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‘The land steward wouldn’t have a woman farmer’: The interaction between language, life trajectory and gender in an island community

1. Introduction

Discussions of language and place sometimes give the impression that the ‘local’ is a clearly defined and recognisable entity. This is often the case when a language feature is recognised as belonging to and defining the social characteristics of a particular place. However, as Eckert (2004, 109) has noted, “the community is a contested entity that is differentially constructed in the practices and in the speech of different factions, as well as individuals.” This can give rise to competing and contended ideas about what it means to be ‘local’ (Johnstone 2004, 71).

This paper explores how life trajectory and gender interact to affect how individuals from the same small island community use language to index ‘local’. In particular, we show how “human geographies, particularly the built and social environments we inhabit, create varying opportunities for individuals and social groups” (Laws 1997, 48). These ‘varying opportunities’ result in the construction of alternative local identity types. In particular, we demonstrate that defining place is no straightforward endeavour when ‘place’ takes on specific meanings linked to alternative life trajectories, and that this is true no matter how small the community studied. As Britain (2009a, also this volume) has argued, rural areas have been particularly ‘fetishized’ as homogeneous and uncontested entities (and this is despite the fact that the types of diversity examined in urban spaces may be considered to be relatively simplistic – see Britain 2009b, 228). By focusing on a small, rural, island community, our work will demonstrate that “individual speakers distinguish themselves linguistically no matter what type of community they live in” (Schreier 2006, 27). We show that what matters is not the size or type of community, but the necessity for individuals to index distinct styles and identities within a particular social space.

2. The research location

The Isles of Scilly are a group of islands, situated approximately twenty-eight miles off the south-west coast of Cornwall, England. They consist of numerous islands, but only five of these are inhabited. Of these, St. Mary's is the largest, both in terms of physical size and population. The islands as a whole had a population of 2203 in the last census (Office for National Statistics, 2011), of which 75% lived on St. Mary's. All of the speakers considered in our paper come from St. Mary's.

Figure 1 shows the location of the islands relative to the south-west English mainland. It also indicates the mainland departure points for the islands. The islands are accessible by air and sea. Light aircraft fly between St. Mary's, and Land's End or Newquay all year round (weather-permitting), and the trip takes between 15 and 25 minutes. The islands also have a passenger ferry service which operates between Penzance and St. Mary's between Easter and October. At all other times, the only scheduled boat is the freight service, which serves the islands three times a week year-round.



Figure 1. Location of the Isles of Scilly relative to the South West of England.

The islands' major industry is tourism, which accounts for over 85% of the islands' income (The Isles of Scilly Council 2005, 14). The tourism trade is long established, but was particularly bolstered by the arrival of the railway to Penzance in 1867, and the replacement of sailing vessels by a steamer in 1859. The islands also have a reasonably robust farming industry, which benefits from the favourable weather conditions experienced on the islands, and some small family fishing businesses.

The islands have a particularly interesting history of governance, having been leased from the crown and managed by a series of governors between 1571 and 1920. This makes the islands quite distinct from the nearest Cornish mainland – a fact of which Scillonians are very proud. This can be seen in (1), a quotation from Scillonian in exile, Frank Banfield, writing in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1888.

1. "I think, unless my recollection of past reading is gravely at fault, that it is Mr. Wilkie Collins, who many years ago, in one of the magazines, expressed surprise that Scillonian English should be so pure, correct, and free from provincial idioms as it was ... but he did not know, probably, that the Scillonians, at least the dominating element, are not Cornish. The accent of the county of which electorally they form a part is entirely wanting on their tongues ..." (Banfield 1888, 45).

Banfield (1888, 54) goes on to claim that Scilly's 'correct speech' is a consequence of the influence of the first governor, Sir Francis Godolphin and his descendants, who "impressed their own correcter locution and more Eastern English of inheritance and education upon the population." The link that Banfield makes between education and 'correct speech' (for which we assume he means something akin to 'Standard English'), and the ideology that Scillonians are better educated and more well-spoken than mainlanders, can be found in metalinguistic commentary about the variety across history, as shown in (2) and (3) below.

2. "... the Language of Scilly refines upon what is spoken in many Parts of Cornwall; probably from the more frequent Intercourse of the Inhabitants, some more than others, with those who speak the Standard English best" (Heath 1750, 436).
3. "The Islanders are remarkable for speaking good English – far preferable, at least, to what is generally heard amongst the humbler classes of any county, at some distance from the metropolis..." (Woodley 1822, 105).

It is certainly true that education has featured highly in Scillonian life. Education was made compulsory on Scilly before it was on the mainland (Mothersole 1914, 48). Also, before the islands built their own secondary school in 1966, wealthy and/or especially bright children were sent away to selective and fee-paying boarding school between the ages of 11 and 16. These education patterns undoubtedly provided ideological pressure supporting the use of Standard forms of English on Scilly. However, given that type of education also served to segregate the population, it does not necessarily follow that there was a consistent effect of ideology on language use across the population. That is to say, whilst the historical metalinguistic commentary implies a uniform orientation to standard forms on the islands, in the absence of substantial linguistic work on the islands (Scilly has been neglected in dialect surveys, although see Thomas 1979), there is no way to confirm whether these perceptions reflect actual patterns of language use across the community.

In order to explore the extent to which islanders orient to Standard English forms, we examine how a cross-section of Scillonians make use of two especially salient markers of Standard English, the vowels in the TRAP and BATH lexical sets. The next section explains the suitability of the TRAP and BATH lexical sets for this study and explains how we undertook our analysis.

