduce. Labov (1998) highlights preverbal
done sentences in which the use of *done* seems to signal intensity of action
and moral disapproval. He argues that these readings should be viewed as
distinct grammaticalized meanings within AAE. Such readings of the *done*
construction are available in Wise AAE, but contra Labov's view, the analysis
of the perfect of persistent situation that I develop here treats preverbal *done*
as a state-introducing element in all of the sentences in which it is found and
offers a straightforward way to derive the extended readings as pragmatic
uses of the construction rather than distinct semantic meanings.

I begin developing my analysis of the perfect of persistent situation in
Wise AAE by comparing the meanings of *done* sentences as in (26) with
those of simple past (V-*ed*) sentences such as those in (27). (I will consider
possible regional variation in the section to come).

26. Mary done lived in Chapel Hill. [AAE]
     'Mary has lived in Chapel Hill.'
27. Mary lived in Chapel Hill. [AAE]
     a. 'Mary lived in Chapel Hill.' OR
     b. 'Mary has lived in Chapel Hill.'

In Wise AAE, as in the AAE reported on by numerous researchers,
including Déchaine (1993), Dayton (1996), and Green (2002), what look
like SE simple past constructions are, in fact, ambiguous between simple past
and present perfect.[9] In these grammars, the sentence in (27) means both
'Mary lived in Chapel Hill' and something closer, but not identical to 'Mary
has lived in Chapel Hill'. Déchaine explains this by, like Edwards, assigning
preverbal *done* the role of introducing perfect aspect into the sentences in
which it is found; then she posits a covert *done* in sentences such as (27)
when they are given present perfect readings, but not when they are given
simple past readings. On her account, (27) on the (27b) reading is the same
sentence as (26) only with a silent *done*.

The (27b) reading of (27) and (26) are not, however, perfectly synony-
mous. Although the SE *have -en* construction provides the closest translation
for each, it is not an exact translation for either, and the two AAE sentences,
despite both being types of perfects, are, in fact, semantically distinct from

one another. According to the judgments of Wise AAE speakers, when modified by durational adverbials such as *for three years*, preverbal *done* sentences such as (26) allow perfect of persistent situation readings, while simple V-*ed* sentences such as (27) do not. As I noted, the sentence in (25), *Mary done lived in Chapel Hill for three years*, has a perfect of persistent situation reading in Wise AAE. *Mary lived in Chapel Hill for three years* does not.

These facts are chief among those that should lead us to conclude that rather than *done*,[10] the source of perfect aspect in both simple V-*ed* constructions (on their present perfect readings) and preverbal *done* constructions is the verbal morphology common to both. Both require a verb in its -*ed* form (e.g., *lived* in both 26 and 27); this -*ed* morphology carries the perfect meaning SITUATION TIME PRECEDES TOPIC TIME. In contrast, the primary role of *done* is to introduce stativity into the sentences in which it is found. It introduces the resultant state of the eventuality provided by the sentence's main verb. As discussed in section 2, a resultant state is the state of having done something (Parsons 1990). Allowing *done* to introduce a resultant state makes it possible to implement a Kamp and Reyle (1993)–style analysis of the perfect of persistent situation in which the interaction of a durational adverbial with a state-introducing element makes the reading possible.[11]

Consider again the preverbal *done* sentence in (25), *Mary done lived in Chapel Hill for three years*. Like its SE *have -en* counterpart, *Mary has lived in Chapel Hill for three years*, this sentence is ambiguous between a reading in which the three-year period of Mary's living in Chapel Hill occurred at some time wholly in the speaker's past and the perfect of persistent situation reading in which it extends to the moment the sentence is uttered. In both readings the *for*-adverbial seems to measure the length of a state. But as Kamp and Reyle (1993) note for SE, in the case of the perfect of persistent situation reading, it is difficult to determine which state the *for*-adverbial measures, the state introduced by the verb or the resultant state they suggest is introduced by *have* and I extend to *done*. This difficulty arises because although the resultant state of an event starts at the moment that the event culminates, the resultant state of a state (the state of having been in that state) starts at the moment the state starts. Ultimately, Kamp and Reyle conclude that when the SE counterparts to sentences such as (25) are given perfect of persistent situation readings, their *for*-adverbials do, in fact, measure out the state introduced by the verb. They reach this conclusion based on the fact that *for*-adverbials never seem to measure the lengths of the resultant states of eventive predicates. There is, for instance, no reading of *Mary has eaten beans for half an hour* in which Mary has been in a state of having eaten beans for a half hour. That is, *Mary has eaten beans for half an hour* never means 'Mary ate beans half an hour ago'. This fact leads Kamp

