

## Sociology by Anthropologists A Chapter in the History of an Academic Discipline in Newfoundland during the 1960s

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Article abstract

*The Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) was founded as a means of promoting research about Newfoundland. Sociologists taught at Memorial University earlier than anthropologists, but key organizational leaders in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology as well as ISER were British anthropologists whose professional networks rarely included sociologists. Concentrating early ISER research on community studies also led to early “sociological” research being undertaken primarily by anthropologists. The article provides insight into the tension between sociologists and anthropologists at Memorial, as well as insight into the methods used in the community studies of Newfoundland in the 1960s.*

# Sociology by Anthropologists: A Chapter in the History of an Academic Discipline in Newfoundland during the 1960s

STEPHEN HAROLD RIGGINS

*L'Institut of Social and Economic Research (ISER) a été fondé dans le but de promouvoir les travaux de recherche sur Terre-Neuve. Des sociologues ont enseigné à l'Université Memorial plus tôt que des anthropologues, mais les responsables de l'organisation du département de sociologie et d'anthropologie ainsi que de l'ISER ont été des anthropologues britanniques dont les réseaux professionnels comptaient rarement des sociologues. De plus, comme l'ISER a d'abord concentré ses efforts de recherche sur les études communautaires, les premières recherches « sociologiques » y ont été menées surtout par des anthropologues. L'article donne un aperçu des tensions entre sociologues et anthropologues à l'Université Memorial, ainsi que des méthodes utilisées dans les études communautaires de Terre-Neuve dans les années 1960.*

*The Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) was founded as a means of promoting research about Newfoundland. Sociologists taught at Memorial University earlier than anthropologists, but key organizational leaders in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology as well as ISER were British anthropologists whose professional networks rarely included sociologists. Concentrating early ISER research on community studies also led to early “sociological” research being undertaken primarily by anthropologists. The article provides insight into the tension between sociologists and anthropologists at Memorial, as well as insight into the methods used in the community studies of Newfoundland in the 1960s.*

WHY WOULD ANYONE CARE IF A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY is the work of a self-declared sociologist or the work of someone in another branch of the social sciences? This is a legitimate question.<sup>1</sup> It is unlikely, for example, that key figures in the establishment of Newfoundland Studies in the 1960s were concerned about this. They simply wanted excellent research. But there were winners and losers when decisions were made about how this research should be conducted.

1 I would like to thank the *Acadiensis* anonymous reviewers of this article. Their assistance has been invaluable in clarifying the initial concept of the theme of this research. I also acknowledge the assistance of Memorial University historians Jeff Webb and Melvin Baker, who read a draft of this article.

Stephen Harold Riggins, “Sociology by Anthropologists: A Chapter in the History of an Academic Discipline in Newfoundland during the 1960s,” *Acadiensis* XLVI, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2017): 119-142.

Ian Whitaker and Robert Paine, the two directors of “sociological” research in the 1960s at Memorial University’s Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), privileged their personal network of academics. It consisted primarily of anthropologists. Whitaker also emphasized the community study method of ethnography, which first appeared as a distinct method in anthropology and remained more common in anthropology than in sociology.<sup>2</sup> Thus it was anthropologists who published the earliest studies of Newfoundland outport coastal villages. Although sociology and anthropology are disciplines that overlap, there are differences. In the 1960s sociologists were more likely than anthropologists to survey people and to gather quantitative information. Sociologists were also more likely to concentrate on urban areas or large geographical areas such as nation states rather than a village. And sociologists were less interested in culture, folklore, family genealogies, and the peculiarities of dialects.

Jeff Webb’s book *Observing the Outports: Describing Newfoundland Culture, 1950-1980* is about the establishment of Newfoundland Studies through collective projects in the social sciences and humanities.<sup>3</sup> This article, in contrast, is a detailed case study of one facet of early Newfoundland Studies – the research on outports – and makes public the tension between sociologists and anthropologists at Memorial University, which has certainly been a topic of discussion but has rarely been mentioned in print.<sup>4</sup> An important concern is how the early community studies might have appeared to mainstream American sociologists, who dominated the discipline internationally. This article also provides more insight into the research procedures used in the outport studies.<sup>5</sup> This article documents the history of ISER, from the planning stages in the 1950s to its implementation by Ian Whitaker and its subsequent re-invention by Robert Paine. It shows that a series of tensions pervaded ISER research – tensions that came to be organized along lines influenced by disciplinary and professional networks that favoured methodologies that neglected important areas of consideration, and that were subject to the idiosyncrasies of different directors.

But before documenting the history of ISER, some contextual comments are necessary about intellectual boundaries dividing academic disciplines and the late

2 Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball, *Culture and Community* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), 28.

3 Jeff A. Webb, *Observing the Outports: Describing Newfoundland Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).

4 Sociology was housed in the Department of Social Studies from 1956 to 1965 and in a joint Department of Sociology and Anthropology from 1965 to 1973.

5 These community studies were examples of realist ethnography. It is assumed in realist ethnography that an observer’s standpoint in society, shaped by age, ethnicity, gender, religion, etc., does not substantially distort the objective description of other people’s lives. Stories are told in a dispassionate, third-person voice. The implication is that most well-intentioned researchers will come to the same conclusions. There are both naïve and more subtle versions of realism. The anti-realist perspective is a more modest notion of truth: understanding always involves some degree of misunderstanding and misrepresentation. Thus alternative interpretations are encouraged. See Martyn Hammersley, *What’s Wrong with Ethnography? Methodological Explorations* (London: Routledge, 1991), 45-56.

development of sociology in the UK and Canada.<sup>6</sup> The social sciences have never been defined in a manner that reflects a “natural reality.” As Puddephatt and McLaughlin have recently explained, “All of [the social sciences] focus on the same emergent level of reality: the linguistically and culturally enabled human species.”<sup>7</sup> The boundaries between them are artificial but real: economics is not political science; anthropology is not sociology. And not only are the social sciences politically and socially constructed, but they also vary from one generation to another. In his history of the social sciences in the UK, George Steinmetz chose not to define sociology or anthropology because of the overlapping quality of the disciplines.<sup>8</sup> He classified scholars by discipline on the basis of their academic degree, the discipline of the journals in which they published, departmental affiliation, and the willingness of colleagues to accept their claim to be a sociologist or an anthropologist. Using these criteria, the first two heads of “sociological” research at ISER were clearly anthropologists.

British-born Gerald Mars was one of the early ISER fellows. The following is his understanding, decades later, of the difference between sociology and anthropology in Britain in the 1960s when he was a student:

There has long been a muddle – an undefined boundary – in the UK between sociology and anthropology. But in Manchester, in the late fifties and sixties, Max Gluckman spearheaded a merger and ran a joint department. Some others followed (Swansea), though there was some subsequent splitting often on political rather than academic grounds. Jack Goody (my undergraduate supervisor at Cambridge) asked me to help one summer in doing a study of Gypsies – essentially using anthropological methods but implicitly also sociological. He recommended me to Ian Whitaker [at Memorial University] because he saw that a proposed occupational study was essentially discipline straddling . . . .

When I was working as an amateur researcher before entering university, and participating in occupational criminology on the Blackpool fairgrounds, I was conscious that I needed anthropological methods, its specific specialisms (e.g., participant observation, kinship) and its holistic orientation. But it was obvious to me that I needed the wider literature of sociology, criminology, and industrial relations to properly understand what was going on.<sup>9</sup>

6 In addition to Webb’s book, the other study of the history of ISER is J.D. House’s “ISER Retrospect and Prospect,” *ISER Research and Policy Papers* 15 (November 1992): 7-49. House wrote primarily about ISER in its mature years beginning c. 1975.

7 Antony Puddephatt and Neil McLaughlin, “Critical Nexus or Pluralist Discipline? Institutional Ambivalence and the Future of Canadian Sociology,” *Canadian Review of Sociology* 52, no. 3 (August 2015): 313.

8 George Steinmetz, “A Child of the Empire: British Sociology and Colonialism, 1940s-1960s,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 49, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 357-60.

