

# SOCIOLOGY ON THE ROCK

## Sociology Department Newsletter

Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador



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“When the contributors to *Canadian Sociologists in the First Person* began their scholarly quests, not all the topics they chose to study were trendy. This is a lesson upon which a passionate young scholar of today should seriously reflect. You cannot know in advance what issues and ideas will lead to a successful career five, ten, or twenty years in the future. All you can do is draw on the sociological imagination, do your best work, and follow your own vision for being a sociologist, scholar, and citizen.”

Neil McLaughlin 2021.



MUN faculty and students who participated in the “Qualitatives” conference. Left to right, front row: Hoornaz Keshavarzian, Foroogh Mohammadi, Lisa-Jo K. van den Scott, Gary Alan Fine (Northwestern University), Pouya Morshedi, Atinuke Tiamiyu, Chiao-Chi Chen. Back row: Brent Augustus, Sheridan Thompson, Ainjel Stephens, Emma Lynn Martin, George Sheppard, Keif Godbout-Kinney.

## Memories of Memorial

By **Juan E. Corradi**, Professor Emeritus of Sociology, New York University

Memorial University in St. John's as well as Newfoundland at large occupy a very special place in my academic and personal life. The experience spanned a happy chunk of time between the mid seventies until the late eighties. I visited the island several times, taught sociology at Memorial three times, explored the island, and with two friends and colleagues eventually purchased a house on forty acres by the sea and on the West Coast, in a region aptly called the Highlands for its resemblance to Scotland. Indeed it was an experience that stretched from the Canadian Maritimes' sea to shining sea, from the easternmost point in the North American Continent to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, mostly during the summer and the fall, and in the company of some of the most intelligent, curious, and learned colleagues I have ever met.

The first visit for which I have a record dates back to 1974, mentioned in a letter about voyaging plans written at the end of 1973 to my dear friend, fellow graduate student at Brandeis University in the sixties, by then professor at Memorial University, and later chair of the Sociology Department, Volker Meja. Globetrotting as usual, at the time I was a visiting sociology professor at the University of California in San Diego, whence I eventually returned to New York University. In the late seventies, and once again on a long leave from NYU, I installed myself in Paris and did research in the Center for the Study of Social Movements at the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales*. From that perch, I followed seminars by Alain Touraine, Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes. I spent three consecutive years in Paris, met some of its last *maîtres à penser* like Pierre Bourdieu, when public intellectuals were as acclaimed as soccer players or movie stars, and I helped a wonderful partner raise three children in the City of Light and still then a beacon of enlightenment. It was from Paris that I visited Newfoundland once more, in 1979, and taught some courses at Memorial, before returning – again – to NYU. In those years I took so many leaves and accepted so many visiting positions in academe, that my tolerant alma mater thought I had invented the reverse sabbatical! In this roving existence of mine there would be a third visit to Memorial in the

eighties. It was while at Memorial that I finished the manuscript of a book on Argentina, my native land, on its fitful course of developmental decline.



Juan and Christina Corradi.

My field is still called sociology, but it could just as well be called social anthropology, comparative history, or geopolitics. While it is true that *qui trop embrasse mal étreint* (literally, “who takes too much in their arms, hugs badly”), the broad range of sociology's interests, its many subfields, afforded scholars like my Newfoundland colleagues and myself a lot of intellectual freedom. My own topics to teach at Memorial University were social theory, ideology and social change, and changing views of the social world. They ranged from the study of culture and knowledge to comparative development – the latter with many incursions into history. Most of my Newfoundland colleagues became dear friends. Our conversations and excursions ranged from international affairs to the study of whole societies, to the avatars of social theory, to art, and even semiotics. It was an international and polyglot set. I will not list their names, for fear of missing some, but their ideas and curiosity stay with me, and will be with me forever. I will mention only a few of the dearly departed: Victor Zaslavsky, who taught me so much about the undoing of the Soviet state; Elliot Leyton, famous for his analysis of multiple murders in America; Paul Piccone, who brought critical theory to the New World; Jean Briggs, anthropologist, ethnographer, linguist; and Zygmunt Bauman, whom I invited to NYU but who also visited Newfoundland and taught at Memorial as well. The list is longer, and their legacy legendary, on The Rock and well beyond.

