

**Tense & Aspect Markers in African American English**

by

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This dissertation examines the development and distribution of tense and aspect markers in two dialects of African American English (AAE) spoken in Louisiana. Its purpose is to fill in the gaps in the literature concerning (1) aspect markers *stay* and *steady*, (2) competing variants for future temporal reference, (3) competing variants for expressing the present perfect, and (4) dialectal differences in the use of tense and aspect markers in northern and southern Louisiana. To fill in these gaps, which I will explain in greater detail shortly hereafter, I pose the following research questions:

1. Which linguistic contexts historically favored the use of each future auxiliary variant — *shall*, *will*, *be*, *be going to*, *be fixing to*—in diachronic English data? To what extent do these constraints still influence the selection of one variant over another in the synchronic data in Louisiana?
2. Which linguistic contexts historically favored the use of each present perfect marker — *done*, *have*, *been*, *be* —in diachronic English data and to what extent do these constraints still influence the patterning of these variants in the synchronic data in Louisiana?
3. What are the semantic uses of the habitual marker *stay* and the continuative marker *steady*? What are the limits to their distribution?
4. Do the inventory of future and present perfect markers and their frequency rates differ in communities in northern and southern Louisiana?

The literature remains silent on the issues I address in my research questions for a number of reasons. Certain aspect markers such as *stay* (which indicates that an action occurs frequently) and *steady* (which indicates that an action occurs continuously) have been largely ignored in the literature because they are camouflaged forms, a term that Spears (1982) coined to describe words whose phonological similarity to forms in Mainstream American English (MAE) masks their different semantic and syntactic functions. What little has been written about *stay* and *steady* does not devote much attention to their full semantic and syntactic use, but largely seeks to prove that they are indeed aspect markers distinct from the adverb *steady* and the main verb *stay* in MAE, which leaves more to be said regarding their use in African American discourse. By considering the semantic and syntactic properties in broad social and linguistic contexts, in this dissertation I provide a more thorough analysis of the markers supported by the data and by my intuitions and insights as a native speaker of Louisiana AAE.

Further, although the grammaticalization of various future and perfect markers (Meillet 1912, Kurylowicz 1965, Hopper 1991, Hopper 1996, Hopper & Traugott 2003, Traugott & Dasher 2002, Smith 2009) has been well studied, quantitative sociolinguistic analyses of these forms in AAE are lacking, with the notable exceptions of the studies conducted by Tagliamonte and Poplack on AAE in the diasporic communities of Nova Scotia and the Samaná Peninsula (see Poplack & Tagliamonte 2000, 2001; Tagliamonte 1997). No quantitative studies have been conducted concerning the coexistence and competition of these variants in Louisiana dialects of AAE, thus this dissertation will be a contribution to the field by providing a descriptive statistical analysis. Further, although AAE is a commonly studied variety of English, much of the research on this variety has been based on patterns of language use by African Americans in the inner

cities in the northern US. Therefore, this dissertation also contributes to the literature by focusing on AAE as it is spoken in rural communities in the southern US.

Grammaticalization, which has given rise to the tense and aspect markers that are the focus of this study, is the process through which lexical items become grammatical morphemes.

Consider the following pairs of sentences:

- (1.1) a. I have a car.  
b. I am going to the car.
  
- (1.2) a. I have bought a car.  
b. I am going to buy a car.

In the sentences above, the meaning of *have* and *go* in (1.1a) and (1.1b) is quite distinct from their meanings in (1.2a) and (1.2b). In the first set of sentences, both *have* and *go* are functioning purely as lexical categories. In (1.1a), the word *have* is functioning as a main verb that means ‘to own, to possess,’ and in (1.1b), the word *go* is functioning as a main verb that means ‘to move from one point to another.’ In the second pair of sentences, however, *have* and *go* are functioning as grammatical markers. In (1.2a), *have* is functioning as an auxiliary verb expressing perfect aspect, and in (1.2b) *go* is functioning as a futurity marker.

In fact, many of the auxiliary verbs (e.g., *have*, *do*, *be*) in English were formed from main verbs such as *have*, *do*, and *be*. As they developed into grammatical items, they underwent a process of semantic bleaching by which they lost some of their literal, concrete meaning and took on more abstract, grammatical meanings (Meillet 1912:136; Brinton 1988: 97-100; Heine, Claudi & Hünnemeyer 1991: 40-41; Eckardt 2006: 30-33). In some cases of grammaticalization, the new form may co-exist along with an older form that serves the same function (e.g. future markers *be going to* and *will*), a principle which Hopper (1991) refers to as *layering*.



In this dissertation I will determine the future and perfect marker variants that coexist in Louisiana dialects of AAE by examining synchronic data. I will refer to the literature concerning earlier attestations of such forms to provide a diachronic account of each form to determine the more recent innovation and provide the contexts that favored each variant's use. Further, I will use a quantitative analysis to determine which linguistic variables (e.g., temporal proximity, subject, and type of clause for future markers) and social variables (sex of speaker and location) influence each variant's distribution. The variables will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 7 and 8.

This dissertation is also concerned with the grammaticalization of the aspect markers *stay* and *steady* in AAE, as they have been largely ignored in the literature. As a quantitative analysis is not possible due to insufficient tokens, this dissertation seeks to add to the literature concerning *steady* and *stay* by providing a more extensive qualitative analysis of their use in African American discourse than is currently available. This dissertation will propose that in addition to being used as aspect markers (as the literature on this topic currently claims), *steady* and *stay* can also be used to express states of surprise and speaker evaluation; I will show furthermore that *stay* and *steady* occur in a wider range of syntactic structures than previously observed.

The organization of this dissertation is as follows: Chapter 2 provides an overview of the relevant literature concerning camouflaged forms, grammaticalization, and variationist approaches to studying tense and aspect markers. Chapter 3 lays out the methodological tools used to conduct this study. Chapter 4 provides a thorough analysis of the marker *stay*, whereas Chapter 5 focuses on the analysis of the marker *steady*. Chapter 6 discusses markers of indignation. Chapter 7 analyzes the use of future markers in Jena and St. Gabriel, Louisiana,

whereas Chapter 8 analyzes the use of present perfect markers for these two sites. Finally, Chapter 9 concludes this dissertation.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Tense, mood, and aspect (TMA) markers are grammatical elements that indicate tense (e.g., the point in time an action occurs), aspect (e.g., whether an action is complete, incomplete, or in progress) and mood (e.g., whether an action is possible, probable, or certain). The TMA system in AAE is noted for being semantically rich due to its status as a semi-creole, ‘which occurs when people with different first languages shift to a typologically distinct target language (itself an amalgam of dialects in contact, including fully restructured varieties) under social circumstances that partially restrict their access to the target language as normally used by native speakers’ (Holm 2000:10). Scholars have generated a wealth of articles dedicated to detailed descriptions of the semantic and pragmatic uses and syntactic environments of TMA markers such as habitual *be* (Dayton 1996, Green 1998a, Green 2002, Labov 1998) and completive *done* (Edwards 2001, Terry 2004, Labov 1998). Habitual *be*, which denotes that an activity or state occurs habitually, is found in a wide variety of syntactic environments, co-occurring with NPs, AdjPs, PPs, AdvPs, and AspPs (Green 1998a:46). Further, the marker *done*, which expresses either perfective or completive aspect, takes a verb ending in *-ed* (Green 1998a: 47-49).

In this chapter I give an overview of the literature regarding the tense and aspect markers that are the focus of this study. Sections 2.1 and 2.2 explain the saliency and methodological issues that have led to certain tense and aspect markers in African American English being understudied. Several TMA markers are not especially salient to researchers. Overlap in the syntactic systems of mainstream American English and African American English initially

caused some scholars to overlook semantic differences. Further, the majority of studies of TMA markers are qualitative rather than quantitative. This is because qualitative studies can be conducted with smaller data sets, whereas quantitative analyses require much larger corpora to yield results that are statistically significant. Section 2.3 describes the grammaticalization framework in which this research is couched, emphasizing the benefits of grammaticalization for understanding the development of TMA markers. Section 2.4 surveys the literature regarding the development of future markers in English, whereas Section 2.5 provides the background regarding the development of present perfect markers in English.

## 2.1. Camouflaging

Spears (1982) explains that certain TMA markers in AAE have been neglected in the literature because they are camouflaged forms, a term he introduces to describe words in AAE whose phonological form is the same as that in Mainstream American English (MAE), but whose semantic and syntactic import is distinct. According to Spears (1982), there are two types of camouflage: syntactic camouflage and word camouflage. The weaker form of camouflage is word camouflage, as it involves a term that occurs in syntactic structures that are distinct from MAE and thus more salient to researchers as potentially differing in semantics. Spears (1982) describes simple past marker *bin* and perfect marker *don* (both from Guyanese Creole English) and habitual *be* from African American English as being word camouflaged. Other AAE markers such as remote past *BIN* could readily be added to this list of word camouflaged terms. Consider the following examples from my corpus:

- (2.1) a. You know, they **be** like this here here.  
‘You know, they are usually like this one here.’

- b. Oh yeah, he **BIN** know how to play dominoes.  
'Oh yeah, he has known how to play dominoes for a long time.'

Both (2.1a) and (2.1b) are grammatically and semantically acceptable utterances in AAE, but they are immediately recognizable as structures absent from MAE. The result is that word camouflaged TMA markers are especially salient to speakers from other language varieties and thus constitute a more readily available topic for researchers who wish to study AAE.

Syntactically camouflaged TMA markers, however, are much more difficult to detect by those who are not native speakers of AAE. When a word is syntactically camouflaged, it occurs in the same or similar environments as the MAE form, but remains distinct on semantic grounds. As a result, its use does not produce an utterance that would be ungrammatical in MAE (at least due only to the use of the camouflaged element) and would thus not be especially salient to speakers of MAE. For example, the TMA marker *come* that expresses speaker indignation occurs only before verbs in *-ing*, an environment in which the motion verb *come* can also occur. Consider the following example from Spears (1982), for which I have provided my own gloss:

- (2.2) He **come** telling me how fine I was. (Spears 1982: 855)  
'He had the nerve to tell me how fine I was.'<sup>1</sup>

Example (2.2) is grammatically acceptable in AAE and is syntactically similar to both MAE *He comes telling me* and AAE *He PASTcome telling me*, so there is no indication to the linguist that AAE speakers may be using *come* as an aspect marker instead of a main verb. The verbal paradigm in AAE has undergone leveling which results in the loss of the *-s* morpheme for agreement in the third person singular. Moreover, AAE, the same as Appalachian English and other regional varieties, uses bare participles to indicate the simple past. In these varieties, expressions such as *He seen it yesterday* and *He saw it yesterday* are equivalent, as are *He come*

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<sup>1</sup> My judgment is that indignant *come* only occurs in past tense expressions and negative commands, hence my use of the past tense in the gloss.

*here yesterday* and *He came here yesterday*. Consequently, the use of *come* instead of *comes* or *came* in (2.2) is not sufficient evidence to indicate that *come* is necessarily an aspect marker in the same way that invariant *be* is considered a habitual aspect marker. Only the co-occurrence of both forms in a single sentence, as in (2.3) would make it clear that there are two distinct lexical items with the same phonetic form *come*.

- (2.3) He **come** coming in here raising all kind of hell. (Spears 1982:854)  
'He had the nerve to come in here raising all kind of hell.'

Intonation expressing disapproval and other non-verbal cues such as facial expressions further serve to distinguish between the two instances of *come*. Similarly, stress is used to distinguish the aspect marker *stay* from the main verb *stay*, and intensity of action distinguishes the syntactically camouflaged aspect marker *steady* from the adverb *steady*. Consider the following example from my corpus:

- (2.4) Friend: (pointing at a car wash) I need to go there and wash my car. My car **STAY** dirty. You go there and pay thirty dollars and you can wash your car as much as you want.

CS: What, you pay thirty dollars and then can wash your car as many times as you want in a certain period of time or what?

Friend: They **steady** charging your credit card thirty dollars every month and you can wash it as much as you want.

In (2.4), use of the aspect marker *stay* indicates that the friend's car is frequently dirty. (This is the case because she must drive through dirt roads to travel to and from her home.) Use of *steady* in the conversation above emphasizes that the company continues to issue a monthly fee for subscription to its services. Stressed *stay* will be discussed further in Chapter 4, whereas Chapter 5 provides more information regarding *steady*.

In conclusion, although TMA markers subject to word camouflage are less likely to be overlooked, utterances with syntactically camouflaged TMA markers could be erroneously read

as having the same meaning as in the fieldworker's dialect. Having described saliency issues that lead to a dearth of studies on certain TMA markers in AAE, I will discuss in the next section methodological issues that limit variationist studies of markers.

## **2.2. Methodological limitations**

African American English differs from mainstream varieties of English in its phonology, syntax, and semantics, yet a disproportionate number of studies focus mainly on phonological and morphosyntactic variation. This is due to the constraints of the methodology that variationist sociolinguists employ. Sociolinguists often analyze empirical data by compiling corpora of spoken data, e.g. by conducting interviews with speakers whose language variety they wish to study. The variables that show up most frequently in recorded speech are phonological and morphosyntactic variables, so they naturally receive more attention. Studies on syntactic variation would require much more recorded speech to yield as many tokens and are thus more labor intensive, so they are rarer. Scholars such as Dayton (1996) and Rickford (1999) have sought to overcome the limits of tape-recorded speech by relying heavily on participant observation in the field. By regularly observing members of the speech community in their daily interactions, scholars in the field are able to collect additional occurrences of the syntactic variables that interest them. Nonetheless, this method still yields much fewer tokens of data hour for hour than would be possible for phonological variables.

Moreover, Labov's insistence that a variable only be studied if the variable context can be determined also makes phonological variables a more attractive topic of study. It is much harder to determine the variable context for syntactic or semantic variables because one cannot say with certainty that the variable should have occurred in a given context but did not. Rather

than explicitly stating the variable context, work within the past 15 years by variationists such as Poplack, Sankoff, and Tagliamonte instead presents a function (e.g., future temporal reference), lists the semantically equivalent forms of that function (e.g., *will*, *be going to*, etc), and performs quantitative analyses of these semantically equivalent forms, which I will refer to as *variants* throughout this dissertation, to determine which is the most natural or felicitous way of expressing that function in a given context and which is more unnatural or unfelicitous.

There is question in the literature as to whether syntactic forms are semantically identical. Fleischman (1982) and other scholars have long pointed out subtle differences between variants of the future. Consider the following two examples from Fleischman (1982:89):

(2.5) J'ai vendu ma bagnole; maintenant je **vais faire** du vélo.  
'I've sold my car; now I'm **going to** start riding a bike.'

(2.6) A. I can't open this bottle.  
B. Here. I'll do it for you.

Fleischman (1982) argues that although both *will* and *be going to* may express intent, they differ in that *be going to* additionally expresses premeditation. In (2.5), the speaker had already decided in advance to switch modes of transport. In (2.6), however, Speaker B decides at the moment of utterance that he will open the bottle for Speaker A. According to Fleischman (1982), *will* and *be going to* are not interchangeable in (2.6) because *be going to* would express premeditation along with intent while *will* simply expresses intent. Sankoff (1988:153) acknowledges that although there may be subtle differences in meaning between different variants of the future upon reflection, those subtle distinctions are not relevant every time a variant is used and are neutralized in discourse. I follow Sankoff (1988) in this regard. I do not consider the variants to be semantically identical since there may subtle differences in connotation; however, they are semantically equivalent in discourse since they share the same semantic function.



For this dissertation, I opted to use more hours of recorded speech in order to capture a wider range of tokens, and I also supplemented my data with participant observation for forms that were rare in interview settings. As previous scholars had discovered, syntactic variation among future and perfect markers did not occur as often as phonological variation, but my dataset yielded a few hundred tokens for both, which is robust enough for a statistical analysis. Tokens with *steady* and *stay* were too few to perform a quantitative analysis, so in their case I limit myself to a qualitative analysis.

In the next section, I explain the grammaticalization framework I use in this dissertation and also discuss the development of the future and perfect markers to be analyzed.

### **2.3. Approach used for this dissertation**

This section provides an overview of grammaticalization, a framework which offers insight into how different forms arise that serve the same function and the constructions in which they develop. The variationist approach demonstrates statistically how those forms compete to serve the same function, thus grammaticalization is relevant for variationist studies, at least regarding morphosyntax.

#### **2.3.1. What is grammaticalization?**

Grammaticalization, which has given rise to the tense and aspect markers that are the focus of this study, is the process through which lexical items become grammatical morphemes. The first use of the term ‘grammaticalization’ can be traced back to Antoine Meillet’s 1912 paper ‘L’évolution des formes grammaticales.’ Meillet (1912:131) defines grammaticalization as ‘le passage d’un mot autonome au rôle d’élément grammatical’ [the passage of an autonomous

word to the role of a grammatical element]. Grammaticalization serves as the primary vehicle for generating new grammatical forms by introducing ‘categories that did not have any linguistic expression’ [des catégories qui n’avaient pas d’expression linguistique] (Meillet 1912:133). For example, the verb *aller* ‘to go’ in French has been grammaticalized as a marker of the near future. As Meillet (1912:146) points out, in expressions such as *je vais faire* [‘I’m going to do’], ‘*je vais* n’est déjà plus qu’un auxiliaire...où le sens d’aller n’est plus perceptible’ [*Je vais* ‘I go’ is already nothing more than an auxiliary where the meaning of *aller* ‘go’ is no longer perceptible]. Kurylowicz (1965) takes a broader view, defining grammaticalization as ‘the increase of the range of a morpheme advancing from a lexical to a grammatical or from a less grammatical to a more grammatical status’ (69).

### **2.3.2. Grammaticalization frameworks**

The literature concerning grammaticalization is extensive and encompasses a variety of approaches from different sub-fields (see Langacker 1977 and Eckardt 2006 for reanalysis; Heine, Claudi & Hünnemeyer 1991 for metaphoric transfer; Hopper 1991, Hopper 1996 for layering of forms and competition; Bybee, Perkins, & Pagliuca 1994 and Heine & Kuteva 2002 for cross-linguistic perspectives; Traugott & Dasher 2002 and Hopper & Traugott 2003 for conversational implicature and speaker inferences; Van Gelderen (2004) for the role of economy principles in linguistic change). However, the concept of universal pathways of grammaticalization developed by Bybee et al. (1994) and Hopper’s principles of grammaticalization are the models that serve as the basis of the approach taken by variationists such as Tagliamonte because they account for the coexistence of multiple variants within a single domain and assist in defining the variable context. Although there is some controversy

concerning grammaticalization as a theory (see Campbell 2001), the grammaticalization framework will be used in this dissertation in spite of objections like Campbell's, as it is useful for conceptualizing the data and results.

### **2.3.2.1. Universal pathways of grammaticalization**

The work of Bybee, Perkins, & Pagliuca (1994) is concerned with providing an explanation for why certain lexical items are chosen for grammaticalization and with demonstrating the grammaticalization paths that a lexical item is bound to follow. By conducting a careful diachronic study of the TMA systems in a cross-linguistic survey of 76 languages representative of the major language families, Bybee et al. (1994) provide compelling evidence that lexical items that express the most general meaning of their semantic domain are used the most frequently in any language and are thus prime candidates for grammaticalization. As a result, movement verbs such as *go* and verbs expressing desire such as *want* become grammaticalized as future markers (Bybee et al. 1994: 251-3). Mainstream varieties of English have two ways of expressing the future since both the motion verb *go* and the desire verb *will* (from Old English *willan*, ‘to want, to wish’) have both grammaticalized into future markers. However, AAE has also grammaticalized the periphrastic form *be fixing to* into a future marker (Smith 2009, Myers 2014). A preliminary analysis of my corpus reveals layering of several variant forms for the future: *will*, *be going to*, *be* (resulting from a process of *will*-deletion to be explained in Section 2.4.5), and *be fixing to*.

In terms of perfect markers, Bybee et al. (1994: 61-69) observe that verbs such as *be*, *remain*, *have*, or *finish* tend to grammaticalize into perfect markers. Bybee et al. (1994: 68) note that the English perfect forms developed from Old English resultatives *beo* ‘be’ and *habb-* ‘to

have.’ Initially, the form with *be* was more common (see example 2.7), but it gradually became overwhelmed by forms with *have*, which was initially restricted to cases of possession, as in example (2.8) below:

(2.7) He wæs gecumen. (Bybee et al. 1994: 68)  
‘He has come.’

(2.8) Ic hæfde hine gebundenne. (Bybee et al. 1994: 68)  
‘I had him in a state of being bound’

Bybee et al. (1994) provide us with pathways for grammaticalization. In the next section, I will describe Hopper’s model, which refines this framework by offering a set of stages for the grammaticalization pathway.

### 2.3.2.2. Hopper’s principles of grammaticalization

Hopper (1991) supplements the models by Bybee et al. (1994) by proposing five principles for identifying patterns of grammaticalization from its earliest to its latest stages. Hopper’s first principle is *layering*, which is a single function having multiple forms. Layering means that a language can develop a new form for a given grammatical function (i.e., grammatical role) without discarding the old form, or, more simply, that a single function can have two forms. One example that he provides is the layering of iterative constructions in English:

(2.9) a. keep (on) + *-ing*: He **keeps (on)** signaling to me. (Hopper 1991: 23)  
b. go on + *-ing*: He **went on** asking silly questions.

An older method of forming the iterative in the English language is the use of the construction *continue (on) + -ing*. Later in the history of the language, the phrasal verbs *keep on* and *go on* develop an iterative meaning that, although similar to that of the older form, is subtly

different in nuance. As a result, neither form replaces the older form, but continues to exist alongside it. Consider the following example:

- (2.10) a. If you **keep on** trying, you will succeed.  
b. ? If you **go on** trying, you will succeed.