9 Gerald Mars to the author, personal communication, 3 November 2015.

American sociologists in the early 20th century appreciated anthropologists who wrote about foreign societies, but they became more critical when anthropologists started interpreting American culture because sociologists could then use their personal experiences to test the validity of the generalizations. At the heart of disagreements between American sociologists and anthropologists lay issues of vision, perspective, and the research methods that underscored them. American sociologists criticized anthropologists for over-generalizing from a few cases, viewing societies as islands without a history, being insufficiently concerned about sampling the populations they investigated, failing to utilize quantitative information, and making claims on the basis of unsubstantiated impressions.<sup>10</sup> The dominant ideal in sociology was to emphasize the basic similarity between sociology and the natural sciences and to downplay the similarity with the humanities and creative literature. British social anthropology, however, was compatible with a vision of sociology held by a minority of American-trained sociologists, such as symbolic interactionists; both doubted sociologists' identification with the natural sciences.<sup>11</sup> Yet it is also important to point out that there are a few famous community studies by sociologists.<sup>12</sup>

The period before 1960 in Canadian sociology has been called the discipline's "prehistory" because it was so poorly institutionalized or professionalized. Sociology began to be taught in Canada in the 1890s but by 1956 only 32 sociologists were teaching at Canadian universities.<sup>13</sup> Professionalization required a competent association supporting careers and an agreement on the appropriate qualifications for engaging effectively in a career. The result was a stratified profession consisting of different levels of prestige. Key institutions in the professionalization of Canadian sociology appeared during the 1960s. The first English Canadian sociology journal started publication in 1964. The Canadian

10 Stephen O. Murray, *American Anthropology & Company: Historical Explorations* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 204-10.

11 Symbolic interactionism is a theoretical perspective within sociology that suggests that society is created and maintained by the repeated interaction of individuals. People are conceptualized as relatively autonomous of institutions and thus their commonsense knowledge and conscious concerns are vital in creating their own social world. The focus on micro-level processes in face-to-face encounters and on subjective perspectives makes symbolic interactionism particularly compatible with anthropology. Ethnography or participant-observation and in-depth, unstructured interviews are the major methods in both symbolic interactionism and anthropology. See Michael J. Carter and Celene Fuller, "Symbolic Interaction," <http://www.sagepub.net/isa/resources/pdf/Symbolic%20interactionism.pdf>. See Herbert Blumer, *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969).

12 For example, see Robert Lynd and Helen Lynd, *Middletown: A Study of Modern American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1929); Lynd and Lynd, *Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1937); Rita Caccamo, *Back to Middletown: Three Generations of Sociological Reflections* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); Arthur Vidich and Joseph Bensman, *Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power and Religion in a Rural Community* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1960); St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1945).

13 Robert Brym and Bonnie Fox, *From Culture to Power: The Sociology of English Canada* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 1989), 20.

Sociology and Anthropology Association was founded in 1965.<sup>14</sup> Before the mid-1960s there was almost no significant financial assistance for sociological research from provincial and national governments in Canada. The Canada Council was founded in 1957, but was still in its infancy. Although the first research center in the social sciences at a Canadian university, the Institute of Child Study at the University of Toronto, was founded in 1926, there were only seven university-affiliated research centres in Canada by 1945. Between 1945 and 1980 183 research centers in the social sciences were established in Canada. The largest number of them (21 per cent) were devoted, like ISER, to regional studies.<sup>15</sup>

As sociology rapidly expanded in Canada during the 1960s, there was no practical alternative other than appointing immigrants as professors. At Memorial and most Canadian universities, sociologists were primarily American immigrants while a few were American-educated Canadians and a few British anthropologists taught sociology. The tradition at Memorial was to recruit scholars in Britain rather than the United States.<sup>16</sup> This worked to the disadvantage of sociology because the discipline developed later in Britain than in the US.<sup>17</sup> Newfoundlander Ralph Matthews, for example, was shocked to discover that his undergraduate education in sociology/anthropology at Memorial University in the early 1960s was inadequate preparation for graduate sociology courses at the University of Minnesota: "My knowledge of Nuer, Trobriand, and feudal societies was irrelevant! . . . I was overwhelmed! My previous anticipation turned to dread. I desperately wanted to be a sociologist, but I couldn't even understand what much of the [graduate] seminar was about."<sup>18</sup>

American sociology was best represented at Memorial by the Chicago-trained American Nels Anderson, remembered primarily for his book on hobos. Anderson was a visiting professor at Memorial (MUN) from 1964 to 1966, a period too short to have much impact.<sup>19</sup> He did, however, have strong opinions about the early ISER community studies and the future of the MUN Department of Sociology and Anthropology. "Sociology at Memorial," he forecast in a letter to the head of sociology at the University of New Brunswick, "may be relegated to a poor spot down with the little pig at the end of the trough."<sup>20</sup>

14 Desmond M. Connor, "Introduction," in *Sociology and Anthropology in Canada: Some Characteristics of the Disciplines and their Current University Programs*, ed. Desmond M. Connor and James E. Curtis (Montreal: Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association, 1970), 10.

15 Mike Almeida, "Comment se rendre utile : Les Centres de Recherche Universitaire en Sciences Sociales au Canada," *Scientia Canadensis: Canadian Journal of the History of Science, Technology and Medicine* 30, no. 2 (2007): 97-122.

16 Webb, *Observing the Outports*, 320.

17 Steinmetz, "A Child of the Empire: British Sociology and Colonialism," 353-78; Brym and Fox, *From Culture to Power*, 14-32.

18 Ralph Matthews, "'But did it make a difference?' Crafting a sociological career" (unpublished manuscript in author's possession), 9-10.

19 For an example of contemporary mainstream American sociology, see chapter one of Peter L. Berger's *Invitation to Sociology: A Humanistic Perspective* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1963), 1-24.

20 Nels Anderson to Douglas R. Pullman, 2 May 1966, in the possession of Noel Iverson, Hamilton, ON. I would like to thank Noel Iverson for sharing Nels Anderson's unpublished letters.



At the time, “community study” was being defined as the study of the “interrelationships of social institutions in a locality.”<sup>21</sup> By definition, a community study was not a study of one institution, for example, an examination of religion in one city. It was a holistic picture that discouraged specialization. Bell and Newby claimed that community studies by social scientists resemble realist community novels such as Sinclair Lewis’s *Babbitt*. Their Canadian example was reading Seeley, Sim, and Looseley’s *Crestwood Heights: A Study of the Culture of Suburban Life* alongside American novelist David Karp’s *Leave Me Alone*.<sup>22</sup> Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball were apparently the first anthropologists to describe a village in the British Isles with the detail normally reserved for Africa or Asia.<sup>23</sup> And during the 1950s Arensberg and Kimball tried to formalize the community study method. They emphasized that it was an observational, comparative method and regretted that the research procedures were only being passed down informally to students. They provided a detailed list of topics that should be investigated in a full-fledged community study. Other issues that concerned them were the representativeness and cohesiveness of the communities chosen for study.<sup>24</sup> Arensberg was one of the scholars consulted by the first director for sociological research at ISER and by Nels Anderson.<sup>25</sup> The ISER Fellow Louis Chiaramonte had also been one of Arensberg’s students.

### The villages around the edge

Discussions about creating a research centre in the social sciences began at Memorial in the 1950s.<sup>26</sup> In 1959, the MUN economist Parzival Copes, on behalf of

21 Colin Bell and Howard Newby, *Community Studies: An Introduction to the Sociology of the Local Community* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), 19.

22 John R. Seeley, Alexander Sim, and Elizabeth W. Looseley, *Crestwood Heights: A Study of the Culture of Suburban Life* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1956); David Karp, *Leave Me Alone* (New York: Knopf, 1957).

23 Ronald Frankenberg, *Communities in Britain: Social Life in Town and Country* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1966), 43.

24 Arensberg and Kimball, *Culture and Community*, 28-47. Many of the chapters in this volume were originally published in the 1940s and 50s.

25 The title held by Whitaker and Paine was “co-director” because there was a co-director for economic research. Since Whitaker and Paine had sole direction for sociology, it can be misleading to call them simply co-director as the term suggests they shared responsibility for sociology with another sociologist/anthropologist.