The city of St. John's was in transition – like so many places – from the local to the global, and was becoming significantly gentrified, but nature seemed still quite unspoiled (despite the fact the world had long taken an irreversible course of degradation) and was ever present in promenades with my friends and colleagues. Not far from town, we hunted mushrooms in the woods, witnessed the spectacular displays of many species in the skies and on land (who can forget the gannets in Cape St. Mary's?), the capelin (a small forage fish of the smelt family) washing on shore, the puffins who gorged on them trying to take off from the waves, the seals on the rocks, and the majestic whales – humpbacks, mink, and orcas too. The cod was abundant, and shellfish could be harvested with ease.



Juan Corradi in his late 20s.

At the time, I was developing a passion for the deep, and taught myself to sail. Occasionally, icebergs came to visit, and once upon a time one blocked for a while the entrance to The Narrows. Such presence of the sea marks one forever. With E.B. White of *The New Yorker* fame, I could say: “The sea became my unspoken challenge: the wind, the tide, the fog, the ledge, the bell, the gull that cried help, the never-ending threat and bluff of weather. Once having permitted the wind to enter the belly of my sail, I was not able to quit the helm; it was as though I had seized hold of a high-tension wire and could not let

go” (from E.B. White’s essay “The Sea and the Wind that Blows”).

I remember world sailors docking in the port of St. John's. Once in the seventies, a legendary navigator came into St. John's to effect repairs in his large three-masted schooner. Alain Colas was a single-handed ocean sailor; one of the few who make blue-water voyages alone, relying on the wind for power, their wits for company. And even among these extraordinary few, Colas stood apart. A group of us at the dock helped with some repairs to his sails. He had black, curly hair and he affected the thick sideburns of a 19th-century mariner. His face was seamed with sun-squint lines and he walked with a limp, the result of a sailing accident. The limp gave him an Ahab-like mystique. Later I learned that, like Ahab, he was lost at sea. I also remember the arrival of the fleet of Portuguese white fishing vessels that fished for cod on Newfoundland's Grand Banks, on their last foray in the ocean under sail – a vision from times immemorial: the white sails and hulls turned spotty yellow after months at sea; the crew sporting dark beards and shouting with joy at the sight of port. It was in the shores of Newfoundland that I first yearned to sail the ocean blue, which I managed to do years later. I believe the challenge for me started on The Rock, and stays with me in old age.

And there was also music, which I enjoyed in my spare time, and in the company of friends. Newfoundland music, while clearly Celtic (mostly Irish and Cornish) in origin and seafaring in its orientation, has a style of its own. Much of the music focuses on life on the water and includes sea shanties and other sailing songs. It comes from the strong seafaring tradition that links various communities and nationalities across the North Atlantic.

The MUN Department of Sociology at the time was flourishing not only with its permanent staff, but also with visiting scholars from all over the world, and we were all teaching a cohort of first-time college students in their families, all eager to learn. Some of our students went on to earn advanced degrees and became successful colleagues in the profession. We learned from each other and from the students as well. A then-recent separation of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology did not prevent an intellectual exchange and cross-fertilization.

Some of us are gone, and many of us are dispersed in a world that has been changing, and not for the best.