In (2.10a), use of *keep on* signals persistence, so use of *go on* in (2.10b) is less acceptable.

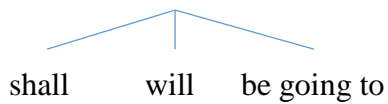
Layering refers to the co-existence of older and newer lexical items in the same functional domain. Lexical items within the same functional domain have the same referential value. For example, both the newer variant *keep on* and the older variant *continue on* serve as iteratives; likewise, the older variant *will* and the newer variant *be going to* both indicate future temporal reference. However, use of *go* as a future marker does not erase its original meaning as a motion verb. Hopper's second principle, *divergence*, refers to the co-existence of several meanings within a single lexical item. Divergence means that a lexical item may split into a grammaticalized form without causing the original lexical form that preserves its original use to disappear. In the previous example of *keep on + -ing*, the lexical item *keep* does not surrender its older meaning of 'to preserve, maintain, have' after developing a grammaticalized form that expresses the iterative. Both forms still exist in English, as seen in the examples below:

(2.11) She **keeps** an alarm clock on her nightstand. (older form='to have')

(2.12) She **keeps on** hitting the snooze button on the alarm clock. (new form=iterative)

Examples (2.11) and (2.12) are synchronic evidence that *keep* displays both layering, as it co-exists with other iteratives, and divergence, as it exists as both a lexical item and a grammatical item. Although Hopper (1991) indicates that layering and divergence are separate stages with the former preceding the latter, it is unclear if this accurately reflects the diachronic development of these grammaticalized forms. The difference between layering and divergence is further illustrated in Figure 1 below:

Layering in the Future Domain



Divergence of meanings in lexical item *go*



Figure 1: Layering vs. Divergence

The third principle is *specialization*, which Hopper (1996:230) describes as the ‘central aspect of grammaticalization, since it typically results in one form being singled out for a grammatical function.’ In Old French, certain nouns such as *pas* ‘step,’ *mie* ‘crumb,’ and *goutte* ‘drop’ could be used along with the original negator *ne* to reinforce the negation. However, *pas* was chosen over all the other reinforcing nouns to be the negator, and it may even stand alone as the negator in colloquial French, as in (2.13) below:

(2.13) *Moi j’aime pas le riz.* ‘I don’t like rice.’ (Hopper 1996:223)

The fourth principle is *persistence*, which refers to the fact that a grammaticalized form may suffer some restrictions in its distribution because it still bears some traces of its original meaning. Hopper (1996:231) explains that because *manage* was originally a verb expressing volition, its auxiliary form can only precede ‘a main verb denoting an intentional action,’ which results in the different grammaticality judgments for (2.14) and (2.15), both taken from Hopper (1996:223):

(2.14) I managed to buy a pig.

(2.15) \* I managed to need a bicycle.

The fifth principle is *de-categorialization*, which refers to the loss of noun or verb categoriality. In example (2.16) below, the noun *pas* can occur with the quantifier *trente* or any other marker used with nouns, such as case markers and determiners. Hopper (1991) refers to these markers that indicate lexical class as ‘markers of categoriality.’ However, once a noun is

grammaticalized, it can no longer occur with these markers of categoriality and undergoes ‘a loss of discourse autonomy’ since it loses its basic function of identifying participants (Hopper 1991: 30). Thus, in the examples below from Hopper (1991:31), the noun *pas* can be preceded by a determiner in (2.16) whereas the negator *pas* in (2.17) and (2.18) cannot:

(2.16) Ils se sont éloignés de trente pas. ‘They went thirty paces away.’

(2.17) Ils ne fument pas. ‘They don’t smoke.’

(2.18) \* Ils ne fument un pas. ‘They don’t smoke one step.’

### **2.3.2.3. Cognitive factors of semantic change**

Although Bybee et al. (1994) provide a substantial amount of information concerning sources and paths for grammaticalization, they are not particularly concerned with the earlier stages of grammaticalization in which the lexical item initially becomes a grammatical morpheme. Heine, Claudi, and Hünnemeyer (1991) complement the work of Bybee et al. (1994) and Hopper (1991, 1996) by providing a model to account for the cognitive factors that allow speakers to innovate grammatical morphemes from lexical items. Towards this end, Heine et al. (1991) seek to explain the cognitive forces motivating grammaticalization through the use of their metonymic-metaphorical model. In Kurylowicz (1965)’s terms, Heine et al. (1991)’s term *metaphor* refers to the leap from ‘a lexical to a grammatical item’ whereas *metonymy* refers to the transition from a ‘less grammatical to a more grammatical status.’ Heine et al. (1991) argue that grammaticalization is essentially a problem-solving strategy whereby speakers creatively innovate a linguistic expression for a grammatical concept. The authors stress that grammaticalization is not necessarily motivated by ‘unfulfilled communicative needs or by the presence of cognitive contents for which no adequate linguistic designations exist’ (Heine et al.

1991:29), as illustrated by the development of *go* as a future marker when *will* already existed as such.

For Heine et al. (1991:31), grammaticalization relies on creativity, which they define as ‘the ability to conceptualize abstract domains of cognition in terms of concrete domains,—for example, the domain of space in terms of that of physical objects, the domain of time in terms of spatial concepts, the domain of logical relations in terms of temporal concepts, etc.’ When speakers use their creativity to generate new grammatical morphemes, they employ metaphor as they make ‘a discrete transfer from one conceptual domain to another’ (Heine et al. 1991:70) and metonymy as they attribute ‘a continuum, or chain, of minimally different conceptual shadings’ (Heine et al. 1991:71) to a grammaticalized form.

Heine et al. (1991) use a wealth of examples to illustrate the difference between metaphor and metonymy. Considering the *be going to* structure, metaphor is what allows the speakers to make the initial leap from the spatial domain to the temporal domain. The authors also point out that this metaphorical jump can result in ambiguous sentences where both the literal sense of the lexical item and its newer meaning as a grammatical morpheme are both possible interpretations—a point which will be important in my analysis of the grammaticalization of *steady* in Chapter 5. Consider the following example:

(2.19) I am going to work. (Heine et al. 1991:47)

This sentence is ambiguous because speakers have the option of either interpreting *go* as a main verb and *to work* a locative expression or interpreting *go* as a future marker and *to work* as an infinitival verb (Heine et al. 1991:47). Whereas *I am going to work* is ambiguous, *I am going to go to work*, which contains both the main verb *go* and the auxiliary *go*, is not.



Metonymy, on the other hand, allows for a continuous chain of connections between different meanings and indicates that the interpretation of a grammatical element is context-driven. Using the following example sentences to illustrate the concept of metonymy, Heine et al. (1991:70-71) demonstrate that the range of meanings of the *be going to* construction include intention and prediction in addition to its use for expressing spatial movement or futurity:

(2.20) Henry is going to town.

(2.21) Are you going to the library?

(2.22) No, I am going to eat.

(2.23) I am going to do my very best to make you happy.

(2.24) The rain is going to come.

Heine et al. (1991: 70-71) offer the following explanations for the examples listed above. The authors explain that example (2.20) is ambiguous in the same manner as (2.19) since *go* can be either a motion verb or a future marker. Example (2.21) expresses both spatial movement and intention, whereas (2.22) expresses intention, prediction, and spatial movement. In contrast, sentences (2.23) and (2.24), which are at the other extreme of the continuum, no longer involve spatial movement at all. Sentence (2.23) expresses intention and prediction, whereas (2.24) only expresses prediction.

#### **2.3.2.4. Invited Inferences**

Although Heine et al. (1991) conclude that metonymy is a major process in grammaticalization, they only list the shades of meaning that a grammatical morpheme has without explaining the interaction between speaker and interlocutor that gives rise to such gradations of meaning. Traugott and Dasher (2002:35) complement other models of

grammaticalization by offering a pragmatic approach, proposing the Invited Inferencing Theory of Semantic Change (IITSC) to explain ‘the conventionalizing of pragmatic meanings and their reanalysis as semantic meanings.’ Their approach is useful for understanding how metonyms such as those in (2.20) through (2.24) arise between speaker and listener. According to their theory, speakers begin the process of grammaticalization by exploiting a context-dependent conversational implicature, which the authors refer to as an Invited Inference (IIN). In such situations, the interlocutor understands that the implied meaning of the utterance is more important than the utterance’s literal meaning. Considering example (2.19) once more, the listener understands through conversational inference that the speaker’s desire to convey futurity is more essential to the utterance than its literal meaning of spatial movement. If the IIN becomes salient and accepted by other speakers, it becomes a Generalized Invited Inference (GIIN). When a linguistic form is linked with a GIIN, it is polysemous, carrying both its original meaning and its newer meaning derived pragmatically through implicature. Once the linguistic form reaches the stage where the original meaning is lost and the meaning from the GIIN is the only possible reading, the process of semantic change is complete. The IITSC model will account for extended uses of *steady* and *stay*, such as their use to mark speaker indignation/evaluation, as well as their original shift from lexical item to grammatical item.

#### **2.3.2.5. Grammaticalization Universals**

Heine & Kuteva (2002) complement the work of Hopper (1991, 1996) by providing parameters for grammaticalization. They note the following processes as being involved in grammaticalization:

1. Desemanticization: loss in meaning of a given lexical item
2. Extension: use of a lexical item in new contexts (Hopper’s *layering*)

3. Decategorialization: loss of morphosyntax of a given lexical item
4. Erosion: loss of phonetic properties of a lexical item

Heine & Kuteva (2002:5) also echo Bybee et al. (1994) in basing their world lexicon on this central idea: ‘underlying human behavior there appears to be a strategy of linguistic processing whereby more abstract functions are expressed in terms of forms for concrete concepts.’ They list additional sources of future markers, such as change of state verbs in German and Dutch, *come* in various African languages, and the copula in Russian. Their work is also useful in identifying other functions of a lexical item for exclusion, such as instances of *go* as a change of state verb instead of a future marker.

### **2.3.3. Summary of grammaticalization theories and application**

Bybee et al. (1994) inform us of the pathways that lexical items take as they move towards becoming grammatical items, and Heine & Kuteva (2005) complement this notion by listing the processes (desemanticization, extension, decategorialization, and phonetic erosion) that occur during this shift. Hopper (1991, 1996) fine-tunes the previous theories by offering a series of discrete steps for grammaticalization, explaining that layering (extension) and divergence (desemanticization) occur first, followed by specialization, persistence, and decategorialization. Heine et al. (1991) and Traugott & Dasher (2002) offer more insight into layering and divergence, with the former focusing on the cognitive tools of metonymy and metaphor that lead to layering and divergence and the latter focusing on interactions between speaker and listener that allow them to negotiate these new, arising meanings.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I use the theories above to offer my explanation for the development of *steady* and *stay* into aspect markers. I will also refer to Bybee et al. (1994) in particular in Chapters 7 and 8 when discussing variation in the forms used for the future and the forms used to

express present perfect functions. In variationist studies, grammaticalization theory is applied to quantitative statistics. Tagliamonte (1997, 2006, 2011) uses grammaticalization theory to determine the linguistic and social contexts in which variants of a given function develop, and then uses a statistical analysis to determine the strength and significance of these relevant predictors on speaker selection of one variant over another.

In the following section, I will trace the evolution of the forms used to express the future tense as well as those used to express present perfect functions. These markers will be examined in closer detail in Chapters 7 and 8.

## **2.4. Evolution of strategies for expressing futurity**

In this section I trace the development of strategies for expressing futurity in the English language. There are four strategies: (1) present tense (2) progressive aspect, (3) prospective forms, and (4) auxiliaries *will* and *shall*.

### **2.4.1. Present tense**

Historically, the English language only had two tenses: past and non-past. The original strategy for expressing futurity in English was the futurate present tense (Warner 1993: 167, Poplack & Tagliamonte 2001:210, Visser 1963-73:669). Temporal adverbs could be used along with the present tense to disambiguate the meaning, but context was used more often.

- (2.25) Gewitaþ forð beran wæpen ond gewædu; ic eow wisige.  
Go forth bearing weapons and war-gear; I (will) guide you.  
(Beowulf lines 291-2, cited in Visser 1963-73: 670)

The present tense with future reference is also used in questions:

- (2.26) Hwæt ete we? oððe hwæt drince we? oððe mid hwam beo we oferwrigene?  
'What will we eat? or What will we drink? or With what will we be clothed?'

(OE gospel, Mt. 6, 31, cited in Visser 1963-73:671)

According to Walker (2001:10), the present tense is currently used to indicate gnomics (general truths), past events (i.e., the historical present), habituais, frequentatives, iteratives, and future events. In modern English, use of the present tense to express future is on the decline and is limited to scheduled events and is commonly accompanied by a temporal adverb or clause.

### 2.4.2. Progressive

The present progressive tense is yet another method of expressing futurity. The present progressive is polysemous in nature, resulting in three meanings for sentence (2.27) below. It can be used to refer to actions that (1) are occurring right now, as in the gloss presented in (2.27a), (2) to actions that are occurring habitually, as in (2.27b), and (3) to actions occurring in the future, as in (2.27c).

(2.27) Sue is making breakfast before the kids wake up.

- a. 'Sue is making breakfast right now before the kids wake up.' (present prog)
- b. 'Sue usually/always makes breakfast before the kids wake up.' (habitual)<sup>2</sup>
- c. 'Sue is about to make breakfast before the kids wake up.' (future)

### 2.4.3. Prospective forms

Certain prospective forms are used for expressing futurity. Comrie (1976) writes that prospective forms in English include *to be going to*, *to be about to*, and *to be on the point of*.

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<sup>2</sup> Use of the present progressive for the habitual is not a feature of Mainstream American English. However, Kortmann and Schneider (2011) report that such usage can be found in L2 varieties of English (e.g. Hong Kong English) as well as high-contact L1 English varieties and some pidgins and creoles. My dialect of AAE also permits use of the present progressive for habituais.

Brinton (1988:61) also lists ‘go to V’ as an ingressive aspectualizer. Fleischman (1982:19) makes the same observation with the following examples:

(2.28) She **is on the verge of** getting divorced.

(2.29) I was **going to** protest when Harry intervened.

(2.30) She’ll be **on the point of** quitting when her promotion comes through.

All aforementioned constructions express prospective aspect, and it appears that that use has been extended to express futurity.

Brinton (1988) writes: ‘In Modern English, a variety of partially, or perhaps completely, grammaticalized forms such as *begin*, *continue*, and *cease* collocate with infinitives or participles and in such constructions express aspect distinctions. In fact, these forms seem to constitute an important secondary system of aspect marking in English, in addition to the primary system of simple, progressive, and perfect forms’ (59). It appears that of these prospective forms, *to be going to* and *to be about to* are the most common for expressing futurity.

According to Poplack & Tagliamonte (2001:210-211), it is unclear how long *be going to* has expressed the future; they point out that it is not used with frequency in English until the mid-seventeenth century. The construction still primarily indicated movement towards a goal in the sixteenth century (ibid.). Poplack & Tagliamonte (2000:319) write that *to be going to* takes over *to be about to* as the preferred means of expressing ‘the meaning of intention and proximity in the future.’

To this list I would add the expression *to be fixing to* as an additional prospective form. Although the form *be fixing to* (often reduced to *finna*) is not a feature of MAE, it exists in both Southern English and in AAE and marks the immediate future, as in ‘We not finna go’ for MAE

‘We’re not about to go’ (Cukor-Avila 2001, Green 2002: 70-1, Rickford 1999:6, Smith 2009, Myers 2014).

#### 2.4.4. *Will and Shall*

The verbs *shall* and *will* are the earliest explicit markers of futurity to appear in the English language. The original meaning of *willan* was ‘to will, intend, wish, be willing’ (Warner 1993: 167), whereas *sculan* meant ‘to owe.’ Use of constructions *sceal* + infinitive and *wille* + infinitive to express futurity appears in Old English texts. Although cases such as (2.31) are ambiguous, use of an impersonal subject with no volition in (2.32) is an unambiguous case of *wile* indicating futurity:

(2.31) Hwilcne hafoc **wilt** þu habban, þone maran hwæþer þe þæne læssan?  
‘Which hawk do you want to have, the larger or the smaller?’  
(ÆColl 134, cited in Warner 1993: 167)

(2.32) Sumum men **wile** þincan syllic þis to gehyrenne, forþan þe ylþas ne common  
næfre on engla lande.  
‘(To) some man (it) will seem wonderful to hear this [about the martial use of  
elephants] because elephants (have) never come within England.’  
(ÆLS ii.25.564, cited in Warner 1993: 167)

#### 2.4.5. *Invariant be*

Although invariant *be* in AAE most often indicates a habitual reading, invariant *be* is also used to express the future, as in ‘They be voting tomorrow’ for MAE ‘They will be voting tomorrow’ (Green 2002: 53, Rickford 1999:6). Rickford (1999: 6) suggests that this use of *be* to mark the future is the result of the deletion of the /l/ in *will*. Note that *be* marking the future does not necessarily have to co-occur with verbs ending in *-ing*, as in ‘They be here soon’ for ‘They will be here soon.’

#### 2.4.6. Summary: Forms to be analyzed in this study

- present tense
- progressive
- prospective forms *to be going to, to be fixing to, to be about to*
- auxiliaries *will, shall*
- invariant *be*

#### 2.5. Evolution of present perfect markers

In this section I trace the development of strategies for expressing the present perfect. Since the present perfect has different functions (i.e., grammatical roles) from the past perfect, analysis will be limited to the present perfect to maintain one clear variable context.

##### 2.5.1. Strategies for expressing the present perfect

The literature identifies six strategies for expressing the auxiliaries for the present perfect functions: *have*, the lone participle, *be*, *been*, *done*, and the preterite. Both AAE and MAE share *have* and the preterite as strategies here; with non-mainstream varieties of English, it shares *be*, and the lone participle *been* and *done*.

Old English originally only distinguished between past and nonpast tense. The simple past was used for all past reference, including current relevance, which is one major function of the present perfect. Use of temporal adverbs indicated current relevance as in example (2.33) below (from Macleod 2014:324):

- (2.33) Ic heold nu nigon gear wið ealle hynða þines fæder gestreon  
I held now nine years with all loss thy father's property  
'I have now held your father's property nine years against all loss.'



Modern English still allows for the preterite to express perfect meaning, allowing for the following expressions (2.34a) and (2.34b) to be used interchangeably in the same context, even though (2.34a) has a verb in the perfect and (2.34b) has a verb in the preterite.

- (2.34) a. Has Lucy left for school yet?  
b. Did Lucy leave for school yet?

As discussed in Section 2.3.2.1, *have* and *be* in resultative constructions grammaticalized into present perfect markers, with *have* becoming the most prevalent form for expressing present perfect functions. Perfect *be*, as in ‘I’m said it before’ for MAE ‘I’ve said it before,’ is a relic from earlier dialects of English that has been preserved in certain conservative dialects of AAE (Tagliamonte 1997) and in Southern English (Dannenbergh & Wolfram 1998:145-6, Wolfram 2004: 284). In my data, I do not encounter use of *be* to express the perfect.

Unstressed *been* marks the present perfect, as in ‘He been tired’ for MAE ‘He has been tired’ (Rickford 1999: 6, Tagliamonte 1997, Green 1998a). Note that unstressed *been* differs from stressed *BEEN*, which indicates remote past, as in ‘He *BEEN* bought that’ for MAE ‘He bought that a long time ago’ (Rickford 1999: 19-27, Green 1998b). It appears that this use of *been* is a result of deletion of *have* in the *have* + participle construction, so I will consider it a lone participle for the purposes of my study. Although *been* is the most frequent lone participle, other forms such as *seen* (e.g., *You ever seen an antique telephone?*) or *gone* (e.g., *He gone big-time*) also occur. There is another *been* (to be discussed in Chapter 8) that is used as a remote present perfect and that does not result from *have*-deletion, so my decision to designate so-called unstressed *been* as a lone participle also helps keep the distinction between these two present perfect markers clear.

*Done* marks the present perfect in both AAE and Southern English and emphasizes the fact that the action is completed, as in ‘They done wrote it down’ for MAE ‘They have written it

down' (Edwards 2001, Feagin 1991, Terry 2004, Terry 2010, Wolfram 2004). Preverbal *done* is often reduced to a nasal flap.

### **2.5.2. Forms to be excluded**

The study is limited to the present perfect functions and the forms that represent those functions, so no forms of the past perfect will be included. As a result, neither pluperfect *had* nor preterite *had* (see Rickford & Théberge-Rafal 1999: 54) will be included. Forms of the participle that mark the preterite instead of the present perfect will be excluded as well.

### **2.5.3. Summary: Forms to be analyzed in this study**

- *have*
- lone participle
- *done*
- *been*
- preterite

Having given an overview of the literature regarding grammaticalization frameworks, the application of grammaticalization theory to variationist studies, and the evolution of forms to be studied in this dissertation, in the next chapter I turn to an overview of the methodology used to conduct this study.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1. Corpus linguistics**

#### **3.1.1. Background**

Before the advent of Chomsky, observed language use was the dominant method for conducting linguistic research. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, early field linguists such as Franz Boas and Leonard Bloomfield used small corpora to examine the phonetics and phonology of Amerindian languages. In the 1950s, British linguist John Rupert Firth also ‘promot[ed] the use of empirical data to provide insight into language use’ (Murphy 2010: 18).

In the 1950s and 1960s, American linguist Noam Chomsky (1957, 1965) argued strongly against using corpora with these major criticisms. The first criticism is that corpora are skewed representations of a language variety that never contain all possible structures. This means that ‘some utterances would be excluded because they are rare, other much more common utterances might be excluded simply by chance, and chance might also act so that some rare utterances were actually included in a corpus’ (McEnery & Wilson 2001:30). The second criticism is that performance errors in naturally occurring speech could cause the linguist to develop an inaccurate model of the language being studied.