26 Robert Newton mentioned the paucity of research on Newfoundland in his *Report on his Survey of the Memorial University of Newfoundland made at the Request of the Board of Regents of the University in March 1951* (St. John’s: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1952). Parzival Copes had experience with institutes for economic research at Queen’s University and the University of Pittsburgh. M.O. Morgan, Memorial University dean of arts and science, had some familiarity, at least from reading, with the Tavistock Institute in the UK. See M.O. Morgan, “Remarks on the 30th Anniversary of ISER,” *ISER Research and Policy Papers*, no. 15 (St. John’s: ISER Books, 1992): 38-9. An unpublished paper by Memorial’s first sociologist, Donald Willmott, was another impetus. Willmott had personal experience with university-based research centres in sociology at the universities of Michigan and Cornell; see Donald Willmott, “Possibilities for Social Research in Newfoundland – and Canada. Informal Comments Prepared for Discussion at the June 5th Meeting of the Political Science Association,” 1959, Willmott family papers, Owen Sound, ON. See also Stephen Harold Riggins, “Memorial University’s First Sociologist: The Dilemmas of a Bureaucratic Intellectual,” *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 29, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 47-83.

the Department of Social Studies at Memorial proposed an organizational framework for the centre. The main recommendations were as follows:

- 1) Concentrate on “long term fundamental research . . . of demonstrable practical importance” to Newfoundland.
- 2) Avoid competition with professional consultants.
- 3) Hire skilled statisticians for a data processing centre.
- 4) Recognize that research by sociologists might be of a more theoretical nature than of applied value.
- 5) Encourage research about education.
- 6) Provide research opportunities for Memorial’s graduate students.
- 7) Appoint a board of control to govern ISER.
- 8) Appoint a senior economist as director and a senior sociologist as deputy director.<sup>27</sup>

Before establishing ISER, university administrators at Memorial sent their proposal to Canadian academics and businesspersons to seek their advice. One person who replied to the ISER proposal commented that it was important the institute begin with modest projects that were successfully finished. This logic might explain the subsequent emphasis on investigations by individual doctoral students. Almost all of the respondents were supportive to varying degrees, judging from the information preserved in the Archives and Special Collections Division of the Queen Elizabeth II Library in St. John’s. The one exception should be noted because the author, S.D. Clark, became the pre-eminent Canadian sociologist of his generation. No response to the proposal in the archives is as negative as Clark’s letter:

As a means of attracting funds for fundamental research there is nothing to be said for an institute. . . . You need only one thing: good people who are doing scholarly work. An institute can defeat the very purpose for which it was set up. Its tendency is to pull people away from what they want to do and thus discourage scholarly work. Foundations are suspicious of bodies organized for research. Funds given to such organizations tend to be diverted to the salaries of directors or to be frittered away on the kind of superficial research which can be planned and directed.<sup>28</sup>

A professor of sociology at the University of Toronto, Clark was to some extent an authority on funding for research in the social sciences because he made an ambitious investigation of the topic in 1957 on behalf of the Canadian Social

27 Department of Social Studies, “Establishment of an Institute of Economic and Social Research within the Memorial University of Newfoundland,” 7 April 1959, Coll.-454, 1.01.001, Archives and Special Collections (ASC), Queen Elizabeth II Library, Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), St. John’s.

28 Clark as quoted in Melvin Baker, “The Establishment of Memorial’s Institute of Social and Economic Research in 1961,” *Newfoundland Quarterly* 92, no. 3 (Winter 1999): 21-5.



Science Research Council. He thought higher faculty salaries, less time in the classroom, and more secretarial assistance would assist scholars more than a research institute.<sup>29</sup> Clark's opinions were not foolish, but he was oddly insensitive to the need for structural requirements to support collaborative research.

Most of the work promoting sociological research at ISER for the first four years fell on the shoulders of Ian Rice Whitaker.<sup>30</sup> It was not unusual during the 1950s and 1960s for British social anthropologists to shift to sociology as the discipline expanded in their country. Many went abroad.<sup>31</sup> Whitaker wrote in his application to teach at Memorial that if he were appointed he would like to "initiate a programme of field research into sociological problems."<sup>32</sup> To my knowledge, this is the first reference to field research, community study, or ethnography in the documentation related to ISER. Since 1952 Whitaker had been working at the School of Scottish Studies at Edinburgh as a research fellow in contemporary material culture. Whitaker was 31 years old in 1959, and had authored or co-authored a dozen short articles or research notes in academic journals. His ethnographic research had taken place in northern Scotland, among the Saami in Norway, and among Albanian-speakers in Yugoslavia. At Memorial, he was immediately appointed an associate professor of sociology. But except for his research on the Saami, his early publications resembled folklore more than sociology.<sup>33</sup>

29 S.D. Clark, "The Support of Social Science Research in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 24, no. 2 (May 1958): 141-51.

30 Ian Rice Whitaker worked at MUN from 1959-1964; he was born in 1928 in Nottingham, UK; he died 2016 in Surrey, BC, and obtained a PhD in social anthropology from the University of Oslo. Donald Willmott, Memorial's first sociologist, was an authority on the Chinese in Indonesia. As part of the first half-dozen courses in the university's calendar, he introduced a basic course in anthropology. He felt competent to teach the course because much of the literature he had read about China and overseas Chinese had been written by anthropologists. When he left Memorial University in 1959, as the university's only sociologist, this course helped open the way for an anthropologist to replace him.

31 Adam Kuper, *Anthropology and Anthropologists: The Modern British School* (London: Routledge, 1996), 152.

32 Ian Whitaker, CV and letter to the president of Memorial University, 7 May 1959, Board of Regents, box 7, MUN Staff, Appointments & Promotions, April 1959-August 1959, Memorial University Archives, President's Office, Arts and Administration Building, MUN.

33 Ian Whitaker, "The Scottish Kayaks and the 'Finn-men'," *Antiquity: A Quarterly Review of Archaeology* 28, no. 110 (June 1954): 99-103; Ian Whitaker, "Some Notes on the Peasant Houses of Montenegro," *Man* 55 (June 1955): 81-4; Ian Whitaker, "Colloquial Naming," *Scottish Genealogist* 1 (1955): 21-6; Ian Whitaker, "Two Hebridean Corn-kilns," *Gwerin: A Half-Yearly Journal of Folklife* 1, no. 4 (1957): 161-70; Ian Whitaker, "Traditional Horse-races in Scotland," *Arv: Nordic Yearbook of Folklore* (1958): 83-94; Ian Whitaker, "The Harrow in Scotland," *Scottish Studies* 2 (1958): 149-65; Ian Whitaker, "A Shoemaker's Vice from South Uist," *Scottish Studies* 2 (1958): 119-20. Ian Whitaker, "Inhabited Caves in Scotland," *Scottish Studies* 2 (1958): 120-1; Ian Whitaker, "Photographs of Traditional Scottish Life," *Scottish Studies* 2 (1958): 211-12; Ian Whitaker, "Some North Uist Harrows," *Scottish Studies* 3 (1959): 106-8; Ian Whitaker, "Some Traditional Techniques in Modern Scottish Farming," *Scottish Studies* 3 (1959): 163-88; Ian Whitaker, "The Reports on the Parishes of Scotland, 1627," *Scottish Studies* 3 (1959): 229-32; Ragnar Jirlow and Ian Whitaker, "The Plough in Scotland," *Scottish Studies* 1 (1957): 71-94. In 1951 the School of Scottish Studies was established at the University of Edinburgh "to collect, research, preserve and publish material relating to Scottish folklore, cultural life and the

Despite his English birth, he liked to say he was Scottish.<sup>34</sup> When he applied to teach at Memorial, he did self-identify as a sociologist but that was necessary for the job. The claim was accepted by university administrators and by some colleagues. Whitaker's sociological interpretation of Newfoundland culture, probably the first such study by anyone holding an academic position as a sociologist, was published by W.E. Mann in his edited volume *Canada: A Sociological Profile*.<sup>35</sup> Whitaker, however, had been trained as an anthropologist, published no articles in mainstream sociology journals, and, most importantly, by his organization of ISER and the introduction of so much anthropology in his sociology courses apparently laid the groundwork for a joint department at Memorial University.<sup>36</sup>

Whitaker referred to University of Minnesota sociologist Don Martindale as the "patron saint" of sociology at Memorial University.<sup>37</sup> Over a period of several years, eight graduate students at the University of Minnesota became tenure-stream professors, part-time instructors, or ISER research fellows at Memorial.<sup>38</sup> Archives at the University of Minnesota and the Centre for Newfoundland Studies in St. John's show that Whitaker, Dean of Arts and Science M.O. Morgan, and MUN's Minnesota graduate students frequently turned to Martindale for advice. Martindale was the author of one of the standard textbooks on sociological theory<sup>39</sup> as well as books on social and cultural change, stratification, and American society. He was also a co-translator of some of Max Weber's seminal publications.

