

Sociology on the Rock

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"Where are the angry young women and men who will thrust us into the annals of intellectual history, rather than render us footnotes and addenda to the labours of our predecessors?" – Fuyuki Kurasawa



Ceremony awarding the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal to Barbara Neis.

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TRAVELIN' MAN: THE JOURNEY OF A RELUCTANT SOCIOLOGIST

By Larry Felt

If a song could characterize my academic career it would probably be Bob Seger's version of *Travelin' Man*. My travelling has been more intellectual than geographical although I have taught at McGill, the University of Toronto, as well as thirty-eight years at Memorial. I would describe my sociology as theoretically and substantively eclectic with an emphasis upon strong research design, good data, and rigorous analysis. I am not nor have I ever wanted to be much of a theorist preferring instead to take bits and pieces of theory to frame research. In important respects, my view of sociology reflects my general persona, i.e., more outsider than insider, aloof, cynical, but not to the point of degenerative pathos, and, while certainly leaning more towards soft positivism than postmodernism, I am not sure that "truth" is really out there.

Being a social scientist (I prefer that term to sociologist) was not much more than the disciplined extension of my persona. I grew up in upstate New York about an hour from the Canadian border (which, incidentally, with the exception of a brief fishing trip I never crossed until I went to McGill at the age of 26). I combined high academic performance with athletic excellence in a school accustomed to winning regional state championships in football and basketball. I was an outsider, respectfully friendly with both nerdish bookworms and jocks. Though none of my siblings nor my parents ever studied beyond high school, I assumed college was my destiny and my vocation; but

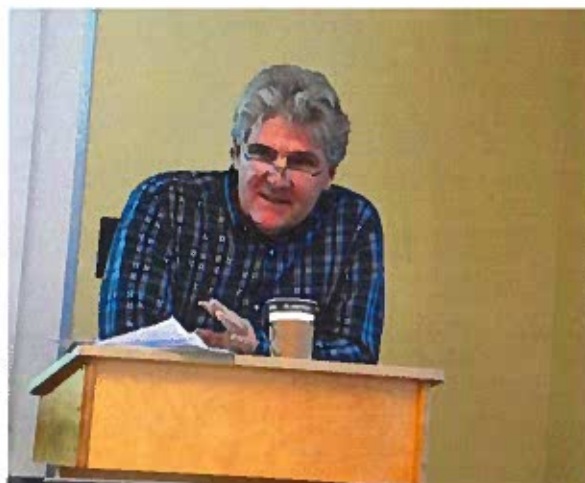
where to go and what to study? Through the intervention of my high school Latin teacher I wound up at a small liberal arts institution, Oberlin College, in Ohio.

Oberlin was truly transformative! High academic standards and progressive politics defined it. I played football and basketball for a year but soon retired – persuaded by the presence of bigger, faster, more motivated players! In keeping with the liberal arts philosophy of diversity and minimal concentration, I took courses all over the place meeting the minimal requirements for a joint major in math and biology with an ample sprinkling of history, philosophy, political science and a few sociology courses. Politically, I went South to Alabama to help register poor African Americans, spent several nights in jail as a result and became active in student New Left movements including one of the iconic organizations of the counterculture, Students for a Democratic Society. At graduation, I had no clear idea what to do next and faced the end of my student deferment from the military draft. Military service beckoned just as the Viet Nam war was escalating!

Chance intervened in the form of a professor from whom I had taken a single sociology course. A doctoral graduate from Northwestern, he was able to convince the sociology department there to take a chance on what he later told me was a “quirky, bright kid with little knowledge of sociology but a good social science mind.” With limited disciplinary preparation, I was awarded financial support, largely, I was later to learn, due to my computer and statistical skills making SPSS hum on a mainframe computer. I spent the first year taking courses, learning sociology in a more rigorous way and writing crosstab routines on a mainframe computer to analyze social mobility data.

