MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

Sociology on the Rock

Sociology Department Newsletter

Summer 2010 Issue 5

"If we understand knowledge, reality and truth as human constructions, we have even more responsibility to think, argue and make up our minds about our own views and then defend them" (Vivien Burr, Social Constructionism, 2003).

Editor:
Stephen Harold Riggins

Archives:
Issue 5

The Clipboard

By Stephen Riggins

Monique Bourgeois' M.A. thesis won the Master's Award from the Canadian Society for the Study of Higher Education. Her thesis, supervised by Karen Stanbridge, is a textual analysis of the Newfoundland government's White Paper on Public Post-secondary Education. Reasons for pursuing higher education in the white paper are compared with the justifications given by women from rural Newfoundland. Monique found that the white paper tended to over-emphasize economic considerations in attending university.

Read more...

Environmental Politics and the Eco-Economy

By Mark Stoddart

The department of sociology has hired two new assistant professors, Mark Stoddart and Liam Swiss, who will begin teaching in September. Both specialize in economic development. In this article Mark Stoddart discusses his research on the environment and outdoor sport. Liam Swiss will write about his career in the next issue of Sociology on the Rock. Read more...

Academic Life is the Best Gig in the World

By Karen Stanbridge

Broadly speaking, "things political" are what I specialize in, which takes in relations of power, especially as they interrelate to the state. I'm partial to comparative-historical work as are most political sociologists. Reading my resume, it might be difficult to see the connections between my areas of interest, but they do speak to each other. Read more...

With their Rubber Boots on: Sociologists as Modernizers, Strip Miners, Necographers, Romancers and Revivalists

By Jim Overton

This essay examines how academics in general and "sociologists," broadly defined, were seen in Newfoundland in the period from the late 1950s through to the early 1970s. The focus is on critical and negative comments made about sociology and sociologists. Ray Guy's work and that of Memorial University philosopher F. L. Jackson are primary sources for this essay. Read more...

The Sociology Society. Left to right: Heather Gillis, Jenna Hawkins, Commander Cool, Courtney Walsh, Drew Ennis and Chris Martin.

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&

Adam Bradley gave the first public reading of his prose poems at The Bovine on Queen Street West in Toronto. Organized by the Poematheque, the reading took place at a prestigious venue which included some well-established Toronto poets. Adam was accompanied on saxophone and clarinet by another MUN graduate, Greg Bruce. Adam and Greg have also performed together at other venues in Toronto as the duo Hair Gel Burrito.

&

Recent M.A. graduate Tina Mercer and her supervisor, Ailsa Craig, have been collaborating to develop work Ms. Mercer began in her M.A. The result so far, a paper they presented at this year's Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences at Concordia University, has received much media attention. The paper is titled "'I Do' but why do I want to?: Theorizing the Desire to Marry." The work has been profiled by *The National Post* and cited in an article in *The Globe and Mail*.

In addition to newspaper coverage, Dr. Craig was also interviewed about this co-authored work on CBC Radio One ("On the Go"), Saskatchewan's CKOM ("The John Gormley Show"), and Ontario's 570News ("The Gary Doyle Show").

&

In November Stephen Riggins taught an advanced course on critical discourse analysis to sociology majors studying at the Mita campus of Keio University in Tokyo. Established in 1858, Keio University was Japan's first private institution of higher learning. His course concentrated on deconstructing discourses of ethnicity in print media. Stephen also presented a paper about contemporary Aboriginal communications societies in Canada.

&

Scott Kenney will be spending his sabbatical at the University of Sheffield. He was invited by the Director of the Centre for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism. During his sabbatical he will be preparing a book on constructions of meaning among contemporary Freemasons.

&

Laura Winters was accepted into the Ph.D. program in sociology at the University of New Brunswick with a top-tier arts graduate assistantship and a doctoral tuition award. These awards are offered to students with outstanding academic qualifications and potential.

&

Hillory Tenute was accepted into the Ph.D. programs in sociology at both Carleton and York universities. She will be attending Carleton where she has been offered a generous four-year fellowship.

&

Completion of the fourth-year internship course in the department of sociology has resulted in some immediate job offers. This spring the Community Service Council offered Jenna Hawkins a position conducting research on the nonprofit sector of the economy. Ellen O'Gorman will be working at the Pottle Centre in St. John's before leaving for the University of New Brunswick to study law.

&

Kimberly Gill gave her M.A. presentation to the department in December. The title of her presentation was "Guarded Messages and the HPV Vaccine: Social Control and the Eclipsing of Sexual Information for Youth."

&

Jenna Hawkins and Ashley Laracy were the recipients of two SSHRC Master's Scholarship Awards. Jenna's research project is titled "Family-friendly Policies in Newfoundland and Labrador: Towards an Egalitarian and Productive Workplace." Ashley's project is "The Promise of Another Spin: The Moral Career of Video Lottery Players in Newfoundland and Labrador."

&

Nicole Power and Ailsa Craig were honoured as V-Day Warriors this spring. V-Day is a global movement which aims to generate broader attention for the fight to stop violence against women and girls. V-Day Warriors are selected for the contributions they make in promoting awareness of and working against gendered violence. Drs. Power and Craig were very happy to be presented with their awards on March 13th at the annual Vagina Monologues show.

&

I would like to congratulate Chris Martin for taking the initiative of reviving the undergraduate Sociology Society this year. In some twenty years at MUN, I have never seen the Sociology Society as active as it was this year. I particularly appreciate the generous contribution the Society has made to the sociology scholarship.

