

A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF  
BURNT ISLANDS, NEWFOUNDLAND

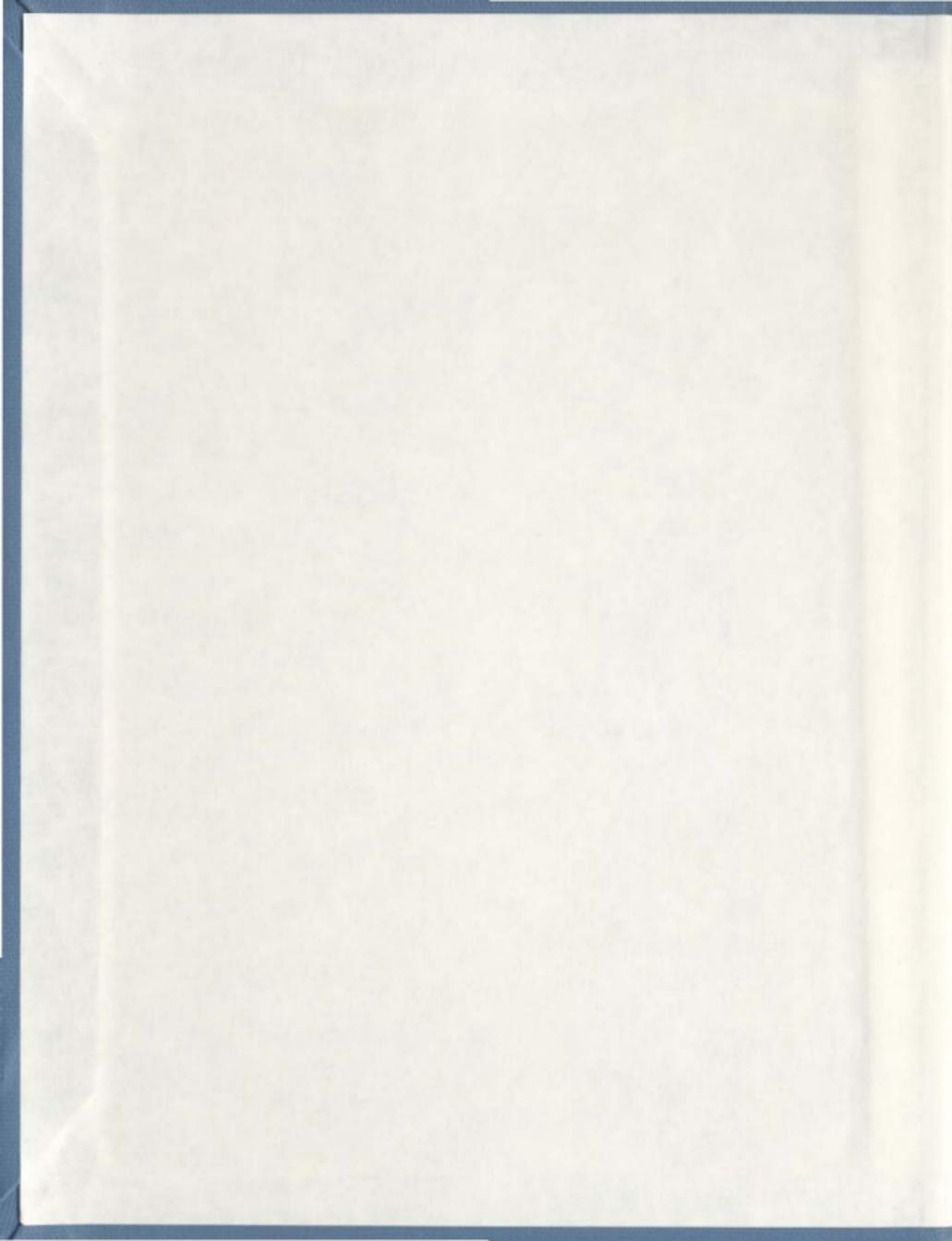
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**A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY OF BURNT ISLANDS, NEWFOUNDLAND**

by

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A thesis submitted to the  
School of Graduate Studies  
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requirement for the degree of  
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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated how the social factors of age and gender co-varied with nine linguistic variables (eight phonological and one grammatical) in Burnt Islands, a rural Newfoundland community. Twelve participants were divided into three age groups in which both genders were represented. The interviews were tape-recorded, and consisted of both casual and formal components in order to examine the effects of speech style on the usage of the linguistic variants. In order to determine the significance of the independent variables, an ANOVA 2 x 2 design (Age x Gender) was employed.

Variation was found in the speech of individuals, as well as across social groups. In casual style, gender proved to be the most significant social factor in variant selection, while age affected approximately half of the variables. Formal style results revealed that speakers in the overall sample displayed style shifting for most of the features examined. Younger females were marked by their avoidance of local variants in both casual and formal speech, while older males tended use local forms the most often. The general pattern of the decreasing usage of local features among successive generations suggests that supralocal norms are encroaching on the distinctive Burnt Islands dialect.

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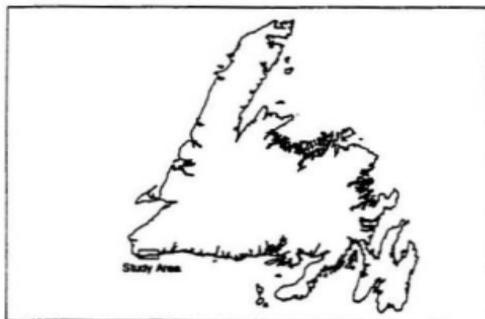
## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the sociolinguistic patterning of several linguistic variables in Burnt Islands, a rural community located on the southwest coast of Newfoundland (see Figure 1). The theoretical framework for this study was adopted from Labov's innovative sociolinguistic studies conducted in the 1960s. The behaviour of various phonological and grammatical variables was analysed via tape-recorded interviews designed to capture different conversational styles. In the Labovian framework, insight into linguistic patterns can be gained by studying relatively few speakers; thus twelve participants were selected to represent the speech community of Burnt Islands, comprising over eight hundred residents. Interviews were conducted during the summer of 2000 in Burnt Islands. The aim of the study is to examine language variation and change in the community by investigating whether the usage of local forms patterns systematically with the social factors of age and gender.

Previous research has shown that linguistic variation exists in Newfoundland and that the selection of local and supralocal linguistic features co-varies with the social factors of gender, age, class, religion, education and style. We are fortunate to have sociolinguistic studies of small rural Newfoundland communities (Reid 1981; Colbourne 1982; Lanari 1994) as well as a handful of more traditional dialect studies (Seary, Story and Kirwin 1968; Noseworthy 1971; Paddock 1981). However, no studies have been carried out on the southwest coast of Newfoundland.

This chapter provides an overview of the community of Burnt Islands – the social history (section 1.1), the settling of the community (section 1.2) and the economy (section

**Figure 1: Southwest Coast of Newfoundland**



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1.3). Section 1.4 discusses how population attrition and contact with outside language varieties affects the status of the dialect spoken in Burnt Islands.

### 1.1 The Community of Burnt Islands

Burnt Islands is approximately 26 kilometers east of Port aux Basques and 16 kilometers west of Rose Blanche and is surrounded by the many islands and rocks which front and partly fill God Bay. Up until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were settlements scattered along the coast and on various islands in this area<sup>1</sup>. At one time, Burnt Islands comprised what were essentially three communities, consisting of an area on the mainland along with two islands in God Bay. One of these islands was Great Burnt Island, the largest of the islands in the bay, which is still populated today. In 1968-69, a causeway was constructed to connect the mainland settlement and the island settlement on Great Burnt Island. Until the 1940s, about seven families resided on another island about three hundred feet across God Bay from Great Burnt Island, in a settlement called North West Cove (known locally as Nar' Wes' Cove). There was also an additional settlement, Hiscock's Point, farther along the coast between Burnt Islands and Isle aux Morts, about two miles from Burnt Islands by boat. Hiscock's Point appears in an 1864-65 directory and in Lovell's 1871 Directory with a population of 54, and is listed until at least 1901. Currently no one resides in either North West Cove nor Hiscock's Point; people eventually moved to larger settlements in the area.

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<sup>1</sup>

Most of the information about Burnt Islands presented in this chapter was collected during interviews with participants, and by speaking informally with residents.

Burnt Islands residents relied heavily on the fishery and, as for most rural outposts, the population of Burnt Islands has been on a steady decline since the fishing industry went into recession just over a decade ago. The 1991 Census of Canada indicated a population of 1024, a decrease of 1.5% relative to the Census of 1986. More recently, the 1996 Census showed the population of Burnt Islands to be 919; the 1991 to 1996 population change represents a further decrease of 10.3%. This significant population decline reflects the effect of the government imposed moratorium on most types of fishery since 1992. Houses are being abandoned and people are moving away to such areas of mainland Canada as Halifax, Ontario, and Alberta in search of employment. The number of younger people who stay in Burnt Islands, especially those between the ages of 20-25, is becoming very small. Most young people move away after high school for post-secondary education or to seek work. In 1999, the unofficial census figure for Burnt Islands collected by the local town council was 816, which indicates a population decrease of 11.2% since the 1996 census.

Since fewer people are staying in rural Newfoundland outpost communities to raise families, there are fewer children in these areas. Consequently, community schools are closing and the remaining children are being transported to schools which often serve the wider geographical region. Currently in Burnt Islands, the elementary school is closed due to poor air quality; the high school is now accommodating the children, and is being renovated to include kindergarten to grade twelve. The high school previously serviced both Burnt Islands and Rose Blanche junior and senior high students. In the near future, it is

expected that this school will need to accommodate kindergarten to grade twelve students in both Rose Blanche and Burnt Islands.

## **1.2 The Settling of Burnt Islands**

Like many other areas of Newfoundland, Burnt Islands was settled by English migrants. These settlers mainly hailed from a concentrated area of southwest England, mostly from Dorset, Devon and Somerset. Early emigration to Newfoundland began as early as the 1600s, yet the main decade of absorption of immigrants from the British Isles was from 1815-1825 (Mannion 1977). There is little written about the settlement of the southwest coast of Newfoundland but it can be presumed that it was settled around the same time as the population expansion in Newfoundland began and the influx of permanent settlers occurred, although a little later than more easterly areas of Newfoundland. Expansion of settlement beyond the east coast of Newfoundland was slow and large areas of the coast remained sparsely inhabited even at the end of the eighteenth century (Mannion 1977: 6).

The exact date of English settlement in Burnt Islands is unknown but it is said that two families were living there by 1822, and more steady and substantial settlement began around 1839-40. By 1841, there were a few families settled on both the mainland and Great Burnt Island. A directory of 1871 listed the population of Burnt Islands as 160. Subsequent census figures show a steady increase in the number of inhabitants: in 1901, the population was given as 296 persons; from 1911-1945, there was an average population in the 400s; by 1955, this had increased to 601. The island settlement grew more quickly than the mainland;

by 1858, the island became sufficiently inhabited that the first Protestant school-chapel in Burnt Islands was constructed there.

Like the Long Island, Notre Dame Bay community investigated by Colbourne (1982), Burnt Islands was settled by a homogenous group of Protestant migrants from southwest England, and has remained largely Protestant. There is only one church in the community, which is Anglican, and there are few other religious groups in Burnt Islands. Like Long Island residents, the inhabitants of Burnt Islands would have had little contact with Irish-Catholic communities in Newfoundland. Religious background (largely synonymous with ethnic background in Newfoundland) therefore has little if any bearing on language variation in Burnt Islands. This differs from the situation in a number of other Newfoundland communities in which sociolinguistic investigation have been conducted. Religious background was found to co-vary with a number of phonological and grammatical features in the ethnically mixed communities of Carbonear (Paddock 1981), Bay de Verde (Reid 1981), St. John's (Clarke 1985) and in Burin (Lanari 1994).

Before the causeway was constructed in 1968-69, the island portion and the mainland portion of the community were largely independent of each other. People would have to row across the bay to get from one settlement to the other, thus there was little solidarity between the residents of each area. Children residing in North West Cove would have to travel across the bay to attend school on Great Burnt Island. As there was a church (school-chapel) and a confectionary store in each settlement, there would be little reason to commute to the other settlement. Participants in the middle age group in this study stated that they had not been

in the other settlement until the causeway was built. They remarked about how novel their first visit was to the other settlement, and recall being wide-eyed and afraid. These settlements are still separately referenced by residents as “the island” and “the main,” while the newer development in the community is known as “the highway.” However, along with the causeway came community identity and unity.

### **1.3 The Economy – Past and Present**

People settled on the rugged, fairly barren coast of Burnt Islands for the same reason as they did in most of Newfoundland – to pursue the fishery. The harbour of Burnt Islands provided good shelter for vessels and fish was abundant. In the late fall and winter the inshore hook and line fishery took place locally; boats would fish for cod about ten miles off Burnt Islands. Then in the spring and fall, the fishermen pursued the fishery on the “other side” – St. Paul’s Island, St. George’s Island, St. Pierre, as well as Sydney, Antigonish, and Glace Bay in Nova Scotia – and also in other areas in Newfoundland, such as Burgeo, Trepassy, the Northern Peninsula and Labrador. During the summers, some boats fished in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, up the west coast of the island of Newfoundland around Port Saunders and Port aux Choix, as well as in southern Labrador. For some years, sword-fishing off Cape Breton was common (Munden 1997).

Until a fish plant was constructed in the area, fish would be sold fresh if caught off Burnt Islands or salted in stages and fish stores. When fishing was pursued elsewhere, fish would be salted in fish-holds of the skiffs. By the 1940s, Burnt Islands supported a fish plant

owned by Fishery Products International on Bragg's Island, located approximately one hundred feet from Great Burnt Island. This plant closed in 1967. A fish plant is currently operated on Great Burnt Island, founded in 1958 by Mr. Eric King and incorporated in 1970; it is still a family-run business. The fish plant has serviced Burnt Islands residents and markets abroad.

Although the fishery has been the mainstay of life for Burnt Islands residents, it was not the only source of food. To supplement the diet of mainly fish, animals such as sheep, cows, pigs and hens were raised and a variety of vegetables were grown. The resources available in the area were utilized to add variety to meals: people spent much time picking the assortment of berries native to the area and hunting caribou, moose, rabbits and birds such as turrs, gulls and tickle-aces<sup>2</sup>. Nonetheless, residents recall eating fish most of the time while many other foods were special treats.

The fishery may have been the lifeline for Burnt Islands but it has not been the only source of work. The community once supported a glue factory. An offal plant founded around 1912 by a Norwegian named Gustav Evanger was operated in Big Cove in Burnt Islands. Offal would be bought from surrounding communities, then it would be dried and ground up and shipped away to make glue. This plant operated for a short period of time, only about three or four years. During the leaner years of the fishery, some people sought work elsewhere. After Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada in 1949, a number of

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<sup>2</sup> Tickle-aces – 'kittiwakes'

men who did not fish found employment with the Canadian National Railway, mainly in Port aux Basques. In the mid to late 1950s, some men began working as deckhands on the Great Lakes ships. Sailing with the Great Lakes boats is still a considerable source of employment for male residents of Burnt Islands today. Currently in Burnt Islands, residents are most likely employed with the inshore fishery or with the fish plant, with the CN ferry service in Port aux Basques, on the Great Lakes ships, or else they work in various service-related jobs.