Northwestern confirmed academia as a career for me in a broad area called social science if not sociology. I felt like a kid suddenly provided a vast array of new intellectual toys! Walter Wallace brought his new book on comparative theory to our seminar for discussion and criticism. Bernard Beck was beginning his work on welfare programs I would later use to construct a Ph.D. thesis. Howard S. Becker performed teaching and intellectual magic in our qualitative methods seminar. Becker’s friends at nearby University of Chicago, Anselm Strauss and Barney Glaser, brought over drafts of *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* which we discussed and debated inside and outside class. Combine this

with well-known sociologists such as Arnold Feldman, Charlie Moskos, Ray Mack, Red Schwartz (Webb et al. *Unobtrusive Measures*), anthropologist George Dalton as well as Donald T. Campbell, the methodologically eclectic professor of psychology (Quasi and Quasi Experimental Designs), and the result was an exciting theoretical and methodological environment. *Continue...*



Alan Hall, professor of sociology at the University of Windsor, speaking to the MUN department of sociology. The topic of his presentation was "Immigrant Responses to Workplace Injuries and Hazards: The Relative Influence of Identity and Precarity."

THE CLIPBOARD

By Stephen Riggins

In June 2012, Memorial University’s Department of Sociology hosted the 29th Annual Qualitative Analysis Conference. The conference welcomed over 150 presenters from across North America and beyond who shared their research in various disciplines in the social sciences. The keynote speaker was Donileen Loseke from the University of South Florida. The conference also included featured talks from Brock University’s Andrea Doucet, St. Thomas University’s Deborah van den Hoonaard, and Memorial’s Bev Diamond. The team of organizers included MUN’s

Ailsa Craig, Scott Kenney, Justin Piché, and Liam Swiss, as well as Brescia University College's Steve Kleinknecht. The conference received generous financial support from SSHRC, Wilfrid Laurier University, Brescia; and from MUN's Faculty of Arts, School of Graduate Studies, and Department of Sociology. Next year's conference will be hosted at Carleton University.

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Two members of the department have been awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal: Barbara Neis and Doug House. Barbara received the medal for her collaborative research projects, primarily in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, on the relationships between work, environment, health, and local community. Doug House received the medal for his role in promoting and strengthening economic growth in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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Anne Morris was the recipient of the 2012 Recognizing Prior Learning Award. This award is an acknowledgement of the prior learning assessment program she developed for the MUN Police Studies Program. The RPL Award winners were recognized in Halifax at the opening plenary session of the annual conference of the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment.

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Lisa Kaida has received a 2012 Insight Development Grant (\$27,000) from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for her collaborative project with Monica Boyd (University of Toronto), "Growing up Working Poor: Short- and Long-term Consequences for Immigrant Children in Canada and the United States."

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Chris Martin has been awarded the title Fellow of the School of Graduate Studies in recognition of outstanding academic achievements in his graduate program.



Karen Stanbridge performing at the department's autumn party.



Lisa Kaida, Judi Smith, and Doug House at the department's autumn party.

Recent Publications:

Marilyn Porter and Diana L. Gustafson (2012) *Reproducing Women: Family and Health Work across Three Generations*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Baker, James (2012) "As Loved our Fathers: The Strength of Patriotism among Young Newfoundlanders," *National Identities*, Vol. 14(4).

Ciganda, Daniel, Alain Gagnon, and Eric Y. Tenkorang (2012) "Child and Young Adult-headed Households in the Context of the AIDS Epidemic in Zimbabwe, 1988-2006," *AIDS Care*, Vol. 24, October.

Hawkins, Jenna (2012) "Canadian Parental Benefits Program: Challenging or Supporting the Gendered Organization," *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative*, Vol. 3(1).

Lawrence F. Felt and David Natcher (2011) "Ethical Foundations and Principles for Collaborative Research with Inuit and their Governments," *Etudes/Inuit/Studies*, Vol. 35(1-2).

Martha MacDonald, Peter Sinclair, and Deatra Walsh (2012) "Labour Migration and Mobility in Newfoundland: Social Transformation and Community in Three Rural Areas." In J. R. Parkins and M.G. Reed (Eds.) *Social Transformation in Rural Canada: New Insights into Community, Cultures and Collective Action*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Natcher, David, Larry Felt, Keith Chaulk and Andrea Procter (2012) "The Harvest and Management of Migratory Bird Eggs by Inuit in Nunatsiavut, Labrador," *Environmental Management*, Vol. 50.

Anton Oleinik (2012) "Institutional Exclusion as a Destabilizing Factor: The Mass Unrest of 1 July 2008 in Mongolia," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 31(2).

Sodero, Stephanie (2012) Review of Mark Everard's book, *Common Ground: The Sharing of Land and Landscapes for Sustainability*, *Canadian Review of Sociology*, Vol. 49, November.

