



Sociology on the Rock

Sociology Department Newsletter

Winter 2011

Issue 6

"There is nothing as theoretical as a good story. Theory meets story when we think with a story rather than about it." Arthur P. Bochner.

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Reflecting on how best to introduce myself in this newsletter, I puzzled over how I once was an aspiring marine biologist intent on saving whales and yet have arrived as a recently-minted political sociologist and new faculty member at MUN. The leap from would-be natural scientist to social scientist might seem an unusual one. Yes, the only whales I have seen lately are those viewed through my kitchen window this past summer. But you just need to add the word "social" in front of "scientist" and you can easily make the jump from marine biology to political sociology. [Read more...](#)

We're Not All Outports Here! Exploring Newfoundland and Labrador's Other "Rurals"

By Deatra Walsh

Ravaged by the end of the cod fishery and left desolate by the exodus of people, both young and old, in search of prosperous opportunities elsewhere, what, if anything, is left to be said about rural Newfoundland? [Read more...](#)

Engaging Experiences, Engaging Voices

By Marie Croll

I teach sociology at the Grenfell Campus of Memorial – an incredibly straightforward statement given the circuitous route that brought me here. As with many other sociologists I know, I came to the discipline late and through somewhat of a side door. Following two graduate degrees, one in English literature and the other in counselling, what may strike the outside observer as disparate disciplines, I settled into the study of sociology which (perhaps begrudgingly) integrated my eclectic interests and now provides me with an academic home in the interdisciplinary programme, Social/Cultural Studies.

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"After the Rain." Photos by Peter Sinclair [More photos...](#)

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Anton Oleinik's book *Market as a Weapon: The Socio-economic Machinery of Dominance in Russia* appeared this autumn in the economics series of Transaction Publishers, Piscataway, New Jersey. The book is described in the publisher's catalogue in these words:

"*Market as a Weapon* focuses on issues of power and domination using the configuration of power relationships in Russia as a 'critical case,' but goes far beyond a narrowly defined scope of country-specific studies. Particular emphasis is put on domination by virtue of a constellation of interests in the market, since this is a relatively underexplored yet broadly used technique for imposing will in all countries that heavily rely on interventionist policies. Instead of being a liberating force, the market becomes an additional instrument facilitating the continuous reproduction of power, which explains the title of the book.

Both qualitative and quantitative data, including more than one hundred in-depth interviews with experts, state servants, and businesspeople in Russia, as well as statistics, are used throughout the text of this major book."

&

Peter Sinclair's book *Energy in Canada* was published this autumn by Oxford University Press.

"Energy is at the core of the way Canadians live. Yet recent research indicates that North America's supply of oil – our most consumed source of primary energy – may only last until 2025. So what happens when this valuable resource runs dry?

In this highly readable introduction, Peter Sinclair examines the history of energy production and consumption leading to the impending energy 'crisis.' What policy decisions have been made along the way and in whose interests?

From the Alberta oil sands to offshore drilling in Newfoundland and Labrador, Sinclair delves into the hot button issues that affect Canadians today. Looking ahead, he points to which alternative and renewable energies we may rely on and the environmental, social, and political pressures that are increasingly pushing Canadians toward a critical change."

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Some recent publication by Mark Stoddart: "Grizzlies and Gondolas: Animals and the Meaning of Skiing Landscapes in British Columbia, Canada," *Nature and Culture*, Vol. 6, No. 1.

Mark Stoddart and David B. Tindall, "Feminism and Environmentalism: Perspectives on Gender in the BC Environmental Movement during the 1990s," *BC Studies*, Issue 165.

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Judy Adler's paper "La Consolation du Philosophe" has appeared as one of the tributes to the philosopher and sociologist Michel Serres in *Cahiers de L'Herne: Michel Serres*. Paris: Editions de L'Herne.

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I would like to congratulate Masoud Kianpour for successfully defending his Ph.D. thesis *Emotion Management in Hospital Chaplaincy* in September. Dr. Kianpour also completed this work in record time. Only people who have lived and worked in a foreign country understand how difficult it is to complete a Ph.D. in a second language. He is presently teaching courses in industrial sociology and English for Sociology Majors at the University of Isfahan in Iran.