#### **1.4 Dialect Loss in Burnt Islands**

Newfoundland English varieties in general are characterized by their conservative nature, and their retention of many regional dialect features from southwest England and southeast Ireland. Residents of Burnt Islands, like many other Newfoundlanders, are aware of the local variety of speech and are conscious of certain features of their native dialect. Before 1958 when roads were constructed to connect neighbouring communities, Burnt Islands was isolated. Apart from those residents who did not fish outside the community or sail with the Great Lakes ships, on a seasonal basis, members of the community generally did not have much contact with the rest of the world. Today there is much more opportunity to travel, and many modes of doing so.

Besides travelling for leisure, or to visit those who have left the area, residents of Burnt Islands have been increasingly forced to leave the community, and in fact the province, to seek employment since the failure of the fishery. Young people grow up knowing that they have to leave Burnt Islands in order to work and will eventually build a life away from

home. Very few young people aspire to work with the fishery since there is not much hope for the future of the industry. As a consequence, many young adults acquire two speech varieties – the local dialect and a more supralocal register which will help them prepare for a future in which they have to move away from the community to obtain further education and employment.

Older residents and those who do not plan to move away also have a register that they perceive as more standard than the local variety and tend to use it in more formal situations, such as when they are in the presence of a more educated and/or higher class person (e.g. a minister or teacher), as well as with non-local people. There are some linguistic features that people view as very stigmatized and monitor more closely than others. People may even switch from supralocal to local variants in the same utterance when not carefully monitoring their speech in formal situations. Yet there are those who do not choose to use more standard speech at all. These people may use local variants to show community membership, or refusal to conform to the supralocal variety. There are many motivations for the register selected in different situations but there is a systematic patterning for linguistic variation among various social factors. It is this patterning that is being explored in this thesis.

With the current rapid rate of population depletion, it is important to document the linguistic variety existing in Burnt Islands. Wolfram and Schilling-Estes (1995: 696) point out the importance of studying endangered dialects of ‘safe’ languages, that is “particular varieties of a language whose unique status is threatened by other encroaching varieties of the same language.” The study of endangered dialects of non-threatened languages, even

those as dominant as English, “reveal features that are not found in more mainstream varieties and these need to be documented in order to provide a full representation of diversity within language” (Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1995: 697).

Schilling-Estes and Wolfram (1999: 480) propose two models of dialect death: 1) dissipation, in which the distinctive features of a variety diminish drastically due to increasing contact with mainstream dialects, and 2) concentration, in which linguistic distinctiveness heightens rather than diminishes as the dialect comes into increasing contact with other varieties. At the same time, the dialect is considered moribund as it rapidly loses speakers. They further (1999: 486) explain that “macrolevel socioeconomic and microlevel sociopsychological factors” are involved in “the maintenance or demise of moribund languages and language varieties, as well as the nature of change in dialect death.”

Mainland Canadian varieties of English and varieties of American English are increasingly encroaching on the unique variety of Newfoundland English spoken in Burnt Islands. As residents travel outside of the area, and as people come into the community from the mainland, Burnt Islanders are increasingly coming into contact with the language varieties of outsiders. However, as Schilling-Estes and Wolfram (1999) point out, contact-based explanations do not provide a full account of dialect dissipation. “In particular, we must consider not only the changing patterns of contact, but also speakers’ attitudes toward the changes affecting their community” (Schilling-Estes and Wolfram 1999: 509). They (1999: 509-510) further explain that relatively closed communities, i.e. those with limited interaction with the outside world, can be “psychologically open, wholeheartedly embracing

the few cultural and linguistic innovations they happen to encounter,” while relatively open communities may be psychologically closed. In addition to face-to-face contact, here as elsewhere in Newfoundland, the extensive exposure to the media – television, radio, movies – can also contribute to the Canadianization and Americanization of local residents, although it is not a major source of linguistic change. However, from these sources Newfoundlanders can form judgements about what constitute prestigious speech features, and approximate these in their more standardized, formal speech style. Young people in particular seem to be very influenced by what is in the media.

Although most of the linguistic features examined sociolinguistically in this study have realizations typical of rural areas of the province originally settled from southwest England, it is not known how the usage of forms patterns socially in this area. In addition, linguistic investigation in Burnt Islands has revealed some rare and unique features that are previously undocumented. Though the aim of this study is not to provide a full dialect description, several unusual features of this area are described in Section 2.1.2.

## **2. THE BURNT ISLANDS STUDY: SOCIOLINGUISTIC BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the sociolinguistic groundwork for the Burnt Islands study. The main purpose of this study is to investigate how social factors co-vary with a number of linguistic features in the community. The nine linguistic features that are examined in this study were carefully selected for analysis according to criteria described below in section 2.1.1. Section 2.1.2 provides a brief description of some unusual linguistic features which exist in Burnt Islands, but were not analysed in this study. In section 2.2, the linguistic variables under investigation are described. Analysis was based on a corpus collected from twelve participants selected to represent three age groups and both genders (see 2.3 and 2.4 below). Two speech styles were examined (section 2.5), and the significance of the independent variables (Age and Gender) was tested statistically via analysis of variance (section 2.6).

#### **2.1.1 Selection of Linguistic Variables**

According to Labov (1972a), if the linguistic variables to be studied in a speech community are to be linguistically revealing and useful, they should be selected according to the following criteria:

First we want an item that is frequent....in the course of undirected natural conversation....Second it should be structural: the more the item is integrated into a larger system of functioning units, the greater will be the intrinsic linguistic interest....Third, the distribution of the feature should be highly stratified....over a wide range of age levels or other order strata of society.

We would like the feature to be salient but we value immunity from conscious distortion. (Labov 1972a: 8).

Obviously, it was not possible to analyse the variation displayed by every single variable linguistic feature that occurs in the Burnt Islands speech community: Labov (1966: 49) recognizes that it is “desirable to select a small number for intensive study.” Just as it was not possible to describe all the variable linguistic features in Burnt Islands, it was not desirable to focus in considerable depth on just a couple of individual variables. Since the area was not investigated previously, it was decided that it would be beneficial to investigate many features. Furthermore, the selection of only one or two features would be arbitrary and might give an erroneous picture of what is occurring in the community in light of the several different social stratification patterns which emerged from the present study. Based on the above criteria, eight phonological variables (six vocalic, two consonantal) and one syntactic variable were selected for detailed investigation and analysis. Before I describe the variables to be investigated, however, I will give a brief overview of some of the more unusual linguistic features which characterize the area.

### **2.1.2 The Linguistic Character of Burnt Islands**

The language variety of Burnt Islands is uninfluenced by the Irish element of Newfoundland; absent are linguistic features characteristic of Irish Newfoundland English

such as the ‘clear’ postvocalic /l/ of words like *pill* and the slit fricative pronunciation of postvocalic /t/ in words like *sit* and *better* (cf. Paddock 1982, Clarke 1991). People unfamiliar with speakers from Burnt Islands often comment on the speed at which they speak. The language variety has features typical of rural English-settled areas of Newfoundland; however, as mentioned above, it also contains some unusual and previously undocumented features.

As in many other areas of Newfoundland, theta /θ/,<sup>4</sup> the fricative found in words like ‘math,’ and ‘thought,’ is variably realized in Burnt Islands as an alveolar stop [t]. In non-initial position (eg. ‘math’), it also occurs as a labiodental fricative [f], which is also found, though fairly rarely, in certain rural areas of Newfoundland settled from Southwest England. Yet in addition, an uncommon nonstandard variant of /θ/, an alveolar voiceless fricative [s], can occur in word-final and intervocalic positions in Burnt Islands. This variant is previously undocumented in Newfoundland. Captured in this study are pronunciations of words like ‘bath’ /bæθ/ as [bæs], and ‘Matthew’ /mæθjuw/ as [mæsjuw]. The fricative [s] variant of theta /θ/ cannot occur in word-initial position – /θɪŋk/ cannot be [sɪŋk]. Therefore theta /θ/ has multiple variants in Burnt Islands, depending on its position. Word-initially, the standard theta [θ] variant and the stop variant are possible – the labiodental fricative [f] and alveolar fricative [s] variants are not. In word-medial and word-final position four

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<sup>3</sup>

The slant brackets (phonemic brackets) represent the phonemic representation of a sound, while square brackets (phonetic brackets) represent the phone or allophone.

<sup>4</sup> The IPA transcription system was used in this study.

variants are possible: the standard theta [θ], stop [t], labiodental fricative [f] and alveolar fricative [s].

Because the [s] variant is stigmatized and infrequent, it did not prove suitable for quantitative investigation in this study. The stop [t] and fricative [f] are the most frequent realizations, while the standard theta [θ] tends to be used in the most formal, careful speech. The [s] variant is the most stigmatized – younger people do not use this variant often, if at all. In the interviews conducted for the present study, none of the younger participants used the [s] variant. However, the two older age groups used this variant occasionally during the interviews.

In the variety spoken in Burnt Islands, the voiced counterpart of theta, eth /ð/, the fricative found in words like ‘weather,’ ‘bathe,’ and ‘though,’ has a voiced alveolar stop variant [d] and a voiced labiodental fricative [v] variant in word-medial and word-final position. Thus a word like ‘breathe’ /bɹijð/, can be pronounced [bɹijd] or [bɹijv] and ‘father’ /fɑðə/ can be pronounced [fɑdə] or [fɑvə]. Like its voiceless counterpart, the voiced labiodental fricative [v] variant does not occur in word-initial position. Eth /ð/, however, does not have a voiced alveolar fricative [z] variant – ‘weather’ /wɛðə/ is not realized as \*[wɛzə] nor is ‘bathe’ /bejð/ realized as \*[bejz].

A second unusual feature found in Burnt Islands is a fricative variant [ʃ] of the affricate /tʃ/ in word-initial position.<sup>5</sup> Thus 'choke' /tʃowk/ may be realized as [ʃowk] or 'chicken' /tʃɪkən/ as [ʃɪkən]. The [ʃ] variant of the affricate /tʃ/ is not possible in other positions: in word final position, 'beach' /bijtʃ/ is not realized as \*[bijʃ] nor does it occur in word-medial position, as 'pitcher' /pɪtʃə/ is not \*[pɪʃə]. The [ʃ] variant is not common among younger people; during the interviews conducted for this study, no adolescents used it. This variant is rare and highly stigmatized. It did not occur frequently during the interviews, although it was used by several speakers on occasion, namely older males, as well as some males and females of the middle age group. Consequently, this variant was not appropriate for sociolinguistic investigation in this study.

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<sup>5</sup>

In historical Irish English, initial /tʃ/ may become /ʃ/; thus, for example, 'cheeks' becomes 'sheiks' (Ó hÚrdail 1997). Williams (1987: 202) also states that 'chive' pronounced with initial [ʃ] occurred in Dorset, Scotland, and northern Ireland. A somewhat different pattern has also been noted in many southwest English regional dialects, namely alternations between [s] and [ʃ]: [ʃ] may be realized as [s], so that 'shrunk' may become 'srunk,' and [s] may be realized as [ʃ], e.g. 'suit' being pronounced as 'shoot.' This [ʃ]/[s] alternation has been noted for Wessex (Rogers 1979), Wiltshire (Dartnell and Goddard 1991) and the Early Modern Southwestern English dialects of Cornwall, Devon and Somerset (Matthews 1939). While initial preconsonantal /s/ is occasionally articulated as [ʃ] in Newfoundland English, this realization did not emerge in the present study.

## 2.2 Linguistic Variables

### 2.2.1 Vocalic Variables

Six vocalic variables were investigated in this study – (ɛ)<sup>6</sup>, (ɪ), (orC), (aj), (aw), and (uw)<sup>7</sup>.

#### 1. (ɛ):

The variable (ɛ) represents the ɛ: sound in words like ‘bet’ and ‘pen,’ that is, in the lexical set corresponding to items containing standard English lax /ɛ/. The standard variant of this variable is [ɛ], a mid-front lax vowel. The local variant is [ɪ], the raised counterpart of [ɛ], so that words like ‘set’ and ‘bell’ may become ‘sit’ and ‘bill’ in many areas of Newfoundland (e.g. Noseworthy 1971, Paddock 1981, Colbourne 1982, Clarke 1985, Lanari 1994). The raised variant of (ɛ) has been associated with areas in Southwest England, particularly Cornwall, Devon and Somerset (Wakelin 1986: 21). It has also been noted in Wiltshire: for example, Dartnell and Goddard (1991: xiv) state that “*left, smell, and kettle* become *lift, smill, and kiddle*.”

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<sup>6</sup> As per the usual sociolinguistic convention, linguistic variables are represented in parentheses.

<sup>7</sup> I performed all the transcription on a purely auditory basis. As vocalic variables represent phonetic continua, and thereby pose problems for transcribers, every effort was made to ensure reliability: the phonetic space associated with each variant was carefully established in consultation with a Memorial University phonetician, and any problematic, i.e., phonetically intermediate, token was disregarded.

The variants for /ɛ/ in Burnt Islands are mid lax [ɛ] and the traditionally raised [ɪ] pronunciation.

2. (ɪ):

This variable (ɪ) represents the /ɪ/ sound in words like 'pit' and 'bin,' that is, the lexical set corresponding to items containing standard English lax /ɪ/. Three variants have been noted for this variable in Newfoundland: the standard variant [ɪ], a high lax vowel; a local variant [ɛ]<sup>8</sup>, its lowered counterpart; and lastly a tensed [i]. Like the previous variable (ɛ), the local variants of (ɪ) are inherited from Southwest England, especially Cornwall, Devon and Somerset (Wakelin 1986). Both this lowered [ɪ] and tensed [i] have also been documented in Wiltshire: "l short becomes e, as *brenḡ*, bring, *drenk*, drink, *zet*, sit, *peḡ*, pigs. Occasionally it is lengthened into ee, as *leetle*, little" (Goddard and Dartnell 1991: xiv). Lowering was more widespread in southern British English, as Parish's (1875: 7) comment on the Sussex dialect suggests: "i becomes e in pet for pit, spet for spit and similar words."

The local variants of both (ɛ) and (ɪ) described above have been documented in other Newfoundland speech communities such as Grand Bank (Noseworthy 1971), Carbonear (Paddock 1981), Long Island, Notre Dame Bay (Colbourne 1982), and in Burin (Lanari

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<sup>8</sup>

It is possible that a merger of /ɪ/ and /ɛ/ has occurred for some Burnt Islands speakers and for some residents of other Newfoundland communities. The question of merger has, however, not been investigated in previous studies of Newfoundland English and of southwest British English. Since detailed investigation of phonological conditioning was beyond the scope of this thesis, this issue is not addressed here, and (ɪ) and (ɛ) are treated as separate phonological variables. Further study is obviously warranted.

1994). In Burnt Islands, the tense long [i] can be heard, but it is not a common realization of (ɪ). Thus only two variants, supralocal [ɪ] and traditional [ɛ], were examined in this study.