Stoddart, Mark (2012) "'It's the Largest, Remotest, Most Wild, Undisturbed Area in the Province': Outdoor Sport and Environmental Conflict in the Tobecoic Wilderness Area, Nova Scotia." In J. R. Parkins and M. G. Reed (Eds.). *Social Transformation in Rural Canada: New Insights into Community, Cultures and Collective Action*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Stoddart, Mark, Liam Swiss, Nicole Power, and Larry Felt (2012) *Taking Care of Pets: Institutional Policies, Perceptions and Practices Regarding Domestic Animal Welfare in Newfoundland and Labrador*. This report was prepared for the office of the Chief Veterinary Officer of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and was shared with the SPCA and other animal shelters operating in the province.

Swiss, Liam, Kathleen M. Fallon, and Giovanni Burgos (2012) "Does Critical Mass Matter? Women's Political Representation and Child Health in Developing Countries," *Social Forces*, Vol. 91(2).

Swiss, Liam (2012) "Gender, Security and Instrumentalism: Canada's Foreign Aid in Support of National Interest?" In Stephen Brown (Ed.) *Struggling for Effectiveness: CIDA and Canadian Aid Policy*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Tenkorang, Eric Y., Stephen O Gyimah, Eleanor Maticka-Tyndale and Jones Adjei (2011) "Superstition, Witchcraft and HIV Prevention in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of Ghana," *Culture, Health Sexuality*, October.

Travelin' Man continued

Lacking an extended sociological background, I developed a more eclectic approach than most of my peers. At least one professor told me I would never be a successful sociologist because I lacked focus! Fortunately for me, four professors: Bernie Beck, Howard S. Becker, Donald T. Campbell and Richard D. Schwartz tolerated my eccentricity. While each was a respected scholar in his own right, they supported a professional dabbler. With the special support of Bernie Beck to whom I benefitted greatly from his insight into client-based bureaucratic organizations, I was able to undertake and complete a thesis.

Northwestern, or rather Chicago's, political environments were equally exciting. Poor people were organizing to resist powerful state bureaucracies; community agitation using the techniques of Saul Alinsky was taking off. Howard Becker's qualitative methods course and Bernie Beck's empirical and theoretical work on welfare fit nicely

with my own political activities with community-based welfare reform and neighborhood mobilization. Drawing heavily on Bernie Beck's work, I used a mixture of methods and theory to examine what we now know as agency and resistance among long term AFDC family heads (Aid to Families with Dependent Children). After approximately three years, with doctoral comprehensives passed, some data collected and a couple of chapters drafted, I ventured into the job market.

As I applied for jobs, Canada was not even on my academic radar! In taking furniture to a younger brother of a graduate friend, I accompanied him to Montreal in my third year. At a party on my first evening, I met several academics from McGill including a Northwestern graduate a few older than me. It was suggested I apply for a job. I did and three months later accepted a job in sociology at McGill. Hello, Canada!

My three years at McGill were exciting. Anthropology and sociology shared the same floor in the Leacock Building. Peter Worsley, Richard Salisbury, Maurice Pinard, Richard Hamilton, Immanuel Wallerstein, Don Von Eschen, Roger Krohn plus a host of bright young professors and students reminded me of Northwestern. I taught courses in social inequality, poverty, general intro social science as well as undergraduate and graduate courses in quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Through McGill's School of Social Work, I became immersed in community action and anti-poverty movements. Had it not been for family commitments, I might still be there. *Continue...*

THE SYMBOLIC LIVES OF FREEMASONS

By Scott Kenney

When I was initiated into the Freemasons in September 1999, just a few months after receiving my Ph.D. from McMaster University, I was struck by something obvious. Extensively trained in symbolic interactionist theory during my graduate studies, I saw unfolding before my eyes an organization that emphasized the use of carefully coordinated ritual actions, combined with a complex, multilayered symbolism, to socially construct meaning for its members. The desire to conduct a study was

born. After all, how could I resist utilizing a sociological approach, which emphasizes the pragmatic construction of meaning through symbolic actions, as a way of studying an organization that utilizes symbolic, ritualized actions to construct meaning?



Yujiro Sano at the department's autumn party.



Liam Swiss and daughter in Halloween costumes.