3. The data

The vowels in the TRAP and BATH lexical sets (Wells 1982) are particularly useful variables for our purposes because they carry a good deal of ideological baggage in English English. In particular, Mugglestone (2003, 78) refers to the pronunciation of the BATH vowel as “a salient feature of ‘talking proper’”. Most historical linguists agree that prior to the seventeenth century words in both of these lexical sets were pronounced with the same low front vowel (Lass 1976, Chapter 4; MacMahon 1998; Beal 1999, 105–111; 2004, 139; Piercy 2010, 9–24). Gradually, in Standard English English (StEE), this vowel raised for some and lengthened for all before the voiceless fricatives /f, θ, s/, and before nasal clusters. However, it is important to note that this change did not proceed to completion across every lexical item, as Piercy (2010: 17–18) has observed. Nonetheless, despite being ‘a half completed sound change’ (Wells 1982: 233), the outcome was a TRAP/BATH split, based on duration, with vowels in the BATH lexical set having longer duration than those in the TRAP lexical set. Then, very gradually, between the eighteenth and twentieth century, the BATH vowels also retracted, so TRAP and BATH eventually came to differ by vowel quality and vowel duration.

However, this change did not proceed to completion in all varieties of English English. Most notably for our purposes, the traditional varieties of Cornish English (the mainland variety closest to the Isles of Scilly) have TRAP/BATH patterns that were fossilized at the point at which English was introduced into this area following the loss of the Cornish language (Wakelin 1975; 1986). Whilst there is some variation in this region with regard to the precise vowel quality of these vowels (reflecting the phased introduction of English westwards along the peninsula), in any given location, the vowel quality is the same for both lexical sets. In traditional varieties of Cornish English, then, the TRAP/BATH split is marked only by duration, with BATH vowels being longer than TRAP vowels.

Although the historical metalinguistic commentary emphasizes dialect contact with StEE speakers via the elite networks provided by the islands’ governors, there has been on-going Cornish immigration into Scilly across time. For instance, in the 1901 census, almost half

(48.3%) of Scilly's 571 migrants were from Cornwall (data from The Isles of Scilly Museum 2007). This opens up different possibilities for our Scillonian speakers. Given that, historically, some of them had access to education in boarding schools on the mainland (and Cheshire and Trudgill 1989, 95, amongst others, consider boarding schools to be one of the main places in which Standard English is cultivated), we might expect mainland-educated Scillonians to show a more StEE-like pattern than Scilly-educated Scillonians. Furthermore, given that sociolinguistic studies have consistently shown that women lead men of the same socioeconomic group in the use of standard language features (so much so, that Holmes 1997 refers to this as a 'sociolinguistic universal'), we might expect mainland-educated women to show the most StEE-like pattern in our dataset.

To examine these patterns, we analysed a sample of data from a group of Scillonians born before the islands' own secondary school opened in 1966. This data was obtained from interviews from the Isles of Scilly Museum's Oral History Archive. This archive contains recordings made by local people interviewing other local people. The archive recordings date from the 1970s through to the present day. The purpose of the archive is to record island history as told by the individuals who experienced it. Interviewees were selected by museum volunteers on the basis of their status as a 'Scillonian character' (a vague definition, but one which includes consideration of island heritage and community roles). Table 1 provides information on the participants used in our analysis.

In order to test the quality of the TRAP and BATH vowels used by these speakers, we extracted formant data, sampling formant tracks every 5ms through each vowel, with LPC order set to appropriate values for each speaker. This allowed us to obtain the median value for each formant in the vowel. We focus on F1 and F2 in our analysis, given that F1 has been found to correlate with vowel height, and F2 with how front or back a vowel is (see Ladefoged 1982, amongst others). We also measured the duration of each vowel, which we transformed into a logarithmic domain to account for the fact that hearers seem to perceive durations as ratios rather than as absolute amounts. This kind of transformation makes sense statistically because

logarithmically-transformed durations also approximate the normal distribution more closely. We also transformed our formants into the domain of the equivalent rectangular bandwidth (Glasberg & Moore 1990), as a step towards speaker normalisation. For clarity of presentation, we provide axis notation in our figures in Hertz for spectral data and milliseconds for temporal data.

Table 1. Participant sample used in the analysis

| | Birth dates of participants | Number of participants |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Mainland-educated males | 1901-1920 | 3 |
| Mainland-educated females | 1905-1931 | 3 |
| Scilly-educated males | 1901-1924 | 3 |
| Scilly-educated females | 1907-1919 | 4 |

We coded for a number of phonological environment factors, namely the position of the syllable in question within each utterance (initial, final or somewhere in the middle of the utterance), the number of syllables in the word, whether the rhyme of the syllable was open or closed, the manner of articulation and the voicing of the following consonant, and whether the syllable seemed to be carrying sentence stress. We also coded for lexical versus grammatical words. In order to focus on the social patterns in our data, we do not deal with these phonological environments in this paper – only to note that the social patterns we discuss below stayed robust when linguistic factors were included in statistical models of the data (see Moore and Carter [2015] for a more comprehensive discussion of the linguistic predictors of TRAP and BATH in this dataset).

In the next section we describe the outcome of our analysis.

4. Results

Figure 2 shows a series of density plots of our raw formant data, according to education-type and gender. Density plots are like contours on a map. Peaks show areas of greater density where formant measurements cluster. TRAP vowels are shown in grey and BATH vowels in black. Figure 2 reveals variation amongst our Scillonian speakers, and suggests effects of both education-type and gender. As expected, the mainland educated speakers seem to have a TRAP/BATH pattern that is more like present-day StEE. Their TRAP and BATH vowels are more distinct from one another, and they appear to have more of an F2 difference between these lexical sets; that is to say, the BATH vowels seem to be further back than the TRAP vowels. On the other hand, the Scilly-educated speakers' plots show much more similarity between TRAP and BATH, with the two vowel clusters largely overlapped. With regard to education type, these plots suggest that mainland boarding school education may indeed correlate with more StEE-like patterns of TRAP and BATH in our sample of Scillonian speakers.