This dispersion is not new. Many of us at Memorial came from different corners of the world: from Canada of course, but also from the US, the UK, the USSR, Poland, Italy, and Germany among them. The circumstances were diverse, and many were not pleasant: voluntary expatriation, persecution, social and political convulsion, and for the luckiest, just global curiosity and a thirst for the different and the unknown. At the time we all converged on The Rock – a Rock that rocked with intellectual ferment. We did believe that humanity would come together above

diverse animosity around many a good common cause. In retrospect, we were perhaps a bunch of innocents abroad, roving scholars born during or after WWII when there were hopes of good auspices in a changing world, and for dressing forever the wounds of the largest bloodbath in history. At the time we were not too concerned, or aware, that beneath our common ground the ambers of hate and spiteful parochialism still glowed. Those were happy times, remembered fondly, with the hope of having planted the seeds of better times to come.

## When “Demos” Didn’t Need Fuel Dumps

By **Marilyn Porter**

Watching the unending coverage of the so-called “Freedom” truckers protest, I am reminded of how much fun we had when our demonstrations didn’t involve huge great trucks or need to stop to re-fuel. The great age of “demos” in our era began with Martin Luther King’s March for Freedom – for the civil rights of all US citizens, something much more significant than the rights of a few entitled truckers to cross the border without being vaccinated against Covid.

I’m sure everyone in the MUN Memoirs Group has stories to tell of demonstrations, sit-ins and other peaceful protests, and sometimes not so peaceful encounters with the police. Here are a few of my own.

I was active in the Women’s Liberation Movement, as well as various left-wing groups at a time when there was plenty to demonstrate about and plenty of groups well able to organise demonstrations, marches, sit-ins, etc. It seemed that every Saturday in the UK we were out on some march or attending a teach-in or some other activity designed to bring about World Revolution or World Peace or to save some animal – whales or fish or forest or building or footpath access. (Remember the mass trespass to save access to Kinder Scout in the Peak District in 1932.)

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) had begun in 1958 under Bertrand Russell and allies, who organised the annual three-day Aldermaston March, where many a fruitful partnership was formed. Based in North Wales and Dublin, I was too far away to be involved and anyway had to face fierce opposition from my parents, both of whom were actively

involved in Civil Defence activities, gloriously parodied in the comedy revue “Beyond the Fringe.” But by the time I became involved the CND had both grown and diversified, with some quite violent offshoots happy to attack the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square.

Apart from marches and other demonstrations against nuclear weapons, key feminist interventions were the camps and blockages of the US Greenham Common Trident Base. There were camps at all nine entrances to the base, named after colours of the rainbow and adopted by women’s groups around the UK, who pitched tents and demonstrated noisily whenever a vehicle entered or exited. Very different cultures evolved at the different camps – some explicitly political but some Mother Goddessy or other less obvious priorities. The entire perimeter fence was decorated with flags, banners, flowers, clothes and anything else women thought to put up. The Lancaster group (where I was living at the time) was based at the Orange Gate, along with the much bigger Birmingham group. However, I was in the midst of a messy divorce so I had to be careful not to get arrested, which would have given my lawyer husband every excuse he needed. From time to time, small groups of women would climb over the fence and make a dash for the central buildings. The US Guards would pick them up and hold them for a couple of hours, and then, deliberately, drop them off at a different gate. My job was to drive round and round the perimeter, picking women up and depositing them back at their own gate. I forget how long the perimeter was but I remember it taking a good half hour to drive round it.

I remember little of the countless Saturday marches of that era or whether any were effective. I do remember ones in support of various strikes, including



the massive ones in support of the miners, especially the ones organised by miners' wives during the Thatcher regime. In the early 1980s, the Women's Liberation Movement was strongly in support of, and in turn supported by, both organised and unorganised labour. This was, of course, particularly true of women workers' strikes. These were often led by powerful, homegrown working-class women, such as Lil Bilocca who led the Hull fishermen's wives protesting about offshore safety of fishing trawlers in 1968, and May Hobbs, who led the Night Cleaners Action group for better wages and safer working conditions for the office cleaners who worked at night in the early 1970s, and the Ford seamstresses who worked at the Dagenham plant who struck for equal pay with their male counterparts.