At first, I moved slowly. I felt that somebody must have done this before. It was just too obvious. I did some research and found that there was, indeed, a sociological

literature. Beginning with Georg Simmel's 1906 publication *Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies*, which characterized so-called "secret" fraternal organizations as fostering boundaries, separation, and corresponding validation so that members come to see themselves as a sort of "aristocracy," there have been many sociological works on the Freemasons and fraternal organizations. Perhaps most notably, Mark Carnes argued in *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* that fraternal ritual provided solace and psychological guidance during young men's troubled passage to manhood. Mary Ann Clawson asserted that 19th century fraternalism articulated a gendered vision of brotherhood in an era of class conflict, attracting a multiclass membership and organized social solidarity centered around the ambiguous symbolic figure of the artisan, the producer-proprietor, when this role was under stress and a growing assertion of a feminine vision of social and affective life threatened to undermine male institutional solidarity.

Yet these, and many other studies, while illuminating in many ways, struck me as problematic. (1) They tended to emphasize the "big picture" (i.e., macro-level structural dynamics filtered through today's sociological preoccupations with class and gender). While these could not be ruled out entirely, relatively little emphasis was placed on the likely more diverse, pragmatic constructions of meaning engaged in by the membership. (2) The vast majority of the extant studies focused on the past. Little work had been done on Freemasons and the meanings that they construct in the very different social world inhabited by members today. Given the vast social changes that have taken place in the twentieth century, particularly since the 1960s, along with the decline of social capital and community organizations, there appeared to be a crying need to study the meanings constructed by Masons today. I felt that these major theoretical and empirical gaps called for contemporary study.

Given these issues, I initially attempted to identify multiple theoretical issues germane to an interactionist study of this organization. While difficult to imagine a complete list before entering the field, I first attempted in 2005 to articulate the relevance of various "sensitizing concepts" in a paper presented at the Canonbury Masonic Research Conference in London. This was subsequently published as "Ritual Actions and Meaning among Freemasons" in the

fourth volume of *The Canonbury Papers: Freemasonry and Initiatic Traditions* (edited by R.A. Gilbert).

Shortly following this theoretical review, I applied for research funding to conduct a qualitative study in this area. In 2006, I was awarded a \$32,600 Research Development Initiatives Grant from SSHRC as well as a \$6,900 Vice President's Research Grant from Memorial, to fund this study. After receiving ethics clearance, I spent the autumn of 2006 to December of 2007 travelling throughout Newfoundland and Nova Scotia interviewing Freemasons about their experiences, activities, involvement, and, perhaps most importantly, the meanings that they derived from their activities in the Masonic order.

Around this same time, I experienced a great stroke of luck. Having some years before appeared in the documentary film *Inside Freemasonry* (Arcadia Entertainment/Vision TV), a film on contemporary Freemasons produced by a friend in my first lodge, I asked my brother if he still had the film footage. "Yeah," he responded, "do you want it?" This resulted in being provided with a banker's box of 58 videotapes, including interview data from 27 individuals, all collected with written consent to disseminate their comments on television. This provided an invaluable boost to my project. Continue...

SAME SAME BUT DIFFERENT: COMPARISONS OF RURAL VIETNAM AND RURAL NEWFOUNDLAND

By Ashley Laracy¹

It's 6:30 am. I wake up slowly to sunshine beaming in through the bedroom window. No alarm clock is needed. Birds are chirping in the ceiling fan – they took up residence there long before I arrived. As the saying goes "the early bird gets the worm" and my feathered roommates are a perfect example, up at the crack of dawn waiting for their morning feeding. I hear the faint sound of a whistle

¹Editor's Note: Ashley Laracy, who is from the town of Cupids, completed a Master's degree in sociology at Memorial University in 2011. In this article she describes her experiences working as a Gender Specialist in the Mekong region of Vietnam. She has completed this work and presently lives in Hanoi where she is a Gender Mainstreaming Advisor with the World University Services of Canada.

accompanied by cheering and clapping. The students are playing soccer on the field next to the guesthouse where I live. They play most mornings for an enthusiastic crowd of observers.