3. (orC):

The variable (orC) represents the ɔr/ sound which occurs before a consonant in words like ‘horse’ and ‘born.’ The vowel in the standard variant of this variable is [ɔ], a low-mid back rounded vowel. Locally, this vowel may become unrounded, lowered and fronted to a/ when followed by /r/ plus consonant, so that words like ‘storm’ and ‘short’ may be pronounced as ‘starm’ and ‘shart.’<sup>4</sup>

Historically, unrounded variants of (orC) have been documented in Southwest England, in dialects of areas such as Cornwall, Devon, and Somerset (Kirwin and Hollett 1986), Wiltshire (Dartnell and Goddard 1894), and Dorset (Barnes 1863). Such pronunciations have also been noted in many areas of Newfoundland, among them Long Island, Notre Dame Bay (Colbourne 1982), Carbonear (Paddock 1981) and the Burin region (Lanari 1994).

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<sup>4</sup> This study considers only the short ɔ/ before /r/ followed by a consonant, not reflexes of Middle English long ɔ/, in words such as ‘hoarse,’ ‘more,’ and ‘mourning.’ Following Colbourne’s (1982: 11-12) analysis of words with the *-oar-*, *-ore*, and *-our-* spellings, it is likely that the phonemic distinction between short ɔ/ and long ɔ/ before /r/ exists in Burnt Islands as it does on Long Island, since both communities are settled from southwest England. The presence in the word list used in this study of the pair ‘horse’ and ‘hoarse’ failed to provide information on this point, since both were articulated exclusively with a rounded [ɔr]-like variant by all Burnt Islands participants.

The range of unrounded pronunciations of (orC) which exists in Burnt Islands was represented as [ɐr], so that the distinction for this variable was binary: supralocal [ɔr] and traditional [ɐr].

4. (aj):

This variable represents the diphthong /aj/ in words like 'pie', 'height' and 'fried.' Outside the pre-voiceless obstruent environment, the standard variant of this variable is [aj], a diphthong with a low-central onset. This is a diphthong which, in Canadian English, is affected by "Canadian Raising," in that the onset of the diphthong is raised to mid central [ə] when followed by a voiceless consonant (Chambers and Hardwick 1986). Kirwin (1993) notes that the /aj/ diphthong in Newfoundland can raise before voiceless consonants, and attributes this pattern to source varieties in Britain and Ireland.

Lanari (1994), who studied this variable in Burin, examined three variants: central low [aj], raised [əj] and rounded [ɔj]. The third variant [ɔj] does not exist in Burnt Islands, or at least not in the sample surveyed. Though this rounded variant occurs in Southwest England, it seems to be more predominant in Irish-settled areas of Newfoundland than in English-settled areas. However, the Burnt Islands variety does possess an additional variant: fronted raised [ɛj].

The three distinctions made for the variable (aj) for this study are standard-like low [aj], raised [əj] and the local [ɛj] realization. These three variants were examined in all linguistic environments.

5. (aw):

This variable represents the diphthong /aw/ in words like 'now,' 'out,' and 'crowd.' In Newfoundland English, this variable is often heard as [aw], with a central low nucleus. In Canadian English the diphthong is also subject to Canadian Raising: the nucleus raises to mid back [ʌ] before voiceless consonants while in the 'elsewhere' environment, the nucleus is low back [ɑ] (Hung, Davison and Chambers 1993). Hung, Davison and Chambers (1993) note a change in progress in the speech of young urban Canadians, for whom this Canadian Raising rule no longer holds: the onset of diphthongs is often raised and fronted in the 'elsewhere' environment. Moreover, in the pre-voiceless environment, the onset is not always raised. The Hung et al. study also found that the fronting of the nucleus proved to be stratified by age, in that younger speakers are fronting more than older speakers: it was also stratified by gender, as females are the innovators.

In parts of Newfoundland settled from southwest England, a fronted and sometimes raised nucleus for (aw) represents an inherited feature. This nucleus is most likely the result of a sixteenth and seventeenth century phonological process in traditional dialects of Devon, east Cornwall and Somerset, England (Wakelin 1977: 88). This fronting has been preserved in the Burnt Islands area.

Lanari (1994) also studied /aw/ sociolinguistically in Burin, and investigated four variants: low central [aw], raised [əw], fronted [ɛw] and monophthongal [a(:)]. The first three of these variants also occurred in my sample, while the monophthongal variant did not.

Thus three variants are investigated in all linguistic contexts for Burnt Islands: low [aw], raised [əw] and raised and fronted [ɛw].

6. (uw):

The variable (uw) represents the /uw/ diphthong in words like 'too' and 'move.' The conservative standard variant of this variable in Newfoundland English is a high back rounded diphthong, [uw]. Historically, in Southwest England, particularly in West Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, the pronunciation of [uw] is "with a very front 'ü' vowel like the *u* of French or the 'ü' of German" (Trudgill 1990: 43). Wakelin (1985: 25) also notes that the "very 'fronted' sound is found....in *boot, food, moon, spoon, good, took, cook, etc.*" This study will only consider the tense (uw) – that is, the lexical set alternating between tense and lax vowels (words like 'spoon,' 'boot,' 'room,' 'broom,' etc.) will be excluded from the analysis. This fronted variant of (uw) is present in the speech repertoire of Burnt Islands speakers.

Lanari (1994) also investigated (uw) in Burin. She found, however, that the fronted variant (as in 'school') was most associated with the descendants of Irish migrants to the Burin region. This is not the case in the current study since Burnt Islands consists largely of residents of English descent.

The variants for (uw) are high back rounded [uw] and the traditional fronted variant, here represented as [yw], though the second element of the diphthong may also be fronted.

### 2.2.2 Consonantal Variables

Two consonantal variables were investigated in this study: vocoid /l/ and /h/-deletion.

#### 1. /l/-vocalization:

There are areas of non-Irish-settled Newfoundland that “drop” the /l/ in postvocalic position in words like ‘pool’ and ‘fell.’ The vocalization of /l/ may result in a vocalic glide or in the total disappearance of the /l/. Colbourne (1982) studied /l/-delateralization on Long Island, and found a vocoid variant (which includes /l/ deletion) to be overwhelmingly favoured in all styles. The vocalization of /l/ also occurs in parts of England, particularly the southeast, which has the “loss of ‘l’ at the end of words like ‘school’ and ‘fool’” as a distinguishing feature of the area (Trudgill 1990: 43); currently, however, /l/ vocalization is spreading in British English. Brooks (1972: 45) has noted that in Dorset and Wiltshire, postvocalic /l/ was lost, especially before particular consonants in words like ‘help’ and ‘self.’ It is possible, then, that /l/ vocalization was an incipient development in the southwest English dialect brought to Newfoundland, and was, to judge from the Colbourne (1982) study at least, expanded in the Newfoundland context.

In areas of Newfoundland where /l/ vocalization occurs, the alternative variant in postvocalic position is the “dark” /l/, velarized, lateral [+]. The same is true for Burnt Islands. The distinction for this variable is therefore binary: in postvocalic position, the /l/ is either a lateral (contoid) or it is not (i.e., it is either vocalic or deleted).

## 2. initial /h/ deletion

In some parts of Newfoundland, outside the Irish-settled Avalon peninsula, a common linguistic behaviour is to delete the /h/ at word initial position, so that 'happy' may sound like 'appy.' Another common behaviour of /h/ in areas of Newfoundland settled from southwest England is its insertion in initial position of a stressed syllable that otherwise would begin with a vowel. For example, 'uncle' may become 'h'uncle' or 'arm' may be 'h'arm.' In the southwestern dialects of English (e.g. those of Cornwall, Devon and Somerset) in the Early Modern period, "there are a fair number of examples of the aspiration of normally initial vowels" (Matthews 1939: 206). The phenomenon of /h/-insertion will not be analysed in this study as it did not occur sufficiently often or systematically in the Burnt Islands sample. However, this was not the case for /h/-deletion. In Newfoundland, the deletion and insertion of /h/ have been documented by Kirwin and Hollett (1986), and investigated in an educational context (Whelan 1978).

The distinction for this variable is binary: either the [h] is present or not in the relevant linguistic environment, namely, words that in standard English contain word-initial /h/.

### 2.2.3 The Grammatical Variable of Pronoun Exchange (PE)

This variable represents the use of either the standard object pronoun form in stressed object position or the traditional subject pronoun form in the same position. Thus 'Give me that' or 'Give that to me' may be realized in Burnt Islands as 'Give I that' or 'Give that to

l' when the personal pronoun object is stressed. This feature is inherited from southwest England. "In the south, more than anywhere else, we find pronouns exchanging their functions....but there usually seems to be restriction on this process where....the subject form is used only as the emphatic form of the object (e.g. *I told she*)" (Wakelin 1977: 100). This grammatical variable has not been previously investigated sociolinguistically in Newfoundland, although Paddock (1982) has documented its geographic distribution on the island.

It should be noted here that Pronoun Exchange, as a grammatical feature, and a highly salient one at that, might be expected to pattern slightly differently from the phonological features in this study. Speakers are often more aware of their usage of grammatical variables than phonological variables (as a result, for example, of the prescriptive norms they encounter within the education system), and are thus better able to self-monitor and suppress their usage of local grammatical variants.

The distinction for this variable is binary: the pronoun in the stressed object position is either a standard object pronoun form or the subject pronoun form.

### **2.3 Social Variables**

The social factors of age and gender are being investigated in this study, while social class is not. James Milroy (1992:153) notes that age and gender are often "treated as secondary to socioeconomic class; yet it is not necessary to assume that social class differences are in all circumstances primary motivators for change or that it would be

appropriate in all societies to make this assumption: it is quite possible that speaker variables other than social class are in some cases primary in linguistic variation and change, or that they interact in a complex way.”

### 2.3.1 Age

Age is predicted to be a significant variable in Burnt Islands. The sample was stratified to encompass three generations of speakers: Older (65+), Middle (35-45) and Younger (13-15).

Sociolinguistic studies conducted in Newfoundland have shown age to be significant (e.g. Colbourne 1982; Clarke 1991; Lanari 1994). Clarke (1991) found that among four social variables examined in St. John's English, age proved to be the most important. Findings relating to age, however, have not been consistent across communities, but are affected by the social structure of the individual community. For example, Clarke (1991) and Colbourne (1982) found older males to use significantly more local variants, while in Burin, younger females (25-35) proved to be the least standard (Lanari 1994).

Following Labov, in order to gain insight into linguistic changes in progress, an apparent time approach was used. Chambers (1995: 193) explains apparent time as a construct when “different age groups are observed simultaneously and the observations are extrapolated as temporal.” This practice is widespread in sociolinguistic studies today in order to examine age as a social factor; as Milroy (1987a: 96) points out, “evidence of change in progress is often provided by systematic differences in apparent time.”

The age groups were selected to represent three generations that would reflect the greatest social differences. The older generation (65+) enjoyed job security all their lives. One older male participant remarked that “we had no education but we always had a job and right now you need grade 12 to get a job.” The fishery allowed men in this age group to travel outside the community, mainly to other areas of Newfoundland and to Nova Scotia. Still economically secure, the older residents are free to travel and know that they can spend the rest of their lives in the community, not having to worry about employment. Those in the middle age group (35-45), however, have had less economic security; most are feeling the disastrous effects of the 1992 fishing moratorium and are seasonally employed. Some in this age group still rely on the fishery. Many are faced with the possibility of having to move away to find work while others refuse to give up and survive on what work is available in the area. Some are so deeply rooted in the community that they can never imagine leaving.

An adolescent group (13-15) was included in the sample since investigation of the usage of linguistic features in this age group would be particularly interesting in light of the current rate of out-migration of young people in the province. As mentioned earlier, many young people grow up expecting to move away either to go to school or to look for work. This factor may influence the linguistic behaviour of adolescents. Interviews with the young participants in my sample confirm that they are faced with a dilemma; they want to live in Burnt Islands in the future but know that they cannot build a prosperous future in the community. Most envision a career in something other than the fishery. Given the economic

insecurity of their parents, the fishery does not appear to appeal to the youth, especially for those who plan to go to post-secondary institutions to train in other areas of employment.

Several researchers have noted the advantages of working with adolescents. Labov (1972b) points out that there is increased likelihood of capturing pure vernacular speech with adolescents than with older speakers. Other advantages noted by Cheshire (1982) are that adolescents have a greater acceptance of an adult researcher, they have more free time for interviews and are less inhibited in the presence of recording equipment.

### **2.3.2 Gender**

As in most sociolinguistic studies, gender was predicted to be a significant social variable in Burnt Islands. Gender differentiation in the usage of phonological variables clearly exists in Newfoundland, but patterning has failed to be entirely consistent. While most Newfoundland sociolinguistic studies conducted have shown that men are less standard than females on the whole (e.g. Colbourne 1982; Clarke 1991), Lanari (1994) found that younger working class females (25-35 years) in the Burin region, whose ties to the area are strong, were the least standard of all the social groups investigated. The present study will investigate how Burnt Islands men and women compare in the usage of the selected variables.

It is expected that gender role and employment differences will be reflected in the speech of Burnt Islands residents. Most males typically worked with the fishery or in the fish plant. As in the community of Burin investigated by Lanari (1994), those who fished spent

most of their time away from home around Nova Scotia or other areas of Newfoundland, mainly in the company of other men. Those who did not work with the fishery often sailed on the Great Lakes boats with other men for extended periods of time while others were employed with the Canadian National Railway. Women remained in Burnt Islands and raised families; those who worked outside of the home were employed mostly in the fish plant. The middle-age generation make a living in much the same way as the older generation: there is less work, but fishing, the fishplant, Great Lakes, and the CN ferry are the major employers for males, while women are employed in the fishplant and in stores, or else stay at home and raise families. Thus gender-related differences in occupation and geographical mobility existed in the older age group and these are still evident in the middle age group. On the other hand, the younger generation plans to make a living in a different way. Both males and females in the adolescent age group of my sample aim to attain post-secondary education, move away and work in something other than the fishery. In this age group, gender role differentiation is considerably less evident.

### **2.3.3 Socioeconomic Class**

A factor that has been found to be significant in sociolinguistic studies in Newfoundland (Paddock 1981; Clarke 1991; Lanari 1994) as well as elsewhere (e.g. Labov 1966; Trudgill 1974) is socioeconomic class. I will not be investigating this factor in the present study. It has been acknowledged that social class is relatively hard to define: "Social class is a broad, large-scale category" that is a "difficult notion to pin down" (Milroy 1987b:

13). Social class is usually defined by relative characteristics such as income, education, occupation, residence or lifestyle. In a rural area it is even more difficult to define social class, since people are largely undifferentiated with respect to these characteristics. Guy (1988: 43) acknowledges the difficulty faced by sociolinguists in defining social class in economies that, like Newfoundland's, are rural and resource-based: "the number of 'nonstandard' speakers is vast, typically constituting a large majority of the population." Like many outports, Burnt Islands can be described as a "traditional" community where there has always been high involvement in the fishery, and few if any obvious socioeconomic class differences. As Colbourne (1982: 19) remarks about Long Island, Notre Dame Bay: "I could not group along social class lines since there appeared to be very little social class structure in the community....Ninety-six percent of the population would have been considered lower or working class." Reid (1981:14) was also unable to define social class in Bay de Verde where the working class "would encompass almost the entire population." Previous Newfoundland studies considering socioeconomic class (Paddock 1981; Clarke 1991; Lanari 1994) were conducted in larger commercial centers where people could be ordered according to class distinctions. In Burnt Islands, a "middle class" is almost entirely non-existent.

