



Sociology on the Rock

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“Dialogue is a difficult art. It means engaging in conversation with the intention of jointly clarifying the issues, rather than having them one’s own way; of multiplying voices, rather than reducing the number; of widening the set of possibilities, rather than aiming at a wholesale consensus...; of jointly pursuing understanding, instead

of aiming at the other's defeat; and all in all being animated by the wish to keep the conversation going"

(Zygmunt Bauman, *Collateral Damage*, p. 172)



Dr. Donald Willmott received the YMCA Peace Medallion in November 2014. The first Memorial University sociologist, Dr. Willmott taught at Memorial from 1956 to 1959. He was a pacifist until he saw the terrible things which happened in his “home” country of China where his parents were missionaries. Dr. Willmott joined the American OSS in China during the Second World War and has since then spent a lifetime in organizations and causes devoted to preventing war. At age 89, he is still active in the Peace and Justice advocacy group in Owen Sound, Ontario. Photo by Michael McLuhan.

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A PASSION FOR SOCIOLOGY

By **Eric Tenkorang**

As an instructor for a first-year sociology course at Memorial University, I have heard some students in my class claim they were first introduced to sociology in high school. This wasn't so in my case; the first time I heard about sociology was when I received an

admission letter in 1998 to study for a Bachelor of Arts Degree at the University of Ghana in Accra. Unlike North America where applicants have some flexibility to choose and pursue courses of interest, this isn't an option in Ghana. The university assigns courses based on grades and availability of space. Not all those who qualify gain admission to the university, not to mention getting placed in the appropriate course of interest. The competitive nature of university admissions in Ghana meant that most applicants received their admission letters with excitement, but my experience was unique. I was completely disappointed and wept.

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BAPTIZED IN DISINFECTANT

By **MarieC. Croll**

Marie Croll teaches sociology at the Grenfell Campus of Memorial University. Her current research brings together her work as a cultural sociologist and her former interests as a private psychotherapist. It explores trauma, gender and identity construction, reflexive transformation, and symbolic interaction through narrative accounts of forced institutionalization.

Generations of women were forcibly confined in female-only institutions known as Magdalene Laundries in the name of a religious “mission” of charity and reform. From the 18th to the 20th centuries they spread from England and Ireland to span several continents before the last one closed in Dublin, Ireland, in 1996. The laundries, controlled by several orders of Roman Catholic nuns, were said to reform prostitutes, unwed mothers, and “incorrigible” girls – yet the inmate population contained countless unwanted, stolen, socially inconvenient, disregarded and/or neglected girls and women. The church exploited all of them as unpaid laundry labourers. The personal and social results of imprisoning these girls and women have been a deeply buried social problem.

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IMPOSSIBLE PROBLEMS

I work on impossible problems: disasters, oceanplastics, the chemicals that leach from plastics and are present in all humans and animals. None of these sociotechnical problems can be solved within the confines of business-as-usual. As such, they can tell us what has to change in social, economic and political systems so effective action can occur; the work always starts at a problematic material or event and ends with systems change. In methodological terms, I do activist-research.

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ENVIRONMENTALISM WEST & EAST: Canadian Ecological Politics from Clayoquot Sound to the Labrador Straits

By **Mark C.J. Stoddart**

Reprinted from the autumn 2014 issue of *Think Sociology*, newsletter of the UBC Department of Sociology.

I was fortunate to win the 2014 Early Investigator Award from the Canadian Sociological Association (following in the formidable footsteps of Catherine Corrigan-Brown). This prompted me to reflect on my path from environmental activist, to graduate student, to Associate Professor. This path has taken me from the west coast (Victoria and Vancouver) to the east coast (Halifax, then St. John's). The process of studying social-environmental interaction in British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador, has been an incredibly rich experience. Here, I wish to focus on a few of the lessons I've learned from this research trajectory.

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THE CLIPBOARD

By **Stephen Harold Riggins**

A message from the department Head Ailsa Craig: Our undergraduate scholarship fund has now reached the amount necessary for us to be able to start granting awards. Thanks to all those who have donated and worked on fundraisers, including the undergraduate Sociology Society which has been one of the most generous donors. Thanks to Stephen Riggins for initiating the scholarship fund in 2008 and to the Scholarship in the Arts research fund for helping the department reach one of its goals. The application process for the annual scholarship will be made public later.

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PHOTO GALLERY











1. The blue house, 166 Gower Street, is the home of Dr. Volker Meja. No other residence in St. John's has so many associations with sociology. At least twelve sociologists have lived here. The cosmopolitan list includes Judith Adler, Peter Baehr, Cecilia Benoit, Juan Corradi, Barry Deas, Masoud Kianpour, Ken Menzies, Paul Piccone, Gianfranco Poggi, Marilyn Porter, Stephen Riggins, and Victor Zaslavsky.

2. Michael A. Fleming and Robert Hill following the successful defense of Dr. Fleming's PhD. thesis "Roads Less Traveled": Dependency and Resilience in Locally-owned Trucking Companies on the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Acadian Peninsula of New Brunswick. Photo by Heather Harris.

3. The committee for James Baker's successful defense of his PhD thesis titled *Defending the Indefensible? The Use of Argumentation, Legitimation, and Othering in Debates on Refugees in the Canadian House of Commons, 2010-2012*. First row: Stephen Riggins, James Baker, and Mark Stoddart. Second row: Brian Staveley (Biology), Stephen Crocker, and Amanda Bittner (Political Science). Photo by Heather Harris.

4. Judith Smith, retired secretary of the Department of Sociology, at Stephen Riggins' retirement party, December 2014.

5. Lisa Kaida and Hari Kunduri at Stephen Riggins' retirement party.

6. Linda Cohen at Stephen Riggins' retirement party.

7. Rose Ricciardelli and Stephen Czarnuch at Stephen Riggins' retirement party.

8. Guests at Anne Morris' retirement party: Linda Cohen, Kathy Fitzpatrick, Paul Ripley, Eric Tenkorang, Ruby Bishop, Anne Morris, Linda Cullum, Judith Smith, Douglas House, and Suzanne Ottenheimer.

9. Contributors to Linda Cullum's and Marilyn Porter's new book *Creating This Place: Women, Family, and Class in St. John's, 1900-1950*. Helen Woodrow, Bonnie Morgan, Sonja Boon, Vicki Hallett, Linda Cullum (editor), Karen Stanbridge, Marilyn Porter (editor), and Margot Duley.

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