I move to the shower. Lukewarm is the normal water temperature. It's a little shock at first, but it aids in the process of waking up. The shower is just a hose and a drain. There is no bathtub; all the water goes onto the bathroom floor. I hear my phone ringing so I turn off the tap and towel off. I have a missed call from my supervisor. I call her back and she's waiting for me at the canteen. I get dressed quickly and put my hair in a ponytail. No need to dry or style my hair. It is so hot and humid here in the Mekong region of Vietnam that I am soaking with sweat whenever I spend any time without air-conditioning. I reach the doors of the university canteen and quickly scan the crowd of customers for my supervisor, Kimanh. She's not hard to find as the room goes silent when I walk in and everyone stops eating and stares. There she is waving at me. The transition from a buzzing room to the sound of silence is a usual reaction when I walk into a room on campus. Being one of three Caucasian foreigners at the university and in the town of Tra Vinh, I guess I'm a shocking sight first thing in the morning.

I sit with my supervisor and her friends. We have nicknamed ourselves "the breakfast club." Meeting for Hu Tieu, a common soup eaten for breakfast in the south, has become our morning ritual. By now I've learned how to order my soup without meat. At first they looked at me oddly when I made this request until I learned how to say that I am a vegetarian. It's usually a smooth process as long as I get a canteen staff member who knows me.

I look around; everyone is still staring but avoiding direct eye contact. They giggle when I smile at them. The football game has finished and the players have retired to the canteen for a refreshing glass of "ngoc mia" (sugarcane juice). By now it's 7:15 am and the university has begun classes for the day. The football field is now occupied by a group of students and their exercise class. As we finish slurping our delicious noodles I ask for a "café sua da" – a strong Vietnamese coffee served with a little sweetened condensed milk on ice. Someone yells "tinh tien" (calculate the bill) and before I know it someone has paid for my breakfast. I try to offer money for my portion, but it's refused. I forgot that it's my turn to pay tomorrow.

It's the norm that one person at the table will pick up the bill. We take turns paying each morning. We leave the canteen and say goodbye. The workday has begun.

Continue...



Karen Stanbridge and Mark Stoddart at a Halloween party.

Symbolic Lives of Freemasons continued

Ultimately, I have collected an enormous amount of data on the experiences of, and meanings constructed by, contemporary Freemasons. These come from three primary sources: (1) the above video footage; (2) interviews with 121 contemporary Freemasons (72 in Nova Scotia and 49 in Newfoundland); and (3) fieldnotes representing my observations and experiences (in various official roles and a variety of Masonic orders).

Since collecting, exhaustively transcribing, crosschecking and coding these data, I have been working on a book, tentatively titled *Masonry is the Method: The Symbolic Lives and Experiences of Contemporary Freemasons*. At this point, beyond sections outlining the problem, reviewing the literature and theory, and discussing my methodology, I have rough drafts of four substantive chapters: "Paths to Masonry," "Taking the Degrees," "Claimed Changes in Respondents' Lives," and "The Question of Involvement." At least two more chapters remain before I begin finally working all of this into a

coherent volume.

However, in the meantime I have been busy giving conference presentations and submitting the occasional paper to journals. For example, in 2008 I presented "The Social Construction of Curiosity: Dramaturgical Processes and Initiation among Contemporary Freemasons" at a conference of the Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction in Boston. I presented "Pragmatic Constructions of History among Contemporary Freemasons" at the International Conference on the History of Freemasonry (ICHF) in Edinburgh in 2009 (which subsequently appeared in the peer-reviewed Journal for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism). In 2012, I presented "Freemasons Today: Thematic Claims of Life Changes since Becoming a Mason" at the First International Conference on Contemporary Esotericism in Stockholm. Finally, I will be presenting a paper titled "Taking the Degrees: Lived Experiences of Initiation, Passing, and Raising in the Words of 20th and 21st Century Canadian Freemasons" at next year's ICHF in Edinburgh.

Throughout all of this, my ongoing research has been highlighted in areas as diverse as Memorial University's 2007 annual Research Report, interviews on CBC Radio, in the Telegram, the Gazette, and on the local television program *Out of the Fog*. I have also spent considerable time giving talks to the local Masonic community as well as giving the occasional guest lecture for other faculty. I have published a number of non-peer reviewed papers on Masonic websites and in Masonic publications. Finally, here at Memorial I have been cast as the unofficial "social convenor" to the MUN Masonic community and University Lodge 34 (which was formed in 2007 by brethren who regularly met for drinks at Bitters Pub).