Martindale's contact with Memorial began in 1960 when he recommended two students for a tenure-stream position. Then, on 31 January 1961, Whitaker wrote to ask if he could recommend a candidate for the first ISER research fellowship. The following is Martindale's advice about the type of research he thought ISER should undertake; he did not explicitly advocate ethnography, but did suggest gathering information for a "community monograph" through surveys and interviews:

I hope that you are planning a series of monographs on the communities. There is a perennial need for recent community studies to begin with. Moreover, since the forces of the mass society have been accelerated since World War II all the community studies prior to 1945 are quite dated. Your project could conceivably supply a basic reference point for every sociologist in North America who

traditional arts"; see Cathlin Macaulay, "Shetland and the School of Scottish Studies," in *The Carrying Stream Flows On: Celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of the School of Scottish Studies*, ed. Bob Chalmers (Kershader, UK: Islands Book Trust, 2013), 73.

34 Kythe Swanson to author, personal communication, 13 September 2015.

35 Ian Whitaker, "Sociological Preconditions and Concomitants of Rapid Socio-economic Change in Newfoundland," in *Canada: A Sociological Profile*, 2nd ed., ed. W.E. Mann (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1971), 292-305.

36 Gerald Mars to author, personal communication, 3 November 2015.

37 Ian Whitaker to George Story, 20 January 1966, Coll.-454, 2.09.002, ISER Archives, ASC, MUN.

38 Seven of the eight graduate students were sociologists: Roger Krohn, Tom Philbrook, Noel Iverson, Robert Stebbins, Jack Ross, Fraine Eugene Whitney, and Ralph Matthews; the anthropologist was Shmuel Ben-Dor. Six of the sociologists were supervised by Martindale. Whitney was supervised by Minnesota's symbolic interactionist Gregory Stone.

39 Don Martindale, *The Nature and Types of Sociological Theory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961).

is concerned with the transformation of the local community by processes generated in the institutions of the mass society.<sup>40</sup>

In 1962 Whitaker reported to the dean of arts on his visit to Martindale in Minnesota. Again, Martindale seems to have recommended that the first stage should be “a series of descriptive monographs” about a local problem and that these should cover as much of the province as possible before proceeding to the next stage of research. He advised spending nearly a decade in this initial first stage based on a shared descriptive framework. “This, as you know,” Whitaker wrote, “accords very closely with my own ideas.”<sup>41</sup> The basic topic Martindale wanted ISER to investigate was the societal impact of industrialization.<sup>42</sup> A comprehensive understanding of industrialization required information about life in preindustrial villages. It was also easier to see social change when the old ways were vanishing before one’s eyes. For comparative purposes, the advantage of the Newfoundland outports was that they were part of anglophone North America rather than villages in the Third World.

The 1959 proposal by Copes made no explicit mention of field research, ethnography, or the community study method of ethnography. Except for Martindale’s student, who was subsequently unable to establish an academic career, no evidence has come to light that Whitaker attempted to recruit doctoral students in sociology for the early community studies. The institute did not become a centre for statistical analysis, although this would have been compatible with sociology. And although it was first headed by co-directors – one in economics and one in sociology – labour issues were left for the most part to the economists. There were also few studies of education undertaken, and the research launched in the early years had little applied value. The early ISER fellows did not follow a standardized descriptive framework, and Memorial University students were rarely hired as research assistants.

The original 1959 proposal for ISER was actually more compatible with mainstream American sociology than the community studies. This might seem odd, but in American universities sociology was frequently introduced at the turn of the 20th century within the curriculum of economics departments. An economist studying the impact of culture on economic activities can have a perspective that is basically sociological.<sup>43</sup> The evolution of ISER is perhaps consistent with the generalization that the success of organized research units is more dependent on the skill and perspective of heads than is true of university departments. Risk-taking is more characteristic of administration in research units.<sup>44</sup>

40 Don Martindale to Ian Whitaker, 11 March 1961, Coll.-454, 1.01.001, ISER Archives, ASC, MUN.

41 Ian Whitaker, report of visit to Professor Don Martindale, n.d. [1962], Coll.-454, 1.01.004, ISER Archives, ASC, MUN.

42 See Don Martindale, *American Society* (New York: D. van Nostrand Company, 1960). See also Don Martindale, *Institutions, Organizations, and Mass Society* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1966).

43 Cristobal Young, “The Emergence of Sociology from Political Economy in the United States: 1890-1940,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 45, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 91-116.

44 Gerald J. Stahler and William R. Tash, “Centers and Institutes in the Research University: Issues, Problems, and Prospects,” *Journal of Higher Education* 65, no. 5 (September/October 1994): 546.

According to the *ISER Report* of 1961-1963, the institute received a start-up grant of \$15,000 from Memorial University. By 1963, the Canada Council had given funds totalling \$39,000, and an anonymous donor (or donors) provided \$5,000.<sup>45</sup> Grants from other government sources are mentioned, but without precise figures: the federal Department of Agriculture, Northern Affairs and National Resources, and the Municipal Council of St. John's. ISER was applying for unstated amounts of money from the federal Department of Agriculture.<sup>46</sup> The harvest gathered by the first fellows was thus influenced by the needs of government agencies for specific research projects as well as the fellows' interests and abilities. And in creating ISER, it appears that Memorial University administrators wanted primarily applied research related to Newfoundland's chronic economic problems. Several things suggest this: ISER was supposed to be headed by an economist, prominent business persons were appointed to the ISER board of directors, and the first sociologist at Memorial was a cross-appointment between the university and the provincial Department of Public Welfare. ISER changed direction, though, because of the involvement of anthropologists, despite the fact that Dean Morgan and the economist Parzival Copes had not initially envisioned ISER as including anthropology. It does not appear, however, that university administrators were upset with this shift; at least there is little evidence in the ISER archives to this effect.

ISER provided two years of support for pre-doctoral fellows. At least in principle, they were supposed to have completed all the course work and exams for their degree but a couple of the early fellows had not completed all of these requirements before coming to Newfoundland. There were also two supervisors who became, as it were, two guarantees of quality: a catalyst at Memorial and the supervisor at the student's home university. A broad topic and general location were assigned to the fellows. The leeway in selecting precise research questions is evident in Whitaker's account of the supervision in a letter to the Ohio State University supervisor for John F. Szwed: "We send [ISER fellows] out to a community in the hope that they will find specific problems worthy of deeper analysis, and which may be looked at in the framework of a general descriptive study."<sup>47</sup> One year was to be spent in the field; the second year in writing up the results in St. John's. Everyone was expected to spend several months in St. John's and give public talks about their work in order to encourage a research environment. Since none of the social sciences had doctoral programs at Memorial during the 1960s, ISER fellows may have been more prominent on campus than post-doctoral fellows are today. Early ISER fellows typically completed one project about Newfoundland – their thesis. If they continued to write about the province, their subsequent publications were either repetitive or of minor significance.

45 According to Gerald Mars, the anonymous donor was local: "I think the key as to why ISER appointed someone to study longshoremen was because Bill Crosbie – who at that time was heavily involved in the port – thought that such a study would be valuable and useful. But he didn't want his financing of the study to be made known partly because he wanted it to be completely impartial. I was told it was funded by a Canada Council Fellowship." See Gerald Mars to author, personal communication, 18 May 2014.

