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Variation in the imperfective in Bahamian English

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Abstract

The current study investigates variation in the marking of two aspectual subcategories of the imperfective in Bahamian English. First, it looks into variable auxiliary *be* use in progressive and future constructions, that is, the variation between full, contracted and zero *be* in non-past V-*ing* environments and related contexts. Second, the paper examines variable application of preverbal *does/is/'s* in non-past habitual environments. The two variables were selected to represent the 'informal' and 'anti-formal' group respectively, that is, one feature that classifies as a reduction of English structure and one direct transfer from the creole (Allsopp, 1996, pp. lvi–lvii). Thus, in addition to examining the linguistic constraints, the study will take a close look at the stylistic factors conditioning the variation, placing a special focus on the distribution of the non-standardized variants over various registers as well as how speakers employ them to create linguistic styles.

1 | INTRODUCTION

The marking of tense and aspect has always figured prominently in the study of English-lexifier Caribbean creoles. The distribution of preverbal tense-mood-aspect (TMA) markers in pidgins and creoles throughout the world is certainly one of the best researched areas in the field (Winford, 1996) and, naturally, research on Bahamian Creole (BahC) has equally centered around variable marking of tense and aspect (Hackert, 2004; McPhee, 2003; Seymour, 2009). However, research has only recently started to investigate in how far local standardized varieties of English are characterized by direct and indirect creole influence. As Deuber (2014, pp. 5–7) points out, overt creole forms like TMA markers have traditionally been treated as pure instantiations of the creole or 'anti-formal' language use

(Allsopp, 1996, p. lvii) and not as part of the continuum that would traditionally be referred to as English. Nevertheless, current investigations into Caribbean standard varieties of English, particularly Deuber's (2014, p. 238) comprehensive account of Jamaican and Trinidadian English, find 'that [c]reole forms, though generally relatively infrequent, are an important feature of style in spoken English in the Caribbean.'

Drawing on Allsopp's *Dictionary of Caribbean English usage*, Deuber (2014, pp. 5–7) differentiates between 'informal,' that is, 'relaxed speech […] characterized by morphological and syntactic reductions of English structure' (Allsopp, 1996, p. lvi), for example, zero forms, and 'anti-formal' speech, meaning 'consciously familiar and intimate' speech situations characterized by the occurrence of overt creole forms or structures like TMA markers (Allsopp, 1996, p. lvii). The assumption behind that is that zero forms, such as *be* deletion before V-*ing*, merely signal informal speech situations and can thus be expected to occur in the more acrolectal areas of the creole continuum, whereas overt forms would be more constrained. Nevertheless, recent studies, most notably Deuber's work on Jamaica and Trinidad (2009, 2011, 2014), show that even overt creole features find their way into the acrolect, which is due to the fact that speakers have, depending on their respective social and socioeconomic background, various shades of creole and English at their disposal and can employ these to adapt to specific speech situations and, more importantly, create images of self in a given conversation, something that invariably results in stylistic variation.

In the present study, I will take a closer look at the imperfective in (standard) Bahamian English.[1] More specifically, I will investigate two aspectual categories belonging to the imperfective, that is, habitual and progressive aspect. Building on formal as well as informal conversational data from the Bahamas subcomponent of the *International Corpus of English* (ICE Bahamas), namely personal conversations and broadcast interviews/discussions, the paper will focus on two variables: firstly, I will examine variable auxiliary *be* use in progressive and future constructions, that is, the variation between full, contracted and zero *be* in V-*ing* environments and before *going to* constructions or creole *go*/*gon*. Secondly, I will investigate the occurrence of BahC preverbal markers *does*/*is*/*'s* in non-past habitual environments. The two variables or features can be thought to represent the 'informal' and 'anti-formal' group respectively, that is, one feature that classifies as a reduction of English structure as well as one direct transfer from the creole. The study will take a close look at the linguistic and stylistic factors conditioning the observed variation, placing a special focus on the distribution of the two variables over various registers as well as how exactly the non-standardized variants are employed by speakers in discourse. I ask the following research questions:

1. In how far do educated Bahamians draw on creole ways of expressing progressive and habitual meanings in informal and formal conversational speech situations? How do zero auxiliary *be* and the overt habitual markers *does*/*is*/*'s* compare and how are they distributed across the two text types?
2. How do the patterns of variation observed in (standard) Bahamian English compare to previous findings for Bahamian Creole (Seymour, 2009)?
3. How do speakers employ these features to create (informal) linguistic styles? Can the effects of style be quantitatively measured for variable auxiliary *be* use?

Following a brief account of the current sociolinguistic situation in The Bahamas (Section 2), I will introduce the notion of aspect and its relevance in the study of Caribbean English-lexifier creoles and, particularly, creole and English in The Bahamas (Section 3). Section 4 will then outline the data and methods and Section 5 will present the results, in turn discussing variable auxiliary *be* use in V-*ing* and future environments and the variable application of preverbal habitual *does*/*is*/*'s*. Lastly, Section 6 will discuss the main points and conclude that, while text type appears to be the most important non-linguistic predictor, speakers constantly style-shift to adapt their speech to the communicative situation and preform acts of identity (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985).

2 | SOCIOLINGUISTIC SITUATION

The Bahamas is an archipelago of more than 700 islands and 2,400 cays located between southeastern Florida and Hispaniola. Having gained its independence from the UK in 1973, the country has developed into one of the wealthiest Caribbean nations (largely due to offshore banking and a flourishing tourism sector) and remains a popular holiday destination, especially for North Americans (Central Intelligence Agency, 2021). As of 2010, the Department of Statistics (2012, pp. 1–3) counts 351,461 inhabitants with over 70% of the total population living in the capital Nassau. Roughly 90% of the inhabitants are of African origin, thus constituting the largest ethnic group of The Bahamas (p. 10). As in other English-speaking Caribbean countries, the linguistic landscape of The Bahamas is characterized by the coexistence of an English-lexifier creole, that is, Bahamian Creole, and a local standardized variety of English. While the official language of the country is English, the great majority of the population grows up acquiring the creole—locally known as (Bahamian) Dialect—as their first language. What sets The Bahamas apart from other Caribbean countries is that the creole itself did not originate on the Bahamian islands. Instead, it is an import from the North American mainland, that is, an offshoot of 18th-century Gullah (Hackert & Huber, 2007).

Generally speaking, Bahamians are aware of the existence of linguistic differences between their 'dialect' and 'proper' English and, in fact, 'most Bahamians, including well-educated Bahamians who have a very good command of standard English, prefer to use the creole in casual (and sometimes not so casual) conversations, and reserve the standard for more formal situations' (Seymour, 2009, p. 74). When it comes to language attitudes, Hackert (2004, p. 55) reports that '[a]mong those who display language consciousness, negative attitudes toward their own vernacular prevail.' The creole is often labeled as 'bad' and/or 'broken' and still carries relatively little overt prestige. However, recent research, taking into account both overt as well as covert attitudes, shows that BahC enjoys high levels of covert prestige, whereas a more standardized Bahamian accent, while being associated with high social status and education, is perceived as pretentious and not particularly likable (Laube & Rothmund, 2021). As elsewhere, therefore, the creole is 'the language of solidarity, national identity, emotion and humour' (Youssef, 2004, p. 44) in The Bahamas, while standardized English appears to be restricted to particularly formal or public speech situations.