I continue to work on this project, writing, presenting, and publishing on various aspects of the Masonic order and Freemasons' experiences in today's rapidly changing, postmodern society. I have found that this is a group which varies in many respects from its portrayal as a secretive, closed organization. Of course, like many community groups today, it hardly lacks organizational and social challenges; and while relatively more diverse than in the past, neither is it devoid of difficulties surrounding membership, inclusion, status, pseudo-status, and bureau-

cratization. Yet, in different ways, the lodge also provides a safe, ritualized space to socialize; increase social capital; experience supportive bonds of "brotherhood;" engage in charitable work; build character, abilities, and skills; and, ultimately, to attempt to symbolically untangle new meanings relevant to members' lives in today's increasingly perplexing world.

Travelin' Man continued

My next stop was the University of Toronto. In my two years there I continued research in community activism and taught undergraduate and graduate courses in methods. Unfortunately, my office was between two well known political theorists (Irving Zeitlin and Lewis Feuer), who did not appreciate each other and made it known to those of us unfortunate to be housed between their offices. Moreover, I missed the more intimate, collegial environment of my past university experience. Despite some very able young faculty and excellent graduate students, it was not for me! In late autumn of my second year I applied to Memorial, came for an interview on a stormy February, and joined the department in July of 1974. Aside from sabbaticals, I have been here ever since.

Memorial, and the province, posed new challenges as well as opportunities for me. Before my arrival, my research had been linked to my doctoral dissertation, derived research such as with low-income activists in Montreal or a few requests for book chapters or journal articles solicited by academics I had come to know. What would I do next? Towards the end of my second year at Toronto I had become interested in Innis and Watkins' theories on staple development and staple traps and had drafted a research grant application exploring how staple traps might be avoided using St. John, New Brunswick, as a case study thinking erroneously that St. John's, Newfoundland, had never developed any sizeable industrial foundation.

I also looked to extend my participation with community groups. Several existed, including a neighborhood movement against the West End highway off Water Street called Columbus Drive. Provincial community action was rural and driven by Memorial's Extension Service in places like Fogo Island. For reasons that are not quite clear to me, I did not duplicate my immersion with community

activism and change. It was not until Peter Sinclair arrived several years after my arrival and started research on the changing fishery sector and the people and communities in which it occurred that I seriously turned to a longer term research vision concerning the province. It started with a discussion of the disjunction between statistical profiles of rural communities on the Northern Peninsula and life there as Peter and I knew it from research and numerous visits for recreational purposes. Contrary to Census Canada, the region seemed to neither of us to be a basket case. In the mid 1980s we developed research proposals, received funding and initiated what would be a nearly ten year study of the region and its people using a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods. *Living on the Edge*, co-authored with Peter Sinclair, resulted as did numerous academic articles, book chapters and evaluation reports on development corporations and other local development initiatives. My interest in power, community organization, economic development and local governance can, I think, be seen in the work in this period in which I was author or co-author.

This initiative was followed by a larger, more formally multidisciplinary one, in the early 1990s focusing upon the role of a cold ocean environment on the lives and communities of the province with special reference to the Bonavista peninsula. I have long been interested in the issue of knowledge, its forms and its relationship to power. My work with fishers demonstrated such knowledge derived from a lifetime of fishing. This focus became a major part of my contribution to this project. *Finding our Sea legs*, co-authored with Barbara Neis, resulted as well as several journal articles and chapters on traditional environmental knowledge, its construction, use and relevance to fisheries management policy.

I have also been interested in issues of comparative economic development as well as the local and regional structures of governance that promote development. In this vein I have written several articles and book chapters comparing Iceland with Newfoundland and Labrador in terms of municipal and regional forms of governance and their implications for the different development trajectories each has followed. Three years ago I co-authored *Remote Control: Governance Lessons for and from Small, Insular and Remote Regions* with Godfrey Baldacchino and Rob Greenwood.

In the last decade I have become highly active doing collaborative research with the Inuit people of Labrador and their new land claims government of Nunatsiavut. This research has included the harvesting of country food, traditional knowledge and its use in responding to environmental change, challenges and opportunities afforded by emergent forms of Aboriginal governance and greater use of Inuit traditional knowledge in structures of resource governance. Much of this work has been published in natural science and policy journals and recently I co-authored with David Natcher and Andrea Procter the first book dealing exclusively with the new Inuit land claims government of Nunatsiavut titled, *Settlement, Subsistence and Change among the Labrador Inuit: The Nunatsiavummiut Experience*. I am now beginning with David Natcher a larger circumpolar investigation of resource governance, focusing upon subsistence fisheries, involving Alaska, Canada, and Greenland.

