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**Youth Culture – Say What? Negotiating Rural Space in Daily life in Southern
Labrador: A Participatory Photovoice Project**

Katrina M. Peddle

A Thesis

In the Department

of

Communication Studies

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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ABSTRACT

Youth Culture – Say What? Negotiating Rural Space in Daily Life in Southern Labrador: A Participatory Photovoice Project

Katrina M. Peddle, Ph.D.
Concordia University, 2008

The dissertation explores how rural youth in Labrador make culture in their daily lives. I use photovoice to work with youth in four Labrador communities, and draw largely on critical scholarship on rurality, identity, race and cultural production, to focus on issues of race, identity, and sexuality. The role of space and place in the lives of rural youth is also critically examined.

This dissertation uses participatory methods to explore ideas of place and cultural production. I strongly critique the notion of culture as a city phenomenon, and elaborate on the ways in which youth employ local knowledge to make sense of their lives and to build a unique cultural space in their communities. I argue that rural youth, despite their invisibility as a political constituency and their lack of representation in popular culture, are indeed active producers of local culture. In exploring youths' understanding of racial identities from their perspective, issues of invisible whiteness, hybridity and Métis identity are examined.

In an effort to illuminate the strengths of youth and the challenges they face in their lives, the dissertation also employs a Foucauldian analysis of discipline to frame the context in which youth negotiate issues of safe sex and sexuality in a place where no one is a stranger. I demonstrate how the lack of anonymity in these communities contributes to the disciplining of youth

sexualities, and offer policy suggestions to improve access to appropriate services to youth in small places. Most importantly, in this dissertation I gained understanding of the dynamism and determination that are characteristic of the lives of the young Labrador people who informed this work.

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In addition to providing space to run the workshops, CYN staff were an excellent source of feedback, support and guidance in working with youth in the area. Their coordinator, Lisa Davis, also helped me navigate working in the region. This dissertation could never have been written without their insights, perspectives and dedication to their communities. Their experience in community development was invaluable to me in planning the workshop series, and making it happen at the community level. Most importantly, the project's participants

gave generously of their time and of themselves to make this dissertation possible.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Early morning, May 2003. The phone rings. I am at my parents' house in Western Newfoundland, having spent the last week checking the ferry schedule between Newfoundland and Labrador, only to find it not yet running. I am eagerly anticipating the beginning of my Master's fieldwork with a telecentre in the small community of Forteau. A contact in Labrador has put me in touch with Mr. Letto, who runs cargo plane service across the Strait of Belle Isle to Labrador during the winter months. Now he is calling to tell me that yes, he has a spot for me, as long as I can make it up the coast for noon. I bolt out of bed, throw my things into the car, and head out. As I drive up the Northern Peninsula, I see layers of pack ice along the coast. I realize that I would have been waiting a long time for ferry service to begin. Four hours later, I have boarded the plane and am off to cover the short distance between the island of Newfoundland and Labrador, on the mainland. Here begins my love of working in Labrador. Three years later, I return to Labrador to continue working with a small community organization, this time in partnership on my doctoral work. Arriving in the fall of 2006 enables me to miss the ice, and begin a new chapter in my life as a community-based researcher.

I have long been interested in the ways in which rural communities adapt and continue to exist in an era of rural decline (Troughton, 1999). Rural decline refers to the challenges that rural communities are facing in an era of growing

urbanization, automation and outmigration. Having grown up in a small resource-based town in Newfoundland during the drastic downturn in the fishery during the 1990s, I was well aware of the social impact of depleted fish stocks. Living in a relatively large centre, my adolescent sporting adventures enabled friendships between myself and youth from smaller communities whose families were facing the harsh realities of mass unemployment and outmigration.

The decline in the fishery and the pressures on coastal communities inspired my interest in researching small places and encouraged my inquiry into the experiences of youth in these areas. As a young person from a small community who came of age reading about cities and cultural production, I was also interested in contributing an informed study on how rural youth make culture in their daily lives. To do so I employed a hands-on visual methodology by working with youth in four Labrador communities. These include L'Anse au Loup (population 590), West St. Modeste (population 140), Red Bay (population 230) and Port Hope Simpson (population 530).

My dissertation draws largely on critical scholarship on rurality, identity, race, sexuality and cultural production. The cultural production scholarship is primarily concerned with the ways in which different media are made; this literature emerges from a largely urban context. My desire to place a lens on the lives of youth in Southern Labrador emerges from a recognized need for additional literature on youth and place. Indeed, the failure for two of the communities where workshops were held to even appear on the political map of Newfoundland and Labrador points to their general invisibility. This project aimed

to examine how youth understand themselves in terms of race in a rural place, especially in light of the recent emergence of Métis as an ethnic identity in Labrador over the past thirty years. My decision to engage in participatory methods is informed by postcolonial theoretical perspectives and past experiences in participatory research (Spivak, 1999; Trinh, 1989; Young, 2001).



Figure 1. Map of Newfoundland and Labrador

Corbett (2007) argues that “[t]he rural child/youth is typically an undifferentiated construction, one which is marginal and poor” (p. 431). This dissertation responds to Corbett’s critique, refuting dominant perspectives on rural youth to bring new understanding about the daily lives of young people in small places to light. In doing so, I focus on the ways in which these youth, many of whom are Métis, understand race from their perspective. Conversations that emerged throughout the fieldwork also motivate an interrogation of the ways in which rural youth negotiate sexuality in small places.

For me, research in Labrador began in 2003, when I first went to the South Coast as a Master’s student.¹ I was happy to run into my former community partners at a conference on rural sustainability in October of 2005. Following late night discussions with them at a cabin in the small island community of Twillingate, we decided that it would be a fun and worthwhile project to combine my dissertation with the creation of a youth program in Southern Labrador. Given the strong social and research networks to which I had access in the region (matched with a local desire to bring a new youth project to the area), the Southern coast of Labrador provided an excellent geographic region of study for my dissertation. My experience there in 2003 enabled me to work with the same organization around a different area of focus, but with a similar goal of contributing to rural capacity.

¹ My Master’s thesis, *The Nurse on the Roof with the Satellite Dish: A Critical Study of Telehealth in a Smart Community* (2004) involved fieldwork in Forteau, Labrador at the main office of SmartLabrador, the community telecentre that was also host to this project. It also involved interviews with health care workers at clinics throughout the Labrador region.

Research Questions and Contributions

In this dissertation I argue that youth in Labrador have a strong local culture and contribute actively to making rural space culturally vibrant, and that this happens in ways that are not adequately accounted for in quantifiable terms such as employment in the cultural sector. In doing so, I argue that youth racial identities are hybrids that incorporate a strong place-based identity, and I employ a Foucauldian perspective on the challenges rural youth face in relation to sexuality, as the effectiveness of many resources is constrained by the lack of anonymity that youth have in their communities. As such, in this dissertation I address the following questions:

- *How are young people in Southern Labrador negotiating their identities?*
- *How do youth negotiate rurality and race in the context of global popular culture? How does this negotiation relate to notions of place?*
- *How do young rural people frame their sexualities?*
- *What vehicles do youth use to resist adultist constructions of their sexual selves?*

As a student, I have always been interested in engaging in research that addresses a community need. With this in mind, my doctoral project involved the design and facilitation of a photovoice program that used imagery to talk with youth about issues of concern to them in their everyday lives (e.g. sexuality, community, globalization's impact on the fishery). Combining this program with research, I also used the discussions that took place during workshops as data sources on rural youth identity. Given the existence of social and research networks in the region (along with a general lack of youth programming in the area), the Southern coast of Labrador represented an excellent geographic

region of study for my doctoral research. This dissertation makes three specific contributions to the scholarship on rural youth, which, while an emergent focus of study, remains underdeveloped in several areas. It does this by: 1. examining issues of hybridity and race from a rural perspective; 2. challenging dominant notions of cultural production; and 3. integrating a stronger analysis of power with current literature on rural youth sexualities. Perhaps most importantly, this dissertation places a lens on youth who are rarely considered in conversations on youth culture.

This dissertation begins to fill in the gap surrounding youth and rural culture and argues that rural spaces are worth exploring in terms of scholarship; a better understanding of rural youth culture also has important implications for public policy as municipal, provincial and federal governments attempt to respond to the changing demographics in Canadian communities. While the existence of cultural spaces outside the city may seem like a moot point, I argue that there is a need not simply to *acknowledge* the existence of complex rural culture but to *examine* specific elements of rural culture.

My dissertation contributes to an important aspect of this field of study, rural youth sexualities. Notably, when the sexualities of young people are considered, rural studies of youth culture pay insufficient attention to the relationships of power in their analysis of youth sexuality (and arguably do not pay enough attention to issues of power generally). A Foucauldian perspective is rarely used in rural studies and adopting this approach in studying rural youth

and sexuality makes, I argue, a new contribution to the field (Little, 2003; Little & Leyshon, 2003).

Overview of Chapters

This dissertation is divided into seven chapters. In this introductory chapter I provide background into the reasons I decided to pursue this project, and elaborate on the theoretical frames employed. In Chapter Two I elaborate on my methodology and shed light on the dynamic data collection process. As a large part of the research focused on the *process* of working with youth on a critical photovoice project, I spend this chapter discussing and critiquing this method, as well as analyzing the ways in which photovoice methodology worked in the Southern Labrador context. In Chapter Three I address how youth relate to place and explore the different and overlapping meanings of rurality.

Building from an exploration of methodology and the problematization of rural youth identities, in Chapter Four I argue that rural youth in Southern Labrador are active cultural producers, and challenge the assumptions often explicit in literature on cultural production that rural places are inherently simplistic and that all culture is produced in the city space. In Chapter Five I examine the ways in which the participants negotiate their racial identities in their daily lives, and engage with issues of hybridity, invisible whiteness, and passing. I also illuminate the historical and political context of Métis people in Labrador. Chapter Six examines the ways in which gossip and a lack of anonymity work to regulate youth sexualities in Southern Labrador, and also explores the ways in

which youth resist and negotiate this regulation. Finally, in Chapter Seven I revisit my arguments, linking issues of rurality, youth, race, cultural production and sexuality.

Throughout this dissertation I argue that rural youth in Southern Labrador have a vibrant culture and notions of place that are rooted in a strong sense of history and love for their community. Rather than accepting an essentialized construction of rural youth as idyllic or a view of youth as “at risk”, I consider as a point of departure the complexity of rural youth identities. I explore rural youth culture via an examination of young people’s understanding of the place in which they live, youth Métis identity, cultural production and sexuality. In doing so I place a lens on the often marginalized place of rural youth in contemporary writing on youth culture, as this writing tends to focus on the experiences of youth in urban environments.

Research with Youth: Negotiating Privacy and Respect

Working in participatory ways with youth presents an exceptional opportunity for research to be grounded in the needs and experiences of young people. Engaging in this kind of a project, however, requires special attention to questions of ethics to ensure that the relationship with youth is fair and that outcomes from the research respond to and respect the lived realities of the participants. As a researcher who spent a lot of time with participants, and as someone who lived in their community (albeit for a relatively short period of time), I was privy to conversations that went beyond the scope of what would typically

be told to me as a youth researcher. While my goal is to illuminate elements of rural youth culture, this is matched by a need to ensure the privacy of participants. Reflecting respectfully on the desires of participants for privacy is a central part of the engagement of trust I have with those who contributed to this project. Indeed, working with youth means they may share details in friendship that they would not otherwise share in a research project. There are thus many things that I learned while working with these young people that have no place in this dissertation. Deciding upon what to include meant that I often would reflect on the conversations we had, especially outside of the workshop context. Typically, conversations that took place outside of the workshop and interview contexts were considered to be private and, when sensitive issues were discussed, were not integrated in the dissertation.

Examining Rural Youth Culture

As I have elaborated in the past few pages, there are many motivations, including personal, political and academic, for my pursuit of fieldwork in Labrador. Rural communities are very often invisible in communication and cultural studies debates about culture, and, more importantly, debates about the sites at which culture is produced. Williams' (1973) discussion of country life is a notable exception, although his work is closely oriented around literature and is different from what I undertake here. As I read more about cultural theorist Baudelaire's 19th century presentation of the rural environment as a site of simplicity, idiocy and calm as a means of illuminating the city's flâneur (Simmel,

1950:1903), I became increasingly frustrated with the ways small communities were represented in many academic and popular discourses.

Such assertions infuriated me as a young Newfoundlander who had made a move to the “mainland”, and I was intrigued by the work of other scholars that sought to illuminate the gaps in social and cultural studies regarding rural areas. Notably, I was frustrated that the diversity I had known throughout childhood was instead erased by typecasting rural spaces as simplistic (depicted as either idyllic or backwards). Corbett (2007) articulates a similar critique and illustrates the need to revisit the ways that rural spaces actually exist. He notes that:

[T]here are differences within rural communities some of which play out along the lines of race, class and gender. The myth of the traditional, tight-knit, relatively egalitarian rural community is as false today as it was in the 1960s and 1970s when analysts such as McKay (1994), Williams (1973), Frank (1966) and Pahl (1966) argued that rural places are integrated into the structures of contemporary capitalism and must be understood in relation to larger economic, political and social structures (p. 431).

Recognizing the assumptions that are often made about rural places was a significant point of departure in this work. I began to explore the construction of rural places from communication and cultural geography perspectives to inform my critique of Simmel's (1950:1903) typecasting of rural spaces (Massey, 1993; Matthews, Taylor, Sherwood, Tucker, & Limb, 2000; R. Williams, 1973). Williams (1973) notes that the tendency to ascribe values such as nostalgia, backwardness and safety to rural areas is a phenomenon that can be traced back to classical times. Rather than continue to recreate this patronizing discourse, I engage with Bourdieu's (1977; 2002/1990) notion of the habitus

when considering the identities of rural youth, as it takes the everyday experiences and family background of people into account when considering the context of their lives. In using the habitus' framing of different elements of experience, one can begin to move beyond a binary of individual versus society, which is important when considering the nuances of the lives of rural youth.

Conceptualizing a rural community is a difficult task, one that generally situates the rural in a binary opposition to the urban (Cloke & Little, 1997). Despite the tendency to nostalgize rural areas in literature, the youth I worked with often commented on the more banal elements of their communities:

KP. Do you think that your town has changed a lot since you guys were little here?

Jimmy (15). Yeah.

Amanda (17). Yes. Lots of people moved away and we don't get so much snow.

KP. Not as much snow and people moved away.

Jimmy. There was no road before.

Amanda. It cost more to go places (before the road was built). And the highway, we could go places [now].

KP. The highway has come through.

Amanda. More people come here.

KP. Oh yeah, and is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Amanda. Good for the businesses (personal communication, October 2006).

These youth are often concerned with issues of transportation, weather and other elements that impact their lives as people living in small places. The binary divide between urban and rural, so often present in literature but typically challenged by the young people with whom I worked, buries questions of meaning surrounding what living in a rural community actually entails. When the rural is idealized for its inherent simplicity and goodness, the assumption is that when looking for complexity in social, political and cultural life, one must head for the city. I question the assumption of rural simplicity in this dissertation by placing a lens on the ways in which rural youth construct their identities and produce culture. I also engage in critical analysis around the invisibility of race and the construction of sexuality in the everyday Labrador context.

There have been few challenges to classical sociological assumptions (e.g. Simmel, 1950:1903) about rural living in communication and cultural studies. While Lash (2005) takes up Simmel's work for the information age, he focuses on deterritorialization, a phenomenon which is relevant to rurality, but does not challenge the assumptions of simplicity in rural spaces.

Creative Rural Spaces

Despite Lash's attempt to update Simmel, there remains a largely unproblematized tendency in cultural studies for the city to be assumed as the *only* site of cultural life, and certainly of cultural production (Frank, 1997; Frith, 1983; Zukin, 1995). This is perhaps most popularly articulated by Florida's (2002) work on cultural industries and "creative economies". Gollmitzer and Murray (2008) argue that while there has been significant growth in cultural industries,

these industries exist with huge differences in the types of creative workers. They also argue that people living in rural areas are most at risk of marginalization in creative industries. Although it is clear that employment in creative industries happens most often in urban settings (Sereda, 2001), there is more to the status of rural creative spaces than can be understood from employment alone. Despite the fact that most cultural workers are based in larger cities, rural communities are active in making culture. Given the size and relative isolation of their communities, and the need to have a large population of consumers to support cultural products, it is understandable that most paid, full-time cultural work occurs in Canadian cities. But this does not exclude rural communities from being sites of cultural production. The cultural employment sector has grown by 30% between 1996 and 2001, and this includes growth in rural areas (Gollmitzer & Murray, 2008). I argue that the layers integrating rurality and culture are often ignored when considering cultural production as simply a quantifiable number of people employed in a cultural sector.

For example, the *Canadian Framework for Culture Statistics* defines culture as “creative artistic activity and the goods and services produced by it, and the preservation of human heritage” and includes occupations such as architects, photographers, graphic designers, illustrators, and dancers (among others) in its list of creative and artistic culture occupations (Cultural Statistics Program, 2004, p. 9). The small population in rural areas means that they typically do not house a large number of these kinds of workers, but a broader understanding of culture and cultural production allows for consideration of

unpaid and unreported cultural work. This tendency to exclude rural space from discussions of culture is largely uninformed by actual rural experience, and ignores what it generally does not know: a living, breathing, complicated rural place. While I recognize that statistical analysis requires a bracketed definition of culture and cultural work, there is a need to take other forms of cultural labour into account. Arguably, focusing on cultural work as paid labour (although it serves an important purpose) contributes to the presumption (whether implicit or explicit) that rural people live simpler lives than their urban counterparts as rural areas simply do not have the population to support cultural employment in the same ways as urban areas. Certainly, just because many rural communities do not have cultural workers does not mean that they are not cultural spaces.

The young people who participated in this project are very invested in popular culture. What youth do with media and how they incorporate them into their daily lives varies with their personal experiences, often very grounded in the places they live (McRobbie & Garber, 1991; Seiter, 2005; Soja, 1989; Valentine, Skelton, & Chambers, 1998). Although young people often listen to the same music and watch the same television shows in different areas, this is interpreted differently among young people, and impacted by class, gender, race, sexuality and ability. A key example of how place overlaps with class is highlighted in Seiter's (2005) work, where inner city youth used media rather differently than their wealthy suburban counterparts. As such it is not a matter of place acting in isolation, but the ways in which a combination of place, class, gender, race and

other factors influence the ways in which youth negotiating their relationship to popular media.

Indeed, defining the category of youth is a complex task. Many definitions of youth exist, and the very ideas of childhood and adolescence have been demonstrated to be categories whose meanings have shifted throughout history (Ariès, 1962; Valentine et al., 1998). My category of 'youth' was delimited in terms of participants by my community partnership. Participants ranged in age from 12 to 18 years of age in keeping with the group served by the Community Youth Network. While perhaps limiting in terms of the broad category of *youth*, it was a practical division based on the structure of the organization (Community Services Council, online, May 2007).

Setting the Context: Southern Labrador and Rural Youth in Canada

Southern Labrador is an isolated region with a sparse population, with several small communities situated along the coastline. It is accessible by ferry from the island portion of the province from late April to early January, and by plane for the remainder of the year. Fishing is the most important industry in several communities, along with logging in the community of Port Hope Simpson, where 22.2 % of the workforce is engaged in a resource-based industry (2006 *Community Profiles*, 2008). The resource-based economy, like many across Canada, is struggling with high levels of unemployment and outmigration. There are several communities in the area, with a total population of approximately 3500 ("Community Accounts," 2007). With the massive downsizing of the fishery,

high unemployment and an exodus of young people from the region, many have questioned the future of the small communities that dot the coastline (Sinclair, 2002). For example, the 2006 census lists the community of West St. Modeste as having no residents between the ages of 20-29, while Red Bay has 25, and L'Anse au Loup has 60. It is important to note that this has played out differently amongst the communities in which I worked, with Port Hope Simpson actually having a 3.9 % increase in population between 2001 and 2006. This differs from the communities of L'Anse au Loup, West St. Modeste, and Red Bay, which experienced population decreases of 6.6 %, 20.0 % and 14.0 %, respectively (*2006 Community Profiles*, 2008). Many families are leaving to seek job opportunities in the oil rich sector of Alberta, and several participants have a parent (typically a father) working away from home. The following excerpt of a conversation with a participant whose father worked far from home is typical of how many families have a parent who stays home and a parent who works away:

KP: And is he [your dad] gone back out on the boat?

Brittany (17). (Shakes her head).

KP. No? He's home now? Is he home for winter?

Brittany. They're going back out in boat later on the winter.

KP. OK. Right on. And how long does he work on the boat?

Brittany. He's gone around a month at a time.

KP. A month at a time.

Brittany. Usually they's bees home two months, like a trip is one month and then he bees home for two.²

KP. Right. And has he been doing that forever and ever?

Brittany. Six or seven years.

KP. Right on. And what did he do before that?

Brittany. I don't know. Well, he fished codfish before that closed. Other than that I don't know.

Many other participants also had fathers who worked in resource-based industries away from home. While St. John's has experienced an economic boom based mostly on the exploitation of oil and gas resources, the rest of the province is still struggling to deal with the changes in the labour environment and in the cultural landscape, as both Newfoundland and Labrador no longer rely on the fishery as it once did. Massey (1993) argues that the increasingly placeless global market "strengthens its hand against struggling local economies the world over as they compete for the labour of some investment" (p. 62). Many Labrador communities, including all of those in which this research was situated, are struggling to survive in this environment, where a lack of local opportunities generally means that young people leave home after completing high school, with few to return permanently. But the challenges of sustaining their communities is not the only thing on the minds of the young people with whom I worked. As one conversation revealed:

KP. Are there any things that you don't like about living in Red Bay?

² Spelling throughout quotes reflects the participants' dialect.

Erica (17). No jobs. And there's some places that you can't hang to and that, and if you goes there you gets in trouble.

KP. Right. Like what kind of places if you hang out there you get in trouble?

Erica. The wharf, but we hangs around there anyway. We just go. (personal communication, November 2006).

Young people are dealing with issues of unemployment and outmigration, but they are also invested in creating a good quality of life for themselves in their day-to-day lives, including trying to secure places to hang out. They are especially concerned about making a space for themselves in their communities. They often referred to the youth centre (and in one community where there was no youth centre, the town hall) as an important place for them to be able to access. They also made extensive use of outdoor space, as Erica refers to in the above quote, to gather and have fun with their peers.

Using Photovoice as a Participatory Data Collection Process

In this dissertation I use participatory methods to engage with youth on the subject of cultural production to better inform the literature on how culture is produced. I employ a participatory approach to research and draw upon the strengths of research participants, thus challenging traditional notions of expertise (Harding, 2004; Presser, 2005; Sprague & Kobrynowicz, 2004). Photovoice is an established research methodology oriented around self-representation and social change. It involves engaging a group of people in taking photos, then spending time discussing the photos as a means of initiating

new and potentially transformative conversations about their lives. This sort of research can take a variety of forms, but in this case, semi-structured workshops enabled flexible conversations while offering enough direction for the group to maintain goals during each workshop. A key element of this methodological choice was *having fun* – seeking ways to engage youth in activities that were entertaining for them while also providing me with a window into their everyday experiences.

Data collection was enabled by a youth program that uses photography as a vehicle for talking about important social issues. I hoped to work with participants to help them articulate how they understand their community, the strengths they possess and the challenges they face. This action-oriented technique has been successfully used in a variety of environments, especially with youth (Mitchell, Moletsane, Stuart, Buthelezi and de Lange, 2005). Intended to be creative and enjoyable, the program involved weekly meetings at which youth gathered to take photographs and interpret them. The meetings provided a forum for discussion of things that are important to youth, and allowed issues to be defined by youth rather than by an outside “expert”. This popular approach to artistic expression links creativity and social change. The resulting conversations were used as data for better understanding rural ethnic identity. This approach also offered participants an opportunity to build technical skills in digital photography and video.

Deciding upon an appropriate methodology presented an important challenge in this research project. An essential element of this research involved situating youth as participants in constructing and shaping the research, adhering to Skelton's (2001) argument of the importance of understanding youth as "active social agents" (p. 168). This required that this project focus on providing a space for youth to dialogue about issues identified by them as important. Valuing the voice of youth offered the opportunity to learn from their lived experiences and to identify potential social interventions that may work to enhance their quality of life in their communities (Hewitt, 2005). At the same time, workshops provided an avenue for discussing race and race relations within the region. I examine photovoice methodology in detail in Chapter Two.

Defining the category of youth is an inherently difficult task. Many definitions of youth exist, and the very ideas of childhood and adolescence have only emerged in recent history (Valentine et al., 1998). For the purposes of this study I limited the category of youth to the ages of 12 to 18 as the Community Youth Network (which partnered to provide space for the workshops) engages with young people between these ages. This may seem to be an arbitrary division as most critical scholarship on youth focuses more heavily on experiences as a defining factor for youth rather than age per se (Besley, 2003; Matthews, Taylor, Sherwood et al., 2000; T Skelton, Valentine, & Chambers, 1998). However, for the purposes of this project I have delimited youth as such in order to correspond with the structures in place at my site partner (Community Services Council, online).

The workshops ran as a series in several different Labrador communities, based on interest and financial considerations. It was sometimes a challenge, especially in the initial stages of the workshops, to have youth talk about the photos that they took. This was largely due to the need to build trust and familiarity between myself and the participants. Typically a workshop would begin with a series of icebreaker games, followed by time to view and discuss photos from the previous week's theme. The second half would involve a discussion of the theme, and the development of a plan for taking photos. As time passed, they began to speak more about the pictures, but generally were more prepared to talk about the theme of the week rather than to make explicit connections between their photography and the topic. The following excerpt from the beginning of a workshop illustrates this:

KP. I wanted to talk about what you'd like to do as a final project, just food for thought on what you'd like to do.

Dwayne (13). What's going to be our topic for this week?

KP. Sexuality.

Brandi (13). So we're going to take pictures of like ----?

Brittany (17). Did you check out the thing at the Desktop thing [referring to getting photos printed]?

KP. I didn't, but I'm pretty sure we can do that because I've got access to the budget, and I think we'll have the money to send you home with something nice. And now we have another example of something great by Brittany, and I was wondering if you could tell us what's going on here?

Brittany. Noo- (hesitating, mostly jokingly). It is raining and it is foggy, and it's a picture with water, trees, grass and rocks.

KP. Yeah, keeping with the scenery. And how would you describe how you take pictures?

Brittany. I dunno – I just goes around and looks for stuff that looks nice to me.

KP. Yeah. That sounds good.

Brandi. How do you get around?

Brittany. (Laughs) Mom's truck. Mom drives me around.

KP. Do you have your driver's license?

Brittany. No, I don't need one!

As is demonstrated by the somewhat chaotic nature of the conversation, there are many things being addressed at once in workshops. But when asked specifically about the links between a thematic workshop and the photos that were taken, participants generally commented on their aesthetics, rather than the kind of link they intended to make between the theme and their photography. We often talked about how often people did not have a specific reason for doing something - they just did it. We also discussed how photography is "sometimes just for fun", an activity that produces something participants did not have a whole lot of commentary on. As such, the photography elements of this project were practical creative tools for bringing people together and engaging in a fun artistic project, but the data that informs my thinking about rural youth culture

comes from the conversations and many hang outs that we had over the course of the Fall of 2006.

Negotiating the Personal and Political in Field Research

Approaching a participatory project requires the researcher to try to better understand the research context without judging it or necessarily changing it (Berg, 2001). I found this to be good advice but at times difficult to follow, especially when explicitly sexist, homophobic and racist comments were made during workshops. While Berg is wise to point out the dangers of attempting to change a situation, action research models which advocate for social change dispute this position, arguing instead that it is the role of the researcher to work with communities towards the goal of social change (Matthews, Taylor, Sherwood et al., 2000; T Skelton et al., 1998; Tacchi, Slater, & Hearn, 2003). He discusses the need for empathy, and to understand what is happening in the research environment instead of simply advocating or critiquing it. This was an important insight for balancing an action-oriented project with my desire to better understand rural youth culture. Working with youth requires creative and fun programming and making engaging activities was an integral part of this research process.

In this dissertation I also critically reflect on the processes in which we engaged as a group to inform my understanding of race and rural youth identities. I employed qualitative journaling techniques to ensure that I captured the richness of the workshops to the best of my ability, and kept all workshop

materials for data analysis purposes. The group discussions about the photos were a key element of the project, as it was in these discussions that youth had the opportunity to elaborate upon the photos they took. This was done in small groups over the course of many hours, and as such capturing the richness of these discussions was a significant challenge. I dealt with this by taking notes following every workshop, and by deciding to audio record the sessions.

Community Partnership: An Essential Input

Moving from a theoretical framework to operationalizing a critical perspective on rurality required partnerships to facilitate a community-based research process. This resource-intensive project would not have been possible without the strong investment of the Labrador I.T. Initiative (LITI) and the Community Youth Network (CYN). The LITI supplied fourteen digital cameras, two laptop computers, one projector and one colour printer for use during the project.³ They also provided office space for the duration of fieldwork. Most importantly, the LITI team (including significant contributions from the staff and the board) worked with me to make this project happen. This included help getting the project running, technical support, insight on negotiating my place in the community, and securing for the project. Their contributions to this dissertation cannot be overstated. The CYN sites served as the primary access points for the project in three communities. There was no youth centre in the

³ Despite the use of ICTs in this project, it is noteworthy that among the most effective tools employed was a flipchart. This reflects the ways in which youth thought about computers as tools for MSN or other one-to-one communication. It also reflects the relative age of the technologies to which they had access.

fourth community, so workshops were held at the town centre, where the youth group also met. In addition to providing space to run the workshops, the CYN staff were an excellent source of feedback, support and guidance in navigating working with youth in the area.

In order to maximize community skill building, we planned initially for the sessions with youth to be co-facilitated in partnership with a local person hired to work with me on this project.⁴ A large amount of work on this dissertation involved working with dedicated community partners to obtain project funding and coordinate the workshops in Labrador. While my community partners provided a great deal of input into the project, I was also given autonomy to tailor each workshop to the different groups in each community. As such I eventually planned workshops around community, globalization, race and representation, sexuality and safer sex, drugs and alcohol, and gender roles. These topics were chosen based on the interests of youth and community members articulated during the needs assessment. The decision to focus the dissertation on cultural production, race, and sexuality reflect both my research interests (rural culture and Métis identity) and the most salient topic that emerged in from the workshops (sexuality). A photovoice workshop manual was created as part of follow up to the workshops, and to ensure that the program could be repeated in the future without having to reinvent many elements such as icebreakers, games and activities.⁵ It also served as part of the program outputs that were reported back

⁴ Funding to pay the co-facilitator came from funds obtained from the Services Canada Job Creation Program.

⁵ See Appendix C for the complete manual.

to the photovoice project's funder, the International Grenfell Association. Working with my community partners meant that I had a sounding board for ideas, support when things were difficult, and advice on how to negotiate my work in different communities. Being so involved with the "doing" of the workshop series distanced me from my typical academic milieu in ways that helped me to better understand the daily motivations and challenges of these community workers.

Métis Identity: Thinking Hybridity

A significant goal at the outset of my doctoral work was to build a better understanding of the identities of Métis youth in Southern Labrador. My desire to focus more closely on race and identity in relation to this specific geographic region is largely a personal one. In the past decade, my father's genealogical research revealed that while my sister and I had grown up thinking of our background as strictly English, Irish, Scottish and French, an important indigenous element of our heritage had been left out – in most cases totally erased in narratives recounted to me by grandparents, great aunts and uncles. Partly inspired by a curiosity piqued by my family's racial history, which (along with the aforementioned heritage) is a mixture of Métis and Miq'mak, a portion of this dissertation addresses the ways in which young people understand race in their daily lives. While the areas where I worked have a large white population (referred to in Labrador as "settlers") and often identify as white, there are many Innu, Inuit and mixed race communities in Labrador, and in this dissertation I wish to better understand how young people make sense of this element of their

identities. Drawing from Clifford (1988), Lawrence (2003) critiques the gaze from which academics focus on Aboriginal identity as one imbued with notions of pity, desire and voyeurism. I attempt to diverge from this pattern, while acknowledging that my lack of personal history in three of the four communities where I worked may have contributed to a recreation of this problematic gaze. I address my position in the different communities in Chapter Two, when I elaborate on methodology. I employ Kraidy's (2005) notion of hybridity when analyzing (consistency here) the ways in which race functions in the lives of youth in Southern Labrador.

Gossip and Rural Youth Sexualities

As fieldwork progressed, important data emerged in relation to youth sexualities. Specifically, in Chapter Six I analyze the ways in which young people's sexualities are regulated by the lack of anonymity that their small communities afford, drawing from Foucault (1990; 1995) to frame the youth's concerns about people in their communities knowing the intimate details of their lives. I also examine the ways in which young rural people resist the regulation of their sexualities, and elaborate on some of the challenges of negotiating sexuality in a rural place. I then make policy recommendations related to the need for a multi-pronged approach to the provision of sexual health services for youth in rural and remote communities.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined several key areas of focus and laid a roadmap for the dissertation to follow. I began by discussing the relationship between youth and visual culture, while also elaborating on the context in which this research was conducted. Drawing largely from work in cultural geography, I then problematized concepts of rurality and place in relation to communication and cultural studies. Arguing that the field of cultural studies does not adequately consider rural communities, and specifically not as sites of cultural production, I demonstrated the need for greater research in this area. Having established the framework in which this dissertation is situated, I related my theoretical framework to my methodological choices and partnerships that were built to support this research. Having set up the background and context for the latter portion of the thesis, I laid out the concepts I employ in my examination of rural youth's understanding of race and sexuality in Chapters Five and Six. The following chapter will elaborate upon my methodology, and will bring the exciting data collection process to life.

CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

As mentioned briefly in the introductory chapter, the beginning of this research project was rather peculiar, involving an unconventional meeting at a cabin outside a small outpost. I was attending a conference on rural communities in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2005 and was happily surprised to see my former community research partner there. I had completed my Master's research in partnership with SmartLabrador (Peddle, 2004), a small community technology organization, and began discussing my interest in youth oriented research with the executive director. She noted that there was a genuine need for youth programming in the region, and we began to discuss the possibility of my returning to Labrador for my doctoral research. I had thrived on the mutually beneficial experience with SmartLabrador during my Master's project and was excited to have the opportunity to work with them again for my doctoral work. The trust and mutual understanding established via my work there in 2003 was fundamental in facilitating my re-entry into the community and my ability to establish contacts with youth centres in the region.

Pursuing a dissertation on rural youth identities presented several methodological challenges.

When embarking upon data collection for this project, I was concerned about how and to whom the stories of youth with whom I engaged would be told. I knew that at the end of the day I would be ultimately responsible for this interpretation as I was writing the dissertation, despite all of our efforts to make the project as collaborative as possible. Garner (2006) argues that the ways in which we tell other people's stories reveals a great deal about ourselves, and the willingness of researchers to meaningfully share power with research participants. Métis artist Stephen Foster articulates the need to give research partners the opportunity to tell their *own* stories, and that there are multiple narratives in any given research project (personal communication, February 2007). Given the requirements for this dissertation to be an academic text, I acknowledge that while I aim to be true to the voices and intentions of participants in so many ways, I do not provide a blanket opportunity for them to narrate this project. In this chapter I therefore reflect upon my telling of the stories of Southern Labrador youth, and elaborate upon why and how I chose to do so.