3 | ASPECT IN ENGLISH AND CREOLE

The notion of aspect has received considerable attention in creole studies over the years. Mainly in response to controversial claims made by Bickerton (1981, 1984) regarding an innate language bioprogram, researchers have started closely examining the TMA systems of creole languages, first, to put Bickerton's prototypical creole TMA system to the test, and, later, to more thoroughly describe the typologically complex and diverse TMA inventories at work in the world's creoles (Winford, 2018). Equally, a lot of the work on language in The Bahamas has centered on the investigation of the tense-aspect system of the local creole from a typological and sociolinguistic perspective (Hackert, 2004; McPhee, 2003; Seymour, 2009) and the current paper aims at shifting the focus to the more acrolectal end of the continuum. Nevertheless, studying aspect in educated Caribbean or Bahamian speech, as is represented in ICE-Bah and similar corpora, demands an entirely different perspective. Instead of addressing questions of creolization, prototypes, or creole exceptionalism, the present paper is mainly interested in the stylistic choices educated creole speakers make in conversation and how they exploit the linguistic resources at their disposal in creating linguistic styles, that is, the focus is on variable aspect marking across the stylistic continuum (Deuber, 2014, p. 242). Nonetheless, before moving on to the analysis, it is essential to briefly introduce the notion of aspect and outline the organization of the imperfective aspectual category in BahC.

Other than tense, aspect is not 'concerned with relating the time of the situation to any other time-point, but rather with the internal temporal consistency of the one situation,' meaning that aspect essentially expresses 'situation-internal time' (Comrie, 1976, p. 5). The typological literature on this topic generally differentiates between a lexical

component of aspectual meaning, that is, the 'inherent aspectual (semantic aspectual) properties of various classes of lexical items' (Comrie, 1976, p. 41), and a grammatical one, that is, grammatical or 'viewpoint' aspect, which presents a situation from a 'particular perspective' (Smith, 1997, p. xiii). In other words, whereas lexical aspect focuses on the particular verb situation, classifying it as either stative or dynamic, grammatical aspect expresses the 'internal temporal constituency of a situation' (Comrie, 1976, p. 3).

As regards grammatical aspect, one first needs to consider the basic perfective/imperfective opposition. Essentially, 'perfectivity indicates the view of a situation as a single whole, without distinction of the various separate phases that make up that situation; [sic] while the imperfective pays essential attention to the internal structure of the situation' (Comrie, 1976, p. 16). The perfective, therefore, can be seen as a self-contained informational unit that 'includes the initial and final endpoints of the situation' (Smith, 1997, p. 66), that is, the situation is seen as self-contained and informationally closed. While the perfective is not restricted to any tense (Smith, 1997, pp. 185–186), it usually occurs with past reference. In standardized English, therefore, the Simple Past, as in *John walked home last night*, is the prototypical instantiation of the perfective; in creole languages like BahC, this is typically achieved with the unmarked non-stative verb (Hackert, 2004, pp. 66–71), as in example (1) below.[2]

(1) <$B><#> the girl when the girl **came** back inside the classroom
<$B><#> I actually **saw** her pass the classroom right
<$B><#> and when she **pass** the classroom I her friend **did not notice** her
<$B><#> her friend **ain't notice** her right
<$B><#> so when
<$B><#> so I **notice** her
[…]
<$B><#> so I **saw** her friend and I **run** her friend down and I **was like** hey hey hey right and then she **gave** me her paper (ICE-Bah:con_008)

The imperfective, on the other hand, places the focus on the internal temporal structure of the respective situation 'with no information about its endpoints' (Smith, 1997, p. 73). While many languages have a single imperfective category, thus showing that 'these various subdivisions do in fact join together to form a single unified concept' (Comrie, 1976, p. 26), the Bahamian imperfective includes distinct subcategories and it is important to distinguish between habitual imperfectivity and continuous imperfectivity (see below). The habitual, as in *I go to school*, 'describe[s] a situation which is characteristic of an extended period of time, so extended in fact that the situation referred to is viewed not as incidental property of the moment, but, precisely, a characteristic feature of a whole period' (Comrie, 1976, pp. 27–28).[3] Typically, habituals refer to situations that occur repeatedly, that is, iterativity is a strong indicator of habitual events, but it cannot be seen as a prerequisite for habitual meaning (Comrie, 1976, p. 27). Generally speaking, it seems that 'cases where HAB [the habitual] is typically used are those in which the adverb *usually* is possible in English' (Dahl, 1985, p. 97), as in examples (2) to (5) below. In BahC, habitual aspect is usually indicated by means of preverbal markers. In non-past verbal environments, as in (2) and (3), we find preverbal *does* or *is/'s* and in past reference situations there is preverbal *useta*, as in (4). The markers can also occur in copula/auxiliary *be* position, that is, there are habitual *does/is/'s be* V-*ing* constructions and *does/is/'s be* in copula environments, as in (5). Apparently, though, less than half of all habitual verb situations in BahC are explicitly marked for habituality (Seymour, 2009, p. 157):

(2) <$B><#> that's one class I can hon- honestly say I learn […]
<$B><#> like I **does** actually **understand** what's be going on for the most part like (ICE-Bah:con_054)
(3) <$B><#> Jamaicans **is talk** faster than us (ICE-Bah:con_032)
(4) <$A><#> that's that's the that's the <sic>thingum</sic> what they **useta call** them (ICE-Bah:con_052)
(5) <$B><#> but I ain't go lie you-all exam I mean them them little quiz and thing you-all **is be having** they don't be nothing like what the finals **is be** bey (ICE-Bah:con_054)

As regards continuous imperfectivity, one further has to distinguish between progressive and non-progressive aspect. While habitual actions are perceived as typically recurring events, continuous verb situations present states (or actions in progress) that can be thought of as lasting over a certain period of time, whether it is a relatively short period (progressive) or a more or less permanent state (non-progressive). Like in standardized English, non-progressive aspect is not explicitly marked in BahC, while the progressive is normally realized via V-*ing* and restricted to non-stative verbs (Hackert, 2004, pp. 72–73; Seymour, 2009, pp. 42–44). Other than in standardized English, however, auxiliary *be* is not obligatory in the Bahamian progressive construction, as example (6) illustrates. An instance of non-progressive imperfectivity is supplied in example (7):

(6) <$B><#> we spent one point six million dollars on that
<$B><#> **we're hoping** this year to address an equal number
<$B><#> and **we Ø hoping** to cut that down incrementally each year
<$B><#> because if
<$B><#> if a **teacher's not**
<$B><#> **getting** the
<$B><#> money that they ought to get
<$B><#> if **they Ø going** to the bank at the end of the month and **Ø not getting** what they ought to get
<$B><#> then they're not gonna feel as good as they ought to
<$B><#> when **they're delivering** uh their lessons in class (ICE-Bah:bint_20)

(7) <$E><#> well we know **Bahamians love** their conch (ICE-Bah:bdis_07)

Although instances of future *going to* or its creole relatives *go/gon* are not instantiations of the progressive, the English *going to* construction bears formal similarity to progressive V-*ing* and, at least in English, demands the same auxiliary *be*. In fact, Seymour (2009), the focus of her work being on constructions expressing various imperfective verb situations, includes *go*-based future markers in her analysis of variable auxiliary *be* use in progressive and, hence, future environments. Thus, constructions like the ones in examples (8) to (10) below are included here (see discussion variable in subsection 5.1.1):

(8) <$A><#> so your mummy ain't **go** mind
<$C><#> no she ain't **go** mind she Ø **go** be cooking for us and thing and we could live in a hotel (ICE-Bah:con_031)
(9) <$A><#> they Ø **gonna** bring in a crew of about
<$A><#> fifty to sixty and employ about thirty to forty Bahamians (ICE-Bah:bint_03)
(10) <$C><#> it's **going to** be epic when that come out part two (ICE-Bah:con_047)

4 | DATA AND METHOD

The study builds on a corpus of conversational data from the Bahamas subcomponent of the *International Corpus of English* currently being compiled at the University of Munich in cooperation with The University of The Bahamas. The ICE project is specifically targeted at investigating and comparing standardized varieties of English worldwide (Greenbaum, 1996). The individual subcorpora consist of 500 texts of approximately 2,000 words each, thus totaling at around one million words spread over various spoken (300 texts) and written (200 texts) registers.[4] As the target variety for ICE corpora is 'educated' or 'standard' English, all speakers have to be at least 18 years of age and generally have completed secondary education, that is, 'criterion for inclusion is not the language used in the texts but who uses the language' (Greenbaum, 1996, p. 6). The ICE data used for this study were largely collected in 2011 and 2012. The

collection procedure was that informants were instructed to speak Bahamian (standard) English, that is, the focus on English (as opposed to Bahamian 'dialect') was made clear, but speakers were not actively discouraged from speaking the local creole. In fact, many informants seemed to find it strange to use the local standard in informal peer-group interaction, as example (11) below illustrates, frequently shifting toward the creole, as in (12). Therefore, the informal ICE data do indeed show considerable creole influence and stylistic variation.[5]