46 ISER, *ISER Report 1961-63* (St. John's: ISER, 1963).

47 Ian Whitaker to Erika Bourguignon, 8 November 1962, Coll.-454, 13.01.108, ISER Archives, ASC, MUN.

Organized research units such as ISER have been classified by Ikenberry and Friedman on the basis of their institutional visibility and resources.<sup>48</sup> The Institute of Social and Economic Research is best described as an adaptive organized research unit. And it had a mission that was clearly related to that of the university: promote Newfoundland research and a research climate. ISER's mission was not in doubt, but how it should be implemented was problematic. Important administrators and faculty members were on its advisory committees, so it was not a shadow unit, but its budget was small and it had to adapt to the research requests of government agencies and the interests of a small number of potential researchers. The budget was too small to qualify as a standard academic unit.

### **Supervision of the early community studies of Newfoundland**

The first seven fellows arrived in Newfoundland with ethnographic experience, although limited, with fishers in Barbados, Sephardic Jews in Seattle, Pueblo Indians in the American Southwest, Aboriginal populations in Montana and Washington State, Spanish Americans, and youth employment in the seaside resort of Blackpool in England. None of the first seven ISER research fellows was a Canadian citizen or enrolled at a Canadian institution of higher education. All were men. Some were married and benefitted from their wives' assistance. None of the first seven fellows were Newfoundlanders.<sup>49</sup>

Whitaker had to entice students to enroll at an unknown university – which had been a two-year junior college until 1949 – and he was promoting a fledgling research institute. He needed to scatter ISER fellows throughout the province as much as possible rather than direct them to one region in order to cover all of Newfoundland and Labrador. Whitaker thought of himself as a “catalyst” who should not undermine the authority of students' formal thesis supervisors.<sup>50</sup> He also had almost no opportunity to socialize with fellows in the field. Students' ISER

48 Stanley O. Ikenberry and Renee C. Friedman, *Beyond Academic Departments* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1972).

49 The first seven research fellows at the Institute of Social and Economic Research were the following: American Tom Philbrook, *Fisherman, Logger, Merchant, Miner: Social Change and Industrialism in Three Newfoundland Communities* (St. John's: ISER, 1966) (PhD, sociology, University of Minnesota); American John F. Szwed, *Private Cultures and Public Imagery: Interpersonal Relations in a Newfoundland Peasant Society* (St. John's: ISER, 1966) (PhD, anthropology, Ohio State University); American James C. Faris, *Cat Harbour: A Newfoundland Fishing Settlement* (St. John's: ISER, 1967) (PhD, anthropology, University of Cambridge); Israeli Shmuel Ben-Dor, *Makkovik: Eskimos and Settlers in a Labrador Community: A Contrastive Study in Adaptation* (St. John's: ISER, 1966) (PhD, anthropology, University of Minnesota); American Melvin M. Firestone, *Brothers and Rivals: Patrilocality in Savage Cove* (St. John's: ISER 1967) (PhD, anthropology, University of Washington); American Louis Chiaramonte, *Craftsmen-Client Contracts: Interpersonal Relations in a Newfoundland Fishing Community* (St. John's: ISER, 1970) (MA, anthropology, Columbia University); and Briton Gerald Mars, “An Anthropological Study of Longshoremen and of Industrial Relations in the Port of St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada” (PhD, anthropology, University of London). Except for Gerald Mars's study, all of the works listed here were published by ISER Books. His study of longshoremen was his doctoral thesis.

50 Ian Whitaker to Raymond Firth, 29 March 1963, Coll.-454, 4.01.033, ISER Archives, ASC, MUN.

reports were supposed to be completed before the expiration of their grant at the end of the second year. Whitaker was adamant that ISER reports were contractual obligations and should thus have priority over a thesis. Students, of course, did not always agree. Judging from the archival record at the Centre for Newfoundland Studies, supervising the first seven ISER fellows was not an easy task. The residents of the outposts were at least usually cooperative with ISER fellows, but Whitaker worried about the ability of the fellows to adapt to the harsh conditions of their Newfoundland locations.

Melvin Firestone and his wife lived in Savage Cove on the Great Northern Peninsula in 1963-1964. In October 1963, Firestone described their home in a letter to Whitaker:

The house we have has two floors, but we shall probably move one of the beds downstairs for the warmth. There is no running water at present, although the landlord says that he will repair the kitchen pump for us. That, however, would function only until it freezes – for about 2 ½ months. The lavatory consists of a chemical toilet upstairs which gets emptied in the ocean – about 100 feet from the door. We are learning about country living from the ground up. How to keep a fire going in the stove seems to be lesson one. The landlord, who is one of the local merchants, has been very helpful and so has his sister-in-law. She supplied us with some home made bread last night since none is available locally. Both they and we are conscious of our inadequacies, and we have somewhat been taken in hand. I am thinking of doing a paper entitled, “The Ethnologist as Boob.”

. . . We have been wearing our longies since we came, outside and in, and will probably continue to do so.<sup>51</sup>

On 22 October 1962 John Szwed wrote to Whitaker:

My trip over was a nightmare. I ruined a new tire, knocked a hole in the muffler, got mired down in the mud, the luggage rack flew off ripping the chrome off the back and scratching the top, then landed in the rain breaking in half and spilling contents in the wet. We [Szwed and his wife] managed to tie the pieces back on, but we weren't able to drive over 30 mph and we both got bad colds. The whole thing was saved, however, by the fact that the people here are quite wonderful and know the “art” of making one feel welcome (if they feel like it), and fortunately for us, they felt like it. Our Catholic status was certainly a help, for as one person confided to me, “we were certainly glad to know you were Catholics because

51 Melvin Firestone to Ian Whitaker, 10 October 1963, Coll.-454, 4.01.022, ISER Archives, ASC, MUN.



with a name like yours we thought you might be Communists.” May I say that both my wife and I are very happy with our location.<sup>52</sup>

Whitaker’s reports to the students and to their home supervisors could be surprisingly harsh. One fellow did not seem to have the motivation to do ethnography when he dismissed it as simply a rite de passage. Whitaker was concerned that the fellows establish “good rapport with several families in different status positions in the community”; however, some fellows were accused of being too shy: “You need to cultivate a rather thick skin. I think you said during my stay with you that you dislike being rebuffed; I should have taken you up on this at that moment, since I think the field worker has to be prepared to be insulted.”<sup>53</sup> The fellow, described in a letter of recommendation as a “rough diamond type,” was accused by Whitaker of taking sloppy fieldnotes and showing a “total unwillingness to take any systematic advice from myself or my other colleagues in the teaching department.” All of the fellows progressed too slowly to suit Whitaker because he pressured them to finish their work as quickly as possible in order to advance the institute.

He was also outraged that Gerald Mars had given information on how to effectively run the longshoremen’s union to a union leader. On 1 February 1964, Whitaker summarized the previous day’s conversation with Mars:

I felt that you yourself had become an agent of change, and this fact unless brought out in your writing would invalidate much of your discussion. If brought out however it would render you open to serious criticism from your colleagues, being a gross breach of the traditional role of the social scientist. I made the parallel between your behaviour and that of an anthropologist studying the religious beliefs of a “primitive” community, and deciding that they should be replaced by Christianity, and then trying to effect this change. . . . You asked why I had appointed a union man for the study, and I pointed out that I had not done this: I had appointed a former union man who was at that time a student. . . . I told you that you must at once extricate yourself from these [labour] negotiations, and in future assume a strictly observational role.<sup>54</sup>

“Salvage ethnography” was in the back of the minds of most ISER fellows, but it could be a distraction.<sup>55</sup> Many people thought they were witnessing the disappearance of a traditional way of life. Even Whitaker urged ISER fellows to

52 John Francis Szwed to Ian Whitaker, 22 October 1962, Coll.-454, 13.01.108, ISER Archives, ASC, MUN.

53 Ian Whitaker to Melvin Firestone, 28 May 1964, Coll.-454, 4.01.022, ISER Archives, ASC, MUN.

54 Ian Whitaker to Gerald Mars, 1 February 1964, Coll.-454, 4.01.033, ISER Archives, ASC, MUN.

55 Andrew Nurse, “Maurice Barbeau and the Methodology of Salvage Ethnography in Canada, 1911-51,” in *Historicizing Canadian Anthropology*, ed. Julia Harrison and Regna Darnell (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006), 52-64.

photograph traditional celebrations and material artifacts before they were disfigured by the outside world.<sup>56</sup> Five of the men (Chiaromonte, Szwed, Ben-Dor, Faris, and Firestone) contributed chapters to an edited volume about Christmas mumming, one of the most widely read social science publications about Newfoundland.<sup>57</sup> When fellows got distracted by folklore, Whitaker steered them back to topics of more orthodox anthropological interest.