The effects of gender are less easy to deduce from these plots. Whilst it seems that the Scilly-educated women have a more StEE-like pattern than the Scilly-educated men (the centre of their BATH density plot has a lower F2 value than that of their TRAP density plot, whereas the distinction is much less clear for the Scilly-educated men), it is not clear that the mainland-educated women are leading the mainland-educated men in having the most StEE-like pattern. The mainland-educated women's TRAP/BATH split does not appear to be any more extreme than that of the mainland-educated men – indeed, a closer look at Figure 2 suggests that it may be less so.¹ Furthermore, there appears to be less differentiation in the patterning of the women overall in our Scillonian sample. That is to say, Figure 2 suggests that it is men who define the envelope of variation in this community: the mainland-educated men seem to have more of a distinct TRAP/BATH quality split than any other group, and the Scilly-educated men seem to have a less distinct TRAP/BATH quality split than anyone else.

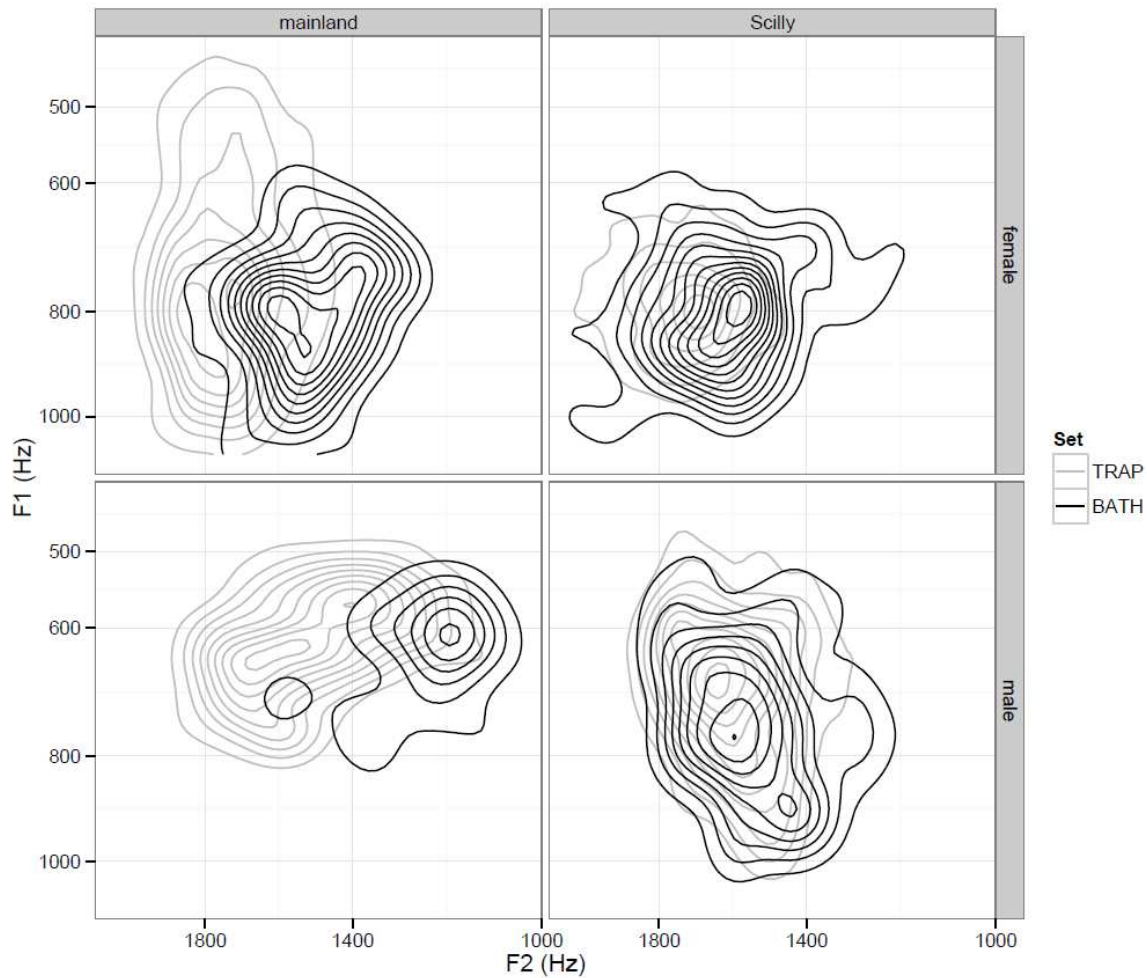


Figure 2. Density plot showing raw formant data for TRAP and BATH, according to education-type (horizontal axis) and gender (vertical axis).

In order to test the patterns suggested by the raw data in Figure 2, we ran random forest variable importance measures on the data. Strobl et al. (2008; 2009) provide an explanation of this type of modelling. Put simply, this technique models the relative importance of predictor variables in explaining the TRAP/BATH split in our data. This modelling allowed us to add duration as a predictor variable alongside F1 and F2. The results of this analysis are shown in Figure 3, which shows the variable importance plots predicting whether a vowel is TRAP or BATH for the data from each of the speaker groups listed in Table 1. Black columns indicate that a factor is a significant predictor and, the larger the bar, the more significant a factor is.