Instead of taking an empirical approach, Chomsky promoted a rationalist approach that privileged native speaker intuition and sought to model linguistic competence rather than linguistic performance. However, this approach also has its downsides. The first is that native speaker intuition regarding grammaticality can be misleading due to limits in imagining all

possible contexts. As evidence that native speaker's spur of the moment judgments are not always right, McEnery & Wilson (2001) give as an example Chomsky's spontaneous creation of a rule for *perform*, in which he states 'The verb *perform* cannot be used with mass word objects: one can perform a task but one cannot perform labour' (Hill 1962:29, cited in McEnery & Wilson 2001:11). However, they point out that checking a corpus readily provides *perform magic* as counterevidence to Chomsky's rule.

McEnery & Wilson (2001) point out that the best approach towards linguistic data is one that makes use both of corpora and introspection. The corpus allows us to easily verify our intuitive judgments and introspection allows us to weed out any ungrammatical utterances in the corpus that result from speaker performance error.

### **3.1.2. Use**

Corpora are useful linguistic tools because they allow for both quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data. Quantified data can be analyzed statistically and allow us to determine which forms are more frequent and which are more rare, in which contexts they are used, and so on. On the other hand, qualitative data gives us a more detailed, nuanced description of the forms being studied. In this dissertation, I will provide a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the future and perfect markers, as they occur frequently enough to lend themselves readily to quantification. Since the camouflaged continuative and habitual markers are rarer, I limit myself to a qualitative analysis.

## **3.2. Creating my corpus**

In this section, I give an overview of the history that makes the verbal system in AAE linguistically interesting, describe my data collection methods, and give background regarding the two field sites that are the subject of this study.

### **3.2.1. Narrowing in on the verbal system of AAE**

The verbal system of AAE is a fascinating area of study since both language contact and second language learner strategies play roles in their historical development. African slaves first arrived in the British colonies in North America and the Caribbean during the early seventeenth century. They worked on small tobacco farms in close contact with their British owners as well as with British and Irish indentured servants, and this access to the target language allowed them to acquire a second-language variety of English. This contact with regional British dialects is preserved in the double modal system present in Southern English (double modals are discussed further in Section 3.2.2) and in invariant *be*, which is also present in Irish English.

However, the advent of the sugar plantations in the Caribbean resulted in an influx of African slaves during the mid-seventeenth century, and whites began to leave the colonies and ceased immigrating to the Caribbean (Rickford 1986: 250). Since the slaves in the Caribbean quickly began to outnumber the whites, they had less access to mainstream English and developed a creole language to communicate with each other. Slaves who arrived in North America in the eighteenth century were typically these speakers of creolized English from the Caribbean or speakers of pidginized English from Africa (Holm 2004: 32.), and they had only partial access to English as spoken by native speakers due to changes in demographics. For example, African slaves made up 6% of the population of Virginia in 1685, but their numbers

increased to 40% of the population by 1760 (Holm 2004: 32), a situation which limited their access to the target language. AAE is distinct from other varieties of English spoken today due to the restructuring of the language that occurred in the eighteenth century as African and Caribbean slaves acquired English.

Limits to the target language may account for what appears to be fossilized L2 learner strategies in AAE. My corpus includes a few tokens of causative constructions that differ from mainstream American English:

- (3.1) But they **let** me **did** the benediction.
- (3.2) A— **let** him **stayed**.
- (3.3) She got a little rug. I **made** her **got** on it.
- (3.4) She **let** them **had** beer mugs.
- (3.5) But you know they **let** me **had** brother duty with him

These examples above are similar to the L2 errors of Malaysian ESL learners reported by Lim (1976) below:

- (3.6) My father **made** me **did** the hard work.

AAE, however, is a native variety, so the presence of structures similar to (3.6) cannot be considered errors, but features of the dialect. A combination of transferring features from their first languages and limited access to more mainstream varieties of English might have led African slaves to rely on their own L1 structures rather than the structures from mainstream American English (see Lefebvre's relexification hypothesis, 1988).

### 3.2.2. Data collection

As explained earlier in Chapter 2, syntactic variables inherently occur less frequently than phonetic variables in recorded data. Labov (1966) informs us that speakers tend to use more standard forms of English when they are aware that their speech is being monitored. The result of this observer's paradox is that the sociolinguistic behavior that the fieldworker aims to capture in recorded interviews is stifled by the presence of the fieldworker. Rickford & McNair-Knox (1994) claim that the race of the fieldworker also skews the data, reporting that African American interviewees use fewer instances of AAE features when interviewed by white fieldworkers than with black. Cukor-Avila & Bailey (2001:258) counter that it is not race per se, but familiarity with the interviewees that 'reduces interviewer effects and leads to richer linguistic data.' Thus, the effects of race can be minimized by establishing long-term relationships with speakers in the community one wishes to study.

Another difficulty is the fact that interview formats do not necessarily lend themselves to the use of certain syntactic variables. Let's consider the case of double modals. Double modals such as *might could*, *may can*, and other such combinations of epistemic and deontic modal verbs occur in dialects of English spoken in Scotland, Northern England, and in the Southern United States (Montgomery & Nagle:1993). In the Southern United States, double modals are used in hedging (di Paolo 1989) and in negotiations (Mishoe & Montgomery: 1994), so they rarely appear during interviews, but may be observed in other contexts. For this reason, researchers dealing with double or multiple modal constructions use participant observation to gather data.

My goal in developing my own corpus was to minimize as much as possible the effect of the observer's paradox (see Labov 1972a) and to collect as rich a set of naturalistic data as possible. To this end, I chose speakers who were family or family friends as interviewees since

they would be comfortable talking to me colloquially even while being recorded. Further, since all the speakers knew me, they trusted me to keep the recordings private (only I would hear them) and to ensure that they would remain anonymous. The interview format was unstructured and conversational. Since I was an in-group member and would often be around the speakers, they also allowed me to supplement my data with observation of their speech outside the interviews. I limited my collection of data through participant observation to features that I noticed were not appearing in the interviews: (1) double modals, (2) modal + auxiliary constructions, (3) the continuative marker *steady*, and (4) the habitual marker *stay*, as illustrated in the examples below taken from my corpus.

(3.7) a. He **might could** bake my perch. I've had it baked before.

b. They finna turn and then you **might can** go.

(3.8) a. They **must done** got a permit.

b. She **must ain't** let S— out the door.

c. He **must finna** go to Sam's.

(3.9) We **steady** have to go get different seasonings and stuff that we done left in the RV.

(3.10) They **STAY** sold out of it at Target.

Tokens for the double modal and modal + auxiliary constructions were too few to carry out any significant analysis, so they were not included in this study. The final study is limited in focus on *steady* and *stay* and variation among future and present perfect markers.

Data were collected in June 2011 in two sites in Louisiana: Jena and St. Gabriel. I interviewed sixteen speakers in all—seven in Jena and nine in St. Gabriel. The ages of the speakers varied from those in their 40s to 80s. They were recorded with a Marantz MP3 recorder. Before the recordings, each speaker signed a consent form and received a general



overview of the project. Each interview began by collecting demographic information concerning the participant (e.g., name, age, place of birth, occupation). The rest of each interview was devoted to discussing topics from everyday life, including work, family, friends, hobbies, school, and so on. I did not have a set list of questions for the interviews, but instead allowed for each conversation to run naturally with the participant leading as much of the conversation as possible. The fact that the speakers were all older than I was also encouraged them to lead most of the conversation. I was present at each interview, and one to three speakers were interviewed in a single session.

### **3.2.3. Description of sites and speakers**

Having been subject to Spanish and later French colonial rule before becoming an American state, Louisiana is rich in dialectal diversity. There are four main varieties of English in the state: Southern African American English, Southern White English, Cajun English, and Creole English. Perhaps the best-known Louisiana dialect, due to it being featured prominently in tourism advertisements nationwide, is Cajun Vernacular English (CVE)—a dialect spoken by descendants of Acadian immigrants who arrived in Louisiana in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Scholars in both the fields of education and of linguistics have published a number of studies on Cajun English. The first publication to focus solely on Cajun English was an essay collection entitled *Cajun Vernacular English: Informal English in French Louisiana* (1992) that was edited by Ann Martin Scott. Students and faculty at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette, which is located in the city that is the heart of Acadian culture in Louisiana, wrote the essays featured in this collection. The essays are ethnographic writings whose goal is to increase awareness among educators of the characteristics of Cajun English, which may influence students' writing (Eble

2004: 177). Today, the most promising work in Cajun English studies is being carried out by the sociolinguist Dr. Sylvie Dubois and her graduate students at Louisiana State University (LSU). Dubois, with the aid of a National Science Foundation grant, created the Cajun French/English corpus in 1997. This corpus allows linguists to easily access recordings of Cajun French and English for research purposes.

Likewise, Louisiana scholars are focusing on African American English from both a linguistics perspective and a communication studies perspective. For example, Sarah Ross, Janna Oetting, Beth Stapleton and other researchers at LSU's Language Development & Disorders Lab have published studies regarding child speakers of African American English (e.g., Ross et al. 2004). Lisa Green has researched child AAE in southwest Louisiana (Green 2011) as well as studied its use in adults. I chose to conduct research in Louisiana to complement this previous work. Since I am a native of the state and could use community ties to access speakers and as well as my own intuition regarding the dialect to make a contribution to the field. Since dialects vary throughout the state, I chose one site in northern Louisiana with which I had community ties and one site in the south.

Jena is located in LaSalle Parish in the northern part of the state. Although Jena is a small town with a population of only 3,398 people (2010 census), the town has been the parish seat since LaSalle Parish was created in 1908 (Hellmann 2005:431). As the parish seat, Jena serves as the hub of activity for the area since the parish hospital, library, school board, and courthouse are all located there. Migration into Jena from the surrounding towns is common, and the birthplaces of my Jena participants demonstrate this fact. Only a few of the participants that I interviewed were born and raised in Jena. The remainder of the speakers were born in

Archie, Trout, and other rural towns in northern Louisiana, but had all lived in Jena for the majority of their lifetimes.

St. Gabriel is located in Iberville Parish in the southern part of the state. St. Gabriel was just recently formed in 1993 by incorporating the three rural towns of St. Gabriel, Sunshine, and Carville into a single community. St. Gabriel was first settled by the Acadians in the mid-18th century, so St. Gabriel is considered part of Acadiana, the French-speaking area of Louisiana where Cajun culture dominates. Although the St. Gabriel Catholic Church, founded by the Acadians in 1769, remains as a monument to the region's Cajun heritage, St. Gabriel's residents are no longer predominantly Cajun. In fact, as of the 2010 census, 64% of the town's 6,677 inhabitants are African-American. Although the local petrochemical industry and the hurricanes along the Gulf Coast have caused new people to move into the town from New Orleans and towns on Louisiana's coast, my cohort of speakers includes only speakers who were born and raised in St. Gabriel.

Having described my methodology and field sites, I will provide an analysis of the markers in the following chapters. I analyze *stay* in Chapter 4, *steady* in chapter 5, future markers in chapter 7, and present perfect markers in Chapter 8.

## Chapter 4: Habitual aspect marker STAY

### 4.1. Background

Spears (2008, 2009) and Green (2002) report that *stay* is a habitual marker that can be glossed as ‘to always be’ or ‘to usually be.’ Distinguishing between the main verb *stay* and the aspect marker *stay* is straightforward since only the stressed form of the word has a habitual reading. Since there is no phonological stress on *stay* in (4.1), it is clear that *stay* is a main verb and that the only possible interpretation is that she lives at her grandmother’s house. However, when *stay* is stressed, as in (4.2), *stay* is clearly an aspect marker and the only interpretation for the sentence is that she is frequently at her grandmother’s house, whatever her place of residence may be. Note that since the verbal paradigm in AAE has been leveled, agreement does not distinguish between the main verb *stay* and the aspect marker *stay* in the third person speaker. Only phonological stress teases apart the two instances of *stay*.

(4.1) She **stay** at Grandma house. (Spears 2009:15)  
‘She lives at Grandma’s house.’

(4.2) She **STAY** at Grandma house. (Spears 2009:15).  
‘She is frequently at Grandma’s house.’

Co-occurrence of the forms in a single utterance further highlights that there are two distinct categories for *stay*--one where *stay* serves as a lexical verb and another where it serves as an aspect marker:

(4.3) He **STAY** telling people that he stay in Snob Hill now.  
‘He’s always telling people that he lives in Snob Hill now.’

Stressed *stay* can also be used to refer to temporary states that occur frequently, as in (4.4) and (4.5).

(4.4) He **STAY** hungry. (Green 2002: 23)  
'He's always hungry.'

(4.5) She **STAY** pregnant. (Spears 2008: 521)  
'She is frequently pregnant.'

In Mainstream American English (MAE), it is possible to produce sentences such as *He stays drunk*, so *He STAY hungry* may not seem so remarkable and could even be considered as evidence that stressed *stay* is no different from the use of *stay* with habitual states in MAE. However, what is important to note is that in MAE, the phrase *He stays drunk*<sup>3</sup> only has a habitual reading if an adverbial phrase is added, as in *He stays drunk all the time*. In AAE, no such adverbial phrase is needed since stressed *stay* already denotes that the state or activity occurs frequently or habitually.

In the literature regarding *stay* (Green 2002, Spears 2009), examples are limited to the present tense. In the following subsections, I show that *stay* can be used in a variety of syntactic constructions, including the existential, and also in the past tense in addition to the present tense.

## 4.2. My findings regarding STAY

### 4.2.1. STAY with predicate adjectives / nominals

Just as Green (2002) has already reported, my data also shows that stressed *stay* occurs with noun phrases (4.6), adjectives (4.7, 4.8), and prepositional phrases (4.9).

(4.6) The things **STAY** a mess. (Bf, 40s)  
'These things are always a mess.'  
(‘These placemats on the table are always disorganized.’)

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<sup>3</sup> MAE also has expressions such as *He stays busy*, meaning ‘He keeps himself busy’ or ‘He keeps busy.’ However, this use is positive. Use of stressed *stay* with *busy* in AAE would indicate a negative evaluation not present in the MAE sentence.

- (4.7) But they **STAY** sold out of those Noir Jeans. I asked the lady, ‘Damn! Are they that good?’ She said, ‘Yes, ma’am.’ They gone. Everybody be buying ‘em. (Bf, 40s)  
 ‘But they are always sold out of those Noir Jeans. I asked the lady [salesclerk], “Damn! Are they that good?” She said, “Yes, ma’am.” They’re gone. Everybody buys them.
- (4.8) She **STAY** mad. (Bm, 60s)  
 ‘She’s always mad.’
- (4.9) She had shingles all the time. It used to **STAY** on her leg. (Bf, 40s)  
 ‘She had shingles all the time. It used to always be on her leg.’

#### 4.2.2. **STAY with existential sentences:**

Stressed *stay* can be used to express speaker indignation or evaluation, which I discuss further in Chapter 6. This is especially apparent when stressed *stay* is used in existential sentences where the speaker is complaining, as in (4.10a) and (4.11a), taken from my corpus. Note that if the speaker did not want to complain, use of habitual *be* would have the same habitual reading, but without the indignation reading.

- (4.10) a. It **STAY** dishes. (Bf, 40s)  
 b. It **be** dishes.  
 ‘There are always dishes [to be washed].’
- (4.11) a. It **STAY** a lot of people at they house. (Bf, 40s)  
 b. It **be** a lot of people at they house.  
 ‘There are always a lot of people frequenting their house.’

In (4.11a), it is understood that the people at the house do not live there, but are temporary guests. Contrast (4.11a) with (4.12), where *stay* is the main verb and it is understood that the people in the house are its permanent residents.

- (4.12) A lot of people **stay** at they house.  
 ‘A lot of people stay at their house.’

### 4.2.3. STAY in other tenses

Whereas previous presentations of *stay* have only shared examples of its use in the present tense (Green 2002, Spears 2009), my data also reveal that stressed *stay* may be used in the past tense, either in the *used to* + stressed *stay* construction shown in (4.13) or through stressed *stayed* as shown in (4.14). Both constructions indicate that an event occurred frequently or habitually in the past. In this case, use of stress *stay* does not necessarily indicate indignation in (4.13) and (4.14); rather, its use is warranted in (4.13) and (4.14) to indicate the speaker's negative evaluation of the medical events that occurred:

(4.13) She had shingles all the time. It used to **STAY** on her leg. (Bf, 40s)  
'She had shingles all the time. It used to always be on her leg.'

(4.14) It was Dr. A 'cause Dr. B by the school. I'm telling you, Mama say I went to him cause she was a new mom and she was scared. She went took me. I thought that was my daddy 'cause I **STAYED** at the doctor's office. Dr. T was a good doctor. (Bf, 40s)  
'I was always at the doctor's office.'

### 4.2.4. STAY with verbs

When combined with verbs, stressed *stay* is similar to *steady* in that it typically precedes the verb in *-ing* and is used mostly with dynamic verbs, as in (4.15). However, it may also be used with stative verbs for emotive effect, such as in (4.16). In both (4.15) and (4.16), there is a negative nuance. For example (4.15), the nuance is that the subject has other responsibilities, but shirks them to talk on the phone. In (4.16), the nuance is that the subject always knows everyone's personal business, although others may not want him to know. Whereas *steady* can also precede the verb in its bare present form, such constructions are not compatible with stressed *stay*. Further, although *steady* can combine with other aspect markers such as *done* or *be* in (4.17), stressed *stay* cannot. The marker *stay* does not combine with *be* in (4.17) because

they are both habitual markers. Further, as a frequentative, stressed *stay* does not combine with completive *done* in (4.18).

- (4.15) She **STAY** talking on the phone.  
\*She STAY talk on the phone.  
'She is always talking on the phone.'
- (4.16) He **STAY** knowing everybody's business.  
\*He STAY know everybody's business.  
'He's always knowing everybody's business.'
- (4.17) They **be steady** watching TV.  
\*They be STAY watching TV.
- (4.18) They **done steady** warned us.  
\*They done STAYED warned us.

Based on the distinct distribution of *stay* and *steady* and the fixed sequence in which they occur as aspect markers, I propose that they are ranked according to a strict hierarchy dictated by the type of aspect they express. One could easily argue for a syntactic hierarchy composed of three distinct aspectual phrases and giving rise to the schema in (4.19):

(4.19) Proposed hierarchy of aspectual markers

Asp1: be/STAY/BIN

Asp2: done

Asp3: steady

#### 4.2.5. Evolution of the aspect marker *stay*

Using the models described in Section 2.3.2 of the literature review, I now present my hypothesis regarding the development of the aspect marker *stay* in AAE. This marker undergoes both primary grammaticalization (change from lexical item to a grammatical item) and secondary grammaticalization (use of one grammatical form as the source for another grammatical form). My analysis begins with the main verb *stay*, which means 'to live, to



remain.’ The *verb* *stay* is commonly followed by an adverbial prepositional phrase indicating place, as in (4.20a), but it may also be followed by a sentential complement, as in (4.20b):

- (4.20) a. They [V *stay* [PP *in Ann Arbor.*]]  
b. They [V *stay* [CP *waiting in line at the checkout counter.*]]

I hypothesize that the construction in (4.20b) gives rise to use of *stay* as a continuative aspect marker. Although Bybee et al. (1994: 164-165) do not list *stay* in particular as a lexical source that would be a prime candidate for grammaticalization, they do note that words such as ‘remain’ and ‘live’ have the tendency to develop into continuative markers. In fact, Brinton (1988:141) illustrates in the following examples that Old English had an aspect marker grammaticalized from the verb *gewunian* ‘to dwell, to remain’ that indicates a habit with punctual and durative verbs and a past state with stative verbs:

- (4.21)            Ða fæmnan þe gewuniað onfon gealdorcraeftigan & scinlæcan & wiccan  
                    ‘The woman who are in the habit of assisting enchantresses and  
                    sorceresses and witches’
- (4.22)            His modor gewunode to fedenne henna  
                    ‘His mother used to feed hens’

The habitual with *gewunian* survives in Modern English under the habitual periphrasis formed from its participial form *wont* ‘accustomed’ as in, *He drank coffee at breakfast, as he is wont to do*. In addition to the old habitual formed with *gewunian*, AAE has two further habitual markers: invariant *be* and stressed *stay*. Moreover, *stay* conveys the idea of continuity, for if one stays at a given location, one continues to be there.

Both MAE and AAE employ *stay* as a continuative marker. The original structure of ‘verb + sentential complement’ has been reanalyzed as follows:

- (4.23) They [I' *stay* [VP *waiting in line at the checkout counter.*]]  
                    ‘They keep on waiting in line at the checkout counter.’

This development is possible for two reasons: metaphorical transfer and syntactic reanalysis. According to Heine et al. (1991: 48), lexical items develop into grammatical morphemes based on a scale of different metaphorical categories, shown in (4.24):

(4.24) Person > Object > Activity > Space > Time > Quality

The intransitive verb *stay* denotes spatial continuity. Subsequently, speakers make a metaphoric jump and begin to use this structure denoting spatial continuity to refer to temporal continuity as well, making the development of the continuative *stay* a case of Space > Time metaphor.

Reanalysis occurs simultaneously along with the metaphorical transfer. Although *stay* is originally a main verb in (4.20), reanalysis as an auxiliary results in use of *stay* as a continuative marker in (4.23).

Since English already contains the iterative/continuatives ‘to keep on’ and ‘to go on,’ it may seem odd that speakers would innovate another form to express the same concept. However, the existence of many forms in the same grammatical domain is quite common, as will be shown later in Chapters 7 and 8 when variation between forms for expressing a given function is explored in greater detail. As Heine et al. (1991:30) note, ‘new grammatical devices may develop despite the existence of old, functionally equivalent structures.’ In fact, English has several means of expressing the function of futurity, including *will*, *be going to (gonna)*, *fixing to (finna)*, all of which are retained due to their different nuances in meaning.