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Ailsa Craig has been awarded a Fulbright Foundation Community Leadership Project Grant for her proposed program, "Make it Better on the Rock: Gender and Sexual Diversity Advocacy for Newfoundland Youth." Ailsa will work with Fulbright Alumni Yolanda Wiersma (Biology), Jennifer Selby (Religious Studies) and Angela Carter (Environmental Studies, Grenfell) as well as community partners, Planned Parenthood, EGALÉ Canada, and the San Francisco-based GSA network that sponsors the US "Make It Better" project.

Ailsa is also co-applicant for a successful SSHRC Workshop grant for an event to be held this spring at Carleton University on the

theme "Cultures of Circulation."

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The January 13th issue of the MUN newspaper, *Gazette*, highlights the research on working parents by Master's student Jenna Hawkins. Her report "Transitioning into and out of Parental Leave: Recommendations for Three Stages of Support" suggests policy changes for increasing the support offered working mothers and their families, before, during, and after the birth of a child.

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To continue her research activities, Marilyn Porter has been appointed Honorary Research Professor in the Department of Sociology

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"The Outsiders" rock band performed at the sociology society mixer in November at the downtown bar called The Levee. The performers, who are graduate and undergraduate majors in sociology were: Danielle Ryder (vox, or vocalist as the art types might have it), Chris Martin (guitar), Ryan Dinn (drums), and Brad Clarke (bass). The Outsiders has been described as a "90s cover band with a curious social mindset." The band was named in honour of the symbolic interactionist sociologist Howard Becker.

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Darrin McGrath, who completed B.A. and M.A. degrees in sociology at MUN, launched his latest book *The Newfoundland Partridge* this autumn. Printed by DRC Publishing, this paperback book is about the history and biology of the rock and willow partridge.

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Recently Completed M.A. Theses and Extended Research Papers

Andrew Canning, "The Political Economy of Corn: A Case Study of Small-scale Production in Mexico."

Laura Samson, "Where There is No Safe Sex: Young Women and the Negotiation of Risk and Sexuality."

Melissa Squarey, "Youth for Hire: Understanding 'Choice' as Experienced by Young Workers in Rural Contexts."

Hillary Tenute, "Modern Smoke Signals: Inadvertent Assimilation in Canadian Native Newspapers circa 2010."

Laura Winter, "The Case of the Invisible Sex Workers: Addressing how Social Research Transforms Sex Workers into Unseen Citizens."

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As an undergraduate student, I had enjoyed probing the symbolic depths of literary works enough to pursue this interest through a first degree and graduate studies. I became riveted by the disembodied soliloquies of Samuel Beckett's characters, in works such as *The Unnameable* and writings such as Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*. This definitely "dark" literature enthralled me, for it so vividly probed the depths of broken selves and fragmented society. This interest in the relationship between the private and public self never left me and in fact became the abiding theme that ultimately guided me into sociology. For during those characteristically introspective days and nights of my first graduate degree I grew to realize that the prospects of circumscribing my love of close analysis to the study of literature alone, and in a career spent solely within the confines of the ivory tower, would always be a bit stifling and, to stick with Beckett's metaphor, a bit disembodied. I struggled with the elitism of study that was disassociated from a hands-on connection to social change. And so, having also been since my teens an armchair fan of Jungian dream analysis I decided to take my diverse interests in symbols, metaphors, and analysis into a more applied domain, and pursued another line of graduate work, this time in counselling. This would become my first real career.

As a graduate student, the internship associated with my counselling degree took place in a clinic that specialized almost solely in matters of abuse and violence. My job there was to co-facilitate a therapy group for sexually abused preteen girls. Even now words cannot describe the harm that had been done to these children, nor can they summarize my initial observations and reaction to the atrocities they had been subjected to. Nevertheless, I realized then that words were needed from both these children and from me to help make sense of these experiences. Words were a link of sorts between their closed off secrets and their potential social reconnection. Like the dark writings that had so enthralled me as a student of literature these were stories that commanded my attention, but this time they also demanded my participation. The significance of this realization and the importance of these first contacts moved me to such an extent that I wanted to work in this area.