Chapter Outline

This chapter outlines the methods employed in my dissertation. It provides justification for my choice of methods and the means through which data was collected, and helps to tell the research story of my time spent in Southern Labrador. I first discuss photovoice and critique its limitations. I then briefly present a logistical picture of data collection. I pay special attention to the ethical considerations of working with young people on a participatory project such as

this one. I then delineate the motivations behind my choice of participatory methods. As this research involved me moving to the region for the Fall of 2006, I articulate the process through which I negotiated my integration into the community, and the different ways I was understood as a community-based researcher, and elaborate upon the challenges of doing this kind of research. I then review the notion of empowerment, with a focus on its conceptual limitations in order to better situate the power dynamics in this project. I then conclude the chapter with a discussion of visual methodology.

Employing Photovoice: History and Context

My decision to engage with a participatory method such as photovoice was made mostly because of my concerns with the limits (both theoretically and methodologically) of ethnographic methods. I specifically took into account critiques of traditional ethnography in relation to power and social action, where a researcher comes to a community, observes and participates in community life, and then leaves with a substantial data set that serves to develop the researcher's career (Presser, 2005). Instead I wanted to pursue a research method that would provide me with the necessary data to write a dissertation while also offering worthwhile programming to youth in the region. A participatory method also pushes researchers to go beyond the traditional boundaries of ethnography when conducting field research. Spivak (1999) argues that ethnography denies the research subject the possibility of self-representation, which raises questions of how researchers should consult during the writing

process with the people who participated in the research project (this was a significant challenge in this research project, as I do not live in the same community as the research participants).

Here I do not wish to argue that employing a more participatory method resolves the issue of representation of research subjects. Tilley (1998) raises the question of what other kinds of information researchers are privy to when doing “insider” research, and elaborates on the potential ethical pitfalls of having gained participants trust when ultimately the researcher still has editorial control of how the research is presented. What I suggest, instead, is that participatory methods offer the possibility of subject’s interpretations to be better taken into account in the process of research. The challenges of providing an ethical interpretation and representation of a group of people are significantly complicated by engaging with them in a meaningful way, where things are often revealed to a researcher which participants would not want publicly illuminated. As such, it is incumbent upon the individual researcher to proceed with open communication and with a strong ethical commitment to the research participants. This, however, can never be fully resolved. In conducting this research I made a commitment to respecting the privacy of participants and the integrity of the communities in which I worked. This meant that several interesting scenarios are not discussed in this dissertation, as I only had access to this information due to a relationship of trust that I had established with participants.

Photovoice methodology emerged from health promotion practice and has a commitment to social change (Wang, Cash, & Powers, 2000). Building upon feminist approaches to qualitative research and Freire's (1970) understanding of critical consciousness, it traditionally has three main tenets: engaging people with the strengths and concerns of their particular community; promoting discussion and sharing knowledge within a community; and engaging with policy makers to catalyze action around the issues addressed (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004; Wang et al., 2000). Like other forms of participatory action research, the main focus is on the *process* of the research, not in the final product such as a community art exhibition or report. As such, I engaged in process-oriented data collection: I did not engage in a semiotic analysis of the photos, but rather spoke with youth regarding their feelings about their community and interests as a means of finding insights into rural youth identities. At the same time, the photography created by young people in Southern Labrador contributed to this project by providing a bank of evidence on how young people engage as cultural producers in their communities, an argument I articulate in Chapter Four.

Bolatagici (2004) argues that hybridity and mixed race studies have been addressed theoretically, through personal testimony and analyzed in literature, but notes that less attention has been paid to visual representations and how mixed race people use visual media to create their own narratives of being mixed race. My dissertation begins to fill this gap in the rural Canadian context. While I do not engage in a semiotic analysis of the photos, this project enables a group of largely mixed race youth to engage in self-representation that challenges the

ways in which both rural places and Métis people are often represented (when they are represented at all). Bolatagici highlights the importance of “producing images of multiracial people that [do not] rely on integrating cultural signifiers” that often stereotype and constrict the ways in which racial identification takes place (p. 81). I recognize now that at certain times during the data collection process when I was struggling to understand what youth identified as important parts of their culture, I perhaps would have liked to see more explicit cultural signifiers, which would have made it easier for me to delimit what youth express their racial identities to be. But it is much more fruitful and exciting that youth did not depend on recycling stereotypical images when expressing their identities.

Photovoice builds from Freire’s (1970) understanding that individuals, when provided with appropriate tools and support, are capable of critically looking at the world in which they live. Marginalized communities are typically underrepresented or problematically represented by mainstream media, and making their own representations enables a community or group of individuals to offer their own version of whom they are and what their experiences have been (Kiss & Tell, 1994). Photovoice challenges the invisibility many groups experience by engaging individuals in documenting their own lives and experiences (Booth & Booth, 2003). This, however, is not to argue that using photovoice creates a true or most ‘realistic’ representation of a community. Rather, it allows for specific people to speak to their experiences in order to better understand the challenges that they face and the strengths that they possess.

Photography has often been associated with baring truth, a notion that is challenged in the critical work on visual culture. In critiquing the presumed truth inherent in photography, Bourdieu (1999) notes “in conferring upon photography a guarantee of realism, society is merely confirming itself in the tautological certainty that an image of the real which is true to its representation of objectivity is really objective” (p. 164). In this project I attempt to move beyond the emphasis in much of the photovoice literature to adopt a more nuanced understanding of photography and representation. Also, due to the diversity of topics covered in the workshops, there was no specific policy group targeted in this research project. Photovoice also has the intention of enhancing the ability of participants to exercise power in their own lives (Wang et al., 2000). Given the problematization of empowerment that I will discuss later in this chapter, I enthusiastically acknowledge the action-orientation of this methodology but proceed with caution about its emancipatory potential.

Strack, Magill and McDonagh (2004) note the differing ways in which youth engage with photovoice, with some being very enthusiastic, while others requiring more guidance and encouragement throughout the process. Additionally, they note the usefulness of grouping photos as ‘personal’ and ‘community’ in order to encourage youth to address issues of self-identification while also discussing subjects and experiences that were more community-oriented. This was useful advice; initial workshops began with questions of community (notably “What does your community mean to you?”) while later workshops often dealt with more individual topics (e.g. sexuality) and projects

(e.g. zinemaking). The small communities in which the workshops were held required significant tailoring to community needs, along with the strengths and capacities of participants. There was also a growing focus on group-based activities as the workshops progressed. Indeed, it was clear throughout the course of workshops that youth were not interested in engaging with overtly political topics. This varied among participants and between groups, but a consistent challenge involved negotiating the project goals of consciousness raising while also engaging youth on their own terms with issues of interest to them. To ensure adequate discussion of issues less easily discussed in workshops (e.g. race and Métis identity) I interviewed seven participants as an additional means of data collection to bring further depth to the workshop discussions. These individuals were participants who were invested in the project, and were chosen because of their interest in being interviewed.

Logistics, Workshop Format and Data Analysis

A project of this type requires minimal but essential inputs. There were 14 digital cameras, two laptop computers, one projector and one colour printer available for the project. These resources were provided by the Labrador I.T. Initiative, along with office space. The Community Youth Network (CYN) provided space to run the workshops at their youth centres and in community centres for the two communities where they do not have physical space, and served as primary access points for the project within each of the communities. A \$10,000 grant was obtained from the International Grenfell Association, which covered

expenses associated with the project (e.g. transportation, printing materials, project flyers and a concluding event which brings together participants from the different communities).

In order to maximize community skill building, I co-facilitated the sessions with youth in partnership with a local person who was hired to work with me on this project. Identifying an individual to work in this position proved challenging, as out-migration has resulted in a very small pool of eligible co-facilitators. This added another layer to an already elaborate project as working with a co-facilitator enabled us to do more and also meant that I had to take on other responsibilities that included supervision and group negotiation.

Workshops were held once a week in each community (a total of four workshops per week in L'Anse au Loup, West St. Modest, Red Bay and Port Hope Simpson) beginning September 18th, 2006 and concluding on November 25th. Each week centred on a different workshop theme, and at the end of ten weeks a total of 36 workshops made up the bulk of the project's data set. These were supplemented with six interviews with youth about their experiences and understandings of race in their everyday lives. I also use zines made by several participants to discuss the habitus of participants (Bourdieu, 1998).

The final workshops were held during the week of November 20th, 2006. My remaining time on the South Coast was spent completing evaluations and ensuring that technical equipment was returned to SmartLabrador. It also involved the completion of a photovoice project manual to be distributed to youth

centres throughout Labrador. This work was an important element of my accountability to the community and to the International Grenfell Association which funded the project.⁶

As there was such a large data set, I used Nvivo qualitative coding software to help organize my analysis. The richness and size of the data I collected is this project's biggest asset and largest challenge. It is rare that a fieldwork-based dissertation provides a linear and clear path to data analysis and eventually completion of a dissertation. With the benefit of hindsight, I think a facilitated group activity that relied less on discussion and more on specific structured activities would have been a more appropriate means of gathering data given the age group with whom I was working. This would have better reflected youth's desire to engage in fun activities to which they typically do not have access. This, however, introduces a methodological challenge as I employed a participatory approach. It is also reflective of challenges faced by other researchers doing similar kinds of community-based technology projects with youth. For example, Seiter's (2005) work with youth found that they were often more interested in purely recreational activities than ones that were politically oriented. This of course reflects the ways in which we as researchers often assert our political desires onto research projects in ways that do not necessarily reflect youth's priorities. I found this to be challenging during the course of workshops, as I felt competing pressures between simply engaging in activities that youth wanted to pursue, feeling accountable to my research

⁶ See Appendix B for the complete manual.

partners and broader community, and ensuring that at the end of three months I would have appropriate data to write my dissertation. This makes me reticent to say that this was a truly youth-directed project.

Thinking Ethics: Working with Youth on Photography

There are several ethical challenges associated with photovoice methodology. First and foremost is the issue of safety when working with vulnerable groups, including youth. This project encouraged young people to take pictures in their leisure time between workshops, leaving their photography experiences relatively unstructured. This first required a discussion about the ethics of photography. As such, the first workshop in each community engaged in discussions and role-plays which dealt with potential ethical issues that might arise. It was integral that participants discussed and engaged with the responsibilities associated with taking pictures, including issues of privacy and intellectual property (Wang et al., 2000). Participants negotiated the collective process of deciding which photos they would like to display, but also had final say over whether their individual images would be displayed in the workshops, at the community centre or in my dissertation. As Wang and Redwood-Jones (2001) underline:

Photovoice is grounded in the fundamental principles that underlie the code of ethics for the health education profession: respect for autonomy, promotion of social justice, active promotion of good, avoidance of harm. Adherence to these principles, however, cannot be left to happenstance. We must ask what consequences – intended and unintended – we can and should anticipate (p. 560).

While I was not able to foresee all the possible ethical challenges that come with this kind of project, participants and I established ground rules to limit possible ethical and exploitive problems. Some of the ethical issues highlighted when engaging with photovoice include: 1. Intrusion into an individual's private space; 2. disclosure of embarrassing elements of a person's life; 3. being "placed in a false light by images" (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001 p. 566); 4. protection from using photos for commercial gain; 5. the ethics of representation; 6. the ethics of facilitator participation and suggestion of "picture-taking ideas" (p. 569). All of these issues were discussed with participants during initial workshops when group guidelines were established. As the onus to adhering to these ethical guidelines lies with the researcher, I reflected on these principles in the planning and execution of these workshops. Conversations with youth about these issues reflected their desire to engage in ways that were both fun and respectful. Issues of safety were also important to talk about, as some youth took pictures of themselves doing "wheelies"⁷ on their dirt bikes during the break, when a discussion of safely taking photos was planned for the latter half of the introductory workshop. Although this is a standard recreational activity for this individual, he could nonetheless have been hurt while doing this safety exercise. This reinforced to me the need to frequently articulate the principles that I expected participants to respect throughout the project. Participants found some of the games we played around safety to be a little boring, but still engaged with

⁷ Wheelies involve driving a bike (in this case a motorized dirt bike) on the back wheel only. Although youth (generally boys) often do these kinds of tricks on their dirt bikes, they are dangerous activities, especially when an element of bravado for the camera is added to the situation.

the activities and contributed to establishing ground rules on what kinds of photos could ethically be taken.

In addition to taking field notes and reflecting on sessions, I also spent time talking with guidance counsellors, meeting parents and hanging out with youth workers. The building of trust between youth workers and myself was an essential element of the project that took a significant amount of time. At the same time, especially given my permanent home in Montreal, more than 2000 kilometres from where I did my research, I am by no means “home free” in terms of research ethics. On the contrary, I am often concerned about the capacity for reciprocity and for me to be accountable to my research partners when I am so far removed from them in my daily life, a sentiment reflected by other researchers who exist on the insider/outsider continuum (Tilley, 1998).

Why Participatory Methods? Situating Method and Power

Youth form a category that are often considered as citizens in the making, not yet able to articulate themselves about their lives or their experiences. Young (2001) argues that postcolonial perspectives rethink subaltern knowledge, noting that “[e]veryone has an informal education, and the boundary lines between the formal and the informal are more than fluid. The knowledge that you need is the knowledge you learn informally” (p. 14). Given its focus on valuing knowledge that is often invisible or considered unimportant, this perspective made a key contribution to my methodological choice and required me to take local knowledge seriously and to value youth contributions throughout the project, for

example their knowledge of how to safely cross an open section of the frozen bay on snowmobile. One participant describes how to best do this:

David (14). You've got to go down to Pinware first, and then go across.

KP. Because it is safer?

David. Yeah. You got to go across the river.

KP. I would pee my pants. I would be so scared, I'm such a chicken for that kind of stuff.

David. It's all flat. You can just give'r all the way (personal communication, November 2006).

Valuing the contributions of participants meant that I had to engage with youth on their terms about what is important to them, and what kinds of knowledge they consider to be important.

While I agreed with the premise that photovoice creates a space for youth empowerment via cultural production, I also later in the fieldwork recognized the limitations of this methodology, especially when considered in the context of the lives of participants, many of whom face challenges that this program could not hope to address. Regardless of any action that youth may wish to take around a problematic situation in their lives (e.g. issues of outmigration in their communities), there is no magic bullet solution to long-term problems that a workshop series could create. However, if social change is incremental (and I believe that it is), these workshops made an important step in valuing the contributions and perspectives of rural youth to their communities. I consider the

photovoice project an important contribution to self-reflection and empowerment that is situated in a context where families and youth are struggling with an economic downturn in their communities, challenged by vast unemployment and outmigration.

I have a long-standing commitment to participatory action research, which, along with exciting community opportunities, informed my decision to explore issues of rurality, race, identity and cultural production through a series of youth-driven workshops in Autumn 2006. I realized over the course of fieldwork that my research questions, while largely overlapping, were better informed by the data than others. Certainly, the idea of engaging youth via an empowerment model is challenged by the very hierarchical ways in which their lives are structured, from school to family to friendship networks. Issues of place were particularly pertinent to youth's identities, and they strongly linked place and globalization. These phenomena are expanded upon at different points throughout the dissertation.

“Well, I’m not from Labrador, but I Grew Up in Corner Brook”: Negotiating Insider/Outsider Status in Research

While values are always embedded in research, it is also important that I articulate my relationship to the fieldwork here and elaborate upon the challenges I faced throughout the workshop series. Much as Schramm (2005) underscores that the political views we hold in theory are much more difficult to enact in the practice of fieldwork, I found myself to be repeatedly challenged by the contexts in which I was working. I am a young, middle class, well-educated researcher. My level of education and access to scholastic opportunities differentiated me

from most people with whom I worked in Labrador. Acknowledging this differentiation did not mean, however, that the type of knowledge I possessed was necessarily more useful than local and applied knowledge in this context. To the contrary, I often found that my lack of 'hands on' skills, years spent in university and position as an outsider meant that my academic knowledge was typically understated. It did, however, mark a significant divide between myself and the average person in Southern Labrador, where many have not had access to postsecondary education (*2006 Community Profiles*, 2008). Reflection on the privileges that I brought with me to the research site with was an essential element of this project. Pini (2004) elaborates on how the ways participants in her rural research framed her as a "nice country girl" had a significant impact on the depth of information they would reveal to her. Unlike Pini, who notes her past efforts to distance herself from her rural background, I have always found my roots in Newfoundland to be a fundamental element of my identity, and my desire to better understand my own mixed race heritage prompted me to pursue this project. I do agree, however, that participants and community members would often ascribe a subjectivity to me that perhaps did not fit how I saw myself, especially considering my political affiliations and feminist politics. That granted, I felt very much at home on the Labrador coast and made life-long friendships there. I feel that I have a loyalty to the region which is matched with a willingness to critique problems as they arise.

Pini (2004) insightfully underlines the multiple and conflicting subjectivities in which researchers are situated when doing rural research. Certainly, while in

Labrador I was distanced from my subjectivity as a young, third wave feminist who had spent the past nine years living in an urban environment. Indeed, the ways in which I framed myself lent me credibility (as a Newfoundlander, as a young person, as someone who had previously worked in Labrador). I found myself questioning, at times, the ways in which I did not reveal elements of myself to the youth with whom I was working and the broader community. For example, one evening I attended an information session about drugs presented by a travelling RCMP officer. Given my commitment to a harm reduction approach in working with youth,⁸ I found the approach taken by the officer to be problematic. I also felt that he capitalized on the lack of knowledge of many community members and used scare tactics to discuss different drugs that had made their way into the region. This made me uncomfortable and angry throughout the course of his talk. However, given my position as an outsider and as a person who worked with youth, I did not question him on his strategy nor did I critique his presentation. In doing so, I presented a much more conservative version of myself to the community than I would have in almost any other context. I did not want community members to question my legitimacy as a youth worker by giving an impression that I was challenging an authority figure on drugs in the area. In several instances throughout the course of the workshops I

⁸ Harm reduction is a model that emerged from research on addictions and critiques the moral and disease models of understanding addictions. Harm reduction is a pragmatic and empathetic approach to working with youth, and involves breaking down the "adult knows best" dynamic that tokenizes the contributions of youth and does not situate them as experts in their own lives (Marlatt, 1996). Harm reduction moves away from paternalistic helper relationships and involves the group in question in developing peer support relationships to encourage healthy and safe choices in the lives of youth and other groups.

negotiated my political views in light of the community in which I was working (e.g. one with a significant evangelical Christian population) and at times felt that I was perceived as a different version of myself than I would present in an urban environment, or in a rural environment where I was not working with young people.

Challenges of Engaging Participatory Methods with Youth: Or, Why Sometimes I Felt Tired During Data Collection

The literature on photovoice, while offering some insights into the processes of running a project, does not adequately deal with the challenges of working with specific groups. For example, working with youth requires constantly adapting to maintain their interest and commitment, which, while perhaps not a glossy research finding, is an important element to underline to people embarking on this kind of project. Photovoice is a method that looks straightforward on paper, but in the research context it required me to constantly rethink ways of engaging with participants to ensure that they felt that participating in the project was still worth their time. Finding and creating new activities was often enjoyable, but required many hours of advance preparation. Acknowledging these challenges provides insights into the ways the project evolved from beginning to end. Despite these challenges, using photovoice methodology created a rich set of experiences from which to draw upon when thinking about rural youth identities.

The need for constant updating and engagement displaces the researcher's traditional modes of power in many ways. For example, I travelled

55 kilometres to Red Bay one evening to find that all the participants had decided to attend a sports night at their school instead of coming to the photovoice workshop. While it is certainly their choice to engage in other recreational activities, it is indicative of the ways in which participatory projects involve a significant amount of emotional labour as I found the community centre dark and empty on a windy fall evening! This differentiates photovoice methodology from an interview or observation-oriented ethnographic approach.⁹

It is absolutely essential that youth programming be participatory and fun. The process of engaging in genuinely participatory methods was this project's greatest challenge. There are many useful resources available in terms of participatory methods and photovoice. However, Leyshon (2002) articulates the challenges of actually using the many guidelines extended to researchers in the context of doing participatory projects, which are characterized as being exciting, messy, and often unpredictable. He notes the importance of a critically assessed ethical framework to protect the youth engaged in research projects. In a similar vein, Valentine, Butler and Skelton (2001) argue that researchers must resist the mental and methodological urge to treat youth as a homogenous group and pay attention to the factors within their lives that may or may not make them more vulnerable to social exclusion. These factors include issues such as race, gender, class and ability, but also to be considered are issues of violence, peer pressure and body politics.

⁹ Although certainly these methodologies are invested with emotional labour, in my experience using all three, photovoice was the richest.

A significant element of this project involved getting to know the participants. Building a relationship with them took many interactions and was disjointed at times. This relationship, however, was very rewarding, as youth gradually began to trust me and we built a friendly working relationship. It is also important to acknowledge the role of leaders within youth communities in encouraging and discouraging participation in projects such as this one. When leaders were keen on participating, it was easier to draw in some people who may not have otherwise been involved, for example some younger participants who were not yet accustomed to coming to the youth centre. However, in one instance, specific youth stopped participating in the project, and when they left their friends accompanied them. I feel that understanding these group dynamics is an important part of engaging in research with youth.

The Problem with Empowerment: Thinking Power Through in Participatory Research

There are several terms, notably empowerment and capacity building, that are often employed when speaking about the implications for people who engage with researchers in participatory methods. These terms, however, must be situated in a critical discussion of power. The key terms that I critique in this section are empowerment and capacity building. Photovoice literature is fundamentally invested in notions of empowerment. Empowerment has been defined as “the process by which people, organizations and communities gain mastery over their lives” (Rappaport, 1981, qtd in Labonte, 1994, p. 253). In comparison, capacity building has been defined as the “increase in community

groups' abilities to define, assess, analyse and act on health (or any other) concerns of importance to their members" (Labonte and Laverack, 2001, qtd in Gibbon, Labonte, & Laverack, 2002, p. 485). As such, capacity building is a process that leads to empowerment of community members. Related to this, photovoice offers an opportunity for youth to build capacity in addressing problems that are of concern to them on their own terms.

Both concepts are predicated on an underlying valuation of participation, which Ottoson and Green (2005) argue increases the chances that a given program will be useful in a community setting. Key influences in the empowerment paradigm include emancipatory pedagogy, feminist pedagogy, and participatory action research and focus on the community rather than the individual level. Major health policy shifts, including the influential Ottawa Charter, began to look seriously at the structural limitations of people's life chances when considering the design and funding of social programs (Marelich & Murphy, 2003).

While the notion of empowerment is enticing to the participatory researcher, it is a concept that requires unpacking and critique. The term implies that individuals and groups undergo a process of becoming powerful, assuming that those involved engage from a point of powerlessness and thus lack agency. I question the underlying elitism of such a perspective but acknowledge that engaging in meaningful conversations and creative activities is enabling for individuals and communities. It is this tension that troubles the theoretical

perspective on empowerment. Although Cruikshank (1994) strongly establishes the problematic elements of empowerment by tracing its roots to neoliberal policies based on individual accountability, this critique does not render community development and political activities irrelevant. In times where austerity in social services and the expansion of military budgets are major federal priorities, politicized community-based research activities provide a vehicle to engage in meaningful research while helping to secure needed resources and build skills in a given community.

Discourses of empowerment have received justified criticism, yet they provide a significantly more progressive rhetoric than empowerment's predecessors. VanderPlaat (1998) argues that traditional approaches to social interventions have been strongly aligned with the technocratic perspective of the bureaucracies that fund them. Decisively addressing the emancipatory potential of using an empowerment approach, she contextualizes empowerment in the environment of advanced capitalism, noting a shift in the 1960s from social programs targeted at specific issues regarding health, education and the economy to programs "even more concerned with changing people's values, attitudes and behaviours" (p. 72). Such moralistic approaches to behavioural change were strongly criticized for insinuating that people are responsible for the marginalisation they face, and for making normative assumptions about what type of society is desired (while ignoring the role of structural and other issues in limiting the scope of possibilities for any given individual).

Habermas (1989) has also argued that welfare state policies based on individual social interventions actually reinforce the power of middle-class bureaucrats and place people (especially those with the least resources) under heightened levels of control and surveillance (VanderPlatt, 1998). Empowerment thus emerged in reaction to these critiques and a call for a more egalitarian approach in implementing social programs, one which also focused on defining problems at a community level. But empowerment seems to fall flat theoretically when one considers the ongoing power relationships embedded in communities and the relative amounts of power that different actors bring to the table. Notions of empowerment have also been critiqued for their simple association with the arbitrary gaining of power without adequately accounting for the ways in which these types of power are gained by some groups while others, perhaps those most in need of getting things done, remain outside the realm of power (Mayo, 2004). As Dean (1999) notes:

The programmatic rationality of empowerment views the world as dichotomized into the powerful and the powerless, and claims to be an external means of effecting a quantitative increase in the power of the latter. The effects of practices of empowerment are quite different: they entail technologies which seek to qualitatively transform subjectivity; they deploy and extend powers of self-government; and they exist within a specific set of relations of power between various agents (bureaucrats, activists, politicians, the poor). To show that rationalities of empowerment exist within this wider field of effects is to have the critical consequence of calling into question the very logic and ethos of notions of empowerment themselves (p. 120).

This offers a challenge to researchers and community workers to find language that adequately accounts for the ways in which power is not arbitrarily given or

created, but exists in a complex set of relations often beyond the control of those who supposedly gain power through participation in a specific program. It is important to place activities considered to be “empowering” in the broader context of political struggle that contribute in incremental (although often in small) ways to a broader public good.

The incorporation of elements of culture is important when considering empowerment and capacity building, especially when creating programs in partnership with specific communities. While not directly related to the concept of capacity building, the notion of cultural appropriateness offers insights into how to facilitate programs that are useful for a given constituency (in this case Southern Labrador Youth). Identities and cultural appropriateness requires that the cultural elements of a given group be taken into account when planning how to work with them. In doing so, however, I had to be careful not to inadvertently rely on stereotypes about the youth with whom I was working, or assume a high level of homogeneity between people who are considered part of one group for whatever reason (Kreuter, Lukwago, Bucholtz, Clark, & Sanders-Thompson, 2002).

Large class divisions exist between the different communities in which workshops took place. These communities also have very different histories in terms of access (with road access to Port Hope Simpson having only been in place for four years). This raises the question of how a group is defined, or who is considered to be a participant in a given community. For example, Coakes and Bishop (2002) note that while participation is often examined in light of

community organizations and volunteer groups, there is limited focus on informal means of community participation. I consider the workshops involved in this project as part of a broader web of formal and informal activities which contribute to youth's sense of feeling in charge of their future "empowerment". While I do not think that power is arbitrarily created, and I critique the idea that people move from a state of powerlessness to having power, working with youth in engaging ways that are respectful to their experiences *does* something. It builds something creative, and a space where youth's experiences are valued and their perspectives taken seriously. These kinds of spaces can be potentially transformative. Although Cruikshank's work is crucial to consider (especially when "empowerment" is used as a means of justifying neo-liberal policies and cuts to social services), it is also vital to have language to describe the things that happen as youth take charge of articulating their wants and needs.

Given the high level of overlap between formal and informal relationships in rural areas, Coakes and Bishop (2002) argue that a narrow consideration of participation which only looks at formal activities can leave out the many unofficial but nonetheless important ways in which people participate in their communities. This is a challenge that I observed in this research. As all the workshops were based at youth or community centres, participants were generally youth who used or wanted to use the centre. It is notable that the project did not attract youth from one community. This can be linked to issues of access (needing to be driven to the workshop) and of who is really included in

these types of state supported youth spaces.¹⁰ It is also important to acknowledge that youth negotiate power differently amongst themselves than they do when relating to adults. As such, Dunkley and Panelli (2007) argue that it is important not to assume that creativity (and access to creative resources) as an inherently positive element of the lives of young people. Instead, they argue that it is essential to focus on “the complex and sobering ways that power relations differentially transect youthful possibilities” (p. 171). Taking these limitations into consideration allows for a broader conception of what a project like this is able to illuminate in terms of rural youth identity.

Working with Youth in Engaging Visual Culture and Qualitative Methods

Visual culture is a field of study that integrates semiotics but moves beyond traditional forms of analysis that focus on the text in cultural studies.

Evans and Hall (1999) cite Mitchell’s (1994) work on the visual field, noting that:

Spectatorship (the look, the gaze, the practices of observation, surveillance, visual pleasure) may be as deep a problem as various forms of reading (decipherment, decoding, interpretation, etc.) and that visual evidence and visual literacy may not be fully explicable on the model of textuality (p. 6).

Similarly, Barnard (2001) notes how a feminist approach to visual culture includes the “set of objects, practices, institutions and personnel that is different from and critical of those prescribed by traditional, mainstream and ‘masculine’ design history” (p. 95). It is with this complicated and emergent understanding of

¹⁰ It is clear that I do not have an exhaustive list of why certain groups of youth did not participate.

the competing and overlapping elements of visual culture, along with the need to examine undervalued elements of culture that I engage with this research.

It is also important to problematize the relationship between youth, race and visual methodology. Visual culture has been very important in terms of racial classification (often in problematic ways); yet has also been used in terms of resituating and reinscribing racial understanding (Smith, 2004). In this dissertation, photography is used as a means of creating self-representations around a variety of topics. These photographs serve as “competing visual evidence” (p. 2) as to what race means from a youth perspective. It is crucial to establish here that photography was used as a tool of creative expression, not employed instrumentally as a substitution for more traditional ethnographic methods. Watney (1999) argues that photography has typically been framed in functionalist ways, a utilitarian position which equates the image in the photograph with its exact reality, and notes that sociology’s photographic ‘regime of truth’, has tended to:

treat photographs either as objects worked upon by a primary, non-cultural world of class interests and so on, or as images with behavioural effects. In both cases the question of the subjective is neatly evacuated (p. 157-58).

This project’s focus is on the workshop material and discussions. As such, the photos are representations of “alignment and identification, with points of view and perspectives” (p. 159). This does not involve my outside analysis of the photographs as an “objective” researcher. Rather, I focus on what participants have to say about the photos; and it is on this process that I draw my data. A

progressive politics of representation requires a refusal to understand cultural production predominantly as an instrument of political struggles – instead it forces a closer understanding of the subjectivities of those involved in it, and for this project the motivations of participants in the photographic choices that they make. In order to ensure an expanded and specific conversation about race, I drew largely on the interviews with participants for data.

Deciding upon an appropriate methodology presents an important challenge to any research project. An essential element of this research involved situating youth as participants in constructing and shaping the research. Skelton (2001) outlines the importance of understanding youth as “active social agents” (p. 168). Valuing the voice of youth offers the opportunity to learn from their lived experiences and to identify potential social interventions that may work to enhance their quality of life in their communities. At the same time, workshops provided an avenue for discussing race and race relations within the region. I struggled as a researcher to not speak too much or too often, especially in relationship to issues such as gender and sexuality where my own political views often differed significantly from community norms. While wanting to learn more about their perspectives on sexuality, I also wanted to ensure a queer positive outlook in the workshops, especially given the lack of such approaches in their education and in their communities. Queer youth in rural contexts are very rarely mentioned in studies of youth sexuality, although the work of both Mary L. Gray (2009) and Colin Johnson (2006) is beginning to address this in the American context.

Focusing on the voice of youth is an approach that is easier discussed in theory than operationalized in practice. The youth that I worked with made essential contributions to this research, and this dissertation owes much to their willing participation. But considering the need for workshops to have a relative amount of structure and the desire for youth to have direction in their projects also made me aware that they often were not interested in discussing certain topics. It is thus difficult for me to employ language such as “focusing on a youth voice” to talk about the role youth played in the workshops. Young people also were not necessarily used to being self-directed nor having their perspectives and decision-making abilities taken seriously. This meant that there was a significant amount of capacity building work to be done in the workshops, which was hindered by the short timeline to complete the series.

Participation in any community-based research project is not a given. Enthusiasm for the project was sometimes dependent on what other activities were taking place in the community and whether they had tests in school that week. Irregular attendance was often frustrating throughout the research project, although as the workshops progressed groups of dedicated participants emerged and working with them on an ongoing basis was very satisfying. Offering the program on an ongoing basis throughout the Fall provided an important way for youth to engage in a creative project, and we learned a lot together. Youth can lose interest quickly, and if a researcher is to keep them motivated to participate in a project she must always have a series of backup plans and an unending

supply of energy. Although I had anticipated this when beginning the project, knowing this and doing this are decidedly different.

Negotiating space within the youth centres was also an interesting experience. Youth workers (all the youth workers were women; there was typically one per youth centre, with the exception of L'Anse au Loup, where there were two) were very helpful in setting up the workshops and participated in the workshops to a limited extent. This participation depended on their workload and time constraints, but they were always welcome at the workshops and over time I developed a relationship with the youth workers in the regions: their help was instrumental in making the project work.

Dealing with Visual Evidence: Data Analysis

Berg (2001) argues that the researcher's attitude is a key part of the eventual results of the project, and cites Marza (1969) in saying that it is important to "enter appreciating the situations rather than intending to correct them." (p.139-140). He discusses the need for empathy, and to understand what is happening in the research environment instead of simply advocating or critiquing it. Wanting to put assumptions aside as much as possible while acknowledging the impossibility of entering any situation unbiased, I used a grounded theory approach to data analysis. I used open coding for the data set based on themes that became evident upon interviews and throughout workshops. Strauss and Corbin (1998) define open coding as "the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and

dimensions are discovered in data” (p. 101). The interviews were used as a supplement to the workshops, and I paid particular attention to themes that had been particularly resonant before transcription. Individual interviews provided more depth to the data and drew out elements of participants’ racial identity that were not made evident through a group process.

The project plan was left very open to input from community stakeholders. A needs assessment was conducted in June 2006 in three communities of the four communities where workshops were held (L’Anse au Loup, Red Bay and Port Hope Simpson), and the themes identified are listed on the following page. I met with fieldworkers at three community centres, who talked to me about their experiences working in the area and the issues that they thought were most relevant to address in terms of youth programming. I also met with three different groups of youth to talk about the project and to begin to identify workshop themes. This involved informal group conversations where we discussed what might be of interest, what they worried about and what they enjoyed doing.

As it takes time to build rapport and establish relationships, my first meeting with youth in one community concluded with enthusiasm for the project but little in the way of project themes. I collected their email addresses and was in contact with them over the summer of 2006 in an effort to draw out more ideas from them about what they wanted the project to look like. The two other meetings with youth were more relaxed and they were more eager to contribute ideas for themes, drawing not only from a list of suggestions used to begin

discussions but also from areas neither I nor other adults involved in the project had considered, such as relationships with friends and music, among others.

This project used photography as an innovative means of engaging with youth creatively about issues that are relevant to them in their day-to-day lives. Several issues (some serious, others light hearted and focused on recreation) came up repeatedly in conversations with young people and with those who work with them, and are identified in the table below.

Youth Development	Identity	Challenges in community	Making Plans
Respect	Racial identity	Bullying/ Suicide	Communication and leadership skills
Self esteem	Cultural diversity	Tobacco/drugs/ alcohol	Planning for the future
Peer pressure	Gender roles	Dating violence	Community organizing
Music and zinemaking	Safer sex and sexuality	Globalization	Career options

Figure 2. List of workshop themes identified by youth and youth stakeholders

With a ten workshop framework, a large part of preparation for fieldwork involved paring these themes down and looking for areas of overlap between themes in order to integrate as much as possible without losing focus on the task at hand. Strauss and Corbin (1998) argue that methods of data collection must be chosen based on the situational demands of a research project, and that methods act as a means of creating a 'flow of work' that changes and develops over the course of the research. Photography functioned as a complex site of

meaning making that could be reduced to a simply being a vehicle for discussion (Smith, 2004). That granted, for the scope of this project I was not engaging in an extended analysis of the photos, but rather focusing on what youth had to say about them.