#### **2.4 Sampling Methodology**

The primary focus of many sociolinguistic studies has been large urban areas such as New York City (Labov 1966). Here, an important concern is representativeness, and hence random sampling is used. To obtain a representative sample in the rural area under

investigation in the present study, random sampling is not required. Since the area is relatively homogeneous in terms of socioeconomic status and contains only approximately 800 people, judgement sampling is appropriate and fairly representative of the speakers. As Milroy (1987a: 26) points out, “the principle underlying judgement sampling is that the researcher identifies in advance the *types* of speakers to be studied and then seeks out a quota of speakers who fit the specified categories.” Given the small population of the area, random sampling would not be the most appropriate method for selecting participants. Since my goal was to access vernacular speech styles, sampling through the social networks of contacts I already had in the area was expected to be more fruitful than formal random methods. These contacts knew the people in the area as well as who would best fit the criteria I had specified for participants. As mentioned previously, the population of Burnt Islands is relatively homogenous – most people belong to the same class and are of the same religion. However, there are some people who do not fit the mold. By using judgement sampling, measures would be taken to ensure that the sample would be socioeconomically uniform and that people who did not best represent the population of Burnt Islands were not included. I selected people who belong to the same class; they worked with the fishery, fish plant, or Great Lakes boats (or, in the case of the adolescents, had parents are employed in these occupations). In each age group, all participants had approximately the same amount of education. As well, I decided to make use of group interviews in which the interviewees would know each other. Selecting participants via random sampling would not allow this selection process to operate according to these criteria.

Previous rural sociolinguistic studies in Newfoundland have typically used judgement sampling as a means of selecting informants and have been successful in doing so (Reid 1981; Colbourne 1982; Lanari 1994). Lanari selected informants “based on a personal network established in the field” because “given the low population density of the Burin region,.... a sample thus selected would be representative” (Lanari 1994: 37). Judgement sampling is also the most effective way to secure the number of interviews required given limited research time.

Following Milroy (1987b: 44), I sampled within social networks of people, using a “friend of a friend” approach in order to escape the effects of observation, or what Labov (1966) calls the “observer’s paradox.” Milroy (1987b: 44) notes that by using this technique, she was able to acquire a “status which was neither that of insider, nor that of outsider, but something of both – a friend of a friend, or more technically, a second order network contact.” This status allowed prolonged observation and varied interaction over a longer period of time. I too was able to achieve this status and overcome a social barrier of sorts. I am from the community, as are my social contacts, so there is a sense of belonging and obligation, being a friend of these contacts. At the same time, I am somewhat detached from the local networks since I have been away from the community for some time now. As such, I required the use of an inside interviewer (see Section 2.5.1).

Informants were selected to fit a matrix of six cells composed of both sexes and three age groups. Two people were interviewed per cell, giving a total of twelve participants. By comparison to other sociolinguistic studies, this ratio of representation is a high one for the

approximately 800 residents of Burnt Islands: Labov (1966), for example, used fewer than a hundred participants to represent New York City.

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Older (65+)</b>	2	2
<b>Middle (35-45)</b>	2	2
<b>Younger (13-15)</b>	2	2

## **2.5 The Interview**

The tape-recorded interviews, consisting of informal and formal components, lasted approximately 2-3 hours each, depending on the number of interviewees. Group dynamics were used to aid in the access of more casual speech styles; a community member (an inside interviewer) and I (an outside interviewer) conducted interviews with two or three people simultaneously. Both the inside interviewer and I conducted each interview. Interviews were recorded via a Sony TC-142 cassette recorder. The microphone was attached to each person for approximately one hour during the group interview, allowing adequate amounts of speech per person for close phonological analysis.

### **2.5.1 Casual Style**

A recognized problem in sociolinguistic studies is accessing vernacular speech. Labov (1966) acknowledges that sociolinguistic surveys encounter the “observer’s paradox”

in that informants are aware that their speech is being observed by the interviewer, thus creating problems in eliciting casual, vernacular speech. The interview is designed to minimize this effect by attempting to reduce the amount of attention that is paid to speech.

Two basic techniques have been used in language variation studies to minimize the effects of observation, and both are employed in the present study. The first is the use of group interviews, which helps remedy the problem of the question-answer type of format that may emerge in the single-interviewer-single-interviewee setting (cf. Labov 1966: 104). Labov notes (1972b) that in an interview he conducted with two interviewees, the latter tended to speak to each other more often than to the interviewer, thus providing a wider variety of speech styles than in an individual recording session. Interviewees also tend to feel more comfortable in this type of interview since they are not the only person under observation. The use of group dynamics does not eliminate the problem of the presence of the observer, but it does, as Milroy (1987a) points out, have the effect of “outnumbering” the interviewer. A group interview increases the chances of capturing casual speech because it can decrease the amount of attention paid to speech through reducing the formality of the interview. This is particularly true if the setting is made as informal as possible (e.g. the interviewees’ own homes).

A second technique is that of an inside interviewer, as used, for example, by Lanari (1994). This technique helps combat the effects of observation since the interviewer is familiar to the interviewee. For example, incongruities in status, gender and age might affect results if the interviewer is an educated, younger female and the interviewees are older males.

A male inside interviewer or someone in the same age bracket would be more successful in creating congruity in the situation. As well, another person of the same age, sex, or from the same social network being interviewed at the same time will also help by means of group dynamics, as discussed earlier.

After the informal interview, the more formal component of the interview was conducted via the reading of a word list. Formal style usage was elicited for all variables except the single grammatical variable examined in this study, since this method would not have worked in producing formal style for pronoun exchange. This word list was presented at the end of the interview so that participants would not be on their guard about their speech from the start. By presenting the reading task at the end, participants then knew that I was studying language and were more conscious of their speech which created the desired effect of capturing more formal speech.

### **2.5.2 Formal Style**

Formal style in this study was elicited by use of a word list designed so that the phonological variables under examination appear in a range of phonological environments in different words. The word list contained 111 items, with at least three occurrences of each variable in different phonological environments. The word list was designed to incorporate a variety of linguistic variables that are typically found in rural areas of Newfoundland settled from southwest England. Linguistic variables for detailed analysis were then selected based on the criteria described in Section 2.1.1. The version of the word list used during elicitation

can be found in the Appendix. Words were arranged so that the phonological variables under examination were not obvious. The words selected for the word list are in current use and allowed for different levels of literacy.

Labov (1966) used several elicitation contexts designed to range in formality. He used minimal pairs to represent the most formal style, but word lists are not much farther down on the scale of formality since words in such lists are pronounced in isolation. I chose not to include a full range of reading tasks as used by Labov and other researchers (e.g. Reid 1981; Colbourne 1982) since the tasks can be monotonous and sometimes insulting to the participants, although I did include thirteen minimal pairs as part of the formal component of the interview (see Appendix). The minimal pairs ultimately were not analyzed as a separate speech style, but were instead included in the analysis of the entire word list. The word list designed for this study is not overly long but allows an adequate amount of data to report on the effects of stylistic variation.

## **2.6 Data Analysis**

The significance of independent variables (Age and Gender) were tested separately in each speech style using the ANOVA subroutine of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 9.0. In each case, the input consisted of individual participant's mean ratio of usage, calculated by dividing the number of instances of a local variant by the total number of occurrences of that linguistic variable. In addition, a frequency index per

variant was calculated by dividing the total number of realizations of each variant examined by the total number of tokens of all variants of the variable it represents.

In the case of Age, since there were three age groups, t-tests were conducted in order to determine between exactly which age groups the significant difference in mean usage of a feature lay. Stylistic variation was analysed by comparing cross-style percentages calculated by dividing the number of instances of a local variant by the total number of tokens occurring for each linguistic variable.

Though many current sociolinguistic studies utilize VARBRUL, a computerized variable rule analysis program, this approach was judged inappropriate for the present study. VARBRUL assumes the independence of the factors analyzed. The present study examines the effects of social factors rather than linguistic ones (e.g. phonological environment), and social factors are expected to interact.

### **3. CASUAL STYLE RESULTS**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter reports the results of statistical analysis of the local variants of the nine linguistic variables investigated – six vocalic ((ɪ), (ɛ), (orC), (aj), (aw) and (uw)), two consonantal ((h) and (l)) and one grammatical (PE) – in casual speech style. Analysis revealed that in casual style, the social factors of Age and Gender influenced the selection of the local variants of nearly all the linguistic variables investigated. In fact, the only variant to prove unaffected by the social factors was the raised pronunciation of (aj).

#### **3.2 Vocalic Variables**

##### **3.2.1 The Variable (ɛ), as in 'set' and 'fence'**

**Total Number of Tokens = 1105**

In the case of (ɛ), the local raised [ɪ] variant was used by the overall Burnt Islands sample 46% of the time in casual speech style. As Table 3.1 indicates, there was a significant main effect of Age on the usage of this variant. Older speakers used the local feature more than middle age speakers who, in turn, used the feature more than younger speakers. Gender also proved significant for raised [ɪ], with males using it significantly more frequently than females.

Although both Gender and Age were significant for this feature, Gender and Age interactions were not ( $p = 0.41$ ). While gender differences were least apparent in the oldest

age group, males in all age groups used the raised [ɪ] pronunciation more than their female counterparts.

<b>Gender (p = .01), F = 13.63, df = 1/11)<sup>10</sup></b>		<b>Age (p &lt; .01, F =96.29, df = 2/11)</b>		
	<b>Overall mean per Gender:</b>	<b>Younger (13-15)</b>	<b>Middle (35-45)</b>	<b>Older (65+)</b>
Male	0.50	0.25	0.51	0.75
Female	0.38	0.08	0.36	0.70
<b>Overall mean per Age group:</b>		0.16	0.43	0.72

This variable displays a linear distribution, with less of the local feature apparent in the speech of each successive generation. Teenage females had by far the lowest mean usage of the local pronunciation while males over 65 used it the most, a pattern which was typical of the majority of features examined in this study.

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<sup>10</sup>

Since the value for the degrees of freedom (df) for Gender is always 1/11 and 2/11 for Age and the interaction between Age and Gender, the df value will not appear in the tables for the remaining linguistic features examined.

### 3.2.2 The Variable (ɪ), as in 'thin' and 'spill'

**Total Number of Tokens = 1146**

The local lowered [ɛ] variant of the (ɪ) variable was used by the overall sample only 24% of the time in casual speech. Mean usage of the lowered [ɛ] pronunciation of (ɪ) was significantly different across age groups. Although the difference in means between the middle and oldest age groups was considerable (a 0.21 difference; see Table 3.2), the only difference to prove statistically significant was between the youngest and middle age groups ( $t(6) = 0.57, p < .05$ ).<sup>11</sup>

Gender also proved significant for the usage of the local variant of (ɪ), with males using it more frequently than females overall, a pattern fairly consistent for local features throughout this study.

As Table 3.2 indicates, the Gender/Age interaction for the local variant [ɛ] was also significant. Although in the oldest and youngest groups males used more of the local feature than their female counterparts, this pattern was reversed in the middle age group, with middle age males proving to be the second most standard social group for this feature. As was often the case in this study, teenage females used the local pronunciation least frequently of all Age/Gender groups. In fact, the largest difference in the mean usage of this local feature existed in the youngest age group: teenage males used the nonstandard variant 29% more

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<sup>11</sup> This equation represents the results of a t-test. The t-value in this case is significant at the .05 alpha level, i.e. ( $p < .05$ ). The equation represents  $t(\text{degrees of freedom}) = t\text{-value, significance level}$ .

than teenage females. Unexpectedly, the mean usage of the lowered [ɛ] variant of (ɪ) for teenage males was higher than that of all other Age/Gender groups with the exception of males aged 65 and over. This finding is somewhat surprising, since in the case of most of the features examined, younger males used less of the local variant than did members of older age groups, irrespective of gender.

<b>Gender (<math>p &lt; .05</math>, <math>F = 9.10</math>)</b>		<b>Age (<math>p &lt; .05</math>, <math>F = 2.98</math>)</b>		
	<b>Gender overall mean:</b>	<b>Younger (13-15)</b>	<b>Middle (35-45)</b>	<b>Older (65+)</b>
<b>Male</b>	0.31	0.36	0.14	0.43
<b>Female</b>	0.19	0.07	0.18	0.31
<b>Overall mean per age group:</b>		0.21	0.16	0.37

The social stratification pattern associated with (ɪ) in Burnt Islands differs from that of at least one other rural Newfoundland sociolinguistic study. Lanari (1994) found that the local, lowered variant of (ɪ) was used only by “two typically standard speech groups, younger middle class and working class females, as well as among a typically NS (= non-standard) speech group, older MC males.” Lanari offers several suggestions to explain this occurrence. She suggests that “[ɛ] is not (and perhaps never was a stigmatized variant in the Burin region.” Furthermore, she suggests that “[ɛ] usage is simply not noticed given its infrequent use.” Although this infrequent usage is also apparent in the Burnt Islands sample (as lowered

variant of (ɪ) was used only 24% of the time in casual speech by participants in this survey), results suggest that it is noticed among the speech community in Burnt Islands, and somewhat stigmatized for certain social groups in Burnt Islands. This is confirmed by the relatively large difference in mean usage between the middle age group and the oldest age group, as well as by the very low rate of usage of [ɛ] on the part of teenage females.

### **3.2.3 The Variable (orC), as in 'fork' and 'horn'**

#### **Total Number of Tokens = 147**

The variable (orC) has a nonstandard unrounded [ɐr] variant which was used in casual speech 36% of the time by the overall sample. As Table 3.3 illustrates, it is quite apparent that this feature is male-associated; gender proved significant, with males using it significantly more frequently than females (0.38 versus 0.11, respectively).

The mean usage of the local [ɐr] pronunciation was also significantly different across age groups. The Age profile is clearly linear: the usage of the local variant decreases with each successive generation. Although there are obvious differences in degree of usage between younger and middle age groups (a 0.23 difference in mean) and between the middle and older age groups (a 0.16 difference), the only statistically significant difference that emerged was between the youngest and the oldest age groups ( $t(6) = -2.92, p < .05$ ). By comparison to speakers aged 65+, the teenagers of the sample have clearly adopted the

supralocal [ɔr] variant; in fact, the female teenagers totally avoided the local pronunciation in their casual speech style.

Table 3.3 shows that the interaction between Age and Gender in the usage of the nonstandard variant of (orC) approaches significance ( $p = 0.08$ ). As for (ɛ) and (ɪ) in each age group, males used the local variant of the (orC) variable more than females, though with this variable, the gender difference in usage is much more apparent in older groups than in the youngest age group, where it has almost disappeared. Older males used the unrounded local pronunciation substantially more than their female counterparts (with a surprisingly large 45% difference in mean usage), while middle age males used the feature 28% more females of the same age group. This reflects the fact that this feature is a stigmatized traditional variant that has largely been abandoned by younger speakers, while middle age and older speakers still use it to varying degrees.

Even though the overall usage of this feature is highest among the oldest age group, it is worthy of note that it is the middle age males that are the second most frequent users of [ɔr], employing it twice as often as older females. This local variant is highly salient, and denotes community membership. In this case, males in general – but particularly middle age and older males – seem to symbolize their local identity by means of this traditional variant. One middle-age male corrected another male during the casual portion of the interview on his usage of the feature: “It’s *Jarge*, not *George*. He’s *George* one day, *Jarge* the next, depending on what you’re doing and where you’re to.”