(11) <$A><#> I don't know they're studying the standard English of Bahamian students so they want us to speak standard English not in Bahamian dialect would you like to join in on our conversation <O>laughter</O>
<$C><#> no <O>laughter</O> (ICE-Bah:con_083)

(12) <$B><#> when her birthday is
<$A><#> the tenth
<$A><#> of October
<$B><#> oh man there I go again using this dialect thing say when her birthday is
<$A><#> that ain't dialect that's just bad English <O>laughter</O>
<$B><#> yeah (ICE-Bah:con_083)

The current corpus consists of a range of personal conversations (ca. 85,000 words) and a number of broadcast discussions and interviews (42,500 words) from ICE Bahamas. While the personal face-to-face conversations represent the most informal text category within the ICE framework (Greenbaum, 1996), the broadcast data are among the most formal conversational registers, thus representing two text types with varying degrees of formality located toward the acrolectal end of the Bahamian continuum. In fact, the two text types were specifically chosen to be comparable to earlier work investigating the variation in the imperfective in conversational creole data (Seymour, 2009) or, as is the case in related ongoing work (Laube, forthcoming), to be combined with 'a range of mesolectal data […] to actually show the gradual transitions generally assumed for spoken [English-lexifier creoles like Bahamian or] Jamaican' (Deuber, 2009, p. 29).

Regarding methods, this paper predominantly operates within the variationist framework. For the first analysis of variable auxiliary *be*, the speech data were annotated for instances of zero auxiliary *be*. Then, all tokens belonging to the respective envelope of variation were extracted using WordSmith Tools (Scott, 2015) and the data were manually coded for a range of linguistic and nonlinguistic predictor variables (confer subsection 5.1.1 below). As regards the second variable, that is, variable marking of habituality, I extracted and coded all non-past tokens explicitly marked for habituality by one of the variants of habitual *does* or *is/'s*, but disregarded all zero-marked non-past habitual tokens (confer subsection 5.2). The individual datasets were then further processed and analyzed in *R*.[6]

5 | VARIATION IN PROGRESSIVE AND HABITUAL CONTEXTS IN BAHAMIAN ENGLISH

In the following, I will in turn examine two variables from the imperfective category of Bahamian (Creole) English, that is, variable auxiliary *be* use in progressive and future contexts and variable marking of habitual aspect with preverbal *does/is/'s*. Regarding auxiliary *be* use, I will, first of all, outline the variable context and then present the results of the analysis, considering both intra- as well as extra-linguistic constraints on the variation and placing a particular focus on text type and speech activity. Following that, I will discuss the distribution and functions of the BahC habitual markers and will present select samples from the data to look into the stylistic constraints.

5.1 | Variable auxiliary *be* use

5.1.1 | The variable

In the following, I will introduce the variable under investigation, that is, the observable variation between full, contracted and zero auxiliary *be* in non-past V-*ing* environments and before future markers *go/gon*, *gonna*, *gəyn to*, and *goin(g) to*, providing a detailed description of the envelope of variation as well as the linguistic and non-linguistic predictor variables. Variable copula and auxiliary *be* is a widely attested and well-researched feature of non-standard varieties of English in general, most notably (varieties of) African-American Vernacular English (for example, Labov, 1969; Walker, 2000), but also North American and Caribbean varieties of English and English-lexifier creoles, often in contrast to AAVE (Deuber, 2014; Feagin, 1979; Rickford, 1987; Rickford & Blake, 1990; Walker & Meyerhoff, 2006; Weldon, 2003a, 2003b; Winford, 1992). Consequently, there is a well-tested and established set of procedures for setting up the envelope of variation, in particular Blake's (1997) detailed analysis of count and 'don't count' forms. For The Bahamas, there is also previous research on variable copula and auxiliary *be* (Reaser, 2004; Seymour, 2009; Shilling, 1978), which was considered in my methodological decisions regarding count and non-count cases.

Following Seymour (2009, p. vii), I set up my 'continuous progressiveness' variable to include both 'variable auxiliary *be* use with V-*ing* verbs and verbs in future constructions.' As discussed in Section 3, *go*-based future constructions, while not instantiations of the progressive, need to be included on the basis of their structural similarity to progressives as well as to retain comparability to Seymour's (2009) work. The following environments were regarded as non-count cases and thus excluded from the analysis: past tense (and past reference) tokens (13), existential constructions (14), and tokens with following sibilants (15) or following /r/ (16)[7] in the respective environments. In line with Blake (1997, p. 60), preceding sibilants, as in (17), were not generally regarded as non-count cases and included in the analysis ($N = 22$); ambiguous cases, as in (18), however, were excluded. As BahC also employs variable *is*-leveling, that is *is* in non-third persons, as in (19), tokens with sibilants in the following environment were also excluded in non-third person contexts, as in example (20) below:[8]

(13) <$B><#> I had something else to tell oh yeah
<$B><#> so my story with the dogs when **I finally went out there last night** to run right
<$A><#> uh huh
<$B><#> so **I Ø flicking running** right <$B><#> I run and I run and **I Ø running**
[…]
<$B><#> so I see they send some puppies down and **the puppies Ø running** so I say okay
<$B><#> th- they send the watchdogs
<$A><#><O>laughter</O> (ICE-Bah:con_077)

(14) <$C><#> **there's gonna** be difference of opinion on it (ICE-Bah:bdis_12)

(15) <$A><#> I think he **he Ø studying** for the Bachelor of Science (ICE-Bah:con_051)

(16) <$C><#> so **we Ø reading** this book **we Ø reading** the play You Can Lead A Horse To Water (ICE-Bah:con_012)

(17) <$A><#> I ain't go lie **this Ø getting** on my nerves (ICE-Bah:con_057)

(18) <$A><#> my **eyes Ø watering** man (ICE-Bah:con_041)

(19) <$A><#> so that means you have a a a machine home eh
<$B><#> huh
<$A><#> you have a sewing machine home
<$B><#> **I's doing** it with my hand
<$A><#> you what
<$B><#> **I's doing** that sew with my hand
<$A><#> you don't use a machine

<$A><#> you Ø that good
<$B><#> it Ø easy Donna (ICE-Bah:con_037)

(20) <$B><#> I can't remember bey I think **I Ø screwing** you over (ICE-Bah:con_058)

Although Blake (1997) generally recommends to include negatives in analyses of copula variation, all negative tokens ($N = 195$) had to be excluded from the present analysis due to near-categorical behavior, that is, there is only one negative token with zero auxiliary *be* below. This is due to the fact that, generally, BahC prefers *ain't* in non-past copula and auxiliary *be* contexts (Hackert & Laube, 2018).[9]

Following previous research on copula variation in Bahamian varieties (Reaser, 2004; Seymour, 2009; Shilling, 1978) and other English-lexifier creoles, I included tokens with *it/that/what* subjects in my analysis. While Blake (1997, pp. 69–70) recommends to exclude these on the basis of particularly high occurrence rates and near-categorical behavior in AAVE, creolized varieties like Gullah (Weldon, 2003a, 2003b) or Trinidadian Creole (Winford, 1992) differ from AAVE in that they generally display variation in these contexts and, thus, should be included:

(21) <$B><#> **it taking** too long to load (ICE-Bah:con_037)
(22) <$B><#> hold on wait that coming out in the summer
<$A><#> no I think **that coming out** the end of this year I ain't sure (ICE-Bah:con_047)
(23) <$B><#> excited for it I's like to tell the truth I's a bit nervous cuz I's just like wh- how is this gonna like **what go happen** (ICE-Bah:con_057)