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By Jim Overton

Under the Native Eye

> *"Ah, yes. Terribly, terribly backward. Terribly, terribly inefficient. No organization. No efficiency. Rather like some of the backward blackamore states we have in Africa. Need to be brought along, you know. Illiterate. Stone age, practically. No idea of getting ahead. No ambition. Stagnant. Peasants. Need to be organized. Drilled. Good for 'em.*
>
> *Our cross to bear. The new white man's burden. Must open their eyes to the joys of capitalism. Obviously, you're not one of them. You're wearing shoes. Can talk frankly.*
>
> *Lack the blood-lust of true capitalistic competition. Deviates. Must be pushed into the mainstream of modern life. Dragged kicking and screaming into the 20th century. Terribly difficult task.*
>
> *Desperate mentality we're dealing with. Infuriating. No particular hunger after the good life. No desire for the joys of suburbs, two cars in garage. Pitiful. Indecent.*
>
> *Must tell them. Must open their eyes. Look at Chicago. Look at Los Angeles. Look at New York. Must be educated to strain their very fibre towards that kind of society. Must be led. Must be dragged.*
>
> *We shall overcome. They will work a 40-hour week. They will drive to work in the morning and drive home in the evening and back to work in the morning and drive home in the evening and…. They'll have nice homes. They'll have nice television sets. They'll have nice mortgages.*
>
> *Make them manageable. Must learn to stop living and live to make a living. Nasty streak there that must be broken. I must break it before it breaks me. I'll. . . I'll. . . My God, doesn't anybody pity me? What a job I'm up against with this stubborn bunch of unruly stone-age baskets."*

This statement from Ray Guy's 1969 essay "Conglomeration: Taking the Pulse" sets the stage for an exploration of how academics in general and "sociologists," broadly defined, were seen in Newfoundland in the period from the late 1950s through to the early 1970s. The focus is on critical and negative comments made about sociology and sociologists. Ray Guy's work and that of Memorial University philosopher F. L. Jackson are primary sources for this essay.

Guy was one of Newfoundland's most important writers in the 1960s and 1970s. As a newspaper reporter and essayist he was prolific and provided a hugely influential on-going commentary on Newfoundland affairs. He won the 1967 National Newspaper Award for feature writing and the Stephen Leacock medal for humour and it was as a political columnist and satirist that he excelled. His first collection of essays You May Know Them as Sea Urchins, Ma'am went through five printings between September 1975 and April 1976 and was followed by a second book That Far Greater Bay in that same year. Various other volumes of his essays have been published, the most recent being The Smallwood Years (2008). From the 1970s on, F. L. (Lin) Jackson was another influential commentator on Newfoundland political, economic and cultural matters in newspaper articles, essays, and his book Newfoundland in Canada (1984), expanded and reprinted as Surviving Confederation in 1986.

Studies of how Westerners – traders, tourists, travellers, missionaries, colonizers, etc. – view the people that they encounter are currently popular. An account of how Newfoundland and Labrador has been seen by others was undertaken in Patrick O'Flaherty's The Rock Observed (1979). In 1937 Julius E. Lips published his book The Savage Hits Back or The White Man through Native Eyes, completed while he was working in Labrador. According to Malinowski's introduction to the book, Lips had provided "the only objective, clear, and telling documentation of native opinion on Europeans." What Lips reported "was unexpected, full of knavery and genius, and inexorable." This essay is in the Lips' tradition, focusing not on how those who came to colonize, convert, study, view, civilize, and exploit saw Newfoundland, but on how academics and sociologists were viewed by "the Other."

There is little record of what the vast majority of people in Newfoundland and Labrador thought about the presence of academic researchers in the province. However, from the mid-to-late 1960s a distinct current of critical comment can be found. In the 1960s, the word "sociologist" began to appear in Newfoundland writing and it was often used pejoratively.

According to Stuart Pierson (1987), Ray Guy was in a tradition of journalists "having in common their populism, their love of plain speaking, and their doubts about modern, or market society." He had a finely tuned "hot air" detector and was wary of the "impressive, puffed-up, pompous or hifalutin prose" by which "advertisers, propagandists, social scientists, educators, and bureaucrats try to turn molehills into scenes of alpine grandeur." Guy saw himself as a truth-teller and a bull shit detector, with a nose for pretense, hypocrisy, and humbug. It was as a "layman bayman" that he observed the activities of the so-called 'ologists.

It was also as "a local boy" and with "a native eye, ear or memory" that the work of social scientists was viewed and appraised by Memorial University philosophy professor F. L. Jackson (1990). Jackson speaks as an owner and takes the attack personally. Like Ray Guy, his stance is that of the local observer, the insider, the native, commenting on what the outsiders are making of his place, his history, his culture – or simple of "us." He speaks as someone suffering from "theory overload," against the CFA academics who are "sharpening their academic axes" on his province, exhibiting their "theoretical biases," purveying their "dogma," undertaking

their “theory-constipated inquiry” which has “missed, obscured or distorted” Newfoundland society, and engaging in “bad ideological theatre.”