Age differences influenced males more than females with respect to the usage of this local feature. Table 3.3 shows that across age levels, female usage means are much less differentiated than those of males. More specifically, differences between the middle and oldest age group in the usage of the local feature are greater among males (25%) than among females (8%). Likewise, there is a 34% difference between the teenage male mean usage and the middle-age male mean usage, while the difference between their female counterparts was only 13%.

<b>Gender (<math>p &lt; .01</math>, <math>F = 16.70</math>)</b>		<b>Age (<math>p &lt; .01</math>, <math>F = 22.90</math>)</b>		
	<b>Gender overall mean:</b>	<b>Younger (13-15)</b>	<b>Middle (35-45)</b>	<b>Older (65+)</b>
Male	0.38	0.07	0.41	0.66
Female	0.11	0.00	0.13	0.21
<b>Overall mean per age group:</b>		0.04	0.27	0.43

It should be noted that although this traditional feature was used infrequently by younger males, it was nonetheless represented in the youngest age group, showing that it is still part of the speech repertoire of male teenagers.

### 3.2.4 The Variable (aj), as in 'five' and 'tie'

#### Total Number of Tokens = 841

Three variants of (aj) were investigated in all linguistic contexts in this survey: a central raised variant [əj], a fronted variant [ɛj], and a low variant [aj]. The raised [əj] pronunciation was clearly favoured in casual style, as it was used at a rate of 79% by the overall sample. The fronted variant [ɛj] and the low variant [aj] were used 8% and 13%, respectively. Only the fronted and raised variants were analysed with respect to social patterning in this study.

#### 3.2.4.1 Raised [əj]

Neither Age nor Gender had significant main effects on the usage of the raised [əj] variant of (aj). Further, Age and Gender did not interact significantly to influence the usage of this feature either. As this feature is not linked with the social variables investigated, the [əj] variant of (aj) is not representative of any particular group. The raised variant is the Burnt Islands norm, and is the variant selected most of the time in casual speech by the all groups in the sample (see Table 3.4).<sup>12</sup> Lanari (1994) found that in Burin, younger speakers used the raised variant considerably more than older speakers, and noted that this

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<sup>12</sup>

The high overall rate of raising suggests that all linguistic contexts were affected and there was an environmental "non-effect" – there was an absence of a "Canadian Raising" pattern. Since the raised variant occurred regularly in all contexts, and not simply before a voiceless obstruent, [əj] and [əw] did not appear to follow a "Canadian Raising" pattern.

pronunciation did not appear to be stigmatized. There was little difference among the age groups in Burnt Islands in the usage of this feature, just as there were no large usage differences between male and female speakers in each of the age groups, or between males and females in general.

<b>Gender (Non-signif.)</b>		<b>Age (Non-signif.)</b>		
	<b>Gender overall mean:</b>	<b>Younger (13-15)</b>	<b>Middle (35-45)</b>	<b>Older (65+)</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>0.83</b>	0.79	0.89	0.81
<b>Female</b>	<b>0.76</b>	0.74	0.81	0.73
<b>Overall mean per age group:</b>		<b>0.77</b>	<b>0.85</b>	<b>0.77</b>

#### **3.2.4.2 Fronted [ɛj]**

Although Gender did not have a main effect on the usage of the fronted variant of [aj], Age did. There were small, yet significant, differences among the age groups in Burnt Islands in the usage of this feature. The oldest speakers used this feature more than middle age speakers who in turn used it more than the youngest speakers – a pattern that suggests that (aj) fronting is a local feature that may have been variably present in the community for some time. Age did not significantly interact with Gender. In the youngest and the oldest age groups, males used this feature only 1-2% more than females and in the middle age group, females led the males but only by 4%. As in the case of the raised variant of (aj),

there were no large usage differences among male and female speakers in each of the age groups, and in this case, no difference between males and females in general.

**Table 3.5: The [ɛj] variant of (aj). Mean use, Gender by Age in casual speech style (Non-signif.)**

Gender (Non-signif.)		Age ( $p < .05$ , $F = 7.39$ )		
	Gender overall mean:	Younger (13-15)	Middle (35-45)	Older (65+)
Male	0.08	0.04	0.06	0.13
Female	0.08	0.03	0.10	0.11
Overall mean per age group:		0.04	0.08	0.12

With such infrequent overall usage of a feature, it is difficult to deduce definite social group preferences. Yet from the data analysed, it is fair to say that usage of fronted (aj) is declining with each successive generation, and that gender does not play a role in this gradual loss.

### 3.2.5 The variable (aw), as in 'loud' and 'house'

**Total Number of Tokens = 482**

Three variants of (aw) were examined in all linguistic environments. The favoured casual style variant was the fronted [ɛw], which was used 53% of the time by the overall sample. The raised variant [əw] had a 37% overall usage, while the low variant [aw] was used only 10% of the time. Age did not prove significant for any of the three variants, while

Gender was significant for both the fronted [ɛw] and the raised [əw] variants. Consequently, only these two variants were analysed with respect to social patterning in this study.

### 3.2.5.1 Fronted [ɛw]

The fronted variant of (aw) was clearly the female preference, and females used it significantly more frequently than males – 20% more overall, as Table 3.6 illustrates. The tendency to use the fronted pronunciation was not significantly affected by Age. The age distribution of the usage of this feature was not linear; each generation used the feature at about the same rate, with the middle age group displaying the lowest mean usage and the oldest age group the highest. Furthermore, Gender did not interact significantly with Age; in each of the three age groups examined, females used the fronted variant more than males.

<b>Gender (p = .001, F = 37.76)</b>		<b>Age (Non-signif.)</b>		
	<b>Gender overall mean:</b>	<b>Younger (13-15)</b>	<b>Middle (35-45)</b>	<b>Older (65+)</b>
Male	0.43	0.46	0.39	0.45
Female	0.63	0.61	0.60	0.68
<b>Overall mean per age group:</b>		0.54	0.50	0.57

It should be noted that (aw)-fronting has been noted as a feature of innovative urban Canadian English, where it occurs mostly among younger speakers and females (e.g. Hung, Davison and Chambers 1993). Lanari (1994) found that in her sample of the Burin region, a fronted variant of (aw) was used exclusively by younger speakers (35-45). She suggests (1994: 50) that the younger generation in Burin “like their counterparts in other Canadian communities are introducing an innovative (aw) variant.” In Burnt Islands, the fact that the feature exists to such a degree in the oldest generation suggests that it represents a traditional fronted variant of (aw) inherited from southwest England. However, this variant does not pattern like many other traditional features in the community in that its usage is not declining with age, and in that it is more associated with females than with males. What may be happening is that the usage of this inherited variant has not declined among successive generations due to reinforcement by the innovative, somewhat “trendy,” fronted (aw) variant in other Canadian speech communities. It is worthy of note that although gender differences were apparent in all generations, the largest gap existed in the older, then middle-age, groups. Thus the gender gap appears to be closing somewhat among younger speakers for fronted (aw).

#### **3.2.5.2 Raised [əw]**

Although this feature did not prove as prevalent as the fronted variant of (aw), it was used fairly frequently overall. As in the case of the fronted pronunciation, there was a significant main effect for Gender on the usage of raised [əw]. However, in this case, males

used the feature the most, almost twice as often as females (see Table 3.7). Age did not affect the usage of the raised variant: younger speakers used it only 1% more than older speakers, while middle-age speakers used [əw] just over 10% more than each of the other age groups. Thus the usage of [əw] did not show a pattern of decline or increase through successive generations.

Analysis also revealed that Gender did not interact significantly with Age. In each of the three age groups examined, males used the feature more than females, with the gender difference being most pronounced in the two older age groups.

<b>Gender (p &lt;.001, F = 28.00)</b>		<b>Age (Non-signif.)</b>		
	<b>Gender overall mean:</b>	<b>Younger (13-15)</b>	<b>Middle (35-45)</b>	<b>Older (65+)</b>
Male	0.49	0.39	0.60	0.47
Female	0.25	0.28	0.29	0.19
<b>Overall mean per age group:</b>		0.34	0.45	0.33

Although raised [əw] is associated with males, it does not appear to be stigmatized given the fact that females, and particularly younger females, use it fairly frequently. Nonetheless, the variant clearly favoured by Burnt Islands females is the fronted [ɛw]-like pronunciation.

### 3.2.6 The Variable (uw), as in 'smooth' and 'pool'

Total Number of Tokens = 1076

Results indicate that the local fronted [yɥ] variant is the favoured variant in Burnt Islands, since it was used by the overall sample in informal speech style 67% of the time. Though Age did not prove significant with respect to usage of this feature, Gender was highly significant (see Table 3.8). This feature patterned much like the fronted variant of (aw), in which the local fronted variant was associated with females. Overall, females used the local [yɥ] feature 16% more than males. There was no significant interaction between Gender and Age: the greater association of fronted (uw) with female speakers was true of all age levels, with the gender differences being most pronounced in the youngest and oldest age groups.

Gender (p = .001, F = 31.90)		Age (Non-signif.)		
	Gender overall mean:	Younger (13-15)	Middle (35-45)	Older (65+)
Male	0.58	0.57	0.65	0.52
Female	0.74	0.79	0.72	0.71
Overall mean per age group:		0.68	0.69	0.62

Like the fronted [ɛɥ] variant of (aw), the apparent lack of stigmatization of this local feature might possibly be related to the fact that (uw)-fronting happens to coincide with

recent fronting innovations in the vowel system of mainland Canadian English, innovations associated with younger and upwardly mobile speech (e.g. Chambers and Hardwick 1986, Clarke, Elms and Youssef 1995).

### **3.2.7 The Vocalic Variables: A Summary**

This study indicates that in casual speech style, social factors affected the production of the vocalic variants surveyed. The social factor that most influenced the production of local features was Gender. As Table 3.9 illustrates, Gender significantly influenced six of the eight vocalic variants. Age proved influential on the production of four variants of the vocalic variables investigated. Age and Gender interacted significantly for only one of the features, namely the lowered variant of (ɪ).

In summary, the fronted variants of both (uw) and (aw) patterned similarly, in that both were associated significantly more with females than the males of the sample. All other local vowel variants displaying significant gender differences were associated with men, namely [ɞr], raised (ɛ), lowered (ɪ), and raised (aw).

<b>Table 3.9: Summary of the significance of Gender and Age on the production of the variants of the vocalic variables</b>			
<b>Vocalic Variants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender/Age</b>
[ɪ] of (ɛ)	‡ <sup>13</sup>	‡	
[ɛ] of (ɪ)	†	†	†
[ɐɪ] of (oRC)	‡	‡	
[əj] of (aj)			
[ɛj] of (aj)		†	
[ɛw] of (aw)	‡		
[əw] of (aw)	†		
[yɥ] of (uw)	‡‡		
<b>Total</b>	37108	37106	37103

The local variants of (oRC), (ɛ), and the fronted variant of (aj) all displayed a linear age distribution, with decreasing usage of the local variant apparent in each successive generation. The lowered variant of (ɪ) was also influenced by age, though it did not display a linear distribution: its usage was greatest in the oldest age group, followed by teenagers and then middle age speakers. This pattern is due however to an Age/Gender interaction, with the higher teenage mean usage resulting from the unexpectedly higher rate on the part of teenage males. Of all the vowel features examined, the raised [əj] variant of (aj) was the only one uninfluenced by social factors; this variant proved the norm among both genders

<sup>13</sup>

Legend for the symbols appearing in Tables 3.9 and 3.13: † = Significant at the .05 level, ‡ = Significant at the .01 level, ‡‡ = Significant at the .001 level

and across all age groups, and was not associated with any particular segment of the community.

### **3.3 Consonantal Variables**

#### **3.3.1 The Variable (l), as in 'fool' and 'ball'**

**Total Number of Tokens = 1307**

In postvocalic position, [l] may become vocalized; this local variant occurred in the sample 56% of the time in casual speech style. Gender proved to be a significant social factor influencing the usage of vocoid (l), with males using the local feature more than females (see Table 3.10).

Mean usage of the local variant showed a significant difference across age groups. T-test analyses revealed that only the differences in mean usage between the youngest age group and the two other age groups approached significance; the means between middle and oldest age groups were quite close, separated by only 3%. The difference between the usage of the local feature among youngest and middle age groups approaches significance ( $t(6) = 2.18, p = .06$ ), as well as between the youngest and oldest age groups ( $t(6) = -2.51, p = .05$ ).

There were no significant interactions of Age and Gender for the usage of this local variant. In each age group examined, males used the local feature more than females. However, as with several other variables in this study, the largest difference in gender usage existed in the youngest age group, a point which will be taken up in chapter 5. In fact, younger females used the local feature much less than any other social group examined. The

low mean usage of the local variant by younger females accounts for the significant main effects of Age and Gender since it lowered the overall mean usage for the youngest age group as well as for females.

<b>Gender (<math>p &lt; .05</math>, <math>F = 10.48</math>)</b>		<b>Age (<math>p &lt; .01</math>, <math>F = 12.54</math>)</b>		
	<b>Gender overall mean:</b>	<b>Younger (13-15)</b>	<b>Middle (35-45)</b>	<b>Older (65+)</b>
Male	0.62	0.55	0.62	0.69
Female	0.49	0.29	0.60	0.59
<b>Overall mean per age group:</b>		0.42	0.61	0.64

The findings for this feature suggest that the vocoid variant of (l) is the casual speech norm in Burnt Islands, although use of vocoid (l) appears to be declining from one generation to the next. Usage of this local feature appears to be more stigmatized among females than males, as witnessed by the behaviour of the female teenagers of the sample.

### 3.3.2 The Variable (h), as in 'help' and 'happy'

#### Total Number of Tokens = 1306

At syllable-initial position, /h/ may not be articulated; in this sample, non-pronunciation of /h/<sup>14</sup> proved the overwhelming casual style norm, occurring at an overall rate of 85%. As Table 3.11 shows, Gender was significant in the deletion of /h/: overall males 'dropped' /h/ 15% more than females. However, the low mean usage of the local variant by teenage females once again accounts for the significant main effect of Gender, since it lowers the overall female mean usage.

The mean usage of the deleted variant across age groups also revealed a significant Age effect. As Table 3.11 demonstrates, the patterning is linear, with rates of /h/ deletion correlating closely with age level. T-tests revealed, however, that the significant differences between the age groups existed only between teenagers and middle-age speakers, as well as between the teenagers and the oldest speakers. T-values for teenagers versus middle-age speakers were  $t(6) = -1.46, p < .001$ , and for teenagers versus 65+ speakers well as between the youngest and oldest speakers,  $t(6) = -1.98, p < .001$ . Again, the results from female usage in the teenage group lowered the overall teenage mean usage rate, and thus created significant differences between this and the other two age groups. Thus for teenage Burnt

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<sup>14</sup>

The non-pronunciation of /h/ will be referred to as /h/ "deletion." A more accurate term, however, might be /h/ "absence," since the extremely high rates of non-articulation of /h/ suggest that this is not an acquired underlying phoneme for most participants in this study.

Islands females, /h/ deletion is clearly avoided, and appears to constitute a stigmatized feature, even in casual style.