Returning to examples (4.20b) and (4.23), note that although the underlying syntactic structure is different, the surface manifestation is identical, making it ambiguous as to whether *stay* is an auxiliary or a verb. The listener has to rely on context to determine if the speaker means to use *stay* as a main verb to convey a sense of spatial continuity or as an auxiliary to convey a sense of temporal continuity. However, sentences such as (4.25) are not ambiguous

because they no longer refer to spatial continuity at all and are thus further evidence of the decategorialization of *stay* as a verb and its new use as a continuative aspect marker:

- (4.25) They **stay** traveling to Louisiana.  
'They keep on traveling to Louisiana.'

Invited inferences play a role in the further development of *stay* from a continuative marker to a frequentative. I hypothesize that speakers noticed that the continuative *stay* was being used in constructions with adverbial phrases such as *all the time*, as in (4.26). Use of continuative *stay* in contexts where it co-occurred with adverbials indicating frequent or habitual action have affected the meaning of the aspect marker itself, prompting speakers to employ *stay* alone as a frequentative/habitual marker, as in (4.27):

- (4.26) They **stay** talking all the time.

- (4.27) They **STAY** talking.  
'They are frequently/always talking.'

I hypothesize that as speakers first began to use *stay* as a frequentative, they used stress to indicate that they were using the continuative *stay* innovatively. Use of stressed *stay* signaled to the reader that the speaker's implied meaning of frequency was of more importance than the meaning of continuity. As more members of the community accepted this conversational inference, stressed *stay* arose as a habitual/frequentative marker. Use of *stay* in negative contexts would allow the marker to be used to express the speaker's negative evaluation or indignation, as will be explained further in Chapter 6.

#### 4.2.6. Summary of properties of *stay*

The aspect marker *stay* functions as a habitual and frequentative marker in AAE. It is distinguishable from the main verb *stay* not by agreement, since neither the aspect marker nor the main verb displays any inflection, but through phonological stress alone. The aspect marker

*stay*, in contrast to the main verb *stay*, has a stressed pronunciation. In this chapter, I have confirmed other studies' findings that stressed *stay* occurs before predicate adjectives, prepositional phrases, adverbs, and verbs in *-ing* (Green 2002) and in the present tense (Green 2002, Spears 2008, 2009). I add to the literature by demonstrating that stressed *stay* also occurs in existential sentences and in the past tense. It does not combine with other aspect markers. It contrasts with the habitual marker *be*, which is neutral, in that it expresses a negative connotation for the event that is marked as habitually occurring.

## Chapter 5: Continuative aspect marker *steady*

### 5.1. Background

*Steady* is one syntactically camouflaged form that has received little attention by researchers so far. Baugh (1984:4), the definitive work on *steady*, describes the TMA marker as ‘a predicate adverb [that] has the specific aspectual function of indicating that the action or process of the progressive verb is completed in an intense, consistent, and continuous manner.’ Baugh (1984) points out that the marker *steady* is a camouflaged form because it indicates a continuous action the same as *steadily* and shares the same grammatical restrictions that are found with *steadily*. For Baugh (1984), the intensity of the activity is what distinguishes the AAE TMA marker *steady* from the MAE adverb *steadily*. In example (5.1), *steady* is used as an adverb meaning ‘steadily, regularly, continuously.’ The use of the aspect marker *steady* in (5.2) emphasizes the fact that not only is the speaker talking continuously or at a steady rate but that she is talking intensely as well.

(5.1) She found a new job and is working **steady** now.  
‘She is working regularly now.’

(5.2) Her mouth is **steady** runnin’.  
‘Her mouth continues to run nonstop.’  
‘She continues to talk/chatter away.’ (Baugh 1984:4)

Baugh (1984) also determined some general sentence structures for utterances with *steady* and also some restrictions that limit its use. In the dialects of AAE spoken in Los Angeles and Philadelphia that Baugh (1984) describes, *steady* is variable in its position in the sentence.

He says that in general, *steady* is found most commonly before progressive verbs, as in (5.3), but that it may also appear sentence-finally, as in (5.4). Note that in the sentences below, the aspect marker *be* provides the habitual reading, which I have glossed as ‘always,’ whereas *steady* provides the continuous, intensive meaning, which I have glossed as ‘keep on consistently/diligently.’

(5.3) Them fools be **steady** hustlin' everybody they see.  
‘Those fools always keep on consistently hustling everybody they see.’  
(Baugh 1983: 86)

(5.4) Them brothers be rappin' **steady**.  
‘Those guys always keep on rapping diligently.’  
(Baugh 1983: 86)

Yet, I believe that it is possible that *steady* has further grammaticalized in the dialects of some speakers such that the TMA marker *steady* can only occur before the verb. In fact, my own data shows that the aspect marker *steady* occurs only before verbs, as will be discussed in Section 5.2.

Baugh (1984) claims that there are also restrictions on the types of verbs with which *steady* can be used. Just as the adverb *steady/steadily* is only used with action verbs, the aspect marker *steady* is only used with action verbs. Sentences such as (5.5) in which *steady* combines with stative verbs are not acceptable since no action is involved:

(5.5) \*He be **steady** knowing the truth. (Baugh 1984: 5)  
‘He usually/always knows the truth.’

However, since it is common for TMA markers to be used in a wider variety of environments as they become further grammaticalized, this restriction of using *steady* only with action verbs may not hold for all dialects of AAE. Consider what has occurred cross-linguistically with the aspect marker *done*, which is used as a completive marker in many contact languages. In AAE, completive *done* can only be used with action verbs, yet the same marker

*done* in Guyanese creole can be used with both action verbs (5.6) and stative verbs (5.7), as shown below (Edwards 1991, cited in Labov 1998: 127):

- (5.6) Somtaim wen you **don** wok yu go an bai a drink.  
'Sometimes when you [are] finished working you go and buy a drink.'
- (5.7) Bai taim mi lef de fu kom hee some a dem **don** marid.  
'By the time I left there to come here some of them were already married.'

Likewise, the acceptability of *steady* with stative verbs may vary across different varieties of AAE according to the degree of grammaticalization it has undergone and is in fact perfectly acceptable in certain contexts, according to data from my corpus that I will present later in this chapter.

Similarly, Baugh (1984:7) states that *steady* cannot be used with prepositional phrases unless 'the prepositional phrase...is perceived as an active process.' Since *on someone's case* is an active process, example (5.8) is grammatical. However, (5.9) is not acceptable because *under the table* is not an active process, but a stable location.

- (5.8) Man, you just **steady** on everybody's case. (Baugh 1984:7)  
'You just keep on consistently being on everybody's case.'
- (5.9) \*The baby is **steady** under the table. (Baugh 1984:7)  
'The baby diligently continues being under the table.'

However, I see no clear reason as to why *on everybody's case* should be considered an active process rather than a stative one. My data, as I will explain in Section 5.2.4, shows that *steady* can be used with stative verbs as well as with prepositional phrases, so there is no need to consider *on everybody's case* as an exceptional form.

There are also restrictions on the type of subject that can be used with *steady*. Baugh (1984:4) notes that *steady* can only be used with 'animate and specific' subjects. Spears (2007: 430) defines specificity as follows: 'By specificity is meant denotation by the speaker of an

entity or a group that is uniquely identifiable and distinguished from all other entities inside and outside of the class of entities to which it belongs.’ As *steady* marks the continuative aspect, it is logical that its use requires some specific, animate subject that keeps the action going. As a result, sentences with a non-specific subject as in (5.10) are ungrammatical.

- (5.10) \* A boy be **steady** rappin’. (Baugh 1984: 4)  
‘A boy always continues rapping diligently.’

Green (2002) expands on Baugh (1984) by explaining that *steady* can indeed be used with indefinite subjects if more descriptors are used. As a result, sentences such as (5.11) and (5.12) below (both from Green 2002:246) are acceptable in spite of the subject being indefinite.

- (5.11) A basketball player sitting way in the back was **steady** talking.  
‘A basketball player sitting way in the back was continuing to talk.’

- (5.12) Some student I couldn’t see was **steady** singing.  
‘Some student I couldn’t see kept on singing.’

Although Green (2002) does not note this explicitly, adding the descriptors makes the noun phrases in (5.11) and (5.12) specific, which would allow the use of *steady*.

Specificity is worth examining in more detail as to how it manifests itself grammatically. Baptista (2007: 64) explains that ‘overt indefinites and definites can be interpreted as specific or nonspecific.’ In examples (5.13) and (5.14) below, the noun phrases *a movie* and *a house* are indefinite. However, *a movie* is non-specific because it does not refer to a specific movie, whereas *a house* is specific because it refers to a particular house owned by Bill. Similarly, in (5.15) and (5.16), *the horse* is definite in both cases. It is definite in (5.15) because it refers to a specific horse; in (5.16), it is definite but non-specific because it is used to refer generically to horses as a class.

- (5.13) Bill wants to watch a movie. (Indefinite, non-specific)

- (5.14) Bill has a house. (Indefinite, specific)



(5.15) The horse galloped away. (Definite, specific)

(5.16) The horse is a prey animal. (Definite, non-specific)

AAE also allows for bare nouns, which are nouns ‘without determiners or a plural suffix’ (Spears 2007: 426). These bare nouns can be specific as in (5.17) or non-specific as in (5.18), taken from Spears (2007:430). When the bare noun is specific, *steady* can be used, as in (5.19):

(5.17) Cop told them what to do.

(5.18) Cow eat grass.

(5.19) Boy be steady rapping.  
‘The boy always continue rapping diligently.’

Based on the fact that bare nouns, overt indefinites, and overt definite can be either non-specific or specific, I make the more general claim that *steady* can be used with a noun phrase of any form as long as it is pragmatically specific.

Green (2002) also points out that aspectual *be* forces stative verbs such as *have* to be read as activities instead of states, in which case *steady* can be used. As a result, (5.20) is acceptable whereas (5.21) is not.

(5.20) They be **steady** having money. (Green 2002: 73)  
‘They always have money.’

(5.21) \*They **steady** having money. (Green 2002: 73)  
‘They are consistently having money.’

However, my corpus shows that *steady* may be used with stative verbs more broadly, which I demonstrate in Section 5.2.4, since some dialects of AAE permit progressive uses of stative verbs, making cases such as (5.21) above grammatical.

Baugh (1984:5) writes that *steady* ‘has the specific function of indicating that the action of process of the progressive verb is completed in an intense, consistent, and continuous manner.’ This definition indicates that *steady* is both a continuative and an intensifier.

Although the term *continuative* is sometimes conflated with the progressive aspect that indicates an ongoing action, I follow Bybee et al. (1994:127) in defining a continuative as an aspect marker that ‘includes progressive meaning—that a dynamic situation is ongoing—and additionally specifies that the agent of the action is deliberately keeping the action going.’ In the following subsections, I will expand on Baugh (1983, 1984) and Green (2002)’s analyses of *steady* by demonstrating that: (1) *steady*, in addition to being used in the present progressive, can be used in the present habitual, the past, and the future mood, which indicates its expansion in domains of tense, aspect and mood; (2) *steady* can be used with stative verbs indicating surprising states; (3) *steady*, in addition to being used with verbs and prepositional phrases, can be used with adjectives as well; (4) *steady* can be used to express speaker indignation, as scholars have shown to be the case with other TMA markers in AAE such as *done*.

## 5.2. My findings regarding *steady*

### 5.2.1. *Steady* with verbs in the present progressive

Baugh (1983: 86) notes that the aspect marker *steady* typically occurs with verbs in the present progressive, and my own data supports this observation. Let’s consider the possible meanings of example (5.22), taken from my corpus of data.

- (5.22) It’s **steady** droppin’ calls. (Bm, 60s)  
a. ‘It [my cell phone]’s regularly dropping calls.’  
b. ‘It [my cell phone]’s keeps on consistently dropping calls.’

The first reading in (5.22a) arises if the listener interprets *steady* as an adverb, meaning ‘regularly, continuously.’ However, the utterance is completely ambiguous, so the listener could just as easily interpret *steady* as an intensive continuative marker as in (5.22b). *Steady* as an adverb already indicates that some action is being done continuously and *steady* as a continuative marker also indicates that some action is continuing. The difference is that *steady* as a

continuative marker conveys additional information about that continuous action—namely, that the action was done consistently or intensely as well. In cases of ambiguity, only context can make it clear which meaning the speaker wished to convey. Since the speaker made this utterance after his frantic efforts to return an important phone call was thwarted by his phone repeatedly, consistently dropping calls, it is clear that he wished to convey the meaning in (5.22b).

### 5.2.2. *Steady* with verbs in the present tense

*Steady* can also be used in combination with verbs in the bare present tense, although such constructions are less common in my data than those that combine *steady* with verbs in the present progressive. In English, the bare present tense can be used to express habitual actions. When *steady* is used with verbs in the present tense, the present tense supplies the habitual reading and *steady* supplies the intensive, continuative reading.

(5.23) I don't know why she just **steady** mistreat us. (Bf, 40s)  
'I don't know why she always persists in mistreating us.'

### 5.2.3. *Steady* with verbs in the past tense

Additionally, *steady* can be used with verbs in the past tense, as in examples (5.24) and (5.25) from my corpus:

(5.24) I **steady** told them not to do that. (Bf, 40s)  
'I consistently told them not to do that.'

(5.25) I done **steady** told them. (Bf, 40s)  
'I have already consistently told them.'

Use of *steady* in the past tense is most commonly heard in complaints or in scolding others. In both (5.24) and (5.25), the understood meaning is that there has been some negative outcome as

the result of the other party not heeding the speaker's persistent advice, which in turn has agitated the speaker. The fact that *done* is used in (5.23) only serves to further highlight the speaker's indignation.

#### 5.2.4. *Steady* with stative verbs

Both Baugh (1984) and Green (2002) indicate that the continuative marker *steady* can only be used with dynamic verbs and not with states, as dynamic actions require the agent to input energy to keep them going whereas states do not. When given a judgment task concerning this construction, some of the speakers I interviewed found sentences such as (5.26) as acceptable, even though *steady* is combined with stative verbs:

- (5.26) He **steady** knowing everybody's business.  
'He consistently knows everybody's business.'

To explain why (5.26) is acceptable, I must first provide more background information concerning the present progressive in English. Comrie (1976:37-8) explains that progressives in English may be used 'to add greater emotive effect' as in (5.27a) than can be found in the bare present in (5.27b).

- (5.27) a. She's always buying far more vegetables than they can possibly eat.  
b. She always buys far more vegetables than they can possibly eat.  
(Comrie 1976:37)

Moreover, progressive use of certain stative verbs may be completely idiosyncratic, which Comrie (1976:38) shows in the following examples by contrasting *look*, which is acceptable in the bare present and in its progressive form, with *seem*, which is only acceptable in the bare present:

- (5.28) a. You look well.  
b. You're looking well.

- (5.29) a. You seem well.  
b. \*You're seeming well.

The stative verb *know* is similar to *seem* since it also cannot be used in the progressive form in Mainstream American English. Comrie (1976:33-39) further explains with the following illustrative examples that *know* cannot take on the progressive form to express either a temporary or 'contingent state' as in (5.30), a 'surprising state' as in (5.31), a 'counterfactual state' as in (5.32), or a 'changing degree of knowledge' as in (5.33).

- (5.30) John realized that there was no sugar before Mary came in, and forgot that there was no sugar almost as soon as she went out, so that when Mary was in the room, he knew / \*was knowing that there was no sugar.
- (5.31) Fancy that! You know / \*are knowing all about quantum mechanics.
- (5.32) So you know / \* are knowing all about quantum mechanics, do / are you?
- (5.33) I find that I know / \*am knowing more about quantum mechanics with each day that passes.

Although AAE does not allow for *know* in the progressive to express contingent states, it does allow it for expressing surprising states (example 5.34), counterfactual states (example 5.35) and changing degrees of knowledge (example 5.36). In addition, AAE allows for the progressive form of *know* to express inchoative meaning as in (5.37).

- (5.34) He just two, but he already knowing how to read!
- (5.35) So you already knowing how to read, huh?
- (5.36) I'm knowing more about it each day.
- (5.37) I'm knowing more people in the community, so living here isn't so bad.  
'I've started to know more people in the community, so living here isn't so bad.'

In sentences where the present progressive form of *know* expresses surprise, the co-occurrence of *steady* serves to intensify the emotive effect of the utterance. *Steady* cannot combine with *know*

in the progressive when the verb expresses counterfactual states, changing degrees of knowledge, or inchoative meaning.

### 5.2.5. *Steady* with prepositional phrases

Although most of his data is filled with examples where *steady* is used exclusively with action verbs, Baugh (1984) does provide one token of *steady* combining with the prepositional phrase ‘on everybody’s case’ in example (5.8) above, which I repeat here as (5.38).

- (5.38) Man, you just **steady** on everybody’s case. (Baugh 1984:7)  
‘You just keep on consistently being on everybody’s case.’

Baugh explains away this case by claiming that ‘on everybody’s case’ is an active process and thus similar to an action verb, which allows it to be used with *steady*. However, it is my view that *steady* can combine with any prepositional phrase and that when it does, it expresses the idea that a temporary state persists, as in examples (5.39) and (5.40) from my corpus.

- (5.39) We **steady** on the road a lot. (Bm, 50s)  
‘We are consistently on the road a lot.’

- (5.40) Dem cats **steady** in my yard. (Bf, 60s)  
‘Those cats are persistently in my yard.’

### 5.2.6. *Steady* with adjectives

Nothing in the literature thus far speaks of *steady* combining with adjectives, but the following structure is also possible:

- (5.41) Although they apologized, she **steady** mad at them.  
‘Although they apologized, she keeps getting mad at them.’

In (5.41), there is also the implied meaning that the person being spoken of should have overcome her anger by now and that she is being stubborn by hanging on to her anger. *Steady* can also be used with adjectives derived from verbs, as in (5.42) from my corpus.

- (5.42) I'm just **steady** involved in it. I can't get no rest. (Bf, 40s)  
 'I'm just continuously deeply involved in it. I can't get any rest.'

The use of *steady* here in (5.42) implies that the speaker feels that she would rather not be involved or she should not be involved in the situation at all.

### 5.2.7. Evolution of the aspect marker *steady*

In their cross-linguistic survey of source lexical items for continuatives, Bybee et al. (1994) report that words such as *live*, *go*, and *remain* often develop into continuative markers, and they make no mention of *steady* developing into an aspect marker of any kind. Given that the adverb *steady* is not as general or frequent as other adverbs, it may be surprising that it would be a lexical source for grammaticalization. However, as was the case with *stay*, I hypothesize that it is a prime candidate for grammaticalization because it already encodes the meaning 'continuously.' The semantic change occurs here is a Time > Quality metaphorical transfer, as the adverb *steady*, which belongs to metaphorical category of Time since it expresses continuity, grammaticalizes to be used as a marker of quality (intensiveness). Conversational inference plays a role in the grammaticalization here as well, as the speaker begins to use the marker to convey not just that an action was continuing, but that it is, more importantly, continuing non-stop. Speakers reanalyze the structure with *steady* followed by a verb ending in *-ing*, which was originally an adverb + verb sequence as in (5.43), as an aspect marker + verb sequence, as in (5.44) below:

(5.43) They    steady        talking.  
                   adverb        main verb

(5.44) They    steady        talking.  
                   aspect        main verb

The intensive continuative marker *steady* is undergoing primary grammaticalization, as all sentences containing the marker remain ambiguous. Only context is useful for distinguishing whether *steady* is being used as an adverb or as an aspect marker. It is entirely possible that occasionally a listener may interpret the speaker's use of *steady* in this construction as an adverb when the speaker intended it to be an aspect marker or sometimes as an aspect marker when the speaker intended only to use *steady* as an adverb.

### **5.2.8. Summary of properties of *steady***

The aspect marker *steady* indicates an intensive continuative aspect. In this chapter I have confirmed the findings of previous studies—namely that *steady* occurs with action verbs and with the aspect marker *be* (Baugh 1983, 1984 and Green 2002). I add to the literature by demonstrating that *steady* occurs with stative verbs in addition to action verbs, especially to express a surprising state. I also show that the marker *steady* precedes prepositional phrases and adjectival phrases and is not limited to occurring with verbs as reported earlier by Baugh (1983, 1984). The aspect marker *steady* can occur with completive marker *done* as well as with habitual *be* and with any subject that is specific. As with stressed *stay*, *steady* may also express speaker indignation, especially when combined with the aspect marker *done*.



## Chapter 6: Markers of indignation

Baugh (1984) does not list the ability to express disapproval as one of the features of *steady*, and the literature concerning *stay* is silent on this matter as well. However, examples from my corpus clearly indicate that *steady* and *stay* can be interpreted as expressing speaker indignation or simply speaker evaluation much like indignant *come* (see Spears 1982). Speaker disapproval is not a core feature of the semantics of *steady* as it is with *stay*, but one that results pragmatically, according to the context. Labov (1998) indicates that the marker *done* has additional pragmatic interpretations that are similar to what I have noticed with these two markers. The aspect marker *done* typically expresses completive aspect as in (6.1) or intensity as in (6.2):

(6.1) I **done** told you on that. (Labov 1998: 124)

(6.2) Well, we useta get into trouble and...y'know...like...if Pop'd catch us, he say,  
'Boy - you **done** done it now.'  
(Baugh 1983: 76)

However, when *done* is uttered 'in the context of disapproval,' it automatically is interpreted pragmatically as indicating 'moral indignation' (Labov 1998:126), as shown in the following example:

(6.3) So he went to where she was...and got the nerve to lie to me...talking 'bout he  
**done** went to work.  
(Baugh 1983:77)

Brinton (1988) sheds some additional light on the issue. Brinton provides the following example sentences to show how habits in the progressive may employ adverbs to express ‘a tone of censure, disapproval, or irritation’ (1998:41):

- (6.4) a. He is always saying the wrong thing.  
b. She is forever forgetting people’s names.  
c. That child is continually getting into trouble.