This I did. A decade of private practice as a therapist in Western Newfoundland subsequently generated discoveries that would prove pivotal in terms of addressing the questions initiated during my internship. Together with my clients, I needed to keep probing how it is that anyone can ever recover from trauma and, in relation, a fragmented self. The issues that my clients – mostly women – were courageously grappling with in the isolation of the counselling environment had to do with their fractured identities and how to mend them following sexual abuse. I came to recognize that this fragmentation problematic was as much the product of social constructions as intrapersonal ones. Just as the young girls of my internship and my clients needed to find words to express what they had experienced and felt, I needed to locate a way to reach them in order to restore them within a broader social construction of self. In other words, while the therapeutic environment was mostly concerned with self, and with the social relationship of self with others, I needed to understand more about this relationship between the private and public self because I knew that in order to be effective as a therapist I had to address the social implications of that dual dynamic. This personal questioning and the inadequacy of the counselling literature in providing the answers that I needed took me back to school once more, this time into doctoral studies in sociology. All the while I continued to practice, though now part-time, as a therapist.

Throughout those years as an analyst, I had been investigating issues of gender, identity, and trauma – where the most personal intertwines with the social. Suddenly these pursuits were called into focus with the then recently released allegations that at the Mount Cashel Orphanage generations of boys had been physically and sexually abused. As some former inmates of this orphanage also began to seek out my assistance my private practice increasingly generated private/public and political issues that I felt I needed to research. That convergence of practice and research became my first encounter with ethnography and generated in me questions about the re/construction of self and identity that I still carry with me and continue to comb in sociological ways.

Sociology allowed me room to probe across the disciplines, providing splendid peripheral insights into the reconfiguration of self following serious trauma. In this regard some feminist sociologies, the Symbolic Interactionist framework, and sociological work on narrative were particularly helpful. The negotiation of identity that is at once private and social, and the constraints placed upon the individual by indirect language censorship and a collective lack of public understanding (among other things), thus became my primary research interest. My current research on the Roman Catholic participation in the missionary and social movement that manifested itself in the Magdalene Laundries, nowadays a major public issue in Ireland, is an extension of this initial focus. These laundries, an arm of state and church control, were asylums operated primarily by the Roman Catholic Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Sisters of Mercy, and Sisters of Charity and intended to house prostitutes, unwed mothers, and "incorrigible" girls. They operated throughout Europe, Britain, Ireland, Canada and the United States. The last one closed in Dublin, Ireland, in 1996. The personal and social effects of this "mission," and its resultant institutionalization of generations of women, has been a long and deeply buried social problem.

As potential accounts disappear with the aging of one time laundry inmates, it is vital that they be gathered and probed for insights into the private and intergenerational aftermath of this specific form of incarceration. Interviewing surviving inmates of the Laundries has led me to revisit the issues raised through my sexual abuse work, because the systemic marginalization of women through their forced confinement has much in common with the abuses I had already been researching, such as post-trauma identities, trust, and patriarchy, and raised many more issues steeped in institutional abuse. The intergenerational impact that these

institutions have had on the identities of their all female inmates (and subsequently their relatives) is also profound.

These women, who come from disparate parts of Australia, Canada, and Ireland, carry with them a strong sense of place into their accounts and have added an immeasurable richness to my experience of doing research. They have survived mostly horrific conditions, and, like my former clients, have every reason not to trust public authorities. I have not asked whether I have been admitted into the corners of their most private lives as a woman, a former therapist, and/or a sociologist. I simply feel privileged to be there, as they share their accounts. In turn, I have tried to transport their voices and experiences to, among other places, the classroom. This has impassioned my teaching, and reminds my students that sociology is a living entity and a fully engaging scholarly practice.