<b>Table 3.11: Mean use of /h/ deletion, Gender by Age in casual speech style</b> ( $p < .001$ , $F = 74.33$ )				
<b>Gender (<math>p &lt; .001</math>, <math>F = 88.00</math>)</b>		<b>Age (<math>p &lt; .001</math>, <math>F = 84.56</math>)</b>		
	<b>Gender overall mean:</b>	<b>Younger (13-15)</b>	<b>Middle (35-45)</b>	<b>Older (65+)</b>
<b>Male</b>	0.93	0.92	0.89	0.97
<b>Female</b>	0.78	0.51	0.90	0.94
<b>Overall mean per age group:</b>		0.72	0.90	0.96

### 3.3.3 The Consonantal Variables: A Summary

For the consonantal variables investigated, this study indicates that in casual speech style, social factors had a considerable effect on the production of local variants. Both Age and Gender influenced the usage of vocoid (l) and /h/ deletion; as well, Age interacted significantly with Gender in the case of /h/ deletion. For both variables, teenage females stood out from the remaining the social groups by having the lowest mean usage of the local pronunciations.

The usage of vocalized (l) appears to be declining with age, though all groups except the teenage females displayed usage rates of between 44% and 69% in casual style. As to /h/ deletion, all groups displayed a very high usage rate apart from teenage females. This

finding suggests that these widely accepted local pronunciations are being eliminated from the speech repertoire of the youngest female group. If we contrast this group's casual style usage to that of the group consistently displaying the highest rate of local features – older males – it is apparent that teenage females used vocoid (l) at a rate less than half that of the older males, and likewise, deleted initial /h/ at only approximately half the rate displayed by males aged 65 and over.

#### **3.4 Grammatical Variable: The Variable of Pronoun Exchange (PE)**

##### **Total Number of Tokens = 344**

In stressed object position, a subject pronoun may be used in Burnt Islands (eg. 'I saw he,' (not she); 'Give it to I'). In casual speech, the local variant was used by the overall sample 19% of the time. Within the sample, Gender produced a significant main effect on the usage of this feature. As Table 3.12 demonstrates, males used subject pronouns as stressed objects more than females in the overall sample.

Age did not produce a significant main effect with respect to the usage of the local variant of (PE), although there were obvious differences in mean usage of this feature between the different age levels sampled. Somewhat unexpectedly, the middle age group mean exceeded that of the older age group. There was, however, a significant Age/Gender interaction for the usage of the local variant of (PE). Although there was a 0.08 difference in mean usage between males and females in the oldest group, the largest gender differences

occurred in the younger and middle age groups (0.19 and 0.16, respectively). Middle age females, a typically more standard group, used the feature as often as older males and more than older females. While teenage females did not use this feature at all, teenage males used it with virtually the same frequency as males in the oldest age group.

**Table 3.12: The nonstandard variant of (PE). Mean use, Gender by Age in casual speech style ( $p < .05$ ,  $F = 6.40$ ).**

<b>Gender (<math>p &lt; .01</math>, <math>F = 22.83</math>)</b>		<b>Age (Non-signif.)</b>		
	<b>Gender overall mean:</b>	<b>Younger (13-15)</b>	<b>Middle (35-45)</b>	<b>Older (65+)</b>
Male	0.25	0.19	0.36	0.20
Female	0.11	0.00	0.20	0.12
<b>Overall mean per age group:</b>		0.10	0.28	0.16

In conclusion, it is worthy of note that this feature was used by all social groups but one, predictably younger females. The usage rates among other groups are surprising, since the feature is highly salient and easier to monitor than phonological features. Considering this, the participants used this feature fairly frequently in this survey.

### 3.5 Discussion

Trends indicate that Gender and then Age influenced the production of local features of the linguistic variables investigated. Gender and Age also interacted significantly to affect

the selection of three variants – the lowered [ɛ] variant of (ɪ), /h/ deletion and Pronoun Exchange. Table 3.13 (which adds to the overview of Table 3.9) summarizes the significance of the social factors on all variants of the linguistic variables under investigation.

Two broad casual style patterns emerged from this study. In the first, affecting the majority of features, the local variant was most prevalent among the older groups, and was associated more with males than females. In the second, the local variant was more associated with females than males, and displayed no obvious age stratification. Only three local realizations fell outside these two patterns, and all involved the diphthongs (aj) and (aw). The fronted [ɛj] pronunciation of (aj) showed a declining use with age, but no gender stratification. The raised variants of both variables on the contrary, showed more stable age stratification (though, interestingly, somewhat greater use by the middle age group), and a greater association with males than females (significantly so in the case of raised [əw]).

Linguistic Variables	Gender	Age	Age/Gender
[ɪ] of (ɛ)	‡	‡	
[ɛ] of (ɪ)	†	†	†
[ɐr] of (orC)	‡	‡	
[əj] of (aj)			
[ɛj] of (aj)		†	
[ɛw] of (aw)	‡		
[əw] of (aw)	†		
[yʷ] of (uw)	‡‡		
Vocalized (l)	†	‡	
h-deletion	‡‡	‡‡	‡‡
PE	‡		†
<b>Total</b>	37144	37052	36960

The first general stratification pattern mentioned above was observed for three of the vocalic variables investigated – (ɛ)-raising, (ɪ)-lowering and the [ɐr] variant of (orC) – as well as for both consonantal variables, and the grammatical variable of Pronoun Exchange. The age profile for most of these variables was linear; in each successive generation, the usage of the local variant declined. Yet age stratification was not linear for the vocoid (l) and Pronoun Exchange variables, since the highest usage of the local feature occurred in the middle age group. With respect to gender, typically males in all three age groups used more

of the local variant than did their female counterparts. This gender differentiation was particularly obvious for most of this group of features among teenage speakers, in that teenage females tended to avoid local variants to a considerably greater degree than males. In the case of (ɛ)-raising, (ɹ)-lowering, vocoid (l), /h/ deletion and Pronoun Exchange, teenage females displayed casual style mean usage rates of from 16% to 41% below those of teenage males. In fact for Pronoun Exchange, as well as for the [ɚr] variant of (orC), teenage females did not use the local feature at all in their casual speech style.

The second general pattern to emerge in this investigation was quite different. In a minority of cases, namely the fronting of (aw) and (uw), local variants were more associated with females than males. For both fronted variants, there were no substantial age differences; in fact, there was a slight increase among teenage females of the fronted pronunciation of (uw).

## **4. STYLISTIC VARIATION**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In the previous chapter, we explored the variation which exists between different social groups in Burnt Islands with respect to the usage of various linguistic features in casual speech style. In this chapter, we are interested in the variation which exists in the speech repertoire of the age and gender groups examined from casual to formal style.

Following Labov's dictum that "style can be ranged along a single dimension, measured by the amount of attention paid to speech" (Labov 1972a: 208), speech style was investigated in the present study by manipulating the amount of attention paid to speech. Thus, formal style was elicited via the reading of a list of isolated words, since attention on pronunciation tends to be more focussed when reading a single word than when articulating a larger stretch of speech. The mean percentage of usage of each particular variant in word list style was recorded per social group and was then compared to the mean usage rate in casual style to determine the degree of shifting. Although problems have been associated with this approach to style (e.g. Milroy 1987a), it was decided that given the constraints of the study it was reasonable to use this method to investigate stylistic variation among the Burnt Islands speakers of the sample, as long as its limitations were taken into consideration.

Even though a binary approach to style was adopted by the present study, style should not be viewed as binary, i.e. either formal or informal, but instead as existing on a continuum ranging from most formal to the vernacular speech style. What was captured in these interviews no doubt lies somewhere between these two poles. At one end of the spectrum

of formality stands the word list reading style, with its degree of self-monitoring. At the other stands the relatively unmonitored casual speech elicited via the measures outlined in chapter 2; this represents fairly natural, vernacular speech. However, no matter what measures are taken or techniques are employed, an interview is never a natural setting to elicit vernacular speech. Thus what is labelled as casual speech style in this study is actually a "as relaxed as possible" style of pronunciation used by participants in a tape-recorded interview. Obviously, the most casual speech style occurs outside the context of an interview.

#### **4.2 Stylistic Variation in the Overall Sample**

Stratification patterns indicate that speakers in the overall sample exhibited style-shifting for most of the features examined in this survey. Table 4.1 illustrates the overall stylistic stratification patterns for each of the variables. For most, usage of the local variant decreased from casual to formal style. Yet the usage of several of the local variants increased in formal style, suggesting that these pronunciations may be perceived as supralocal, or 'standard-like,' by residents of Burnt Islands.

All but one of the linguistic features examined displayed some stylistic variation, though each feature varied with respect to the degree of shifting from casual to formal style. Overall, local pronunciations of (ɛ), (orC), (aj), its fronted variant [ɛj], and (l) were those which displayed the greatest degree of style shifting, and which tended to be avoided the most in formal speech style. The raised [əw] variant of (aw), fronted [yɹw] and /h/-deletion

were avoided to a lesser degree in formal style. On the contrary, the fronted variant of (aw) and the raised variant of (aj) increased in usage in formal style. The lowered variant of (ɪ) proved a prototypical stylistic indicator in the Labovian sense, in that it was the only feature that exhibited no difference whatsoever in rate of usage between casual and formal style.

Linguistic Variable	Variant	Casual Style	Formal Style	Range
(ɛ)	[ɪ]	0.44	0.06	0.38
(ɪ)	[ɛ]	0.25	0.25	0.00
(orC)	[ɐr]	0.25	0.00	0.25
(aj)	[əj]	0.50	0.75	0.25
	[ɛj]	0.38	0.09	0.29
(aw)	[ɛw]	0.53	0.66	0.13
	[əw]	0.37	0.27	0.10
(uw)	[yʷ]	0.63	0.45	0.18
(l)	vocoid (l)	0.56	0.29	0.27
(h)	deleted (h)	0.85	0.78	0.07
(PE)	pronoun exchange	0.18	N/A	—

### 4.3 Stylistic Variation – Group Patterns

In the previous section, stylistic variation was examined across the overall sample. In the following section, stylistic variation will be examined with respect to specific social groups to determine whether particular social groups style shifted more than others, as well as what this variation may indicate about the Burnt Islands speech community.

#### 4.3.1 The Variable (ɛ), as in 'set' and 'fence'

##### Number of Tokens = 14 per speaker

As Table 4.2<sup>15</sup> shows, all social groups except younger females style shifted considerably on this feature, with less usage of the local pronunciation (raised [ɪ]) in formal style. Even though older females and middle-age females had the highest formal style usage rate of the local variant, older males had the highest percentage of shifting with respect to their usage of [ɪ] from casual to formal register. In fact, older speakers style shifted the most, displaying an overall decrease of 64% in formal style. Teenagers shifted the least, 16% overall: their mean usage was low in casual style, and they avoided the local pronunciation completely in formal style.

Unlike in casual style, Gender did not prove significant with respect to the usage of the raised variant of (ɛ) in formal style: however, women in the two older age groups used

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<sup>15</sup>

Casual style results are repeated in Tables 4.2 to 4.11 to facilitate cross-style comparison per group. The information on statistical significance in these tables, however (relating to the main effects of both Gender and Age, as well as the Gender and Age interaction), represents formal style exclusively.

the raised local pronunciation somewhat more than their male counterparts. Age, however, once again had a significant main effect on the usage of this feature. The raised [ɪ] pronunciation was most common in formal style among the two older groups of speakers, while teenagers invariably used the supralocal [ɛ] variant.

The lack of significant Gender/Age interactions confirms the general tendency among all sample groups toward avoidance of the local variant in a more formal context.

Table 4.2: The [ɪ] variant of (ɛ). Mean use, Gender by Age in casual and formal speech styles								
Gender by Age in formal style (Non-signif.)								
GENDER (Non-signif.)			AGE ( $p < .05$ , $F = 7.00$ , $df = 2/11$ )					
	Overall Gender Per Style		YOUNGER 13-15		MIDDLE 35-45		OLDER 65+	
	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal
Male	0.5	0.04	0.25	0.00	0.51	0.07	0.75	0.04
Female	0.38	0.07	0.08	0.00	0.36	0.11	0.70	0.11
	Overall Age Per Style		0.16	0.00	0.43	0.09	0.72	0.08

#### 4.3.2 The Variable (ɪ), as in 'thin' and 'spill'

Number of Tokens = 17 per speaker

This variable displayed a quite different stylistic stratification pattern than did (ɛ). Table 4.3 indicates that, except for the teenage group, all speakers used the local lowered variant more in formal style than in casual style. However, for at least one group, older

males, style shifting on this variable was minimal. Younger males, who used the local feature at the second highest casual style rate among the social groups (36%), exhibited the greatest style shift to the second lowest rate of usage (12%) in formal style. Teenage females had a low mean usage (7%) of this feature in casual style, and in formal style they totally avoided the local pronunciation.

Though it had proven significant in casual style, Gender was not a significant factor in the usage of the lowered variant of (ɪ) in formal style; males used it just slightly more than females (4%) overall. Age, however, did prove once again to be significant. In formal style, older speakers used the local pronunciation (44%) more than middle-age speakers (27%) who, in turn, used the lowered variant more than younger speakers (6%). There were no significant Age/Gender interactions: in the two older age groups, males and females used the local pronunciation at exactly the same rate while in the youngest age group, males used it only 12% more than their female counterparts.

Their stylistic behaviour suggests that older and even middle-age speakers did not perceive the lowered variant as stigmatized, since they utilized it more in their formal style than their casual style. The teenagers' tendency to reduce their use of lowered [ɛ] in formal style, however, suggests a greater awareness of supralocal norms on the part of this age group. This differential behaviour by teenage speakers clarifies the flat overall stylistic profile observed in section 4.2 above.

<b>Table 4.3: The [ɛ] variant of (ɪ). Mean use, Gender by Age in casual and formal speech styles</b>								
<b>Gender by Age in formal style (Non-signif.)</b>								
<b>GENDER (Non-signif.)</b>			<b>AGE (p &lt; 0.001, F = 142.33)</b>					
<b>Overall Gender Per Style</b>			<b>YOUNGER 13-15</b>		<b>MIDDLE 35-45</b>		<b>OLDER 65+</b>	
	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal
Male	0.31	0.28	0.36	0.12	0.14	0.27	0.43	0.44
Female	0.19	0.24	0.07	0.00	0.18	0.27	0.31	0.44
	<b>Overall Age Per Style</b>		0.21	0.06	0.16	0.27	0.37	0.44

#### 4.3.3 The Variable (orC), as in 'fork' and 'horn'

**Number of Tokens = 4 per speaker**

Table 4.4 shows that the local [ɛr] pronunciation of (orC) is highly stigmatized among Burnt Islands speakers in formal style. All social groups avoided this local variant entirely in their formal repertoire. Older males used the feature the most in casual style; thus this the group exhibited the greatest amount (66%) of style shifting. They were followed by middle-age males, with a rate of 41%. Younger females, who also totally avoided this feature in casual style, did not use it in formal style either and thus exhibited no style shifting whatsoever.

Since there was no variation in usage among the social groups in formal style, neither of the social factors of Age or Gender proved significant, whether individually or in interaction.