The publications by early ISER fellows listed in footnote 50 above are examples of realist ethnography, the dominant convention of the time.<sup>58</sup> The basic assumption of this perspective is that there is a reality independent of the observer. Presumably anyone would come to the same conclusions as the author because little in the text suggests that representations are partial, partisan, and problematic. The author's voice is impersonal and rarely self-reflexive. The writing style does not strive to be artistic or experimental. Shmuel Ben-Dor may have been interested in breaking the stylistic conventions of realist ethnography, but Whitaker tried to prevent this:

Ben-Dor's style of writing has now changed radically and his presentation at the time verges on the flippant. There is a great deal of impressionism [in his writings] which I feel more appropriate to the novelette than to an academic study. On discussing this with him he felt he could not accept my criticisms. He argues that most theses are far too dull and that therefore something should be done to enliven them.<sup>59</sup>

Unfortunately, one can only guess what Whitaker understood by the term "impressionism." It might be any or all of the following: stories which are more entertaining than accurate, a vague remembrance, opinions backed up with insufficient evidence, subjective narratives, stories conveying emotions rather than accurate observations, and descriptions of brief moments in time with little contextual information. Some of the highlights of all the early community studies are Ben-Dor's observations about religious practices among the Inuit and white settlers in Labrador. His observations do not seem to be impressionist in any sense.<sup>60</sup>

The fellows did not elaborate on the ethnographic role they played in the outposts. They were often insiders in terms of race and gender (white men writing about white men), but with respect to class, occupation, and nationality they were outsiders. It is not clear how much time they spent socializing with local people because of the rarity of field notes in their publications. They must have been what can be called participating outsiders; otherwise, they would not have gathered

56 Louis Chiaromonte was a talented photographer. Examples of his photographs can be found in his book *Craftsman-Client Contracts* (St. John's: ISER, 1970) and in Gerald Sider's *Between History and Tomorrow: Making and Breaking Everyday Life in Rural Newfoundland* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2003).

57 Herbert Halpert and George Story, eds., *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland: Essays in Anthropology, Folklore, and History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969).

58 H.L. Goodall, Jr., *Writing the New Ethnography* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2000).

59 Ian Whitaker to Robert F. Spencer, 27 February 1964, Coll.-454, 4.01.004, ISER Archives, ASC, MUN.

60 Ben-Dor, *Makkovik*, 92-148.

sufficient information to complete their studies. With respect to work in the fishing industry, they were (with one exception) non-participating outsiders. This was Whitaker's advice to James Faris:

Only one of our field workers can really be said at the moment to be a participant observer, and he regularly goes out fishing with one of the fishing crews. I have always found in my own field work in Scotland and elsewhere that a willingness to attempt to fulfill standardized roles is as satisfactory as actually fulfilling them. When I worked among the Lapps I was in fact a reindeer herder, hired as any other young man. This was possible because there was a shortage of such people. But all our other work has been done with less adherence to the theoretical ideal, and I am not aware that it has suffered too much.<sup>61</sup>

Among the first seven projects, it was Gerald Mars's study of St. John's longshoremen that may be of most interest to sociologists because it is a detailed, descriptive study of an urban occupation.<sup>62</sup> Mars is now best known among criminologists and sociologists for his book *Cheats at Work: An Anthropology of Workplace Crime*.<sup>63</sup> In describing the institutionalized techniques for stealing goods at the harbour, Mars took an appreciative rather than correctional approach to deviance.<sup>64</sup> It was appreciative in that he was not trying to eradicate pilferage. He captured the subjects' own perspective – that pilfered goods were a moral entitlement. Among the early ISER fellows, Mars came closest to confessional ethnography. The autobiographical narrative in confessional ethnography makes readers aware of the human and professional weaknesses of the fieldworker. Mars was very frank about the difficulties of obtaining cooperation from the longshoremen and their union; however, the confessions were restricted to an appendix of the thesis. The introduction of shipping containers transformed the work of longshoremen, turning his anthropological study into history even before he had completed his thesis.

As Webb notes, the perception of the academic authorities in Newfoundland Studies was not always superior to the perception of laypersons.<sup>65</sup> According to Memorial University philosopher and native-born Newfoundlander F.L. Jackson,

61 Ian Whitaker to James Faris, 4 September 1963, Coll.-454, 4.01.020, ISER Archives, ASC, MUN.

62 Mars, "An Anthropological Study of Longshoremen and of Industrial Relations in the Port of St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada." See also these publications, which are derived from his thesis: Mars, "The Stigma Cycle: Values and Politics in a Dockland Union," in *Social Anthropology of Work*, ed. Sandra Wallman (London: Academic Press, 1979), 135-58; Mars, "Longshore Drinking, Economic Security and Union Politics in Newfoundland," in *Constructive Drinking: Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology*, ed. Mary Douglas (Cambridge, UK: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme and Cambridge University Press, 1987), 91-101; and Mars, *Advances in Criminology: Locating Deviance: Crime, Change and Organizations* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2013).

63 Gerald Mars, *Cheats at Work: An Anthropology of Workplace Crime* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982).

64 David Matza, *Becoming Deviant* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969).

65 Webb, *Observing the Outposts*, 330.

ISER fellows were not as objective as they thought. They romanticized the “earthy authenticity” of old outport life and exaggerated the insularity of Newfoundlanders by focusing on community in geographical terms and thus underestimating the extent to which Newfoundlanders identified with outside institutions such as the British Empire and the Catholic Church.<sup>66</sup>

Common stereotypes of social scientists in general may have played a role in some Newfoundlanders, notably the journalist and humorist Ray Guy, discrediting the community studies as “riddled with inaccuracies and shallow as a pothole.” He may have been hyper-sensitive due to being the butt of Newfie jokes. Indeed, Guy implies this.<sup>67</sup> One stereotype of sociologists is that they dehumanize people when they coldly and rationally observe them.<sup>68</sup> Guy wrote: “We don’t like to see our outport people pinned to the wall and examined by sociologists like rare insects. There’s room for science and scholarship, but also the need for a bit of respect for human dignity.”<sup>69</sup> Actually, Guy was complaining about anthropologists because sociologists at Memorial for the most part did not contribute to Newfoundland Studies until the 1980s. John Szwed’s portrait of the folksinger Paul E. Hall might substantiate the claim that social scientists romanticized outport life. Hall was a bachelor, destitute, and an outsider even within his own community. The following description of Hall’s home is an introduction to the Newfoundlander’s account of how he taught himself to read:

Today Paulie’s house is cramped with an accumulation of a lifetime: bottles of home-brew, an assortment of farm and woods tools, hand-carved butter paddles, hats, calendars, and buckets fill the tiny space. An assortment of socks has been drying over the stove for the four years I have known him and, for all I know, have been dry for twenty years. Most striking, though, is an astonishing pile of newspapers and magazines dating back to the 1920s; one pile, covered with a sheepskin, forms a day-bed. Having had no formal education, Paulie as a young man set out to become a reader.<sup>70</sup>

Does this paragraph romanticize the shack Paul Hall built as a home and thus the builder? Yes, to some extent. Readers can easily imagine features that were downplayed: dirt, odors, and disorder. The important story for the anthropologist

66 Unfortunately, Jackson’s perception cannot easily be checked with respect to the 1960s because he did not name specific people, publications, or research projects; see F.L. Jackson, *Surviving Confederation* (St. John’s: Harry Cuff Publications, 1986). Jackson did write a detailed criticism of articles that had appeared in a special issue of *Labour/Le Travail* devoted to Newfoundland history; see F.L. Jackson, “The Marxist Mystification of Newfoundland Culture,” *Newfoundland Studies* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1990): 267-81.