and Reyle to locate the source of the ambiguity in sentences such as *Mary has lived in Chapel Hill for three years* in the perfect construction itself. They stipulate two kinds of perfects: one in which the state indicated by the verb phrase extends into the utterance time, and one in which it does not. In Terry (2004), I offer a different way out based on a semantic formalization of *done* as a "state transforming operator" that when applied to an eventive predicate picks out a resultant state and when applied to a stative predicate is vague; it picks out either the resultant state or the state indicated by the main verb. It is important to note that while this state transforming operator interacts differently with different lower verb phrase predicates depending on their aspectual class, it does not turn eventive verb phrases into stative ones, and thus, the standard tests of stativity will still show these verb phrases to be eventive. I additionally place a constraint on *for*-adverbials that prohibits them from modifying resultant states, avoiding the need for two different constructions while preserving Kamp and Reyle's (1993) basic insight.

This style of analysis has a number of advantages. For one, it explains why, like SE *have -en* sentences, only preverbal *done* sentences whose main verbs are either lexically stative, as in (25), or interpreted as habituals (habituals very likely being kinds of statives) allow perfect of persistent situation readings. It also helps explain why, again like their SE *have -en* counterparts, sentences such (28), in which the durational adverbial appears in a preposed rather than postposed position, are not ambiguous and only have perfect of persistent situation readings.

28. For three years Mary done lived here. [AAE]
      'For three years Mary has lived here.'

As was the case for the definite past-time denoting adverbials that I considered earlier, syntactically speaking, the preposed position of the *for*-adverbial suggests a high attachment site. There, I argue, it directly modifies the state-introducing element *done*, resulting in a perfect of persistent situation reading, as the interaction of *done* with present tense leads to the sentence asserting that the state *done* introduces holds at the utterance time. The postposed position, on the other hand, allows for both a high and low (VP-level) attachment explaining the ambiguity of sentences such as (25), *Mary done lived in Chapel Hill for three years*. Attached at the VP-level, the adverbial modifies the state introduced by the main verb directly before any resultant state is calculated. Thus, in the case of (25), for example, the resultant state that is calculated is the resultant state of a live-in-Chapel-Hill-for-three-years state, a state that does not begin until after the three-year period has ended, and thus, the state introduced by the verb does not extend into the present.

A brief note about the semantic types involved in these operations: like Green (1993) and most others who have investigated the syntax of *done*, despite its appearance, I treat this marker as a single morphological word, rather than an inflected form of the verb *do*.[12] Consistent with its surface appearance, however, I contend that in terms of its semantic type it is more like an inflected main verb than an uninflected one. As a result, like the high attached past-time denoting adverbials I discussed previously, the durational adverbials that combine directly with *done* to produce perfect of persistent situation readings must denote properties of times. The state is "stretched into the present" indirectly by modifying the time interval that contains it (Terry 2004). To allow for the ambiguity of sentences such as (25) requires that either the lexicon of Wise AAE has two entries for each durational adverbial, one that treats it as properties of times and another that treats it as a property of eventualities, or we must allow a type shifting operation for durational adverbials similar to the one that I suggested for definite past-time indicating adverbials such as *yesterday*.[13]

In addition to accounting for the perfect of persistent situation readings of *done* sentences, this account of the meaning of *done* helps explain the readings of *done* sentences that Labov (1998) discusses. Focusing on the completive nature of many *done* sentences, Labov highlights what he sees as two distinct uses of the *done* construction that do not clearly follow from the notion of completion. First, there is what he refers to as "intensive *done*." He uses the example in (29) among others to demonstrate this reading.

29. After I done won all that money. [AAE; Labov 1998, 125]

Labov's point is this: *win* is an achievement verb. This is to say that the action of winning is conceptualized as occurring instantaneously; so to speak of the winning of the money as occurring completely would make little sense. Instead, he argues that in this example, *done* is best seen as carrying "intensive" meaning. Two points are worth noting here. First, Labov is treating completion as the core meaning of the *done* construction, the key meaning to be tested against for semantic extensions. Second, he is assigning that meaning to *done* itself.