**Table 4.4: The [ɔr] variant of (orC). Mean use, Gender by Age in casual and formal speech styles**

Gender by Age in formal style (Non-signif.)								
GENDER (Non-signif.)			AGE (Non-signif.)					
	Overall Gender Per Style		YOUNGER 13-15		MIDDLE 35-45		OLDER 65+	
	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal
Male	0.38	0.00	0.07	0.00	0.41	0.00	0.66	0.00
Female	0.11	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.13	0.00	0.21	0.00
	Overall Age Per Style		0.04	0.00	0.27	0.00	0.43	0.00

#### 4.3.4 The Variable (aj), as in 'five' and 'tie'

Number of Tokens = 12 per speaker

##### 4.3.4.1 Raised [əj]

As Table 4.5 illustrates, the raised variant of (aj) was the clear preference for all groups in both casual and formal style. Females, apart from the teenage girls, tended to use less of the raised variant in their formal style. However, the direction of shift varied among Age and Gender groups: the teenage group increased their usage of [əj] in formal style (females by only 1%), while older speakers generally decreased their usage of this variant. Yet the middle-age group shift in usage of the raised variant of (aj) depended on gender. Middle-age females, who displayed the greatest style-shift (18%), decreased their usage of raised (aj) in formal style, while middle-age males, on the contrary, increased their usage by 10%, making raised [əj] their virtually categorical formal style pronunciation.

In casual style, while males used more of the raised pronunciation overall, Gender did not prove significant (see section 3.2.4 above). It was however a significant social factor in formal style, with males using 22% of the raised variant than females, overall. Age once again did not prove significant, in spite of the greater mean usage of raised [əj] by the two younger age groups. There were also no significant formal style Age/Gender interactions – in all age groups, males used raised (əj) more than females.

<b>Table 4.5: The [əj] variant of (aj). Mean use, Gender by Age in casual and formal speech styles</b>								
<b>Gender by Age in formal style (Non-signif.)</b>								
<b>GENDER (p &lt; 0.05, F = 6.88)</b>			<b>AGE (Non-signif.)</b>					
	<b>Overall Gender Per Style</b>		<b>YOUNGER 13-15</b>		<b>MIDDLE 35-45</b>		<b>OLDER 65+</b>	
	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal
Male	0.83	0.87	0.79	0.88	0.89	0.99	0.81	0.74
Female	0.76	0.65	0.74	0.75	0.81	0.63	0.73	0.58
	<b>Overall Age Per Style</b>		0.77	0.82	0.85	0.81	0.77	0.66

#### 4.3.4.2 Fronted [ej]

As Table 4.6 shows, the fronted variant of (aj) was considerably less common than the raised variant of (aj) in both casual and formal style. However, there was an obvious discrepancy between older speakers and the two younger groups. Members of the sample

aged 65 and over increased their usage of the local fronted pronunciation in formal style, while teenage speakers completely avoided the variant, thereby decreasing their already minimal casual style usage of it. The middle-age group exhibited minimal shifting, the direction of which depended upon gender.

None of the social factors proved significant in the usage of the fronted variant in formal style. This pattern confirms the observations made in the previous chapter on this variant: there appear to be no definite social preferences for this variant, given its infrequent usage rate. However, the fact that older speakers increased their usage in formal style while the two other age groups decreased their selection of this feature suggests that the use of the fronted variant of (aj) is declining with each successive generation. As noted, it has entirely disappeared from the formal register of the teenagers sampled. Furthermore, given the small differences between males and females in usage, gender is not a significant factor in this decline.

**Table 4.6: The [ɛj] variant of (aj). Mean use, Gender by Age in casual and formal speech styles**

**Gender by Age in formal style (Non-signif.)**

GENDER (Non-signif.)			AGE (Non-signif.)					
	Overall Gender Per Style		YOUNGER 13-15		MIDDLE 35-45		OLDER 65+	
	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal
Male	0.08	0.13	0.04	0.00	0.06	0.04	0.13	0.21
Female	0.08	0.17	0.03	0.00	0.10	0.13	0.11	0.21
	Overall Age Per Style		0.04	0.00	0.08	0.09	0.12	0.21

#### 4.3.5 The Variable (aw), as in 'house' and 'loud'

Number of Tokens = 10 per speaker

##### 4.3.5.1 Fronted [ɛw]

In casual style, the fronted variant was the most common variant of (aw) overall. In formal style (see Table 4.7), most social groups increased their usage of this pronunciation; though middle-age females exhibited a constant usage rate (60%) in both styles, only older males displayed a formal style drop (10%) in rate of usage. Overall, older speakers shifted the least on this variant, while teenagers shifted the most. The direction of shift varied according to age group: the oldest age group displayed virtually the same or a decreased rate of usage of the fronted variant of (aw) in formal style, while the two youngest groups increased their usage of this feature. Style-shifting was most apparent among middle-age

males, who used 31% more of the fronted variant in formal than in casual style; they were followed by teenage males and teenage females, at rates of 29% and 24%, respectively.

Just as for casual style, there was a significant main effect for Gender: females used the fronted variant significantly more than males in the word list style. There was also a main effect of Age on the usage of the fronted variant of (aw), an effect which did not emerge in casual style. Teenagers used the fronted variant at an overall rate of 15% more than the middle-age group, who in turn, used it more than speakers over 65 (12%).

Gender patterns were not consistent across age groups, however, as there were also significant Age/Gender interactions. In the youngest and oldest age groups, females used the fronted variant of (aw) more than males; yet in the middle age group, the reverse was true (unlike the casual style observations for this group). In general, however, formal style results confirm that (aw) fronting, though in all likelihood an inherited traditional feature, is not undergoing stigmatization and loss in the community, as are a number of features examined in this study. For some groups, this may reflect the perception (whether fully conscious or not) of the occurrence of this pronunciation in innovative urban Canadian English (see 3.2.5 above).

Table 4.7: The [əw] variant of (aw). Mean use, Gender by Age in casual and formal speech styles								
Gender by Age in formal style ( $p < .05$ , $F = 8.71$ )								
GENDER ( $p < .05$ , $F = 7.00$ )			AGE ( $p < .01$ , $F = 13.00$ )					
	Overall Gender Per Style		YOUNGER 13-15		MIDDLE 35-45		OLDER 65+	
	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal
Male	0.43	0.60	0.46	0.75	0.39	0.70	0.45	0.35
Female	0.63	0.72	0.61	0.85	0.60	0.60	0.68	0.70
	Overall Age Per Style		0.54	0.80	0.50	0.65	0.57	0.53

#### 4.3.5.2 Raised [əw]

All social groups style shifted with respect to (aw) raising, although the shift for some was minimal. Overall, speakers aged 65 and over increased just slightly their usage of the raised variant in formal style, while a decrease was apparent among the two younger age groups (see Table 4.8). Middle-age males, whose usage of the raised variant was so high in casual style, displayed the greatest style shift, with a drop of 30% in formal style. Teenagers also substantially decreased their usage of the raised variant; middle-age females, however, stayed virtually constant with respect to usage rate across style. Even though the use of this feature decreased for most speakers in formal style, the raised variant does not appear to be stigmatized; rather, the decrease in usage seems to result from the preference for the fronted variant by most social groups in formal style.

Gender was significant in the usage of the raised [əw] variant in formal style, with greater overall use by males rather than females, just as in casual style. Age was also a significant factor with respect to the raised variant of (aw). Unlike in casual style, however, in formal style raised [əw] declined proportionally with age level. There were no significant Age/Gender interactions; in all age groups, males raised more than females.

<b>Table 4.8: The [əw] variant of (aw). Mean use, Gender by Age in casual and formal speech styles</b>								
<b>Gender by Age in formal style (Non-signif.)</b>								
<b>GENDER (p &lt; .01, F = 16.67)</b>			<b>AGE (p &lt; .05, F = 6.17)</b>					
	<b>Overall Gender Per Style</b>		<b>YOUNGER 13-15</b>		<b>MIDDLE 35-45</b>		<b>OLDER 65+</b>	
	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal
Male	0.49	0.35	0.39	0.25	0.60	0.30	0.47	0.50
Female	0.25	0.18	0.28	0.10	0.29	0.25	0.19	0.20
	<b>Overall Age Per Style</b>		0.34	0.18	0.45	0.28	0.33	0.35

#### **4.3.6 The Variable (uw), as in 'smooth' and 'pool'**

##### **Number of Tokens = 7 per speaker**

In casual style, the fronted variant was the most common variant overall, but in formal style, the feature was less favoured, with all social groups decreasing its usage. As Table 4.9 shows, older males – who had by far the lowest usage of this variant in formal style – shifted the most on this feature. Style shifting was also highly evident for middle-age males and for females aged 65 and over, suggesting that the feature was more stigmatized for these than for other groups. Overall, as well as within each age group, females style shifted less than males for this feature. Likewise, style shifting was less noticeable among the two younger age groups. These stylistic stratification patterns suggest a greater association of (uw) fronting in the community with female and younger speakers.

The formal style social stratification patterns bear out the last observation to some degree. Gender proved to be significant in the usage of (uw) fronting, with females using this feature more than males in formal style, just as they did in casual style. Age, however, was not a significant factor in either style, even though the tendency towards greater usage on the part of the younger age groups was more apparent in formal than casual style. There were also no significant Age/Gender interactions – females in all age groups used the local feature of (uw) fronting more than their male counterparts.

In section 3.2.6 above, it was speculated that the apparent lack of stigmatization of fronted (uw) in Burnt Islands might be related to the fact that it coincided with the fronted variant apparent in innovative mainland Canadian speech. The general decrease in usage of

this variant in formal style, however, suggests that this hypothesis may not be correct. The evidence points simply to the conclusion that [yɥw] is a female-linked characteristic of the Burnt Islands speech community that is very slowly spreading over successive generations.

**Table 4.9: The [yɥw] variant of (uw). Mean use, Gender by Age in casual and formal speech styles**  
**Gender by Age in formal style (Non-signif.)**

GENDER ( $p < .01$ , $F = 16.25$ )			AGE (Non-signif.)					
	Overall Gender Per Style		YOUNGER 13-15		MIDDLE 35-45		OLDER 65+	
	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal
Male	0.58	0.29	0.57	0.43	0.65	0.36	0.52	0.07
Female	0.74	0.62	0.79	0.71	0.72	0.64	0.71	0.50
	Overall Age Per Style		0.68	0.57	0.69	0.50	0.62	0.29

#### 4.3.7 The Variable (l), as in 'fool' and 'ball'

##### Number of Tokens = 15 per speaker

As Table 4.10 demonstrates, all social groups style shifted considerably on this feature, and in the same direction of decreased usage of the vocoid variant in formal style. Speakers over 65 shifted the most, followed by the middle-age group, while the youngest speakers style shifted the least. Females tended to decrease their use of this feature slightly more than males overall. Older females, who displayed a surprisingly low mean usage in

formal style, style shifted the most, while teenage males exhibited the smallest degree of style shifting.

In formal style, Age was once again a significant factor in the usage of vocoid (l) in formal style. Middle-age speakers used vocoid (l) the most in this style, followed by older speakers and then teenagers. Gender also had a significant effect on the usage of vocoid (l); males used it more than females. There were also significant formal style Age/Gender interactions; in the oldest and youngest age groups, males used the vocoid more than females, with the opposite pattern in the middle age group. In fact, teenage females did not use the local feature at all in formal style. Their avoidance of vocoid (l) created separate significant effects of Age and Gender, since it lowered both the mean of the youngest age group and the overall female mean usage of this feature.

It is worthy of note that middle-age females and teenage males had the same mean usage of vocoid (l) in formal style as older males, who had the highest usage in casual style.

Table 4.10: The vocoid variant of /l/. Mean use, Gender by Age in casual and formal speech styles								
Gender by Age in formal style ( $p < .001$ , $F = 38.63$ )								
GENDER ( $p < .001$ , $F = 67.75$ )			AGE ( $p < 0.01$ , $F = 20.17$ )					
	Overall Gender Per Style		YOUNGER 13-15		MIDDLE 35-45		OLDER 65+	
	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal
Male	0.62	0.38	0.55	0.40	0.62	0.34	0.69	0.40
Female	0.49	0.20	0.29	0.00	0.60	0.40	0.59	0.20
	Overall Age Per Style		0.42	0.20	0.61	0.37	0.64	0.30

On Long Island, Notre Dame Bay, Colbourne (1982) found /l/ vocalization to be the overwhelming norm in all styles and for all speakers. These findings are quite contradictory to that of the present study, since the usage of /l/ vocalization appears to correlate with not only social variables, but also with style. Investigation into the effect of phonological environment on variant usage was beyond the scope of this thesis, but it is likely to have had an effect on at least some the variables in this study. For example, as Table 4.10 demonstrates, teenage males, older males and middle-age females had the same percentage of /l/ vocalization in formal style. Among each of these social groups, /l/ was vocalized in most of the same words in the word list.<sup>16</sup> The postvocalic /l/ in these particular words

<sup>16</sup>

These words included *full*, *fool*, *ball*, *pole*, *pull* and *pool*, i.e., words containing a non-front vowel.

appeared to be susceptible to vocalization, due to either lexical reasons or to phonological environment.

One of the limitations of using word lists to elicit formal style should also be noted here: the effect of orthography on speech. For this variable, for some speakers, the presence of the orthographic /l/ in postvocalic position may have prompted them to pronounce it, while in casual speech, they would normally use the vocalized variant. In any case, /l/ vocalization in Burnt Islands, in contrast to Long Island, was affected by factors other than linguistic environment, due to the fact that the /l/ was not vocalized across the board for the words in formal style.

#### **4.3.8 The Variable (h), as in 'help' and 'happy'**

##### **Number of Tokens = 16 per speaker**

As Table 4.11 shows, the only social group to style shift to any considerable degree with respect to the /h/-deletion variable was the youngest female group. Teenage females, who had by far the lowest mean usage rate of /h/-deletion in casual style, dropped a further 45% in formal style. Their degree of style shifting is unmatched by that of all other Age/Gender groups, whose range of style shifting did not exceed 7%. In fact, speakers in the middle age group increased rather than decreased their /h/-dropping in formal style, males by 2% and females by a surprising 7%.

As in casual style, Age proved to be a significant factor with respect to /h/-deletion. Older speakers and middle-age speakers deleted /h/ at the same overall rate in formal style

but substantially more than the teenagers. The teenage speakers' low mean usage rate was gender-dependent; as the teenage females' mean usage of this feature was so low, significant differences were created relative to the other two age groups.

Gender also proved to be a significant factor in the percentage of /h/-dropping, as it had in casual style. Males once again deleted /h/ significantly more than females in the overall sample. Again, the teenage females' low mean percentage of /h/-dropping lowered the overall female mean, thus creating a significant difference in the usage of this feature with respect to the male group.

As expected, there was also a significant Age/Gender interaction in the usage of /h/-deletion in formal style. In the oldest age group, there were no differences in /h/ deletion between males and females; in the youngest age group, males deleted /h/ a full 81% more than their female counterparts; and in the middle age group, females deleted /h/ slightly more than males.

These results suggest that while initial /h/ deletion is the overwhelming norm in all registers in Burm Islands, a single group is anomalous. Teenage females appear much more attuned than any other group to the supralocal norm, and utilize initial /h/ significantly more than do other members of the community.