67 See Ray Guy, *Ray Guy: The Smallwood Years* (Portugal Cove, NL: Boulder Publications 2008), 85.

68 Diane Bjorklund, “Sociologists as Characters in Twentieth-Century Novels,” *American Sociologist* 32, no. 4 (Winter 2002): 24.

69 Guy, *Ray Guy*, 85-6.

70 John Francis Szwed, “Paul E. Hall, a Newfoundland Song-Maker and his Community of Song,” in Henry Glassie, Edward D. Ives, and John F. Szwed, *Folksongs and their Makers* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1970), 153.

was Hall as an artist who had transcended the limitations of his environment. Hall's songs received the attention normally reserved for the fine arts and commercially successful popular music. For Szwed, one of Hall's satirical songs about bachelorhood illustrated community values. Hall represented the kind of local culture common before the era of radio and television. There is respect, even love, in this portrait.

### **ISER recreated**

In 1959 Ian Whitaker was appointed at Memorial while Robert Paine arrived in 1965. Together they recreated ISER. Ian Whitaker was an energetic executive; Robert Paine was a visionary. The Department of Sociology and Anthropology, ISER, and ISER Books would have had very different histories without Robert Paine.<sup>71</sup> Although Paine was department head for only three years (1965-1968), it was a crucial period because he came with a mandate to create a department.<sup>72</sup> Robert Paine made no claim, to my knowledge, to be a sociologist. However, he did serve as director of "sociological" research at the institute from 1965 to 1973 and was in charge of ISER publications from 1966 to 1994. In 1965, when Paine applied for the position at MUN, he was 39 years old. His accomplishments included one book and a dozen articles about the Saami in Scandinavia. He later published several papers and books about Newfoundland but is celebrated in his obituaries primarily as a specialist of Saami reindeer pastoralism, the topic of his most ambitious research.<sup>73</sup>

One of Paine's projects that never got off the ground is relevant to this article. He tried to write a textbook for Paladin Books giving more substance to Erving Goffman's concepts of impression management but progressed no further than a synopsis titled "The Performing Self."<sup>74</sup> The synopsis and his other publications show that Paine's knowledge of the American sociological literature was quite superficial and, unfortunately, the synopsis was circulated prematurely to critics. Otherwise, Paine might have become one of the pioneers in the secondary literature about Goffman. I suspect that Paine dropped this project once he realized the difficulties he faced. He may also have thought it was more fun to study and live with Saami reindeer herders.

Beginning in 1966, with Paine as co-director, ISER funding was made available to MUN faculty members in the form of joint appointments between the institute and

71 Robert Paine, who earned a doctorate in social anthropology from the University of Oxford, worked at MUN from 1965-1994; was born 1926 in Portsmouth, UK; and died in 2010 in St. John's.

72 To be more exact, the sociology and anthropology section of the Department of Social Studies was headed by Paine from 1965 to 1967; from 1967 to 1968 Paine headed the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

73 Robert Paine, *Coast Lapp Society, Vol. I: A Study of Neighbourhood in Revsbotn Fjord* (Tromsø, NOR: Tromsø Museum, 1957); Robert Paine, *Coast Lapp Society, Vol. II: A Study of Economic Development and Social Values* (Tromsø, NOR: Universitetsforlaget, 1965); Robert Paine, *Herds of the Tundra: A Portrait of Saami Reindeer Pastoralism* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994); Robert Paine, *Camps of the Tundra: Politics through Reindeer among Saami Pastoralists* (Oslo: Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 2009).

74 Robert Paine, "The Performing Self" (draft), 1971, in Robert Paine's non-catalogued papers, ASC, MUN.

a university department, giving new faculty members more time to do research. Also, one could expect that in general faculty members would remain longer at Memorial than doctoral students and thus were more likely to continue research projects about the province. ISER's geographical focus expanded to include the eastern Arctic and the northern North Atlantic. Paine even aspired to include Appalachia and the West Indies, but these regions never attracted much interest among Memorial University anthropologists. The number of affiliated disciplines expanded to encompass history, political science, and occasionally psychology, although anthropology and sociology remained the institute's greatest strength. Community studies documenting the outports became rare. More funds were also available for research by Memorial's MA students, and ISER began to publish books and reports. Over the years the appearance of the books became increasingly professional and Paine organized ambitious conferences.<sup>75</sup>

Between September 1965 and March 1971 – under Paine's direction – ISER sponsored 44 projects in sociology and anthropology by 45 scholars. A mere 11 of these projects went to sociologists; a 12th was assigned to specialists in both fields. With one exception (a two-person team), all of the sociologists were working alone. After Paine arrived the introductory sociology course at Memorial was replaced by a course entitled "Principles of Anthropology and Sociology." It soon proved to be unsatisfactory and the department returned to separate courses introducing the two disciplines.<sup>76</sup>

Anthropologist Jean Briggs – enticed to come to Memorial by Robert Paine – spoke in an interview about the role Paine played in the department and institute during his early years at Memorial:

Yes, Robert Paine did privilege anthropology at the expense of sociology. He had a very narrow sense of disciplinary boundaries. That's where he and I came a cropper. . . .<sup>77</sup> He particularly scorned and abominated survey research. Somebody like MUN survey researcher Clint Herrick was at the bottom of the pile. But you notice he hired Clint because he thought the sociologists wanted him.

Robert thought I was a "traitor" to my discipline because I did not give beans about disciplinary boundaries. I thought we should stay as we were [a joint Department of Sociology and Anthropology]. Robert had this British school boy value that he placed on team loyalty which I thought was a can of beans. I was also opposed to teams and loyalty.<sup>78</sup>

75 See Douglas House, "ISER Retrospect and Prospect," in *ISER Research and Policy Papers*, No. 15 (St. John's: ISER Books, November 1992), 7-32.

76 Webb also reported that some MUN sociologists felt that Paine did not promote both sociology and anthropology to the same extent; see Webb, *Observing the Outports*, 308, 342.

77 The informal expression "cropper" means to suffer a misfortune or to fail. In other words, Briggs's and Paine's opposing views tested their friendship.

78 Jean Briggs, interview by author, 22 February 2012, typescript in possession of author.



Paine could be very sociable, even charismatic. He was able to attract anthropologists from other universities, quite important because Newfoundland is such an out-of-the-way place. He soon went “head hunting” to Harvard but he knew few sociologists, a reflection of the late development of sociology in Great Britain. Paine created a link between Norwegian anthropologists and Memorial University on the basis of the excellent Norwegian scholars he knew (Ottar Brox, Georg Henriksen, and Cato Wadel). It was logical to appoint them because they had written either about the fishing industry or the Aboriginal populations in North America. However, none of the sociologists at Memorial was interested in Norway. There are also stories about Paine’s hostility to quantitative methods. “When I first came to Memorial in 1967,” Clint Herrick complained in writing to the dean of arts and science,

neither the Department of Sociology and Anthropology nor ISER owned a desk calculator. I was told by Robert Paine . . . that we were not going to buy a desk calculator. Not because there was no money . . . but because, in his estimation, a desk calculator is not an important tool for sociologists and anthropologists. “After all,” he explained, “we learn mostly from books.” . . . He has also discouraged quantitative sociological research in his capacity as Director of Sociological Research for ISER.<sup>79</sup>

While there was competition between sociology and anthropology, it is essential to note that there was also cooperation. ISER still exists, although in a modified form, and despite its modest beginnings was better organized than the contemporary Saskatchewan Centre for Community Study founded in 1958 and abolished in 1964. That centre was publicly funded, and some years its annual budget was \$200,000. However, the Saskatchewan centre was fatally flawed in being simultaneously an action-oriented agency and a research institute. It was also not as well integrated into a university environment as was ISER.<sup>80</sup> Although some 1960s research at ISER was action-oriented – notably investigations related to the resettlement of rural populations – ISER research generally was more consistent with academic interests.