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Photos by Peter Sinclair



"Slipway Art"



"Yellow Hawkweed, Brigus"



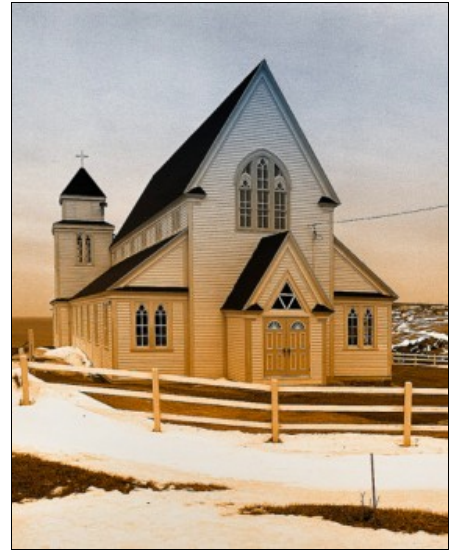
"Tilting Harbour"



"Tilting Painting"



"Turpins Train Coast"



"Torbay Anglican Church"

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I started down the biology path during my undergraduate degree at the University of Calgary only to find that the social sciences appeal to my sense of social justice and trying to better understand the world's ills and inequalities. It took an undergraduate detour through the colonial history of British India, some Master's-level dabbling in the international affairs of development and a few years of bureaucratic soul-searching work on Canada's foreign aid programs at the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to set me on my path to sociology. Given this circuitous route I guess it is not surprising that I arrive at MUN with a set of diverse research and teaching interests in the areas of international development, gender, and globalisation.

My past research has addressed two main areas: the political sociology of foreign aid and international development, and gender and politics in the developing world. My research on aid commenced while working on my doctorate at McGill University. There, I was exposed to a range of methodological and theoretical influences that helped concretise how I could best study those facets of development, politics, and inequality that spurred my interest. Building on my experience working in the aid sector, I was intrigued to examine processes of globalisation and convergence in the aid industry and examine why donors from different countries act in relative unison around specific aid priorities.

My theoretical framework followed from the work of John Meyer and others in the world society/world polity approach to political globalization. This perspective argues that states look so similar globally because they enact institutions and policy models to attain legitimacy in the eyes of intergovernmental and international non-state actors who play an active role in shaping global norms of statehood and organizational structure. Using this world polity perspective, my thesis research asked how bilateral aid donors arrive at common policy positions despite disparate domestic contexts and national interests. I was struck by the necessity of addressing the question through a mixed-methods lens, incorporating both macro-level cross-national quantitative analysis and micro-level comparative country case studies. My macro-level analysis showing that donors were strongly influenced by the international actors of world society inspired the basis for my case studies of three donors – Canada, Sweden, and the United States. I extended these quantitative results through semi-structured interviews around the issues of gender and security with respondents involved in the aid sector in these countries.

My dissertation findings highlight the critical importance of examining micro-level social processes and bureaucratic agency within donor organisations as a lens through which to understand processes of globalisation and the pressure exerted upon nation-state entities by world society. This research makes a unique contribution to the literature on foreign aid as I was the first to apply a world society institutionalist perspective to this topic. It also makes a significant contribution to this literature by emphasising the need to examine micro-level processes alongside the macro-level correlations which have traditionally been the hallmark of research. I am in the process of preparing a book based on this work which will be submitted to McGill-Queen's University Press.

Following my doctoral research, I began a postdoctoral project at the University of Ottawa's School of Political Studies examining the intersection of my two qualitative case studies – security and gender – and how they interact within the context of the securitisation of aid. This more policy-related research built upon my doctoral interviews and incorporated new data around the securitisation of aid within the Canadian and other-donor contexts to demonstrate why donors need to be more aware of how they integrate issues of gender equality in the context of securitised aid. This work also expanded on theories of gender relations, masculinities, and the feminist international relations literature to show why aid donors, and Canada in particular, should use gender equality as an entry point when providing aid that has combating extremism as an objective. I am currently finishing a paper based on this research for an edited volume examining the securitisation of aid at the global level which will be presented at an upcoming workshop at the German Development Institute in Bonn.

Given my past and ongoing research on security, conflict, and aid, I will move my research in the next few years in a new but related direction. Having explored questions of how the securitisation of aid has evolved and how it has affected other policy priorities like gender equality, I will begin to examine in greater detail the impact of securitisation on the aid process and development. My new research will focus on the subject of violence against aid workers. The more I hear from former CIDA colleagues and read news stories about frequent attacks and violent incidents, the more interested I become in exploring the relationship between the securitisation of aid and greater risks to aid workers. My new project analyses securitisation as a direct contributor to these violent attacks. The relative silence about this relationship suggests that these questions require more attention than sociologists have previously accorded them.