Brinton (1998:41) argues that the expressions in (6.4) are ‘a kind of hyperbole’ where the use of the frequency adverbs along with the progressive ‘portray[s] the habit, which is not continuous, *as if* continuous.’ Since AAE’s TMA system already includes a frequentative in *stay* and a continuative in *steady*, its speakers have the option of using these markers as an alternative to adverbs such as *forever*, *continually*, and *always* when they seek to express indignation.

Both *be* and *stay* express the habitual in AAE, but only the marker *stay*, which has an additional reading as a frequentative, has the possibility of expressing disapproval. Consider the following pair of sentences, where (6.5a) has a neutral reading and (6.5b) expresses irritation:

- (6.5) a. It **be** a lot of people at they house.  
‘They are usually a lot of people at their house.’  
b. It **STAY** a lot of people at they house. (Bf, 40s)  
‘There are always a lot of people frequenting their house.’

*Steady* can also be used to express speaker indignation when it is used to describe an action that is done persistently and even stubbornly according to the speaker’s judgment, as in the following example from my corpus:

- (6.6) I told her to come in from 6:30 to 2. She came in at 8. (Bf, 60s)  
But she **steady** begging for hours.  
‘But she has the nerve to beg for hours.’  
‘But she insistently continues begging for hours.’

In this case, the speaker is complaining about an invariably tardy, unreliable coworker who persists in asking for extra hours to work. The speaker tries to help out her coworker by giving

her extra hours when another colleague calls in sick, yet the coworker still arrives late to work and misses the opportunity. The use of *steady* here signals the speaker's indignation at her coworker's persistent failure to be punctual, even though it is in her best interest to be so.

*Steady* can also express indignation in cases where there are no repeated events, but simply the continuation of an undesirable act, as in the following conversation I had with a transport clerk, who is in his 20s, concerning until what point another relative and I could accompany a family member to surgery.

(6.7) CS: How far can we walk with him?

Clerk: To just about this corner right here.

[CS and CS' relative pass the corner and continue walking towards doors to surgery department]

Clerk: Y'all **steady** following me to the door! I said y'all had to stop at the corner right there. Y'all tryinna buck the system.  
'You all have the nerve to continue following me to the door!'

As noted earlier in this chapter, some AAE speakers have the option of combining *done* and *steady* when they are particularly indignant. In example (6.8), taken from my corpus of data, the implied meaning is that the speaker has continuously warned her children about doing something wrong, but they stubbornly went and did it anyway.

(6.8) I **done steady** told them. (Bf, 40s)  
'I have already consistently told them.'

Note that use of *steady* with the future mood nearly always indicates speaker indignation, as the speaker is predicting that someone will do something without heeding good advice, as in example (6.9) from my corpus.

(6.9) He **gonna steady** do it how he wanna do it anyway. (Bf, 40s)  
'He's going to continue to do it how he wants to do it anyway.'

Similarly, the speakers can use *steady* to indicate that they themselves will continue in some behavior, although they have been warned not to do so, as in (6.10) and (6.11), taken from my corpus of data.

(6.10) I'm **steady** gonna do it. (Bf, 40s)  
'I'm going to willingly continue to do it.'

(6.11) The doctor say I can't, but I'm **steady** eating it though. (Bf, 60s)  
'The doctor says I can't [eat fried foods], but I'm continuing to eat it in spite of myself though.'

To sum up, scholars have already shown that AAE markers *done* (Labov 1998) and indignant *come* (Spears 1982) are used to express negative speaker evaluations. I add to the literature here by identifying two more markers with this function. Whereas previous analyses of *stay* (Green 2002, Spears 2008, 2009) and *steady* (Baugh 1983, 1984, Green 2002) seek to prove they are aspect markers distinct from their lexical counterparts and to provide the core semantic and semantic properties of the markers, in this chapter I have explored an additional use of these markers in discourse: expressing speaker evaluation.

## Chapter 7: Future Markers

### 7.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a quantitative and qualitative variationist analysis of the strategies for expressing futurity: *will*, *be going to*, *be fixing to*, *be*, the present progressive, and the present. In this chapter I take a function-based approach (Walker 2010: 13), meaning that I compare all the common grammatical variables for expressing one given function: future temporal reference. Although there may be some restrictions on some of the variants<sup>4</sup> (e.g., the variant *be fixing to* is mostly limited to immediate future reference) and therefore some slight differences in semantic nuance, they compete within the same functional domain of future reference. My goal here is to illustrate how these strategies pattern in Louisiana AAE.

Although *will* still commonly occurs as a future marker, Winford (1998) observes that use of *be going to* is the preferred method for marking futurity in AAE. In this chapter, I provide a distributional analysis to demonstrate how linguistic factors influence speaker selection of *be going to* versus *will*, as they are the most frequent variants. In addition to *will* and *be going to*, AAE has four additional strategies for expressing futurity which occur less frequently: the simple present, the present progressive, *be fixing to*, and *be*. As will be discussed later in Chapter 9, Jena and St. Gabriel diverge in their pronunciation of the marker *steady*, and speakers in the two communities also diverge in their use of the less frequent future markers *be fixing to* and *be*,

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<sup>4</sup> As explained earlier in Section 2.2, I use the term *variant* here to refer to any auxiliary or periphrastic construction that competes with other semantically equivalent forms in one functional domain. Although there may be slight differences in use, in discourse they are more or less interchangeable, such as *I'm going to tell you* and *I'm fixing to tell you* to indicate immediate future.

indicating that the two dialects may be on the course to developing distinct systems for marking futurity.

The organization of this chapter is as follows. Section 7.2 introduces the forms to be studied and also circumscribes the variable context by indicating non-futurate uses of said forms to be excluded from the analysis. Section 7.3 outlines the coding protocol for the study. Section 7.4 provides the results and discussion of the markers. Section 7.5 concludes the chapter.

## **7.2. The variable context: included and excluded tokens**

Labov's principle of accountability guides the organization of variationist studies. According to this principle, any variable must be considered in the context of all other variables with the same function and each realization or failure to realize that variable must be accounted for. The realization of a marker is simple to report. For example, to analyze *will*, one would simply tally up the number of tokens with *will* indicating futurity. Failures to realize *will* would be the tally of all tokens where any other strategy indicating futurity is used instead of *will*. These strategies, first introduced in Section 2.4, are listed below:

- present tense
- progressive
- *to be going to*
- *to be fixing to*
- invariant *be*
- *will*

Of the forms listed above, *will*, *be going to*, the present tense, and the present progressive are strategies that speakers of all varieties of English use to express futurity. Invariant *be* is limited to AAE, whereas *be fixing to* is limited to AAE and Southern varieties of English.

Although knowing which tokens of the future variant to include is essential, of equal importance is knowing which tokens to exclude. The future variants have other functional uses

beyond expressing futurity. For example, the present can express habitual actions as well as future actions. Although we think of *will* as the default form for expressing futurity, it also has additional functions, such as giving commands or expressing general truths. In the following section, I will explain additional functions of the future forms. Whenever a token of a future variant expresses any of these functions instead of futurity, it will not be included in the final data set.

### 7.2.1. Gnomics

Gnomic aspect is used to express generic truths. Visser (1963-73:668) writes: ‘In all periods of English one finds the present tense frequently used in sentences expressing general truths.’ Various terms for this type of use of the present tense include ‘timeless present’, ‘a-chronic present’, and ‘gnomic present’. Gnomic forms are ‘defined as nontemporal, because they are assumed to hold at all times’ (Wagner & Sankoff 2011:280). One finds examples of the gnomic present in Old English:

- (7.1) Mycel wund **behofaþ** mycles læcedomes.  
‘A great wound requires a great remedy.’  
(Ælfred Bede (Smith) 599, 40, cited in Visser 1963-73:668)

Although the gnomic present is more common, the gnomic future is used as well, especially in sayings or proverbs as in (7.2) from Wagner & Sankoff (2011:280):

- (7.2) Boys will be boys.

My data indicates that *be going to* in addition to *will* may express gnomic truths, as indicated in the following example.

- (7.3) You elect these other people...to keep from having a dictating mayor making everything. Because he **gon** get everything the way he want it, and it may not be the best for the city.

All tokens where the future variant expressed a general truth instead of futurity were excluded.

### 7.2.2. Habituals

Future forms may express habitual actions. In such cases, they may occur with adverbials such as ‘often’ or ‘sometimes’ (Wagner & Sankoff 2011:279). My corpus shows that future markers can express habitual actions with an adverbial as in (7.4) or without an adverbial as in (7.5). *Will* also varies with *would* in expressing habituals in the past, as in (7.6).

(7.4) But I don’t- I don’t use that. Very seldom I’ll use that van.

(7.5) These trainers who winning a lot, they **gon** charge you more than what these other trainers that’s not winning that much.

(7.6) Then we’ll rinse ‘em, and after we get through rinsing, we ‘a- we **would** uh hang ‘em on the line.

All tokens where future variants express habitual actions were also excluded.

### 7.2.3. Conditionals

Future forms are also used to express conditional statements. Wagner & Sankoff (2011:282) included in their analysis tokens of the future where the future event hinged on some condition, as in the following example:

(7.7) Si dans dix ans là la pollution est pas contrôlée là, on **va** mourir de ça.  
‘If in ten years pollution isn’t controlled, we’ll die of it.’

However, they excluded tokens of the future in hypothetical situations with no specific temporal reference, as in the following example (Wagner & Sankoff 2011:282), since they considered them gnomics:

(7.8) S’il y a pas de religion personne **va** se respecter. Tu **vas** vouloir aller coucher avec la femme d’en face.



‘If there’s no religion, no one will respect each other. You’ll want to go sleep with the woman across the street.’

In contrast, I included conditionals with or without a specific temporal reference if I considered them real conditionals, as in example (7.9) from my corpus:

(7.9) I’m **gon** get them if they make fun of me.

#### 7.2.4. Imperatives

Imperatives, invitations, requests are volitional uses of the future forms and do not indicate futurity, as shown in example (7.10):

(7.10) Tu **vas** aller t’habiller puis tu **vas** sortir avec moi.<sup>5</sup>  
‘You’ll go get dressed/Go get dressed, then you’re going out with me.’  
(Wagner & Sankoff 2011: 283)

Due to the interview format and my choice of speakers, my corpus does not contain any examples of future variants used as imperatives. *Will* and *be going to* are typically used when giving a sequence of commands as in (7.11) or to be polite (7.12).

(7.11) You’**ll** eat your dinner first, and then you can have dessert.

(7.12) You’**ll** write your essay, and you’**ll** submit it on Friday.

The interview format limited opportunities for speakers to give sequences of commands.

Moreover, since I am younger than all of the speakers and an in-group member, the speakers used familiar language with me rather than polite imperatives such as those listed above.

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<sup>5</sup> Wagner & Sankoff (2011) indicate that this exchange occurs between a mother and her son. Use of the future for informal imperatives may be particular to Canadian French. Baptista (p.c.) notes that imperatives with the future have the weight of a summons and are more common in formal settings; the expected form here would be *Vas t’habiller!* (‘Go get dressed!’)

### 7.2.5. Invitations

*Shall* and *will* can be used for invitations. Use of future forms as invitations or suggestions as in (7.13) are typically excluded in variationist studies:

(7.13) **Shall** we go to London tomorrow? (Fleischman 1982: 283)

For the same reasons given in section 7.2.4, my corpus does not include any tokens of *will* being used for invitations.

### 7.2.6. Movement

Some of the periphrastic forms may simply indicate movement rather than futurity. Wagner & Sankoff (2011: 282) provide the following example with *aller* + infinitive where meaning is movement:

(7.14) On fait comme les grands-parents, on **va** les voir puis on s’amuse avec.  
‘We act like grandparents, we **go** see them and we have fun with them.’

Likewise, there are some cases as in (7.15) from my corpus where *be going to* + infinitive indicates movement rather than prediction. All such cases were excluded from the dataset.

(7.15) I’**m going get** what she said go get.

## 7.3. Coding

In this section, I describe the coding process used to analyze the dataset. The present, present progressive, *will*, and *be going to* are well studied in the literature (Poplack & Tagliamonte 2000, Torres Cacoullous & Walker 2009, Wagner & Sankoff 2011), yet there are no quantitative studies of the emerging markers *be fixing to* and *be*. In developing a coding scheme, I decided to highlight variables I hypothesized would be the most likely to tease apart uses of *be*

*fixing to* from the more well-established future variants *will* and *be going to*. I give an overview of the various sociolinguistic factors (location, sex) and linguistic factors (grammatical person, sentence type, clause type, temporal proximity, and time reference) considered in the following section. Results will be discussed later in section 7.4.

### 7.3.1. External factors

To test my hypothesis that external factors influenced speaker selection of a future variant, I coded all tokens for sex and for location. For sex, a token was coded as male or female. Studies concerning variation of future markers (Wagner & Sankoff 2011, Poplack & Tagliamonte 2000) omit sex in general since the future forms studied are older and used equally by both sexes. However, *fixing to* is a newer strategy for indicating futurity (Smith 2009 and Myers 2014 trace its history only to the 1800s), and previous studies of the future system in English (Poplack & Tagliamonte 2000, Torres Cacoullos & Walker 2009) have not included this variant due to its absence in the dialects under study. I was curious to determine what role, if any, sex might have on speaker selection of *fixing to*, so I included it as a variable. Women have a tendency to be the forerunners of linguistic change, so I hypothesized that instances of *be fixing to* would be more prevalent among women.

For location, tokens were coded as Jena or St. Gabriel. As explained earlier in Chapter 3, these two sites have different histories and differ slightly in their phonetic realizations of markers. I was interested in determining whether the distribution of markers would also vary across the two communities or even if both communities displayed the same inventory and frequency rates of future variants. Poplack & Tagliamonte (2000) discovered differences in rates of usage of

future variants in neighboring rural sites in Nova Scotia, so differences according to location are not out of the ordinary.

### 7.3.2. Internal factors

To determine the linguistic features that govern the use of each form, it is crucial to examine the historical contexts in which each form was developed. These features will serve as linguistic factors that influence speaker selection of one future variant over the other. In this section, I give an overview of linguistic factors gathered from the literature and explain how tokens were coded accordingly.

#### 7.3.2.1. Future in the past

Fleischman (1982:37) writes: ‘The (relative) tense relationship known as future-of-the-past marks an event E as being in the future when visualized from some past moment R.’

Fleischman (1982:37) used the following examples to illustrate that the event may be viewed as either incomplete (7.16) or completed (7.17) at the envisioned future moment and to show that ‘indirect discourse...is probably the most common grammatical environment for future-of-the-past.’

(7.16) I said – two weeks ago – that I **would** do it the following week.

(7.17) I said – two weeks ago – that I **would** have it done (by) the following week.

Inclusion of past reference as an independent variable varies from study to study. Poplack & Tagliamonte (2000) include past reference. Although Fleischman (1982) provides examples with *will* expressing future-in-the-past, Poplack & Tagliamonte (2000) point out that the *go*-future is favored in this context because the earliest attestations of its use reveal that context to

be the *go*-future's entry point in to English (334). My data also reveals *be going to* as the preferred variant in this context:

(7.18) B— said you **were going to** be out there.

(7.19) They also did not know that they **were gonna** take their homes from them, such as has happened now.

Moreover, use of the *go*-future generalized to all subordinate clauses in general after appearing in subordinated future-in-the-past clauses.

In contrast, Torres Cacoullós & Walker (2009:327) omit past reference, explaining that 'backshifted futures differ from their present-tense counterparts not only in relative frequencies...but also in their conditioning by language-internal variables.' As a result, the model of the data may be affected. Nevertheless, I followed Poplack & Tagliamonte (2000) in including the past in the future as a variable it would be useful to provide information regarding the distribution of *be fixing to* in past and nonpast contexts. Inclusion of past reference would only affect the statistical model, yet information could still be gleaned from the cross-tabulations. Tokens were coded as either past or nonpast. Later analysis of my data revealed no variation within this category for *will* (see Table 1), so this predictor was excluded from the final model, yet it is included in qualitative discussions.

*Table 1: Effect of past reference on distribution of will and be going to*

	Non-past reference	Past reference
<i>be going to</i>	281	108
<i>will</i>	28	0
	309	108

### 7.3.2.2. Imminence

Imminence refers to whether an action is impending or not. Fleischman (1982:87) uses the following examples to show that ‘the go-future seems to convey a sense of impending action lacking in the simple future’:

(7.20) Je vais tomber! ‘I’m going to/about to fall !’

(7.21) Je tomberai ‘I’ll fall’

According to Fleischman (1982:87), example (7.21) seems ‘slightly unusual’ or ‘somehow incomplete’ and ‘seems to require some sort of condition, e.g. *if I don’t hold on the railing.*’

Inclusion of imminence as an independent variable varies. Poplack & Tagliamonte (2000) include this variable; however, Wagner & Sankoff (2011) point out that this category is difficult to code for reliably and is rarely included in studies, so they exclude it. I follow Wagner & Sankoff (2011) and exclude imminence as an independent variable since it is similar to temporal proximity, which I do code for.

### 7.3.2.3. Temporal proximity

Temporal proximity refers to how soon or far into the future an event will occur after speech time. Although Wagner & Sankoff (2011) exclude temporal proximity since it is featured in a number of previous studies and they preferred to focus their efforts on other variables to add to the literature, Poplack & Tagliamonte (2000) and Torres Cacoullos & Walker (2009) include it. Poplack & Tagliamonte (2000) code tokens as proximate (occurring within the day) or distal (occurring tomorrow or later). Torres Cacoullos & Walker (2009) use eight levels for temporal proximity: within the minute, within the hour, within the day, tomorrow, within the week, within the month, within the year, and far future. Poplack & Tagliamonte (2000) reveal use of *will* and

*be going to* as roughly regarding temporal proximity. Since my goal was to tease apart *be fixing to* from the other markers, I decided to replicate the coding scheme from Torres Cacoullos & Walker (2009). However, since it was difficult to code reliably for eight levels and also because having too many levels within a single variable is problematic for statistical modelling, I opted to make fine-grained distinctions within the day, but to treat tomorrow and any time thereafter as one level. My coding for temporal proximity was thus a 4-way distinction: within the minute (7.22a, 7.22b), within the hour (7.22c), within the day (7.22d), and tomorrow or any time thereafter (7.22e) as illustrated by the following examples from my corpus:

(7.22a) I'm **gon** take this to B—.

(7.22b) and **Imma** tell you why

(7.22c) I 'a-be right back. (said before leaving to run a quick errand)

(7.22d) **Imma** call James today and tell him don't stop this guy out here from exercising my horse every day until we get together and talk.

(7.22e) He **gon** make 100.

#### 7.3.2.4. Type of clause

Poplack & Tagliamonte (2000), Wagner & Sankoff (2011), and Torres Cacoullos & Walker (2009) distinguish between different types of clauses. Poplack & Tagliamonte (2000) make a 2-way distinction between main and subordinate clauses. As explained earlier in Section 7.3.2.1, the *be going to* future first entered the language in subordinate clauses, so Poplack & Tagliamonte (2000) hypothesized that subordinate clauses would continue to favor *be going to*. Wagner & Sankoff (2011) and Torres Cacoullos & Walker (2009) add conditional statements to the list of clause types. The main clause of a conditional statement is referred to as an apodosis, and they note that *will* tends to occur in the main clause of contingencies. Wagner & Sankoff

(2011) exclude if-clauses of contingent statements from analysis since ‘the inflected future is categorically absent in this environment’ (289). Torres Cacoullos & Walker (2009) discover that *will* is also categorically absent in if-clauses, but they do observe a few tokens of *be going to* in if-clauses. Based on these readings, I coded the data as follows: apodosis, main, subordinate, and if-clause.

#### **7.3.2.5. Type of sentence**

Torres Cacoullos & Walker (2009) make a four-way distinction among sentence types, coding for *wh*-questions, yes/no questions, declaratives, and negatives. They note that questions strongly favor *be going to*. I adopt their coding scheme to determine the range of sentence types possible for *be fixing to*.

#### **7.3.2.6. Grammatical person**

Torres Cacoullos & Walker (2009:331) indicate that first-person subjects favor newer variants of the future since grammaticalized forms enter the language through intent, typically expressed by the first-person subject. Forms that are further along the grammaticalization cline will progress from animate subjects to inanimate and later dummy subjects. Torres Cacoullos & Walker (2009) also note that since *be going to* is more common with questions, which favor second-person subjects, *be going to* occurs more often than *will* with the 2<sup>nd</sup> person. I included this variable to test how far along the grammaticalization cline *be fixing to* might be by observing the range of subjects that it takes.



### 7.3.2.5. Summary of coding:

- Sex: male, female
- Location: Jena, St. Gabriel
- Person: 1ps, 1pp, 2p, 3p animate, 3p inanimate, 3p dummy subject
- Type of clause: apodosis, main, subordinate, if-clause, when-clause
- Temporal proximity: within the minute, within the hour, within the day, tomorrow or later
- Sentence type: wh-questions, yes/no questions, declaratives, negatives
- Temporal Reference: past, nonpast

## 7.4. Results

In this section, I provide a distributional analysis of the data. Data were investigated by means of R and Rbrul. R is a popular open-source programming language and environment used for statistical analysis. Rbrul (Johnson 2009) is a software package run in R that can be used for data manipulation, cross-tabulations, logistic regressions, and mixed-effect models. It is an updated version of VARBRUL, the original software package that variationist linguists used to analyze data. A distributional analysis will provide descriptive statistics for the dataset, indicating frequencies of the forms across variables and levels. A multivariate analysis will indicate the variables that are statistically significant in predicting speaker selection of a given variant and the strength of those variables in relation to each other.