Setting these assumptions aside, I see another view as possible. Labov's example need not force us to conclude that the marker *done* itself is introducing anything more than a resultant state. Rather than thinking of intensity as what the choice of a *done* construction here signals beyond saying "After I won all that money," one might view this choice as means of highlighting personal responsibility on the part of the subject for the act. If *done* constructions do make use of a resultant state and if resultant states do not

simply hold but are held by the subject of the sentence, stativity would help explain the added sense of personal responsibility associated with sentences such as (29). Rather than simply asserting that the subject was a participant in an event that occurred in the past, AAE preverbal *done* sentences would, in addition to this, assert that the subject is therefore in a state of having participated in that event. It is understandable, then, why speakers would make the pragmatic choice of using a *done* construction instead of a simple past construction such as *After I won all that money* in cases where personal responsibility is to be highlighted.

Labov uses the example in (30) as an example of *done* being used to signal "moral indignation."

30. He done slept with Francine and he done slept with Darlene … and he supposed to be a good friend of Henry [Darlene's husband, from W. Philadelphia]. [AAE; Labov 1998, 126]

Again, focusing on the completive nature of many *done* sentences, Labov points out that sleeping with someone is something that is either done or not done and argues that as society defines it, it cannot be done partially or completely, intensively or moderately. He notes that AAE speakers generally agree that the use of the *done* construction in such examples "resonates with the sense of moral indignation and can be translated by the phrase 'had the nerve to'" (Labov 1998, 126). He goes on to argue that moral indignation is a distinct meaning selectable by the rules of AAE grammar rather than simply a pragmatic interpretation of a more general meaning of the *done* construction:

Whenever we find such extended meanings of a grammatical particle, we must consider the possibility that they are contextually pragmatic interpretations ([Donald] Winford, p.c.), and not meanings within the grammatical system. There is no general criterion for deciding when a particular interpretation has been grammaticalized and is now a part of the fundamental meaning of the particle. However, we must be prepared to describe, at least informally, the rules of interpretation that take us from 'completed' or 'intensive' to 'moral indignation.' I do not know of any pragmatic analysis that would carry the *done* of [(30)] from 'intensive' to 'morally undesirable' rather than to 'thoroughly,' 'magnificently,' or 'spectacularly.' [Labov 1998, 126]

In Wise AAE, it is common to find *done* constructions in such "blaming contexts." They are preferred here to simple past sentences and even simple V-*ed* perfects. It is possible, however, to view this in terms of highlighting personal responsibility rather than blame or moral indignation directly. The AAE sentence *You done messed up*, to add another example, carries a greater sense of personal responsibility than *You messed up*. I would add that

this preference for a *done* construction is not limited to blaming or negative contexts. In general, any context that highlights personal responsibility, blame, or praise tends to favor the *done* perfect over the simple past or simple V-*ed* perfects. For example, in comparison to *Marie did it*, the sentence *Marie done did it* seems to highlight personal responsibility for whatever Marie did whether what she did was good or bad. Thus, treating *done* as a state-introducing element provides a natural way to think about Labov's example without treating moral indignation as a distinct grammaticalized meaning of the *done* construction, as the same pragmatic choice that accounted for his intensive *done* readings can be invoked here as well. The suggestion here is not that there is some core meaning of the *done* marker that, examined on its own, leads to a personal responsibility meaning. Rather, I am suggesting that personal responsibility is something that quite often, in conversation, speakers wish to express, and given the inventory of constructions available to AAE speakers, the *done* construction, because it makes use of a resultant state, becomes a natural choice when, for instance, compared to the simple V-*ed* construction. This is not, in any way, to say that the marker *done* has become some sort of personal responsibility operator; nor is it to say that all uses of preverbal *done* will carry with them a sense of personal responsibility. It is only to say that when an AAE speaker wishes to express this type of personal responsibility, the *done* construction is a good choice.

7. VARIATION IN THE AAE PERFECT OF PERSISTENT SITUATION

It is unclear how applicable the analysis of AAE preverbal *done* sentences developed in the previous section is to areas beyond Wise, North Carolina, where I have collected my data. This is in part because the account relies so heavily on the availability of perfect of persistent situation readings to the *done* construction, and here we find variation in the reports of different researchers. For instance, Dayton (1996) reports that such uses of the *done* construction are disfavored by AAE speakers in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Despite their being disfavored there, however, she does record instances of their use such as the sentence in (31).