Aliens About

One persistent image is that of academics and “sociologists” as “alien beings,” “invading,” “descending on,” and “conquering” Newfoundland, or “skulking among the outharbors” in order to obtain “material” which would get “a degree or ... be filed for further scholarly ‘study.’” There is talk of the outports being “strip-mined” by researchers and “stalked” by rubber booted sociologists and anthropologists with British or CFA accents. Ray Guy’s list of aliens in “The Invasion has begun in earnest” (1968) includes “university professors and presidents, sociologists, anthropologists, researchers” as well as “artists and dramatists” and the heads of a variety of important organizations, including the CBC. Guy even suggested that “a task for one of the invading sociologists” would be to “classify the types that make up the invaders and catalogue their reasons for coming here.”

The hunting/military metaphors are striking. Ray Guy talked of “battalions of sociologists, anthropologists and folklorists” (Guy, 1976); F. L. Jackson (1990) of a “blitzkrieg of ‘scientific’ analysis inflicted upon Newfoundland outport culture” by “come-from-away academics” (Jackson, 1991), and of “phalanxes of anthropologists and folklorists” – suggesting infantry in line of battle. He talks of the “social scientific conquest of my province,” of the mining of “cultural history” by “mostly British” academics “who came from away to tell us who we were.”

The arrival of so-called ‘ologists was seen by some as a threatening and unwelcome intrusion. The motives and intentions of the invaders often remained obscure. Their actions were questioned. There is a xenophobic, nationalist thread running through the writing of Guy and Jackson and others in this period. They reacted against what they regard as alien ideas, an alien presence (CFAs), and the imposition of what Ron Crocker (1973) called an “alien lifestyle.” Claude Quigley (1974), writing in the Newfoundland and Labrador Rural Development Council’s publication The Rounder, noted that it was in vogue to “lament the passing of our unique way of life which critics claim is being replaced by ‘North American values’” and the North American Way of Life (NAWOL). Patrick O’Flaherty (1975) called on people to prevent the “more vulgar aspects of North American life from intruding into our communities.”

Hitting Back at the Modernizers

These images of social scientists as aliens should be set against the view that celebrates the 1960s and 1970s as a kind of golden age of academic research and writing about Newfoundland on the part of sociologists, anthropologists, folklorists, historians and others. Robert Paine (1997) describes this as “a period of discovery” with the university being “perhaps in the vanguard” of the process, and with the “Newfoundland contingent on the faculty” providing “the yeast without which our ‘loaf’ would not have risen.”

In 1980, Anthony Cohen celebrated the work of Memorial University’s Institute of Social and Economic Research, suggesting that it “had become the single most important centre for research on the peripheral areas of North-west Europe, the Northern North Atlantic and the East Arctic” and as a consequence Newfoundland had become the “the best documented society in this huge region.” Similar comments were made by Gail Pool in 1999, when he noted that Newfoundland and Labrador is one of the “most studied regions of Canada as far as anthropology and sociology are concerned” and that the early studies undertaken by ISER are “among the best” done.

The “Needs and Opportunities for Economic and Socio-Economic Research in Canada’s Atlantic Provinces” were discussed at a seminar at Dalhousie University in Halifax in late 1958 attended by Dr. S. D. Clark, professor of sociology at the University of Toronto, and a Newfoundland contingent which included sociologist Don Willmott from Memorial. The seminar outlined what was to become the main research agenda for economic and social scientists from the late 1950s through the 1960s and beyond, research questions being largely posed within a “modernization theory” framework. The main focus was on the negative effects that behaviour and social and cultural structures might have on the development of economic enterprise.

Within months of this seminar, efforts were initiated which led to the formation of Memorial University’s Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) in 1961. ISER was headed by Parzival Copes and Ian Whitaker, a graduate of the universities of Cambridge and Oslo and a former employee of the inter-disciplinary Institute of Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

Whitaker had arrived in Newfoundland in 1959 to undertake a study of the value orientations of Newfoundlanders along the lines of the work done by Florence Kluckhohn, and by Whitaker himself in the Irish community of Great Blasket. According to Whitaker (1988), financed by a grant from the Atlantic Province’s Economic Council, aided by “the advice of the neophyte sociology and anthropology students whom I was teaching at Memorial University of Newfoundland,” and “assisted by one or two students, then not even half-trained as social scientists,” he set forth to break new ground for the social scientist in Newfoundland by travelling “slowly along the [south west] coast” to “record a rapidly vanishing way of life.”

Perhaps the most sustained research effort in the period came from economist Parzival Copes, who had arrived at Memorial in 1957. Working within a modernization framework, he became the primary academic proponent of the policy of resettlement of small rural communities. Work was also undertaken by other social scientists associated with ISER, some of it for federal government agencies involved in regional development work with ISER acting as broker (Neis, 1992). As Robert Paine (1969) noted, ISER “authorized” a “working partnership” between academics and “the leviathan of modern government” in the area of “applied research.” While Paine provided an assurance that “the Institute emerged from the exercise with its scientific integrity unblemished,” there were some who expressed doubts.

Another major research effort was associated with the Royal Commission on Newfoundland’s Economy and Prospects, which reported in 1967. Unabashedly pro-modernization, when the Commission noted that “a Bulldozer can move trees and earth but not ideas and habits,” it suggested a role for the social scientist and educator in “removing obstacles to growth” based on sociologist Ian Whitaker’s essay, “Sociological Preconditions and Concomitants of Rapid Socio-Economic Development in Newfoundland,” which was included in the Commission’s report. Whitaker accepted “the assumption... that the goal of rapid social change by industrialization in the western capitalist model is essential for the province,” arguing that there existed a “rural ethic” in Newfoundland and that “capital accumulation is in some sense seen as an anti-social activity,” both these being barriers to social change and “inimical to development,” and as such to be “deliberately changed.” The tide of modernization was still riding high in the late 1960s and early 1970s and Whitaker’s essay was used in W.E. Mann’s Social and Cultural Change in Canada, published in 1970, a celebration of modernization in action in Canada which included the transformation of “the isolated, inbred, pre-modern

fishing communities of coastal Newfoundland."