It has been an incredibly short thirty-nine years at Memorial. I stopped teaching a year ago. Retirement from Memorial looms in less than a year. Much has changed in these years. Large, interdisciplinary research projects are increasingly the norm. A range of new approaches and perspectives now characterize the social sciences. Some are truly innovative; others largely repackaged much as Pitirim Sorokin predicted in *Fads and Foibles*. I already miss the teaching, particularly at the graduate level, but I feel comfortable leaving. Memorial, my colleagues and the thousands of students I have taught have been supportive and generous to me. I will miss everyone but it is now time to ride into the sunset to find new challenges and pursue outlets I have neglected for nearly four decades!

Same Same but Different continued

Although this is a typical morning in Tra Vinh, it took me a while to adapt to this "strange" routine. I arrived in Tra Vinh, Vietnam, at the end of September 2011. After finishing my Master's degree in sociology, I was seeking an adventure and needed a break from the demanding academic lifestyle. While exploring my options, I found an internship program at Marine Institute International, funded by the Canadian International Development Agency. They had a position as Gender Specialist at Tra Vinh University in Vietnam. I thought that working towards women's

rights in Vietnam would offer the perfect contrast to a student lifestyle that required being chained to a never-ending word document and deadlines. I was longing to put to use the many skills I had learned during graduate studies.

As a Gender Specialist in Tra Vinh, I am responsible for working directly with the Gender and Community (Khmer Culture) Department to increase their knowledge of gender and equality. While Tra Vinh and the university are quite advanced in comparison to other regions in the country, examples of a male-dominated culture are everywhere. Males hold most of the power and occupy the decision-making positions. Women, who have advanced to working outside the home, are primarily responsible for the housework and child rearing. Male children are preferred to female children, and if the family can afford to educate only one child, it will most definitely be the boy. Females are expected to obey and follow their husband's rules, despite his absence in the household. A "good woman" is a follower. It didn't come as a huge shock to me that women were treated this way while living and working in a patriarchal culture. However, it was difficult for me to accept that I would not be treated as an equal amongst my peers and co-workers because of my ethnicity, age, and most importantly biological sex. Quickly I learned that there was nothing I could do about it other than to accept it and learn to work within its constraints.

I have three main tasks to accomplish in a six-month contract: teaching about gender equality practices in Canada, teaching research design and feminist research methodologies, and assisting in conducting a piece of research on Khmer students' access to education. My colleagues and I worked hard to accomplish the assigned tasks in my work plan. However, individually I make it my mission to challenge any man I can to reflect on his advantages and privileges living as a male in Vietnam. My approach leads to some of the most interesting conversations in Tra Vinh. I guess it's true that the best learning happens outside of the classroom, and the best research is conducted once the tape recorder has been turned off. The men also question me and push my limits. I was ready to accept the challenge.

And there are many challenges! The intense heat and humidity is at times unbearable. Using chopsticks at every meal and eating soup for breakfast is definitely an adjust-

ment. Living in a formalized and conservative culture is in stark contrast to my liberal lifestyle in Canada. Everyone in the town knows who I am and where I am at all times. Children run out to the street utterly elated at the sight of a foreigner and yell "hello, hello" as I ride around on my bicycle. I was so used to blending in at home in Newfoundland. Although I had volunteered with international student organizations at Memorial University, for the first time I was truly beginning to understand how those of different racial and ethnic backgrounds must feel in the place that I call home.

Although there was a period of adjustment, it was a transition easily facilitated by the overwhelming hospitality of the university staff and teachers at Tra Vinh University and the people who lived in the town of Tra Vinh. The level of hospitality in this rural Vietnamese town is comparable only to that of Newfoundland. As we settled into our daily routine, it became more apparent that living in rural Vietnam in many ways resembles life in rural Newfoundland – or as the local Vietnamese would say, it is "same same but different."