Tacchi, Slater and Hearn (2003) outline an ethnographic action research (EAR) approach to working with community media. This approach bridges the gap between traditional ethnographic approaches while meeting the methodological challenges of participatory action research. EAR employs ethnographic techniques while integrating action research principles in to the project design (Notley & Tacchi, 2005) and offers an interesting framework for a community media project such as this. I thus drew from EAR and photovoice frameworks to guide my methodological approach. I also employed qualitative journaling to ensure that I captured the richness of the workshops to the best of my ability. Additionally, the flow chart paper used during the workshops was kept as an important source of notes from during the workshops. The group discussions around the photos are a key element of the project as it is in these discussions that youth elaborated upon the photos they took (Strack et al., 2004). All workshops were recorded and transcribed. Acknowledging the shared intellectual property emerging from this project, I discussed the ways in which the photos would be presented with the workshop participants. Photos are presented at the end of the dissertation as an appendix, and are placed periodically throughout the dissertation to illustrate different issues.

Conclusion

Choosing methods for a participatory project such as this one required a thorough consideration of the research goals, research ethics, and the desires of participants. Doing so was essential to creating new spaces for youth representation and helped to avoid recreating traditional power dynamics between myself and the young people with whom I worked. In this chapter I reviewed photovoice literature and problematized using photovoice as a method for engaging in community-based research with youth. I critically examined my standpoint as a researcher, and considered the ethical implications of working with youth in the ways in which I did.

In this chapter I also deconstructed the often touted term *empowerment*. Working with a group of people who were so often considered as ‘adults in the making’ required me to question often taken for granted assumptions about empowerment, as it implies that power is created in a vacuum. That granted, I also acknowledge that working with youth in meaningful ways is productive, even if empowerment is perhaps too simple a term to employ. Thinking through power in relation to methods was necessary to avoid the dynamic of ‘working on’ a research project about youth and pursue a project that worked with youth and took their expertise in their own lives into account.

This chapter complemented the existing work on photovoice by also engaging with visual culture literature. By talking about the dynamic and eclectic workshop process, this chapter provided a glimpse into my experience doing

photovoice, and serves as an important foundation for the study of rural youth identities, which I elaborate upon in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3: RURALITY AND YOUTH: NEGOTIATING PLACE IDENTITY

Thinking Rural

This dissertation critically examines what it means to live in a rural place. With high levels of outmigration, movement between rural and urban spaces, and the diminishing of resourced-based economies, one may question the utility of even discussing 'rural' as a category. But despite these challenges and areas of increasing overlap, there is still a distinctively rural experience. In this chapter I focus on youth's local and everyday experiences. I discuss the representations they choose to employ as a means of understanding what they care about in their daily lives. As Halfacree (2004) articulates,

In spite of receiving a battering from numerous commentators who feel that the 'rural' is an outdated concept, residualized and perhaps totally transcended by the spatial hegemony of (urbanized) capitalism, it simply does not go away. Indeed, its social and cultural significance today may be as great as it has ever been (p. 285).

This significance granted, defining a rural community is a difficult task, and one that generally situates the rural in a problematic binary opposition to the urban. This binary buries the question of meaning surrounding what living in a rural community actually entails and simplifies contemporary understandings of rural life.

Within rural studies, the meaning of *rural* has long been debated and the changes in broader social and cultural theory, along with the growth of cultural geography, are seen in the evolving literature (Bushin, Ansell, Adriansen, Lahteenmaa, & Panelli, 2007; K. Halfacree, 2004, 2006; O. Jones, 1995; Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2003). The cultural turn has largely influenced the definition of rural and removed it from being solely about a geographic and census definition. Mormont (1990, cited in Rye, 2006), argues that understanding rurality is more about the social production of meaning than any specific geographic territory. Halfacree (1995) also refers to the rural as a social representation of space. Many contemporary rural studies work to critique and challenge the notion that rural communities are idyllic spaces to escape the constraints and complexities of city living (Kraack & Kenway, 2002; Matthews, Taylor, K, Tucker, & Limb, 2000; Watkins & Jacoby, 2007).

While recognizing that meanings of rurality are contextual and shifting, talking about rurality only in these terms ignores the elements that many rural communities share, especially in the Canadian context. Within these socially constructed meanings, there are many dominant meanings that largely inform how "rural" is understood. The majority of work on rural studies emerges from a British perspective which has important parallels in the Canadian context but differs in that the geographic area considered is significantly smaller and the population much denser than in Canada (O. Jones, 1995; Watkins & Jacoby, 2007). I also draw from Canadian work on rural communities (Corbett, 2007; DeWeese-Boyd, 2007; Shoveller, Johnson, Prkachin, & Patrick, 2007) to

complement this critical yet distinct perspective on rurality. This dissertation is focused on youth experiences, with a keen interest in power relations.

There is a tension within rural studies between materialist notions of fixed localisms (which are increasingly difficult to justify theoretically in an era of globalization), the rural as socially represented, and a dematerialized rural space (Cloke & Little, 1997; K. Halfacree, 2004). Thinking both materially and representationally about rurality recognizes that “to some extent social representations can be seen as the resources through which localities will be produced” (Halfacree, 2004, p. 292). The literature on rural spaces emphasizes that rurality is material, representational and imagined. Certainly, the youth in my project had significantly different class experiences within and across the communities. The representations that they created nearly all shared a similar theme of relating to the landscape. The cultural imaginary seems largely rooted in a heritage of struggle with and love of the land. Youth almost always took photos of their natural environment, with an emphasis in discussions on the aesthetic beauty of their communities as a reason for having taken a given photo.



Figure 3. Photo by Brittany of Port Hope Simpson in the evening

Halfacree (2004) proposes a model of rurality composed of four parts: rural locality (specific spatial practices), formal representations of the rural (professional discourses), everyday lives of the rural (this is where my work focuses) and lay discourses of the rural (social representations of rural life, both deliberate and incidental) (p. 294). I am interested in how rural youth understand their lives on a daily basis, on the perhaps banal structures and practices which inform their lifeworlds. It is on the locality, the everyday lives of youth, and social representations of rurality that I focus my research.

Robertson and Richards (2003) argue that we engage iteratively in the place in which we live, both “physically by means of cultivation and building, and imaginatively by projecting onto it our aspirations and fantasies of wealth, refuge, well-being, awe, danger and consolation” (p. 1). Indeed, it is important to underscore that this work is not geographically determinist. I do not assume that the places in which people live independently nor causally determine how they think or the attitudes that they hold. Rather, I posit that place plays an integral role in identity formation and that notions of place incorporate both metaphorical and physical phenomena. It is thus important to acknowledge the material elements which contribute to the production of space.

Halfacree (2004) proposes a network approach to understanding rurality, which rejects the notion that there is any fundamental rural “essence,” and instead recognizes the inherent contextuality of rural communities. Taken alone, this perspective does not allow for other markers — such as population density, services, ecology and distance from major centres — to be part of the working definition of the concept of rural. Yet material elements must be taken into account when thinking through what defines a rural community. Materiality is accounted for (if not explicitly so) in most conceptualizations of rurality, including frameworks that call for the exclusion of hard categories when thinking about rural places. Although understanding the rural as practice speaks to rurality at a social level, it reveals little about how individuals understand the concept, which is imbued with various elements of experience, including gender, class, race and ability. Rye (2006) demonstrates how rural youth’s lay interpretations of ‘rural’ are

largely informed by their class experience. Jones' (1999) study of Scottish rural youth's decisions to migrate or stay in their communities, however, underlines how class should not be considered as the sole motivator in outmigration, but must also take a socio-spatial identity into account. This underlines the importance of hearing from people who live in rural areas when creating accounts of rural communities.

Rural Youth and Identity

While I take a communication and cultural studies perspective, there has been a large amount of work in youth studies in other disciplines, most notably psychology. I do not draw from this work as it often problematically frames youth as deviant. Maira and Soep (2004) argue that the social and historical context of youth's lives is often left out of the research process in work on youth. Additionally, they note that the contradictory ways in which youth articulate their sense of identity; or how their priorities are generally ignored in favour of claiming a more universal set of sources of identification. Maira and Soep also note the way youths' identities, particularly girls' identities, have often been framed in terms of victimhood and a lack of agency, therefore tending for youth culture to veer towards moral panic. I echo their concerns that youth are often villainized in issues of teen sexuality and deviance, and agree that it is all too "easy to slip from analyzing the problems young people face, to seeing youth as themselves the problem" (p. 252). This is especially prevalent in relation to young people of

colour, as there are parallels between the racialized fears of urban youth and that of their rural indigenous counterparts (Grossberg, 2005; Maira & Soep, 2004).

Coming from a communication studies perspective which acknowledges the multiple ways in which people form their identities, in this work I engage with the overlapping, convoluted and often contradictory means through which young people in Labrador expressed their identities, with a focus on how race and sexuality play into that identity. I do not assume youth to have power or to be powerless, but instead recognize them as the best informants on their own lives. In doing so I argue that youth contributions and opinions should be viewed as no less valid than those of the adults, which generally hold a great deal of power in relation to the lives of young people. I also argue that unlike the dominant frame coming from literature on cultural production, rural youth are engaged cultural producers who contribute significantly to their communities. Kearney's (2006) extensive work on girl zinesters is demonstrative of the ways in which young people are active makers of culture. Young people do not only look to popular culture for representations of their lives, but actively create their own through vehicles like zines, and in the case of this project, via photography.

Canada's rural youth are generally frustrated with the lack of facilities and consideration of their desire for social and cultural events that are oriented towards their interests (Canadian Rural Partnership, 2002). Activities of interest include efforts to build skate parks, which are often met with counter petitions by local residents. Dunkley (2004) notes that rural youth (especially girls) often have no place to hang out and pursue recreational activities, which encourages

them to instead engage in often risky activities such as drinking and driving as they travel from their homes to places where there is more opportunity for social activities. Recognition of this phenomenon contributed significantly to this research project's choice of methods.

Although the rural is often idealized for its inherent simplicity and goodness, the assumption is that when looking for complexity in social, political and cultural life, one must head for the city.¹¹ Sassen's (2001) work on post-industrial cities demonstrates the networked elements of these spaces, and Castells and Hall's (1994) work on technopoles also underlines the city as the site of complexity in late capitalism. While this is certainly the case, what often accompanies this analysis is the assumption that rural spaces are the antithesis of the city. Certainly, the popularity of Florida's (2002) simplistic vision of creative cities is indicative of the assumption that cities are the only creative spaces. In the Canadian context, where much of the wealth is predicated on the exploitation of natural resources that are derived from rural spaces, it is clear that the complexity of the city is intrinsically related to what is happening in rural areas. While this is a simplistic economic connection, there is limited scholarship on rural spaces as vital and complex in terms of culture. The rural context, in contrast, is at best portrayed as a safe place for children and at worst as an inherently simplistic, homogeneous space from which no significant cultural life emerges. While Florida (2002) has been significantly critiqued for his work on creative cities, the popularity of his text speaks to the power that cities possess in

¹¹ For a historical example of this, see Baudelaire in Simmel (1950:1903).

terms of politics, culture and society. In Chapter Four I will shed light on the other side of this presumed rural/urban binary to investigate how rural youth participate in cultural production. What rural youth themselves have to say about their communities is a topic that to date has been relatively unexplored (Creed & Ching, 1997; Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2003).

But how do we understand what it means to identify as rural rather than urban? Perhaps, as Vanderbeck and Dunkley (2003) argue, the question requires exploration of the different ways youth create meaning, how they define themselves, the nuances of overlap between the rural and the urban, and the slippery “form of hierarchy in which practices and perspectives considered ‘urban’ are often deemed superior to those which are ‘rural’” (Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2003, p. 245). Creed and Ching (1997) rightly argue that it is through and against this urban hierarchy that rural identity is (at least partially) formed. In the rural/urban dichotomy, the city is a major source of material wealth, culture and political power. Recognition of this phenomenon contributed significantly to this research project’s choice of methods, as I was curious about what kinds of creative activities youth would engage in when offered the opportunity.

Now that the rural-urban hierarchy is acknowledged, it is important to unpack the main elements of identity formation. Drawing on Bourdieu, Rye (2006) argues that the habitus plays a central role in identity formation for rural youth, which then impacts the ways in which young people understand their rural experience. Bourdieu (1977) describes the habitus as “a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every

moment as a matrix of perceptions, and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks” (p.82). Habitus offers a means of problematizing embodied subjectivity (what Bourdieu refers to as practical knowledge), and offers a means of articulating how one’s history and current circumstances inform what an individual is wont to do.

As a means of explaining a social actor’s practical knowledge, the ways in which people, act, talk, feel and organize, habitus is a fundamental idea when thinking about social space and identity. Bourdieu employs the concept of habitus as an alternative to the extremes of structuralism, which problematically frames the subject as totally rational and self-knowing (Sterne, 2003). This is not to argue that the habitus is void of structure; as Bourdieu (2002/1990) argues:

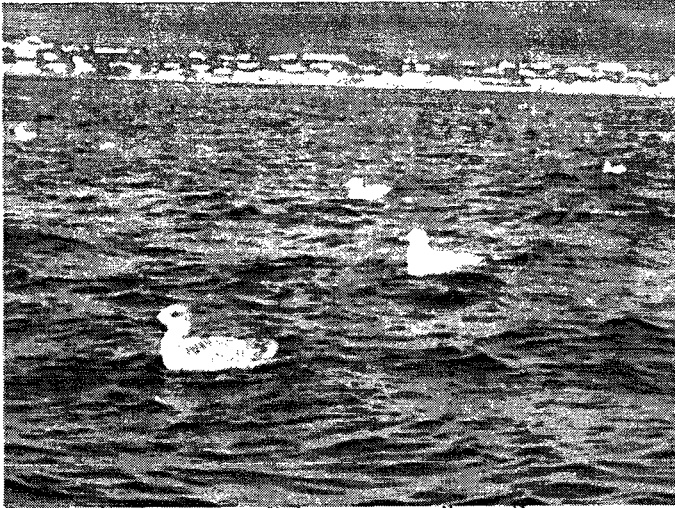
The habitus is not only a structuring structure which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principal of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes (p. 170).

As such, Bourdieu acknowledges the role of internalized classism, sexism, racism and other forms of oppression in structuring what people think is possible.

The habitus of youth is reflected in the zines they made. By breaking down the traditional binary of individual and society, the habitus has both a physicality and a social memory (Bridge, 2001). The habitus is thus rooted in place. Sterne (2003) describes habitus as a mediating concept that allows space between understanding social relations as structured relations and “‘objectified’ forms of economic or social agency or interest” (p. 375). Sterne also makes the important

point that the habitus goes beyond the mental state to include embodied social knowledge. Yet individuals must not be considered as only acting upon the process of socialization, for to do so would preclude the possibility of original and independent thought. There is controversy over where to locate the agent in the habitus. Bridge (2001) critiques Bourdieu for his passive understanding of human agency and what he calls a presentation of human activity as “over-socialized” (p. 207). His problem with the habitus lies in the limited amount of knowledge it allows actors about the social world in which they live. Having completed extensive fieldwork with several rural youth, it is clear to me that they possess a great deal of knowledge about their lives, traditions and families. Farnell (2000) echoes Bridge’s critique by arguing that “if one asks where human agency is located within all this, one finds that ‘habitus’ has replaced ‘person’ as the agentic power, located somewhere ambiguously behind or beneath the agency of persons” (p. 403). As such, she argues that the place of the agent has been unjustifiably displaced within Bourdieu’s framework. If it is within the habitus that agency lies, then we must also focus our attention on how the habitus functions in a rural context. It is to this that I now turn.

Insight into the habitus of participants was gained through their process of zinemaking and scrapbooking, as topics they chose reflected their lives and the role that place and other factors played in their identities. The following section from Jessica’s (12) zine demonstrates how a connection to the outdoors is important for her:



Ok so there was this sea gull eating a HUGE fish whole and i wanted a picture,,, it had it ate before i got to get the pic.. But it still came out funky



This picture aint good but its of the class i grew up with.

Figure 4. Page taken from Jessica's zine (titled "My Obsessions")

The zines also provided insight into the things they care about, such as family, friends, the environment, art and fashion; the zines are also an important form of

DIY expression. Shauna (12) used her zine to showcase some of the drawings she was working on:

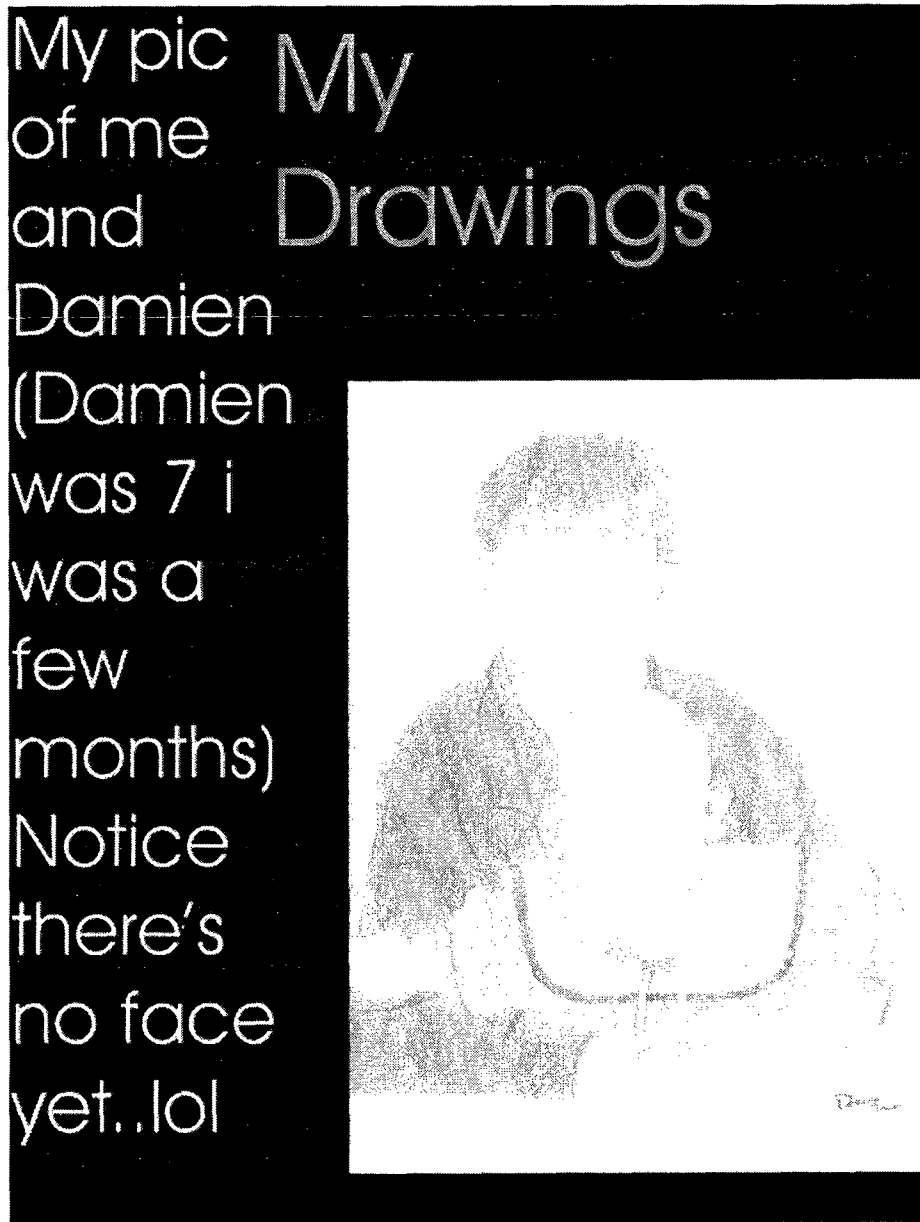


Figure 5. Page taken from Shauna's zine, which covers different elements of her daily life

Bourdieu's habitus is similar to Massey's (1993) specificity of place, which she argues is "continually reproduced, but is not a specificity that results from some long, internalized history. There are a number of sources for this specificity – the uniqueness of place" (p. 68). While this system is focused on the reproduction of embodied social action, the theory does not foreclose actions that are different from those which have already been produced in the social system.

In a similar vein as Massey's (1994) argument that the postmodern notion of fragmentation (which highlights having lost the locus of control) is indicative of coming from a site of privilege where one formerly had control, Morley (2001) argues that identity is not as easily refitted for some as it is for others. He notes:

Insufficient attention is often paid both to the processes through which the forms of cultural capital with which people can refashion their identities are unequally distributed, and to the extent to which many people are still forced to live through the identities ascribed to them by others, rather than through the identities they might choose for themselves (p. 427).

The ability of individuals to retrofit their identities is related to their possession of various types of capital. Bourdieu places these forms of capital into four categories: economic capital (referring to the possession of material wealth); social capital (referring to the power someone is able to leverage through social networks); cultural capital (referring to skills and knowledge that emerge from socialization at an early age); and symbolic capital (referred to as how the three previous forms of capital get symbolically represented and the form that the various types of capital take on when they are understood as legitimate) (Painter, 2000).

The perception of legitimacy is central to the symbolic function of forms of capital. For example, the cultural capital of a participant at a youth centre (which may include formal and informal education) may not be perceived as legitimate by certain groups of people (for example by local police who are attempting to deal with the arrival of methamphetamine, popularly known as crystal meth, in the area). In this case, the cultural capital of the youth worker does not become symbolic capital because it cannot be legitimated in the context at hand. This in turn may make it difficult to convert the cultural capital (education) into economic capital (employment). But in another environment (e.g. at a planning session for this project) this cultural capital can be legitimated and thus becomes symbolic capital (their input was required for the project to succeed). This in turn contributes to an individual's capacity to reform their identities. Those with small amounts of the different forms of capital are those with less power, the same people who Morley (2001) argues cannot move so simply between identities. The conceptualization of different forms of capital is useful for categorization and understanding social life. That granted, I am reticent to relate all forms of social experience to a form of capital, which can then be thought of as a transaction, almost as something to be bought and sold. Shoveller, Johnson, Prkachin and Patrick (2007) argue that "power relations *within* and across places both reflect and challenge the distribution of social capital" (p. 827). This was reflected in terms of the role of family support, education, and social skills that youth possessed. These power relations are also mitigated by gender.

Clearly, it is important to underline here that not all rural people share the same habitus. Such an assumption would mask the complex ways in which people live in rural communities. For example, the habitus is influenced by familial and outside relationships the individuals have within the community. Whether one has many or few links with the urban environment, the experience of rural living is not uniform, nor are the youth within a given community a homogenous group (Hopkins, 1998). The zines youth made varied in topics from hairstyling to heavy metal, and reflected the varying tastes and interests among participants.

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Figure 6. Page from Dwayne's scrapbook about his life in Port Hope Simpson

While rural youth are certainly heterogeneous, they share some common experiences. Commonalities for youth living in rural Canada generally include living in a place with a declining population, a high rate of youth outmigration, and a difficulty in accessing municipal services (Canada, 2002). Rural youth also often grow up in a community that is struggling to sustain itself, to live in a place

temporarily, that is, until one has to leave to pursue post-secondary education or to move with family members seeking employment. This experience is common in many North Atlantic coastal communities.

It is also important to underline here that while the habitus is tied up with ideas of shared experience and embodied social knowledge, McKay (1993) argues that the claim to public memory is controlled by specific dominant groups in a given place. The claim to what is legitimately part of the community's memory is often carefully managed by those with the power to write history and speak for community and, of course, the means of contributing to this memory are limited by categories such as gender, race and class, among others.

Although specific dominant groups often write a community's history, dominant forms of popular culture (coming almost exclusively from the urban environment), play an important role in the identities of rural youth. Clearly, in the case of youth culture, classifying rural youth as simply being non-urban is a binary that no longer holds, as so many of the cultural products which they consume and incorporate into their identities come from the urban spaces which many of them have never visited (this is also arguably the case for urban youth). Despite the problems associated with using the terms rural and urban, in this dissertation I will continue to use them as means of distinction. Rather than assume a solid division between these spaces, I understand them as overlapping in several areas. Here I do not wish to essentialize rural youth's experiences by over-emphasizing the role of place, but simply to recognize that "place identities

are clearly linked to a particular kind of place, but even identities built upon the land are social constructions” (Creed & Ching, 1997, p. 12).

Besley (2003) argues that youth culture is becoming increasingly postmodern, and describe youth as hybridized; in turn, youth culture is typified by diversity, variety and heterogeneity. Despite the relative geographic isolation of the communities in which the research was situated (Port Hope Simpson is located 200 km from the end of the paved highway), rural youth cultures, much like urban ones, are argued to share several postmodern qualities with their urban counterparts. Such approaches to youth culture tend to emphasize “the dual processes of constructing youth identity and through the market as an aspect of the culture of advanced consumerism and through the agency of youth themselves” (Besley, 2003, p. 164-165). Understanding how youth interact with a global market in constructing and consuming their identities is central to a serious examination of youth cultures. One must also seek to understand how style also works hand in hand with identity in this formation of culture. However, youth cultures are inherently specific, as “kids assemble their identities in the global marketplace on the basis of what their local culture predisposes them to make” (Besley 2003, p. 168). These cultures are governed, to a certain extent, by the same spatial divisions of adult culture, (e.g. the gendered division of space in terms of the private and the public). Gender is considered as important as social class in guiding the way in which girls experience youth culture. As youth culture is increasingly defined by the popular, youth identity is inherently tied to the consumption of cultural products and the process of commodification.

Considering the centrality of popular culture in identity formation, rural youth are being problematically typecast as isolated characters who lead simple lives removed from consumer culture.

One cannot, however, assume that rural youth are passive within the process of commodified identity formation. Young consumers are incredibly savvy ones, and the agency of youth in the consumption of culture and the production of identity must be considered an essential part of how youth construct their sense of self. Gilroy argues that, “consumption is a vague word that trips far too easily off the dismissive tongue. People use these images [in popular culture] and the music they enclose for a variety of reasons” (qtd in McRobbie, 1996, p. 260). Far from being passive in their consumption, youth will blend elements of their cultural background and elements of popular culture or subculture in the process of creating their identities (Besley, 2003). But the overcategorization of “youth culture” is problematic and one must explore the nuances of this group, which underlines once again the need for research on rural youth identities in Canada. The analysis of youth culture has been widely influenced by the work of Hebdige (1979), who argues that youth form identities in reaction to the marginalized position that they occupy in relation to adult society. McRobbie and Garber (1991), among others, have rendered justified criticism on the work of Hebdige and the Birmingham School of cultural studies for their male-focused understanding of subculture. Nonetheless, it is important not to simply examine how youth identities are shaped in terms of resistance, but

also to look at the identity formation for youth who hold less radical or subversive ideas.

Contextualizing the construction of a rural youth identity in an era of rural decline, where many communities (including those in Southern Labrador) experience high levels of out-migration and mass changes in resource-based economies is an essential element of this dissertation (Kraack & Kenway, 2002). This outmigration is accentuated by the long-standing idea that leaving is necessary to secure success and middle-class status (Jamieson, 2000).

Bjarnason and Thorlindsson (2006) use a case study of Icelandic youth to elaborate upon the overlapping of class positioning and migration expectations in rural areas. The notion that individuals who are 'going somewhere' must leave their community is prevalent in many rural areas, and challenging this assumption can be a difficult thing to do. Valuing local knowledge is central to the philosophy of SmartLabrador, and I was well supported by my community partners in validating this in the workshops with youth. But no matter how convinced certain adults in the community were of the need to keep young people at home, few youth expressed sincere hope that they would live in their communities in the future, as they were very aware of their limited chances for employment and post-secondary educational opportunities should they remain in their home towns. As the unemployment rate ranged from 26.9% in L'Anse au Loup, to 55% in Port Hope Simpson and peaking at 60.9% in Red Bay in the 2006 census, young people face a severely limited opportunity structure when it

comes to accessing employment in their communities (*2006 Community Profiles*, 2008).

What a Lovely Place: Thinking Through the Rural Idyll

One of the key ways that rural places are conceptualized is through idealization of rural space, referred to in the literature as the rural idyll. The rural idyll is used to construct rural places as homogenous and inherently good. It is often constructed as a means of improving life within cities – the idyll is called upon not as a critique of city life, but used as a moral icon to motivate or discourage certain types of urban behaviour (Ching & Creed, 1997). The signs of the rural life, such as fishing stages and small inshore boats, that are so difficult to sustain are readily consumed for the urban gentrified environment. Creed and Ching (1997) argue that rural icons are utilized in urban contexts to demonstrate the cultural superiority of the person possessing them, and also argue that rural citizens do not possess the cultural capital to “enforce their aesthetic judgments, and they usually lack the monetary capital to reappropriate the images sanctioned by urban commodification” (p.23).¹² While critical introspection and experience in rural communities quickly challenges this idyll, it remains a dominant means of thinking about rural communities. A critical understanding of rural youth identities must take this cultural assumption into account. The rustic

¹² While the term cultural capital can and is used here to critique elitist cultural forms, I am concerned here about its implications for how we consider “low” culture. The language of “high” and “low” culture carries with it enough elitism that even using them to usefully explain a concept is apt to inspire criticism from those who genuinely value rural culture, subculture and the marginal. Considering this, I am loath to employ them yet cannot find engaging language to express the cultural hierarchy in other terms. It is not the project of this dissertation, however, to rework this language.

construction of the rural is pervasive, and as Vanderbeck and Dunkley (2003, p. 247) note: “positive characteristics ascribed to rural people are often rooted in nostalgia rather than any recognition of the rural as vital, dynamic, and of the present”.

This imagined construction of the rural meets a very different reality with rural youth, who exist in complex relation to the urban gaze that stereotypes them. Many young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, faced with the near impossibility of finding employment in their communities, leave home and often the province in search of education and employment opportunities. The province’s population dropped by over 30,000 people between 1997 and 2000, with those leaving comprising mostly the ages of 15-29. This accounts for a loss of over five percent of the population (Sinclair, 2002). The government of Newfoundland and Labrador estimates that by 2010 the number of children graduating from the province’s high schools will be one half of the number graduating in 2000 (Atkin, 2003). There are currently less than ten children starting kindergarten in a population of approximately 2000 people along the South Coast (personal communication, community member, October 2006). One may wonder how long a community can sustain itself with such a drastic loss of young people.

These changing demographics point to two important phenomena: first, it reinforces my previous argument that the binary between the rural citizen and the urban dweller outlined above is an arbitrary one; and second, young people do construct their identities, in part, through narratives of difference between the

urban and the rural, even though their definitions of these terms engage in vastly more complicated understandings of place than census definitions allow (Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2003). In the case of rural Newfoundland and Labrador, being a young person includes the probability of an eventual dislocation from his or her community of origin. Jamieson (2000) argues that social class has a large impact on the migration patterns of young people from rural places.

However problematic, the categorizations of rural and urban draw a line of distinction between these two types of communities, which remain, in terms of material and social conditions, vastly different spaces. Despite this overlap and movement between the rural and the urban, Creed and Ching (1997) argue that it is from this rural/urban opposition that economic and political conflict stems. More importantly, they understand this site of opposition as an important place of social identity formation. The eventual dislocation from their home communities may seem inevitable to many in light of the economic situation, and serves as a central part of the youth identity. Young people realize their precarious position as residents of rural communities and face the challenge of leaving home and family at an early age. Nearly all participants stated that they anticipated leaving their community following high school.

Negotiating Place in Identity Formation

Essential in any discussion of rurality is a conceptualization of place. Massey (1993) echoes McKay (1993) in her critique of essentialized ideas of place. While Southern Labrador is certainly unique, she argues that what

members of communities such as those researched in this dissertation have is “absolutely not a seamless, coherent identity, a single sense of place which everyone shares” (Massey 1993, p. 65).

Place also acts as a source of difference and identity within this increasingly complex process of identity formation. As such, place exists in addition to (and sometimes in conflict with) the important role of popular culture in the constitution of youth identities (Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2003). Place identities also exist in relation to other places, and young people often used other places as points of comparison when discussing their own relationship to home. In the following conversation two Métis youth articulated their understanding of their community:

KP. So Amanda, is being from a small place like Port Hope Simpson important to you? Do you like that you are from a small community?

Amanda (17). Uhh. I don't know. Well...

Jimmy (15). (cutting in) You knows it is!

Amanda. I guess.

KP. Yeah? When you think about being from Port Hope does it make you happy? Frustrated? Or what does it make you think about?

Amanda. We've got the best hockey team.

KP. Best hockey team, yeah. Nice. Do you play hockey, Jimmy?

Jimmy. Nope.

KP. Do you play hockey, Amanda?

Amanda. I played on Friday. It was the first time that I ever tried it.

After taking a break to work on the scrapbooks they were making, we continued our conversation:

KP. So when you think about Port Hope Simpson, what are the things that come to your mind? Like, Port Hope Simpson is like...

Amanda. I always thinks about the best hockey team.

KP. Best hockey team, yep. How about you?

Jimmy. I don't know, home.

KP. Yeah.

Amanda. Yeah. Home, and going outside fishing and on skidoo.

KP. Skidoo? Yeah, skidoo is a big one, hey?

Amanda. Yeah, but lots of people in Newfoundland thinks that we sniffs gas.

KP. Yeah. And you're like, "I don't sniff gas".

Amanda. No.

Jimmy. Newfies don't know anyway.

KP. That's true. It's true, like I grew up in Newfoundland, and we never learned about Labrador, really. We learned about Nain¹³ in Grade Four for an hour.

Amanda. All they sees is the people on TV sniffin' gas.

¹³ Nain is an Inuit community in Northern Labrador. Nain, along with several other Labrador indigenous communities, was placed under media spotlight due to intense problems of youth solvent addiction and high youth suicide rates.

KP. And do you really think that there are a lot of stereotypes like that about Labrador are on the go?

Amanda. Yeah. And they thinks we lives in igloos.

KP. Yeah. And do those stereotypes piss you off or make you angry?

Amanda. I laughs at them. At how stupid they can be (laughing).

KP. You just see it as funny. What do you think is the most challenging thing about living in Port Hope Simpson?

Amanda. It is so expensive to go places. I don't like that.

KP. Very expensive. OK (personal communication, October 2006).

Both Amanda and Jimmy felt that outsiders did not understand the context of their lives well, and that negative stereotypes about their community were demonstrative not of a problem they had, but of others' ignorance. It is important to contextualize Amanda's comment about solvent abuse. Many communities in Labrador have dealt with significant solvent abuse problems, and Amanda's comment also serves as a way of distancing her community from those which have received a great deal of media attention because of high youth suicide rates and severe issues of addiction. The communities on the South Coast have not experienced these problems to the same degree.

Creed and Ching (1997) argue that the issue of rural identity has been largely ignored by scholarship on identity politics. By leaving the rural/urban axis unexplored, they argue that the ways in which questions of ethnicity, class and gender exist in concert with place identity are being ignored. While the complex

web of identity based on these issues (and on popular culture) is a means of understanding how youth identity is formed, place narratives are also central in this process. The mediated identity is socio-spatial, and thus the experience of youth within a specific geographic space (in this case the southern coast of Labrador) must be valued as an important source when attempting to understand identity. The ways in which youth situate themselves in a place are entangled with questions of social power, and “have implications for, among other things, young people’s senses of self, their thoughts about the future, and the constitution of youth cultures” (Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2003, p. 256). Clearly, identity is formed by a complex and contingent confluence of factors that include culture, media and place. None exist in isolation to the others, but each in turn holds influence over how the other is interpreted.