Taking on the role of what C. Wright Mills called "advisors to the king," Whitaker, ISER and sociology became part and parcel of the broader movement of modernization by which post-confederation Newfoundland was being transformed. It would be some time before a major shift in thinking would allow "the modernization of Newfoundland" to be condemned by Ray Morrow (1991) as one of Canada's great colonial crimes. In the 1960s even the rather muted criticisms of those working on resettlement and rural development issues were with rather than against the grain of modernization. It was in this period that the idea that Newfoundland was a "traditional" rather than a "modern" society came to be widely accepted by both academics and non-academics.

Those setting themselves up as civilizers, modernizers and reformers run risks; those on the receiving end of the civilizing and improving activities may hit back. As Stuart Pierson suggests, there is "a deep conservatism" in Ray Guy's work, and he was suspicious of the civilizers and the modernizers. He reacted strongly against being "bettered," that is, having more progress "stuffed down our throats hand over fist" until "we are ready to retch or bust" (Guy, "The Invasion has begun in earnest," 1968). However, he tended to see the alien invasion and modernization as inevitable and unstoppable, even if he believed that, however futile resistance might be, it was still worthwhile.

For Guy, the modernizers and civilizers are seen as evangelicals with a dictatorial bent. In several of his columns in the late 1960s, he launched a populist attack on modernization and those he held to be responsible for this, focusing especially on the centralization/resettlement issue, and even using some of the work of social scientists associated with ISER to do this. As one of the leading and most vocal opponents of the resettlement program, Guy played a key role in creating the idea that centralization/resettlement was "a nasty criminal business that killed many of the older people and drove others mad" (Guy, 1981), and that it involved the use of force by the province's premier J.R. Smallwood, who was acting in much the same way as Adolf Hitler had.

More recently the work of the social scientists on rural Newfoundland in the 1960s and early 1970s has been questioned by historian Robert Sweeny (1996). In "The Costs of Modernity," he examines "the role of the human sciences in the Newfoundland crisis," suggesting that the cod collapse of the 1990s:

...was in no small measure the result of public policies based on an analysis of Newfoundland society developed by historians and social scientists over the past half century. For once, the combined wisdom of the academic human sciences was heeded; the end result has been unmitigated disaster.

Sweeny's argument is that "the human sciences played a determining role in this debate by identifying the inshore fishery as the principal impediment to modernisation and successful economic development." And this was done "almost exclusively by scholars who were 'CFAs,' that is to say Come From Aways – non-Newfoundlanders, who studied this society from without rather than from within"; in the process these "expatriate experts" imposed on Newfoundland an "external viewpoint." Sweeny sees scholars in the human sciences as being responsible for defining rural Newfoundland as "traditional" and the outport inshore fishery as a "traditional fishery" – a "negative assessment of the inshore fishery" which reinforced the idea that the inshore fishery had been holding back development. Sweeny's argument is that the work of sociologists and anthropologists – their "assumptions and theoretical frameworks" – inadvertently provided support for a program of modernization in the fishery and that this led to an "unprecedented, made in Canada, environmental disaster" – the crisis of overfishing that led to the Cod Moratorium of 1992.

Specimen's Revolt

An essential element of the modernizing process was the conducting of research on Newfoundland. In many ways the 1960s was the age of surveys and many early critical comments of the work of the 'ologists focused on this aspect of their work. Whitaker and other were involved in surveys which ranged from examining "the core values of Newfoundlanders" to small-scale agriculture (gardening) – the former funded by the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council and the latter by the federal ARDA program and conducted under the auspices of ISER in 1963. But other 'ologists were also afoot, including the folklorists who were collecting material even before the creation of the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive in 1968.

What Robert Paine (1997), following George Story (1972), tells us was once seen as a "twilight world" was now "in all its singularities of time, space and place, language and people – to be mapped and, still more important, to be honoured." Mapped and measured, perhaps, but not everyone was happy about this and not all agreed that Newfoundland was being honoured.

As the "spokesperson" for Bung Hole Tickle and Nonentity Bay, Ray Guy took a critical and desultory stance towards being mapped and honoured, sharpening his satirical wit at the expense of sociologists, anthropologists and assorted others in a number of his columns in the late 1960s. He zeroed in on the surveyors – the fact collectors, who, armed with questionnaires, were prying and poking in to all of Newfoundland's nooks and crannies. He objected to "our outport people pinned to the wall and examined by sociologists like rare insects" in order to "examine in minute detail their speech, customs and way of life." Guy's was a call for "a bit of respect for human dignity."

One defense mechanism was to turn the tables on the collectors and classifiers by studying them, by surveying their activities. Guy specialized in this, parodying the new fashion in academic and political life for "scientific" surveys by telling us that he had conducted his own "survey" on the eve of the 20th anniversary of confederation in 1969.