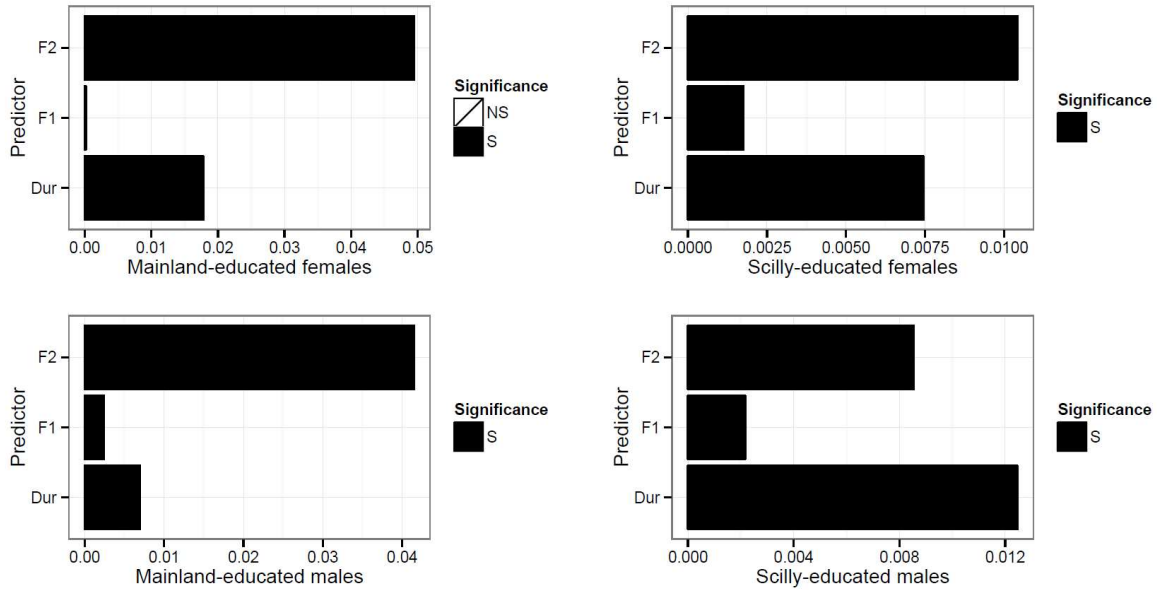


Figure 3. Variable importance plots predicting the relative importance of F1, F2 and duration in the TRAP/BATH split for each speaker group.

Figure 3 shows that F1 is not very important for predicting whether a vowel is TRAP or BATH, although it does have a small effect on the data of all of our speaker groups, with the exception of the mainland-educated females (the F1 bar here is insignificant, but the bar is so small that it is not possible to see its colour clearly in the figure). On the other hand, F2 and duration are clear predictors of whether a vowel is TRAP or BATH for all of our groups. However, these two factors do not pattern in the same ways across our speaker set. F2 is the most significant factor predicting whether a vowel is TRAP or BATH for everyone except the Scilly-educated men. For the mainland-educated males and females, and the Scilly-educated females, duration matters, but it is less important than vowel quality in differentiating TRAP and BATH, and it is *much* less important than F2 for the mainland-educated men. On the other hand, this pattern is reversed for the Scilly-educated men; duration is the most significant factor in predicting whether a vowel is TRAP or BATH for this group. F2 also matters for these speakers, but it is less important than duration.

In sum, the results shown in Figure 3 seem to support the patterns evident in the raw data. However, they elaborate on these results in two key ways. Firstly, Figure 3 suggests that the Scillonian men have oppositional patterns of language use. Their patterns of F2 and their patterns of duration work to create distinction – where one group uses more of one of these factors to mark the TRAP/BATH split, the other group use more of the other. Secondly, and in contrast to the men, the two groups of Scillonian women are much less different from one another – both groups seem to be moving towards a present-day standard-like norm, irrespective of education type, and there is much less differentiation in their linguistic patterning, as shown in Figure 3. We attempt to explain these patterns in the next section.

5. Discussion: The social meanings of TRAP and BATH

The results in Section 4 suggest that women and mainland-educated men use more StEE-like forms and Scilly-educated men use more Cornish-like (i.e. regional vernacular) forms. Previous research has suggested that speakers use vernacular forms to index local identity. This was shown in Labov's (1963) Martha's Vineyard study, and has been demonstrated in subsequent work many times since (see, for instance, Schilling-Estes' 1998 research in Ocracoke; Johnstone et al.'s 2006 work on Pittsburgh; and Wong and Hall-Lew's 2014 San Francisco study). Other research has suggested that increased use of standard language forms reflects orientation away from the local and towards less traditional or more global language norms. For instance, Holmquist's (1985, 199) study of a rural Spanish village discovered increased use of Castilian Spanish being driven by "a general turning away from things rural". These findings echo those in Gal's (1978) study of a rural Austrian village a decade earlier, where increased use of German (the more prestigious code in this bilingual context), was most frequent amongst those who oriented away from the community's traditional peasant roles and values. In both Holmquist's and Gal's studies, it was women who drove language change, given that, socially and

economically, they suffered most in the rural economies of the locations studied. On the other hand, the men who controlled the local rural economy resisted language change the most.

It is tempting to apply these findings to the Scillonian context: we might assume that (i) the Scilly-educated men are resisting StEE-like forms to reflect and construct their stake in the local economy, whereas (ii) women and mainland-educated men are driving change towards the standard as a reflection of their orientation towards island-external prestige norms. Whilst the first part of this explanation may hold true, the second part may require further elaboration. Firstly, Scilly's unique sociocultural history suggests that it may be problematic to assume that the StEE-like patterns found on the island reflect a straightforward orientation away from the islands and, secondly, Scillonian women use StEE-like forms, but, unlike the women in Holmquist's and Gal's studies, it is not straightforwardly the case that they have the most advanced use of these forms on Scilly.