Conclusion

This chapter sets the frame for how I consider rural communities in this dissertation. By engaging with work on issues such as the rural idyll, I laid out the ways in which understandings of rural life have been problematically juxtaposed to urban areas. Using literature from cultural geography, I discussed the constructed nature of the countryside and use Bourdieu’s concept of the habitus to talk about embedded social knowledge that rural youth possess. I also employed contemporary literature on youth to situate them as active social agents, and argue that youth are working to construct meaning in their daily lives in ways that reference their surroundings, notably a rural place where they often

access a great deal of popular culture. I argue that placing a lens on the lives of rural youth when the discourses circulating about their communities is overwhelmingly negative (regarding outmigration and the future of rural places) offers an important counternarrative to dominant framings of rurality.

In this chapter I also discussed rural youth identities, and paid particular attention to the ways in which place factors into this discussion. The theoretical perspectives discussed here will be applied to the case study throughout the following chapters. In doing so I hope to reveal the lively and dynamic elements of youth identity in Labrador, focusing next on the rethinking of rural spaces as cultural spaces. In Chapter Four I focus on the ways in which rural youth produce culture, linking notions of place identity to cultural production.

CHAPTER 4: CREATIVE RURAL SPACES: RETHINKING THE LOCUS OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION

Following the discussion of youth and rurality from Chapter Three, in this chapter I will discuss how youth in Southern Labrador create their own cultural spaces. I will also explore how these vibrant spaces interact with popular culture, the economic realities of their communities and outmigration. In doing so, I will focus on how youth articulated their thoughts around issues they wanted to discuss, and argue that - contrary to dominant narratives about the spaces of cultural production being almost exclusively urban - rural youth are active makers of culture, and express a particular kind of local knowledge specific to their experiences as young people in Southern Labrador.

The fields of communication and cultural studies have focused largely on the role of the city as the space in which culture. In this chapter I investigate how youth produce culture outside the cityscape, diverging from the city as a typical site of focus in communication and cultural studies research (O'Connor, 2004; Sassen, 2006). I examine the ways in which youth living far from these centres make culture and, in doing so, make sense of their daily lives. The chapter has two primary goals: first, to discuss existing literature concerned with the ways in which youth engage in making culture, and to critique the urban "bias" evident in this literature; and second, to elaborate upon the ways in which youth in Southern Labrador create their own cultural spaces, and to discuss some of the

characteristics of these spaces. Examining how youth make culture in Southern Labrador challenges the persistent tendency in scholarship (and in society at large) to describe the relationship between rural communities and cities as dichotomous and polarized.

The polarized framing of this relationship persists in communication studies despite a long-standing critique of its foundation. Williams (1973) articulates the divide between urban and rural spaces, focusing on the ways in which different spaces are ascribed different moral significance, despite the actual variation within a place and between places:

(O)n the country has gathered the idea of a natural way of life: of peace, innocence, and simple virtue. On the city has gathered the idea of an achieved centre: of learning, communication, light. Powerful hostile associations have also developed; on the city as a place of noise, worldliness and ambition; on the country as a place of backwardness, ignorance, limitation. A contrast between country and city, as fundamental ways of life, reaches back into classical times (p.1).

Although the trend is to contrast these spaces, in historical fact, Williams argues, the countryside has been highly differentiated. The variation among rural spaces that Williams demonstrates underlines heterogeneity among and within rural areas. The communities in which I worked varied significantly in terms of religious denomination, race and social class, and the context of rural youth in Labrador is decidedly different from that of youth living in more prosperous rural areas in other parts of the country. Williams argues that the juxtaposition of country and city, along with the types of ideas projected onto each, are persistent

throughout history. Although he refers particularly to representations in literature, his critique applies to broader representations of both the country and the city.

Situating ideas of place in identity formation is central in this project. Place acts as a source of difference and identity within an increasingly complex process of identity formation. As such, place exists in addition to (and sometimes in conflict with) the important role of popular culture in the constitution of youth identities (Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2003). Place narratives (the stories people tell about the places in which they live) are also central in this process, again interacting in important ways with popular culture. The mediated identity is socio-spatial, and thus the experience of youth within a specific geographic space (in this case the South coast of Labrador) acts as an important site of identity formation. As an indication of this importance, young people in Southern Labrador nearly always cited “being a Labradorian” as important to them. They also articulated intercommunity rivalries and the importance of their homes in answering the question, “Who am I?”

While scholarship on place and identity has undervalued examining rurality from a rural perspective, when it is discussed, the rural context is often portrayed as a safe place for youth, with a ‘natural’ rural setting often promoted by youth advocates as an appropriate space for them to live and learn in safety (Creed & Ching, 1997; Katz, 1998). Yet what rural youth themselves have to say about their communities is a topic that has been relatively unexplored (Craig & Stanley, 2006). Therefore throughout this dissertation I address the lack of rural youth voices in understandings of rurality.

Creative Cities and Cultural Industries: A Critique of Place-based Assumptions and Exclusions

A significant motivation in writing this dissertation comes from my frustration in communication studies literature with the depiction of cities as the sites of all cultural complexity. In the following section, I discuss this phenomenon, reviewing literature on “creative cities” and discussing how these understandings of spaces set rural areas up to seem void of culture, an assumption that I critique. I then elaborate in the following section on the ways in which rural youth create their own culture, and on the challenges they face in the context of their daily lives.

Discussions of the city as a cultural space are often framed around issues of production. Cultural producers are actively creating cultural projects, generally reflected in city centres. Texts on cultural production are based mostly on urban environments (O’Connor, 2004). While cultural production is concerned primarily with the making of films, television, music and other artistic works, the language to describe it implies that the act of making culture is an urban phenomenon. Urban youth are often framed as innovators and important makers of culture (Frith, 1983; Hollands & Chatterton, 2003). This literature largely ignores the existence of rural places, let alone explores the ways in which rural youth create culture.

Before extending this analysis any further, however, it must be situated within the rise of cities literature. Conway and Wolfel (2006) argue that there has been a shift from thinking about nations to considering cities as important

interconnected sites of global exchange. They consider global cities to be functional nodes of exchange and creativity. Within these global cities lie huge disparities of wealth and poverty, and an increased focus within these cities on recreation as an important element of the economy. Leisure is more important than ever in economic terms, and is increasingly central to how cities are designed and planned (Hannigan, 2002). Although whether or not people have time for leisure activities is often debated, culture is typically portrayed as produced largely on a mass scale in the city. In his critique of the commodified cultural spaces of the city, Hannigan (2002) leaves little agency to the individual's engagement with popular culture, a perspective that has been significantly critiqued and re-evaluated through audience studies (Penley, 1991; Radway, 1984).

But despite the heightened centrality of the city, these representations do not always describe it as a utopian space. Hannigan (2002) argues that "the well-crafted image of the city that we find in 'tourist bubbles' such as Times Square contributes to the sense that downtowns are being reshaped for recreational users rather than those who live there" (p. 32). This reshaping is a tactic for attracting investment in a global economy where capital is very mobile. Zukin (1995) outlines in detail the ways in which city spaces are impacted by issues such as ethnicity and social class, and argues that culture is now an integral element of the economic strategies of cities, with cultural workers supplementing their income as artists with exploitative service industry work.

This analysis, while it rightly examines the ways in which culture has moved in to replace traditional manufacturing as urban industry, ignores where raw materials still come from, and the kinds of spaces that exist beyond the city that she describes. As such, it is incomplete in its framing of the different elements of the symbolic economy.

I do not argue here that thinking simplistically about raw materials adequately accounts for the rural in writing on symbolic economies. In focusing exclusively on the city, writers such as Zukin further marginalize the role that rural spaces play in cultural life. The urban bias of this research, as Zukin herself admits, comes from her own experience of growing up in the city. This imbalance highlights the need to examine academic subjectivities as a crucial part of what motivates research, and also explains why there are so few critical studies of rural youth culture, as researchers typically are more comfortable in urban environments. Pini (2004) notes the ways in which her university training had distanced her from the rural farming community in which she had grown up, and discusses the challenges of negotiating home with her academic feminism, which many people read as a city phenomenon. Situating her work in poststructuralist understandings of the multiple subjectivities one person can occupy, she discusses her position as at times dubious, and one where she was ascribed roles by research participants that she often did not claim as central parts of her identity. Pini is right to underline the role of researchers' subjectivities in the decision to engage with given topics. Acknowledging this, however, does not negate the importance of engaging in rural research. Instead, it points to the

necessity to support rural research projects that engage communities in meaningful ways.

While many people are paying attention to the ways in which people living in cities negotiate their urban spaces, how should we think of rural spaces in relation to the mobility of capital? Participants in this study had first-hand experience in dealing with the mobile capital of the fishing industry. Youth referenced the closure of local crab processing plants due to the cheaper costs of processing in China, which resulted in the loss of several hundred jobs in the province that year. Surely rural places are adapting to the changing context, though little research acknowledges or investigates this process. This dissertation sheds light on how young people in a small place do this kind of negotiating, and looks at how youth have dealt with these changes in their lives.

From examining clusters of creative workers to discussing the role of parties in the networks of creative industries, the literature on cities examines a specific kind of place. McRobbie (2004) comments that:

There is a substantial literature on the relation between the global city as a space of culture, and the ways in which cities like London, New York and Paris, and the kind of urban policies which have been pursued in recent years, foster transformations in the world of work, including the decline of the public sector and the growth of the service sector, the new media and, of course, enterprise culture (online).

While there is much consideration of the relationships between cities, rural communities that service these cities are ignored when considering the relationship between places. Indeed, much of the work on urban space implies

that culture is made in the city (e.g. Florida, 2002; O'Connor, 2004; Hannigan, 2002). Rural places, then, are not *framed* as sites where culture is created. While culture is undeniably something that is created and made outside the cityscape, what would be revealed if an examination of rural cultural production was undertaken? Traditional crafts, and other traditional elements of rural life, would perhaps be central; however, other representations, such as hybridizations of mass media, also fit into their everyday life worlds.

Taking the opposite point of departure from Florida's (2002) idealized city space, Hannigan (2002) articulates a dystopian view of contemporary cities:

Intimately linked to the fusion of consumerism, entertainment, and popular culture, this counterfeit form of urban experience is measured, controlled, and tightly organized – cleaner and safer but also flatter and duller. Its shops and cafés are filled with consumers of culture, not with the makers and shapers of it (p. 37).

While Hannigan does not celebrate the city space as one where many people are able to participate in making culture, it is clear that any engagement with culture (whether as a maker/shaper in a corporate office or as a consumer in a café) happens within the urban context. Although Hannigan provides an important critique of the corporate control of culture, the implication is that there is little culture in the city, and even less outside of it. His work is simplistic in its lack of consideration of independent modes of artistic engagement.

Sassen's (2001; 2002; 2006) notable work on cities demonstrates the interconnectedness of cities on a global scale. The focus of urban geography on mapping the city demonstrates the power of these centres, and the ways in

which the functioning of late capitalism marginalizes people, especially service workers, within urban centres. These workers tend to be immigrants, non-status people, migrant workers, and females. Her work strongly demonstrates the role of cities in networked capitalism, but does not elaborate largely on the role of culture in the global city. The implicit and often explicit assumption in urban geography, however, is that the city is the site at which culture is produced.

Sassen (2001) argues that while capital is hypermobile, it relies on place-based institutions in order to move flexibly. She places a radical lens on the role of workers in the city, focusing on the ways in which cities are segmented. While it is true that cities are the nodal sites of international financial networks, rural areas are still central to the capitalist economy, with the exploitation of natural resources accounting for 13.0% of the gross domestic product, a key element of the Canadian economy (Canada, 2008). Clearly, when one considers the outmigration of rural youth and the displacement of workers following resource depletion, it is an incomplete analysis not to include a well-developed examination of rural spaces, especially considering the growth of the call centre industry in many areas of Atlantic Canada. Scott-Dixon (2005) argues that while the “high tech” and “knowledge-based economy” discourses employed by the province of New Brunswick place call centre work at the heart of a new economy, the actual labour performed is low status, routine and poorly paid. Although industry statistics have been difficult to obtain, the call centre industry is female-dominated (Buchanan & Koch-Shulte, 2000). Gendered call centre work does not enjoy the same benefits of a “knowledge based economy” as the “high-tech” and

largely male-dominated workforce; and while technology enables the linking of low-status labour to elite labour, the material reality of those labouring in call centres falls outside of the world of highly waged technology work. This phenomenon plays out differently internationally, where Mirchandani (2005) argues, “gender is ‘eclipsed’ in the sense that it is hidden behind a profound, racialized gendering of jobs at a transnational level” (p. 105). This denotes the interaction of sexism and racism in call centre work nationally and internationally. In the context of outmigration, however, the option to be selective in the types of development pursued is a luxury most rural areas do not enjoy. Additionally, it is important to consider these spaces not just as sites of resource extraction, but as sites of culture. Certainly, most transactions happen in the city, but rural spaces are cultural spaces; rural people interact with globalized cultural products much like people do in cities. The invisibility of rural areas in work like Sassen’s reinforces the rural-urban binary, where rural spaces are undertheorized¹⁴ in terms of their negotiation of the global and the local. While I certainly do not expect a given scholar to be proficient in both rural and urban research, the focus on this kind of global cities network makes it important for rural researchers to investigate the ways that rural spaces impact and are impacted by the issues Sassen addresses. The huge field of urban geography and the focus on mapping the city demonstrates the power of these centres but dismisses the important role of natural resources that emerge from rural areas.

¹⁴ I recognize that given Sassen’s focus she does not discuss the rural context. However, her work is indicative of the ways in which rural communities are typically not considered in the Western context of placelessness and globalization.

While Sassen's work strongly demonstrates the role of the cities in global capitalism, it does not elaborate largely on the role of culture in the global city. I acknowledge that cities are indeed rich cultural spaces, but argue that rural spaces merit examination, despite their invisibility in the literature. Wong (2002) notes that communities are now considered to be more defined by space than by place, referring to the shift from geographic community to communities of interest, experience or struggle. While this may be the case for many people, an ongoing place-based element of community also exists that is not rendered irrelevant by acknowledging communities of interest (Corbett, 2007). This geographic place is the subject of most importance here. I take as a point of departure the assertion that rural spaces are cultural spaces. I also examine the role youth play in these spaces, and elaborate upon the means through which they articulate their cultural lives.

Rural Youth, Not Citizens in the Making: Popular Culture and Cultural Production

Young people in cities and in rural spaces are often situated as citizens in the making. Youth are often framed as deviants that need to be controlled until they eventually become old enough to contribute as active members of adult society, rather than as individuals with specific contributions of their own (Hall, Coffey, & Williamson, 1999). What youth have to say about their lives is often absorbed by the normalizing narratives imposed on them by adults. Shoveller, Johnson, Prkachin and Patrick (2007) argue that adults play an important role in stigmatizing youth identities and behaviours, describing in their work the "disdain

that some adults have for youth who *choose* to go against the advice of adult authority figures” (p. 831). Although literature is sparse, youth studies in recent years has shifted to focus on examining youth lives and cultures from their perspective (C. Dunkley, 2004; T. Skelton, 2001).

The ways in which rural youth make culture remain marginalized in literature about young people. Throughout this dissertation research, the young participants established themselves as individuals with perspectives to contribute on living in a rural place, and insightful statements to make about their daily lives. I am not asserting that what the youth said requires scant analysis, but I am committed to making their contributions a central part of this dissertation, and consider them not as “adults in the making,” but as active participants.

Youth and Community Technology: Problematizing Cultural Production

It is also important to interrogate the relationship of youth identities to adult constructions of them. The ways in which young people use public spaces and participate in communities is often heavily monitored and perceived as a threat to public safety (Tate, 2003). Rather than situating youth as a potentially threatening group in need of monitoring, this project assumes that rural youth have a contribution to make to their communities, and are experts in their own cultural spaces.

Youth have long been established as important cultural producers in communication studies, and young people have effectively used media as a creative means to circulate their activities and ideas (Driscoll, 1999). The Do It Yourself (DIY) ethic is historically rooted in the punk movement and even further

back in history with pamphlet self-publishing for various political movements (Ladendorf, 2002). Similar to how women in the feminist movement have creatively used media in ways that range from low to high technology to circulate their activities and ideas (Wajcman, 2003), youth engaged in cultural production throughout to articulate their lives and identities from their perspective.

While Kearney (2006) notes how zines, the most common form of DIY media production for girls, are mostly produced by middle-class white women, she also demonstrates the important contributions that girls are making in media production. Although it is certainly important to recognize the privilege of many involved in making their own media, we must also resist essentialist ideas that innovative and independent cultural production belongs exclusively to white middle-class youth. Such an assumption can unintentionally reinforce the class-race-gender-ability hierarchies that work to privilege this group. That point being granted, overvaluing cultural production may in turn force other activities where identity is articulated into privacy, an issue that Young (1990) raises as a key problem with the normative functioning of public and private spaces. Despite attempts within this project's recruitment strategy to include the most diverse group of participants and to avoid excluding the most marginal individuals (e.g. those who have typically been excluded from participating in extracurricular activities), there were many youth who did not partake in the project. Other forms of cultural production and sites of identity formation must also be acknowledged as relevant and important contributions, notably the ways in which youth

engaged in music and outdoor recreation. Despite these critiques, the project provided important insights into youth culture in Southern Labrador.

Working with youth and the people employed to serve them, I attempted to make the artistic outputs from this project as accessible as possible to all participants and to the local community. As such, a significant part of the project involved creating two final art shows where the participants' work was put on display for the local community. I organized these shows by having participants choose their five favourite photos taken during the project, and then had these pictures professionally printed for the community art show. Participants kept these photos after the exposition, and were also given a poster with a selection of their pictures on it. Additionally, each site was given a Labrador Youth Photovoice Poster containing the participant's work. These were put up for display in the youth and community centres.



Figure 7. Photo of participants and community members at final L'Anse au Loup Show

As discussed earlier in the chapter, cultural production is largely framed as a process that involves making a cultural product for the purposes of exchange (O'Connor, 2004). I focus on non-exchange-related forms of cultural production, specifically photography, zines and scrapbooks. Throughout the process of data collection, I took digital divide issues into account by using workshops as a form of hands-on training in digital photography (but also acknowledged that the technical skills youth possessed often surpassed my own). Angerer (1999) argues that "the discussion of new technologies is still dominated in many cases by the old technophobic attitude of feminist theorists, which regards women as

the Other in a technology that is structured and dominated by men” (p. 211).¹⁵ Although I think Angerer significantly underestimates the contributions that feminist scholarship has made to deconstructing and participating in technology, nonetheless, a large digital divide remains that prevents many individuals from accessing new media in meaningful ways. This divide forms around issues of gender, class, disability and ethnicity, and undoubtedly played out in unpredictable ways during this project (Loader & Keeble, 2004; Reddick, Boucher, & Manon, 2000). While some of the project’s participants had digital cameras, computers and printers at home, others did not, or if they had them, they did not necessarily possess the technical skills required to use them beyond basic functions. In other cases, the computers to which people had access at home were not working properly. It is important here to underline a key point from Chapter Two: The most useful element of this research was not the product itself (the zine or scrapbook) but the *process* that youth engaged in throughout the workshops.

Certainly, technologically-mediated activities are important, but they often constitute a privileged sphere to which many community members do not have access. Generally, the least economically privileged youth in each community typically did not participate in the workshops. Although the exact reasons for this are difficult to determine (and can range from lack of interest to systemic forms of social exclusion), it is possible that this absence is related (in two of the four

¹⁵ The contributions of many feminists, including Haraway (1991), McLaughlin (1993) and Hocks and Balsamo (2003; 1993) strongly discredit Angerer’s claim that feminists are technophobic.

original sites) to the lack of transportation to and from the workshops. In hindsight, transportation services would have been another means of making the workshops more accessible for some youth.¹⁶

The Labrador Youth Photovoice Project offered a different kind of recreational activity than was typically available to young people on the South Coast. Throughout the course of weekly workshops, youth were encouraged to use their creative capacities to articulate ideas about their community and themselves. However, focusing on the cultural products (in this case photography) is not itself unproblematic, and requires care to ensure that this creative site is not necessarily privileged over other arenas of identity formation. Driscoll (1999) outlines the potential exclusions of local cultural production in the case of DIY feminism:

Despite the claims of 'DIY' feminists that other (read older) feminists do not understand or value them, feminists in general feel comfortable with DIY feminism, in which strong girls triumph over the system. But such claims to agency, or rather such a reliance on claims to agency, is a problematic foundation for feminist politics...when agency is evaluated according to resistance it is inevitable that the agency of some people or groups – the ones with least access to modes of cultural production, for example – will seem less independent and less individual than others (p. 188).

A significant number of youth in the area were not interested in the project (this is unsurprising, considering the program was an after school activity like any other), and although I interacted with them on a regular basis around the

¹⁶ I often gave youth a ride home from workshops. They found this a prime opportunity to remind me of my lack of skills driving a standard transmission, and it was an opportunity for us to build rapport outside the workshop structure.

community, I cannot comment in great detail about their experiences as I did not have the same level of interaction with them as I did with participants. Nevertheless, the goal of this project is not to further marginalize the voices of youth who did not want to participate in such an indoor activity. Given the prominence of outdoor activities and unstructured time for youth in Southern Labrador, it is not surprising that some youth did not participate. While several participants were taking photos for fun before the establishment of workshops, I am also certain that photography cannot capture all the ways that the youth in L'Anse au Loup, West St. Modeste, Red Bay, and Port Hope Simpson express themselves. To make such an assumption would be presumptuous and arrogant. Instead, what the data from the photography workshop series offers is a selection of youth photography and a huge compilation of conversations about the youths' lives, gathered while they were engaged creatively in an extracurricular activity. In the following section I discuss the insights I gained into youth culture in Southern Labrador via analysis of workshop and interview data. Notably, I focus on the ways that youth create their own spaces when they do not exist; local knowledge; and the relationship that youth have to outmigration.

Photography is Fun, But I Love Skidooing: Cultural Practices of Southern Labrador Youth

Skidoo Culture

The interests of the youth varied greatly, but one common activity united them all. Snowmobiling (skidooing) is an integral part of how youth spend their free time. Many participants articulated an intense love of skidooing. Skidoos are

central to winter recreation and an activity in which both boys and girls participate. Skidoos operate as markers of status, as participants would talk and argue about which kinds of snowmobiles are the best. It is important to note how snowmobiles function as markers of social class throughout the coast of Southern Labrador, as a skidoo can easily cost over \$10,000. While the communities I worked in are tightly knit, there are large differences in socioeconomic status. Corbett (2004) notes that the fishery (which was for years the backbone of the Southern Labrador economy) is a “heavily capitalized industry that supports a family-based social class structure” (p. 454). Fishing licenses are owned and passed between family members, with the owner of the license employing people to work throughout the fishing season.

In addition to demarcating social class, snowmobiling is used to create a kind of youth space where they are free from the supervision of adults. Participants lived in communities where there were very limited opportunities to hang out in a space where there was not an adult. For example, key youth spaces in each community were the community centre and youth centres. These spaces were only accessible to youth with adult supervision. Participants engaged in snowmobiling as a cultural practice that creates a youth space away from adults. One girl reflected on the freedom gained by being able to “go out on skidoo”:

KP. Where do you go skidooing?

Erica (17). On the old road.

KP. And who do you go with?

Erica. Everyone.

KP. Everybody goes. So it is a real community thing.

Erica. Only the younger people.

KP. Only the younger people, oh I see. So the grown ups, they don't come? They go on their own skidoo trips?

Erica. So if we goes on skidoo trips for school or for activities they'll come with us, but every time we gets out of school, over the road (personal communication, November 2006).

Youth use skidoing to create a space to which adults do not have access. Several youth felt frustrated that there was no space in the community that was explicitly theirs, although they were happy that the community hall had recently been opened up to youth in the evenings. Several participants decided to make skidoing a focus of their zines when we spent time making zines during workshops. Although many youth used the youth centre as a place to hang out and spend time, there were also spaces in the woods in one community, and behind the community centre in another, where youth would gather beyond the supervision of adults. These kinds of spaces, while not approved of by the adults in their lives, were frequented by youth. These gatherings can be seen as a reaction to the ways in which adults often decide what is most "appropriate" for youth (Dunkley & Panelli, 2007).

Both boys and girls are avid snowmobilers, and often discuss what kinds of skidoos people have, which are faster, and which have more power. Dirt

biking, by comparison, is more the domain of boys. This recreational vehicle creates a “boy space” in the summer and fall, as dirt bikes enhance their mobility and their capacity to spend time away from adults. In winter, however, both boys and girls “go out on snowmachine” whenever possible.

Although snowmobiling was pursued by boys and girls in similar ways, gendered uses of space still existed, a topic that was discussed by participants on different occasions. Two siblings engaged in the discussion, which I think speaks to the gendered spaces that they move through. The discussion also highlights the ways in which youth talked about their love of the natural world even when they often did not spend a lot of time in it.

KP. What are the things you like about living in Port Hope?

Amanda (17). Swimming and skidoos.

KP. Swimming and skidoos? Nice. What are some of the things that you don't like about living in Port Hope? Or are there any things that you don't like about living in Port Hope?

Amanda. We don't have ice capps [iced cappuccinos] and there's no mall.

KP. No ice capps, no mall, so no Tim Horton's.

Amanda. And there's not much to do. Sometimes.

KP. Sometimes.

Jimmy (15). You don't go outdoors!

KP. Oh – the brother says you don't go outdoors!

Amanda. I do but there don't be much to do outdoors.

KP. Do you think there's a lot to do outdoors, Jimmy?

Jimmy. Yeah.

Amanda. You don't go outdoors either!

Jimmy. Yes I do!

KP. What do you do outdoors? [addressed to both youth]

Jimmy. Oh, she don't do the same stuff as I doos.

KP. So what do you do?

Jimmy. I dunno, huntin'n'that (personal communication, October 2006).

Hunting is a typical activity of boys and men, and this fact naturally has implications for the ways in which youth relate to their outdoor surroundings. At times they employ these metaphors of nature to talk about their home spaces, even if they do not actually spend a lot of time engaged in outdoor pursuits. Regardless of how much time the two siblings in the above discussion actually spend outside, clearly both relate to "being outside" as a part of community life. The question remains, however, if outdoor activities are things that interest them. For Amanda it seems that they are less important than other, more urban possibilities. Her comments speak to the ways in which domestic space is still often considered to be more the domain of girls, and some outdoor activities are more accessible to boys than they are to girls.

Local Knowledge

Among the most significant phenomena that I observed while in Labrador was the huge amount of local knowledge that youth possessed. Over the course of time, youth repeatedly articulated a significant amount of knowledge about their homes and local ways of doing things. Murray, Neis and Johnsen (2006) argue that fishermen and women are quite astute about complicated processes in the fishery, and thus possess a body of local ecological knowledge that is an important part of rural culture. Youth share this complex ecological knowledge as they learn from their parents and grandparents about the fishery, berry picking, and other activities.

A workshop on globalization revealed a wealth of local knowledge and strategies for consuming locally. Youth systematically went through their communities and came up with examples of how they could consume more local products, and offered examples of local initiatives that were happening. The following discussion is demonstrative of the kind of knowledge they possess.



Figure 8. Photo of berry bush by Tara

KP. What does this photo tell you about globalization?

Amanda (17). You go out berry picking.

Tara (16). In the middle of the summer you go out berry picking and at the cod and everything. So really, all the food connects everything else to the rest of the world...



Figure 9. Photo of longliner fishing boat by Jimmy

Jimmy (15). The back of that boat was made somewhere else, that's globalization (personal communication, October, 2006).

Activities like berry picking and hunting were considered by participants to be important ways to fight globalization and focus on resources they had locally. While they took time to break the ice and begin conversations around other topics such as race and gender, youth typically articulated local knowledge with confidence, and in doing so, frequently revealed a significant level of community pride. Indeed, their knowledge and pride in local products reflects a renewed focus on the region's heritage occurring in the community as a whole. A large regional craft and agricultural fair is held every fall, and plays in the local schools

focus on the fishery or the seal hunt. Organizations like the Quebec-Labrador Foundation have been active on the South coast for several years, notably working to build a network of people with traditional skills to share their knowledge and develop a larger crafting industry.

The following discussion of globalization illustrates the participants' connection to local ways of knowing, as they considered ways that they could mitigate the negative aspects of globalization:

Susan (18). Grow a little garden. Hunt.

Erica (17). Dad has taken up hunting a lot.

Susan. Out by the door there is nothing but traps that he has made.

Jamie (13). Fishing.

KP. You mean like just going out trouting or something? Ok. What else?

Erica. When you are bored, make your own games.

Susan. There's lots of stuff that gets made locally that barely gets any attention at all. Like lots of the stuff that gets made locally, up there at that [Craft and Agricultural] fair, it is really wicked (personal communication, October 2006).

This workshop also provided insight into how youth see their communities in light of rural outmigration. They were quick to express a sense of fatalism around the future of their communities, and how they would mostly be leaving as soon as they had completed high school. These sentiments reflect the limited work opportunities and lack of post-secondary facilities in the area.

With globalization, an increasing focus on understanding identity as deterritorialized has emerged in the literature. Wong (2002) refers to uses of the term deterritorialization to describe how the forces of globalization impact how “production, consumption, communities, politics, and identities become detached from local places” (p. 61), arguing that:

The deterritorialization and the delinking of community and identity from place opens up the possibility of new theoretical developments; but at the same time, recognition of the importance of place, or in some cases, at least a geographic contextualization in transnational discourse, must continue. The notion of deterritorialization need not be perceived as excluding or negating local ‘place’ or territory, but rather as relativizing or decentering it. In this sense, it shifts the balance from solely territorially defined politics to non-territorial forms of organization and identity. The terms ‘translocalities’ and ‘multilocationality’ have emerged to indicate a local embeddedness or ‘rootedness’ to transnational processes. In other words, these processes embody culturally heterogeneous places that are largely divorced from their national contexts and that straddle formal political borders (p. 62-63).

Wong’s argument for the continuing rootedness of a place-based identity was reflected by participants. Virtually all the youth who participated in the project articulated a strong sense of place being related to who they see themselves to be. Indeed, these youth will almost all leave the South Coast at some point or another, but they repeatedly articulate a feeling of home that is important to them. Of course, many other elements of their lives that contribute to their identities are not specifically related to place, although these elements of identity (e.g. sexuality) are often informed by the ways in which youth negotiate place identity. Much as Massey (1993) and Corbett (2007) argue that there are winners and losers in the face of globalization, many people are no less rooted in place-

based identities than they were before the advent of new technologies that mitigate space. While I agree with the assertion that place remains important and that people are increasingly mobile, I think that it is crucial to underline that in my context of study the specificity of place is most important.

An intense temporality is attached to the four communities in which I worked, due largely to their stark decline. Youth articulated affection for their communities, but only a select few believed that they would live in their communities as adults. This viewpoint reflects the lack of opportunity structure available for youth as they transition into adulthood. While most thought they would move, they often expressed fear of living in a place like Toronto:

KP. How do you feel about the idea of living in a city or in a bigger place, like Corner Brook or St. John's or even a big place like Toronto?

Brittany (17). Scared. Especially if it was like Toronto or something.

KP. How come?

Brittany. Because there are a lot of crazy, messed up people. Here you knows everybody so you knows what they're like.

Her friends also noted this same apprehension:

KP. And how do you feel about the idea of living in St. John's or even living in a big place like Toronto?

Amanda (17). No way! I wouldn't be able to live there.

KP. How come?

Amanda. Cause it is not like here. We got fresh air and all they got is gross old brown and black skies. And there's too many people

there. It is not the same because you might go out in the street and someone would try to kill you. And here everyone knows each other...Corner Brook's good. It's not too big.

KP. How about you, Jimmy? What do you think? Toronto?

Jimmy (15). No. I wouldn't go there.

Amanda. And I'd get lost there...There wouldn't be very much people from down here.

Jimmy. You wouldn't know anyone.

Amanda. They wouldn't know much about down around here.

Jimmy. Out there you are on your own, sure.

KP. It is true that here everybody knows who you are and stuff.

Amanda. That's the best way.

Jimmy. I'm not going to sell no newspapers up there (all laugh – he is referring to his local paper route). You'd get killed (personal communication, October 2006).

Their humour underscores a feeling of trepidation about life in the city, although nearly all youth expressed their anticipation that they would need to leave home. It also demonstrates their loyalty to their communities and articulates a validation of the quality of life in their communities. Brittany expressed that her parents wanted her to “do something with her life,” which meant that she had to go away once she completed high school, but she felt that things were safer and better at home. Her perspective reflects what Corbett (2007) refers to as the migration imperative, a kind of “ethical and even moral responsibility” to leave one's community of origin in search of education and other opportunities (p. 431).

Although the city may be where educational and employment opportunities abound, these youth felt that their small community offered them a degree of safety lacking in an urban centre.

The struggle to obtain employment marks the experiences of many families throughout the South Coast. Many rightly perceive their communities as places where it is hard to make a living. Corbett (2007) raises key questions about the impact of such discourses on rural youth:

What are the effects of the persistent discourse of rural decline upon rural youth and the choices they make? And what is the effect of moral panics (justified or not) around contemporary global/local rural issues such as the decline of fish stocks, resource depletion, the degradation of rural environments due to industrial agriculture, forestry and mining? The alleged necessity of leaving rural places is not simply an innocent reflection of social conditions, it also contains an aura of obligation and compulsion for the individual youth who experience them. Children are taught that they “need an education” while in the same breath they are told that there is “nothing for you here” (p. 431).

Corbett’s assertion echoes the conversations I had with youth about their prospects of staying in their community and what they thought about leaving their home for another place.

KP. Do you feel like you are encouraged to stay in PHS when you are finished school? Or are you encouraged to go away?

Amanda (17). I think to go away, because there is nothing to do around here. No places to get work.

KP. Is work a major thing? Do you feel like if you could get a job would people encourage you to stay home?

Amanda. Probably. Cause everyone gotta move to go to school or go to work (personal communication, November 2006).

Young people in Southern Labrador occupy a liminal space that is predicated on their eventual departure from their communities. While in the community of Port Hope Simpson youth seemed less fatalistic about their eventual departure from their communities, youth in Red Bay, West St. Modest and L'Anse au Loup articulated feelings of certainty that they would be leaving once they finished their high school education. Parents who had grown up when the communities were prosperous expressed marked frustration about the huge decline in the area. An interview held around one participant's kitchen table was filled with commentary by his father, who was listening from the living room. He spoke extensively throughout the interview on issues pertinent to his experience of community change.

KP. What if you really, really wanted to stay? Would you find that [the pressure to leave to seek one's fortune elsewhere] a hard thing to fight against?

Father: The hardest thing is that what was there is gone.

KP. Right. That is hard.

Father: You know there's no work, we're only surviving.

KP. It is hard, too.

David (14). The only way people can get a bit of work now is by leaving.

Father: I guess that's what you've got to get your learning for now, hey b'y.

David. Yeah (personal communication, November, 2006).

What I wish to underline here is the strong sense of survival that I saw throughout the coast. These communities are facing difficult times, but are still committed to their homes. Corbett (2004) argues that despite the tendency for Atlantic Canadian rural communities to be seen as in a state of drastic decline, “a closer look beyond the statistics into the communities they allegedly describe reveals struggle but not desperation” (p. 453). People are making sense of their daily lives in ways that challenge the stereotypes of rural and remote Atlantic Canada.