Not willing to trust entirely to the opinion of our rather narrow – and ever narrowing – circle of friends, we decided to range afield and go out into every nook and cranny of Newfoundland (particularly the crannies) to seek out opinion and to feel the pulse. We were determined not to weight our investigation with regard to race, color, religion or creed, outport or town, male or female, young or old, rich or poor, Liberal or dirty Tory. To take our first random sampling we journeyed to that quaint and charming settlement in Nonentity Bay – Bung Hole Tickle. It is not what you would call a cranny but is, rather, one of our larger nooks.

To Guy, it seemed as if everything was being studied and surveyed. In a 1970 column, he noted that Memorial University's Institute for Research into Human Abilities was involved in a study of the effects of resettlement on intelligence. "Whatever next?" is Guy's unstated message. But he also provides us with a picture of Professor Scrod who, together with his tape recorder, turned "three complete somersaults before they hit the water" in Bung Hole Tickle Harbour.

F. L. Jackson (1990) was also wary of being placed under the academic microscope, using himself as an example of what he calls "the Specimen's Revolt" (1990) in this view of the "halcyon days of the local anthropological gold rush":

"...my wife and I were invited to a social gathering of visiting academics ending a major conference on the Newfoundland Cultural Heritage. It became clear as the evening progressed that we had mistaken our presence and function there: we were not academic colleagues, but raw cultural data; not fellow observers, but specimens. This evoked a giddy reflection as to who was observing whom and we specimens resolved to wile away the rest of the evening observing the curious traits of Homo Levi-Straussicus – the floor sitting habit, the classification of theoretical stances into positivist/romantic, culture-free and culture-omnivorous."

In Jackson's words, "it was quite startling, indeed very flattering, to be informed by our new social scientist friends that we were in fact an extraordinary, pristine breed, with a rare mint-condition, pre-industrial culture and living out a version of the world-historical class struggle in exquisite microcosm on our blighted rock." If, indeed, he was for a moment flattered, this did not last long; he soon became a bitter and incisive critic of the work of social scientists.

Romantic Rebellion

Jonathan Friedman (1987) suggests that during the "romantic rebellion" of "the roaring sixties," to many in social science disciplines the "idea of progress began to appear like a disease," and "primitive and traditional cultures" came to be "understood as successful struggles against development and a totally policed state of the future." Moreover, many within these disciplines were increasingly willing to question their own role in society. Howard Becker (1967) asked "Whose Side Are We On?" In France, "the Nanterre Students" asked "Why Sociologists?" (Cohn-Bendit, 1969). In North America, Martin Nicolaus (1968, 1972) called for a "Sociology Liberation Movement" and Alvin Gouldner (1970) talked of Western sociology's "coming crisis" and the need for "partisan sociology." In Britain, there was growing evidence that what Peter Townsend (1981) called "sociological guerrillas" were at work.

It is important not to overestimate the extent to which these broader trends had transformed the work of social scientists in Newfoundland in the 1960s. In the late 1960s the modernizers continued to dominate thinking about development. However, both in academic and non-academic circles, new "players" arrived on the scene in Newfoundland and there was evidence of a somewhat more critical stance towards capitalism, the state, and academia.

Some academics and other members of the urban intelligentsia demonstrated their affinity for, and solidarity with, rural Newfoundland in this period by taking Ralph Matthews' (1975) advice and becoming "activists" in defense of rural life. Others became what Levi-Strauss called "necographers" – those involved in recording the death throes of threatened ways of life, or following Ray Guy's suggestion to "salvage" the best of the Newfoundland way of life.

Requiem, rescue, and revival were all aspects of the more radical trend in the social sciences from the late 1960s on. The efforts of the social scientists as savers of culture and celebrators of tradition would be clearly linked to what Sandra Gwyn (1976) called "the Newfoundland renaissance" and others described as a "revival," "cultural revolution," "neo-nationalism," or as "nativism," "tribalism" or the "Newfcult" phenomenon. What had once been looked down upon or ignored was now fashionable in some circles. As Patrick O'Flaherty noted in 1975, "it is amusing to see some who once scorned the outport now trying to cultivate the outharbour speech habits and developing their own 'Newfoundland identity.'"

Resettlement was one of the key battlegrounds between what Patrick O'Flaherty (1993) described as "a new breed of trendy academics and journalists" and those who supported the resettlement program. Parzival Copes had "become a symbol of bureaucratic tampering with the out-harbours," and "poets as well as sociologists were taking to the barricades against him."2 Copes described those who would "put resettlement into reverse," his opponents, as "save-the-outports enthusiasts" – "self-appointed protectors, the urban-dwelling rural romantics" who sought to "save a way of life" that they would never be content to live themselves.

Guy continued to pursue his battle with the modernizers, and with Parzival Copes over the resettlement issue. But he also kept a weather eye open for new trends and he became a regular and incisive critic of a range of fads and fashions. He took on the "necographers" in his 1968 essay on the "'colourful Newfie' binge," where he comments: "The professors have joined the scramble to record and preserve this abundant 'color' – all in the interests of science, of course," adding that "We're tired of being treated like some lost tribe with bizarre customs and ridiculous manners." As part of a rant against the National Film Board's "study" of Fogo he described the "beard-and-beret lads stumbling over each other's tripods and telephoto lenses in the frantic search for the raw truth – and color." He also commented critically on what he called the "social consciousness" phenomenon – the activist trend.