31. For two weeks now, I done had this car. [AAE]
    'For two weeks now, I have had this car.'
    [Dayton 1996, 311; gloss my own]

Similar to Dayton, Green (1993, 2002) argues that the perfect of persistent situation use of the *done* construction is at odds with the core meaning

of *done* as it is used by her consultants in southwest Louisiana. These readings are, according to Green, only available in restricted contexts as a "stylistic" use. She uses her consultants' judgments of the out-of-context sentence in (32) as ungrammatical, along with their more favorable judgments of the same sentence provided the context in (33), to make this case.

32. *She done been an invalid all her life. [AAE]
33. Why do you want to help her now? She done been an invalid all her life. [AAE]
    'Why do you want to help her now? She has been an invalid all her life.'
    [Green 2002, 61; gloss my own]

In the discourse context in (33), Green's consultants treat (32) as fully grammatical. Testing Green's sentence in (32), Edwards (2001) finds that AAE speakers in Detroit, Michigan, judge it as marginally acceptable. And while he did not test it using the context in (33), he, like Dayton, does report actual instances of perfect of persistent situation uses of *done* constructions. The sentence in (34) is one of his examples.

34. The people saying now what kind of a leader he is. He dən[14] been in there long, about twenty something years, and he's getting really senile. [AAE]
    'The people are saying now what kind of a leader he is. He has been in there a long time, and he is getting really senile.
    [Edwards 2001, 418; gloss my own]

As he does not find many such uses of the *done* construction in his data, Edwards concludes that more examples are needed to determine the status of these readings in the Detroit area.

   None of the AAE speakers that I have consulted in Wise find (32) or sentences like it ungrammatical, but the differences between these judgments and those reported by Green, Dayton, and Edwards may not be as great as they first appear. Strikingly similar to the context that permits Wise AAE speakers to modify preverbal *done* sentences with definite past-time denoting adverbs, Green's discourse environment in (33) and the contexts in both Dayton's and Edwards's examples emphasize the present moment and offer a reason for modifying the state introduced by the main verb in the relevant sentence. Following the analysis of *done* that I developed in the previous section, it is quite possible that, in general, AAE speakers in southwest Louisiana, Philadelphia, and Detroit treat durational adverbials such as *for three years* and *all her life* as properties of eventualities. As such, they attach at the VP-level where they do not produce perfect of persistent situation readings of *done* sentences, but at least some speakers allow a contextually conditioned type shift in which the durational adverbials are treated as properties of times.

These adverbials attach at the level of *done* in preverbal *done* constructions and, as I described for Wise AAE speakers, force perfect of persistent situation readings. Thus (albeit in reverse), the same kind of type shifting operation that I used to explain the variable judgments that Wise AAE speakers give sentences such as *John done baked a cake yesterday* can be used to explain Edwards's and Dayton's sentences and Green's stylistic *done*. The question of why AAE speakers in Wise seem to be more comfortable with perfect of persistent situation readings of the *done* construction than speakers in other areas, however, remains. It may be that the lexicon of Wise AAE contains entries for durational adverbials both as properties of events and as properties of times, whereas in southwest Louisiana, for instance, adverbials must be type shifted. This is just one possible explanation, and clearly more data would need to be collected and more work done to establish that this is the case. Despite this lingering question and the need to work out some technical details involved in formalization, I contend that in principle, the type-shifting account reconciles the data presented by Green, Dayton, and Edwards with the Wise data and allows the analysis to serve for all four data sets.

8. CONCLUSION

Wolfram (2007) argues that to complement the many studies that describe the ways in which AAE differs from more standard varieties of American English and to provide a more accurate picture of the variety itself, we, as linguists, must overcome the homogenizing myths that we have created for ourselves and pay greater attention to the variation that resides WITHIN the dialect. In support of that position, my intention in this article has been to extend his argument beyond the more familiar group-level variation to include variation at the individual-speaker level. I contend that there are times when to fully understand the nature of the variation that exists between regional and social groups, or to even establish its existence, we must first confront variation within the individual speaker.

　　Clear in his challenge to excessive homogenization, Wolfram calls upon linguists to reconsider their very definitions of AAE as a variety:

Although sociolinguists have tended to agree that AAE constitutes a variety, there is no consensus definition, only a shared belief that it exists. It is time to revisit our foundational definition of AAE so that we do not unwittingly perpetuate the notion that AAE is a unitary language variety whose features and functions are quite transparent to linguists and speakers of American English.