Finally, I excluded all instances of the Bahamian future marker *gəyn to* ($N = 3$). While Seymour (2009, p. 82) asserts that, in Bahamian, *gəyn to* 'is equivalent to standard English "going to",' she groups the variant with the creole future markers, where, if we consider the occurrence rates she finds for auxiliary *be* in this particular context, it certainly belongs (Seymour, 2009, p. 125). Nevertheless, due to the unmistakable similarity of *gəyn to* to the two (standard) English variants in my corpus (*goin' to* and *going to*) and the fact that the three instances of *gəyn to* were produced by just one speaker in one isolated speech situation, I maintain that these tokens cannot accurately be grouped with either the English or the creole variants and need to be excluded from the analysis. The tokens in question are reproduced in example (24):[10]

(24) <$B><#> that's why when I go Abaco I Ø going there either I Ø working or **I Ø going to** camp
<$A><#><O>laughter</O>
<$B><#> I ain't staying home
<$A><#> oh <O>laughter</O> shoot
<$A><#> what you do
<$B><#> and **I Ø going to** work and **I Ø going to** camp I done I done make that reservation with my daddy (ICE-Bah:con_075)

Prior to the analysis, all tokens were manually coded for a range of linguistic and non-linguistic predictor variables, that is, preceding and following grammatical environment (Table 1), text type (broadcast vs. personal conversation), and stance dimension.[11] As regards the last variable, that is, stance dimension, I follow previous worsk by Kiesling (2009) and Holmes-Elliott and Levon (2017) in employing stance as a predictor of linguistic style. Building on the idea 'that people's primary way of organizing interaction […] is through stances' and that stance is thus at the heart of stylistic variation (Kiesling, 2009, p. 172), their studies demonstrate the benefits of a stance-based coding scheme to examine linguistic style and style-shifting in spoken discourse.

The main problem that a stance-based approach entails, however, is that, although people invariably adopt stances toward, for example, the topic of conversation or their interlocutor in interaction, it is nearly impossible to come up with a list of all possible stances and, moreover, stances might be different for different speakers (Kiesling, 2009, p.

TABLE 1 Auxiliary *be* deletion by predictor variable

Predictor variable	Level	Total N	% ZERO
Preceding environment	*I*	292	63.0
	you	218	78.4
	he/she	156	70.5
	we	120	46.7
	you-all	24	91.7
	they	78	66.7
	it	37	45.9
	NP	123	61.8
	NP pl.	46	39.1
	wh- pronoun	26	30.8
	that	37	29.7
	this	11	27.3
	what	31	9.7
Following environment	*go/gon*	158	94.3
	gonna	114	34.2
	goin' to	8	62.5
	going to	11	–
	-ing	908	59.3
Text type	broadcast	293	13.7
	conversation	906	76.3
Stance dimension	social	559	76.7
	discourse	229	49.8
	info	411	45.7
Total		1199	61.0

173). Nevertheless, he argues that speakers generally engage in similar speech activities, for example, joking, gossiping, or arguing. These activities, in turn, are associated with certain linguistic styles, meaning that stance—and, by extension, style—can be coded for indirectly using a predefined range of speech activities, providing 'a clear method for operationalizing stance in a replicable and objective fashion' (Holmes-Elliott & Levon, 2017, p. 1056).

For my study, I employed a slightly modified version of the coding framework used by Holmes-Elliott and Levon (2017, p. 1056), which is, in itself, an expanded version of Kiesling's (2009) speech activities.[12] Like in the previous studies, these speech activities were conflated into a few broader 'stance dimensions,' that is, social speech activities (for example, gossiping and personal evaluation), informational speech activities (for example, expert information or teaching) and discourse management (Holmes-Elliott & Levon, 2017, pp. 1054–1056), to allow for a robust statistical analysis.

5.1.2 | Results

As is standard procedure in analyses of *be* deletion and in order to maintain comparability with Seymour (2009), I employ a straight deletion method, that is, for the quantitative analysis, contracted and full forms of auxiliary *be* are

conflated and contrasted with zero forms. As indicated above, I examined the effects of preceding grammatical environment, following grammatical environment, text type, and stance dimension; phonetic factors were not considered, as previous research has shown that, at least in a straight deletion design, we can hardly expect any influence of preceding or following phonetic environment in Bahamian (Seymour, 2009, pp. 122–124). Table 1 summarizes *be* deletion rates for the entire dataset by predictor variable. It reports total *N* and corresponding deletion rate in per cent per level for each variable.

As Table 1 shows, the final dataset contains 1199 tokens of variable auxiliary *be* before V-*ing* and the various future markers. First and foremost, the data show that auxiliary *be* deletion is a high-frequency feature in spoken Bahamian English, occurring at an overall rate of 61% ($N = 731$). As expected, text type appears to have the highest influence on the overall application of zero *be*, that is, while the feature occurs at 76.3% in the informal personal conversations, the more formal broadcast data show a deletion rate of only 13.7%. As regards preceding grammatical environment, Table 1 suggests relatively high rates of *be* deletion following personal pronouns and noun phrases (NPs) but lower rates after *it/that/what* and *this*. Looking at following environment, we see very high rates of zero *be* before the BahC preverbal future markers *go/gon*, infrequent use before English *gonna*, and not a single instance of *be* deletion before *going to*; V-*ing* environments show 59.3% auxiliary *be* deletion. Nevertheless, while the overall picture emerging from this summary does indeed demonstrate certain patterns of variation, a bit of caution is necessary regarding the interpretation of these numbers. First of all, the numbers for informal conversations and broadcast data are conflated in this table. While the two text types may not differ extensively regarding the relative application of the non-standard variant by grammatical context, the clear differences in overall application can certainly mask text type specific patterns in cells with relatively few total *N*. For example, while Table 1 reports only 39.1% *be* deletion after plural NPs ($N = 46$), the picture changes dramatically once we examine the two texts types individually. In fact, plural NPs show about 86% ($N = 18/21$) zero *be* in the conversations, while there is not a single instance of *be* deletion in the remaining broadcast tokens ($N = 25$). In the reminder of this article, the two text types are, therefore, examined separately.

For the following statistical analysis, some levels of the two linguistic predictor variables were conflated along the lines of previous work. Regarding preceding environment or subject type, the personal pronouns were grouped according to the form of *be* they generally take in non-past environments, that is, *I*, *you/we/you-all/they*, and *he/she* (Seymour, 2009). Naturally, *it/that/what* subjects were treated together and *this* was added to the group; the remaining subject types (NP, NP pl., *wh*- pronoun) were also conflated. For following environment, I differentiate between V-*ing* environments, creole future markers *go/gon*, and (standard) English *gonna/goin(g) to*. This approach is largely in line with Seymour (2009).

As regards statistical modeling, I fitted a generalized linear model using the glm() function in *R* and the final model contained four simple main effects (preceding environment, following environment, text type, and stance dimension).[13] Additionally, a range of post hoc tests, that is, pairwise comparisons for all main effects, were conducted using the *multcomp* package (Hothorn et al., 2008) in *R*; the reported p-values have been adjusted for multiplicity using the Holm-Bonferroni method. In the following paragraphs, I will mainly base my argument on a number of graphs reporting estimated marginal effects (or marginal means) calculated from the model via the ggeffect() function (Lüdecke, 2018), that is, they depict predicted values for each predictor variable averaged over the other terms in the model on a probability scale (Fox, 2003, p. 6); most of the following graphs are combinations of the effect in question grouped by text type and a combined calculation, thus reporting marginal means for the two text types (ICE broadcast and ICE conversations) individually as well as for the entire (combined) dataset. Summaries of the model and all pairwise comparisons are provided in the Appendix (A1, A2, A3).