Other critics made similar comments. Sandra Gwyn (1976) described Memorial's Folklore Department as "a scholarly repository for layer upon layer of Newfoundland's cultural heritage, strip-mined by anthropologists who came mostly from the U.S." Claude Quigley (1974), too, hurled a rubber boot in the direction of the social scientists when he noted the presence of "Academics (most of them British) wearing rubber boots and sporting Gambo sods parade around the 20th century campus of Memorial University and discuss the sad and sorrowful plight of the 'noble savage.'"3

Guy and others also became incisive critics of the growing cultural revival in Newfoundland, often focusing on the connection between academics and the movement. Sandra Gwyn saw Memorial as the "crossroads and command post" of Newfoundland's "cultural revolution." In 1977, Guy commented on the rise of 'Professional Baymanism,'" noting the involvement of Memorial University in "The Patriot Game" and "ethnic lunacy" of the period. The power of the renaissance and its mythology is captured well by Jackson (1990) in his comment that "it was impossible to swim against the Newf-cultic tide at the time, as everyone was into it his rubber boots on." He also suggests that social scientists played a key role in persuading Newfoundlanders to "celebrate" their "newly-acclaimed cultural heritage" by "exhuming it and putting it on stage, page and canvas." He sees some good in this "identity-building" exercise because it "fueled a new pride of place, language and peoplehood." However, he suggests that "the Newfcult spree of the '70s and '80s" involved a great deal of "fancy and fabrication." Most cringe-inducing from Jackson's point of view were "the caricatures of the alleged 'earthy authenticity' of the old outport life which hopelessly romanticized even its most mean and desperate side." Jackson's view is that "social scientists" were responsible for misunderstanding and misrepresenting Newfoundland society, the problem being the "notoriously theory-prone" nature of their science and the tendency for there to be "great piles of ideological baggage loaded onto the backs of a few puny, undeserving facts, or innocent phenomena cruelly tortured to make them confess to crimes of which they are ignorant."

Conclusion

The history of sociology is not just about what academic theorists and practitioners think and do. It is also about their effect on the

world around and how they are seen by those who are on the receiving end of academic attention and action. In the Newfoundland case, whether social scientists act as civilizers, modernizers, or surveyors; or whether they act as recorders, rescuers, or revivers, their actions are scrutinized, evaluated and criticized. And they may be treated with suspicion, even deep skepticism and, occasionally, hostility. Recognizing this is important if we agree with Levi-Strauss that “doubt” is essential for the social scientist’s method and that it is necessary to expose ourselves to “the insults and denials inflicted on [our] dearest ideas and habits by those ideas and habits which may contradict them to the highest degree.”

MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY

Sociology on the Rock

Sociology Department Newsletter

Summer 2010 Issue 5

Academic Life is the Best Gig in the World

By Karen Stanbridge

Broadly speaking, "things political" are what I specialize in, which takes in relations of power, especially as they interrelate to the state. I'm partial to comparative-historical work as are most political sociologists. Reading my resume, it might be difficult to see the connections between my areas of interest, but they do speak to each other.

Broadly speaking, "things political" are what I specialize in, which takes in relations of power, especially as they interrelate to the state. I'm partial to comparative-historical work as are most political sociologists. Reading my resume, it might be difficult to see the connections between my areas of interest, but they do speak to each other.

My M.A. and Ph.D. theses examined how state institutions shaped and were in turn shaped by the actions of what I called "politicized groups," people not necessarily in the state proper but who were more closely involved in state processes than the average person: lobby groups, nationalists, social movement actors, and so forth. How I examine these things is a bit unusual, admittedly – plotting differences in the way British and French state officials organised the governance of their colonies in North America; comparing the dynamics of English/British policy-making toward Catholics in 18th-century Ireland and Quebec – but you kind of fall into these things sometimes. I was interested in history and state institutions; my supervisors were specialists in Irish studies and British imperial history. And there you go.

Like many of my students, I came to sociology late in my undergraduate career at Western University, and completely by accident. I was finishing my degree in economics (chosen only because it was my highest mark in first year) and only pulling mediocre marks as I spent all of my time volunteering at the campus radio station. The need for an elective brought me to a course on mass media and society. Changed my life, it did.

I had already realized that the topics in economics which interested me the most – economic history, and issues around social inequality discussed in macroeconomics – seemed marginal to the topics I was supposed to be concerned about, supply and demand curves, inflation and interest rates, and so forth. But sitting in class watching Pete Stemp chain smoke while he railed about the manufacture of consumer needs and the impact of media monopolization, well, it came together for me and I was hooked. I picked up my three-year B.A. in economics and set off to complete an honours degree in sociology.

And then I dropped out. Not entirely sure why. Some of it had to do with working as a research assistant on a huge quantitative study about the residual health effects of living with a disability and realizing that the research model I'd learned in methods and statistics didn't always unfold the way the books said it should. I actually expressed my disillusionment to Professor Stemp, who laughed, not unkindly, then said something about the real world. Anyway, I left.

Five years of working in the "real world" followed: secretary at a concert hall, secretary at Chatelaine magazine, secretary at an oil and gas company, secretary for a temp service. I learned a lot those years, about people, organizations, negotiation and compromise. And I remembered I had been pretty good at sociology. So I returned to Western to finish what I'd started.