David Chafe and his wife

When I first arrived in Tra Vinh, I was taken by motor-bike to a colleague's house in the rice patties. Upon arrival I was introduced to everyone at the house and given sticky rice as a welcoming appetizer. Soon I was ushered to a seat in the front of the house where tables were already set for

a feast. The front of the house is reserved primarily for males and guests. As a foreigner I sat with the men and my female colleague – without my colleague being there for translation, communication would be quite difficult. We were invited to drink beer in glasses with chunks of ice. Refrigeration is non-existent in a hut made out of banana leaves with a mud floor. We would all toast one another and drink beer together. Sometimes even a bottle of rice wine was brought to the table and the men would come to toast me saying, “nam moui, nam moui,” which was a suggestion to share the drink 50% each. Eventually one or two women would appear from the kitchen with an incredible amount of food.

The bathroom was a squat toilet located outside the back of the house. To get there I had to walk through the kitchen. I was surprised by the number of women that were behind the operation of producing this lovely meal. I had no idea so many women were here. Women are not generally permitted to sit in the front of the house with the men, and they are certainly not allowed to drink. Working as a gender specialist, I was interested in getting to know these women, but I was always led back into the main part of the house. I felt a strong disconnect from the local women as we were unable to communicate due to language and cultural barriers.

Until one day I was invited to visit the house of my supervisor’s grandmother-in-law in the neighbouring province of Ben Tre. At this point, I had been invited to many people’s houses for dinner and the experience was similar to that of my first visit in the rice patties. But this time it was different. When I arrived, nobody really paid any attention to me. I was introduced to people at the house, but everyone was busy with their assigned tasks. I met the grandmother and we exchanged hellos. I told my supervisor that I would call her “Nan.” She immediately handed me a pair of scissors and instructed me to head into the backyard where the meat was being grilled. I was responsible for cutting the meat to suitable serving sizes. I was elated! Finally, I felt useful and accepted as an equal. While most of my work in Tra Vinh was working towards women advancing beyond traditional roles in the family, I was ironically longing to be accepted into this private sphere dominated by women.

The whole house had a feeling similar to that at my parents’ house when my mother entertains for Sunday dinner.

I will admit that at home in Newfoundland I am guilty of sitting in the living room while my mother and her sisters prepare the meal. I sit in protest holding tight to my ideals that it is not my role, nor will it ever be my role, to serve the men in my family. But here, I was beside myself with excitement. Once I completed my meat-cutting task I moved into the kitchen. Typically, I was not permitted to enter the kitchen during a dinner, but at “Nan’s house” I was expected to be there alongside the other women helping to set the table. When it came time to eat, I was told to sit in the kitchen with the women and served a Coca Cola with my dinner. I was not permitted to drink beer at this meal. For the first time in Vietnam I felt like a woman equal to other women instead of an outsider that they had to serve hand and foot. I smiled from ear to ear as I helped to clear the table and wash the dishes. Just like home, nobody left the house empty handed. All leftovers were divided up into plastic bags (instead of Tupperware) and given to the departing children and grandchildren.

My last week in Tra Vinh was one of the busiest. I had made so many friends, and arguably family, in the town that I was invited out for meal after meal to say goodbye. It reminded me of the week before I left Newfoundland trying to see all of my friends and say goodbye for a few months. I and two other interns took one full day to visit several of my Khmer (of Cambodian decent) friends at their home in the middle of the jungle. It was a busy day beginning with a lunch prepared by my friends, all male, who cooked and served the ladies. At this meal we would all stand and shout, “mot, hai, ba, YO!” before drinking from our glass. We visited my favorite pagodas one last time before heading to another friend’s house to say goodbye. There we were greeted by an extended family with children running around in excitement at the sight of foreigners.

It was insisted that my friends and I sit down and eat fruit. I spoke in broken Khmer and broken Vietnamese while one local friend spoke back in broken English attempting to translate all the questions the family members had to ask. Before long, the table had transformed into another feast. We ate and toasted one another. Soon we were asked to sing the Khmer song we had learned at the university. The family was amazed. Soon music was playing and our shoes came off as we began to show off our Khmer dancing skills. I sat down to take a break and I looked

around. It reminded me of Christmas at home with everyone eating, singing, and dancing. However, it was different. All three of us had been engaged in our own conversations over the past few hours. But none of the family spoke English, and our level of Khmer and Vietnamese was embarrassing at best. Somehow we managed to communicate and enjoy our time together.

It was an evening of celebration, not focused on differences, but on similarities. Although there were barriers of language and culture, I felt incredibly at home sharing food, music, and dancing with some of my closest friends deep in the Vietnamese jungle. There really is no other way to explain it and compare it to home other than "same same but different."

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