Photograph by Marilyn Porter showing her daughter, son-in-law, and granddaughter at the 2003 protest in London against the Iraq War.

All these strikes led to lasting links between Women's Liberation groups and unions and women workers groups, as well as personal friendships. These personal connections were particularly important in introducing middle-class women to the lived experience and struggles of working-class women. It also led to the formation of the Trade Union Studies unit at Ruskin College, which built links between trade unions in the Global South with activists in unions in the UK and Europe.

In 1980, I came to Memorial and soon participated in feminist and labour actions here. They were important, of course, but our scattered and small

population meant that our marches and demonstrations were inevitably smaller and less immediately impressive. They were also shorter. I remember one held on a brutally cold February day when the only way to tell people apart was by their dogs – and we made record time in a sprint from City Hall to the War Memorial. And there was a sit-in to protest cuts to the Status of Women programs in 1990. But by and large we have had to find other ways to make our protests heard.

Not so in the UK, where they have a smaller land mass and a bigger population, both of which can still give national demonstrations the heft they used to have.

One of the biggest and best was the anti-Iraq war demonstrations of 2003. If you remember, the elder Bush was all gung-ho to go to war against Saddam Hussein on the basis of fabricated evidence of stockpiled nuclear weapons presented by Colin Powell – who has since said he was sorry. Tony Blair had suspiciously close links with Bush, based on their shared religious faith. Rumour had it that both had a Bible to hand when they talked. True or not, Blair had agreed to send British troops to help the Americans overthrow Hussein. It was, of course, a disaster and Iraq has still not recovered. The war moved to Afghanistan and we all know the subsequent sorry history. At the time, 2003, there was huge civilian resistance to the prospect of war in Iraq, including one of the biggest demonstrations ever in London. I was in the UK at the time and my daughter Fenella and I immediately knew we should go to London for it. We took Mark, Fenella's husband and, at the time, a March virgin. He took the photo I am trying to insert here – with Hannah in her pushchair and a placard – Three Generations against the War. The whole of central London was so packed that we just had to park the car and join whichever bit of the march was close by at the time. I remember that we happened to end up in the middle of a group of poets – under a placard that said "Poets against the War." I also remember walking back at the end of the march past lines and lines of parked buses in Hyde Park from all corners of the UK – Aberdeen, Clovelly, Lincoln, Penrhynaedreth. We didn't succeed, of course. Blair went to war anyway but his reputation never recovered.

So, part of my sadness at watching the footage of truckers is to see their aggression and how manipulated by extremists they are, and remembering how much fun we had when we didn't need to bring tanks of fuel to demonstrations.

## Together Again

By Lisa-Jo K. van den Scott

For the first time in three years, qualitative researchers from across Newfoundland, Canada, and abroad gathered for the 38th Annual Qualitative Analysis Conference and Couch-Stone Symposium. On the first morning, a hush descended on the room. As I rose to do the Welcome, before finishing the first sentence, applause burst out. The sheer joy burst forth of being together; seeing old friends; spending time with “our tribe,” as Professor Waverly Duck put it; and of excitement for the intellectually rich environment we had missed so much. We did it! We were together again!

“The Qualitatives” is known for its collegial atmosphere, its porous boundaries, and support of graduate students. Graduate students who present their research find senior scholars populating their sessions, academics of note who are happy to meet with them, and a supportive attitude at the networking lunch where they can share a meal with researchers they have previously admired only from afar.

The conference drew together an international and interdisciplinary crowd of 140 qualitative researchers. Over three days, conference-goers could attend four to five concurrent sessions throughout the day, as well as the plenaries, which Susie Scott and Waverly Duck delivered. Scott presented her work on the sociology of nothing. She studies the social life of things that did not happen, for we do indeed give a job missed, a bad decision in hindsight, or a child not born a social life of their own. Professor Duck, who recently won the Charles Horton Cooley Book Award for *Tacit Racism*, co-authored with Anne Rawls, is an urban ethnographer who examines on-the-ground experiences of marginalized groups. Gary Alan Fine was the keynote speaker. Known as an ethnographer, theorist, and highly influential sociologist in the macro-micro conversation, Fine presented his most recent work on the study of group life, treating groups as a “hinge” between micro-level living and structural forces.