In parallel to my research on foreign aid and as an extension of my interest in gender and development, I have collaborated actively in researching the factors leading to increased women's political representation in the developing world. In 2009, I published an article in the *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* examining the election of the first woman to parliaments in developing countries; and currently have a co-authored article under review that examines the relationship between democratization and women's representation in the developing world. The next steps in this research agenda are pieces examining the reputed relationship between women's political representation and beneficial social and health outcomes for societies, and factors leading to the adoption of parliamentary electoral quotas for women in the developing world.

Luckily, I am able to share my enthusiasm with MUN students for the global politics of development and the inequalities that persist in North-South relationships and in gender relations in developing societies. My newsletter introduction makes it sound as if all I do is research, but I have equally enjoyed my evolution over the past several years as a teacher. I have taught courses at several universities on the sociology of development, gender and development, gender and international relations, and the politics of aid. At MUN, I have been fortunate in being able to continue my teaching on development and gender as well as getting the chance to teach research methods for the first time (an appealing prospect to a self-avowed "stats" nerd!). I found my autumn 2010 teaching to be both challenging and rewarding and look forward to more fun and excitement in the winter term.

Nearing the end of my first term here at MUN I am happy that I followed a circuitous route to arrive as one of the new additions to this sociology department. There may be less whale watching than I expected as a ten-year old, but I am content in knowing that my research helps people understand and combat inequalities and injustices linked to development and that my teaching lets me work together with students to help them better understand our globalized world. As a sociologist, I can still see whales during walks on the local beach. I could not ask for more.

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We're Not All Outports Here! Exploring Newfoundland and Labrador's Other "Rurals"

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Ravaged by the end of the cod fishery and left desolate by the exodus of people, both young and old, in search of prosperous opportunities elsewhere, what, if anything, is left to be said about rural Newfoundland?

If I were not a sociologist, I would perhaps be content to leave this statement as is, stinging the tongues of planners, policy makers, academics, and rural people who have "managed" to stay in rural areas. While sensationalism is appealing, rural realities are more complex than a simple assumption of decline.

Ravaged and desolate are certainly not truths for all of rural Newfoundland and Labrador, despite the messages that emerge from urban-centric media sources (for a recent example, see the November 14, 2010, edition of *The Globe and Mail* featuring an article on Labrador's Black Tickle). Decline was certainly not the case for the community of Lewisporte, and its rural surround, when I conducted research there in 2008.

"When you think about Lewisporte," I ask her, the first of 45 women who participated in a comparative research project on the migration biographies of women who stayed, left, returned and moved in to that area, "What do you think about?" I was interested in whether and how these women saw the town, and the area, as a rural place.

"I think ..." she begins, "I mean people say Lewisporte is dyin' – it's a retirement town – everything like that. But I don't really see it from that perspective."

"No?" I question her.

"And probably because I'm not here as, here retired; cause I'm here with a job, and with a young family and we're quite content... There are things for us to do, maybe not as much as there would be," she pauses, "I don't even think Gander has a whole lot more than we do when it comes to extracurricular you know, besides the swimming pool, that sort of thing. But I would look at Lewisporte as ... I think it's thriving."

A service community populated by over 3300 people, Lewisporte surrounds a harbour that branches from Notre Dame Bay, which is located off the central north coast of the Island. The Lewisporte Area, as it was called in my research, included the town of Lewisporte and its rural surround of 11 smaller communities and unincorporated areas – all within about 35 km driving distance. Lewisporte is, in turn, about a 60 km drive (35 minutes) from the larger towns of Gander and Grand Falls-Windsor (each with a population of approximately 10,000 people).

In the last decade, Lewisporte has had its share of struggles. The closure of a large warehouse facility in 2007 eliminated 70 full- and part-time jobs in the community. The town has also constantly faced the threat that Marine Atlantic's ferry service to Labrador will terminate. Despite this, the community has a strong economic development plan that encompasses tourism and service development, particularly for seniors, a strong public service sector (including administrative, health care and education employment) and a large consumer service sector (including a mall, numerous shops, and several chain fast food restaurants) that indeed make it unique in the landscape of Newfoundland's rural.