With regard to the first of these points, we refer back to the discussion in Section 2. This described a history of metalinguistic commentary linking Scillonian English and StEE. As can be seen in the quotations in (1), (2) and (3), this discourse typically juxtaposes Scilly with Cornwall and, Scillonian English with Cornish varieties of English. In this commentary, speaking in a style which more closely approximates StEE is a defining characteristic of being Scillonian according to the historical record. Consequently, one could view the use of this style as a claim regarding "inheritance and education" (Banfield 1888, 54) and, as such, as a claim for a particular kind of Scillonian authenticity. In this sense, use of StEE-like forms may not solely indicate orientation to island-external or global language norms; it may also indicate orientation to a particular (and historically-substantiated) Scillonian social type. That this is possible is further substantiated by the fact that the context of the interview itself focuses our mainland-educated speakers upon what they consider to be the important aspects of Scillonian life. That is to say, their discourse in the interview is focused on all matters Scillonian, not island-external concerns.

On the other hand, the oppositional behaviour of the Scilly-educated men suggests that they are orienting to a quite different Scillonian identity type, which is associated with different forms of status. This can be seen if we compare the roles and responsibilities undertaken by our male speakers over their lifetimes, and the dominant topics that these speakers discussed in their interviews. This information is given in Table 2, which suggests two distinct life trajectories for men according to education type.

Table 2. The roles and responsibilities of the male participants and the topics covered in their interviews.²

| | Speaker | Date of birth | Key roles and responsibilities | Main interview topics |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---|---|
| Scilly-educated | Stan | 1901 | Boat transportation (during the war); Wireless operator; Bus driver/tours | Local history (WWI and II); sea employment |
| | Charlie | 1911 | Merchant navy; Boat-building and joinery; Barber; Councillor & Alderman | Local history (childhood & island places); management responsibilities (council work) |
| | Luke | 1924 | Fisherman; Farm labourer; Builder, decorator, carpenter & boatbuilder; Lifeboat (coxswain). | Sea employment; local history (childhood and family) |
| Mainland-educated | Victor | 1905 | Flower farmer from established farming family; Magistrate; Councillor; Director/Chairman/President of the IoS Steamship Co. | Management responsibilities (Steamship Co.) |
| | Ted | 1914 | Butcher and Hotelier; Councillor. | Local history; management responsibilities (council) |
| | Jim | 1920 | Farmer from established farming family; Magistrate; Councillor; Director/Managing Director of IoS Steamship Co. | Management responsibilities (flower farming, Steamship Co, council) |

Whereas the men who were educated on the mainland tended to end up being managers of their own businesses and taking on authoritative positions in the community, such as being councillors or magistrates, the men educated on Scilly tend to find employment in seafaring

activities or local trades. The differences in roles and responsibilities is also highlighted in the topics the men discuss in their interviews. As noted in Section 3, the purpose of the oral history interviews was to reminisce about Scillonian life. Consequently, the topics discussed in the interviews offer a window on how our interviewees characterise Scillonian status and construct it in their talk. In line with their employment, the most frequent topic of conversation for the mainland-educated males is their management responsibilities. These might be responsibilities to do with their own businesses (Victor and Jim managed their own farm and also had various management roles in the islands transport company; and Ted managed a butcher's shop and a hotel), or authoritative roles such as being local councillors or magistrates. The Scilly-educated men, on the other hand, are more likely to talk about local history (that is event and occurrences on the islands) linked to their employment on the islands or at sea. For instance, Stan ran an inter-island boat service during the wars (navigating the treacherous seas around the islands in difficult conditions) and he tells stories about this time, and Luke was a fisherman and served as the lifeboat coxswain for many years; most of his interview is concerned with stories about lifeboat rescues.

The two different life trajectories experienced by male Scillonians prioritise different types of knowledge. Whereas the mainland-educated men achieve institutional status following their mainland schooling, there is evidence that at least some of the Scilly-educated men are strongly resistant to the idea that education gained elsewhere is more important than practical, local knowledge. In particular, the archive materials include evidence of some islanders expressing concern about too much intervention from outside the islands. This can be seen in the transcript in (4), which comes from a news report featuring Scilly-educated Scillonian, Luke, warning against outside influences on the development of a new runway on the islands.

(4)

1 Any development company at all, or developer, I mean, he would he would turn
2 head over heels to get his foot in here, wouldn't he? I mean look what Mr de
3 Savaray have done over Land's End, look what they've done in Falmouth, look
4 what they've done in all these little coastal ports around the town. I mean,
5 they just turn them upside down in five minutes. They would have a field day
6 in a place like this... You - you - see... You can have a hundred places like

7 Land's End, yuppy parks sort of style, you know, I mean, those sort of centre
8 places. But there's only one Scilly. You can't - and, and, if you change that,
9 you won't get no more, will you? I mean, it's gone, gone forever.

In (4), Luke stresses that islanders like him have local knowledge and know what is best for the islands. This is articulated by positioning himself in opposition to mainland development companies (1.1), and by opposing the ways in which mainland coastal locations have developed (1.2-4). Luke stresses Scilly's uniqueness (1.8-9), insinuating that it requires people like him to protect the islands from outside influence. Whilst Luke does not mention education in this extract, the implication is clear: knowledge about what is best for the islands comes from having a situated understanding of Scilly, and this is not necessarily achieved via formal education.