Of course, there were the usual hiccups. Air travel has been unreliable and several flights between the U.S. and Canada were cancelled. Thanks to the remarkable dedication of those coming to the conference,

everyone eventually made it in. However, you may ask who was the most delayed. Our first plenary speaker who was supposed to kick off the conference! Thanks to the flexibility of our speakers, Susie Scott and Waverly Duck switched times, and all ran smoothly after that – but their generosity of spirit should be noted! After opening remarks by Acting Associate Vice-President and Professor of Classics Tana Allen, Professor Scott gave an engaging talk on the sociology of nothing. So, in the end, the conference did begin with nothing! MUN President Vianne Timmons was on deck to introduce Professor Duck as the last plenary speaker. He concluded with a rousing talk about the study of interactions in everyday life. We were pleased to welcome Sophie Angnatok who performed throat singing and several songs before Gary Alan Fine’s keynote address. We were particularly lucky to have Professor Fine with us at the conference. Not only is he an excellent speaker and renowned sociologist, folklorist, and social psychologist, but he extended his usual generosity to graduate students and colleagues, alike.

Being in St. John’s, we had quite a few people from Memorial University presenting in person, including ten graduate students: Wonkyong Choi on conducting research among fellow-Korean immigrants (anthropology); Keif Godbout-Kinney on the social meaning of surgical robots (sociology); Israt Jahan Lipa on narrative, genre, and text in qualitative methods (folklore); Emma Lynn Martin on how ex-YouTubers eulogize their symbolic death (sociology); Ehsan Mohammadi on the adult doll community (folklore); Foroogh Mohammadi on Iranian migrants’ sense of belonging in Atlantic Canada (sociology); Pouya Morshedi on Iranian music and representations of home (sociology); Sam E. Morton on development workers and gender equality (sociology/geography); Amie Richards on the impact of Covid on wedding planning (sociology); and Ainjel Stephens on extreme metal subculture (folklore).

We also had several MUN faculty members present: John Bodner (Grenfell – social/cultural studies), Paul Alhassan Issahaku (social work), Daniel Kudla (sociology), Katherine Pendakis (Grenfell – social/cultural studies), Adrienne Peters (sociology), Jennifer Howard (nursing), Allison Stokes (sociology), and Jeffery D. van den Scott (history). We were delighted to share time with like-minded colleagues

from folklore, history, social work, Faculty of Medicine, and the Grenfell Campus.

This year, the Qualitatives paired with the Couch-Stone Symposium, a meeting of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction. While the Qualitatives have previously occurred in Newfoundland, this was the first meeting of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction on the Rock. This pairing was a great success and brought to Newfoundland many international scholars who, of course, marveled at our stunning corner of the world. The hospitable atmosphere of the conference led to wonderful

meals, connections, and late-night conversations about ideas and future projects.

The organizers would like to thank the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction, and Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador (particularly the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, the School of Graduate Studies, and the Department of Sociology) as the largest funders, as well as Ruby Bishop, without whom we could not have managed.

## Reflections from a Grad-emic

By **Laura Squires**, introduction by **Adrienne Peters**

Each year, graduate schools welcome new passionate scholars as they embark on journeys of professional and personal development in preparation for their future careers and ambitions. However, in recent years, the experience of graduate school has become for some students more tumultuous than it had seemed earlier. The reasons are increasing competition and expectations, as well as growing concerns about future employment. Although the Covid-19 Pandemic has placed more strains on graduate students, many have persevered and are now moving forward. The term “grad-emic” refers to university graduates who have completed their degree during the Pandemic. In Memorial University’s Department of Sociology, we have recently experienced “record-breaking” MA and PhD completions.