Conclusion

This chapter challenges dominant academic discourses about the production of culture and offers a new perspective for thinking about the cultural lives of rural youth. I provided a background of the city-oriented literature on cultural production, and then critiqued what this urban-biased literature implies for rural communities. I then problematized the idea of local knowledge, elaborating on the participants' depth of local knowledge and how this knowledge contributes to a vibrant and dynamic rural culture. By discussing the different ways that youth framed their communities, I argued that rural youth, while typically invisible in writings about youth culture, are active cultural producers. Given the high rate of young people who leave the region upon completing secondary education, I also explored youth's understandings of outmigration.

Participants uniformly voiced a love for snowmobiling, a recreational activity that provides them with distance from adults and a sense of their own space. I thus argue that youth use the cultural practice of snowmobiling as a means of creating spaces that are their own, spaces into which adults sometimes enter, but often are the sole domain of young people. They also possess and use community-based knowledge in their daily lives. Certainly, there are no hard, fast or homogenous ways that young people understand the communities in which they live, but they share several common characteristics, such as their desire to create their own spaces, their employment of local knowledge to explain the world around them, and a sense of uncertainty about the years following high school when they may need to leave home in pursuit of other post-secondary education or employment opportunities.

In sum, this chapter provides a window into the ways that rural communities are actively negotiating their current contexts, and how youth work to place themselves in their communities and in relationship to the urban centres where they will likely eventually reside.

CHAPTER 5: HYBRIDITY AND RACE RELATIONS IN SOUTHERN LABRADOR

Introduction

The production of culture is related to the daily contexts of youth. In this dissertation I explore the practices and ideas of Métis identity of youth in Southern Labrador. As many of my participants were not Métis, I also reflect on how whiteness plays out in the daily lives of youth in Southern Labrador, and how being Métis is negotiated in an environment where many people 'pass' as white. Given the multiplicity of ways in which one can 'be Métis', it is important that this work incorporate multiple narratives and perspectives from the lives of the youth with whom I worked from September to December 2006. This affords a broader engagement in the different and overlapping elements of Métis identity than the limited literature on Labrador Métis life has so far demonstrated.

I will now engage with how youth articulate their understandings of race in their lives. I am interested specifically with notions of hybridity and metissage, and will use these theories to inform fieldwork. In the latter part of the chapter I will focus largely on the invisibility of race. I had anticipated that sharing my personal experiences of race would also encourage a discussion that would provide data on how young people integrate race into their identity but I experienced both logistical and theoretical challenges to having these

conversations. This is indicative of how young people felt free to discuss other issues such as globalization and gender roles, but had difficulty discussing issues related to race.

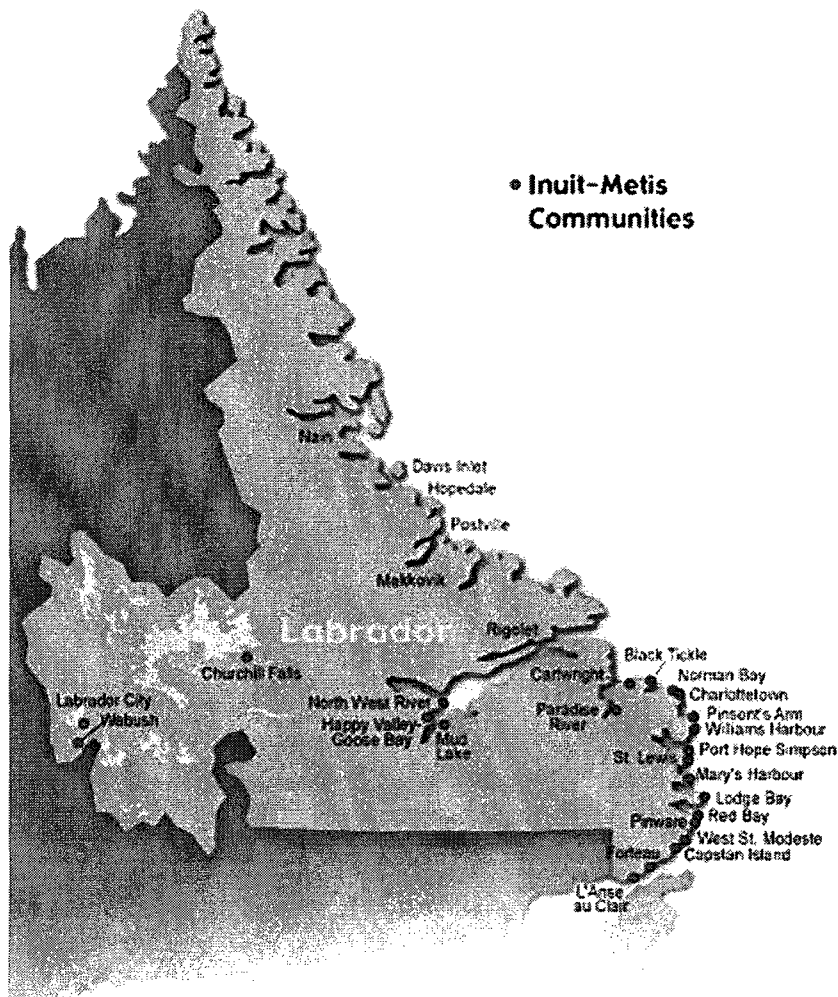


Figure 10. Map of Labrador's Métis Communities (<http://www.labradormetis.ca/home/10>, accessed April 10, 2008)

I acknowledge that as a middle class doctoral student I have the privilege of often being listened to when I speak. I also recognize the criticisms often made

of academics who “speak for” different marginalized groups. When thinking through issues of Métis identity in this dissertation, I am aware that identifying as Métis as an educated adult from the island portion of Newfoundland and Labrador is a site of privilege. My work requires me to be accountable to the needs and desires of my research partners, most importantly to the youth with whom I worked. It is thus vital to state here that several photovoice participants did not wish to articulate their thoughts about being Métis at great length, preferring instead to discuss other elements of their lives, including relationships to family, school and extracurricular pursuits, and sexuality. Participants who were white identified had little desire to talk about race in the context of Labrador. This may reflect many things, from the marginalization of Métis people to the desire of youth to not be represented in marginalizing ways.

Background: Métis History in Labrador

One key “non-white” group in the Southern Labrador context is the Métis nation. Existing scholarship on Labrador Métis identity is limited, and the relationship between different racial identities in the area has not been problematized in great depth from a communication or cultural studies perspective. Taking a traditional anthropological approach, Kennedy (1997) argues that Métis living in Labrador negotiate being Aboriginal in three ways. First, a re-examining and reviving of what Métis people know about their Inuit heritage is taking place. The role of artefacts as identity markers are often valued more for their social connotations than for their authenticity. This often involves

adopting cultural markers which appeal to white stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples as a means of communicating Métis culture to an outside audience (e.g. a figurine of two scantily-clad individuals seated bareback on a horse). Second, the Métis identity is negotiated through associations such as the Labrador Métis Association (LMA), which acts as a member of national First Nations organizations. Third, this identity emerges through public protest, such as defying Department of Fisheries and Oceans policies on fishing as a means of testing the ways in which Métis people can use natural resources in Southern Labrador. Given the multiplicity of ways in which identities are constructed, it seems that these three categories are narrow conceptualizations of how a racial identity is negotiated, but serve as an important first step in understanding the processes involved in racial identification in Southern Labrador communities. Although Kennedy's (1997) work provides background into understanding the process of "becoming Métis" writ large from a traditional anthropological perspective, there has been limited research on rural youth and ethnicity written from a communication perspective.

It is important to situate the negotiation of Labrador Métis identity in terms of relationships with the state. Sawchuck (2001) argues that while the struggle of Métis people to be recognized in the Canadian constitution was successful, this categorical inclusion homogenizes the experience of being Métis as they are constitutionally framed as a "single, holistic aboriginal group" (p. 75). This reproduces a hierarchy of elements about what it means to be Métis and the ways in which this identity can exist. Despite this homogenization, there is no

governmental definition of this group of people at the federal level. The Alberta government is the only provincial body with a formal definition of Métis, with the legislation dating from the 1930s:

The most recent version of the act, the Métis Settlements Act (1990) defines Métis as “a person of aboriginal ancestry who identifies with Métis history and culture.” The current definition, which depends primarily on the basis of self-identification and acceptance from the Métis population, is more in keeping with the way political organizations defined Métis in recent years (p. 76).

Sawchuck (2001) also reports that taking on the title Métis in Labrador emerged from consultative input from Yvonne Dumont, who came to Labrador as a fieldworker and was a member of and had worked extensively with the Manitoba Métis Federation and the Métis National Council. Dupont stated after the fact that his encouragement of the group to adopt this label was a mistake, and that “being Métis” is an identity belonging only to groups from the prairie region of central and western Canada. This reflects broader struggles within Métis groups for recognition and control over resource allocation.

The Labrador Métis represent a unique group in Canada as they are mostly of Inuit descent. With 80 percent of Labrador Métis of Inuit heritage, the remaining 20 percent are of Innu and Mi'kmaq (Hanrahan, 2000; Sawchuck, 2001). Historically Métis people in Labrador have had a strong relationship to the land and to the sea. Living mostly on the isolated South Coast of Labrador, many Métis people lived parts of the year in different communities based on the hunting and fishing seasons. Hanrahan (2000) notes that the end of most Métis families' seasonal migration was marked by the introduction of the cod moratorium in

1992, and that many Métis community members still practice traditional preventative medicine through tonics made from a traditional diet. My work does not focus on issues such as migration or traditional medicine but rather attempts to tease out the central elements of how Métis youth see themselves and their communities. In doing so I embrace the ways in which they engage with contemporary popular culture, such as music and television.

There are clearly different ways that Métis identity is defined throughout Canada, as there are no kinship ties between Métis people in the Prairie region and the isolated Southern Coast of Labrador. The push and pull of having more inclusive and less inclusive titles for who is included in being Métis is reflective of events taking place on the political Canadian political landscape. However, despite these important political fluctuations, I am focusing here on how young people understand being Métis, a process of becoming that Richardson (2005) argues creates a third space in which people can exist as Métis. It is in this third space of a community centre that we explored elements of their identities.

An intense contradiction lies at the base of Canadian identity and the ways in which white Canadians relate to indigenous people. Canada's international reputation and identity as a multicultural nation does not encourage an inward examination of how racism continues to marginalize Aboriginal people in this country. Instead, Canadians often ride on Pearson and Trudeau era images of an accountable and equitable society. Lawrence (2003) argues that the *Indian Act* has played a large role in the development of Aboriginal identities in Canada as it

has drawn lines of inclusion and exclusion around who is recognized as Indian.¹⁷ This acknowledgement has material consequences, and efforts to maintain status have reinforced ongoing sexism (until federal court challenges by Aboriginal women forced the amendment of the *Indian Act* in 1985, women lost their status as Indians when they married white men. The inverse applied to white women.). This reinforces Spivak's (1999) caution that while the academic community often uses *postcolonial* as a frame, we must not let colonialism 'off the hook' by referring to it only in historical terms. These colonial power relationships still exist and are often reinforced in the Canadian context by decisions around who counts as an Aboriginal person or group.

Critical Race Studies

In this section I draw on the work of several critical race theorists to inform my investigation of youth and Métis identity in Southern Labrador. Young (1990) argues that colonized spaces do not only exist in opposition to European ones. Rather, he sees the cultures of Europe and colonized places like this one as "deeply implicated within each other" (p. 119). Modern Labrador has a large story to tell in the overlapping relationships between the Settler and indigenous populations. With a large mixed race population the boundaries between colonizer and colonized are blurry in the context of Southern Labrador.

¹⁷ This federal act was enacted in 1876, and determined who was defined as Indian in the eyes of the state, and dictated what lands would be allotted as reserves. It still exists and is strongly critiqued by many indigenous communities (e.g. regarding the reserve system).

It is clear that the longstanding mixed race heritage of Southern Labrador complicates many contemporary studies of whiteness. Whiteness is typically defined in relationship to a racialized other (Winant, 2004). Yet how this exists in a small rural area where many community members pass as white makes the study of whiteness more challenging, especially considering the lack of anonymity found in the rural area in which I worked, and the many people who live in these communities who may or may not identify with their mixed race heritage. It reveals very little, in this context, to only understand whiteness as it relates to Blackness, a problematic binary association that Garner (2006) and other critical race theorists establish. Whiteness is a subjective hierarchy that is constructed and fluid, with relative privileges accorded depending on the social context.

Whiteness comes with undeniable privileges, and those who are part of a dominant white group also experience relative amounts of privilege as part of the hierarchy existing among whites (Irish immigrants to the United States and Canada, for example, were historically at the bottom of the hierarchy among whites). Studies of whiteness are often framed in relation to anti-immigration sentiments and relationships between people in cities with diverse populations (Garner, 2006; Nakayama & Martin, 1998; Pheonix, 1996; Wilmot, 2005). My dissertation departs significantly from this tradition in its investigation of race and identity in rural Labrador. Taken as the normative point from which difference emerges, whiteness is itself a category that becomes meaningful in terms of its interaction with people who are not white. Nakayama and Martin (1998) note

that: “(a)t the end of the millennium, we are now emerging from a period in which whiteness was (again) hidden and invisible to a period in which it is becoming (again) increasingly visible” (p. viii). I do not assume a binary between the rural and the urban, but acknowledge that the ways race plays out in rural areas of Canada (specifically Labrador) are indeed different from the city context, where immigration plays an important role in race relations. The ethnic groups represented in Labrador are indigenous and quite specific, with four generally recognized groups of people (Innu, Inuit, Métis and Settler). I also recognize that talking about whiteness is often difficult, especially because it involves recognizing the benefits certain individuals receive from participating in a racist society that grants “unearned skin privilege” to some and not to others (Winant, 2004). Whiteness is thus an important conceptual framework in this dissertation. Specifically, the taken for granted functioning of whiteness is examined.

The knapsack of privilege that comes with whiteness includes many things, from access to education to health care to housing (McIntosh, 1988). In reviewing the literature on whiteness for this chapter, I was struck by a glaring lack of analysis about the historical and contemporary circumstances of indigenous people in North America in relation to the concept. Many studies of whiteness relate it in a dichotomous relationship to Blackness, without adequately examining how whiteness interacts with those who first lived in North America. For example, Morrison (1993) in her otherwise brilliant text *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* scarcely acknowledges that Aboriginal people may have some representational and material role in the

construction of early America as “savage”. When speaking about American literature’s relationship to landscape, she is dismissive of the overlapping workings of racism:

Why is it seen as raw and savage? Because it is peopled by a non-white indigenous population? Perhaps. But certainly because there is ready to hand a bound and unfree, rebellious but serviceable, black population against which...all white men are enabled to measure these privileging and privileged differences (p. 44-45).

While it is essential to delineate the role of slave labour in these constructions, this analysis ignores the colonial forces of genocide at work in many parts of North America, a point of departure that substantially weakens her argument. While surely Aboriginal people are less visible in literary representations, she misses an opportunity to demonstrate the interconnectedness of Black struggle against white oppression and the fight of many different Aboriginal peoples to defend their land and families against colonial invasion. While Morrison engages with a critical analysis of the Enlightenment, she does not acknowledge the representational and material realities of the racist constructions of people indigenous to North America. Presenting indigenous people as both savage and raw was an important strategy in justifying appropriation of their land, presenting them with smallpox blankets, and a variety of other tactics employed in “settling” North America. What I am arguing here is not that Morrison is wrong to focus on the history of how Blackness contributed largely to representations of “America” in early literature. Rather, I argue that she limits her analysis of whiteness by shelving important

elements of North American history; notably, how America grew out of frontier narratives and a belief that the “New World” was an empty, wild place in need of settling (of course, with an inexhaustible labour supply made possible by the sale of human beings). As such, whiteness, with all its unearned privileges, is arguably predicated on the repression of multiple racial groups, including Blacks, indigenous peoples, Chinese migrant workers and many others.¹⁸ Painting Aboriginals as primitives in need of civilizing also worked to justify the enslavement of thousands of Blacks in the colonization of North America, as their labour was required to build the civilization that this “new” place necessitated. This linked exploitation is an important element of what enabled such vast genocide and brutal slavery, and the connections between these two historical oppressions remain evident in contemporary North America.

While whiteness is a dominant and normative identity, it is by no means static. Most of the participants in my study pass as white, but were often quick to tell me more about their racial background. Kraidy (2005) argues that identities are often hybridized; they are mixes resulting from the intersection of several elements of social experience. These overlapping identities do not necessarily exist in a hierarchy, with one identity trumping the other (Boltagici, 2004). Instead, they can coexist and it is this tension that I interrogate in this dissertation. Writing on hybridity does not consider difference as a negative or

¹⁸ I am hesitant to bracket the discussion by dealing only with these two groups for fear of repeating the same dismissive analysis that Morrison provides. Certainly, this must also include the many different experiences of people of colour and indigenous people in Canada.

destructive phenomenon, but rather lets go of the longing to find a kind of imagined origin.

The mixing of racial backgrounds discussed in the hybridity literature also intersects with other experienced factors such as those of space, place, gender, class, sexuality and ability (Morley, 2001). Lawrence (2003) reinforces Morley's point about the fluidity of identities being inherently tied to intersecting notions of privilege and oppression:

[T]he contradictions between what Lakota writer Philip Deloria has referred to as "a self-focused world of playful cultural hybridity and a social world of struggle, hatred, winners, and losers (with Indians usually numbered among the losers)" (1998, 176) continue to resonate for Native people who attempt to explore more complex and nuanced notions of Native identity (p. 22).

The centrality of material experiences must not be left in the background of hybridity studies. However, in her critique of hybridity Lawrence prematurely dismisses the capacities of Aboriginal people's engagement in nuanced explorations of identity as manifold and fluid despite the systemic racism and genocidal historical contexts in which they live. Many Aboriginal people (e.g. Métis artist Stephen Foster) work creatively to articulate and unpack the identities entangled in their lives. These identities are not free-floating, but always exist in the context of competing power structures. Young (2001) underscores the pressures to fit into the dominant culture:

[T]he negotiation between different identities, between the layers of different value systems (especially in the case of women, for whom the options seem to be mutually contradictory) is part of the process of becoming white, changing your race and class by assimilating the dominant culture. Except that, though you may

assimilate white values, you never quite can become white enough
(p. 23).

Indeed, it is important to consider the unequal footing upon which identities sit when thinking about how youth negotiate their race in a rural context.

Despite its theoretical utility, the concept of hybridity has a troubling history, and it is a term that I employ while taking this into account. In addition to its current use as a theoretical instrument for understanding an increasingly globalized and mixed world, it has also been negatively employed in nineteenth century scientific debates about racial purity (Ifekwunigwe, 1999). An ideological and pseudo-scientific debate over whether all races are members of the same human species (monogenesis) or whether different races actually exist as separate species (polygenesis) reflected the broader social fear of racial intermixing and the denial of the long existing patterns of interracial relationships. The latter concept implies that the mixing of races is biologically inferior, with Francis Galton (a close relative of Darwin) using 'science' to demonstrate a supposed "distribution of intelligence within and between so-called different 'races'" (Ifekwunigwe, 1999). As such, the historical meaning of 'hybrid' infers racial contamination. The lack of historical consciousness surrounding the term in academic discourse ignores the concept's racist history. Although this presents a significant problem with hybridity, the concept offers important insights into the ways race functions – not as a sequence of discrete categories, but as a series of overlapping and mutually constitutive elements which are imbued with class, sexuality and geopolitics.

The very notion of race itself implies a kind of 'pure' lineage, which is more historical fiction than genealogical reality. Despite this problematically assumed purity, race delineates relationships between individuals, communities and the state. As such, race performs plenty of "practical 'work'" by elevating the privileged status of certain groups while simultaneously marginalizing others (Winant, 2004). With this in mind, my research acknowledges that racism can exist in a myriad of forms. As Minkler (2004) notes,

Racism may be institutionalized (manifesting in access to power and material conditions), personally mediated (encompassing prejudice and discrimination based on stereotypic race-based assumptions and judgments), or internalized (reflected in people's own acceptance of negative messages concerning their own race or ethnic group) (p. 687).

These different forms of racism impacted the lives of participants in many ways. Youth expressed repeated frustration about the stereotypes of Labrador as a place where people always sniff gas (referring to addiction problems in some Labrador communities that gained national media attention in the early 1990s). Although young people did not expressly refer to this, I found a significant difference between the mostly white identified community where I worked compared to the mostly Métis community of Port Hope Simpson further up the coast.

Race and Rurality: Exploring Youth Constructions of Racial Identity

Understanding race in the rural Labrador context involves a critical problematization of the notion of race itself. Race is a concept that becomes

meaningful in terms of social practice, and in terms of how people live their lives. While it is essential to recognize how race is used as an instrument of domination and subjugation, it is not sufficient to think of race only in these terms. Winant (2004) notes that “racial identity is not merely an instrument of rule; it is also an arena and medium of social practice” (p. 35), and it is this arena that I explore in this chapter. The research project is framed by this understanding of race as made meaningful via interacting and participating in social life.

At least eight of the participants in the photovoice project self identified as Métis. While their ideas about being Métis varied largely, being Métis typically indicates a level of cultural mixing. As young people living in relatively isolated communities they have a strong and specific relationship to their geography. Several were involved in activities such as trapping and hunting that have strong roots in Métis culture. At the same time, these youth firmly identify with popular culture, and the explicit face of their communities is often white. As such, the concept of hybridity usefully informs this work. However, unlike much of the literature on hybridity, which refers to feelings of not being rooted in a particular place, or feelings of being between places, the participants in this project had a strong and clearly articulated attachment to their geographic community.

Bolatagici (2004) argues that photography is an excellent medium to explore issues of hybrid identities due to the historical privileging of the photographic image as a purveyor of truth. Enabling self-representation via

photography challenges the historically racist gaze of much photography, while also using an accessible medium for creative expression.

A main goal of the project was to engage young people in their own understandings of race in their community. This, however, was more difficult to do in the field than I had anticipated. Often when race was raised as an issue at workshops, participants did not speak extensively about it and discussion was more stilted than it had been around previously discussed topics such as community. When participants talked about race, they often framed their comments in reference to Black culture, although there are very few Black people living in Labrador. Discussing race as it related to them was a much more subtle conversation than I had anticipated. The following conversation between myself and a participant illuminates the ways in which discussing race often does not involve an explicit conversation:

KP. How would you define what being Métis is to you? What does being Métis mean to you? When you say, I'm Brittany and I'm Métis?

Brittany (17). I don't know...that question's too hard.

KP. Well, there's no right answer.

Brittany. I really don't know.

KP. Yeah. Is it something that your family talks about sometimes or that you talk about in school?

Brittany. Yeah (personal communication, November 2006).

This quote illustrates the ways in which youth do not necessarily articulate a racial identity in ways that I may have expected. This marks an interesting distancing between the race relations within Labrador communities and their conceptions of race in their lives. Participants were often more hesitant in speaking about race than they were in discussing other topics. Additionally, participants did not take many photos that represented race in their lives, which is also indicative of their comfort level, interest, and ability to express themselves about the topic. Several participants spoke about race in terms of Black culture. One group elaborated on their family histories during our discussion of race.

It was clear that when thinking about race, several of the participants did not have conscious notions of racial identity to articulate. Notably, these participants were largely those who responded that they were not Métis. This speaks to two phenomena that I wish to explore more greatly in the context of Southern Labrador: the invisibility of whiteness, and the difficulty that comes with stating and feeling that one has an explicit racial identity. This reflects the broader tendency of normative whiteness at work in Labrador society. As Garner (2006) eloquently argues:

One mechanism for white 'invisibility' is the conferral of an otherness made visible only as a form of racialized 'simulacra'...The question of 'invisibility' and 'malevolent absence' seem to be determined primarily by the perspective from which whiteness is *experienced*: i.e. there is nothing 'invisible' about whiteness for African-Americans (p. 259-260).

Indeed, notions of passing and privilege are inextricably linked.

Whiteness studies are very valuable here; one could easily argue that the face of Southern Labrador is normatively white. Garner (2006) notes that whiteness studies often focuses on two key themes: the invisibility of whiteness; and the recognition of that whiteness referring to specific references, practices and privileges. As he argues:

To divorce whiteness from the power relationships that frame it is to commit a cardinal error: it bears repeating that whiteness has historically functioned as a racial supremacist identity, fleetingly suspending the power relationships between genders and classes within the self-identifying 'white' group in order to unite them (p. 262).

This is certainly the case in Labrador where there are stark differences between white and Aboriginal communities in terms of standard of living, health status and education (*Aboriginal Peoples in Canada in 2006: Inuit, Métis and First Nations, 2006 Census*, 2008). These differences underline that while race is socially constructed, it is marked with an intense materiality to which is it inextricably linked.

As mentioned previously, although one goal of the fieldwork element of this research was to offer a safe space in which to speak about race, young people did not express as much interest in discussing race as they did with other topics (notably community, globalization and sexuality). It is important to underline here that levels of interest in discussing race varied greatly between communities. Youth had much more to say about ethnicity in the community with a significantly larger Métis population. This is perhaps unsurprising considering the overall politicization and recognition of Port Hope Simpson (also the most

isolated of the three communities in which workshops took place) as a Métis community. I will unpack this intercommunity variation later in the chapter. Youth in the most isolate and northernmost community had the most to say about the role that race played in their lives. These youth spoke with the most confidence and passion about their Métis identity, and resisted using the Métis card as a way of asserting themselves as Métis. They instead would talk about the things that they did in relation to being Métis, and when they did not have more words to describe it, would articulate being Métis as “just who you are”. This statement represents how some young people value being Métis even if they do not have a particular vocabulary to express it.

It is important to underline that youth’s self definitions would shift from one period of time to another, and that their racial identity is formed (in part) in relation to peer groups. The ways of being Métis were debated by two siblings in the following exchange; I interviewed these two participants together as we prepared for the final photography show in their hometown. Jimmy disputed the role of the state in the making of “being Métis”. Instead, he focused on the activities in which one participates as traditional parts of Métis culture.

KP. Do you guys feel like being Métis is an important part of who you are?

Jimmy (15). Well, nah. We’re going to do the same stuff anyway.

KP. Yeah. How about you, Amanda, what do you think about being Métis?

Amanda (17). Uh. I don’t know.

Jimmy. Just the card don't prove nuddin'.

KP. Yeah? It's more about who you are then your card¹⁹.

Jimmy. Yeah...

KP. If you're going to say, like "I'm Métis", what is it about you that you feel is Métis? Do you feel like it is title, or is it part of what you do, or...?

Amanda. Fishin' and stuff.

Jimmy. It is what you doos.

KP. And what do you do?

Jimmy. I dunno. Huntin', trappin'.

KP. Hunting, trapping, all those things.

Jimmy. Yeah.

Amanda. Make snowshoes.

KP. Make snowshoes. And what was the other thing you said, Amanda?

Amanda. Make slippers. And seal boots.

KP. Do you guys make all those things?

Amanda. I could...

KP. Yeah.

Jimmy. What's that course Amanda, that you were doing?

¹⁹ The "card" is issued by the Labrador Métis Nation as a means of organizing its membership. Historically, Métis cards were used as a political tool to establish hunting rights for Métis people (Richardson, 2005).

Amanda. Caribou tufting [on] December 5th.

KP. Cool. So fun, hey. And do you feel like those things are important parts of Métis life?

Jimmy. I s'pose (personal communication, November 2006).

Jimmy clearly states that being Métis is not about what you are *called*, but about what you *do*. His understanding of himself as a Métis youth is strongly rooted in the traditions of hunting and fishing, activities that he loves and participates in regularly. This relates interestingly to the issue of the Métis card, which was first employed as a political tool to fight for hunting rights for Métis people in Northern Ontario. Jimmy sees this state identifier as a meaningless form of bureaucratic sanctioning; rather it is activities such as hunting and fishing which he considers to be authentic elements of his life as Métis.

Youth also expressed concern for how their community had changed, and the process of personal change that they would have to participate in as they grew older and were required to leave their community in search of employment or education. This is related to their understanding of being Métis as also being connected to the natural world, and their participation in cultural production activities such as caribou tufting as a means of making this identity explicit. This involved them engaging in activities like fishing and hunting, and also in making certain crafts. For Jimmy, this meant participating in activities such as fishing. The following photo, which Jimmy included in his "about me" scrapbook, is exemplary of the ways in which he situated these kinds of activities as part of

his identity.



Figure 11. Scrapbook photo of parent fishing

Amanda (17). It is almost all gone away now. It's not like it used to be. Everything is gone different.

KP. Different. Like do you feel like there is a big difference between say, someone who is a settler in Port Hope Simpson and someone who is Métis in Port Hope Simpson? Do you think there is a big difference?

Amanda. Not really.

Jimmy (15). Not anymore. It has gone crappy. Too much technology and crap.

KP. Too much technology and crap. How about you? Do you agree?

Amanda. Mmm. No.

Jimmy. Too many, I dunno, what you calls it.

KP. Too many mainlanders?

Jimmy. Yeah.

KP. Fair enough.

Jimmy. They ruined that for us (not referring to anything in particular).

Amanda. He's old school.

KP. And you feel like before there were too many mainlanders and not enough...

Jimmy. I don't mean mainlanders...

KP. Do you mean white people?

Jimmy. No, no...

Amanda. People coming down here.

Jimmy. No I don't mean the people.

Amanda. Technology.

Jimmy. Technology and smokestacks and all that stuff.

KP. Like industry and stuff. Like it was better when you lived off the land more?

Jimmy. Yeah.

KP. Right on (personal communication, November 2006).

Traditional ways of doing things were more readily available for one male teen than they perhaps were for other participants. Boys had been encouraged more than girls to participate in activities such as hunting and trapping. Amanda, the older sibling, loves music, socializing and seeing other things (especially activities that bring her into contact with boys from outside of her community). She articulated a need for integration and sameness that her brother refuted.

KP. If there are the things that are more important and less important, where would you put being Métis? Is it the most important part of who you are? Or maybe the medium important part? Or a not very important part?

Amanda. Not really.

KP. Not really. What about you, Jimmy?

Jimmy. Yeah.

KP. It is important. And how come it is not very important to you and how come it is very important to you?

Amanda. Because everyone is all...all the people is all...there's different kinds of people anyway. And you're all...I don't know. (This quote seems like she's not certain, but she sounds certain).

KP. Un huh. OK. So you'd rather if everyone is just mixed together.

Amanda. I don't know. I guess...(now sounding less sure). Some of my songs is missing (from her playlist on her MP3 player).

KP. And what about you? How come you say it is important to you?

Jimmy. Because of the stuff you doos around here (personal communication, November 2006).

Amanda was less invested in these kinds of activities, and also was less interested in having a conversation about the topic. I argue that her ways of being Métis are no less legitimate than her brothers, but her identity plays out differently. Unlike Jimmy, who spoke of his frustration with modern technology, Amanda is highly invested in popular culture and is interested in the world beyond her community. This desire for exploration is imbued with home as she too spoke of a strong place identity, and noted the negative stereotypes she often faced when on the island. She was articulating her perspective on authenticity and belonging as Métis in relation to her travels outside of Port Hope Simpson during an interview:

Amanda (17). I don't know. I am only halfbreed.

KP. Yeah, and when you say halfbreed, is that a good thing or a bad thing, or why do you use that term?

Amanda. That's cool. Mudder's a Newfie (laughs).

KP. Yeah, and your dad is...

Amanda. Is Métis.

KP. Is Métis? Yeah. So you feel like halfbreed is a good descriptor of who you are?

Amanda. Yeah. (This doesn't seem to have a negative connotation).

KP. Do you ever feel like halfbreed is a term that people use with a negative meaning behind it?

Amanda. No, not really.

Jimmy (15). She's the only one who says that.

Amanda. No! When I went to Newfoundland they called me a crackie, so...

KP. What does crackie mean?

Amanda. A halfbreed.

KP. A halfbreed. That's harsh.

Amanda. They shouldn't say that.

KP. So who calls you a crackie?

Amanda. Some people in Newfoundland.

KP. Just an isolated guy? Or a lot of people?

Amanda. Just some dude that liked me.

KP. Oh yeah. He's got a strange way of showing it, doesn't he?
(personal communication, November 2006)

This kind of commentary is demonstrative of the racialized ways in which Labrador youth sometimes interact with young people from the island. Mann (2004) argues that these kinds of terms, imposed originally by colonizers on

indigenous populations, have pervasive use that is indicative of ongoing racism, asking the pointed question, “How is it that slurs, so completely disavowed when other groups are at issue, remain acceptable lingo for indicating Native Americans?” (p. 18). At the same time, one must also consider the ways in which Amanda’s appropriation of specific ways of speaking about her racial heritage is implicated in her negotiation of race within and outside her community. In this instance, appropriating racist language with the term “halfbreed” is an important part of how Amanda articulates her Métissage. She seems to use the term in similar ways as other racialized groups have claimed language originally intended to oppress them.

The two siblings have different interests and decidedly different takes on what being Métis means. The relationship between nature and modernity is articulated in their discussion, with Jimmy being a staunch traditionalist and Amanda being much more interested in popular culture, technology and all things modern. Their debate illustrates how young people do not have a single, set way of seeing race, and that while they all have feelings and ideas about being Métis, these vary with people’s experiences.

Being mixed race was important to Tara, who had always lived in small and isolated communities and had a strong identification with them. She spoke frequently about a very small community where she had spent a year with affection, and often had plans of writing letters and calling the local “talk back” radio show with her opinions on what was not being adequately provided in terms

of health and social services. Indeed, she is a staunch defender of small communities and the rights of people in small places.

KP. How would you describe your ethnic background?

Tara (16). What does ethnic mean?

KP. Ah – that is a good question...your ethnic background is like your racial background. Like, for example, my family is Métis.

Tara. I'm Métis.

KP. You're Métis too?

Tara. Well, I'm Métis, but my mom is LIA.²⁰

KP. Okay.

Tara. And my nan [grandmother] came from Makkovik.

KP. Makkovik? Do you ever go back up there?

Tara. No. I was never there in my life.

KP. So you call yourself Métis?

Tara. Yeah.

KP. And is being Métis important to you?

Tara. Mmm. Yeah. I guess. Well, yeah.

KP. Yeah. And how would you say being Métis is important to you? Are there things that you do that make you think, 'Hey, I'm Métis', or is it just part of the background of your life?

²⁰ LIA refers to the Labrador Inuit Association, which recently established the self governed region of Nunatsiavut in Northern Labrador.

Tara. We gets to go out hunting and stuff like that.

KP. Hunting and stuff, yeah.

Tara. And fishin' and all that stuff.

KP. Do you do that with your family?

Tara. My dad.

KP. Why is it important or how is it important?

Tara. I don't know, because probably if I wasn't Métis, I wouldn't know who I'd be.

KP. So it is...a thing that makes you know...who you are and stuff?

Tara. Yeah [with emphasis]. Lets you know who you are (personal communication, November 2006).

For Tara, being Métis is a vital part of how she understands herself in relationship to her community and with her history. It is this background function of race, as something that is hard to articulate but "lets you know who you are" that is of interest in this case.

Interestingly, during a previous group discussion she had specifically articulated that she was Inuit, not Métis. This fluid movement between identifying as Inuit or Métis is related to her mixed heritage but also presumably to the different kinds of resources indigenous people have access to depending upon the categories to which they are ascribed membership. This reflects shifting self-definitions regarding race, and illuminates the ways in which speaking about race changes depending upon who is listening or participating in the conversation.

What I think is clear, however, is that for this young person, the label or name is less important than the feelings of home and community that are connected to her racial identification. Tara brought this photo to a workshop following a weekend trip with her grandmother to pick berries and set snares.