The behaviour of the men in our sample suggest that male Scillonians have adapted variants of TRAP and BATH to construct oppositional local identity types: one concerned with education and aspiration, and one concerned with local island knowledge. Britain and Trudgill (1999, 247-248) refer to this kind of adaptation as "socio-stylistic reallocation". It is evidenced here by the oppositional TRAP/BATH patterns in the male data and (i) the differences in the roles and responsibilities of the two groups of Scillonian men, (ii) the likely differences in social practices that such activities entail, (iii) the matters with which the men are concerned in the topics of their interviews, and (iv) in other evidence available in the archive, such as the extract in (4).

Turning now to our female speakers, we see that there are far fewer opportunities for women to gain explicit status within the community. Table 3 provides information about the roles and responsibilities undertaken by our female speakers over their lifetimes, and the topics that these speakers discussed in their interviews. Comparing the two groups of women reveals that, whilst Scilly-educated women tended to have more jobs than mainland-educated women, both groups of women undertook employment in the flower and farming industries, irrespective of their educational background or the other activities in which they were engaged. In practice, this meant that women were recruited to work in their husband's or wider family's

main lines of work, by tying and packing flowers, in addition to undertaking all of the domestic responsibilities of the home, and any other form of employment they undertook. Furthermore, unlike the men, these women did not have roles and responsibilities in the community that brought them into conflict with each other. In fact, as their list of roles and responsibilities suggest, they were more often working alongside each other sustaining island industries.

Table 3. The roles and responsibilities of the female participants and the topics covered in their interviews.

| | Speaker | Date of birth | Key roles and responsibilities | Main interview topics |
|--------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---|--|
| Scilly-educated | Tess | 1907 | Post woman; Taking in visitors; Flower tier | Local history (WWI and II and island stories) |
| | Gloria | 1914 | Housemaid; Shop worker; Taking in visitors; Flower tier | Local history (island folk and families) |
| | Sarah | 1916 | Housemaid; Taking in visitors | Local history (island folk and families) |
| | Kath | 1919 | Shop-worker; Taking in visitors; Working on family's farm | Local history (childhood) |
| Mainland-educated | Margaret | 1905 | Homemaker; Working on family's flower farm | Flower farming industry (local daffodil varieties) |
| | Elizabeth | 1921 | Teacher; Working on family's flower farm | Local history (education on the islands); flower farming industry. |
| | Glenda | 1931 | Homemaker; Working on family's flower farm | Local history (gardening) |

This is not to say that these two groups of women are entirely homogeneous. The topics shown in Table 3 reveal some differences between the groups. Like their male counterparts, Scilly-educated women talk about local history. However, they do not talk about their roles or responsibilities in relation to this history as the Scilly-educated men do. Instead they tend to talk about people, that is, island folk, and their families. Sometimes this is in relation to a specific historical event; for instance, Tess was asked by her interviewer to focus on the period around

the World Wars. Whilst mainland-educated women also focus on local history, their emphasis is on horticultural matters – they either talk about their own interests in gardening, or they talk about the flower farming industries managed by their husbands or fathers. For instance, Margaret talks about the varieties of flowers farmed on the farm managed by her husband, and Elizabeth talks about the way flowers were packed on the farm managed by her father. These slight differences in topic reflect that these two groups of women have different histories, concerns and priorities.

Nonetheless, Table 3 suggests *neither group* of women is acknowledged as having visible institutional roles in this island community. This is not to say that they do not contribute significantly to community life, but that their topics are not driven by their roles and responsibilities, because their roles are not acknowledged historically in the way that those occupied by men are. Women may sustain many of the island industries but none of these women were councillors, or chairs of local businesses; and none of them served on the lifeboat crew or ran local boat services. This suggests that the type of education that women had gave them different life experiences, but it did little to affect how they are recognised within the community.

This is exemplified in the extract in (5), which provided the title of this paper. It is taken from a story told by one of the Scilly-educated women, Tess, who is in conversation with another Scilly-educated woman, Gloria. They are talking about farmworkers' wives having to tie flowers for their husbands' employers.

(5)

1 Tess Yes I remember when Mr Teddy Potts had that Penberthy farm before
2 your father took over.
3 Gloria Yeah.
4 Tess And he had farm at Old Town, as well,
5 forty acres altogether.
6 Gloria Was it?
7 Tess He used to have for- twenty steady men, and
8 twenty part workers, flower season and potatoes.
9 Gloria Did you work for him, did
10 you?
11 Tess Er- no my mother tied flowers for him.
12 Gloria Um.
13 Tess All the workmen's wives had

14 to tie the flowers.
 15 Gloria Did they?
 16 Tess Well they were- they were asked. I suppose if
 17 they refused- which they couldn't because it meant if they refused the-
 18 their- their husbands might be out of work.

[...]

19 Tess And my mother used to be tying til midnight... and I know my Aunt
 20 Peggy, she was in bed all the time,
 21 Gloria Mmm.
 22 Tess and she used to like fried
 23 potatoes for supper. And the question was mother said she wished Aunt
 24 Peggy [INAUD] because when she- when she finished tying flowers at twelve
 25 o'clock she had to go and fry spuds for her supper! .. But of course that
 26 was only a question of her saying so. She was tired out of course.
 27 Gloria Course so, yeah.

[...]

28 Tess But that was when Mr Potts had died, Mrs Corbett took over the farm.
 29 Gloria Umm.
 30 Tess And then we had a Mr Howard here who was the Land Steward
 31 Gloria Um.
 32 Tess and he
 33 wouldn't have a woman farmer.
 34 Gloria He wouldn't?
 35 Tess No so the question is they had
 36 to give the farm up. But it was a great pity because all the men were
 37 sacked.