I will begin this article by introducing a few preliminary findings on the experience of graduate/post-secondary school, especially in connection to Covid-19, and then turn to one student’s journey toward the light at the end of a long, dark tunnel, one that has been filled with unexpected passageways and routes.

Karen Foster and Alyssa Gerhardt (2021) conducted a non-probability, mixed-methods research study using an online survey to examine the education and labour market experiences of post-graduate sociology students in university between 2009 and 2020. Based on the responses of 225 MA and PhD graduates from across Canada, they found that graduates before and during the Covid-19 Pandemic had concerns related to securing meaningful employment after graduate

school. Additional stressors facing young scholars during and following their graduate studies included negative experiences in programs and with supervisors, and not feeling welcome in academia. While most PhD students and many MAs felt their programs prepared them well for the labour market, a number revealed that their career aspirations changed (that is, moved away from academia) during their graduate studies. Many graduates and current students who did not wish to pursue academic positions expressed new aspirations to work outside a university environment in research or government positions as well as for non-governmental organizations.

When assessing the impact of Covid-19 on job satisfaction, Foster and Gerhardt found that the majority of respondents felt the greatest change was in relation to working from home. This was a positive shift for some students – as it improved work-life balance especially for those who had endured lengthy commuting times or had children and families. For many, however, their satisfaction with work had decreased. Some shared sentiments around the erosion of work-life balance: increased stress due to the blurring of work and home life, declining pleasure in teaching and learning online, fading excitement associated with work, and the increasing demands and expectations being placed upon them.

As soon as we entered the Covid-19 Pandemic at Memorial in March 2020, university administrators began sending a regular stream of emails to faculty, staff, and students; each new message outlined new policies and practices related to delivering our programs and services safely and effectively. This

often related to program/course delivery plans and transitioning back-and-forth between online and in-person education, with various combinations of synchronous and asynchronous options, while implementing “circuit breakers” and contributing to “flattening the curve” as deemed necessary. The administrators were continually changing, revising, and updating information and doing their best to stay on top of students’ needs by providing access to resources, including newly developed tools and resources for supporting psychological/emotional health and well-being during the Pandemic (see, e.g., MUNL).

While all of these resources were welcomed and of value to some, they were still limited in their capacity to truly assist students who were facing greater concerns. Student worries included unforeseen obstacles to research projects; financial challenges; health concerns; familial and personal challenges; moving to new spaces or staying at home; and finally, fears about opportunities available post-Pandemic in an already fragile job market. For some persons, this may have contributed to anxieties and fears that have been reported by graduate students throughout the Pandemic (Kee, 2021).

Statistics Canada (2020) used crowdsourcing to collect information from over 100,000 postsecondary students in April and May 2020 (not divided by undergraduate and graduate). The results indicated that students were facing considerable disruptions in their studies, as well as in current employment positions and future employment opportunities. This also has resulted in many fears related to their financial security and futures.

Despite the new challenges that were introduced or exacerbated following the onset of the Covid-19 Pandemic, many graduate students have endeavoured and endured, found the positive aspect in this situation, and are now excitedly preparing for a transition to their new lives. One of our soon-to-finish MA students, Laura Squires, is one of the shining examples of a student who found unexpected opportunities in the Pandemic to engage in research and teaching in addition to her already active engagement in coursework and thesis research, as well as involvement in social justice activism. However, I will let her tell you the story. . . .

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Navigating graduate school as a first-generation university student is difficult. Navigating graduate

school during a Pandemic is not a battle that I had expected to encounter, nor was I prepared.

When the Pandemic hit, I had luckily completed all my course work and had what I would say is a “typical” graduate school experience. In-person lectures and presentations, seminars, conferences, parties, by-chance interactions in the department, and developing friendships around shared interests are all classic features of graduate school I was fortunate to experience.