As Figure 1, showing the predicated probabilities for zero *be* by preceding grammatical environment, illustrates, subject type does indeed appear to be conditioning the variation and, apart from entirely different overall application rates, the two text types indicate similar patterns of auxiliary *be* deletion. As expected, *it/that/this/what* subjects (ITTW) generally disfavor the application of zero *be* and, in fact, there is not a single token zero *be* in these contexts in the broadcast data. Nevertheless, at 43% ($N = 34/79$) application rate in the informal conversations, it hardly qualifies as a non-count context. As regards the personal pronouns and NPs, there does not seem to be much variation between

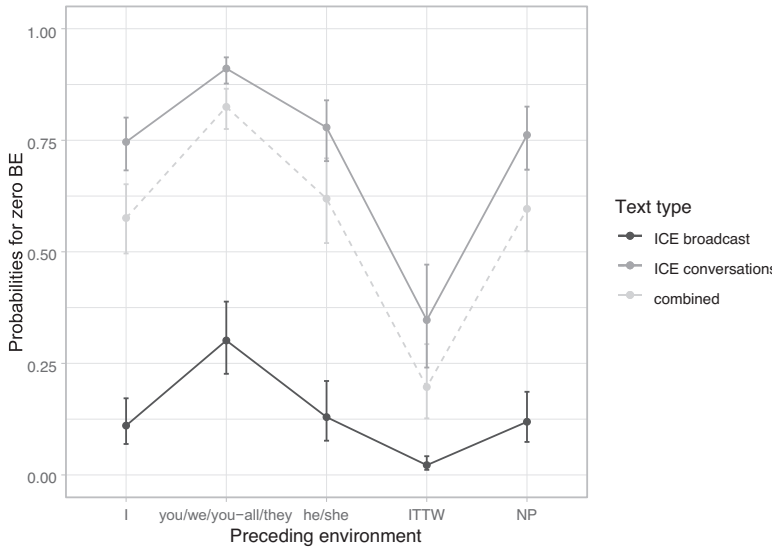

FIGURE 1 Estimated marginal effects (with 95% confidence intervals) for preceding environment by text type (and combined) averaged over other factors

the individual contexts, that is, depending on text type, they either greatly favor zero *be* (ICE conversations) or disfavor it (ICE broadcast). The only exception are *you/we/you-all/they* (or *are*) contexts where auxiliary *be* deletion is even more frequent in both the informal and formal data. While Seymour (2009, p. 177), investigating speakers of urban Bahamian Creole, reports even higher numbers of zero *be* across all environments, the general pattern regarding subject type appears to be the same, that is, she also finds that *what/it/that* subjects show the lowest deletion rates (76%) and 'that auxiliary *be* absence occurs a little more frequently with subjects taking *are* than with those taking *am* and *is*.'

Likewise, following environment appears to have a strong effect on the variation. While auxiliary *be* environments favor the application of zero *be* in general (at least in informal contexts), the observed deletion rates show an increased tendency of *be* deletion to co-occur with overt creole markers. As outlined above, we find near-categorical application of zero *be* with BahC future tense markers *go/gon*, as in examples (25) and (26) below. This is expected as preverbal TMA markers generally do not require an auxiliary and Seymour (2009, p. 125), in fact, finds categorical auxiliary *be* absence in these contexts. Nevertheless, there are a few instances of *be* + *go/gon* + V ($N = 9$) in the current ICE data, as in (27) and (28), but these cases are very infrequent.[14] Moreover, the overt creole markers *go* and *gon* themselves are, of course, largely restricted to the informal ICE conversations and there is, in fact, only a single instance of future *go* in the more formal broadcast data, reproduced in example (26) below. The fact that there is only one such instance also accounts for the comparatively large confidence interval for this particular context in Figure 2:

(25) <$C><#> **I Ø go** find you a boyfriend <unclear>name</unclear> (ICE-Bah:con_031)

(26) <$A><#> explain that to us
<$B><#> no but it has to be understood
<$B><#> no I I **I Ø go** explain it (ICE-Bah:bdis_09)

(27) <$A><#> on the whole I was thinking about applying for fall or whatever but I don't want do try out or nothing again like
<$A><#> I don't wanna do all that whole thing again so **I's go** aks them if I have to try out again
<$B><#> mhm
<$A><#> and if if I do then I ain't go do it cuz I <unclear>words</unclear> cuz they already know how I could play so (ICE-Bah:con_013)

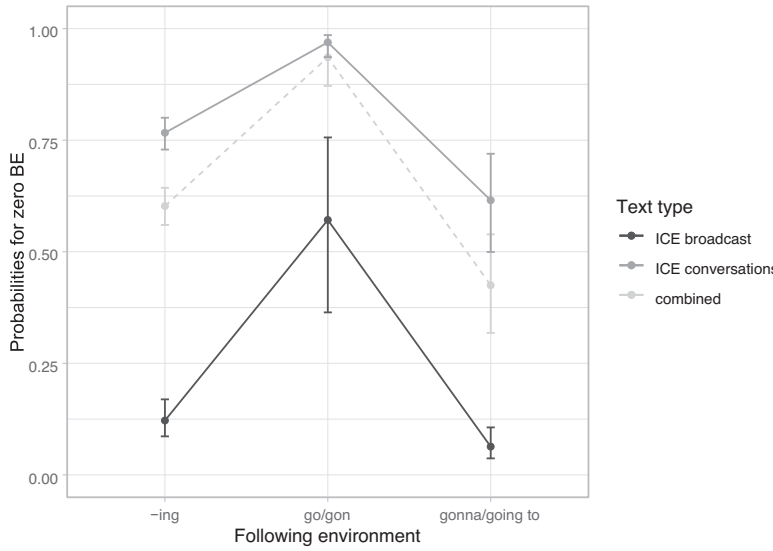

FIGURE 2 Estimated marginal effects (with 95% confidence intervals) for following environment by text type (and combined) averaged over other factors

(28) <$A><#> **I'm gon'** switch my minor man
<$C><#> to what
<$A><#> I don't know (ICE-Bah:con_027)

Regarding the English future markers *gonna/goin(g) to*, on the other hand, there are significantly lower rates of zero *be* in both text types. While this finding is expected, a comparison of the current data with Seymour's (2009) results brings to light two important aspects: firstly, the English variants of the go-based future markers (*gonna/goin(g) to*) occur much more frequently in the ICE data, that is, close to 46% of all future markers in the current sample (31%, if we only consider the informal conversations) correspond to the English pattern, as compared to the roughly 11% reported by Seymour (2009, p. 125). Especially the informal English variant *gonna* occurs at particularly high frequencies in both the personal conversations as well as the broadcast data. In the latter, it accounts for roughly 84% (N = 54/64) of all future markers and seems to index appropriate casualness in relatively formal situations, that is, speech situations where some level of informality is desirable, but creole use is not deemed appropriate. Secondly, the English future markers *gonna* and *goin(g) to* differ with regard to the application of zero *be*. While *gonna*, at 34.2% deletion rate (conversations and broadcast data combined), mirrors Seymour's (2009, p. 125) results, the two pronunciations of *goin(g) to* need to be examined more closely. As regards the most formal variant, that is, *going to* with velar /ŋ/, which is restricted to 11 tokens in the present corpus, there is not a single instance without auxiliary *be*; the alveolarized variant *goin' to*, on the other hand, seems to regularly combine with zero *be* (N = 5/8). Seymour (2009, p. 125) reports 43% zero *be* for *going to* + V constructions, although she does not specify, in how far this category includes alveolar pronunciations. Nevertheless, the findings certainly suggest that educated Bahamians consciously code-switch between English and creole means of indicating future temporal reference, apparently favoring relatively informal *gonna* over *going to* in public settings and creole future markers in personal conversations, and that zero *be* greatly depends on the 'creoleness' of the future marker.