Social theory soon became my passion. I was scared to death of most of my professors, but especially my theory professor Anton Allahar. I never said a peep in his classes, but was so anxious that I do well that I read and read and read. Allahar encouraged his students to challenge him and take risks in their writing, so I did. Well, I didn't challenge him because all words from him were pearls, as far as I was concerned, but take risks? Certainly. And it paid off. He praised; I wrote some more. And so it went. I also turned out to be pretty good at statistics too, luckily, and although statistics didn't really do much for me I came to appreciate how numbers and social phenomena could be combined toward both good and evil ends. I was accepted into the graduate program at Western.

When my students ask me about grad studies, many of them say "But SEVEN YEARS is soooo long." True, I say, but it's not like your life doesn't continue along as you're completing your degrees. And mine did too: I got married (to my handsome and talented husband Pete), bought a house and a car, had my first child (my handsome and talented son Chris). And chugging away behind all this, overshadowing it at times, especially in the face of deadlines, was the Master's and the Ph.D. I can remember details, if I try hard enough, and I draw upon the experiences to contextualise what my own grad students may be experiencing.

I've filed those years like I've filed childbirth: somewhat uncomfortable, at times painful, but ultimately rewarding. This is especially true of the year of sessional teaching I did for Western's sociology department after I graduated. How I managed to teach a year of introductory methods and statistics, and organizational behaviour to 120 "pre-business" students, I'm not sure. A small office overlooking a loading zone and lots of coffee come to mind. A postdoctoral fellowship from SSHRC finally took me and my family away from London, Ontario, to Finland. There I worked at the University of Helsinki until MUN said they would have me and we returned to Canada. And so here I've been since 2001, a political sociologist (and now mother of two after my lovely and talented daughter Dana arrived), happily teaching, writing and doing academic things in, from, and about Newfoundland.

I extended my research to Finland during my time at the University of Helsinki. It was through my study of the Åland Islands secessionist movement that I became more involved with theories of social movements and nationalism. This shift was good for me professionally in a number of ways, research-wise certainly, but it was also the catalyst for my beginning to forge contacts with other scholars in Canada engaged in "contention research."

Djordje Stefanovic (now of St. Mary's University) and I thought it would be a good idea to pull together people with similar research

interests. I called for expressions of interest and the Canadian Network for the Study of Mobilization and Conflict was born. Yes, it's an ungainly name, but inclusive, and a great vehicle for establishing and maintaining connections and generating research projects with like-minded people.

My newest work concerns children and politics, especially how modern constructions of children and childhood intersect with the modern nation-state. "Politics" and "children" are not terms we often find together, and that's precisely why I find their study so interesting: it's the exclusion of children and childhood from Western liberal political discourse (or more correctly the delimited way in which they are included) which is the puzzle framing many of my questions. I explore how "the child" as a structural category has developed historically, and how it has been pivotal to the structuring of the nation-state, including the expression of modern nationalisms. I also continue to examine these things through historical case studies of Newfoundland, Ireland, and Finland.

I have found that examining the state and nationalisms through the lens of children and childhood has opened up entirely new avenues of thought for me. I often find myself caught between two distinct fields of research, however: the (female-dominated) sociology of childhood scholars and educationalists, who do not often engage macro and/or political theory; and the (male-dominated) political/state sociologists, who have little interest in children and childhood. Both tend to look at me a little strangely. But I have collected around me a number of other scholars from different places who study children and politics in this way.

It's been almost twelve years since I received my Ph.D. and I'm still having a grand time. I always tell my students that the academic life is the best gig in the world, and that MUN is the best place to enjoy it. Wasn't I smart to end up here?!

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Environmental Politics and the Eco-Economy

By Mark Stoddart

The department of sociology has hired two new assistant professors, Mark Stoddart and Liam Swiss, who will begin teaching in September. Both specialize in economic development. In this article Mark Stoddart discusses his research on the environment and outdoor sport. Liam Swiss will write about his career in the next issue of Sociology on the Rock.

Sociology was Plan B. After growing up in western Quebec, I moved in 1992 to California and attended music school to study electric bass. This was followed by a move to Vancouver the next year, where I played and taught bass until tiring of late nights, (then) smoky bars and low wages. I became aware of sociology a few years later, shortly after beginning my B.A. through Athabasca University. The discipline seemed like a good fit with my personal interests in environmental activism, alternative media and social justice. Twelve years down the long path from student to sociologist, Plan B has turned out to be intellectually stimulating and personally fulfilling.

Upon completion of my B.A. in 2002 (with a major in sociology), I went to the University of Victoria to work with Dr. William K. Carroll. My M.A. research focused on the media framing of forestry policy debate in BC. I examined the Vancouver Sun's coverage of the Protected Areas Strategy (designed to protect 12% of the provincial land-base) and the Forest Practices Code (designed to improve forestry practices), both introduced by the NDP government during the 1990s. These cases were compared with coverage of the Working Forest (a failed proposal to legally prioritize forestry on Crown land outside protected areas) and the Results-based Forest Practices Code (designed to deregulate the forest industry), both introduced by the Liberal government. Drawing on Gramscian and Foucauldian theory, this work argues that the Vancouver Sun limits debate over forestry policy to the hegemonic alternatives of "eco-managerialism" and "eco-capitalism." This network of power/knowledge is constructed from three major organizational standpoints: government, industry and environmentalists. The voices of First Nations and labour are marginalized from the media narrative, as are environmental discourses which present a radical alternative to the ecological and social justice impacts of our dominant economic and political structures. Articles based on this work were published in Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change; and in Local Environment.