I do not take Wolfram to doubt the value of treating AAE as a variety. Rather, I see him as warning that we must be prepared to recognize varieties within the variety and advising that we become clearer about what ties these subvarieties together. Ironically, by providing a way to reconcile the different judgments reported by various researchers from different regions, the analysis of the individual-level variation that exists within the *done* construction in Wise, North Carolina, that I presented here provides one way in which several possibly different varieties of AAE might be connected.

NOTES

1.   Further information regarding the sociolinguistic landscape of Warren County and many of the structural features of African American English as it is spoken there can be found in Hazen (2000).

2.   I am appealing here to the traditional use of native speaker judgments of grammaticality as applied in generative studies, which some linguists (e.g., Green 1993 in the study of African American English and Zanuttini 1995 in the case of Appalachian English) have found to be applicable to the study of dialectal variation.

3.   Like their SE *have -en* counterparts, what I take to be past perfect and nonfinite perfect *done* constructions are also formed by using an auxiliary *have*. In line with Terry (2004), I assume that there is no underlying *have* in simple preverbal *done* constructions and that the auxiliary *have* that is found in AAE past perfect and nonfinite *done* constructions such as (9a) and (9b) is projected only to host past-tense morphology as in (9a) or to supply a requisite nonfinite form as in (9b).

4.   Although numerous authors (e.g., Klein 1992; Giorgi and Pianesi 1998; Musan 2002; Pancheva and von Stechow 2004) have offered explanations for the SE facts and the difference between them and those of languages like German, a widely agreed upon solution to the puzzle presented by these facts has yet to be found.

5.   In Terry (2004), I argue that the *done* construction, as it is used in Wise, expresses all of Comrie's perfects except the perfect of result. While I continue to hold that those arguments show there is no semantically distinct perfect of result in Wise AAE, I now believe that perfect of result readings are available as a pragmatic option. This change in view is reflected in Terry (2005) and other work.

6.   This notion that sentences are "about" times is potentially problematic. However, the same idea can be captured by considering topic times to be focused or particularly salient intervals of time within the semantic computations of sentences.

7.   Klein's (1992) P-definiteness constraint is designed to explain why English sentences like *John has baked a cake yesterday* and *John has baked a cake on Friday*

(when *on Friday* is understood to pick out a particular Friday, say, last Friday) are ungrammatical. The constraint says that in any utterance, the expression of the topic time and the expression of the situation time cannot both be independently position-definite (P-definite for short). According to Klein, the present time in a present perfect is always P-definite due to its inclusion of the moment of utterance. The past time is not P-definite until it is contextually filled or fixed by a definite adverbial, such as *yesterday* or *on Friday*, when it is used definitely as above.

8. Consistent with the full formalization presented in Terry (2000a), I assume that the VP introduces uninflected verb phrases and that the verb endings such as *-ed* and *-ing* are added in the syntax as opposed to the lexicon.

9. I offer extensive evidence for this ambiguity in Terry (2004, 2006b). The evidence comes from a variety of sources, including overlap with Comrie's categories of the perfect, the use of Dahl's (1985) survey of tense, mood, and aspect, adverbial attachment facts, and tag question data. The tag question data are key in showing that there is a true ambiguity here and not simply vagueness. In present perfect contexts, simple V-*ed* sentences take *ain't* tags, while in past perfective contexts they take *didn't* tags. For example, wondering whether or not you have heard Leontyne Price sing before, I might ask the question *You heard her sing, ain't you?* If my concern, however, is whether or not you heard Leontyne Price sing at her concert last month, I would instead ask *You heard her sing, didn't you?* As tag questions such as *didn't he?* and *ain't he?* are (at least in part) reflexes of the tense of the sentences they are tags to, this type of contrast forms an important part of the argument in Terry (2004, 2006) that there is a covert present tense in AAE simple V-*ed* sentences on their present perfect readings, but not on the past perfective readings.

10. A similar argument can be made against a covert *have* supplying these sentences with perfect aspect.

11. Additional support for treating AAE *done* constructions as making use of resultant states can be found in Green (1993).

12. My chief reasons for treating preverbal *done* as a single unit stem from the problems that a morphologically complex preverbal *done* poses for AAE phrase structure.

13. This assumes the semantic types given in Terry (2006a), where inflected and uninflected verb phrase have distinct types. In Terry (2004) inflected and uninflected verb phrases are treated as having the same semantic type, but this system has difficulty explaining the variable judgments that Wise AAE speakers give *done* constructions that are modified by definite past-time denoting adverbials.

14. As do a number of authors, Edwards (1991, 2001) uses "dən" to refer to what I call preverbal *done*.

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