Although the difference between V-*ing* environments and following *gonna/goin(g) to* is not as striking as the differences between the other two pairs (*go/gon–gonna/goin(g) to* and *go/gon*–V-*ing*), a pairwise comparison still reaches statistical significance (p = 0.020*). As Figure 2 illustrates, this effect, that is, auxiliary *be* deletion being more likely to occur in *-ing* environments, is stronger in the more informal ICE conversations and, again, we see a clear divide

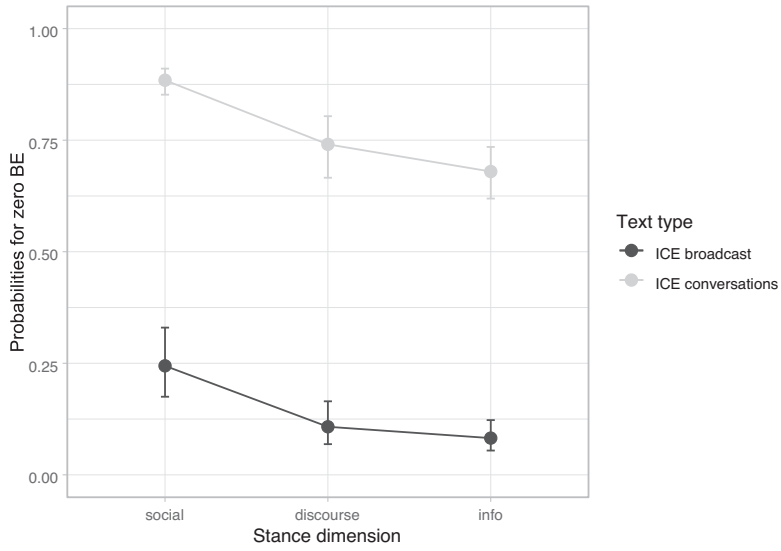

FIGURE 3 Estimated marginal effects (with 95% confidence intervals) for stance dimension by text type averaged over other factors

between formal and informal speech situations. Nevertheless, even though zero *be* occurs at high frequencies in the personal conversations, Seymour (2009, p. 125) reports near categorical behavior in *-ing* environments, that is, 94% application rate, for her creole speakers; by comparison, only about 74% of all *-ing* tokens in the ICE conversations ($N = 516/679$) and a mere 9.6% in the broadcast data ($N = 22/229$) evidence auxiliary *be* deletion. This again shows that ICE speakers continuously (and certainly, to some extent, consciously) adapt their stylistic range to suit their current communicative situation and purposes, a point that I will expand on in the following paragraphs.

Examining the second non-linguistic variable apart from text type, stance dimension, Figure 3 suggests a clear preference for the non-standard variant in speech activities that belong to the social domain, for example, joking, as in example (29), or gossiping, as in (30). In fact, pairwise comparisons comparing social speech activities to discourse management as well as informational speech activities both reach statistical significance ($p = 0.000^{***}$); the third comparison (info–discourse), however, is not significant ($p = 0.678$). This shows that speakers do indeed style-shift within conversations depending on the various speech activities they engage in and that the feature in question is certainly part of a linguistic style indexing informality and being employed, predominantly, in social speech situations:

(29) <$A><#> no we ain't go do no freaky stuff
<$C><#><O>laughter</O>
<$A><#><O>laughter</O>
<$A><#> I Ø go find you a boyfriend <unclear>name</unclear> (ICE-Bah:con_031)

(30) <$A><#> <O>laughter</O> I Ø telling you she Ø walking all twist up (ICE-Bah:con_035)

Lastly, I would like to, once more, stress that the text types under investigation do, in fact, behave quite differently as regards *be* deletion. While, generally speaking, the same linguistic and stylistic constraints on the variable can be observed in both text types, there are considerable differences regarding social embedding and speech situation between these two text types. While the personal conversations can almost exclusively be characterized as peer-group interaction, the broadcast data are, by definition, instances of predominantly formal, public conversations between speakers who do not necessarily know each other. This, of course, leads to very different overall application rates of the non-standard variant, but, as Figure 3 illustrates, the effects of the various types of speech activities can still be traced in both text types, conditioning stylistic variation within these two entirely different registers.

5.2 | Variable marking of habitual aspect

In the following subsection, I discuss the BahC markers of habitual aspect *does* and *is/'s*. I will restrict my analysis to explicitly marked instances of the habitual, adopting a predominantly qualitative perspective. This was deemed necessary for two reasons. First, there is not a single token of the overt creole markers *does* or *is/'s* in the formal broadcast data, rendering a variation analysis with a focus on comparing the two text types pointless. Second, a proper variation analysis would entail manually examining all unmarked verb situations in the entire corpus and determining, if they carry habitual meaning or not. Therefore, this section, in quantitative terms, will mainly focus on describing the frequencies and contexts of the various makers and offer a few qualitative observations regarding style. First, there is habitual *does* as in example (31) below. In fact, this is the only token of habitual *does* in the current corpus, whereas the marker accounts for around 7% of the preverbal markers in non-past habitual environments in BahC (Seymour, 2009, p. 159). The other two habitual markers (*is* and *'s*), however, occur at rather high frequencies in the ICE conversations. Consequently, Seymour's (2009, p. 166) observation that '*does* is usually favoured [over *is* or *'s*] by older speakers' while 'younger speakers disfavour the marker,' seems to hold, as a great majority of the speakers in the current dataset are students at the local university:

(31) <$B><#> that's one class I can hon- honestly say I learn […]
<$B><#> like I **does** actually understand what's be going on for the most part like (ICE-Bah:con_054)

Second, there are habitual *is* and the contracted form *'s*. Although Seymour (2009, p. 220) finds that *is* and contracted *'s* cannot be regarded as phonologically reduced forms of *does*, she discusses prior work on both Bahamian (Hackert, 2004; Holm & Shilling, 1982; McPhee, 2003) as well as Guyanese Creole (Bickerton, 1975; Rickford, 1975) that assumes such a relationship (Seymour, 2009, pp. 144–147). In fact, she argues against approaches that assume *does* reduction to be 'the result of standardization processes' and that, while non-marking of habitual aspect corresponds to standardized English usage, 'reduced [Iz] and contracted [z] are considered more standard than the full form' *does* (Seymour, 2009, p. 145). Nevertheless, the fact remains that habitual *does* hardly occurs in the speech of educated, young Bahamians, whereas *is* and contracted *'s* are frequently employed in casual conversation. As regards complementation, *is* and *'s* usually occur with the base form of the verb. A majority of these are dynamic verbs (N = 326/450), as in example (32), but the markers also combine with stative verbs (N = 41/450), as in (33). Nevertheless, there are instances of dynamic use of traditionally stative verbs and vice versa, as in (34). In addition, habitual *is/'s* can also combine with more complex verb phrases, occurring, for example, before modals like *have to* and *gotta* (also *gotty* in BahC), as in examples (35) and (36), or in negative environments before *can't* or *don't*, as in examples (37) and (38) (confer Seymour, 2009, p. 197). Lastly, there are a number of *is/'s be* (N = 50/450), as in (39), and *is/'s be* V-*ing* (N = 12/450), as in (40), constructions in the data, adding habitual meaning to these typically non-progressive and progressive verb situations. Although adverbials like *always* are not required in constructions containing a habitual marker, they can still occur, as the last example (40) illustrates:

(32) <$C><#> let's talk what words Bahamians **is kill** the most (ICE-Bah:con_013)
(33) <$B><#> I don't know the food **is smell** good mind you but
<$B><#> I ain't know (ICE-Bah:con_082)
(34) <$A><#> all these lecturers **is smell** theyself (ICE-Bah:con_075)
(35) <$A><#> this whole semester Ø just depressing bey <$C><#> <O>laughter</O> **you's have to laugh** it off (ICE-Bah:con_043)
(36) <$A><#> he is put us in groups
<$A><#> to do these projects and **we's gotta present** them to the class <$A><#> our last one tomorrow (ICE-Bah:con_020)