Photo of rabbit snare taken on a weekend afternoon with family by Tara

We're Labradorians! Place Identity, Invisible Whiteness and Youth Understandings of Race in White Identified Communities

The ways in which youth spoke about race varied greatly between communities. Throughout the research youth did not always articulate a strong racial identity, and outside of Port Hope Simpson, where youth spoke more extensively about how they see themselves racially, participants were less interested and willing to discuss how they think about race in their own lives. This was the case notably for white participants, and those living in communities which are mostly white identified. This phenomenon is by no means unique: Pheonix's (1996) research on white youth in London found that they generally did not have a specific consciousness around their race. This lack of recognition, however, does not equate with a lack of activity and meaning in whiteness. Although youth did not often articulate what they thought about being white, it is clear that their racial status is performing work and is laden with symbolic and material privilege.

Talking not only about what it means to be of Aboriginal heritage, but also of European descent facilitated participants' exploration of their own racial identities, and began a discussion of how they understand their community in relationship to race. I had hoped that this would in turn enable a broader discussion of racial politics and self-determination, which was not the case in most workshops. This reflects a certain naivety and idealism that I had when planning the project. Seiter's (2005) work with youth in schools also highlights

how young people are often more interested in engaging with popular culture in uncritical ways than in discussing politics or politicized topics. She also noted that she was at times uncomfortable with the positions of school administrators, which underlines the ways in which participatory youth research projects involve a negotiation of the everyday and institutional contexts of the places young people spend their time.

By engaging in these workshops, youth were encouraged to reflect critically on why race might be an important phenomenon for them to consider in their community. With fieldwork complete, I frequently questioned whether addressing such issues (ones that are notably difficult for adults with experience discussing these topics) was even possible with this age group in this context. I think engaging with a slightly older age group may have been more appropriate, although this would not have been possible given that most youth leave the area after completing high school.

But why talk of race in the Southern Labrador context, where many people, if not white identified, may “pass” as such? Passing refers to the ability of some individuals to appear as members of an ethnic group to which they may or may not belong (T. K. Williams, 2004). This phenomenon can be likened to shape shifting in that people may act out different racial identities depending on the circumstances in which they are situated. Using the example of Jewish identity, Itkovitz (2001) notes that those who pass are “caught in the double bind of the ‘chameleonic race’ – an ‘identity’ marked at once by indistinguishable

sameness and irreducible difference” (p.43). Studies of passing underline how race is performative, but that there are specific ways in which race is understood as authentic and inauthentic. Many participants pass very easily as white, and may have never explicitly considered their identities as mixed-race subjects with many Métis friends living alongside settlers in their community. This offers up the challenge of understanding race not simply as a compilation of traits and bodily markers, but also as performance that is socially constructed and situated. While passing as white offers protection to individuals in a racist society, it does not, however, protect these individuals from the harmful witnessing of racism on family members who cannot pass or on community at large which is impacted by institutionalized forms of racism (for example, the ways in which Innu people in Labrador are represented in media) (Richardson, 2005). While passing certainly involves issues of privilege, the internalization of racism and the confounding of identities that passing enables also merit further reflection, especially in this case where so many of the participants identified as Métis but would not easily be identified as such without them actively disclosing their racial identity.

Existing in between the visible markers of belonging as Métis and living in white society speaks to issues of hybridity and displacement. The labelling of some Métis people as Aboriginal “wannabes” (Richardson, 2005) is indicative of the tension that is an important element of negotiating this identity. For example, the issue of having or not having a Métis card often came up in discussions of race in workshops and interviews. The following passage is indicative of the tensions between the Métis and white population:

KP. Do you feel like Labrador is a place where there's racism?

Jessica (12). Almost, kind of...call it Métis people, they have cards so they are able to do more. But European white people don't get anything special (personal communication, October, 2006).

This participant has conflated issues of indigenous rights with a kind of “reverse racism”; a concept that does not hold given the political and historical context of the region, and the privileges that white people have regardless of geography. Reverse racism is a term often employed when white power is threatened, and in this case, the participant sees Métis ability to hunt as a privilege, not as a right (despite it being a right, both historically and constitutionally). What it does reveal, however, are the kinds of tensions that exist between people around the Métis card. It is important to highlight that this discussion took place during a workshop in the most southern community in the project, where the number of Métis people is significantly less than further up the coast. Indeed, this kind of comment also reflects the racial makeup of the community. Young people from Port Hope Simpson had the most to say about Métis identity, as 86% of the community listed having an Aboriginal identity on the 2006 census, compared with 8.9% in Red Bay and 7.6% in L'Anse au Loup (*2006 Community Profiles*, 2008). This distribution allowed for an important examination of the invisibility of whiteness in different parts of the region.

Understanding how people pass was of interest in negotiating Métis identity. Several people in the community expressed sentiments of frustration about how people were “getting cards” and thus getting access to different

resources than those who were not. This led to certain frustrations like those expressed by Jessica. Passing can be considered in vastly different ways, and is often conceptualized as racial opportunism, or, on the other end of the spectrum, a radical form of resistance to oppression. As people in Labrador and on the island begin to explore their family histories in more detail, questions are raised as to who is “really” Métis when they can pass as white in many parts of their lives. Williams (2004) complicates notions of passing by asking:

How do we determine authentic membership into a racial group: by birth? blood-ties? kinship organization? geographic upbringing? cultural socialization? presence or absence of one parent’s heritage? phenotypical resemblance? a combination of these variables? And moreover, who determines racial and ethnic authenticity? Thus, both the interaction among *hapa* individuals and the social, ecological structure must be taken into consideration when interrogating the phenomenon of passing, as well as understanding its social consequences (p. 167, italics in original).

In the Labrador context there has been intermarriage between Europeans and Aboriginal people for several generations, and the question of needing to appear authentic has impacted the ways in which being Métis is officially framed in the community’s adoption of stereotypical cultural markers (Kennedy, 1997).

Williams (2004) argues that a fundamental problem of passing as a concept for people who are multiracial is its acceptance of the exclusiveness of racial categories where “fluidity across its boundaries or multiple situationality within many boundaries is not permitted” (p. 167). Criticism has been rendered on many people of mixed race by other members of their racial group who do not have the option to pass due to phenotypical characteristics. This critique, while

an important one, does not adequately account for the experiences of many mixed raced people (e.g. like many youth with whom I worked, whose identities may shift, depending on social location and circumstance).

Debates around being Aboriginal in Canada often centre on such issues of authenticity. Certainly, as Lawrence (2003) argues, contestations of Aboriginal identity, of belonging or not belonging, almost always happen on white terms (much like the critique of the Métis card that came up during a workshop discussion). Indeed, the expectation that claims to Aboriginality be based on an authenticity that often draws largely on iconic elements of a given culture demonstrates an expectation that to be Aboriginal is to be somehow frozen in history. Similar in expected timelessness to the places constructed in the rural idyll discussed in Chapter Three (although with much more dire material and political consequences), Aboriginal people are expected to be frozen in time, with a kind of specific form of identity being understood as legitimate (Ching & Creed, 1997).

There is a great deal of pressure on groups such as the Labrador Métis to demonstrate how they are 'real' Aboriginal people. While there was a rush to link the Labrador Métis to other Métis communities in Western Canada in the 1980s, the political climate has since shifted and the Labrador Métis are not fighting to be included as Métis people in Canada. The need to articulate a kind of authenticity leads to an emphasis on presenting specific iconic elements of Métis culture as a central part of Métis identity. Taking the tendency to put Aboriginal

people under the microscope of authenticity into account, this project does not focus on the iconic relations and representations that are often presented as the key elements of Métis culture. Instead, it reflects upon the daily relations that constitute what it means to be Métis for a specific group of youth.

Lawrence's (2003) analysis of Native identities in North America elaborates on how questions of authenticity are closely linked with Aboriginal peoples' being seen as credible as their identities are policed by the state:

In the Gitksan/Wet'suwet'en case, the plaintiffs were continuously presented as contemporary interlopers whose claims to Indigenous rights were invalid because they were not "the same" people as their ancestors were – because they held paying jobs, lived in houses, consumed pizza and other European foods, and in general lived contemporary lives...Attacks on the authenticity of contemporary Indian existence continue to come from white environmentalists and anthropologists who disparage the modernity of contemporary Native existence and use their arguments to campaign for new restrictions on emergent Native rights (p. 23).

This insistence on a static and antiquated version of Aboriginality is problematic, and Lawrence rightly points out this racist and narrow understanding of 'how to be' Aboriginal, arguing that it is essential for Aboriginal people to challenge the codifying systems imposed by the state which have long regulated what counts as a legitimate Aboriginal identity. As such, it is vital for Aboriginal people to reclaim their own systems of governance in order to break from the colonial order which has long framed whom and what is included in an Aboriginal identity.

Many youth did not mention the ways in which race played out in their community, but generally spoke about a situation that was removed from their

community and geographic region. One workshop entailed a heated debate about race relations within Labrador. The following discussion took place during a workshop when participants began talking about Northern Labrador:

Kyle (14). Well, first of all, if I was living down there and I got in with the wrong people, I'd be huffing gas every day of my life, I'd be stoned and whatever! Not only that, I wouldn't go down there.

Warren (15). Down there, the government buys the houses, like skidoos and everything like that. They'll go break up something and the government -

Dana (14, cutting him off). Racism again! Out! [Meaning the other boys have to leave]. They [the other boys in the group] are racists. They [Aboriginal people in Labrador] got a reason why they gets stuff and don't pay taxes.

Neil (13). Everybody got a reason for something!

Dana. Because we took over all their land. I can't say much, because I'm a Métis myself, but all white people [pauses] - white people took their land over and the government and they fought for it and all that stuff.

KP. So it is this idea that it's not the government giving them stuff. The government, you could say, is on land that doesn't belong to them.

Warren. Helping them out is messing them up even worse, because it gets worse every year...

Dana. I don't think they knows Black from white, so you'll have a good job to get them talking.

Warren. They [settlers] came here and they stole everything (personal communication, October, 2006).

This continued to be debated throughout the course of the workshop. Also, a dynamic developed where one youth, as indicated in the previous quote, is

expressing frustration at what she perceives as her peers' lack of critical analysis of race relations in the region. The attitudes of her peers ranged from hostile comments about Northern communities to a critique of government funding which does not really address underlying problems of institutional and internalized racism that play into social problems in the communities they were discussing. This was also part of a larger power struggle between these youth generally in the workshops. What is clear, however, is that several youth have an understanding of colonialism and the role of the state in relation to Aboriginal people in Labrador that was not as strongly articulated elsewhere.

This is perhaps a reflection of their isolation and also of the ways in which their education teaches them about racial struggles elsewhere but not those at home. Participants, perhaps not surprisingly, pulled from their knowledge of American popular culture when speaking about race. One youth described the ways that the reality show *Survivor* had recently aired a series where people were divided up according to race and then eventually merged. This prompted a discussion of segregation and racism. Two other young people cited the film *Roots* when talking about race. While these were interesting interjections, what they clearly raised is the ways in which race was considered to be something "out there" in the world, something that was removed from their daily experiences. It is also interesting that until prompted, the only white youth that spoke of her ethnic background was a girl whose father had immigrated to Canada from Northern Ireland. When discussing race she related strongly to her family's history of struggle around issues of Irish autonomy. Certainly,

participants had opinions and insights about race, particularly as they related to the racial oppression of Black Americans. When I asked participants about what they thought about racism, several asked me if I had seen the film *Roots*, a film whose narrative which addressed one family's journey from Africa to their eventual emancipation in America.²¹ But these insights often did not draw from their home or surrounding communities, but from American popular culture representations. This is an example of a 'discourse from elsewhere' that I elaborate upon later in the dissertation.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I explored the role that race plays in the daily lives of youth in the communities in which this project is situated. I related theoretical concepts of hybridity and mixed race studies to the context of Southern Labrador. Recognizing the ways in which many Métis people do not have phenotypical traits that make them recognizable as members of a non-white group, passing is an important concept when thinking about ways of being Métis.

When discussing race with youth who did not self-identify as Métis, race was considered a non-issue in their community. This reveals how white youth often do not see themselves as racialized subjects, but rather they focus on other elements of their identities such as their families' country of origin, and their

²¹ *Roots* has been strongly critiqued for its many representation of racism being resolved following the family's freedom from slavery. Here, I do not address these critiques in detail, but recognize that the example upon which they draw in relation to race is problematic and very popular.

identities as Labradorians. These youth were interested, however, in discussing elements of their ethnic backgrounds.

Both youth who identified as Métis and those with white identifications often called on examples of racism from popular culture representations of places and circumstances far from their home communities. This revealed a kind of distance that youth created between themselves and how they understood racism's impact. It is clear that in the context of Labrador, this phenomenon is related to the high number of mixed race people and the strong links between Métis and non-Métis people in the region. It is also reflective of a certain level of white privilege where white participants did not necessarily see themselves as having access to resources based on their race.

"Being Métis" and "being white" are two very closely connected ideas in Southern Labrador. Youth negotiate being Métis in a context that is normatively white, and expressed differing and conflicting perspectives on what it means to be Métis. By using their voices, I illuminated the overlapping and often conflicted ways in which youth articulate their sentiments of racial identity that move beyond the limited anthropological literature on Labrador Métis people.

CHAPTER 6: RURAL YOUTH SEXUALITIES: ANONYMITY AND DISCIPLINE IN SMALL PLACES

It would seem remiss to write a dissertation oriented around the priorities of youth research participants without discussing issues of teenage sexuality. In this chapter I discuss the rural youth's articulation of ideas of sexuality. I do this by examining how they negotiated their relationship to sexuality in their day-to-day lives. As scholarship around youth sexualities rarely delve into issues of rurality or elaborate upon a rural context, in this chapter I will elaborate upon and provide analysis of conversations about sex and sexuality that I had with young people in Southern Labrador. Although there have been few studies on rural sexualities, the field is growing in breadth and complexity. Notably, Little and Panelli (2007) have made significant contributions to the study of how youth make sense of their sexual selves, and Valentine's (2003) work on rural sexualities sets a broader framework for this chapter.

Considering the interest and curiosity that youth expressed in conversations about sexuality, it seems only fitting that a participatory youth project elaborate upon those discussions and shed light on the ways in which youth negotiate issues of sexuality in their everyday lives. I draw extensively on conversations from the workshop on sexuality (held in three communities), which was one of the later workshops in the series. I employ a Foucauldian (1990, 1995) understanding of power to illustrate that despite their experience of open

space and freedom to move through it, youth are also closely regulated as sexual subjects. Following this analysis, I examine the ways in which the discourses of open space and freedom articulated by youth in earlier parts of this dissertation are circumscribed by the functioning of a lack of anonymity and the circulation of gossip, using the work of Foucault as a point of departure for a critical examination of anonymity and heteronormativity in relationship to rural space. I then discuss how youth articulated their understanding of alternative sexualities. I finally offer some potential policy recommendations for the provision of sexual health services for young people in rural areas.

Currently, contemporary literature on rural sexualities is limited but growing (Bell & Valentine, 1995; Hillier, Harrison, & Bowditch, 1999; Hillier, Harrison, & Warr, 1998; Kramer, 1995; Little, 2003; Little & Panelli, 2007; Shoveller, Johnson, Langille, & Mitchell, 2004; Shoveller et al., 2007). The examination of youth sexualities encompasses a large and diverse literature. Studies on rural youth sexualities, however, are few. This state of affairs is beginning to change, notably through the work of Hillier, Harrison and Bowditch (1999), and Shoveller, Johnson, Prkachin, and Patrick (2007). Shoveller and colleagues' work is situated in a health perspective, which, while having many similarities (notably a focus on geography), differs significantly from what I undertake here. My examination of rural youth sexualities is concerned with better understanding the relationship between rural youth, sexuality and power. A major goal of this chapter is thus to bring a detailed examination of power into discussions of how rural youth understand sexuality, and the contexts of their

lives in relation to living in a rural place. Rural youth studies' strong accounting for space can be well complemented by bringing a thorough analysis of power into thinking about rural youth sexuality.

Discussion about youth sexualities must take a gender analysis into account. Throughout this chapter I will engage with community expectations concerning young people's gender presentation. Butler (1990) argues that communities place many demands on how youth can perform their gender identities. This constraint of acceptable gender practices within a community in turn has a significant impact on how young people see themselves as sexual beings, and what they may consider as the scope of possibilities for sexual behaviour. Butler further argues that this conflation between sex, gender and desire, in which the biological sex of young people is considered a determinant of their gender, and their gender in turn a determinant of their sexuality, is problematic. She also argues that gender and sexuality are framed as inseparable in current discourse, which impacts the ways that young people are able to articulate their sexualities, an issue that I discuss in detail in this chapter. In the case of Southern Labrador, the discursive framework in these communities makes specific links between sex, gender and sexuality. Although youth (especially girls) disputed these links, they nonetheless work to regulate youth sexualities, and put boundaries on the kinds of subjects youth can be. I will later elaborate upon the linked issues of gender and heteronormativity at work here. In my review of literature, there has been limited research on the ways that rural youth negotiate heteronormativity; Youdell (2005) has explored the connections

among these layered phenomena in her work in London schools, and Little (2003) has explored heterosexuality in rural areas, but these are exceptions to the literature, which generally does not address issues of rural youth sexuality.

Although I draw on Foucault (1990; 1995) and Butler (1990) throughout the chapter to inform my discussion on gender and sexuality, I do not make use of their methodological approach (e.g. discourse analysis, nor interpellation), but instead look at the ways youth discuss sexuality in their everyday lives, focusing on the conversations we had together as a primary source of data. Both Foucault and Butler, however, offer significant theoretical insights into the framing of the data, and enable a complex analysis of sexuality in the lives of Southern Labrador youth.

Methodologically speaking, it is important to note here that youth did not take many photos for the workshop on sexuality. In retrospect, this is not surprising. I would also find it challenging to provide representations of sexuality in the context of being a rural youth. Instead of working through photos as a means of starting conversations, the week that focused on sexuality was heavily focused on playing games to start conversations and direct the discussion.

Workshops revealed specific ways of discussing safer sex practices that were not rooted in their geographic space, and how the lack of anonymity youth have in their communities impacts how they engage with their sexuality. In the final section of the chapter, I discuss how discourses from elsewhere are part of the ways in which rural youth talk about sexuality. I elaborate on the relationship

between “the right answer” and the answer most appropriate to their experience, and how these positions are often in conflict.

The relationship between popular culture and youth sexuality has long been written about from an urban perspective (Besley, 2003; Cohen, 1990; Frith, 1983). Similar to their urban counterparts, rural youth use media to talk about sex, and get information about sexual practices through media they consume. Throughout the course of workshops, youth often pulled from their own experiences when talking about a given issue, but also repeatedly drew examples from popular culture. The following conversation begins with me talking about boundaries, and continues on with youths’ discussion of popular culture as a way to frame issues related to boundary setting (in this case teen pregnancy). The discussion demonstrates the negotiation between lived experience and popular representations that youth employ when talking about sex:

KP: But around things like sexual boundaries, it is really important to remember that at the end of the day, the responsibility rests here, with you, to set your boundaries and to do things that you are comfortable with, right? Regardless of what your friends might be doing or what your family expects from you, those boundaries have got to be set by you.

Jane (17). I knows a girl who’s 15 and she’s pregnant. Well, her sister is 16 and I met her at LabQuest²² and she’s pregnant.

Shauna (13). There was one on *Dr. Phil* one time. And she was 15 and pregnant and she didn’t know if she was going to put him up for adoption or keep him and she decided to keep him.

²² Labquest is a summer program for students interested in science. It brings together diverse youth from across the region for a week long summer camp in the larger administrative centre of Goose Bay.

KP. Right.

Jessica (12). There was one girl on *Maury (Povich)* who was 14 and she was pregnant and this one girl who was on *One Tree Hill* and she was pregnant too (personal communication, October 2006).

Much like the ways youth used popular references to talk about issues of race (as discussed in Chapter Four), they also brought popular culture representations into their framing of sexuality. Their employment of media representations was also coupled with their own experience, with reference often made to friends and older siblings. For some youth, this use of personal experience was reflective of their age, as some participants were as young as 12. Using examples from popular culture also provides a safe distance for discussing such an intimate topic. The ways in which youth discussed teen pregnancy echo other work on how the sexual behaviour of others (especially around issues of pregnancy) impact how young people understand sexuality (Shoveller et al., 2004).

In the following section, I explore youths' ideas of sex and sexuality, paying particular attention to the ways in which their thinking about sexuality involves notions of space. Having grown up in a small community but always lived as an adult in cities, I have long been concerned with the impact of space on sexualities, and here focus specifically on sexuality from a rural perspective. I consider issues of space to be of particular importance to the ways that rural youth consider sexuality in their daily lives. Little (2003) argues that the traditional thinking of sexuality in terms of public and private spaces has also "encouraged a

focus on the different ways in which sexuality is constructed in different places and the influence of space itself on the construction and performance of sexual identity” (p. 404).

With a critique of these taken for granted understandings of space in mind, I examine here the ways in which youth implicate space in their discussion of sexuality. On one hand, notions of public and private spaces are complicated in a rural context, where the public spaces that youth can occupy are limited. On the other hand, rural youth have significantly more opportunities to be alone in the outdoors than exist for urban youth. What does it mean to consider rurality as an active element of the sexual identities of the participants? I argue here that the rural character of the space they occupy (and the characteristics of this space, notably a lack of anonymity) has specific impacts on the scope of sexualities that youth can safely articulate, and the safer sexual practices in which they can or will engage. It is clear that understanding the sexual identities of young people in Southern Labrador requires an understanding of the socio-spatial context of the communities in which they live.

While it is apparent that living in a rural area is an integral part of how these youth situate themselves in the world, they felt frustrated and constrained by some of the ways their rural space circumscribes the possibilities open to them as sexual beings.

Community Regulation and Youth Sexualities: Anonymity and Discipline

Youth studies has addressed the lack of autonomy young people often have over their lives, and the ways in which youth are assumed to be deviant (Bushin et al., 2007). In this section, I discuss the relationship between youth sexuality, anonymity and discipline, drawing from a Foucauldian perspective to illuminate how youths' lives are framed by the interaction of these phenomena.²³ The assumption that young people are deviant problematically justifies the disciplining of their sexuality in the eyes of adults. This assumption of deviancy (and the justification for discipline that comes with this assumption) contributes significantly to the discussion of youth and sexuality in rural places. As Dunkley and Panelli (2007; Hewitt, 2005) argue, it is important to place a lens on the “complex and sobering ways that power relations differentially transect youthful possibilities” (p. 171). As such, I also examine the ways in which forms of disciplinary power impact youth sexualities in Southern Labrador.

While rural youth in Southern Labrador expressed love for their communities and a strong sense of belonging to their homes, they clearly face challenges in several areas of their lives, notably in terms of how they are able to negotiate a developing and changing sexuality. The workshop on sexuality was particularly indicative of these changes. Notably, youth expressed that the lack of anonymity and privacy in the community negatively impacted their capacity to seek out sexual information and contraceptives. Not surprisingly, youth

²³ While Shoveller, Johnson, Langille and Mitchell (2004) note the parallels between their findings and Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, they do not go into depth on the insights gained via a Foucauldian approach.

expressed hesitancy about their capacity to purchase contraceptives and ask about information on safer sex.

But what does anonymity have to do with sexuality? I argue that the lack of anonymity in Southern Labrador communities enables the disciplining of youth sexualities. The issue of anonymity and discipline is complex and as such first requires an examination of the concept of sexuality. Foucault (1990) argues that it is crucial not to conceptualize sexuality through a framework of repression, but to instead examine its productivity. In so doing, it is important to examine the form of power exercised, rather than simply looking at specific prohibitions as a mode of repression. Foucault's concept of biopower asserts that there has been, in the past two centuries, an increasing connection between the body and power. Power is articulated through the control of bodies. Biopower is a useful means of understanding the ways in which the bodies of young people in Southern Labrador are regulated and subjected to discipline. Perhaps most importantly for this analysis, Foucault (1990) argues that it is important to consider sexuality not in terms of *repression*, but in terms of *regulation*. Youth are not sexually repressed, but their bodies are subjected to specific regimes of control. Considering sexuality in terms of regulation does not deny that sexuality is governed by a set of rules and techniques of control, but rather, it reveals more by examining the ways in which "deployments of power are directly connected to the body" (p. 151). In the case of rural youth, this observation informs the ways in which the lack of anonymity functions in the small communities where I worked.

Youth often expressed annoyance at the ways in which adults in their community “wanted to know their business” (personal communication, November 2006). Although the notion of anonymity (and the lack thereof) has not been substantially linked to Foucauldian frameworks of power (especially from a rural perspective), thinking through the disciplining of youth sexuality provides significant insights into the function of power in the lives of youth in Southern Labrador. In the following pages, I will establish a link between heteronormativity, anonymity and disciplinary power in the lives of participants.

Disciplinary power involves many different and calculated exercises of power. These forms of power do not necessarily have any single rationality that links them into a “unified relation” (Barnett, 1999, p. 378). Rather, they are heterogeneous and do not emerge from a sole centre of power. The most famous examples of disciplinary power Foucault (1990) employs are of asylums and prisons, with the key image of the Panopticon demonstrating the functioning of disciplinary power. Certainly, in the case of Southern Labrador youth, no one centralized form of power seeks to discipline their activities, but rather a series of different elements (including closeness of ties, gossip and other factors) contribute to their regulation. Employing a Foucauldian perspective on power reveals a great deal about the operations of power with respect to young people and sexuality in Southern Labrador.

When considering the ways in which power is a productive force, it is important to look at the ways youth are talked about in their communities. Gossip

was a key productive source of regulation of youth sexual activities. When considered in relationship to biopower, gossip worked to discipline the bodies of young people, as being gossiped about served as a form of punishment for youth who transgressed specific community moral codes (for example, buying condoms and having sex). Youth repeatedly expressed concern and irritation about the lack of anonymity and gossip that circulates around them in their communities. Foucault (1995) argues that this kind of perpetual surveillance creates a system where power is “visible and unverifiable” (p. 201). Young people are aware of the ways in which gossip circulates, but are not able to pinpoint who will be talking about them and when new bits of gossip may surface and begin to circulate. This form of control was specifically related to the regulation of young people’s sexual activity.

When we discussed buying condoms during a workshop, participants spoke of the fear of people telling their parents about what they were doing, and of their desire to keep their sexual behaviours secret from their parents. While many young people feel this way regardless of their geography, the small size of their hometowns made secrecy around sexual matters particularly challenging for the youth with whom I worked. These communities in Southern Labrador are places where everyone knows everyone else and engaging in activities that are totally private can prove challenging. During a discussion about the availability of contraceptives in the area, one participant said that she could purchase condoms from a vending machine in the local health centre, but that it “was a long walk down the driveway” (personal communication, November 2006), referring to the

fact that everyone would know what she was going to buy. She considered this long walk a significant deterrent to accessing contraceptives at the clinic. Certainly, much as Shoveller et al.'s (2004) rural youth study reflects how youth experience social norms that pathologize sex and silence conversations about it, the youth with whom I worked were explicit about the problems associated with trying to buy condoms and learning about engaging in safer sex practices. Additionally, Foucault's Panopticon, when taken as a way of thinking through rural youth sexualities, highlights how gossip outlines differences between youth, and works to compare them. The high level of scrutiny that comes with rural gossip functions as a "way of training or correcting individuals" who may stray from sanctioned norms of behaviour (Foucault, 1995, p. 203).

The things young people had to say about their fears of being talked about made me consider the role of gossip in regulating sexuality. Gossip, however, cannot be dismissed simply as snide and malicious, for it also provides an important avenue for different kinds of knowledge to circulate. In this case, however, gossip plays an integral role in circumscribing the ways in which youth can articulate their sexual selves, with both men and women engaging in it. As Birchall (2006) argues:

Gossip...is information or knowledge with a disclaimer clause: whereas information and knowledge are traditionally thought to be traceable to a source if they are to be considered information or knowledge at all, gossip puts on display the difficulty of such a pose (p. 96).

Certainly, the role of informal information networks in creating new understandings of specific things, and creating new knowledge, must be acknowledged. I value the role these networks play in generating local knowledge and passing on stories as different ways of understanding a given phenomenon, as evidenced by my discussion on race in Chapter Five. I must underline here that my critique of gossip does not mean that I do not value the role of informal knowledge: it is clearly an important element of storytelling. Gossip is also part of the means through which youth learned a significant part of the community-based, local knowledge that I examined in the previous chapter. Breaking down the division between “legitimate” and “illegitimate” knowledge is an important task, and my discussion of rurality in Chapter Three, specifically around the ways in which youth employ traditional knowledge in their understanding of their communities, was an attempt to make this break. In this instance, however, I argue that some kinds of gossip (e.g. gossip by adults about youth and their sexual practices) significantly circumscribe what young people are able to express and limits their sexual development and empowerment. Haugen and Villa (2006) argue that:

The feeling of security [in rural communities] is based on transparency and that ‘everybody knows everybody’ and everyone cares about what is going on in the community. At the same time, visibility facilitates negative informal social control, such as gossip and the spreading of rumours. Gossip – or the threat of gossip – represents strong expectations and exerts forces on individuals in terms of how to act and live within small and surveyable communities (p. 210).

These findings also reflect what youth had to say about their perceptions of being under surveillance. They felt that *if* they did something they would be talked about – and it is this power that I draw attention to here. This distinction underlines the ways in which young people feel circumscribed by the thought and experience of people talking about them behind their backs, and parallels Foucault's (1995) discussion of the Panopticon, where it is the ability of a surveyor to intervene at any point that lends it power:

In each of its [the Panopticon] applications, it makes it possible to perfect the exercise of power. It does this in several ways: because it can reduce the number of those who exercise it, while increasing the number of those on whom it is exercised. Because it is *possible to intervene at any moment and because the constant pressure acts even before the offences, mistakes or crimes have been committed* (p. 206, emphasis mine).

The fact that youth do not know when gossip about them may arise impacts the ways in which they engage with their sexualities.

The notion that gossip works as a pre-emptive tool is crucial to understanding the frustration youth articulated about it. Traditional critiques of gossip are frequently concerned with the ways it disrupts moral order, and focus on the need to protect people from the presumed negative impacts of gossip. As such, gossip is criticized because it violates a moral code. In this context, however, and in the work of Haugen and Villa (2006) cited above, gossip is actually a tool for reinforcing specific moral codes by causing youth to be concerned that when they transgress community moral codes of sexual behaviour, people will talk about them. Youth repeatedly noted that the

circulation of these stories (and the possibility that these stories would get back to their families) was the root of the problem. Understood philosophically as oppositional to the “pursuit of truth” (Birchall, 2006, p. 103), gossip in this context is understood as a tool of regulation – a means of producing a specific kind of sexual subject. This subject is under surveillance and negotiates sexuality (including decisions around safer sexual practices) in a context where they are known to everyone in a given community.

The regulatory impact of gossip seems more significant in a place where no one is a stranger. I do not have a preconceived notion of gossip as good or bad, but argue that it plays a specific role in limiting the scope of possibilities in which youth can openly engage. The speculative role of gossip (and the desire to not be gossiped about) impacts young people’s perception of adults in their community, and limits their trust in adults during an important time in their development. The closeness of ties within the rural communities considered here provides a sense of security and safety, but also simultaneously works to induce conformity in youth (although I would never argue that youth do not have sophisticated methods of working around this pressure to conform). Although youth were well aware of the social pressures in their communities, they were also quick to tell me that they would “deal with it”, or figure out another means of continuing to do what they want to do. As such, youth challenge their framing as seen, and assert themselves as subjects who see (Foucault, 1995).

Stereotypes of youth as deviant, along with adultist ideas about when and how they should engage in sexual activity, further work to limit the faith youth have in accessing information and contraceptives from health practitioners. Craig and Stanley (2006) outline the distrust that many rural youth have of health professionals' capacity to keep the health issues they discuss private. The concerns of youth expressed in Craig and Stanley's work echo the kinds of issues Labrador youth articulated, notably the lack of privacy they have in their communities and "nosy people knowing your business" (personal communication, November 2006). The haphazard nature of services in rural places means that youth are often left with limited resources to tap into, or ones that they do not feel comfortable accessing. Despite good intentions on the part of health service providers, keeping issues confidential in a rural community is not a simple matter. A balance of "accessibility and anonymity" in health services, especially related to sexual health, is important for rural youth who do not have access to community organizations and who may not want to purchase contraceptives from local stores for fear of their parents finding out (Craig & Stanley, 2006, p. 181). Youth-oriented strategies for contraceptive use and distribution would help to mitigate this problem. Moreover, this demonstrates how the surveillance (imagined or real) of youth in rural areas discourages them from engaging in safer sex practices. It also relates to the ways in which clinics medicalize sexuality and survey youth's sexual practices. When it comes to monitoring sexuality, the health systems' means of disciplining youth embodies Foucault's example of the Panopticon (Pryce, 2001).

Rural Youth and Heteronormativity: Gender and Sexuality in Rural Space

Although rural spaces offer young people the opportunity to explore nature in ways that are not possible for urban youth, young people in small communities live under close watch in many ways. As argued in the previous section, this surveillance is particularly apparent in relationship to their sexual experiences. This argument relates to Butler's (1990) articulation of gender and sexuality as being inextricably linked in current discourse. This also implicates notions of compulsory heterosexuality, as young people in rural spaces live in contexts which are intensely heteronormative.

Compulsory Heterosexuality and Rural Youth

The workings and everyday meanings of rural sexualities are understudied. Little (2003) articulates the need for exploring the functioning of heterosexuality in rural studies:

Heterosexuality often goes unrecognized as a form of sexuality – while homosexuals are identified through their sexual identities, heterosexuals are identified through their social identities. Thus sexuality in rural spaces has only been confronted within studies of homosexuality. There is a need to look more closely at the performance of heterosexuality in the everyday spaces of the rural community and to explore ways in which particular moral heterosexual assumptions and practices become naturalised (p. 405).

What are the elements that contribute to a naturalisation of heterosexuality? Rich (1980) argues for the need to understand heterosexuality as a political institution, one that comes with specific rewards and punishments

for participation. In Southern Labrador this dynamic was often reflected by in the lives of women working in partnerships with their husbands in the family fishing business. While Rich discusses the naturalisation of heterosexuality in relationship to women, it is clear that both men and women face heteronormative pressure in their daily lives that impacts the ways in which they understand themselves as sexual beings and the decisions they make around their sexual practices. Butler (1990) argues that:

The heterosexualization of desire requires and institutes the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between “feminine” and “masculine,” where these are understood as expressive attributes of “male” and “female” (p.24).

Certainly, in the traditional division of labour among fishing families (typical of the Southern Labrador region), the need for women to stay onshore and work to maintain gear and procure supplies is well documented (Porter, 1993; Power, 2005). This gendered division of labour (which, as Butler argues, requires heterosexual relationships) remains strong on the Southern Labrador coast. That noted, it remains that the girls with whom I worked did not hesitate to dissent from the often sexist narratives they encountered with friends or family. Indeed, one early workshop turned into a heated debate about gender roles, where in which two girls emphatically criticised another participant for his statements about what “girls couldn’t do”.

Issues of heteronormativity and performance, however, go beyond the traditional family structures in the region. Pascoe (2007) argues that youth, especially boys, enact *compulsive* heterosexuality, referring to the emphatic and

daily ways in which youth demonstrate a heterosexual social position. Compulsive heterosexuality is not necessarily about heterosexual desire, but about fitting in, about achieving a sense of belonging in a sexist culture with unequal relationships between men and women. This notion reflects what Butler (1990) refers to as not simply the functioning of a compulsory heterosexuality, but of a compulsory order of sex, gender and desire. This links the subjective and political elements of sexuality.