The extract outlines the roles of women in the farming industry. Women are expected to work in the same industries as men, although this is often characterised as 'supporting' their menfolk, rather than perceived as work in its own right. Women may be unable to refuse to take on this work (ll.13-18), no matter what other responsibilities they have (ll.19-27). Notably, however, women are not allowed to be 'farmers' (ll.32-33) – no matter how well educated they are, or if their deceased relative had served as a manager (ll.35-37).

The 'resilience of the Scillonian woman' is an ideological trope which has endured across time. The extract in (6) is taken from a 2014 interview with two young Scillonian women who were also discussing the role of women in the farming industry.

(6)

1 Kate I'd say the women have always worked on the farms, [wouldn't you? You know-]
 2 Ann [Yeah. Yeah,] cos your
 3 mum used to tie [with] my mum.
 4 Kate [Yeah.] You know, and especially living over here..
 5 most people did the summer jobs and then went on to the farms because of
 6 the flowers and that's where the w- work was in the winter, so I'd say,
 7 nearly everyone was, like- But, yeah, all the families I know, farmers,
 8 Ann Umm.
 9 Kate the wife's definitely like- your mum was a nurse,
 10 Ann Yeah.

11 Kate and that's her
12 main job, but she [always, yeah, worked on the farm,] didn't she,
13 Ann [Always worked on the farm.]
14
15 Kate whenever she had- Err, it was always her job as well, [wasn't it?]
16 Ann [Yeah.]
17
18 Kate So she had three jobs. [House, nursing and farming.]
19 Emma [LAUGHS] Wow.
20 Ann [Yeah.]

[...]

21 Ann [INAUDIBLE]
22 Kate [And she] loved her [nursing, didn't she?]
23 Ann [Yeah.]
24 Kate But she did do both. Cos I think
25 that's the thing with farming, you know, I wouldn't say- I don't know
26 there's many farmers here who don't have their other half helping them.
27 [I wouldn't say, would you?]
28 Ann [Not really, no.] I can't think of any really.
29 Kate No.
30 Emma Yeah.
31 Kate So, um.. SNIFFS No, I'd say it was kind of quite equal. But I do think...
32 I don't- EXHALES it's hard to say, but I think as Scillonians, you do just
33 get in with everything- you know, I think..

Much like the description in (5), in (6), Kate describes a situation in which women take on multiple jobs, including skilled work such as nursing. Interestingly, Kate does not perceive there to be inequity between men and women (l.31), despite defining women's roles in farming as "helping" (l.26), rather than defining women as 'farmers', or workers in their own right. This provides further evidence to support the observation that education or training has few practical consequences on how hard or how much a woman is required to work, or how much acknowledgement she receives for this work. Whereas men get to define their Scillonian status on the basis of their education or their local knowledge, Kate characterises the true Scillonian woman as someone who "get[s] in with everything" (l.33), despite receiving little explicit status in return for her labour.

Several sociolinguistic studies have demonstrated how women's language use may be conditioned by their access to particular 'linguistic markets' (Bourdieu 1977; Woolard 1985) and their ability to gain status within those markets (Milroy 1980; Eckert 2000). The market in which the Scilly-educated men operate is largely inaccessible to women by virtue of the sharp gender segregation in many of the activities undertaken by the Scilly-educated men. For instance, women do not engage in boating and fishing. These activities entail engagement with

the tourist industry (tourists are taken on fishing trips and on pleasure trips from St. Mary's to Scilly's other islands), and they also bring Scilly-educated men in contact with other seafaring men from Cornwall who use Scilly as a port. It is possible that contact around these shared practices may serve to reinforce, or at least support, the Scilly-educated males' Cornish English-like TRAP and BATH patterns. Dubois and Horvath (2000) observe a similar pattern of language use in the Cajun community where young men (but not young women) were found to 'recycle' traditional Cajun English features which were previously in decline. Dubois and Horvath (2000, 306) attribute this "to the fact that the Cajun Renaissance has largely affected the sphere of traditional male activities, such as boating, fishing and hunting, and the display of Cajun culture associated with tourism". Of course, this is not to say that the Cornish-like variants of TRAP and BATH are 'male' in any direct sense. Rather, they have acquired social meanings that are linked to characteristics that are more commonly associated with men than with women. That is to say, their social meanings are associated with styles of speakers (*personae*) and social stances which occur more frequently in the discourse of Scilly-educated Scillonian men.³

Many of the activities undertaken by the mainland-educated males are also largely inaccessible to women. In this generation, women are not councillors, managers or magistrates. However, the kinds of social meanings linked to these activities ('educated', 'discerning') index the characteristics of the historically-dominant Scillonian identity type, as articulated in the metalinguistic commentary on the islands. This might explain why we find both groups of Scillonian women using relatively more standard-like variants of TRAP and BATH, irrespective of their social and educational background. StEE-like variants of TRAP and BATH index a Scillonian identity that is also in line with ideological expectations about female behaviour.

The ideological-loaded nature of TRAP and BATH may also help to explain why women are more constrained in their ability to use these particular linguistic forms to signal intra-gender differentiation. In Section 3, we discussed how the backing of the BATH vowel in StEE happened very gradually and may not have been entirely complete until the beginning of the twentieth century – that is, at the very time that our speakers were born and acquiring their

language variation. As Beal (2004, 141) has observed, when this change was in progress “those who aspired to ‘correct’ pronunciation in England had to steer a very narrow course, avoiding both the ‘broad’ [ɑ:] and the ‘mincing’ [æ]”. Tracing pronunciation guidance over this period, Mugglestone (2003, 78) notes that these pressures were particularly strong on women, for whom a less than careful enunciation may have led to their speech being perceived as “‘inaccurate’, ‘vulgar’, or indeed ‘uneducated’”. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, both Ellis (1869, iv. 1152) and Ripman (1906, 55), writing at the turn of the twentieth century, describe an ‘intermediate’ sound as more typical of female speakers.

