Annotation Guidelines

*AAE, or African American English, is a language variety spoken by many African Americans with its own grammatical rules and structures. Below are guidelines for identifying and annotating these features in interview transcripts. Note that transcription of AAE does not require correction; annotate but do not edit or change the phrases to SAE, or Standard American English.*

**Habitual Be**

In AAE, ‘be’ is used to indicate a habitual occurrence or state. Most often, habituality is indicated by the usage of present or past tense in conjunction with a verb immediately succeeding the ‘be’, though this is not an exhaustive or exclusionary rule.

Example of Habitual Be:

‘He be blowing up my phone every day’

‘They be sharing information.’

‘It’s fine; we don’t be waiting too long.’

Example of Non-Habitual Be:

‘I know he is going to be blowing up my phone.’

‘They will be sharing information.’

‘It’s fine; we will not be waiting too long.’

**Multiple Negation**

In AAE, multiple negators can be used within phrases to emphasize negation. This feature presents when at least two negators are used within the same phrase (i.e. uninterrupted by punctuation or conjunction) to emphasize negation.

Example of Multiple Negation:

‘We don’t be bothering nobody up at the school.’

‘Wasn’t no sawmill in Elzey.’

‘I ain’t never had nobody do me like that.’

Example of Non-Multiple Negation:

‘We don’t be bothering anybody up at the school because nobody is there.’

‘There wasn’t a sawmill in Elzey.’

‘I’ve never had somebody do me like that.’

**Person Number Disagreement**

In AAE, verbs conjugated in the 3rd person (he/she/it/etc) do not reflect the -s morpheme found in American English. Person number disagreement can appear in a sentence where there is a plural subject attached to a singular verb, or in a sentence where there is a singular subject attached to a plural verb.

Example of Person Number Disagreement:

‘She play too much.’

‘They does better than me.’

‘There was opportunities for whatever you wanted to do.’

Example of Person Number Agreement:

‘She plays too much.’

‘They do better than me.’

‘There were opportunities for whatever you wanted to do.’

**Remote Past Bin**

In AAE, bin (or been) is ‘used to indicate that the time period referred to is longer than normal [...] or used to affirm that a state has indeed held for a [long time].’ (Green, 2002)

Example of Remote Past Bin:

‘I been cleaned up the kitchen.’

‘She been a hundred and one.’

‘And if not for my job, I would’ve been moved to New York.’

Example of Non-Remote Past Bin:

‘I have been to the kitchen.’

‘She has been alive for over a hundred years.’

‘And if not for my job, I would’ve been eager to move.’

**Existential It/Dey**

In AAE, it/dey can be used similarly to ‘there are/there is’ constructions in American English. Various forms include ‘it/dey is’, ‘it/dey are’, ‘it/dey got’, and ‘it/dey have.’

Example of Existential It/Dey:

‘It was a big bear that started chasing me.’

‘Dey got some good sales at Publix.’

‘It was some men that were working with the paint.’

Example of Non-Existential It/Dey:

‘It started chasing me.’

‘They shopped the good sales at Publix.’

‘It was being painted by some men.’

**Perfect Done**

In AAE, done is similar to the ‘have x’ construction in SAE - it signals that an event has concluded or is complete. The ‘x’ typically represents a verb, i.e. ‘done x’ in AAE would roughly translate to ‘have x’ in SAE.

Example of Perfect Done:

‘I done told you to leave my flowers alone.’

‘Yes, we done ran all our errands and yours too.’

‘They done come in, made a whole ruckus.’

Example of Non-Perfect Done:

‘I have done some work on my flowers.’

‘Yes, we are done with all our errands, and yours too.’

‘They came in, made a whole ruckus before they were done.’