An important element of compulsive heterosexuality to consider in the lives of the youth with whom I worked involved their Christian faith. Many people in Southern Labrador practice a branch of evangelical Christianity that labels non-heterosexual activity as a sin. Churches in the area are also very successful at organizing social events in which youth can participate. For example, in the Fall of 2006, the Pentecostal Church organized a Youth Conference (dubbed YC 2006), which brought together over 2000 young people from across the province. Held in the larger community of Corner Brook (my hometown), the weekend consisted of a variety of activities, including a 2500-person concert at which several Christian bands performed. As one participant announced upon returning from the event, "YC was awesome! The bands were awesome!" (personal communication, October 2006). Two girls returned from the event with stories of boys that they had met and with whom one of the girls "carried boxes" (a joking term for time spent one-on-one, when they were supposed to be helping an event organizer carry boxes into a venue). Clearly, this event not only allowed this participant a trip to see bands that she loved, but also offered a space where

youth were sanctioned to meet and flirt. Considering the limited opportunities youth from Southern Labrador have to travel and attend concerts, participation in church has several advantages. Participation in activities such as YC also plays an important role in reinforcing heterosexual relations in the community and between communities, especially considering the strong homophobic stance taken by the church on issues of gay rights and representation.

The disciplinary power of evangelical churches in the region contribute to the need for youth to often make frequent displays of compulsive heterosexuality, such as being uncomfortable when asked to discuss alternative sexualities and by engaging in jokes or teasing related to crushes (Foucault, 1995). For example, Amanda often called a local boy who sometimes played ping-pong in an adjacent room at the youth centre during workshops “her boyfriend.” While the status of her relationship with him was expressed as a joke, she made this joke repeatedly: Amanda was motivated by a simple desire to tease her friend, but she was also playing out a game that underlined her own heterosexuality. This instance is one of many examples of compulsive heterosexuality that was typical of the ways youth often spoke. This mode of expression may be a way in which she asserted herself as a sexual being, but it also exists in the context of a faith that requires its members to be engaged in heterosexual relations.

The following discussion (explicitly related to homosexuality) outlines how youth’s relationship to heterosexual norms:

KP. Do you feel like being gay or having gay people around is something that you are comfortable with?

Dwayne (13). No.

KP. If someone came and told you they were homosexual, how would you feel about it?

Brandi (13). I wouldn't mind if it was a girl.

Community support person (woman, 30). If it was a girl I wouldn't feel comfortable, hardly, but if it was a guy I wouldn't mind - if I got a gay guy friend.

KP. Comfortable with gay men, not comfortable with lesbians. I'm curious, why is that?

Community support person. Because they might hit on you.

Brandi. Yeah, that'd be scary.

KP. Isn't that kind of the same as you not wanting to have guy friends because your guy friends might hit on you?

Brandi. No.

Brittany (17). No (personal communication, October 2006).

Both Brandi and Dwayne demonstrate a lack of comfort with homosexuality, especially when they considered the idea of someone who is homosexual being attracted to them. The youth worker also articulated discomfort when discussing alternative sexualities. When asked about what they would do if they felt attracted to someone of the same gender, several youth responded that they would need to distance themselves from the person in order to feel safe from that person's potential sexual advances. Although these comments may initially seem like a simple articulation of homophobia, they are part of a layered and complex structure of heteronormativity. Bell and Valentine (1995) argue that these types

of sentiments make it difficult for people to claim any kind of non-heterosexual identity:

Many people who are attracted to others of the same sex, and many who act on those feelings, often actively deny the label 'homosexual,' let alone 'gay' or 'lesbian.' In fact, due to the intense heteronormative pressures of rural life, many are married, or have long-term partners of the opposite sex (though this does not necessarily make them 'bisexual' or mean that they would lay claim to 'bisexuality' as an identity (p. 116).

In the Labrador context, this pressure toward heterosexuality means that young people live in a space where the possibility of expressing queer sexuality is seriously limited.²⁴

The young people who participated in the project clearly had invested a great deal in a kind of compulsory heterosexuality, which reflects the circumstances of their lives and the functioning of heteronormativity in small communities. Rural youth do not simply connect with their communities as a matter of choice. Young people who do not "fit in" to community norms may potentially be ostracized by peers and family. Youth resistance to the norms of adult and mainstream society is not new, but non-conformity plays out differently in rural environments, where youth are less able to meet peers who are experiencing similar frustrations. The small number of people living in a given rural community makes staying difficult for those who do not share the same

²⁴ While I employ *queer* as a term to describe a non-heterosexual position, I do not develop the concept, nor do I situate it in the context of queer theory. My goal here is to understand how the young people with whom I worked understand and negotiate sexuality in their daily lives, and as such I do not expand on queer theory. I instead focus on the ways in which they articulate their relationships to the idea of not being straight. A well-developed discussion of queer theory is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

values of the community. Bushin, Ansell, Adriansen, Lahteenmaa, and Panelli (2007) argue in their international rural research that “young people who dissented from the norms of the community tended to out-migrate, whereas those who conformed remained. Thus young people’s identities are mutually constituted and, although they may have an opportunity to express agency, are also constrained by external factors” (p. 79). As I will elaborate later in this chapter, youth are influenced by the specific elements about their sexual development that are encouraged, and, I argue, inhibited by those parts of themselves that are discouraged. The notion that non-heterosexuality would require a physical and psychological displacement from their ideas of home is evident in the following discussion, where a different group debated strategies for negotiating alternative sexualities. The participants were engaged in a Spin the Bottle role-play game, where they were asked questions or asked to take on roles from papers pulled from a hat. This exercise was particularly effective as they found it fun, and the structure of the game enabled us to hear from all members of the group:

KP [asking role-play questions]. You’ve had the same best friend for years. One day you find out through some other person that your pal is gay. How would you react?

[all participants laugh]

Jessica (12). I don’t know.

KP. Ok, think about it (pausing for youth to consider the question).

Jessica. I think - I dunno - be like, “I knew it was true!” (all participants laugh). Or I would try to cover it up or something.

KP. Really? You wouldn't want to talk to your friend about it?

Jessica. No.

KP. Ok, so you would cover it up. Ok, spin the bottle.

Shauna (13). I'm not gay because apparently I like Mr. Power (all laugh). Right Jessica?

Chloe (13): I decided she likes Mr. Smith.

KP. Oh yeah?

Shauna. Jana (a friend of the participants who was not part of the program) decided I liked Mr. Power.

(We spin the bottle, it lands on Shauna)

KP. Ok. I feel attracted to people of the same sex as me. (all laugh) My family thinks being gay is a sin. What do I do and who do I turn to?

Shauna. I don't turn to anybody and I run away! (all laugh) Go to one of those places where everybody's gay.

KP. Ok, so you would leave town, you would leave your community and you would move somewhere else.

Shauna. I'd move to a gay country (laughs).

KP. You'd move to a gay country. Well, you could move to a gay neighbourhood. There's lots of those.

Jessica. You could go to a nude beach.

KP. You could hang out on a nude beach...(echoing Jessica as a way of carrying the conversation).

Shauna. I'm going to stick to moving to a gay community (personal communication, October 2006).

The ways in which youth discussed their tactics for negotiating an alternative sexuality in their lives shows the ways that heteronormativity works to constrain the scope of possibilities for youth in their communities. This discussion is indicative of the ways these participants understood the functioning of normative sexual codes in their community. More importantly, however, it demonstrates how young people create coping strategies to deal with the constraints in their lives. Although they are troubled by the idea of stepping outside the heterosexual norm, they discuss the possibilities open to them and recognize that they may need to move beyond their communities to be more able to openly express an alternative sexuality which the heteronormative constraints of their community renders challenging to express.

Space for Queers? Alternative Sexualities in the Southern Labrador Context

Homophobic comments must be understood in the context of compulsive heterosexuality. Nevertheless, the consistent lack of comfort with issues of homosexuality demonstrated during the workshops made me, as a young activist-oriented researcher, concerned for any young people who might have been questioning their sexuality. In one workshop (outlined in an earlier section), a youth worker expressed a level of comfort with spending time with gay men, but said that the idea of hanging out with lesbians made her nervous as she felt that they might hit on her. The sentiments expressed by the youth centre worker are demonstrative of the lack of resources available for queer youth in rural and

remote areas (Watkins & Jacoby, 2007). While the worker had a strong relationship with the young people at the centre and was clearly concerned with their well-being, she expressed homophobic sentiments that would hardly encourage a young queer person to discuss issues of alternative sexualities with her. If the youth worker in a given community is not comfortable with issues of homosexuality herself, the odds of youth receiving queer positive messages in their communities are slim. Fortier (2001) argues that queer ideas of home are often removed from the geographic places where people spent their youth. As such, ideas of home are not linear but are always processed and reprocessed throughout time.

As previously mentioned, several of the participants are members of religious denominations that explicitly consider homosexuality a sin. Their religions have a significant influence on youths' comments about negotiating queer relationships (i.e., that queers must leave and never return, that as the community is unable to accommodate non-heterosexual members). There is very limited research on queer people growing up in rural areas, "despite the fact that a considerable number of sexual outsiders are born and raised in rural locations" (Kramer, 1995, p. 200). The lack of anonymity in rural places often reinforces a split between homosexual activity and homosexual identity, so that although people may have sex with people of the same gender, they would not identify themselves as homosexual (Kramer, 1995). The lack of social support in rural areas and the strict heterosexual norms of behaviour are demonstrated by youths' discussions of alternative sexualities.

Certainly, the workshops on sexuality and safe sex revealed that youth articulate feelings of discomfort with homosexuality that are indicative of their life contexts. Although queer youth have become much more visible in larger centres, queer sexuality is still a strict taboo in Southern Labrador. Shoveller, Johnson, Prkachin and Patrick (2007) demonstrate in their work with youth in Northern British Columbia that "places expose youth to intrinsic social norms (e.g. gender norms; social mores; expectations about privacy) that contribute to their development as sexual beings" (p. 827). Indeed, for youth in Southern Labrador, the intense heteronormativity in their communities means that they are often uncomfortable with issues of homosexuality, although in their discomfort they are not necessarily different from their urban counterparts.

Youth were also engaged and willing to discuss issues, and had little hesitation when it came to telling me the lines they would draw around situations that made them feel uncomfortable. When asked the best solution for dealing with a partner trying to go farther sexually than she was comfortable with, one youth replied "Slap him!," while another stated that she would have no problem telling her partner exactly what she found acceptable. Although these workshops were perhaps an imperfect method for gathering this information (as they are specifically constructed spaces where I focused on youths' empowerment and encouraged them to articulate how they felt about sexual boundaries), the young people (primarily girls) who participated in the workshops expressed indignation

at the idea of anyone stepping over the lines they drew around their sexual activities.²⁵

Again, the context of youths' communities figured largely in what they found to be an acceptable sexuality. Further along in the workshop discussion, youth were asked to comment on what they would do if they found themselves attracted to someone of the same gender:

KP. Ok, so this is an imagination process. Imagine you just woke up and you were attracted to a friend of yours who is a girl. What would you do?

Jane (17). I don't know, try to keep it locked up.

Jessica (12). I'd just try to get it out of me.

KP. Really? Like try to repress it?

Jessica. Like go to my room and stare at posters [of male popular culture stars].

KP. Ok, so you would be like, this is not a part of me, I'm not going to accept this, I'm just going to do something else.

Jessica. Yeah.

Jane. Kiss my poster of (can't make out celebrity's name).

[All participants laugh]

Shauna (13). I don't wanna end up like this (points to a picture in a *Teen Vogue* magazine of an older, stressed looking man).

KP. You don't want to end up a man in a white lab coat.

²⁵ This visioning process was based more in experience for some of the participants than for others, as some were sexually active while others were not.

Shauna. No like, this (pointing to picture in a magazine).

KP. You don't want to end up a gay woman? And why would you not want to end up like that, besides the goatee thing? Why wouldn't you want to end up in a same sex relationship?

Jessica. You might not mind too much, but then you get put in the same spot.

Jane. And then there is family and everything.

Jessica. And you get put in a spot like everybody hates you and stuff.

Jane. Or people at school and everything.

KP. So you feel like you would get labelled...What do you think is at stake for somebody who is in your class who maybe is feeling attracted to girls if that person's a girl or boys if that person is a guy? Like what is at stake for that person?

Jane. Reputation at school...

KP. What else might be at stake for that person?

Shauna. Like the relationship between him and his friends.

KP. The relationship between him and his friends. Jessica?

Jessica. The way the teachers think about them.

KP. Oh really? The way the teachers think about them?

Jessica. Yeah, like if the teachers found out that someone was gay, they would treat them differently or something.

KP. Really.

Shauna. For sure Mr. Jordan is. [whispering] He drives me nuts! (personal communication, October 2006).

Youth are very aware of what is at stake for them should they stray from heterosexual norms. Their answers are indicative of the ways in which young people consider the context of their communities in their daily decisions, and also their ability to think through what would be required of them in order to survive if they dissented from the norms of their tightly-knit homes.

The Answer Just Doesn't Quite Fit: Youths' Employment of Discourses from Elsewhere

Youth frequently expressed discomfort at the idea of talking to an adult about sex and sexuality. The following discussion during a sexuality and safer sex role -play game demonstrates some of the trepidation youth expressed around issues of trusting an adult for advice about their sexual activity:

KP: What would you do if you thought you were pregnant?

Brandi (13): I don't know.

Dwayne (13): I can't get pregnant²⁶. Get a test!

KP. But you could be involved in a pregnancy so it is a good thing for you to be involved in. Who in town could you go talk to?

Dwayne. A doctor.

Brittany (17). A nurse.

Community resource person (30). Or even a teacher.

Dwayne. I wouldn't trust a teacher.

KP. Me, if I'm around.

²⁶ This participant is referring to his inability to carry a fetus.

Brandi: Yeah, I was gonna say you. I'll email you. [all laugh]
(personal communication, October 2006).

These youth did not trust many of the adults in their lives to respect their autonomy or their confidentiality. It is interesting that Dwayne said he would not trust a teacher, but would try to see a doctor. His community has in fact no full-time doctor, which makes this strategy difficult to act upon. Dwayne is articulating a kind of *discourse from elsewhere*. This is a discourse that perhaps appeared in a health book, popular culture, or in a discussion at school, but that clearly it is not a plan that he can easily enact. Although Dwayne responded with what might be considered an appropriate answer, and one that he may have been taught, the response does not fit well with the reality of his community, and is not appropriate for the situated context of his life. This contradiction reflects the ways in which youth in small places are marginalized in terms of their capacity to access educational materials that appropriately reflect the environment in which they live. These discourses from elsewhere have power, as they come from sanctioned sites of knowledge production (e.g. universities and urban contexts), and their contextually inappropriate messages have an impact on what counts as a valid answer in the eyes of youth and the broader community. The importance of local knowledge has been problematized in the previous chapter, and provides an important frame for understanding the need to challenge these discourses from elsewhere.

While youth listed a variety of resources, they also noted that visiting the nurse involves other people being aware of them doing so (at least visiting the

clinic), and that people would have questions about why a given young person was paying the nurse a visit. The largest group of people whom they could access for this information are teachers; a group that the participant felt was not trustworthy. This observation also underlines the ways in which research with or about rural youth has not adequately theorized nor examined the issue of anonymity in the lives of youth rural people. I recognize, of course, that as an adult I encountered a different version of youth than I would have as one of their peers. Certainly, youth negotiate power differently among themselves than they do in relationship with adults (Dunkley & Panelli, 2007).

Rural Youth Studies, Sexuality and Understandings of Power: Rural Youth Resistance?

Background research for this chapter revealed a very limited literature on rural youth sexualities in the fields of rural sociology and cultural geography. The work that was available did not adequately deal with how youth articulate feelings of assertiveness and agency. In this chapter, I challenge the patronizing idea that youth are not able to assert themselves as sexual beings, and move beyond framings of youth sexuality that assume a correlation between high self-esteem and limited sexual activity and low self-esteem and extensive sexual activity (an assumption challenged by Shoveller et al, 2004). Young people were often quick to assert themselves in some discussions of sex. For example, girls made no hesitation when asked about their response to sexual aggression:

KP: What would you do if your boyfriend or girlfriend pressured you into having sex?

Brittany (17). Beat him up. Get really mad at him. Leave him (personal communication, October 2006).

Brittany seemed confident in articulating her disgust at the suggestion of sexual assault. Girls at another workshop articulated a similar sentiment:

KP. [role-play] What would you do if your boyfriend or girlfriend tried to pressure you into having sex?

Chloe (13). Slap him.

KP. Slap him.

Chloe. Seriously! Yes.

KP. That is definitely a good response. Slap him. Awesome. Anything else?

Chloe. No.

KP. Perfect! Chloe, empowered woman. Are you ready? All my friends got their period except for me. One friend teases me by telling me I'm not cool unless I get it. What do I say?

Jessica (12). It's not really *that* cool...

KP. Ok Chloe. A friend of mine starts having sex with her boyfriend. I am not having sex and I don't feel ready. What do I say when my friend talks to me about it?

Chloe. Slap her – no I'm just kidding. I don't know, tell her to be quiet.

KP. Tell her to be quiet, ok (personal communication, November 2006).

Youths' expression of how and why they would or have engaged in sexual activity also reflected an empowered and sex positive perspective:

KP. [drawing final question from Spin the Bottle game] You want to make out with a friend of yours. What do you do?

Dwayne (13). Make out with him!

KP. I think that's one of the best things I've heard all night.

Dwayne. Get it on without telling your parents.

Brittany (17). Just don't tell them nothing about it, and if they find out, oh well...

KP. Also, even though you might think that your parents wouldn't be very receptive to talking about stuff like that, often your parents are just afraid to talk about that because it gives them the heebiejeebies. I know lots of people who are totally comfortable.

Community support worker (30). But mom and dad, talking to us, no. Parents are afraid about what they are gonna hear.

KP. What do you think the point of that game was?

Brandi (13): To lighten the mood?

Brittany. Good answer Brandi!

KP. What do you think about when you hear the word boundaries?

Brandi: How far can you go.

KP. Yeah, but more importantly, how far do you wanna go – and where are you comfortable and where are you not comfortable. Every boundary comes with a responsibility. What if I decide my

boundary is that I am not ready to have sex. What responsibility does that come with?²⁷

Group. To say no!

KP. What if I decide my boundary is that I wanna have sex. What responsibility does that come with?

Brandi. To use protection.

KP. So what would be my options if I was looking at protection?

Dwayne. Condoms. The Pill.

Community support worker. Well it all depends. If you're with your partner who you've been with for years, the Pill is fine, but if you've out having this one or having that one, then you need a condom (personal communication, October 2006).

Dwayne's comment "Make out with him!" demonstrates how youth do not necessarily think that engaging sexually is a bad thing, and feel entitled to express their desires when asked about them. This assertion challenges other work that presumes that young people feel shame about their sexuality. I am not trying to argue that youth have an uncomplicated relationship to their sexual selves, but I am attempting to problematize the ways in which agency and sexuality are discussed in relationship to rural youth. The assumption that rural youth are not able to make informed decisions about their sexuality is a fundamentally adultist way of framing youth, and is antithetical to the kind of work

²⁷ This quote caused me to reflect on my active role in workshops. At time it appears that I am talking more than they are, which is reflective of my position as a facilitator and youth educator during this workshop series. I struggled with the ways in which I directed the conversation during the workshops. I believe that taking an active position in the workshops made sense considering that young people were coming to the workshops with the expectation they would participate in discussions, but that they could also access information from the workshops.

that this project attempts. Instead, it is important to highlight the strategies that youth employ to work around the regulating structures in their daily lives. Brittany's comments about her desire for her to keep her sexual activity from her parents (and the presumption that they will just have to deal with it when and if they find out) demonstrates a negotiation of autonomy and a desire to keep her sexual life private. Brandi is not unfamiliar with the notion of boundaries, and the idea of "how far can you go" seems under her control. As a group they assertively articulate what works and what does not work for them in the realm of sexuality, boundaries and privacy.

Youth sometimes articulated feelings of fatalism in relationship to the ways in which their bodies are changing. One youth expressed a need for self-reliance in order to cope with adolescence:

KP. [role-play] Your body is changing a lot and you are feeling worried about it. What do you do?

Jane (17). Talk to your mom.

Jessica (12). Oh my God! No!! [laughing, but acknowledging she would never do that]

KP. Ok, how about you, Shauna?

Shauna (13). I don't know.

KP. You'd have to think about it. Chloe?

Chloe (13). I wouldn't talk to my mom. I don't know, you've just gotta deal with it, I guess. You can't do anything about it (personal communication, October 2006).

These comments are reflective of how youth often do not wish to discuss their sexual development with family (Shoveller et al., 2004), but are determined to figure themselves out as they go along. They are thus not subjects in the making who are patiently waiting for adults to guide them through puberty and into adulthood. The need for self-reliance was articulated repeatedly by youth throughout the course of workshops, but most significantly during our discussions on safer sex and sexuality. Young people clearly do not respond passively to the lack of anonymity in their communities. In relation to some parts of their lives, the tightly-knit community is considered very positive. When it comes to sexuality, however, living in a place where no one is a stranger means that youth rely on intergenerational friendships, older siblings and cousins in a system of mutual aid to circumvent the disciplining of their sexualities via vehicles like gossip.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed issues of youth sexuality, arguing that the spatial context of rural lives plays a large role in how they make meaning about sexuality. Using a Foucauldian framework of analysis, I focused my discussion on the ways in which space, anonymity and discipline work to regulate the ways youth frame sexuality and engage in sexual practices in Southern Labrador. Youth repeatedly expressed frustration at the amount of gossip that circulates about them and their activities. This gossip, whether real or imagined, plays a significant role in limiting young people's comfort with seeking contraceptives and advice related to their sexual development. Gossip and lack of anonymity also

function as important tools for enforcing heteronormative community standards of sexuality. Much like the Panopticon, gossip (and the desire to not be the focus of gossip) plays a disciplinary role in the sexualities of rural youth.

Although I think an analysis of the functioning of heteronormativity in the lives of rural youth is crucial, this work does not reveal a compliant group of young people who conform entirely to community norms. On the contrary, the young people who participated in these discussions were active and often empowered discussants of their sexualities, their understandings of relationships, and the constraints that they face. While they are certainly in the process of developing their language around sexuality, they had no trouble isolating what situations they found to be challenging and unfair. It is also clear that these young people have a strong commitment to mutual aid, and are able to problem-solve around many of the challenges they face. They are also well aware of their need to work around the norms and constraints that they face in their communities, and find allies when and where appropriate.

It must be noted, however, that rural young people have very limited access to information on sexual health and contraceptives. When I say access, I do not mean a physical lack of access to condoms or to sources of information on sexuality and safer sex. What I am instead referring to are the layers of anonymity and social support that are part of making safer sex tools and education available for young people in ways that make sense for them. Policy makers must take the need for accessible and anonymous services into account.

Additionally, it is vital for me to comment on the lack of resources available for young people who may be questioning their sexuality. This lack reflects community social norms, but also the ways in which the education system and youth centre network must provide better training to teachers and youth workers in order for them to engage with youth in ways that encourage youth centres to be safe spaces for everyone.

Issues of sexuality are crucial elements in youth studies. By analyzing the ways in which young people in Southern Labrador make sense of sexuality and safer sex, this chapter places an important lens on their lives, and contributes significantly to the limited literature on rural sexuality.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined the daily lives of young people in Southern Labrador. I have explored youth culture from their perspective and have written with an understanding of youth as active participants, not as future adults, or as people who are not yet capable of making decisions for themselves. Using participatory methods, I engaged with youth around issues that they wanted to explore, and covered topics that members of the community thought would be important. I also focused on my initial research interests around Métis identity and youth culture. This made for an interesting and eclectic research process. It was important to balance the need to talk about what youth wanted to cover with the need to produce an academic text. As I conclude this dissertation, I feel that this challenge made the writing process much more interesting than perhaps it would otherwise have been.

Writing this dissertation was an iterative process of priority setting. There were many conversations about different topics too broad to cover in a work such as this. Moving significantly away from what I began doing (e.g. self-determination and Métis identity) to areas that I had not initially considered exploring (e.g. sexuality), I focused on three main areas of interest: 1. issues of hybridity in relation to being Métis and being white in Southern Labrador; 2. a critique of the urban bias of cultural production literature, and a rethinking of

cultural production in rural spaces; and, 3. a discussion of the ways in which rural youth frame sexuality, with a special focus on the interplay of anonymity, discipline and compulsory heterosexuality in rural space. In doing so, I brought a communication studies perspective to rural studies which is often situated in the fields of human and cultural geography. As such, this dissertation is a work in interdisciplinary practice. In the following pages I return to key elements of the dissertation, elaborate on its contributions and limitations, and offer thoughts for future research that focuses on rural youth.

Methods: Participation is Not Easy, Nor is it Perfect

An important part of this dissertation surrounds my attempt to engage meaningfully with youth in ways that respect their experiences and opinions. The use of participatory methods throughout the course of this research process was limited by my geographic location in Montreal, and the mobility of youth once they complete their high school education. At times I struggled with this sense of dislocation, but felt that it eventually contributed positively to the writing process, as I reflected on the problems and possibilities of engaging in this kind of research. I also found that the length of fieldwork (a 10-week series) was perhaps too long of a time commitment to expect from the workshop participants. Instead, I think they would have preferred to have a six week series, though the levels of enthusiasm and a desire for a shorter or longer timeframe varied between communities.

It was also challenging to work with youth using a framework of youth participation and agency when young people were not typically engaged with at this level in other areas of their lives (for example at school). This meant that participants and myself were on the learning curve of encouraging youth to be self-directed and to not expect the adult (me) to direct the process to a large degree. I instead saw my role largely as one of a facilitator. This meant that we often had to spend time discussing the means through which we would engage, and I think that this still fell short of what I had hoped the workshops could look like, and thus, the transformative potential of participatory research that I had hoped would manifest was not achieved in this project. For example, youth did not organize around a particular issue as was often suggested by other photovoice projects.

This research did not happen in a vacuum and was impacted by the existing power structures in the lives of young people, and the limitations of a short-term research intervention. This is also reflective of the incremental ways in which social change often happens, and the importance of working continually to make opportunities available and to build long-term research relationships with communities to enable the trust and long-term vision to foster transformative relationships. Breaking down the adultist biases of youth and myself to work in more egalitarian and engaging ways takes time. This was a significant challenge to the research, especially given my relatively short stay in the region. It is important here to underline a key point from Chapter Two: the most useful element of this research was not the product itself (the photographs) but the

process that youth engaged in throughout the workshops. I think we engaged in a successful research process to better understand the daily lives of rural youth, and also created a positive youth program for the duration of the Fall of 2006.

Summary of Dissertation and Research Questions

Throughout this dissertation I have been largely concerned with the ways in which rural youth negotiate their identities. This is a broad area of inquiry that was narrowed to the following research questions:

- ❖ *How are rural spaces implicated in cultural production?*
- ❖ *How do youth negotiate rurality and race in the context of global popular culture? How does this negotiation relate to notions of place?*
- ❖ *How do young rural people frame their sexualities?*
- ❖ *What vehicles do youth use to resist adultist constructions of their sexual selves?*

The interests of participants focused the scope of this project, along with my own desire to focus on how they understand race in their daily lives. As such, this dissertation explored the daily lives of Southern Labrador youth in depth by focusing on their understandings of their communities, their racial identities and their experiences of sexuality.

Popular and Local: Youth Culture and Cultural Production

Young people in Southern Labrador often have complex relationships to the communities in which they live. Youth articulated a great sense of pride in

their communities and expressed concerns about their need to outmigrate once they completed high school. This differed between communities, with some youth speaking with confidence about their plan to live in their communities as adults or to return to their communities upon completion of their post-secondary education. This reflects both an expectation that youth leave their communities (Corbett, 2004, 2007) and the intense population decline in rural communities (especially among youth) in Southern Labrador.

Young people in Southern Labrador fashion their identities through a mixing of local and popular culture. While they listen to hip hop and are ever fashion conscious, they are also connected to a strong sense of place and possess vast local knowledge, from crafts to understanding the geographic layout of their communities, and the ways of living safely in a Northern environment. Rural youth are also active producers of culture, and the isolated character of their communities contributes to a specific type of DIY ethos that enables creativity. The lack of access to many of the typical sites of youth culture found in the city encourages youth to make their own fun and feel in charge of their local culture. They also identify as Labradorians and talk about the importance of being from and living in Labrador to who they consider themselves to be. Although paid cultural work happens mostly in urban Canada, small communities are active cultural spaces.

Thinking Race: Youth Understandings of “Being Métis” and “Being White”

Perhaps the most interesting part of this research involved the challenge of not finding what I assumed I would find. Exploring youth understandings of Métissage was important for me personally and politically, and discussing this with them revealed a much murkier space than I had anticipated. This project was a process of finding out things that I did not consider asking, and working to keep my overlapping desire for community inputs, academic inputs, and political consciousness in play. The racial identities that youth articulated ranged from seeing race as very important to their identities to sounding (at least initially) like they were inconsequential to how they understood themselves. Upon further examination this revealed the ways in which whiteness functions as an invisible racial identity, where white youth discussed their religious and ethnic backgrounds to nuance this category. Métis youth identities are of course heterogeneous, and the importance of being Métis to youth identities varied greatly among individuals and between communities, with it being much more central to youth living in Port Hope Simpson, further up the coast, than it was to youth in L’Anse au Loup or Red Bay. This reflects the broader community make-up and the dominance of settler culture in many Southern Labrador communities.

Certainly, how young people thought about race varied greatly between communities, with youth from the community with the most obvious Métis population having more things to say about the experience of being Métis than others (including Métis youth from other communities). This reflects the political

consciousness of the community and the meaningful ways that youth consider being Métis as a central element of their identities. This often involved framing being Métis in connection to their outdoor activities and their connection to nature. Youth expressed varied ideas about having “the Métis card” - the card which identifies them legally as Métis and as having rights to hunting and fishing. Some young people talked about being Métis solely in terms of the card, and the card seemed to assert their membership in this group. Other youth, however, scoffed at the card, saying that being Métis is not determined by one’s possession of the card, but by the things that a person does to “be Métis”. As such, youth articulated both legal and cultural understandings of their racial identities. These two identities are decidedly different in terms of self-determination and in terms of practice. While the Métis card is an important tool for political recognition, it also engages with state control over who can or cannot be considered to be part of a group. Culturally defined understandings of Métis identity offer greater opportunities for young people to determine their ways of being Métis on their own terms.

Rural Youth Sexualities, Anonymity and Gossip

At the same time as they are negotiating race and place in their daily lives, youth are also engaging with questions of sexuality. Youth sexualities are generally subjected to much scrutiny and this is exacerbated in rural spaces where people typically all know each other. Although understudied in academic literature, rural spaces are clearly sites where young people develop and

articulate their sexualities. This happens in relationship to themselves, their peers, family and popular culture. The small population and strong family ties within these communities meant that youth sexualities were often under the watchful eye of adults. Being under surveillance (or the perception of being under surveillance) regulates the kinds of acceptable sexualities that youth articulated as being available to them (Foucault, 1995). While youth were certainly capable of asserting themselves and their desires in many areas of their lives, the lack of anonymity that they had in their small communities contributed significantly to compulsory heterosexuality as a frame that informed their development as sexual subjects. This surveillance also made it difficult for youth to access contraceptives and information on safer sex practices. It also means that young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirit, intersex and questioning (LGBTTIQ) people in rural areas face heightened challenges when negotiating coming out, seeking resources, or finding positive spaces in which they can exist. It is incumbent upon policy makers to seek creative and youth-oriented strategies to mitigate this situation, and to ensure adequate and queer positive education for youth workers that take the specificity of rural communities into account.

That granted, youth had strong systems of mutual aid, and used activities like snowmobiling to create spaces where they were not under supervision. It was also important to consider my role as an adult researcher regarding some things that youth did not say about how they circumvent this lack of anonymity. As this is not intended to be an exercise in voyeurism, I do not consider not having further insight into youth's attempts to evade adult surveillance to be a

weakness in the research results. Working respectfully with youth includes considering their right to privacy, which also reflects why many things that I came across during fieldwork are not mentioned in this dissertation. To do so would violate the relationship of trust and friendship that I built with these young people.

Partnership, Community-Building and Research

This project owes greatly to the contributions of many people, and reflects the strong 'can-do' attitude in Southern Labrador. My community partners and the youth participants made this dissertation possible, and working collaboratively with them informed my understanding of the research sites in ways that could never have been created as an outside researcher.

Limitations and Contributions

This project has several limitations. It does not treat the photos youth took instrumentally, nor does it examine individual photos in great detail. Instead, photos were used as a vehicle for discussion during workshops. A limit to this project is the treatment of the photos, which were mostly used as a vehicle of conversation during workshops. Indeed, a challenge of a project such as this one is defining its scope, and had I been more focused on (or had more experience in) visual culture than I do with participatory methods, a greater analysis of the photos would have been possible. I was reticent to engage in a semiotic analysis of their work as it would involve me engaging in a reading of their work that was not their own. However, this project enables a group of largely mixed race youth to engage in self-representations that challenge the ways in which both rural

places and Métis people are often represented (when they are represented at all). Given the focus on the voices of youth throughout this project, I felt that this was an appropriate choice as a researcher.

I am interested in how rural youth understand their lives on a daily basis, on the perhaps banal structures and practices which inform their lifeworlds. It is on the locality, the everyday lives of youth, and social representations of rurality that I have focused my research. Long clinic driveways and skidoo trips, while seemingly banal, are important elements of youth spaces and youth negotiations of sexuality.

This dissertation makes several contributions to scholarship. Notably, when the sexualities of young people are considered, rural studies scholars pay insufficient attention to the relationships of power in their analysis of youth sexuality. This is symptomatic of a lack of thorough analysis of power in rural studies more broadly. A major outcome of this dissertation, especially in Chapter Six, is thus to bring a detailed examination of power into discussions of how rural youth understand sexuality, and the contexts of their lives in relation to living in a rural place. This builds on the work of Mary L. Gray (2009), whose exploration of youth sexuality in the rural United States is an important point of reference, despite some specific differences from the Canadian context.

It is clear that understanding the sexual identities of young people in Southern Labrador required an understanding of the socio-spatial context of the communities in which they live. Employing a Foucauldian perspective on power

revealed a great deal about the operations of power with respect to young people and sexuality in Southern Labrador. A Foucauldian perspective is rarely used in rural studies and adopting this approach in studying rural youth and sexuality makes an important new contribution to the field (Little, 2003; Little & Leyshon, 2003). Additionally, placing a lens on the lives of rural youth happens infrequently and is rarely undertaken from a youth-directed approach. Often, youth are understood as a vulnerable group to study, not an engaged group with whom to work. This youth-centred perspective is beginning to find its way into studies of rural youth culture, and this dissertation makes an important contribution to the limited existing knowledge in the area of youth-oriented rural studies.