Figures 2 and 3 suggest that our female speakers have a TRAP/BATH pattern that is situated in between that of our two groups of male speakers; that is to say, they have an intermediate pattern for these vowels. What we see for the Scillonian female speakers, then, may be sensitivity to the historical ideological pressures on TRAP/BATH usage, given the incredible salience of these particular vowels. That is to say, the female speakers’ patterns reflect an orientation to a conservative and old-fashioned standard norm of pronunciation – one where TRAP has a quality distinct from BATH, but not too distinct as to risk being misinterpreted.

A counter argument to this might be that the behaviour of the mainland-educated men indicates that the uncertainty about the social meaning of backed BATH variants has passed for this generation of speakers. However, this would assume that both men and women are responding to the same linguistic norms, and that they are in the same stage of language change. It is not necessarily the case that something that is presumed ‘vulgar’ in female practice, necessarily carries the same evaluation when observed in male practice. As Eckert (1989) has argued, whilst sociolinguists have tended to evaluate language use in terms of oppositional gender categories, the effects of gender on language variation are not necessarily consistent across gender groups. This is likely to be particularly true in communities, like the one considered here, that demonstrate gender segregation in social and cultural roles.

It is important to stress that, whilst women behave more homogeneously than men with regard to their use of these variables, we do not wish to imply, as Jespersen (1922, 258) once did, that women are simply more linguistically alike than men. The nature of the variables we have analysed in this paper is key. It is probable (and indeed likely, as our current research on other variables in this community is suggesting) that women use other, less ideologically-loaded, linguistic features to mark intra-gender differentiation. With regards to their use of TRAP and BATH, female Scillonians' linguistic behaviour is constrained by the following factors: (i) the peculiar, and especially salient, status of TRAP and BATH in English English; (ii) the link these variables have with 'education' and associated characteristics; (iii) the indexical links between 'education' and the historically-dominant delineation of the 'Scillonian'; and (iv) the ideological constraints on women to conform to this 'educated' social type and avoid linguistic behaviours that could be negatively evaluated.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we have explored how life trajectory and gender interact in a small island community to affect how men and women use variables of the TRAP and BATH lexical sets. Our results showed that men defined the envelope of variation for these vowels. This was explained as a consequence of different educational experiences, which resulted in divergent life trajectories and the construction of two oppositional Scillonian identity types. The women in the community were found to show less differentiation in their linguistic variation for these vowels. Women's linguistic behaviour was explained as a consequence of constraints on women's sociolinguistic behaviour, irrespective of education types; limitations on the kind of Scillonian identity available to them; and ideological pressures to conform to gendered expectations about language use.

In the course of our analysis, we have questioned the assumption implicit in much sociolinguistic work that use of standard language features straightforwardly reflects orientation to norms external to the local community being studied. The complicated social history of the Isles of Scilly provides a context in which standard language forms take on local meanings linked to local identity types. This is not to say that the StEE-like variants of TRAP and BATH found on Scilly do not carry traces of social meanings available beyond the islands – indeed, our analysis has shown that the ideological baggage associated with variants of these vowels affects how they are used by different groups of speakers. Our point is that their use on Scilly expands and adapts their precise indexical values to reflect the social relations and histories of the islanders. In the context of their use on Scilly, the “local ‘palimpsest’” effect (Lass 1976, 268–269) on these variants means that they are not just StEE-like forms, they are Scillonian forms.

Our study has suggested that there are multiple ways to index a Scillonian identity. These different identity types reflect different experiences of the local environment and different entitlements to local space and resources. Whilst it is tempting to find ways to ‘distil’ the essence of a particular location, our research suggests that place takes on a range of meanings linked to alternative life trajectories. We have found this to be true even in a very small, rural, island location. The Isles of Scilly meet many of the criteria of an isolated community (see Montgomery 2000; Schilling-Estes 2002, 65; Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 2006, 174–178); they are geographically remote, they exhibit historical continuity in their population and they are relatively autonomous from the mainland in terms of their governance. Nonetheless, they exhibit sociolinguistic heterogeneity, linked to different claims about Scillonian identity. Geographical isolation may be less important than how open or exocentric community members are, as Andersen (1988) has observed. Schilling-Estes (2002, 77) has observed that the need to mark out very local distinctions may actually mean that some geographically-isolated communities actually support heterogeneity better than less isolated communities. This seems to be the case in Smith and Durham’s (2011) study, which shows

divergent language use in one very tight-knit community in Shetland, and our data also suggests that this could be true. However, it may just be that research on geographically-isolated communities has tended to more closely interrogate the social criteria by which speakers are identified, given that these communities less easily conform to the hierarchical social models used in sociolinguistic work. Perhaps all communities are more heterogeneous than has been assumed, and we are still in the process of finding ways to adequately conceptualise how individuals inhabit space and create meaning in relation to it.

Notes

1. Figure 2 shows a cluster of anomalous fronted BATH tokens in the data from the mainland-educated males. This data consists of four tokens from one speaker, all of which occur in a stylistically-heightened interview segment. We discuss this anomalous data in depth in Moore and Carter (2015).
2. All names used to identify people from Scilly have been changed to pseudonyms throughout the paper.
3. See Wagner (2013) for an example of women adapting their language use as a consequence of accessing discourses more traditionally associated with men.

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