### 7.4.1. Distribution analysis

#### 7.4.1.1. Overall Distribution

Table 2 below summarizes the overall distribution of the data. Analysis of the frequency of the markers reveals that *will* and *be going to* are by far the most common variants of future markers in my corpus. This is similar to findings in other studies regarding the grammaticalization of future markers in English. Poplack & Tagliamonte (2000:327) report that

the frequency of *will* is ‘rivalled or exceeded by that of *going to*’ in 4 out of 5 field sites studied and that *will* is still the preferred variant overall in one of their rural sites. Torres Cacoullós & Walker (2009:328) report that instances of *going to* and *will* are equal in their data at 42% each. In my corpus, *be going to* is the preferred method for expressing futurity overall, as 67% of the tokens use *be going to* whereas only 24% use *will*.

Table 2: Frequency of future marker variants

Variant of Future	Frequency	
	N	%
<i>be going to</i>	309	67.2
<i>will</i>	108	23.5
<i>be fixing to</i>	13	2.8
present progressive	21	4.6
present	8	1.7
<i>be</i>	1	0.2
Total	460	

Language change is a recognized trend. Fleischman (1982:103) posits that in modern Romance languages, the evolution of modals is cyclical, explaining that ‘an initially periphrastic structure synthesizes, the resulting synthetic formations is subsequently replaced by a new periphrastic structure, and ultimately this sequence of events repeats itself.’ The French inflected future *chanterai* (*I will sing*), which itself is a synthesized form of the Latin periphrastic future *cantare* (‘to sing’)+ *habeo* (*I have*), was the most frequent attested form of future temporal reference in writing and speech until the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Poplack & Dion 2009). Since this point, the periphrastic future has become more dominant. Poplack & Dion (2009) provide a historical account demonstrating the rise of the periphrastic form of the future, *aller* + V, as it has overtaken the inflected future. In some dialects of Spanish, another iteration of this cyclic alternation is evident in the future inflection *va-* (synthesized from periphrastic *voy a*), as shown in example (7.23).

(7.23) Yo va dormir. ‘I will sleep’

Fleischman 1(982:118)

Poplack & Tagliamonte (2000) indicate that *be going to* is dominant in several varieties of Canadian English, and Torres Cacoullos & Walker (2009) reveal that the *be going to* and *will* occur at the same rates and are therefore completely variable. Their study shows that some dialects are more conservative and still in the process of switching to the periphrastic form of expressing futurity.

#### **7.4.1.2. Speaker**

Data was collected from 7 speakers (1 male and 6 female) in Jena, LA and 9 speakers (5 male and 4 female) in St. Gabriel, LA who were in their 40s to 80s and who had spent most of their lives in the area. All of the speakers were either relatives or family friends; they were already used to talking to me in AAE and continued to do so in the recordings. I did not follow a set script for the interviews; instead, speakers talked about topics from everyday life. Tokens of the future vary by speaker according to the topics the speakers chose to focus on during the interviews. If speakers focused more on their past lives or recent news, they employed more tokens of past or present perfect markers. If speakers spent more time speaking of their schedules and plans, they used more tokens of the future. Personality also comes into play; some speakers were not particularly verbose. Moreover, since I interviewed people who were family members or friends and who tended to visit each other frequently, some speakers appeared in more than one interview, so I was able to collect more tokens from those speakers.

Table 3: Distribution of future markers across speakers

Speaker	<i>will</i>	<i>be going to</i>	<i>be fixing to</i>	<i>present progressive</i>	<i>present</i>	<i>be</i>	Total
1	10	22	2	1	1	0	36
2	26	13	7	5	0	0	51
3	7	35	3	0	0	0	45
4	5	22	0	1	0	0	28
5	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
6	2	7	0	1	0	0	9
7	2	8	1	0	0	0	11
8	28	85	0	10	1	0	125
9	4	17	0	0	0	0	21
10	4	13	0	0	3	0	20
11	5	18	0	1	0	1	25
12	1	9	0	2	1	0	13
13	6	36	0	0	1	0	43
14	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
15	8	14	0	0	1	0	23
16	0	7	0	0	0	0	7
Total	108	309	13	21	8	1	460

Table 3 above shows the distribution of future markers across speakers. The table shows that tokens were unevenly distributed across the speakers. On one end of the spectrum, I have one speaker producing as many as 125 tokens. Yet on the other end, there is a speaker with only 1 token, shown below in example (7.24):

(7.24) I say, ‘Who **gon** clean the- all that?’

Likewise, another speaker only has 2 tokens, as shown below in (7.25) and (7.26):

(7.25) **Imma** have to tell T—

(7.26) You know one day we **gon** have to just take a ride out there

Although those two speakers on the lower end of the spectrum rarely referred to future events or obligations, they used *be going to* in the cases where they did indicate futurity.

### 7.4.1.3. Location

The distribution of future marker variants across the two field sites is summarized in Table 4. In both the Jena and St Gabriel speech communities, the most frequent future variant is *be going to*. Use of *will* is the second most common variant to occur in the data. Both sites have occasional use of the present progressive and the present to indicate futurity. The two sites diverge in use of the two least frequent markers of the future: *be fixing to* and *be*. Whereas four speakers in Jena use *fixing to*, no instances of its use occur in this data set for St. Gabriel. Moreover, St. Gabriel has a single token of *be* used as a future marker. The markers *be fixing to* and *be* will be discussed in further detail later in the chapter.

*Table 4: Distribution of future marker variants across communities*

Variant of Future	Jena, LA		St. Gabriel, LA	
	N	%	N	%
<i>be going to</i>	108	59.3	201	72.3
<i>will</i>	52	28.6	56	20.1
<i>be fixing to</i>	13	7.1	0	0
present progressive	8	4.4	13	4.7
present	1	0.6	7	2.5
<i>be</i>	0	0	1	0.4

### 7.4.1.4. *Be*

*Be* is the least frequent among all of the future variants. A single token comes from a speaker in St. Gabriel in a declarative statement, as shown in example (7.27) below:

(7.27) A: I'm going to do this. I use a lot of ammonia nitrate because of my garden. And the next time I get a sack- I usually get a fifty pound sack- I'll put you a gallon bag in there so you can put around your fruit tree.

B: You could go pick up a truckload of ammonia nitrate and you see what gon happen. The feds **be** at your house before you there.

In the conversation above, Speaker A is offering to bring Speaker B ammonia nitrate to use for gardening. Speaker B turns the offer into a joke about Speaker A being arrested under suspicion of gathering large quantities of ammonia nitrate to make a fertilizer bomb, warning him that after he picks up his order and heads home, ‘the feds be at your house before you there.’ As we will see later in Chapter 8, the past participle frequently stands alone to mark the present perfect due to the auxiliary *have* being phonetically reduced and ultimately deleted. Likewise, in the example shown above, *will* has been phonetically eroded, leaving *be* as the lone indicator of futurity.

Labov (1972b) warns that loss of final /l/ in contracted *will* could potentially have serious effects on the future system in AAE since its loss would render the future forms as homophonous to the simple present forms. Deletion of *will* before *be* is the only context where this loss would be noticeable. In example (7.28) from my corpus, it is clear that this is a case of the simple present because of the marker –s. However, in cases as in (7.29) where there is no marker, it is impossible to know if there is an underlying *will* that was deleted since *go* is both the infinitive and the 1pp form for the present.

(7.28) Yeah, he gets sworn in.

(7.29) We go with B—.

Phonetic erosion of *will* may lead to either increased frequency of the present as a marker of future or increased frequency of use of *be going to* to mark future.

#### **7.4.1.5. *Be Fixing To***

Use of *be fixing to* is mentioned in scholarly works as early as the 1990s. Bailey (1991:133) indicates that it is used in Texas along with other Southern English regional forms such as *might could*. Several scholars provide an account of the grammaticalization of *be fixing*

*to* as it evolves from the verb *fix*. Although Ziegler (2003, cited in Myers 2014 and in Smith 2009) states that use of *fix* as a future marker derives from its meaning ‘to prepare,’ other scholars have argued convincingly that it is the meaning of ‘to settle in one’s mind’ (Smith 2009:13) and of ‘fixing one’s intention or purpose’ (Myers 2014:46) that leads to extended use as a future marker since these meaning relate to intention and obligation. Although *be fixing to* is used as a future marker as early as the 1800s (Smith 2009:13), it does not become prevalent in the Southern United States until the early 1900s (Myers 2014:48).

My corpus reveals 13 tokens of *be fixing to*. The low frequency of tokens along with its recent grammaticalization suggests that this form is new and just beginning to compete with other existing forms. *Be fixing to* is used to describe an event occurring within the next minute (examples 7.30, 7.31), within the day (example 7.32), and thereafter (example 7.33):

(7.30) What you was **finna** say?

(7.31) A: Oh, where you going, G—?  
B: **Finna** go to the store.

(7.32) We left home that morning, and my mama was **fixing** to start a search. I don’t remember who found us and how they found us that night cause we, we all— If it hadn’t been for the Lord, we woulda got drowned.

(7.33) She’s **finna** be 12 in December.

In my corpus, there were 39 instances of tokens being used to indicate an event happening within the next minute. This distribution is shown in Table 5 below. *Be going to* is the most frequent at 59%, whereas *be fixing to* is the second most frequent, capturing 28% of this usage. *Will* is scarcely used to indicate the immediate future, and the present progressive, present, and *be* are never used.

Table 5: Future forms indicating event happening within next minute

Variant of Future	Frequency	
	N	%
<i>be going to</i>	23	59.0
<i>will</i>	5	12.8
<i>be fixing to</i>	11	28.2
present progressive	0	0
present	0	0
<i>be</i>	0	0
Total	39	

It is clear from Table 5 that *be going to* and *be fixing to* are the main contenders for expressing imminent events. Bailey (1991:126) writes that ‘[w]e can predict, more or less, the outcome of the competition between forms by observing their relative frequency among various social groups as well as among different generations.’ The 13 tokens of *be fixing to* in my corpus are distributed among 4 speakers in Jena, all of whom are female. Bailey (1991:126) states that ‘women tend to lead men in linguistic change, so that if a form is more advanced in the speech of women than of men, we might assume that it will spread throughout the population at the expense of the competing form.’ Determining if adoption of *be fixing to* is linguistic change would require a combination of both real time (longitudinal) and apparent time (cross-sectional) evidence. As I do not have a set of younger speakers and have not collected data over a period of years, it is too early yet to make any claims on linguistic change. Additional research is needed here.

#### 7.4.2. Influence of independent variables

In this section I model the influence of independent variables on speaker selection of *will* vs. *be going to*. Two popular toolkits for variationist analysis are Rbrul (Johnson 2009) and R (2009). Both programs allow sociolinguists to run a multiple logistic regression on their data to



determine the relationship between the dependent variable and multiple independent variables, but they do so in different ways.

R uses treatment coding by default, which means that one level within each variable serves as the reference level. In my model, the reference level for the dependent variable is *will*. For all independent variables, I have set the most frequent variable as the reference level. For Person, the reference level is 3<sup>rd</sup> person animate; for Sentence Type, Declarative; for Clause Type, Main; for Temporal Proximity, Tomorrow. These reference levels indicate the most typical type of sentence in the data set, exemplified by the following:

(7.34) Oh, Hilary **gon** beat him.

R uses the log odds scale to demonstrate the effects of the predictors on the dependent variable. On the log odds scale, 0 is neutral; positive values represent a favoring effect, whereas negative values indicate a disfavoring effect. Output generated by R is interpretable across fields and sets the playing field for interdisciplinary work.

Rbrul, in contrast, uses sum coding, which means that the coefficients of the predictor variables represent differences from the group mean instead of differences from the reference level. Rbrul uses a percentage scale where 50% is neutral; values over 50% indicate a favoring effect and values below 50% represent a disfavoring effect. It also shows the log odds equivalent. Since my data set is small, I have opted to use treatment coding in R to compare selection of one variant against the most typical examples rather than comparing to the grand mean.

### 7.4.2.1. Model in R

Tagliamonte & Baayen (2012:142) inform us that ‘the data are almost always more sparse than desirable and are typically unevenly distributed across individuals, social groups, and linguistic contexts.’ Inclusion of too many empty cells results in a statistical model that is not sound. At just 460 tokens, my data set is sparse and unevenly distributed. To resolve this issue, I limit the final statistical analysis to a binary choice between *will* and *be going to*, thus excluding the 43 tokens of the less frequent variants. In the model below, linguistic factors determining speaker selection of the future variant *will* are presented.

*Table 6: Logistic regression analysis of selection of will as future variant*

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z )	
(Intercept)	1.08686	0.25167	4.319	1.57e-05	***
Person = 3p animate vs. 1ps	-0.86379	0.30368	-2.844	0.00445	**
Person = 3p animate vs. 1pp	1.16715	0.65029	1.795	0.07268	.
Person = 3p animate vs. 2p	-0.38498	0.39595	-0.972	0.33090	
Person = 3p animate vs. 3p inanimate	0.03863	0.51282	0.075	0.93995	
Person = 3p animate vs. 3p dummy	-1.12990	0.48088	-2.350	0.01879	*
Sentence = Declarative vs. Wh Question	15.75591	790.50183	0.020	0.98410	
Sentence = Declarative vs. Y/N Question	1.71148	1.07416	1.593	0.11109	
Sentence = Declarative vs. Negative	0.59311	0.32404	1.830	0.06720	.
Clause = Main vs. Apodosis	0.51709	0.59029	0.876	0.38103	
Clause = Main vs. Other	0.23180	0.29478	0.786	0.43167	
Clause = Main vs. If-clause	0.57052	1.14255	0.499	0.61754	
Temp Prox = Tomorrow vs. w/i minute	0.87246	0.53714	1.624	0.10432	
Temp Prox = Tomorrow vs. w/i hour	0.52954	1.17802	0.450	0.65306	
Temp Prox = Tomorrow vs. Today	0.10454	0.45387	0.230	0.81784	

Signif. codes: 0 ‘\*\*\*’ 0.001 ‘\*\*’ 0.01 ‘\*’ 0.05 ‘.’ 0.1 ‘ ’ 1

Table 6 presents the logistic regression model of the variant *will*. As indicated in Section 7.4.1, *be going to* is the dominant method for marking futurity, so it is provided as the reference level for the model here. The model indicates the variables that cause speakers to stray from that standard pattern shown in example (7.34) above. Of the linguistic factors, both Person and Sentence Type are statistically significant. For the independent variable Person where 3<sup>rd</sup> person

animate is the reference level, the negative value of the estimated coefficient indicates a lower likelihood of *will* occurring with 1<sup>st</sup> person singular or 3<sup>rd</sup> person dummy subject as opposed to 3<sup>rd</sup> person animate, with 1<sup>st</sup> person singular exerting a stronger statistical affect ( $p < 0.001$ ). Also for Person, the positive coefficient indicates a marginally higher likelihood that *will* is chosen for 1<sup>st</sup> person plural when compared to 3<sup>rd</sup> person animate. This means that 1<sup>st</sup> person plural weakly favors *will*, whereas 3<sup>rd</sup> person dummy subjects and especially the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular favor *be going to*.

As noted in Section 7.3.2.6, newer future variants demonstrate persistence by being more common with 1<sup>st</sup> person singular subjects since that subject is most closely tied to intention (Torres Cacoullos & Walker 2009:331-2). The fact that the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular strongly favors *be going to* is evidence supporting this hypothesis. Moreover, preference of *be going to* with dummy subjects indicates that the form has grammaticalized to include inanimate, agentless subjects and is pushing out use of *will* in this domain. Torres Cacoullos & Walker (2009:332) also explain that use of *will* for 1<sup>st</sup> person plural is more likely since it indicates ‘willingness and cooperative activity.’ Due to the persistence of willingness/volition, *will* continues to be favored by 1<sup>st</sup> person plural. However, that effect is weak, and it is possible that the favoring effect may continue to disappear.

Although the 1<sup>st</sup> person singular subject favors *be going to* in my dataset, it weakly favors *will* in the study by Torres Cacoullos & Walker (2009), a fact which they attribute to a prevalence of tokens with the collocation *I’ll*. Since /l/ is weakened in AAE, my speakers may be choosing *be going to* (shortened to *Imma*) since it is more salient and avoids confusion with the present tense form.

For Sentence Type, *will* is more likely to occur in negative statements than in declarative statements. Negative systems behave differently from the affirmative forms in that they are more conservative. The form *won't* continues to dominate in this domain because it is older than *not be going to* or *ain't going to*. The favoring effect is weak, so it is possible that *be going to* will eventually push *will* out of this domain as well.

## 7.5. Summary

In this chapter, I provided a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the strategies for indicating futurity in AAE. The dominant future variant is *be going to* (67%) with *will* a distant second at 24%. This finding confirms a similar study by Poplack & Tagliamonte (2000) on AAE in Nova Scotia where *be going to* also leads. A multivariate analysis of *will* vs. *be going to* indicates weak preference by negative contexts and 1<sup>st</sup> person plural subjects. In contrast, 1<sup>st</sup> person singular subjects and 3<sup>rd</sup> person dummy subjects show preference to *be going to*, indicating that the form is far along the grammaticalization cline and edging *will* out of the domain.

A distributional analysis of the emerging forms *be fixing to* and *be* suggest that Jena and St. Gabriel are moving towards developing distinct future marking systems. *Be fixing to* occurs only in Jena and is led by female speakers. It outpaces *will* in competition with *be going to* for expressing the immediate future. However, as Baker (2010:5) notes, 'not all variation is necessarily followed by change.' Without a longitudinal study or additional age groups, it is not possible at this point to determine if the use of *be fixing to* is spreading. In St. Gabriel, the use of *be* alone for marking the future occurs when an underlying *will* is phonetically eroded, similarly to how the past participle alone has come to mark the present perfect due to phonetic erosion of

*have*. Time will tell if this form gains footing or is pushed out of the competition by the rise of the *be going to* form.

## Chapter 8: Perfect Markers

### 8.1. Introduction

Labov (1998:117) describes AAE as consisting of two systems: a general English component that is similar to mainstream varieties and an African-American component that serves not as a complete grammar itself, but as a complementary system to the general English component. Given that AAE speakers have access to both MAE and AAE grammars, which contexts determine their selection of an MAE marker versus an AAE marker?

Previous variationist studies on the present perfect (Tagliamonte 1997, Van Herk 2010) have focused on its development from the preterite. As a result, they have analyzed the factors governing speaker selection of the present perfect versus all other past forms rather than considering competition among the present perfect forms themselves. In contrast to previous studies, I focus on competition among the present perfect forms. This is especially useful to the study of AAE because it offers insight into how speakers negotiate between their co-existing grammars. In this chapter, I look at the strategies speakers have for expressing present perfect aspect (*have, been, done*, lone participles, and the preterite) and the distribution of these forms across the semantic functions of the present perfect to examine how these co-existent grammars are manifested in Louisiana dialects of AAE. I trace the grammaticalization of these markers into perfects to offer insight into their distribution, hypothesizing that older perfects will have more semantic nuances than younger perfects and that markers may show persistence in meaning.

## **8.2. Semantic uses of the perfect**

In this section, I rely on the taxonomy proposed by Comrie (1976:52) who explains that the perfect ‘expresses a relation between two time-points, on the one hand the time of the state resulting from a prior situation, and on the other the time of that prior situation.’ For the present perfect, past events are viewed as still being relevant to the current time. There are four semantic uses of the perfect that Comrie (1976) describes: perfect of result, experiential perfect, perfect of persistent situation, and perfect of recent past.

### **8.2.1. Perfect of result**

The perfect of result refers to ‘a present state...as being the result of some past situation’ (Comrie 1976:56). This semantic use is also referred to as ‘result state’ in other studies. Comrie (1976:56) uses the following examples to illustrate this semantic use of the perfect:

(8.1) John has arrived.

(8.2) John arrived.

In example (8.1), we understand that John is still here, thus the use of the perfect ‘indicates persistence of the result of John’s arrival’ (Comrie 1976:56). In example (8.2), there is no indication that John is still here, although he might be.

At this point, it is necessary to draw a distinction between the perfect and the perfective. The perfect is another aspect marker; it indicates that an action is completed in the present, and it may further draw attention to the consequences of those actions. In short, perfect aspect highlights the resulting state of an action. Perfective aspect, however, emphasizes the occurrence of an action. The simple past expresses completed actions, so it can also be referred to as the past-perfective. Due to the historical development of the perfect (to be explained in Section 8.3),

there is overlap between the perfect and the perfective in certain contexts. For example, it is possible for a native English speaker to use the following expressions interchangeably in the same context:

(8.3) Has John left for school yet?

(8.4) Did John leave for school yet?

Use of the present perfect in (8.3) clearly indicates a result state reading and is the standard mode of indicating this result state. However, the past perfective along with the adverbial *yet* in (8.4) performs the same ‘perfect of result’ function for which the present perfect is selected in (8.3). The present perfect developed out of past perfective, and overlap continues in contexts with adverbials indicating present relevance. Although this overlap exists in English, it is clear that past perfective and the present perfect have distinct aspectual readings. The present perfect reports past events that are still relevant to the present, so any adverbial modifiers used with the present perfect must include a time period that starts in the past and includes the time of utterance in order for the sentence to be grammatical. Although present perfect constructions cannot be used with adverbials such as *yesterday* that refer to only the past time, such adverbials commonly occur with past perfective constructions.

### **8.2.2. Experiential perfect**

Whereas the perfect of result indicates a state holding at the time of speech, the experiential perfect refers to ‘a given situation [that] has held at least once during some time in the past leading up to the present’ (Comrie 1976:58). In the example below, we understand that living in France is one of John’s experiences.

(8.5) John has lived in France.