Conclusion

This dissertation has examined the daily lives of young people living on the South Coast of Labrador. Using participatory methods, I explored ideas of place and cultural production. I strongly critiqued the notion of culture as a city phenomenon, and elaborated on the ways in which youth employ local knowledge to make sense of their lives and to build a unique cultural space in their communities. By exploring youth understandings of being Métis and being white, I gained insight into the functioning of race in their lives. Finally, I demonstrated how the lack of anonymity in these communities contributes to the disciplining of youth sexualities. Most importantly, I gained understanding of the dynamism and determination that are characteristic of the lives of the young people who informed this work. Despite growing up in a time where global

changes in food harvesting, a decline in the fishery and the migration of rural people to urban centres is prevalent, youth participants in this project reflected a strong sense of place, connectedness to history, and a love for their communities. Youth are clearly active, engaged and vital producers of culture. Their tenacity reflects a strong and vital rural culture in Southern Labrador.



Figure 12. Photo of participant at school

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APPENDIX A: SELECTED PHOTOGRAPHS BY PARTICIPANTS²⁸



Figure A.1. Photo of wharf by Alana

²⁸ These photos were chosen based on the amount of interest participants took in them. These are photos that were presented in the final show, and ones that capture some of the spirit of participants. Names of people were removed when they appeared in the photos to protect their privacy, but names of photographers were included when they do not appear in photos as the participants were proud of their work and are credited accordingly.



Figure A.2. Photo of participant taken by a family member



Figure A.3. Photo of L'Anse au Loup by Deanna

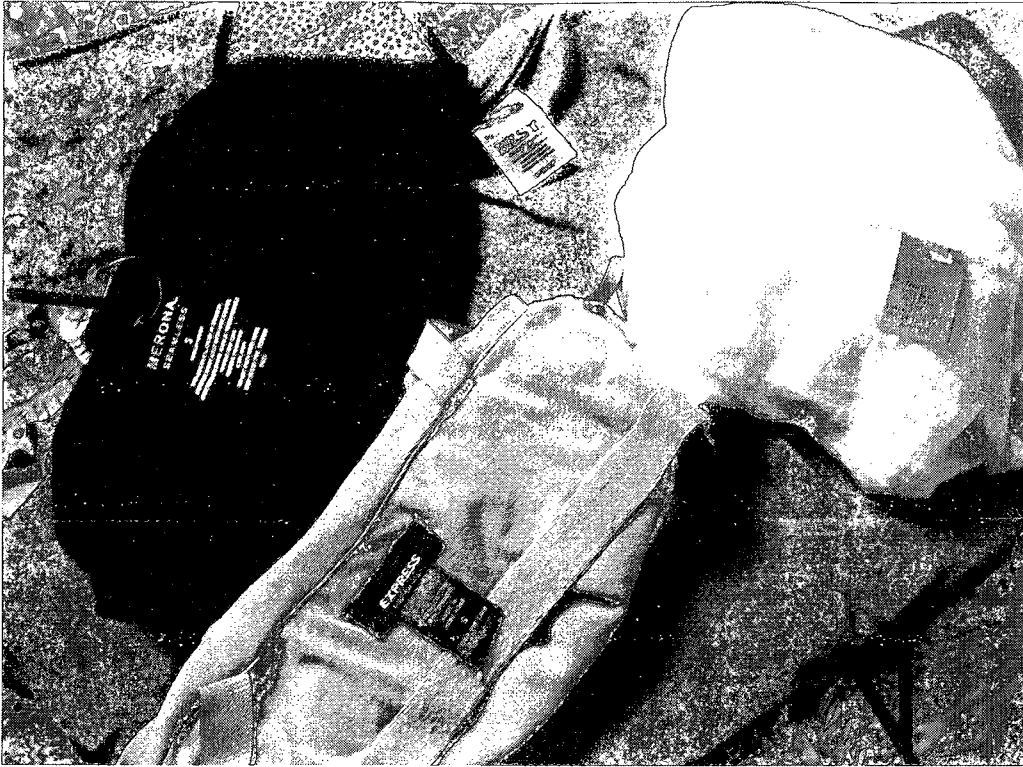


Figure A.4. Photo of clothing taken for globalization workshop by Isabella



Figure A.5. Photo of trees in Red Bay by Erin



Figure A.6. Photograph of family pet by Mark



Figure A.7. Photograph of bonfire by Jesse

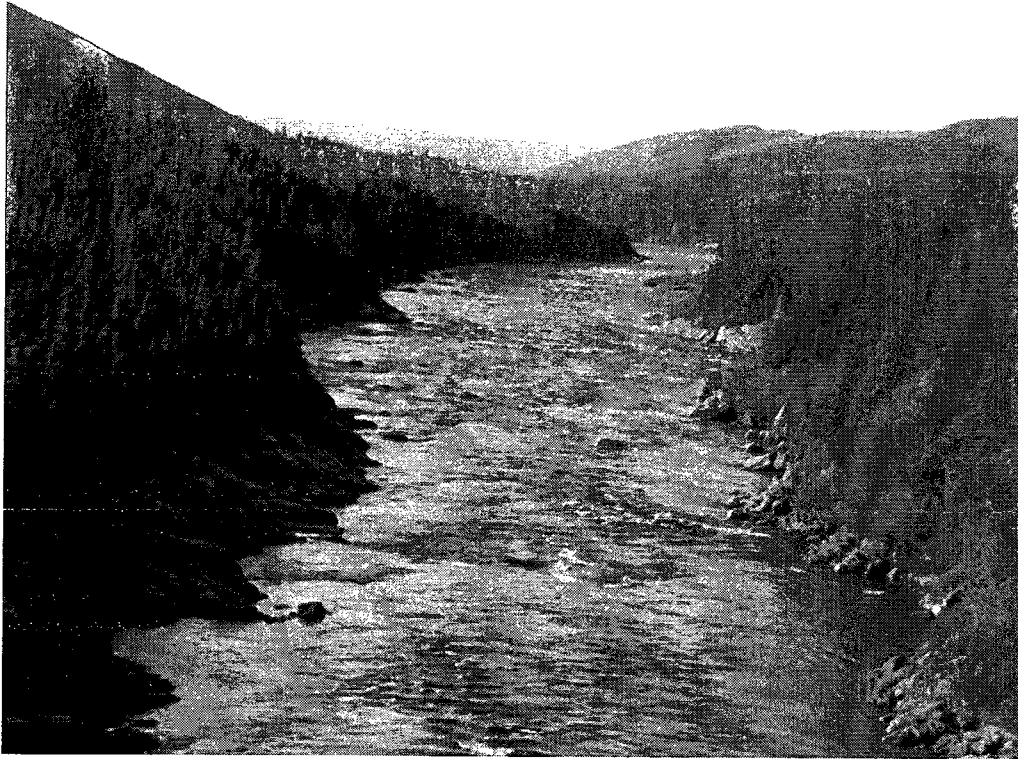


Figure A.8. Photo of Pinware River by Derrick

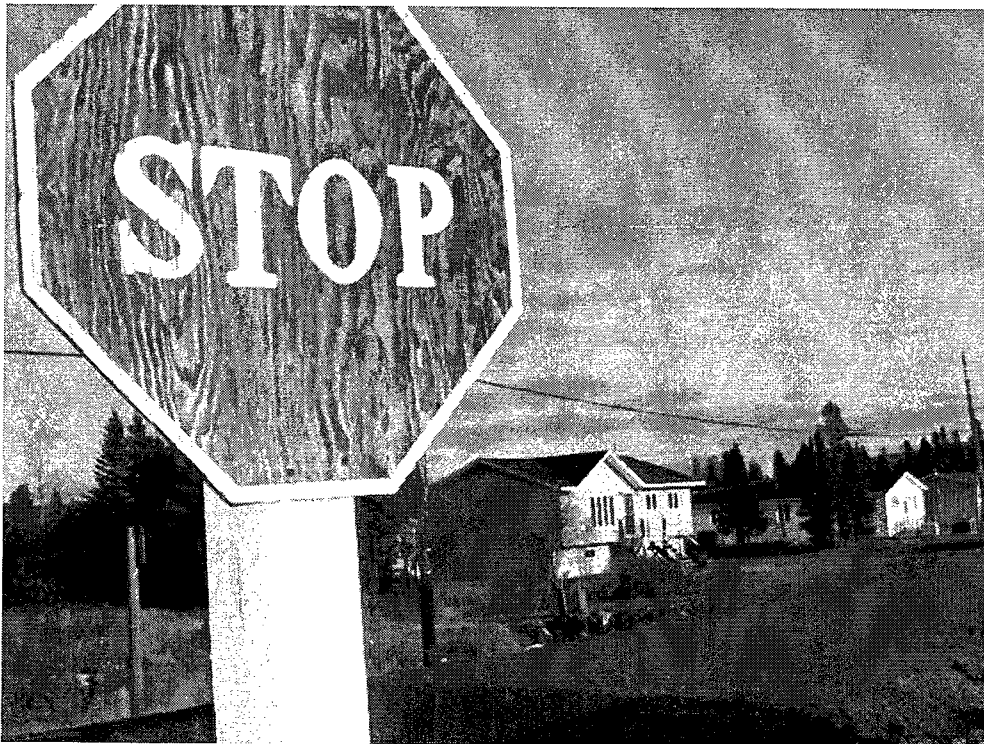


Figure A.9. Photo of stop sign by Darren

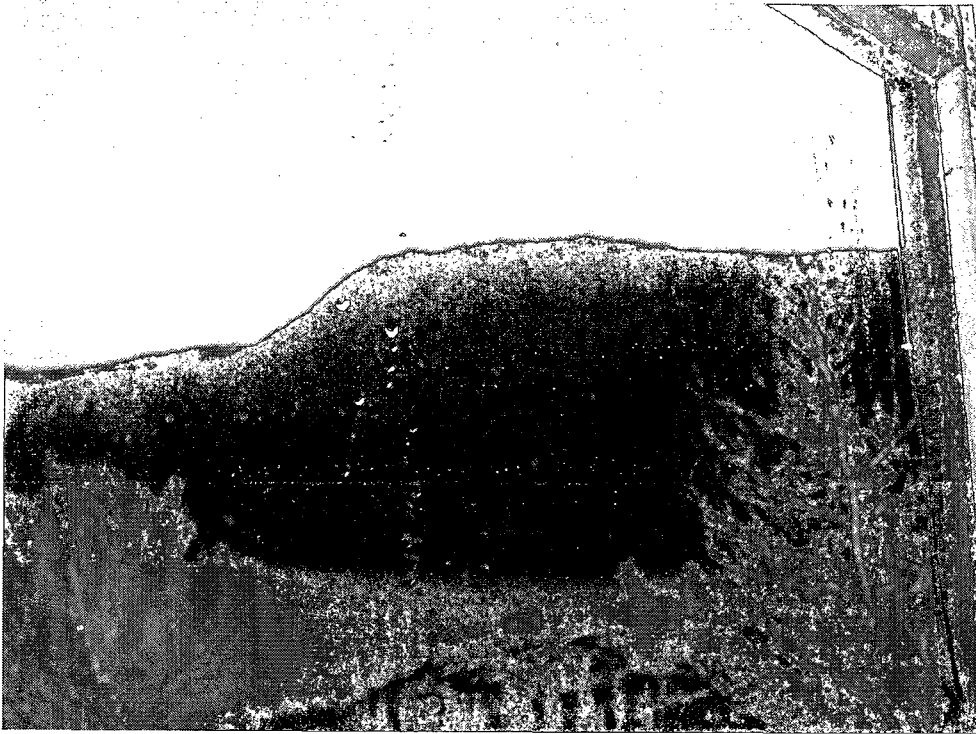


Figure A.10. Reflected landscape by Shauna

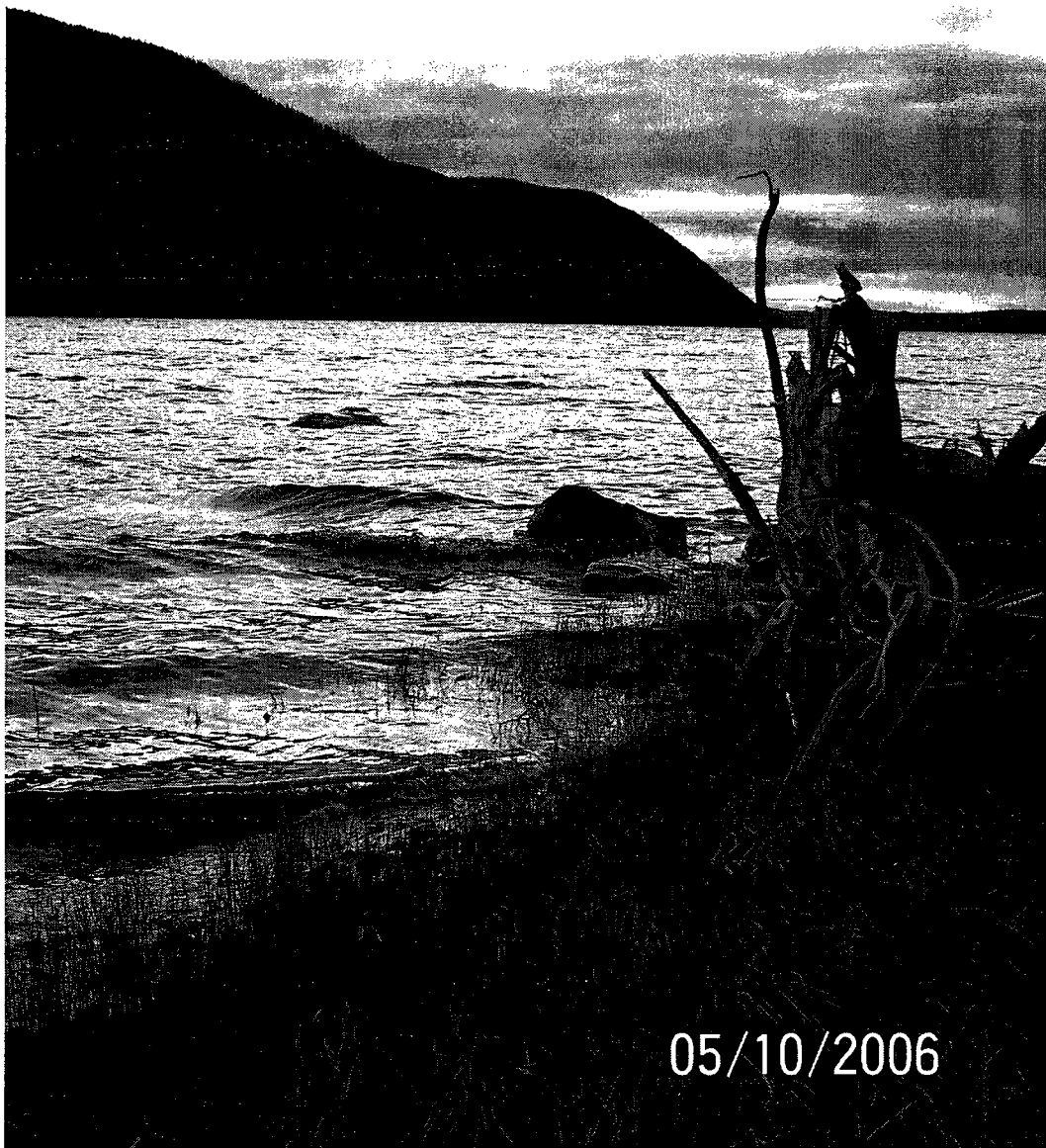


Figure A.11. Photo near water by Tiffany



Figure A.13. Photo of father and brother working on boat by Carrie



Figure A. 14. Photo of family pet by Candac

APPENDIX B: PROJECT NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

PAGE 8, SHEIKH AL-NOR THIRTEEN, MONDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2006

Photography course inspires confidence, creativity in youth

By JOCELYNE CORRIER
Staff Writer

RED BAY - It's through the lens of a camera that a group of youths from the Labrador Straits is learning that their voice matters.

For the past several weeks, four groups of youths located in L'Anse-au-Loup, West St. Modeste, Red Bay and Port Hope Simpson have been meeting once a week to discuss the photos they've taken and to talk about issues that concern them, such as globalization and racism.

Sara Yetman said she decided to participate in the project because she always enjoyed taking photographs. At a meeting earlier this year, youths in the area were asked which issues concern them. Afterwards, she wanted to take

photos which focused on those issues.

"So far, since we've been taking pictures, we've learned to focus. We also learned about stuff like globalization," Ms. Yetman said.

She would encourage other youths to participate in the project because it's a great learning experience and it's fun. To parents, she asks them to be open-minded regarding the project because it is a learning tool for the youths.

"I'm really grateful to her (Ms. Peddie) to be here because this is wonderful. The fact that she actually took the time and did this with us, it's great. If we have something to say, we say it. We get our opinion out. It actually shows that what we think matters."

Karina Peddie, co-ordinator for the Labrador Youth Photo Voice Project, explained the project combines photography, visual cul-

ture, youth engagement and youth leadership. The goal of the project is to use photography as a tool for youths to express what they feel about the issues that affect their lives. It's a way to start a conversation on issues in a safe and supporting environment.

It's a partnership project with South Labrador, with the Community Youth Network and herself. Karina Peddie was talking about how great it would be to have a new youth program in the area. This is what she came up with. It's a 10-week workshop series.

Noting that it's going well, Ms. Peddie acknowledged the grant from the International Gender Association.

The co-ordinator said Photo Voice is an approach that's used quite a bit with youths, especially around issues that concern them.

"I think they got a chance to learn about photography, which is exciting. It's a chance to get out there and decide what you want to capture. What is your community?

When you think about your community, what do you want your photo to say about your community? More importantly, it pays attention to the voice of youth. They have so much to offer."

In all, some 25 youths between the ages of 12 and 17 are participating in the project. According to Ms. Peddie, each group has its own unique dynamic.

"The one thing that is really interesting is that in an urban centre, you'd have a difficult time getting youths of different ages to co-operate. But in a smaller community, I think they're more used to being together and they co-operate real well together. It's great to see the older kids mentoring the younger kids a little bit."

During the workshops, groups go through the photos that were taken during the week. Each participant is



Several youths from Red Bay are taking part in a photography course. Shown in the photo are, clockwise from bottom left: - Enn Yetman, Sara Yetman, Dillon Power, Jessie Rumpo, Andrea Park, Andy Moores, Karina Peddie (co-ordinator), Christopher Przydatek and Lara Yetman. Missing from photo is Louise Trimm, co-facilitator.

asked: Why the photo was taken? What does it mean to them? What do they think about what they see the photo?

"We spend the other hour of the workshop talking about a specific theme for the week. Some of the topics are globalization, community role and

race. There are a lot of different things we talk about. The issues were defined by the youths in a needs assessment that went on in June."

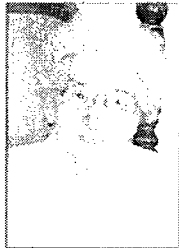
At the end of the 10-week

project, which is slated to end sometime in November, an exhibit will be organized so all of the participants will have the opportunity to showcase what they've done.

New Arrival

GOULD

Gerard and Stephanie are pleased to announce the safe arrival of their son, **Shawn Andrew Shaver** was born Aug. 26, 2006, weighing 6 lb., 15 oz. His grandparents are Gerald and Thelma Gould and Peggie and Kathi Loke. His grandparents are Gerry and Tany Ludek and Maria Gould. Special thanks to the nurses for their excellent care.



Happy 95th birthday
 Birthday greetings to **Florence Randell of Engle** who celebrated her 95th birthday on Oct. 26, 2006. Love and best wishes from her two daughters, four sons and families.

CONGRATULATIONS



Congratulations are ex-



60th wedding anniversary

WHAT'S

Expressions through photos

Youth use images to voice their views

Youths participating in the PhotoVoice project held a photo exhibit at L'Anse au Loup last month to showcase their photos to family, friends and other youth.

Alana Clarke was one of the many youths who took part in the project. During the course of the 10-week project, not only did she improve her photography skills, she also learned how to do a slide presentation on the computer.

"We talked about the pictures we took. Every week, she

(Katrina Peddle) would give us a theme to take pictures for. Then that week, she got us to talk about the pictures we took," Ms. Clarke said.

She enjoyed being a participant in the project because it gave her the chance to spend time with her friends, have fun and learn new things.

Katrina Peddle, co-facilitator for the project, explained that participants took the photos that were hung from the ceiling. The goal of the exhibit was to give the public a chance

to see the work produced by participants, as well as see the similarities and differences in their work.

"What PhotoVoice is all about is hearing from young people. So people like all of our participants have come together to show us their creative side. As you can see as you look around, people have photos of things that are important to them like their families, their pets. You can also see a lot of representation from the Labrador scenery."

There's a lot of exciting things around us today," said Ms. Peddle.

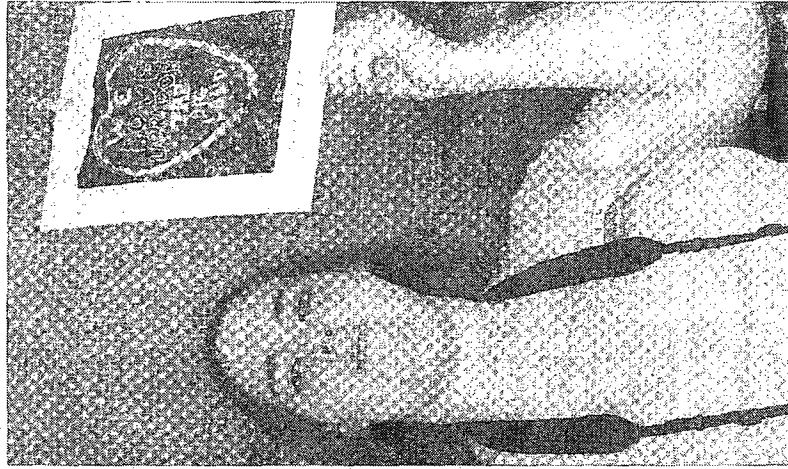
Sheila Downer, executive director of SmartLabrador, said PhotoVoice projects happen all around the world. It's an initiative that gives young people a voice. The photography becomes a means for people to voice the concerns that affect them in their communities.

"It allows them to take action on those issues if they decide they want to. I think just as importantly, they learn skills in digital photography. They learn new things about technology," Ms. Downer said.

"They also learn a very important skill that doesn't have anything to do with the technology, but it's a very important thing in their lives and that's the whole thing about group work. They've done a lot of that in the workshop."

She pointed out that the Labrador Youth PhotoVoice Project is the first one of its kind in Labrador. The hope is that the project becomes a first for many more such projects to come in the future in Labrador.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
JOCELYNE CORMIER



Alana Clarke proudly showcases one of the many photographs she took as a participant of the PhotoVoice Project.



Katrina Peddle (centre) takes a few moments to talk to participants before the exhibit opens.

APPENDIX C: PHOTOVOICE MANUAL²⁹

What is Photovoice?

The voices of youth have an important contribution to make to any community. At the same time, it is essential to engage youth in fun and participatory ways to hear what issues are most important to them and to better understand what is important for them in their daily lives. Using digital photography as a vehicle for talking about important social issues, photovoice projects work with participants to help them articulate how they understand their community, the strengths they possess and the challenges they face. This is an action-oriented technique that has been successfully used in a variety of environments, especially with youth (Mitchell, Moletsane, Stuart, Buthelezi and de Lange, 2005). Each week participants are given a theme to work through. They are also provided with cameras that they use to take photos.

Intended to be creative and enjoyable, this manual will provide you with the tools to facilitate a weekly gathering of youth. During the program youth will have facilitated discussions around self-defined issues, take digital photographs around these issues, and interpret the end results. This provides a medium for talking about things that are important to youth, and allows these issues to be defined by them rather than an outside “expert”. It also helps participants to build technical skills in digital photography. And it’s fun!

This manual is designed to give you guidelines in running a photovoice project in your community. The themes addressed here should by no means limit the scope of things that you may want to address (most of these themes emerged from a needs assessment undertaken for the initial Labrador Youth Photovoice Project). The most important part

²⁹ I wrote this manual as part of my role as the photovoice facilitator in order to ensure that the project could be repeated in the future. It was also used as a reporting mechanism for the International Grenfell Association, the project’s funder.

of any photovoice project is creating a safe space to be creative and have fun, all the while challenging young people to talk about things that matter.

Week One: Introduction

This is your opportunity to get participants excited about the project, and build on their enthusiasm as you move forward. Be ready for them to have many questions, and want the project to only be about taking pictures (rather than also talking about issues that matter!). An important part of the facilitator's role is to help participants understand that photovoice is about *their opinions, their assets and their commitment*.

1. **What is photovoice?** Introduce the concept as one where youth are largely in charge of defining the problems and issues to be addressed. Photovoice combines photography and social issues to encourage youth to speak for themselves in relation to their lives and their communities.
2. **Icebreaker beach ball game.** Write a series of questions on a beach ball. The ball is thrown around between participants. Each participant has to answer the question that his or her right thumb lands on. This is a good get to know you game (and fun even if the kids have all known each other for years). Check in your kit for a sample.
3. **Ethics role play.** Two participants take on roles – one as photographer and one as a person who doesn't want to be photographed. Use the role play as a conversation starter for talking about needing permission to take someone's photo. See your kit for a sample cards.
4. **Safety role play.** Two participants act out the roles of photographer and 4-wheeler. The photographer keeps asking the driver to go faster and faster to get a better shot. Eventually the 4-wheeler topples over. Use the role play to talk about safety when taking pictures. See your kit for sample cards.
5. **Workshop themes.** Lay out the workshop plan for participants so they understand what is expected of them in terms of time commitment. Ask for feedback and see if there are any themes that need adjusting.
6. **Introduction to cameras.** Show the participants the basics of using the cameras. Be sure to explain that they are responsible for the cameras and that they have to take good care of them! Use the camera handout to make sure they have

something to refer to at home. Have each participant sign out a camera, with their name, phone number and email address.

7. **Alphabet game.** Divide the participants into groups. Each group has to take pictures of every letter of the alphabet (can they find an 'S' in a cloud? An 'O' in the water?). Have them find all the letters and review them next week.
8. **Who am I?** Ask participants to take photos which answer the question 'Who am I?' They will review these pictures together next week. Ask them to come prepared to discuss five of their pictures the following week.
9. **Conclusion.** Ask them for input on what they would like the workshops to look like. Sum up activities and reinforce that the project is about hearing from them! Set a time for next week.

Week Two: Community

The goal of this workshop is to get participants to begin to talk about their community – its strengths, its challenges, the things they love about it, and where they see themselves in relation to it.

1. **Conversation on baseline respect/ ground rules.** 10 minutes. Be sure to collectively establish processes for speaking, making contributions and respecting other participants. This can be mapped out a flip chart to be referred to throughout the workshops and is especially helpful with challenging groups.
2. **Frozen-in-Motion Icebreaker game.** 10-15 minutes. The leader and participants sit on their chairs. Initially, have the participants feel the floor, feel the chair and feel the space they are in. This can be done with eyes open or closed. Participants are then directed to feel and replicate an emotion, such as boredom, surprise or anger. The leader (the facilitator or a student) then says, "Freeze!" Everyone freezes like statues, and the leader now says, "We are in the museum of boredom" (or surprise or anger, whatever the selected emotion is). The leader selects one person to hold his or her frozen pose and be the "statue" and everyone else focuses their attention on that person. Ask the class to describe different aspects of the statue, such as the posture or facial set. This is a great exercise for training observation skills and is good for building enhanced vocabulary for writing.
3. **Check in with participants.** Favourite and least favourite thing that happened this week. Challenges or problems?
4. **Review alphabet game pictures.** Who got the whole alphabet? Pick your top three photos and explain why your group should win. Use the projector to display their photos.
5. **PowerPoint presentation on digital photography** -10 minutes (See resource CD).
6. **Who am I?** Reviewing photos from the previous week's photo assignment on the projector. Why did you take this picture? What does it mean? 10 minutes.
7. **Circulate email list/explain about uploading the pictures if you have a website for the project.**

8. **Break.**
9. **Community.** Create a group definition of community. E.g. people with common interests living in a particular area. What is your community? Where does it start? Where does it end? Who is included in it? Who is excluded from it? What does your community do really well?
10. **Game around the table.** My community is...(participants fill in the blanks – e.g. fun, small/big, a place I like, I place that makes me mad sometimes), with each participant coming up with one phrase. The important part of this exercise is to give them a chance to just talk about their community including its strengths and challenges.
11. **Build your community game.** Select one participant. That person goes at the centre. That person then assigns everyone else a role (a school, family, music, sports etc.). The group will then fill in around the participant, depending on what parts of the community he or she decides to include. Then have participants list five things they like about their community and one thing they don't like. How would you change the thing you don't like?
12. **Draw a picture of your community.** Who fits where? Why? LOOK AT CAUSES, NOT JUST SYMPTOMS to ensure that we think about social problems as collective issues and not just focused on the individual.
13. **Photography assignment:** take photos of things that make you “feel safe” and “feel less safe” in your community.
14. If there is time, make cards of different elements of community and put them on the wall.

Week Three: Globalization

The goal of this workshop is to engage participants in a conversation about globalization and relate the topic to their own lives. To keep it as simple as possible, it may be useful to talk about the global and the local.

1. **Warm up game.** 10 minutes. Decide on an icebreaker from the icebreaker file on the resource CD.
2. **Hook up computer to laptop.** If you need to load some pictures onto the laptop directly from their cameras, you may want to have participants play pool while photos are loaded.
3. **View photos.** 30 minutes. Review participants' pictures about community. Key discussion questions? Why did you take them? What do they mean? Was it fun? How did you feel when you took this photo?
4. **Break.**

Move into talking about globalization.

5. **Icebreaker.** Have each person guess where the person to the right of them's clothing was made. How many are made in Canada? North America? List the countries on a flip chart. Participants really related to this activity well.
6. **How does this relate to your life?** Talk about crab fishery processing or another local industry that may be in decline due to global markets. SeaTreat closed this year, and the price for crab reached a record low. Whose family was affected by this? This low price has affected people going after crab. Much of this natural resource is being processed in China.
7. **What is globalization?** Understanding globalization requires us to make connections between places on a global scale. Today, more and more places around the world are connected to each other in ways that were previously unimaginable. More and more places are being connected in more and more ways. Five ways in which we are connected:
 - a. **People:** movements of people, including tourists, immigrants, refugees, and business travelers.
 - b. **Money:** global flows of money, often driven by interconnected currency markets, stock exchanges, and commodity markets.
 - c. **Ideas and political beliefs:** the global spread of ideas and political ideologies. E.g. Environmental movement.
 - d. **Media:** the global distribution of media images that appear on our computer screens, in newspapers, television, and radio.

- e. Technology: the movement of technologies around the globe. For example, the Green Revolution in rice cultivation introduced western farming practices into many developing countries.
 - f. Big trade agreements mean that borders don't make as big of a difference, and transnational corporations can set up wherever they please.
8. **Previously people were connected through time (we did the same kinds of work as our parents, like fishing). Now we are connected through space (I may have more in common with a young person from Japan than I have with my grandparents).**
- Is globalization new? No, but it has been accelerated via new technologies.
 - What are some of the good things? New experiences, mobility, etc. But who really wins? Maybe some big corporations?
 - Growth of a global culture which is mostly American. Where do most of our shows come from?
9. **How do people resist the bad things about globalization? What are people doing about globalization?** They celebrate local culture! They are thinking about self-expression and resistance. They make media! They make fun of advertising. There are lots of things people can do at a local level to resist the negative aspects of globalization (e.g. homemade gifts, local products, fair trade clothing and coffee).
10. **Photography assignment.** Take pictures of examples of globalization in your life. You may want to specify something for them to look at to avoid confusion.
11. **Conclusion.** Review globalization. Is everyone clear on the idea? Is everyone ready to take pictures about the topic?

Week Five: Race, Identity and Diversity

The goal of this workshop is for young people to think critically about issues of racism in their lives. Goal: To think about how race works at the community level, to have participants think about their own ethnicity, to begin to make links between issues of race and poverty, education, inclusion, etc. How do you understand race in your day-to-day lives? What do you think about your ethnicity? What is racial profiling?

1. **Warm up game.** Two truths and a lie. Each participant has to tell two things that are true about themselves and one lie. By asking questions, the other participants have to figure out which statement is a lie. Depending on the size of the group, it may be necessary for participants to divide into small groups to ensure this game doesn't take too long.
2. **Review photos** and look at what people may have taken this week. Why did they take these pictures? How do they relate to how they think about globalization and their community?
3. **Break.**
4. **Icebreaker:** Historical game. 10 minutes. Write different important historical events in relation to race relations on cue cards. As a group, participants have to put each of the cards in chronological order. See printed materials for a sample.
5. **What is identity?** What is it made up of? (brainstorm).
6. **Power flower of social identity** (see handout in printed materials in appendix). This exercise involves drawing a flower with each petal being a different element of a participant's social identity, including issues like race, gender, ethnic group, age, family, social class, relationship to the natural world, ability/disability). By placing themselves on different petals, participants will engage in a process of making their social identity explicit. It helps us to see how we each have different amounts of social power that we come to a situation with, and have to acknowledge that power when we engage with people.
7. What is racism? What are some of your experiences of race in your community? When you think of race, what comes to mind? Brainstorm on the flip chart. Underline that racism isn't just about individual prejudice, but about also about things that we can and can't access depending on the colour of our skin. Racism is a system that privileges some and exploits others. It is no coincidence that white people dominate in government, in society, and in the world.
8. Choose between the two following games to decide which ones you'd like to play with your group. Each requires about 20 minutes to do.

Candy game

Each participant is given a role to play. Then the group is asked a series of questions, and if the participant answers yes to a question, then he or she has to take a piece of candy. Sample questions include: "I am not statistically more likely to not finish high school based on my race"; "When people talk about my religion, the word 'terrorist' often comes to mind". You can take these questions

from the *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* handout that is in the printed materials section of this manual.

OR

Stereotyping Game

This game is designed to help people understand their prejudices. You make up index cards that have descriptions of different types of people. It could cover race, religion, disabilities, whatever you come up with. Each person has an index card placed on their back and they don't know what they have been labeled with. Each person has to guess what their label is by the way others act towards them. I think that you could make a more serious activity by having quite a bit of processing afterwards to talk about why others acted towards you in a stereotypical way, and how they need to recognize these stereotypes and prejudices that they knew they had or just recognized with this activity.

9. **Photography assignment.** Find images and representations in your community that speak to issues of race and racism. You might want to suggest that they find images from school projects (I once suggested that they find something that looked like prison bars as First Nations and people of colour make up a disproportionately high percentage of the prison population). Be sure to give them a relatively concrete idea of what pictures to take. Also encourage them to pictures around the theme without this structure.
10. **Review and wrap up.**

Becoming an Ally

What does it mean to be an ally? What is an Ally?

An ally is a member of the dominant majority culture (white) who works to end oppression in his/her professional and personal life through support of, and as an advocate for, the oppressed population.

Why Be an Ally?

Recall a time in your life when you felt valued and how that made you feel. Then recall a time when you were made to feel different and how that made you feel. If you compare the difference in how you felt each time, you'd probably agree the main difference was this: when you felt valued, you were proud to be who you are and truly enjoyed being yourself; but when you felt different, you were reluctant to be yourself and perhaps even wished you could be someone else.

Feeling as though you can't really be yourself is not an uncommon experience for people of colour and First Nations people. If you're not a member of this population, this may be difficult to understand. Certainly we've all experienced times when we felt, for whatever reason, we could not be ourselves. But do you have an understanding what it's like to feel this way on a daily basis for an entire lifetime? If you want to support people of colour in their efforts to live fuller lives and be proud of who they are, you're ready to be an ally.³⁰

³⁰ Adapted from Western Illinois University Committee on Sexual Orientation
<<http://www.wiu.edu/UCOSO/allyguide.shtml>>.

And remember, you can be an ally to other groups too, for example by being an ally to queer youth in high school.