Enter Covid-19 at the beginning of 2020. During the first couple of months, the uncertainty of things was stressful, but expected. What I had not anticipated is that the restrictions due to the Pandemic completely derailed my original plans for a thesis – a project of qualitative interviews with justice-involved populations encountering problems of mental health and substance use. Accessing incarcerated or “vulnerable” populations was extremely difficult. Entry to institutions like the local jail, halfway houses, or assisted-living facilities was restricted to formal employees. Even family members were not allowed to enter in some cases, let alone a university student doing research. Thus, many individuals who would have been my targeted participants could not be accessed institutionally, and reaching individuals in the community was often difficult due in part to their access to technology and methods of communication, the restrictions around gatherings, not to mention that everyone was likely overwhelmed by the Pandemic and unwilling to add another responsibility to their plate.

The ongoing changes in restrictions made it impossible to continue with this project, which I would say was the biggest hurdle I faced during graduate school. I had already invested months in developing a project that could no longer be carried out. It slashed my motivation and made me question my choice to do a Master of Arts degree. It looked like I would be months behind schedule. And what if my next project could not go ahead because the Pandemic lingered?

I am from Newfoundland and was lucky to be near my family and support system through the worst of the Pandemic, when the future of my research was unknown and I was questioning my path in academia. I do not think I would have chosen to continue if it were not for the exceptional and unwavering support from my supervisor, Dr. Adrienne Peters, who convinced me to continue with a new project. I am very grateful that I took her advice.



Motivating myself to work with few breaks from a screen was truly a test of self-discipline, and I was not exactly proud of my work. However, looking back, I am proud, although it has taken me longer than anticipated to complete the degree. My supervisor and I are nearly there, and I am actually grateful for the unexpected opportunities the Pandemic brought. I took time waiting to see if my original project could go ahead and then developed a completely new one. I was able to create a new project using important data about youth, which I think is just as valuable as my original project. I have been able to submit four co-authored papers to peer-reviewed journals. All were accepted at the revise and resubmit stage, with two already published: "Examining the Use of Twitter in the Online Classroom: Can Twitter Improve Interaction and Engagement" (Rohr, Squires, & Peters, 2022) and "Examining Social Media in the Online Postsecondary Classroom: Students' Twitter Use and Motivation" (Peters, Rohr, & Squires, 2022). Another two are being prepared for resubmission. This is in an entirely different area from my research concentrations, but it sparked a new interest in improving online learning that I had not anticipated.

I have been able to teach independently and participate in redeveloping course assessments in the School of Human Kinetics and Recreation; and hold a separate paid graduate student research position in the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Windsor, which would not have been possible without the status of a graduate student. Retaining that status has made it possible for me to complete a research internship at fasdNL, supported by Mitacs, which resulted in a paid research assistant position after completion. I have been to more conferences virtually than would have been possible in person, and invited to guest-lecture at the Durham campus of Trent University in Oshawa, Ontario.

These past two years have been difficult for everyone, but many graduate students have shown incredible resilience during these times. Being in a new province or country, blocked from support during the already difficult transition to graduate school, in a socially isolating Pandemic cannot be easy. Being able to complete course work, theses, and dissertations in such conditions is commendable, but something I hope you do not have to experience.

I was able to persevere thanks to my reliance on stable support systems. Having a partner and family to rely on emotionally, physically, interpersonally and financially removed a lot of the pain of the Pandemic – and school-related stress. I recognize that this is a privileged position. Secondly, having such an involved and dedicated supervisor who encouraged me to continue opened many doors for me – in research, teaching, and the community – which I do not think all graduate students are fortunate to experience. Getting through an MA program alone is a nearly impossible feat. So is getting through a Pandemic. Doing both at the same time? That is an astonishing feat in my opinion. I know I am not the only student at Memorial who has accomplished this. We should congratulate ourselves.

Congratulations to all of our dedicated and passionate students – current and past, undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate – who have pandemic-ed and continued to persevere through their grad-emic!

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