(Comrie 1976:58)



### 8.2.3. Perfect of persistent situation

The perfect of persistent situation, also referred to as a continuing state in other studies, refers to ‘a situation that started in the past but continues (persists) into the present’ (Comrie 1976:60). In (8.6) below, we understand that John started to live in Michigan ten years ago and that he continues to do so in the present.

(8.6) John has lived in Michigan for ten years. (Comrie 1976:60)

Comrie (1976:60) also notes that although English uses the present perfect in such situations, other languages such as French tend to use the present tense instead:

(8.7) J’attends depuis trois jours. (Comrie 1976:60)  
I wait since three days  
‘I’ve been waiting for three days.’

Another option here, as noted in the translation that Comrie (1976) provides for the French example above, is to use the present perfect continuous to refer to continuing states. The difference between a continuing state reading and an experiential reading often hinges on the presence of a temporal adverbial, as shown by the difference between (8.5) and (8.6). Use of the continuous allows for a continuing state reading without the need for a temporal phrase.

### 8.2.4. Perfect of recent past

Comrie (1976:60) notes that the perfect ‘may be used where the present relevance of the past situation referred to is simply one of temporal closeness, i.e. the past situation is very recent.’ This use of the perfect is also referred to as the ‘hot news’ perfect (McCawley 1971). In example (8.8a) below from Comrie (1976:60), the present perfect is used instead of the past perfective (8.8b) to indicate that the information is new.

- (8.8) a. I have recently learned that the match is to be postponed.  
b. I learned that the match is to be postponed.

Comrie (1976) also writes that languages vary in the degree of recentness with which the perfect may still be used. Comrie (1976:60) shows that English speakers use the perfective instead of the perfect with temporal phrases referencing the past (8.9), whereas Spanish allows for a wider time frame for using the perfect (8.10).<sup>6</sup>

- (8.9) a. I went to the dentist this morning.  
b. \* I've been to the dentist this morning.<sup>7</sup>

- (8.10) La he visto esta mañana.  
'I saw her this morning.'

Comrie (1976:61) observes that 'gradual relaxation of the degree of recentness required for use of the perfect seems to have been a key part of the development of the perfect in many Romance languages to oust the simple past completely.'

### 8.3. Evolution of present perfect

#### 8.3.1. Resultatives to perfects

As mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, two periphrastic strategies for expressing present perfect reference arose to compete with the preterite: the *be* + participle construction for intransitive verbs and the *have* + participle construction for transitive verbs. As explained earlier in Section 2.3.2.1, both *have* and *be* are stative verbs that were employed in Old English resultative constructions as in (8.11) and (8.12) below:

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<sup>6</sup> Schaden (2009:117, 124-5) indicates that American Spanish is similar to English in that it does not allow the present perfect with past-denoting temporal adverbials, and that cases such as (8.10) are marginal in Spanish. In contrast, French and German present perfect forms regularly occur with past-denoting temporal adverbials.

<sup>7</sup> Although this example is unacceptable under a reading in which it is the afternoon or evening, Acrisio Pires (p.c.) points out that this example should be acceptable under a reading in which it is still morning (e.g. *I've been to the dentist (twice) this morning. I forgot my laptop there and had to go back to pick it up before coming to work.*).

(8.11) He wæs gecumen. (Bybee et al. 1994: 68)  
'He has come.'

(8.12) Ic hæfde hine gebundenne. (Bybee et al. 1994: 68)  
'I had him in a state of being bound'

Bybee et al. (1994:68) explain that, cross-linguistically, resultatives commonly grammaticalize into perfect markers. Resultatives indicate that 'a present state exists as the result of a previous action' (Bybee et al. 1994:69). Consider the following example from my corpus in which a speaker recalls a conversation with a travel agent, pointing out a difference the agent has made regarding the booking:

(8.13) No, that's what you told me, cause Imma<sup>8</sup> read back to you what I have. When you tell me something, I write it down. I have a little tablet. I **have** everything **written down**.

In the example above, *I have everything written down* expresses the fact that everything (i.e., all of the information the agent originally told the speaker) is in a state of being written down. In this construction, *have* still has its lexical meaning of 'to possess' and is not functioning as an auxiliary. This resultative construction is the original context in which the present perfect arises. In time, the *have* + adjectival participle construction is reanalyzed as an auxiliary + verb sequence indicating a past action that still is relevant to the present. Although in English, *be* and *have* were both in competition as the marker for indicating the perfect, *have* spread to intransitive verbs and won out as the general marker for the perfect, limiting use of *be* to mark perfect only for the verb *go* as in example (8.14) from Bybee et al. (1994:68). Use of the verb *be* as a perfect marker is preserved in church hymns such as Isaac Watts' 1719 hymn 'Joy to the World'<sup>9</sup> in (8.15). However, modern updates of the lyrics to 'The Lord has come' occur both in recorded

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<sup>8</sup> *I'm going to* is often reduced to *Imma* [aimə] in casual speech. Like the reduced form *gonna*, it is only used for instances of *I'm going to* that indicate future temporal reference. As a result, it's possible to use *Imma do it tomorrow* for *I'm going to do it tomorrow*. However, it's impossible to use the reduced form simply for movement. As a result, one cannot say *Imma the store* for *I'm going to the store*.

<sup>9</sup> For lyrics to the hymn, see <http://www.lutheran-hymnal.com/lyrics/tlh087.htm>.

versions of the song, such as Mariah Carey's cover in her 1994 album *Merry Christmas*, as well as in public performances by African American choirs throughout Louisiana, suggesting that modern speakers are less comfortable with perfect *be* followed by *come*.

(8.14) He is gone.

(8.15) Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King.

Although the preterite may still be used in some cases (8.16), use of *have* for expressing the perfect is preferred by speakers in my corpus (8.17). Use of an inflected participle as in (8.17a) is possible in both AAE and mainstream varieties of English. In AAE, preterite and perfect forms may overlap, and context or an overt realization of the auxiliary as in (8.17b) teases them apart.

(8.16) Did you already eat?

(8.17) a. Have you already eaten?  
b. Have you already ate?

Having discussed the pathway of resultatives to perfect markers, in the next section I discuss the grammaticalization pathway of completives to perfect markers.

### 8.3.2. Completives to perfects

A completive marker is used to indicate that 'an action [is] performed completely and thoroughly' (Bybee et al. 1994:57). Completive markers derive from movement or action verbs. Mainstream varieties of English have a use of *go* that resembles a completive, as shown in the following example (8.18):

(8.18) He went and told her the whole story. (Bybee et al. 1994:57)

African American English also has the completive marker *done*. Bybee et al. (1994:57) explain that a completive marker indicates that 'an action is done completely,' 'may...involve multiple

entities,’ and ‘is reported with some emphasis or surprise value.’ Consider the following example from my corpus:

- (8.19) A: You **done** put up all your vegetables?  
B: Aw, man.  
A: You guys through, huh?  
B: I **done** put up a lot. I still got a speck of butterbeans and-

In the example above, two speakers start talking about canning produce for the summer after Speaker A notices jars of canned vegetables in the kitchen. Speaker A asks, ‘You done put up all your vegetables?’ Note that *done* functions as a completive marker here, as Speaker A asks about carrying out an action completely (i.e., *canning*) that affects ‘multiple entities’—namely, *all the vegetables*. Speaker B responds, ‘I done put up a lot.’ However, Speaker B has not yet completely finished the task, noting that the butterbeans still have not been canned. Over time, completive markers cross-linguistically develop into perfects as emphasis shifts from completion of the action to the result state (Bybee et al. 1994). Note that in the conversation above, *done* functions as a perfect marker in Speaker B’s utterance, yet retains the completive nuances that are in the foreground in Speaker A’s utterance.

Having discussed the multiple semantic functions of the present perfect as well as the grammaticalization pathways that lead to their manifestation, I now turn to an analysis of the data in my corpus in the following section.

## **8.4. Distribution of the data**

### **8.4.1. Token selection**

The data considered in this chapter are affirmative perfect tokens extracted from my corpus of data. The negative of the perfect does not display the variation exhibited in the affirmative and is limited to a contrast between *ain’t* and *haven’t*. The negative is thus a distinct variable context

and not the subject of discussion in this section. The perfect continuous (e.g., *I been watering*) is also excluded; its semantic function is limited to continuing states since it is a compound of the present perfect, which ‘links a present state to a past situation’ and the imperfective, which indicates that an ‘event, or a state, or a process [is] not yet completed’ (Comrie 1976:62). As a result, they only refer to continuing states.

- (8.20) A: You put up figs?  
B: The figs **ain’t** come up yet cause it **ain’t** had no rain.  
A: Mine, man, I **been watering** my tree. It is loaded.

#### 8.4.2. Variants Observed

The present perfect variants observed in my corpus are *have*, *done*, the preterite, *been*, and the lone participle. Use of *have*, *done*, and the preterite as strategies for expressing the perfect has been discussed earlier in Section 8.3, but a brief explanation of the final two strategies—*been* and the lone participle—is necessary before moving forward.

Use of the lone participle to indicate futurity results from deletion of the underlying auxiliary *have* (Tagliamonte 1997:37). Since *have* has become cliticized in perfect constructions, it tends to be completely phonetically eroded in modern colloquial speech, leaving the participle alone to indicate the perfect, as in the following example from my corpus:

- (8.21) She and her husband **have been** married for 55 years. They **been** married for 55 years.

In the initial utterance, the speaker produces the full auxiliary *have*, but in a subsequent repeat of the same statement, the auxiliary is phonetically null. Use of the lone participle as a perfect patterns the same as use of *have*, as will be explained later, suggesting that this is a reasonable explanation.

However, there are some cases of *been* + past participle marking the perfect that do not appear to result from deleting *have* since *been* is followed by action verbs as opposed to stative verbs as in (8.21). Consider these examples that Tagliamonte (1997:40) reports from Noseworthy (1972:22) of constructions found in rural Newfoundland English.

(8.22) I **been cut** more wood than you.

(8.23) I **been cooked** some meals.

Clarke (2005) points out that *been* continues to compete in the perfect system since its nuance is different from that of *have*. Newfoundland and Labrador was settled by Irish and British immigrants beginning in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and its status as an enclave community has allowed speakers to preserve regional forms that have died out in other dialects due to standardization. Speakers of Newfoundland English use *been* to express events that happened more distantly in the past but that still have present relevance, making it a remote perfect marker. My corpus also included 4 tokens of perfect *been* + past participle; however, they do not occur with as wide a range of verbs as reported in Tagliamonte (1997). Instead, they are limited to use with main verb *have/have got* to express a state that started more remotely in the past but still has present relevance, as shown in (8.24) below. Use of *have had* is also a possibility here, but the nuance would not read as the state having endured for as long.

(8.24) But down—somewhere down the line, I would like to get me another car cause I **been had** that car for a while—about four, four years now.

An additional strategy for expressing the perfect is *be* + past participle (see section 8.3.1). Although Tagliamonte (1997:4) reports that *be* has been preserved as a perfect marker (although one relegated to the margins of the perfect marking system) in enclave communities as shown in (8.25), my corpus is void of tokens of *be* to mark the perfect.

(8.25) I **m forgot** all them things.

### 8.4.3. Distribution

Having introduced the variants to be discussed, I now turn to their distribution in the data. Table 7 below presents the frequency of the variants in my data set. I use the term *variant* here to refer to any form that performs present perfect functions, acknowledging that some variants may not perform all four functions of the present perfect, but a subset. *Have* is the most commonly employed strategy for expressing the perfect, accounting for 45% of the tokens, whereas the lone participle is a close second (38%). If we consider the lone participle as a form arising from the deletion of *have*, it is not surprising that is the second-most frequent. The less frequent strategies for expressing the perfect are the forms *done* (14%), *been* (3%), and the preterite.

Table 7: Frequency of present perfect variants

Variant of Present Perfect	Total	
	N	%
<i>have</i> + participle	68	44.7
lone participle	57	37.5
<i>done</i> + participle	21	13.8
<i>been</i> + participle	4	2.6
preterite	2	1.3
	152	

Table 8 displays the distribution of the five perfect markers in Jena and St. Gabriel. Although the two communities differed in their use of future variants, they are similar in their use of the present perfect markers. In both communities, use of *have*+ participle is the preferred method of indicating the present perfect with the lone participle resulting from *have*-deletion a close second. For both communities, *done* is the third most frequent strategy for indicating the present perfect, and use of preverbal *been* and the preterite are rare. Although the counts are different since speakers in the communities produced differing numbers of tokens, the percentages are roughly the same when the two communities are compared.



Table 8: Distribution of present perfect markers across communities

Variant of Present Perfect	Jena, LA		St. Gabriel, LA	
	N	%	N	%
<i>have</i> + participle	25	42	43	46
lone participle	23	39	34	37
<i>done</i> + participle	8	14	13	14
<i>been</i> + participle	2	3	2	2
preterite	1	2	1	1
	59		93	

Since the communities are consistent in their use, I will treat the data as a whole in the following section, in which I analyze the semantic nuances of the markers.

#### 8.4.4. Semantic nuances observed

Table 9: Frequency of uses of present perfect

Uses of Perfect	Total	
	N	%
Result State	41	27
Experiential	50	33
Continuing State	59	39
Hot News	2	1
Total	152	

Table 9 above shows the frequency of uses of the present perfect. As outlined in Section 8.2, there are four semantic nuances for the present perfect: continuing states, experientials, result states, and ‘hot news’, as further illustrated in the following examples (8.26a-d) from my data.

(8.26) a. See his mom ‘**n** [done] taught him that and these little games.

b. I **been** to Belize once because I have a- the guys on the boat working with me, they dad owns property in Belize. He’s from Belize.

c. I **been** in that house since ’88 and never knew I had a apple tree along the side of the wall till two years ago.

d. I **done** hit a button that I wasn't supposed to hit.

Let's consider these examples from my corpus. In (8.26a), the event that occurred is the boy's mother teaching him to play games, which has resulted in a new state--namely, that he is now knowledgeable of the rules and able to play. Kearns (2000:159) points out that in the result state reading of the perfect, it is the new state of affairs that is highlighted rather than the reported event itself. The second reading is an experiential reading, indicating that an event or state is over now, although it was true in the past. In (8.26b), it is understood that the speaker has been to Belize before. There is no indication of when the speaker may have lived there, so the state of having visited Belize could have occurred in either the remote or the recent past. The third reading is the continuing state reading of the perfect, which reports a state of affairs that began in the past and continues into the present time. The meaning of (8.26c) is that the speaker has lived in that particular house since 1988 and is still living there even now. The final reading of the perfect is the 'hot news' perfect, which reports recent news that is relevant to the present, as in (8.26d). In this example, the speaker has just accidentally pressed the wrong button on the remote control and has switched the input, turning the screen black.

Since the *done* and *have* variants first grammaticalized in the context of emphasizing a change in state of a past event (Bybee et al. 1994), I hypothesized that *done* and *have* would display persistence and that most tokens of the perfect would indicate result states. However, only a third (27%) of the tokens are dedicated to this purpose. Two thirds of the tokens refer to experiences (33%) or continuing states (39%) even though these semantic nuances arise later in the development of perfects (Tagliamonte 1997, Van Herk 2010). Only 1% of the tokens refer to hot news, but this may well be a side effect of the interview format. The speakers are mainly

talking instead of engaging in activities, so their opportunities to comment on things that have just occurred are limited.

Table 10: Frequency of variants within context of each semantic nuance

Perfect	Result State		Experiential		Continuing State		Hot news	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<i>have</i>	16	39	33	66	19	32	0	0
lone participle	8	20	13	26	37	63	0	0
<i>done</i>	16	39	3	6	0	0	2	100
<i>been</i>	0	0	0	0	4	7	0	0
preterite	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	0
Total	41		50		59		2	

Table 10 above shows the frequency of each variant of the perfect within each semantic domain. For result states, both *have* and *done* are tied for the proportionally most frequent marker (39%). Although the evolution of *have* into a present perfect marker is well documented (see Section 2.5.1 and Section 8.3.1), there is limited data concerning the historical account of the development of *done* into a perfect marker in AAE. As a result, I assume that it follows the completive > perfect marker trajectory outlined in Bybee et al. (1994). According to Bybee et al. (1994), young perfects first express result state, and this fact accounts for the strong competition between present perfect variants for this function of the present perfect. Although the preterite was the original strategy for expressing this nuance, it has been completely supplanted by later forms and only appears in a single token of a speaker discussing the maintenance for the all-terrain vehicle, or four-wheeler, that he uses for hunting. He explains that sometimes he adds carburetor cleaner and runs it through the bike for half an hour to filter through. However, he cannot do that at the moment since the battery has died, so he needs to boost or jump start it before it will even run. Use of the adverbial *now* makes present reference and thus perfect meaning unambiguous.

(8.27) Sometimes I just let mine sit out there and run but right now the battery **went down** and I boos[t]es it.

Table 10 also reveals that *have* and its derived form the lone participle lead in expressing experientials, making up a whopping 92% of the tokens with this nuance. It is clear that *done* is still emerging in this domain, which is a nuance present in older, more established perfects (Bybee et al. 1994). At this point, it accounts for only 6% of the tokens with experiential reference. Once again, the preterite has been marginalized, this time to a mere 2% of the data.

For continuing states, the preterite and completive *done* are not used at all. The preterite was never used to represent the present, so it naturally does not occur. Completive *done* seems to display persistence and is thus restricted from expressing continuing states due to its origins as a completive marker. Nevertheless, as the completive nuance becomes more backgrounded and perfect semantics are foregrounded, it is possible that *done* will spread into this domain later in its development as *have* has done. At this point in time, it simply has not progressed as far along the grammaticalization cline as *have*. Once again, *have* + participle and the lone participle form derived from *have* deletion account for 95% of the data.

The perfect marker *been* occurs only in the context of continuing states and only with the verb *have* or (*have*) *got*. Research on British dialects of English may shed some light on this marker. Clarke (2005) offers that Newfoundland English can be considered a ‘window into the past’ since its isolation has made it conservative. Newfoundland English has remarkably interesting parallels with AAE, including habitual *be*, *steady* as an aspect marker (habitual marker in NE as opposed to a continuative in AAE), a-prefixing before participles, and *been* as a perfect. Clarke (2005:257) illustrates use of *been* in Newfoundland English with the following example. Although she does not provide context for this particular example, she notes that it refers to an event located more distantly in the past and thus contrasts with other perfects in the dialect:

(8.28) Dad bin apulled his weight.

The tokens of *been* from my corpus are consistent with this explanation.

(8.29) He got- **been** had pears since I been there

(8.30) A: Yeah. How he been doing?

B: Just beating up these girls left and right.

A: Really?

B: Yeah. The ones he—

A: That's too bad.

B: Yeah, that is. The ones he **been got**— Far as I know, the ones he's been in relationships with, just being mean to 'em. Abuse, very abusive.

In (8.29), the speaker had previously mentioned that he had lived in his current home since 1988 (see example 8.26c). In spite of this fact, he had only recently noticed that the neighbor had an apple tree, having mistaken the small green apples for pears. When he considers how long the apple tree has been there, he uses *been had* to place the start of the state more distantly in the past than his realization about the kind of fruit it bears. Note that this *been* is distinct from anterior *been* used in creoles to indicate simple past since this use of *been* still highlights current relevance. In (8.30), Speaker A asks after an old classmate that she hasn't seen or heard news of in over a decade. When Speaker B responds, she considers all of the classmate's former girlfriends, using *been got* to extend the time of reference to include all the intervening years. Note that once she switches the verb from *got*, she has to revert to using *have* as the perfect marker. My hypothesis is that use of *been* as a remote perfect marker was once present in Jena and St Gabriel, just as it is present in Newfoundland English. However, it appears that the function of remote perfect and its associated form remote perfect *been* is now in obsolescence since *have* is the generic and more preferable form for almost all perfect contexts. Since perfect markers have a tendency to develop into perfectives (Bybee et al. 1994), I suspect that remote present perfect *been* further grammaticalized into remote past *been*, which stresses the

distinguishing feature between the remote present perfect *been* and the remote past perfective *been*.

Although the marker *done* is not used to indicate continuing states at all, it is the only means of expressing hot news in my data set. This result is unexpected, but is most likely due to the overall small size of the dataset. The interview format limited the ability to collect tokens with this semantic nuance, so it is possible other data collection formats would elicit more tokens of hot news perfects.

### **8.5. Aspect marker *done***

The goal of this section is to define the role of *done* in AAE by responding to the analyses provided by Edwards (2001), Terry (2004), and Green (2002). More specifically, I propose that preverbal *done* is in fact a general present perfect marker and that its use is not limited to indicating negative evaluations, as stated in Edwards (2001).

Although the pathway of a resultative to perfect marker is common in Indo-European languages, development of completives into perfect markers is more common cross-linguistically (Heine & Kuteva 2002:134-7, Heine & Kuteva 2007:75, Bybee et al. 1994:61). Completive markers indicate that an action has been performed thoroughly, and the closest construction with this meaning in Mainstream American English is the *went and did* construction (Bybee et al. 1994), previously illustrated in Section 8.3.2, example (8.18) and reproduced here as (8.31):

(8.31) He went and told her the whole story.

AAE and the white southern dialects of English that it has influenced differ from mainstream English in that they make use of *done* as a completive marker, as shown in the following examples from my corpus:

(8.32) I think she **done** drove him crazy.

(8.33) Her daddy told me she **done** moved up there now.

Although (8.32) and (8.33) have nuances of completion of an action, the stronger reading is the present relevance of the action and not merely the conveyance of the completion of an event. In my opinion, *done* is, without a doubt, a perfect marker, yet a major issue in the discussion of AAE grammar is defining the role that it plays in the dialect and whether it is in fact a perfect marker at all (Green 2002, Terry 2004). Preverbal *done* is distinct from the past participle *done*, as shown by the fact that it can appear in sentences along with *done*:

(8.34) She *done* done her homework.  
'She has (completely) done her homework.'