The Lewisporte Area, although coastal in location, challenges the assumption that all rural coastal communities in Newfoundland and Labrador are fishing communities. They are not.

The rural-as-fishing-community notion that pervades our understanding of communities outside the "overpass" is akin to the assumption that all rural communities in Canada west of Nova Scotia, for example, are agricultural in nature. Even though the synonymy of rural with any one particular natural resource activity has been challenged in academic literature – and a multitude of "rurals" has been exposed nationally, internationally and in this province (sociologists from MUN have done extensive research in forestry, mining, and service communities) – here, on the eastern edge of the North American continent, the fishery prevails as the image of the rural.

"I don't mind rural," my seventh interviewee tells me when I ask her what comes to mind when someone says the word rural to her. "Like, I know this is rural Newfoundland and [rural] is small towns, and they say town by the water and towns that don't have big industries and stuff like that. But I don't like it when people say outports."

"No?" I ask, obviously interested in why she would feel this way.

"No because that's just – because when somebody from Ontario says, 'oh you're from an outport town in Newfoundland,' then they automatically go to everybody here fishes and everybody here, if they don't fish, then they're gone to Alberta and like you're all walking around with like two teeth in your mouth and rubbers on, and your camouflage vest and stuff. And that's not us at all and I hate that."

The outport stigma, as it is attached to a particular image of the make-it-or-break-it rugged, usually *male*, Newfoundlander who spends more time in the wilderness hunting and fishing than in a dentist's chair, is problematic. It is problematic for those of us studying the rural and it is, as this interview indicates, problematic for those living in rural areas not characterized by fishing. A larger problem emerges with the outport stigma – beyond the assumption that it is a fishing community in decline. This problem relates to an outmigration narrative (i.e., "if they don't fish, then they're gone to Alberta").

It is a fact that Newfoundland and Labrador has consistently had the highest rates of outmigration in the country. In the 2006 Census, most rural areas in the province decreased in population (through natural population decline and net outmigration). St. John's and its surrounding communities, on the other hand, experienced population growth.

While going west to Alberta has been touted as "still the best advice" for Newfoundlanders (see *The Globe and Mail*, March 13, 2002: A7) and westward migration patterns remain (see *Second Promised Land* by Harry H. Hiller), outmigration is not the only rural population flow, nor is migration out of the province necessarily the norm.

Of the 45 women with whom I spoke, most never moved off the island or out of the province. Often, their migration patterns encompassed one or several moves related to post-secondary education in either St. John's or Corner Brook. Furthermore, 27 women from the Lewisporte Area who left to work, attend school, or accompany a partner, actually returned; six women from other rural areas in the province moved to the Lewisporte Area and four did not move away. Leaving is not the only rural migration narrative available to us.

A pattern of circular migration (leaving and returning) is, and has been, prevalent in the province; temporary migration is normal, and commuting short and long distances is increasingly part of the lives of rural families, despite their location.

In my research, young educated professional women stayed in, moved to and returned to the Lewisporte Area. Many moved there because they were able to secure work in their fields of employment; several lived in the area and commuted to Gander and Grand Falls-Windsor for work. Others sought employment in the area, as well as the support of their extended families, while their partners commuted to other places in the province or elsewhere in the country for work. These women moved in and back to the area because they had, or were about to have, children. Lewisporte is a community with a history of attracting and maintaining young professionals with families (see Robert Hill's 1983 report on the *Meaning of Work and the Reality of Unemployment in the Newfoundland Context* which features Lewisporte as one of its comparative research sites).

Though rural by Statistics Canada's standards, the Lewisporte Area is not ravaged and desolate. It is not comprised of fishing communities; it does not appear to be in decline and it is home to both in-migrants and return migrants. It is, by all accounts, another "rural" in the province that should be considered when the sweeping messages of fisheries-related decline and subsequent outmigration tend to pervade the province's "outport" imagination.

Deatra Walsh is a postdoctoral research fellow at York University. In this essay, she draws upon young rural women's migration biographies to challenge the assumptions that: 1) all of rural Newfoundland and Labrador is in decline, 2) all rural areas in the province are fishery-dependent, and 3) rural outmigration is the only population flow occurring in the province.