

DLLL, Lecture Series in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics

Thursday, February 6, 2014

5:15-6:15 pm

Room Ross S 562

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## **Sociolinguistic Variation in the Eastern Caribbean**

*Studies of Caribbean English and English-based creole have tended to focus on the bigger islands (Jamaica, Barbados, Guyana), leaving smaller islands, especially those of the eastern Caribbean, relatively underdescribed. Between 2003 and 2005, we conducted fieldwork in Bequia (St Vincent and the Grenadines), a small island characterized by prior geographic isolation and distinct communities with different settlement histories. Using a corpus of recorded speech with 62 residents, we have been analyzing a number of phonetic and grammatical features. In this paper, I will report on analyses of several of these features: vowel systems, verbal negation, be (the copula), and morphological marking of past tense. Although many of these features occur across all communities in Bequia, overall rates and conditioning by language-internal factors often differ, undoubtedly reflecting the different linguistic systems that each community inherited and subsequently restructured. Although there is some evidence for the existence of multiple linguistic systems, such systems cannot be neatly classified along a cline of creoleness but require a more multidimensional model.*

**\*Reception to follow in the DLLL lounge\***