Table 4.11: Mean use of /h/-deletion, Gender by Age in casual and formal speech styles								
Gender by Age in formal style ( $p < .001$ , $F = 71.28$ )								
GENDER ( $p < .001$ , $F = 56.53$ )			AGE ( $p < .001$ , $F = 89.75$ )					
	Overall Gender Per Style		YOUNGER 13-15		MIDDLE 35-45		OLDER 65+	
	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal	Casual	Formal
Male	0.72	0.91	0.92	0.87	0.89	0.91	0.97	0.94
Female	0.78	0.66	0.51	0.06	0.90	0.97	0.94	0.94
	Overall Age Per Style		0.72	0.47	0.90	0.94	0.96	0.94

#### 4.4 Stylistic Variation: A Summary

Overall, four of the ten variants examined exhibited minimal stylistic stratification (i.e. a shift of under 15%) across styles, namely [ɛw], [øw], lowered (ɪ) and /h/ deletion. Lowered (ɪ) did not in fact display any stylistic stratification at all. The overall rate of shifting of the remaining variants ranged from 18% to 38%.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Variant</b>	<b>Younger 13-15</b>	<b>Middle 35-45</b>	<b>Older 65+</b>
(ε)	[ɪ]	0.16	0.34	0.64
(ɪ)	[e]	0.15	0.11	0.07
(orC)	[θr]	0.04	0.27	0.43
(aj)	[əj]	0.05	0.04	0.11
	[ɛj]	0.04	0.01	0.09
(aw)	[ɛw]	0.26	0.15	0.04
	[əw]	0.16	0.17	0.02
(uw)	[yw]	0.11	0.19	0.33
(l)	vocalized /l/	0.22	0.24	0.34
/h/ deletion	deleted /h/	0.25	0.04	0.02

As Table 4.12 shows, the degree of style shifting is generally greatest among speakers over 65 and the lowest among teenagers. This is quite different from Colbourne's findings on Long Island, Notre Dame Bay where there was "a much wider range between most S [standard] and most NS [nonstandard] styles for the younger groups than for the older groups" (Colbourne 1982: 86). That is, in Colbourne's Long Island sample, younger speakers would be more likely to style shift than older speakers. However, on Long Island, the overall rates of local variant usage were nearly identical in casual speech style for younger and older speakers. Recall that in Burnt Islands, on the contrary, speakers aged 65 and over and teenagers varied greatly with respect to local variant usage in casual style, with

older speaker (especially males) having the highest rates and teenagers (especially females) having the lowest. This suggests that there is a general attrition of local features in casual as well as more formal contexts.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Variant</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
(ɛ)	[ɪ]	0.46	0.31
(ɪ)	[ɛ]	0.03	0.05
(orC)	[ɐr]	0.38	0.11
(aj)	[əj]	0.04	0.11
	[ɛj]	0.05	0.09
(aw)	[ɛw]	0.17	0.09
	[əw]	0.14	0.07
(uw)	[yw]	0.29	0.12
(l)	vocalized /l/	0.24	0.29
/h/-deletion	deleted /h/	0.19	0.12

As the summary in Table 4.13 suggests, Gender did not constitute a major factor with respect to stylistic variation in Burnt Islands. There was no consistent pattern of differentiation in style shifting between the genders. In most cases, males and females decreased their usage of local variants at about the same rate; males often shifted to a greater degree than females, since their casual style mean usage of the variant was generally higher than that of females. In other cases, usage of a less standard variant increased, such as the

fronted variants of [aw] and [aj] which slightly increased for both genders. There were, however, a few cases where males and females style shifted in opposite directions. For two features (raised (aj) and /h/- deletion), males increased their usage of the local pronunciation in formal style, while females' mean usage decreased. For the lowered variant of (ɪ), on the other hand, females increased their usage of this pronunciation in formal style, while males decreased their usage.

Younger females generally had the lowest degree of style shifting for nearly all variables, since their mean usage of local pronunciations in casual style was very low. For some features, such as (ɛ) and (orC) older males and middle-age males had the greatest degree of shifting, since they used local variants at the greatest rates in casual style.

It should be noted here that older participants were asked prior to the interview if they were able to read, in order to ensure that the formal component of the interview could be completed. Generally though, the older speakers were uncomfortable reading, and had very little formal learning. As a result, older speakers were quite careful in their pronunciations of each word and thus style shifted on most of the features. On the contrary, the younger generations, especially teenagers, were more comfortable reading and were less focussed on the exact pronunciation of each and every word. Thus, the formal style elicited may not have been uniform for each generation. This is one of several problems associated with eliciting formal style via reading tasks (see Milroy 1987a). In any event, the reading task did elicit more formal styles in each social group for most of the features investigated in this study.

In summary, all social groups exhibited style shifting for most linguistic features examined. This included older males, the social group that used local pronunciations to the greatest degree in casual style.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In this sociolinguistic investigation of Burnt Islands, it was shown that variation exists across all social groups in the community, as well as in the speech of individuals. In casual style, Gender proved to be the most significant of the social factors examined. Age also significantly affected variant choice of about half of the variables in casual style. The general pattern emerging for Age, in both styles, was that of a decrease in the usage of local pronunciations with each successive generation.

Style was shown to affect the selection of most variants to some degree. Although there were no dramatic shifts in mean usage from casual to formal style, local variants were typically used less frequently by speakers while reading the word list than in conversation. All social groups style shifted with respect to the usage of most features. Older males tended to have the greatest degree of shifting for many variables since this group generally had the highest mean usage of local variants in casual style. Conversely, teenage females, who usually had the lowest casual style mean usage of local features, tended to have the smallest degree of style shifting.

The finding that Gender was the most significant social factor affecting speech variation in the Burnt Islands sample is typical of sociolinguistic investigations of rural Newfoundland communities. Colbourne (1982: 73) discovered that on Long Island, Notre Dame Bay, gender was the most significant independent variable for both phonological and morphological features and that it was "the most consistent in all its influences of all the social variables." Lanari (1994) also found that in the Newfoundland south coast community

of Burin, gender had a great impact on feature usage, although it was secondary to socioeconomic class. Despite the common belief that socioeconomic class is somehow more important than gender in explaining linguistic variation, Milroy (1992: 165) has suggested that "it is perhaps more reasonable (certainly just as reasonable) to explain class differences in terms of sex, as an alternative to the standard approach to the explanation of sex differences in terms of class." Furthermore, she (1987a) suggests that socioeconomic class is secondary to gender as the most important speaker variable in language variation. In Burnt Islands, the importance of gender was evident even among teenagers, despite the similarity within this age group in terms of life attitudes and ambitions. Even though there is a general move towards supralocal norms among teenagers, for several variables this change is much more evident among females. Yet perhaps this is not overly surprising, in light of the important role that language plays in the social construction of identity among adolescents (cf. for example Eckert 1999). For teenage Burnt Island males, the association of many local linguistic features with "maleness," and its ensuing connotations, plays an important role in variant choice.

The general finding in this study that mean usage of local features decreased with each successive generation suggests that the Burnt Islands speech variety is coming under the increasing threat of supralocal linguistic norms. As discussed in chapter 1, Schilling-Estes and Wolfram (1999: 486) outline two models of dialect loss: on the one hand,

dissipation, in which a dialect recedes by “linguistic decay;” and on the other, concentration, in which attrition causes dialect death but at the same time the structure of the language remains intact and its distinctiveness is heightened among the fewer remaining speakers. They suggest that the variety spoken in the North Carolina community of Ocracoke is undergoing dissipation as it accommodates to the speech of the mainlanders who have taken up permanent residence on the island, as well as of the many tourists who visit the island yearly. Smith Island, on the other hand, is undergoing concentration as it loses speakers to the mainland in search of employment, given the recession in the maritime industry in the area.

Burnt Islands is much like Smith Island in that its residents once depended heavily on the maritime industry which has declined in recent years: as a result, the community is losing speakers to more urbanized areas of Newfoundland and mainland Canada. Like Smith Island, Burnt Islands does not have a lucrative tourism industry, nor do outsiders come to the community to take up permanent residence. Therefore, one might expect the variety of English spoken in Burnt Islands to be undergoing concentration as well. This in fact is the case in one rural Newfoundland community that has been investigated sociolinguistically. Lanari (1994) found a concentration-type model of dialect loss among one segment of the population of Burin, namely, working class females aged 25-35 who set themselves apart linguistically from the rest of her sample by their unexpectedly high usage of traditional

features, sometimes exceeding the rates of older males. Lanari attributed this difference to the group's local orientation and high solidarity, along with their relative isolation from other social groups in Burin since their male counterparts were often away from the community fishing. Lanari (1994: 146) described this group as more "socioeconomically disadvantaged and considerably more confined to the community than any other social group."

In Burnt Islands, however, the local dialect is not being strengthened among residents of the community, but instead is receding. Yet as Schilling-Estes (1997: 13) notes, "the process of dialect death – and by extension, language death – may be guided by quite different principles in different communities, even ones whose dialects seem as similar as the Smith Island and Ocracoke varieties." According to Schilling-Estes and Wolfram (1999), such principles may include socioeconomic and sociopsychological factors, though the process of the death of a speech variety is complex and far from completely understood. Thus the present study of the Burnt Islands dialect paints a slightly different picture of dialect demise in a relatively isolated rural community.

Schilling-Estes and Wolfram (1999) point out that in order to understand the process of dialect death, one must look at the degree of interaction a community has with the outside world. Thus a community can be described as relatively open, in that it has frequent interactions with outsiders, or relatively closed, in that it displays limited contacts. Burnt Islands is like Smith Island in that both communities are relatively closed with respect to

residents' interactions with outsiders, by comparison to the residents of Ocracoke. Nonetheless, in all these communities, contact with outsiders is increasing; and as Schilling-Estes and Wolfram (1999) acknowledge, contact-based explanations must be supplemented with other explanatory factors, in particular attitudinal ones. They make the distinction between endocentric and exocentric communities to describe the degree to which community members are locally-focused or focused elsewhere. Thus Smith Island is a fairly closed community which is more endocentric than Ocracoke, in that residents of Smith Island are relatively closed, psychologically, to cultural and linguistic change, and are more aware than residents of Ocracoke of the relationship between the maintenance of their dialect and the preservation of their culture.

These attitudinal factors help clarify the important difference between Burnt Islands and Smith Island: the Burnt Islands community is not highly endocentric, nor perhaps do most speakers relate dialect preservation to cultural preservation. Teenagers, in particular, can be described as relatively exocentric in that they are to some degree adapting their speech to supralocal varieties in preparation for an eventual move away. All teenagers in my sample plan in fact to leave Burnt Islands upon high school graduation, and want to settle elsewhere. The very low rates of usage of a number of local features on the part of teenage females attest to their non-local focus. Middle-age speakers are less exocentric than teenagers – many middle-age residents are psychologically prepared to leave Burnt Islands, but do not like the

idea of moving away. Other middle-age residents are considerably more endocentric, resistant to change and interested in holding onto their identity, including distinctive local features. Like older speakers, these individuals are settled and plan to remain in Burnt Islands; consequently, they feel no pressure to accommodate their speech to external and more standard varieties. Males in particular, in the middle-aged and older age groups, are very opposed to the idea of moving and would never leave "the Rock" [Newfoundland]. This attitude is reflected linguistically, in that these are the speakers who make the greatest use of local features. These findings echo Colbourne's (1982) observations concerning a rural northeast coast Newfoundland community, where, as well, those who were planning to remain in the area exhibited fewer supralocal forms. In fact, in Colbourne's study, among younger males, those with a higher educational level tended to use slightly more local variants than their less well educated counterparts, who, unlike themselves, had fewer local job options, and hence a greater likelihood of leaving.

A further attitudinal factor affects the variety spoken in Burnt Islands, namely, how residents feel about their own dialect. Most Burnt Islanders are aware of their local variety and have either been made fun of themselves or have heard of others who had been teased about their speech. Even within the province, speakers from one area laugh at other dialects on the island. Comments are common such as "they have a stronger Newfoundland accent than we do," or "they talks different than we do," or "at least we don't talk like them."

Negative evaluations about Newfoundland dialects and even about the local variety exist in many communities. Colbourne (1982: 90) comments that his participants had said that they did not speak proper English and “expressed a negative attitude toward the way they talked.” He listed negative connotations of the dialect such as “a sign of ignorance, low class, low education” and “poverty.” Today, with the growing necessity to out-migrate, this self-conscious, negative evaluation of the Burnt Islands dialect may be growing with each generation. I spoke to one woman who said that she tried not to raise her children with a strong Newfoundland accent. It appears that there is little pride with respect to the local variety among those who plan to leave the community, and little concern about dialect preservation. There is more of a focus on the avoidance of local features, especially among teenagers.

It remains to be seen if the Burnt Islands dialect variety will continue to dissipate over time. Once older speakers die and residents continue to accommodate their speech and move away, the variety may die through a loss of speakers, even if it stays relatively intact up to that point.

Despite the pattern of dialect loss, it should be noted that Burnt Islands is still a markedly unique speech community where many traditional dialect features inherited from Southwest England have survived in the speech of quite a few residents and still thrive among the older generation. Any visitor to Burnt Islands would surely be struck by its

unique language variety – the phonological and grammatical features, lexical items and speed of speech. This will very likely continue to be the case for a number of years to come.

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## APPENDIX

### Word List

bother  
chicken  
fork  
who  
road  
triple  
smooth  
full  
leave  
quarter  
button  
the act  
copper  
thin  
skiff  
tight  
nickel  
choice  
pretty  
ball  
show  
weather  
stem  
cheek  
avoid  
since  
houses  
they  
mess  
better  
mouse  
loud  
breathe  
method  
shrimp  
spill  
mesh

allow  
hail  
pal  
bathe  
scratch  
anything  
joy  
fool  
tide  
faith  
shell  
wood horse  
fence  
beat  
say  
spell  
boy  
thank you  
kettle  
chair  
truth  
apple  
toy  
shred  
happy  
father  
joined  
open  
fish  
automobile  
naked  
ankle  
now  
there  
buy  
set  
miss

help  
bacon  
tie  
soil  
surprise  
half  
nothing  
go  
moist  
bottom  
heal  
ice  
cookie  
happen  
shatter  
supper  
owl  
shy  
pole  
thought  
cow house  
bottle  
chew  
shout  
homemaker  
life  
five  
hoist  
if  
check  
left  
horn  
length  
shrunk  
puppy  
windbreaker  
eyebrow

### Minimal Pairs

pull, pool  
groan, grown  
chair, share  
horse, hoarse  
maid, made  
knotty, naughty

sigh, shy  
weak, week  
bear, beer  
caught, cot  
pore, poor  
hear, hair  
sure, shore

**Background Information**  
Amanda Newhook  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Education: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Residence until age 8-10 years: \_\_\_\_\_

Married:      Yes              No

Spouse's Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse's place of residence until age 8-10 years: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you lived anywhere else? If so, when and for how long? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Has your spouse lived anywhere else? \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently:    Working?              Retired?              Unemployed?

If employed, what is your work? \_\_\_\_\_

What other jobs have you had and for how long? \_\_\_\_\_

**Burnt Islands and Isle aux Morts Study  
Participant Release Form**

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's address: \_\_\_\_\_

I have been advised of the purpose of the research for which you have interviewed me and

1. I am fully aware of the fact that the interviews are being tape-recorded.
2. I grant you permission to use the interview material for your current research, and for any resulting published or unpublished thesis.
3. I further grant you permission to use the interview material for any other purposes: discussions, presentations, or any published or unpublished works in addition to the thesis.
4. I grant you permission to deposit the tape-recorded material with the Department of Linguistics, Memorial University of Newfoundland, thereby granting access to this material for other research.
5. It is understood that all information provided will be kept strictly confidential, and that my identity will be known only by the present investigator, Amanda R. Newhook. It is also understood that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end the interview at any time.

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_