(37) <$B><#> he don't go cuz **he's can't get** the time off (ICE-Bah:con_035)
(38) <$B><#> I hope he don't call my phone back
<$A><#> he **he's don't do** that (ICE-Bah:con_026)
(39) <$B><#> their food **is be** so good
<$A><#> it is be good it's expensive (ICE-Bah:con_082)
(40) <$B><#> this car **is always be coming** across t- the field (ICE-Bah:con_082)

Lastly, I would like to briefly comment on a few instances of quotative *be like*. Evidently, this formerly US American feature has spread throughout the English-speaking world by now and has surely arrived on the neighboring Caribbean islands. Recently, *be like* has been attested and studied in Jamaican (Bogetić, 2014) and Trinidadian English (Deuber et al., 2020), and younger Bahamian speakers use it very frequently in informal contexts (Laube, forthcoming). While previous studies of language in The Bahamas have not reported any instances of quotative *be like* and, in fact, Hackert's (2004) set of sociolinguistic interviews recorded in the late 1990s does not contain a single instance of the form, we find extensive use of both past and non-past *be like* in the more informal registers in ICE Bahamas and might, in fact, be seeing a 'true case of change in progress' (Barbieri, 2009, p. 87) here. Most crucially, however, quotative *be like* also co-occurs with the preverbal marker *is* or contracted *'s*, as examples (41) and (42) below illustrate. Interestingly then, it appears that a feature of colloquial American English is adopted by younger speakers and, in informal speech situations, combined with overt creole features, showing that creole and non-creole non-standardized features alike are used to construct specific linguistic styles. Similar findings have been reported for Trinidad, where Deuber et al. (2020, p. 9) find that *be like* is favored by younger speakers and 'tends to be more common when speakers opt for stylistic levels along the […] continuum' toward the creole.

(41) <$A><#> no **he is be like** like when we Ø doing derivatives right
<$B><#> mh
<$A><#> **he's be like** well this now is just a
<$A><#> this is an exercise of arithmetic
<$A><#> you should have mastered arithmetic by now so you don't particularly need to do this (ICE-Bah:con_058)
(42) <$B><#> they is sound funny
<$A><#> okay so we sound funny to them
<$A><#> when they Ø playing people online **they's be like** what the fuck Ø you talking about
<$B><#> laughter
[…]
<$B><#> I wanna hear them
<$A><#> **they's they's be like they be like** who you are kid what are you talking about honestly like what the fuck Ø you talking about (ICE-Bah:con_052)

Table 2 summarizes the distribution of *is* and *'s* by both preceding as well as following environment. Zooming in on preceding environment, the data show that, while some environments do not appear to favor either *is* or contracted *'s* (as, for example, the majority of pronouns), most do, in fact, favor one over the other. For example, heavy noun phrases appear to favor the full form *is*, whereas 2nd person singular *you* occurs much more frequently with the contracted variant.

Again, there are two constructions that merit more detailed attention. First, there is one token with existential *there* in the preceding environment, reproduced in example (43). This is simply another instance of *is/'s* + *be* discussed above filling the copula slot after *there*. Second, there are five instances of what I have labeled zero relativizer. These tokens are essentially also existentials, consisting of negative existential *ain't* and a noun phrase (normally an indefinite pronoun) followed by habitual *is/'s*; the expected relatvizer before the habitual marker is missing. Example (44), containing two of the five tokens, illustrates:

TABLE 2 Distribution of *is/'s* by preceding and following environment

Variable	Level	N	% *is*	% *'s*
Preceding environment	*I*	70	47.1	52.9
	you	43	23.3	76.7
	he/she	108	47.2	52.8
	we	24	41.7	58.3
	you-all	7	85.7	14.3
	they	71	47.9	52.1
	existential *there*	1	–	100.0
	it/that/what	35	71.4	28.6
	NP	61	78.7	21.3
	NP pl.	25	100.0	–
	zero relativizer	5	80.0	20.0
Following environment	dynamic verb	326	57.4	42.6
	stative verb	41	56.1	43.9
	be	50	60.0	40.0
	be V-*ing*	12	25.0	75.0
	quotative *be like*	21	14.3	85.7
Total		450	54.7	45.3

(43) <$B><#> we useta um have to have a <uncertain>college sheet</uncertain> sheet and you have to answer them questions just like that all and you can't even like <uncertain>you can't hav- you can't even carry</uncertain> that paper out the room cuz on the finals **there's be** like a lot of the same questions you see (ICE-Bah:con_054)

(44) <$B><#> this family island **ain't nobody's be** on the road
<$C><#> and like **ain't no cars is be** on the road (ICE-Bah:con_031)

As regards the role of habitual aspect markers in the construction of linguistic style, it seems clear that using a preverbal marker is reserved for very informal and, partly, intimate speech situations, since there is not a single token in the broadcast data. In the informal conversations, on the other hand, they occur quite frequently. It appears, therefore, that the feature generally combines with other creole and non-creole non-standardized features like future *go/gon*, zero *be*, and quotative *be like*, only to name a few actually discussed in this paper, to create a linguistic style that belongs to the 'anti-formal' domain (Allsopp, 1996, p. lvii). Nevertheless, in how far speakers style-shift in their use of these TMA markers within conversations, the present paper cannot answer satisfactorily. A qualitative examination of a few examples suggests that habitual *is/'s* occurs regardless of topic, particular context, or, to remain in the theoretical framework introduced above, types of speech activity and related stances. As illustrated by the examples above, the marker is used both in speech activities belonging to the social domain, for example, joking (32), gossiping (34), and personal evaluation (39), as well as informational speech activities like information sharing (36) and expert information or teaching (43). However, further research along the lines of the analysis presented above (subsection 5.1.2) is certainly needed to closely examine possible effects of speech activity on the variation. Still, the present study concludes that these overt creole features do, in fact, find their way into (but, at the same time, seem to be restricted to) informal Bahamian English registers.

6 | CONCLUSION

This section discusses the main issues and implications of this paper, bringing together the results of the two previous sections on variable auxiliary *be* use and habitual aspect marking. First of all, the study finds that text type or register is the most important predictor as regards the application of non-standardized morphosyntactic or creole features in conversation. This is true for both auxiliary *be* deletion as well as habitual aspect marking, the second feature being even more restrictive, meaning that there is not a single token of habitual *does* or *is/'s* in the formal broadcast data. Deletion of *be* in auxiliary contexts, by contrast, occurs in both text types, but significantly less in the broadcast discussions and interviews. In this regard, Allsopp's (1996) distinction between 'informal' and 'anti-formal' certainly seems to hold. The overt or 'anti-formal' creole feature, preverbal *does* or *is/'s*, is indeed restricted to the most informal text type, where, however, it can be used quite freely, whereas the zero form represents merely 'relaxed speech' (Allsopp, 1996, p. lvi) and occurs even in the high acrolect.

Second, a major focus of the study being on stylistic, that is, intra-speaker or intra-textual, variation, the current findings suggest that speakers permanently code-switch and style-shift in conversation, employing all linguistic resources at their disposal. A case in point is the analysis of auxiliary *be* variation presented above. It finds that specific speech activities belonging to the social domain, for example, joking or gossiping, favor the application of the non-standard variant, while activities like information sharing or discourse management strategies showed significantly fewer instances of zero *be*. These findings are certainly in line with previous research on Jamaican English, that is, speakers appear to prefer creole variants 'where a topic is being discussed that is more personal and/or seems to be associated with a higher degree of emotional involvement than other topics in the text' (Deuber, 2014, p. 115). Nevertheless, a predominantly quantitative approach such as this one naturally falls short. While the stance-based approach employed in the current variationist analysis of variable auxiliary *be* has merit in that it quantifies style and integrates the factor into the variationist paradigm, the subsuming of a range of speech activities under three overarching stance dimensions, that is, social speech activities, informational speech activities, and discourse management, of course, does not capture the complexity of style. As Hackert (2016, p. 105) points out, creole speakers generally 'perform individual acts of identity by making finely graded stylistic choices between English and creole forms which complement each other rather than representing mutually exclusive opposites' and further research, both quantitatively and qualitatively, is needed to expand on these issues and fully understand these acts of identity (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985).