While at the University of Victoria, I also had the pleasure of working with Dr. Susan C. Boyd as a research assistant on her project Hooked: Drug War Films in Britain, Canada, and the United States. This project examined media discourses of drug trafficking and use in over 100 films produced since 1916. This project provided valuable experience in cultural criminology and visual sociology. As an off-shoot of this project, I examined how drug narratives work in racialized and gendered ways in comic books. An article based on this work was published in the Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture. While this work piqued my interest in deviance and crime, these interests have been side-tracked by my primary focus on environmental sociology.

My work on mass media and forestry conflict led to two important realizations. First, that many people were working on the social dynamics of forestry and environmentalism in British Columbia. Second, that relatively little sociological attention had been given to the increasing prevalence and importance of outdoor sport and nature tourism in B.C. or elsewhere in Canada. As a result, I turned my attention to skiing as an entry point to examine the eco-politics of what Luke terms the "attractive economy," wherein non-human nature is valued as a site of experience rather than as a natural resource pool. This work was carried out at the University of British Columbia, under the supervision of Dr. David B. Tindall. A book manuscript based on this research, Making Meaning out of Mountains: Skiing, the Environment and Eco-Politics, is under advanced contract with UBC Press.

Skiing brings to mind images of steep, snowy mountains, sunshine and athletic men and women having fun. My research takes a sociological look at the eco-politics of skiing, with a focus on British Columbia. Drawing on textual analysis, field observation and interviews with skiers, this research explores the eco-political ambiguities within the sport. Ski resort companies position themselves as pro-environmental stewards of mountain landscapes. Skiers also talk about how their sport allows them to go out into nature, experience it and come to care for it. However, environmental groups and First Nations protesters occasionally disrupt this image of skiing at places like Jumbo Pass, Sun Peaks and Melvin Creek. They argue that it infringes on wildlife and unceded First Nations territory. Skiers also offer reflexive accounts of the environmental impacts of their sport.

My research describes how the meaning of skiing landscapes is not fixed, but is contested by the ski industry, skiers, the mass media and social movement groups. Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour and John Urry, this work argues that skiing is not only "socially constructed," but is co-constructed by humans in interaction with technologies and non-human nature. As a recreational form of interaction with mountain environments, skiing is also the site for multiple flows of power, based on gender, ethnicity, class and species. While the research is grounded in Vancouver, Whistler and Nelson, British Columbia, it illustrates how local sporting practices intersect with (partially) globalized flows of tourism and migration, climate change, social movement politics and media representations of nature.

My mentorship with Dr. Tindall at UBC also included working with him as a Research Assistant on his ongoing program of work on the social dynamics of environmental movement participation in Canada. This research included surveys of over 1000 members of Canadian environmental organizations and 1000 members of the Canadian general public. Through my experience with Dr. Tindall, I gained familiarity with survey research design and analysis as well as social network analysis. This has added to my appreciation for the potential of quantitative research, and has also stoked my interest in mixed-methods forms of data collection and analysis. We have collaborated on several articles based on qualitative data collected from environmental movement members. Two of these are forthcoming. The first, which will appear in BC Studies, examines how ecofeminist discourses are taken up and used by environmentalists to interpret the connections between gender and environmentalism.

The second of these articles, which will appear in Social Movement Studies, examines the meanings ascribed to social networks

by environmental movement participants. Environmental group participation creates multiplex social networks, encompassing work, leisure and friendship. Social movement networks are conduits for information exchange among environmental groups and they amplify the political power of individual participants. Ties to government workers and forest company management are more intense – based on frequency of contact – than ties to forestry labour or First Nations groups. However, forestry workers and First Nations are viewed more positively than government or forest company management. This illustrates how the intensity of social network ties can be distinguished from the subjective meanings attached to them by network participants.

In July 2009, I relocated to Atlantic Canada to take up a Killam Postdoctoral Fellowship at Dalhousie University, where I worked with Dr. Howard Ramos. This position allowed me to expand my dissertation research by carrying out a comparative case study of social movements and outdoor sport at Jumbo Pass, British Columbia; and the Tobeatic Wilderness Area, Nova Scotia. The Tobeatic Wilderness Area is a popular destination for canoeing, hiking, hunting and fishing. At the same time, environmental groups challenge All-Terrain Vehicle use in this area as an ecologically illegitimate form of outdoor recreation. Jumbo Glacier Resort is a proposed ski resort development that would be located in the Purcell Mountains near Invermere, British Columbia. It has been opposed by environmental groups and First Nations – often with the support of hikers and backcountry skiers – because of its potential impacts on wildlife populations and alpine eco-systems. This project combines textual analysis of newspaper coverage and interviews with environmentalists to compare the media framing and social dynamics of eco-politics and outdoor sport in these two cases. Through this work, I have been able to further explore the methodological potential of linking qualitative data collection and analysis with quantitative techniques from social network analysis. This approach allows me to preserve the integrity of qualitative data while mapping out the large-scale connections among discursive themes, claims-makers, and media outlets.

I have greatly enjoyed my relocation to Atlantic Canada and am excited about participating in the Department of Sociology at Memorial in the years to come. Through an ongoing focus on Canadian research sites, the long-term goal of my research program is to add to our substantive knowledge and theoretical understanding in three inter-related areas: the eco-politics of outdoor sport and nature tourism; media representations of environmental conflict; and the cultural dynamics of environmental movement participation.