In (8.34), preverbal *done* is unstressed, as are auxiliary verbs *have* and *be*. Since it is an unstressed syllable, it is also subject to reduction and thus may be reduced to [dn] or syllabic [n] in its phonetic realization (Edwards 2001:413). The second *done* is the main verb of the sentence in (8.34), and so it receives the main phrasal stress.

Since preverbal *done* is not a main verb and is not available as an auxiliary in MAE, what is its function in AAE? Linguists such as Edwards (2001) and Terry (2004, 2006) argue that *done* is a present perfect marker and Edwards (2001) even proposes that *done* is an alternative to present perfect *have* that is chosen by speakers to indicate negative orientation towards the topic discussed in the *done V-ed* statement, as will be explored later in this section. On the other hand, Green (2002) acknowledges that although *done* is clearly a tense or aspect marker and indicates nearly all the same semantic nuances as the present perfect marker *have*, it is not a genuine marker of the present perfect as it does not cover the exact same semantic range as *have V-en*. I will return to this issue later in this section.

### 8.5.1. Analysis of *dən* from Green (2002)

Green (2002) bases her description of AAE on her own knowledge of the dialect as a native speaker as well as data collected from her informants in Lake Arthur, Louisiana. Although there is overlap between AAE and MAE in the grammars of African American speakers, Green, for the sake of her analysis, abstracts away from this competency in both dialects and presents an idealized version of AAE that shows no influence from SAE for the purposes of developing a verbal paradigm. Her method of abstraction is helpful because it frees us from being troubled by overlapping forms in MAE and AAE and allows us to study features that are unique to AAE. In her analysis of the verbal paradigms of AAE, Green (2002:36-8, 45-7) presents the following patterns:

#### (8.35) Past Perfective Verbal Paradigm

<b>Past Perfective</b> ate, ran, rubbed	<b>Emphatic affirmation</b> <sup>10</sup> DID eat, run, rub	<b>Negative</b> din (didn't) eat, run, rub ain('t) eat/ate, run/ran, rub/rubbed
--------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

#### (8.36) Present Perfect Verbal Paradigm

<b>Present Perfect</b> ate, ran, rubbed	<b>Emphatic affirmation</b> HAVE ate, ran, rubbed	<b>Negative</b> ain('t)/haven't ate, ran, rubbed
--------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------

#### (8.37) Resultant State Verbal Paradigm

<b>Resultant State</b> <i>dən</i> ate 'has/have already eaten'	<b>Emphatic affirmation</b> ?HAVE <i>dən</i> ate <sup>11</sup>	<b>Negative</b> ain('t) <i>dən</i> ate
----------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------

Green points out that although the verbal paradigms in this abstract form of AAE reveal that the semantic functions of past perfective and present perfect are both performed by preterite

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<sup>10</sup> In the emphatic affirmation, the auxiliary verb receives primary stress and the main verb receives secondary stress. As always, *dən* is never stressed.

<sup>11</sup> Although Green and her informants are unclear as to the acceptability of this construction, in my dialect of AAVE, this emphatic affirmation is indeed grammatical.



forms, the difference between the two becomes clear in cases of emphatic affirmation. In the case of the emphatic past perfective, the auxiliary *did* is used, whereas the auxiliary *have* is used in the case of the emphatic present perfect. Green reasons that if AAE speakers made no distinction at all between the past tense and the present perfect, the same auxiliary would be used for the emphatic forms.

Note, however, that Green does not consider *dən* as a present perfect marker. For Green, *dən* is simply an additional aspect marker that has a result state reading. She is not comfortable labeling *dən* as a present perfect marker because she feels that its range of meanings differs from that of the present perfect. Green (2002:60-1) provides the following examples showing that, similar to the present perfect marker *have*, *dən* has a result state reading, a hot news reading, an experiential reading:

Result state reading of *dən*

- (8.38) I told him you *dən* changed. (AAE)  
       ‘I told him you have changed.’ (MAE)

Hot news reading of *dən*

- (8.39) I *dən* lost my wallet! (AAE)  
       ‘I have (just) lost my wallet!’ (MAE)

Experiential reading of *dən*

- (8.40) She *dən* been to church. (AAE)  
       ‘She has been to church before.’ (MAE)

According to Green, *dən* differs from the present perfect *have* in that it does not have the continuing state reading. The following sentences are ungrammatical or only marginally acceptable in her dialect of AAE:

- (8.41) a. ?/\*I *dən* wanted to do that for five years. (AAE)  
       a’. ‘I have wanted to do that for five years.’ (MAE)  
       b. ?/\*She *dən* always wanted to go to Liberia. (AAE)

- b'. 'She has always wanted to go to Liberia.' (MAE)
- c. ?/\*His sister *dən* knew that for five years. (AAE)
- c'. 'His sister has known that for five years.' (MAE)
- d. ?/\*His sister *dən* been an invalid all her life (AAE)
- d'. 'His sister has been an invalid all her life.' (MAE) Green (2002:61)

Although Green argues that sentences 43(a,b,c,d) are ungrammatical, she does admit that such utterances are acceptable in certain pragmatic contexts. For example, she concedes that (8.41a) is sometimes possible in the context of wanting to express surprise:

- (8.42) a. I can't believe that dance class is canceled (AAE)  
after I *dən* wanted to take dance for five years.
- a'. I can't believe that dance class is canceled (MAE)  
after I have wanted to take dance for five years. Green (2002:61)

Further, (8.41d) is possible in the context of wanting to express indignation:

- (8.43) a. How dare you offer your help now (ten years (AAE)  
too late). She *dən* been an invalid all her life.
- a'. How dare you offer your help now (ten years (MAE)  
too late). She has been an invalid all her life. Green (2002:61)

### 8.5.2. Analysis of *dən* from Terry (2004)

Terry (2004) analyzes *dən* as a present perfect marker with the same four readings as present perfect *have*. That is, he argues against Green's claim that *dən* has no continuous state reading. Terry, who is also a native speaker of AAE, bases his description of AAE on the dialect spoken in Wise, North Carolina. According to his judgment and that of his informants in Wise, sentences (8.41a,b,c,d) are grammatical. He also points out that the difference in judgment of the grammaticality of these sentences may result from Green's unclear analysis of the role *dən* plays

in the grammar of AAE. Although Green provides examples of situations where *dən* may be used, she does not explain sufficiently why (8.41a,b,c,d) would be ungrammatical or how AAE would express the equivalents to the SAE sentences in (8.41a',b',c',d'). Although Green argues that sentences (8.41a,b,c,d) are ungrammatical except in special contexts, Terry questions the need of these special contexts at all. He contends that the special use of *dən* in (8.42) and (8.43) that allows the utterances to be considered grammatical is actually a continuing state reading. He proposes that his dialect and that of Green's in fact use *dən* the same way, if we reanalyze Green's special contexts as continuing state readings.

I concur with Terry's reanalysis of Green's special contexts. One of the semantic nuances of the completive is to express surprise or intensity (Bybee et al. 1994: 57), so it follows that *done* as a perfect would continue to have those nuances. Moreover, the temporal adverbials included in 8.41(a, b, c, d) force a perfect reading of ongoing relevance. In addition, it is not necessary for one perfect to compete with another variant in every single domain to be a true perfect marker, as markers have different grammaticalization pathways and take on additional semantic nuances as they progress from younger perfects to older perfects. Green's data reveals her dialect to have all four nuances traditionally linked to the present perfect. My data only indicates three semantic nuances for *done*, indicating that speakers have a strong preference for using *have* and the lone participle form resulting from *have*-deletion to indicate continuing states. For this function of the present perfect, *done* displays persistence: its original use as a completive marker is hindering its spread into indicating continuing states in my dialect.

### 8.5.3. Analysis of *dən* from Edwards (2001)

Edwards (2001) analyzes *dən* as a present perfect marker similarly to Terry (2004). What makes Edward's argument different from Terry (2004, 2006) and Green (2002) is that he focuses on the fact that African American speakers have two dialects at their command (AAE and MAE) and tries to account for why there is variation between *dən V-ed* (the AAE form) and *have V-en* (the MAE form) in African American speech<sup>12</sup>. Edwards, a native speaker of Guyanese Creole and British English, cannot use his own judgment of AAE utterances and relies on the judgment of two friends, who are both working class African American women in Detroit who are native speakers of AAE. He trained these two friends to conduct recorded interviews with community members, and he bases his analysis of AAE on these recordings. His data reveal that the 18 African American speakers in his study (9 female and 9 male) use *dən V-ed* constructions in 31% of their present perfect utterances, and *have V-en* constructions in 69% of their present perfect utterances. Edwards suggests that the choice of *dən V-ed* sentences over *have V-en* sentences sometimes functions as a means for the speaker to indicate 'a negative evaluation of or attitude toward the topic or addressee' (2001: 423-5), as shown in the following example in which the speaker criticizes the length of time Coleman Young has been serving as mayor of Detroit.

(8.44) The people saying now what kind of leader he is. He *dən been* in there long, about twenty something years, and he's getting really senile. [64 year old female]

(Edwards 2001:423)<sup>13</sup>

Compare the use of *dən V-ed* in (8.44) to the following use of *have V-en* in (8.45), in which the speaker expresses a more positive opinion regarding Detroit's mayor:

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<sup>12</sup> Edwards (2001) focuses on the binary choice between *done* and *have* as present perfect markers and does not present the wider range of forms of the present perfect functions I explore in my data set.

<sup>13</sup> Although Edwards (2001) lists this use of *done* as an experiential perfect, it appears that it is a continuing state perfect, offering further evidence that *done* may also be used in this domain.

(8.45) Oh, I think he's a nice gentleman. How many things he *have did* for the public, you know. Very nice for the senior citizens. Very nice. [64 year old female]

(Edwards 2001:423)

Although Edwards' data may suggest otherwise, my judgment is that *dən V-ed* does not inherently indicate a negative evaluation or indignation as other verbal expressions in AAE are known to do. Let's consider the construction *come V-ing*. Green (2002) explains that the lexical item *come* in this construction is distinct from the main verb *come* and functions as a 'semi-auxiliary that expresses speaker indignation' (73), as in the following examples:

(8.46) a. You the one come telling me it's hot. (AAE)  
I can't believe you got your coat on. [Black male, 30s]

a'. 'You're the one who had the nerve to tell me that it's hot. (MAE)  
I can't believe you've got your coat on.'

(Green 2002:73)

In (8.46), the presence of the *come V-ing* construction immediately alerts the listener that the speaker is becoming angry or annoyed with his behavior. The marker *dən* in the *dən V-ed* construction is not a marker of indignation in the same sense as *come*. Whereas *come* is only used in negative contexts, the marker *done* can be used in any context—be it negative or positive. My corpus offers counterexamples where *done* is used in positive contexts:

(8.47) But when we first moved over here, B-- say, Oh, I'm so glad y'all **done** moved over here. I'm glad of it.

The fact that Edwards' data shows that *dən* appears more often than *have* in negative evaluations can be explained by the observer's paradox. Since African American English is a stigmatized variety, speakers tend to limit their use of AAE in recorded interviews. Due to this tendency towards hypercorrect speech, the *have V-en* construction is used more often overall in present perfect utterances throughout the interviews, and *dən* is used more often in negative

evaluations. The interviewees are being more careful of their speech during the interview, so they try to use the *have V-en* construction that is more common in MAE to accommodate white Americans who will see the data later. However, when they become upset about a topic, they revert back to the AAE dialect, which explains the tendency to use *dən* in those contexts.

## 8.6. Conclusion

Although there are several variants of perfect markers, they each have a role to play in the present perfect system. *Done*, *have*, and the lone participle are equally frequent for expressing result states. *Have* is the most frequent variant for experientials, whereas the lone participle is the most common means of expressing continuing states. The marker *done* is just as frequent as *have* in indicating result states, and it is also leads in marking hot news. However, persistence in its original meaning as a completive marker blocks its spread into expressing continuing states. Both *been* and the preterite are fading out of the system, but *been* appears occasionally to mark the remote perfect, and the preterite is still used, albeit rarely, in result states and experientials.

Since the present perfect developed out of resultative and completive markers, I had hypothesized that the present perfect would display persistence and be used most often to indicate result states since both *done* and *have* historically indicated result states. However, the present perfect has expanded its domain, being used to indicate continuing states and experiences, which are fairly new developments in its history. The speakers rarely use the present perfect to indicate recent news, but this is most likely a restriction imposed by the interview format where people are talking face to face instead of going about their daily activities.

Moreover, I have indicated that *done* is not limited to use in negative contexts. It performs the same semantic work as *have* in the same domains and does not serve merely as added color to the language expressing speaker attitude.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have sought to add to the body of literature concerning African American English (AAE) by (1) giving a greater descriptive account of the understudied aspect markers *steady* and *stay*, which are still in the process of being grammaticalized, and (2) providing a qualitative and quantitative analysis of how its speakers in Louisiana use future and perfect markers. Baugh (1984) labels *steady* merely as an intensive continuative marker, yet my corpus reveals that *steady* also serves the pragmatic function of signaling speaker indignation in certain contexts. Using a TMA marker to pragmatically express negative feelings is not uncommon, and Mainstream American English also includes such markers. For example, *go*, in addition to being used as a motion verb and a futurity marker, may also express speaker indignation. Spears (1982: 865) provides evidence of this use of negative *go* in his example: ‘Whenever I let him cook, he goes burning everything’ (Spears 1982: 865). Labov (1998) explains that *done* in AAE also expresses speaker indignation, and my corpus complements his work by providing examples where both *done* and *steady* can both be used in utterances to further highlight the speaker’s negative feelings.

In addition to highlighting additional pragmatic uses of *steady*, I also demonstrated that *steady* takes a wider range of subject type and occurs in a wider range of syntactic environments than has been previously observed in the literature. Although Baugh (1984) noted that *steady* could be used with specific, definite NP subjects and Green (1998) expanded the acceptable subjects to indefinite NPs that are specific, they both miss the generalization that *steady* can take



any NP—be it definite, indefinite, or bare—as a subject as long as that NP is specific. Whereas Baugh (1984) and Green (1998) limit use of *steady* to action verbs, my corpus reveals that some speakers allow for use of *steady* with stative verbs as well, which indicates that *steady* is being further grammaticalized for some speakers. Previous analyses of *steady* have limited it to occurring with verbs in the present progressive, but my corpus provides evidence that *steady* may also be used in the bare present and the past tense, as well as before prepositional phrases and adjectives.

In regards to *stay*, which functions as a habitual or frequentative aspect marker, I have confirmed what the literature has already stated concerning its occurrence before verbs, adjectives, and prepositional phrases as well as pointing out an additional occurrence before predicate nominals and in existential sentences. Whereas the literature presents tokens of *stay* that occur in the present, my corpus offers evidence that *stay* may occur in the past tense as *stayed*. Unlike other aspect markers derived from verbs (e.g., indignant *come*, habitual *be*, and completive/perfective *done*), *stay* continues to inflect for past tense. Like *steady*, *stay* can also be used to express speaker indignation.

The aspect markers *steady* and *stay* are at different stages in the grammaticalization process, with *stay* having undergone both primary and secondary grammaticalization. The aspect marker *stay* first developed out of a lexical item into a continuative marker, as seen in *He stayed reading his book by flashlight after lights outs*. As a result of secondary grammaticalization, *stay* has taken on additional functions as a habitual and frequentative marker. On the other hand, although *steady* has evolved from a lexical item into a grammatical marker expressing intensive continuity, it has not yet undergone secondary grammaticalization to express additional grammatical functions.

The fact that both *steady* and *stay* are still undergoing grammaticalization and are being extended to broader domains of use means that not all speakers share the same judgments concerning how *steady* and *stay* should be used. All of my data was collected from adult speakers. Traugott and Dasher (2002:41) note that although adults are responsible for innovating new grammatical meanings for grammaticalized forms ‘because of the complex inferences involved,’ it is children and young adults who spread these uses. In future research, I would like to examine how younger speakers of AAE employ the markers *steady* and *stay*. Do they use the markers in the same manner as the adults, or have they extended the use of the aspect markers into even more domains? Further, it would be interesting to determine the age at which AAE speakers acquire these markers and use them competently.

Of equal interest would be a determination of the origin of the aspect marker *steady*. According to Childs & van Herk (2010), Newfoundland English uses *steady* and *be* as habitual marker, which is reminiscent of AAE:

(9.1) My parents are **steady** telling me not to do that.

(9.2) Everything **bees** talked about.

According to the Dictionary of Newfoundland English, the word *steady* may also be pronounced [stɛdi], which we see in both the Caribbean creoles and in certain dialects of AAE. In my corpus, pronunciation of the marker *steady* varies among African Americans depending on whether they are from northern or southern Louisiana. In northern Louisiana, all of my speakers use the pronunciation [stɛdi]<sup>14</sup>, as shown in this example from my corpus:

(9.3) She just **steady** [stɛdi] looking, like “I ain’t looking”  
‘She just stubbornly continues looking away from me, as if to say, “I won’t look your way.”’

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<sup>14</sup> Although Green (p.c.) notes that some older speakers in northern Louisiana also pronounce *steady* as [stɛdi], none of my speakers do so.

However, in southern Louisiana and in the Caribbean creoles as well, the vowel [ɛ] in [stɛdi] may be backed, resulting in the alternate pronunciation of [stədi]. Examples (9.4) and (9.5) illustrate the variance in pronunciation of this aspect marker in St. Gabriel.

- (9.4) We **steady** [stɛdi] have to go get different seasonings and stuff that we done left in the RV.  
'We continuously have to go get different seasonings and stuff that we have left in the RV.'
- (9.5) You'a be like that lady at B—. She **steady** [stədi] cutting okra.  
'You will be like that lady at B—. She keeps on diligently cutting okra.'

Similarly, we are in need of a closer phonetic analysis of the frequentative marker *stay*. Scholars such as Jason McLarty at the University of Oregon are conducting careful phonetic analyses to determine how perfect *been* and remote past *been* differ in intensity. Since stressed *been* and *stay* are more rare, we need publicly available corpora regarding African American English so that more scholars can contribute to the field, as current privately collected corpora are unavailable due to IRB restrictions. Walt Wolfram is currently assembling corpora of African American English through projects at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with the goal of making them publicly available. These corpora are longitudinal studies of AAE speakers from childhood through adolescence and could be the source of greater insight into how AAE speakers use tense and aspect markers.

During my fieldwork, some of my consultants in their metalinguistic analysis of the markers explained that *stay* means **always** and *steady* means **still**. According to Maho (2008), southern and eastern Bantu languages have a persistive marker \*-kí-, which he explains as meaning 'still going on.' The persistive marker is realized as [ki], [ʃi], [tʃi], [çi], or [tʃáa], depending on the language. For example, Subiya uses [tʃi] (example 9.6), whereas Nkoya uses

[çi] (example 9.7). A subset of these languages require the persistive to co-occur with an inflected copula, which ranges from [li], [ri], and [dzi].

(9.6) nicitenda  
ni ci [tʃi] tenda  
1SG PERS work  
'I am still working'

(Baumbach 1997, cited in Maho 2008: 287)

(9.7) nishijimôna  
ni shi [çi] ji[dzi] ku môna  
1SG PERS be INF look  
'I am still looking'

(Yukawa 1987, cited in Maho 2008: 288)

The persistive has a distinct meaning from the imperfective and continuous. Nurse (2008: 295) defines the following temporal categories in the Bantu languages as follows:

- **Imperfective:** used for ongoing and incomplete situations where beginning is unknown or not mentioned
- **Situative:** also used for ongoing and incomplete situations with no mention of beginning, but is restricted to use in hypotheticals and dependent or subordinate clauses
- **Persistive:** also used with ongoing and incomplete situations, but emphasizes the start of the activity in the past

Would it be better to categorize *steady* as a persistive instead of a continuative? To answer this question, extended examples of *steady* with evident context are required. Publicly available corpora would provide us with more information to expand upon our current analyses.

Publicly available corpora would also enhance our knowledge of newer markers for future reference and present perfect reference. In this dissertation, I have shown that *will*, once considered the standard or neutral method of indicating the future, has been dethroned by *be going to*. When speakers have to choose a form for indicating future reference, they opt for *be going to* in 67% of the tokens, with *will* a distant second at 24%. A multivariate analysis of *will*

vs. *be going to* reveals that *will* is still preferred in negative contexts or with 1<sup>st</sup> person plural subjects to indicate willingness, but it is possible that this form will continue to be replaced by the newer form. What is more interesting is that *be going to* is now facing competition for expressing imminent future at least in one research site, with the emerging forms *be fixing to* being the second most frequent strategy for expressing the immediate future.

In my study of the present perfect, I have shown that the forms are distributed differently across the functions that the present perfect serves. For expressing result states, there is a 3-way tie with *have*, the lone participle, and *done* being equally frequent methods of expressing result states. For hot news, there are few tokens due to the limits imposed by the interview setting, but my speakers prefer *done* for reporting breaking news in everyday discourse. For experiences, my speakers also prefer *have*. Although Green (2002), Terry (2004), and Edwards (2001) provide examples where *done* can also be interpreted to have a continuing state reading, my data reveals no such tokens, suggesting that persistence in its original meaning may be hindering its use to express continuing states in certain dialects, leaving speakers to continue using the lone participle and *have*. The most surprising discovery in my study of the present perfect forms is that my speakers produce tokens of remote present perfect *been*, which is also found in conservative dialects such as Newfoundland English. Scholars such as Poplack & Tagliamonte (2001) have focused on the English origins of AAE, suggesting that any differences from MAE that AAE exhibits are the result of influence from non-mainstream varieties of British dialects. Further comparison of AAE with Newfoundland English, which also uses *steady* as an aspect marker and *been* as a remote present perfect marker, could offer new insight into the development of AAE.

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