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NOTES

[1] I use the term *standard* to refer to the registers spoken in speech situations that would normally call for a standardized variety to be used and that are represented in the ICE Bahamas corpus. As these data display considerable variation and influence from the local creole, speaking of standardized Bahamian English would be misleading.

[2] For a detailed treatment of the perfective in BahC, please refer to Hackert (2004).

[3] Evidently, this definition of the habitual also seems to hold true for generics (*Water boils at 100 degrees*) and non-progressive verb situations (*Mark knows German*), that is, 'more or less permanent state[s] of affairs' (Comrie, 1976, p. 37). Nevertheless, generic aspect differs from the other imperfective categories in one main feature, which is its "nomic' or 'lawlike' character' (Dahl, 1985, p. 99), but, as example (3), despite being explicitly marked for habituality, illustrates, they 'are almost impossible to separate' (Hackert, 2004, p. 69).

[4] For further information regarding the ICE project and ICE corpus design, please refer to https://www.ice-corpora.uzh.ch/en.html.

[5] This is, of course, not unique to The Bahamas, but comparable ICE projects (for example, ICE Jamaica) show similarly high degrees of inter-textual variation in the informal text types, most prominently the personal conversations (Deuber, 2009, pp. 6–7; 2014, pp. 110–113).

[6] In order to do all data processing, frequency calculations, statistical modeling, post-hoc testing and data visualization in *R* (R Core Team, 2020), I employed the following packages: *car* (Fox & Weisberg, 2019), *effects* (Fox, 2003; Fox & Weisberg, 2019), *ggeffects* (Lüdecke, 2018), *ggplot2* (Wickham, 2016), *kableExtra* (Hao Zhu, 2021), *knitr* (Xie, 2014, 2015, 2020), *lme4* (Bates, Mächler, Bolker, & Walker, 2015), *multcomp* (Hothorn, Bretz, & Westfall, 2008), *sjPlot* (Lüdecke, 2020).

[7] Other typical 'don't count' cases like *be* in clause final position or emphatic or stressed *be* (Blake, 1997) are, of course, not relevant in the context of this study, as copula contexts are generally excluded.

[8] While Seymour (2009, p. 119) finds no instances of *is*-leveling before V-*ing* or future markers in her data and confirms earlier observations of hers that *is* is ungrammatical in non-third person copula or auxiliary *be* contexts other than before NPs (Seymour, 1995, p. 40), my data do indeed contain such instances of *is/'s* before V-*ing* (and in other copula environments), as example (19) illustrates. Instances like this one seem to frequently demand habitual reading, thus possibly allowing for interpreting such constructions as cases of habitual *is/'s* + V-*ing* (Laube, forthcoming).

[9] In fact, 68% ($N = 133/195$) of all negative tokens in the present dataset are instances of *ain't*. If we consider following grammatical environment, we find around 71% *ain't* in V-*ing* environments ($N = 73$) and even 100% ($N = 60$) before creole future makers *go/gon*; preceding English *gonna*, on the other hand, there not a single instance of *ain't*. This confirms previous results for urban BahC by Hackert and Laube (2018, p. 284), who found that negative *ain't* occurs at around 71% in non-past copula and auxiliary *be* contexts; regarding grammatical environment, they report 70% *ain't* before V-*ing* environments and identically categorical behavior with *go/gon* and *gonna* respectively (Hackert & Laube, 2018, p. 289). In addition, if we zoom in on the personal conversations only, we find that the ICE speakers seem to be even more focused in this regard than the creole speakers, as negative *ain't* occurs at around 77% ($N = 73/164$) before V-*ing* in this text category.

[10] Please note that, in accordance with ICE-Bah transcription conventions, all transcription (apart from selected lexical items) are in standardized British English and phonetic features are not indicated in the transcript. As the data are available in a text-speech-aligned format, I checked all instances of <going to> manually in order to be able to differentiate between the three phonetic variants.

[11] The data were coded for further linguistic (for example, negation, contraction, intervening material) and non-linguistic (individual speaker, corpus text) variables, but these either became obsolete due to exclusions for the envelope of variation or were not considered in the analysis for various reasons.

[12] I differentiate between the following speech activities (listed alphabetically): 'alignment,' 'commiserating,' 'complaining,' 'confrontation,' 'discourse management' (including references to local context, clarification, facilitators, and more), 'expert information,' 'expert teaching,' 'gossiping,' 'hedging,' 'information sharing,' 'joking,' 'personal disclosure,' 'personal evaluation,' 'question (discourse),' 'question (information),' 'question (social),' 'request,' 'story telling' (Holmes-Elliott & Levon, 2017, pp. 1054–1059; Kiesling, 2009, pp. 182–185).

[13] Before, I attempted to fit generalized mixed effects models using the *glmer* function from the *lme4* package (Bates et al., 2015) in order to account for inter-speaker variation. However, due to the nature of the ICE data, that is, relatively short conversations of no more than 2,000 words, the token count per speaker was so low that the model including individual speaker as a random intercept did not converge. In addition, the two-way interaction of text type and stance dimension did not turn out to be significant and was thus removed from the model.

[14] Note that *go* only co-occurs with auxiliary *'s/is* and these tokens often carry habitual meaning, meaning that they might, in fact, be instances of habitual *is/'s*. In addition, there are **'s go* tokens that also permit past reference readings, which were only included, if they occurred embedded in a passage that was undoubtedly non-past in reference.

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APPENDIX

TABLE A1 Summary of generalized linear model reporting estimated coefficients, standard errors and *z* and *p* values for all effects

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	*p*
(Intercept)	−1.676	0.273	−6.150	0.000
Precedingyou/we/you-all/they	1.244	0.227	5.471	0.000
Precedinghe/she	0.180	0.251	0.719	0.472
PrecedingITTW	−1.710	0.312	−5.476	0.000
PrecedingNP	0.084	0.247	0.341	0.733
Followinggo/gon	2.262	0.399	5.664	0.000
Followinggonna/going to	−0.719	0.250	−2.872	0.004
Stancediscourse	−0.985	0.215	−4.581	0.000
Stanceinfo	−1.282	0.182	−7.061	0.000
text.typeconversation	3.164	0.224	14.093	0.000

TABLE A2 Analysis of deviance table (type II tests) for generalized linear model computed with Anova() fucntion from *R* package car() (Fox & Weisberg, 2019)

	Likelihood ratio $\chi 2$	DF	*p*
Preceding	107.729	4	0.000
Following	63.766	2	0.000
Stance	56.137	2	0.000
text.type	288.629	1	0.000

TABLE A3 Pairwise comparisons for generalized linear model reporting estimated coefficients, standard errors and *z* and *p* values

		Estimate	Std. Error	z value	*p*
STANCE	discourse - social	−0.985	0.215	−4.581	0.000
	info - social	−1.282	0.182	−7.061	0.000
	info – discourse	−0.297	0.216	−1.373	0.678
TEXT TYPE	conversation - broadcast	3.164	0.224	14.093	0.000
PRECEDING	you/we/you-all/they - I	1.244	0.227	5.471	0.000
	he/she - I	0.180	0.251	0.719	1.000
	ITTW - I	−1.710	0.312	−5.476	0.000
	NP - I	0.084	0.247	0.341	1.000
	he/she - you/we/you-all/they	−1.064	0.261	−4.075	0.000
	ITTW - you/we/you-all/they	−2.955	0.324	−9.126	0.000
	NP - you/we/you-all/they	−1.160	0.247	−4.702	0.000
	ITTW - he/she	−1.891	0.338	−5.596	0.000
	NP - he/she	−0.096	0.273	−0.352	1.000
	NP - ITTW	1.795	0.335	5.354	0.000
FOLLOWING	go/gon - -ing	2.262	0.399	5.664	0.000
	gonna/going to - -ing	−0.719	0.250	−2.872	0.020
	gonna/going to - go/gon	−2.981	0.453	−6.579	0.000