Under Robert Paine, ISER and its publishing company ISER Books became a symbol of sociology and anthropology at Memorial University. From its founding until 1968 it received \$310,042 dollars.<sup>81</sup> And thanks to Robert Paine, ISER gave

79 Clinton Herrick to MUN Dean of Arts and Science, 16 September 1972, MUN President’s Office files, box PO-36, Faculty of Arts, Sociology and Anthropology, MUN.

80 ISER, *Report of the Institute of Social and Economic Research 1965-68* (St. John’s: Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1968), n.p.: “The Institute is in effect a research arm of the University. It is an integral part, and not an autonomous appendage, of the University. It is so organized that all of its officers also serve the University in other capacities . . .” For information about the Saskatchewan Centre for Community Study, see Arthur K. Davis, *Farewell to Earth: The Collected Writings of Arthur K. Davis*, vol. I (Adamant, VT: Adamant Press, 1991), 294-314.

81 Funds directly from Memorial University amounted to \$95,000, the Government of Canada (Departments of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Northern Affairs) contributed \$68,900, while the Government of Canada (Atlantic Development Board, Agricultural and Rural Development Act,

Memorial a competitive edge over other eastern Canadian universities in that ISER helped attract faculty members because it was one of the few agencies funding academic research. The bonanza it offered included basic funding for research, an institutional link making a project more credible in the public's eyes, the chance of publication through ISER Books, opportunities to teach undergraduates, and interaction with colleagues in St. John's who were genuinely interested in other people's research about Newfoundland. Even by today's standards, such support is remarkable. ISER Books was a niche publisher specializing in sociology and anthropology, and although it never attained the status of a university press – a label that implies a broader focus – many anthropology students in Canada from the 1970s to the 1990s would have read ISER publications during their studies.<sup>82</sup>

### Conclusions – the rise and fall of community studies

For different reasons – disputes over a salary and a promotion, and the withdrawal of a promised one-year leave of absence – the three sociology instructors at Memorial resigned in the winter term of 1964. The resignations jeopardized both the future of ISER and sociology at Memorial. It was too late to properly advertise for replacements. Seventy-five-year-old Nels Anderson was one of the replacements. Anderson was the most distinguished sociologist who taught at Memorial in the 1960s. Although he is remembered primarily for writing a Chicago School classic, *The Hobo: The Sociology of the Homeless Man*, Anderson's publication record is extensive.<sup>83</sup> Memorial University was the first institution of higher education to offer Anderson a full-time teaching contract; he had spent much of his life in government service and had taught briefly at other universities.<sup>84</sup> Almost as soon as Paine arrived in St. John's, Anderson feared that Paine might neglect sociology. Criticism of Paine appears in a half-dozen letters: Anderson wrote to his wife Helen Merchel-Anderson, sociologist Douglas Pullman at the University of New Brunswick, and George Britt of New York City, who edited *Silurian News*. For example, Anderson wrote to his wife on 4 February 1966: "School work goes well. I keep much to myself. Paine as I thought from the first day, is a good man but not sure of himself, very anxious to be more important, have a big office and now wants

Canada Council, and Northern Coordination Research Centre) contributed \$125,830 and the Government of Newfoundland (departments of Community Development, Finance, and Labour) \$17,432. Other sources ("St. John's Municipal Council, foundations, miscellaneous agencies, anonymous donors") contributed \$17,880. See Leslie Harris, *Report of the Institute of Social and Economic Research 1965-1968* (St. John's: ISER), n.p.

82 ISER books (founded in 1966) published 8 titles in the 1960s, 22 in the 1970s, 22 in the 1980s, 31 in the 1990s, and 14 from 2000 to 2009 for a total of 97 titles. Approximately 111,500 copies were sold during these years. See Robert Paine and Lawrence Felt, "Reflections on ISER Books," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 48, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 172.

83 Nels Anderson, *The Hobo: Sociology of the Homeless Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967). The Chicago School of Sociology refers to the type of qualitative research undertaken at the University of Chicago from circa 1915 to 1935. It was typically urban ethnography of communities perceived as a social problem and tended to be more descriptive than theoretical.

84 Noel Iverson, "Nels Anderson: A Profile," *Labour/Le Travail* 63 (Spring 2009): 181-205.

a secretary. He knows nothing about sociology so he puts anthropology up and sociology down, so the best for me is to stay at the typewriter, see and hear but say nothing.”<sup>85</sup>

While one might expect that he would have appreciated early ISER research – his famous study of Chicago’s hoboemia (a neighborhood of artistic bohemians and hobos) was partly ethnographic – he was very critical as evidenced by his comments to Douglas Pullman about the presentations by speakers at a colloquium held in April 1966 – “The Newfoundland Community Studies: An Overview” – who were fellows that Whitaker had supervised:

None of the papers touch the heart of problems of Newfoundland. We learned much about the villages around the edge, each village different from the rest, naturally since each tends to be isolated. For a public functionary seriously coping with the big social problems of the island, this material may be interesting but cannot be very helpful.<sup>86</sup>

Anderson thought that ISER studies were too modest, should have been the work of teams of researchers, and should have employed Newfoundlanders as interviewers and researchers. His reference to the Tennessee Valley Authority in the following letter might be excessive, but otherwise his opinions were consistent with mainstream American sociology. In 1965 Anderson wrote Conrad Arensberg at Columbia about how ISER had been “limping along for some . . . years, but has never really taken off the ground”:

There have been some earnest grand gestures and some studies by individuals, all imported from elsewhere, each more or less turned loose without much direction except from professors elsewhere producing reports to be published elsewhere. There has never developed a nucleus, a working center for the institute . . . This is the time to make a study of a sizable area of several or a dozen villages. The study should be joined in by geographers, economists, anthropologists, sociologists, perhaps psychologists. It should be a joint project running about two years and it should use the best students from this institution who get no chance to touch research and there are some good ones, not sharp like some, but serious, steady, patient. They come from these places, know the life, which some of the imported students do not, until after months being here.

An outside shove is needed to get such a study started. It has to be bigger than the little ventures which seem to come to mind here. I would be glad to help design the plan for the big project to keep a

85 Nels Anderson to his wife Helen Merchel-Anderson, 4 February 1966, unpublished letter in the possession of Noel Iverson, Hamilton, ON.

86 Nels Anderson to Douglas R. Pullman, 2 May 1966, unpublished letter in the possession of Noel Iverson, Hamilton, ON.

dozen at work for a couple of years. I fear that such a plan could not get financed from the limited funds available. There is needed a nest-egg fund from the outside, enough to tempt some outsider, preferably a Canadian to be put in charge. Once started, some public funds would be attracted to it. The situation is like TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority], the idea must be brought in. And here is a frontier for a mansize[d] cross-disciplinary research.<sup>87</sup>

The Bureau for Applied Social Research in New York may be the model Anderson had in mind for ISER. The director of the bureau, Paul Lazarsfeld, made the organization into a “general-purpose, autonomous, unspecialized research center” that emphasized teamwork.<sup>88</sup> Lazarsfeld advocated using multiple methods, both quantitative and qualitative.

Community study – especially undertaken by a single young person – was not an ideal method of research. Its eclecticism undermined sociology’s claim to professional status. A historian could have written a better introductory chapter on the history of an outport, a cultural geographer a better description of the environment, etc. As Bell and Newby argue, community study tended to rest “all too frequently on the observations of a single person, the procedures of observation are not systematized, there is no guarantee that another investigator would produce similar results.” Community study was “perhaps acceptable as a branch of humanistic studies,” but it “certainly cannot be taken seriously as social science.”<sup>89</sup>

The emphasis on one year of ethnography is understandable when fellows arrived with no experience of Newfoundland. Surveys and interviews, however, could have been conducted more quickly. The research on rural resettlement by Noel Iverson and Ralph Matthews showed that in the 1960s it was possible to do research in rural Newfoundland using surveys, especially if the interviewers were Newfoundlanders, and that it was not necessary to live for an extended period of time in a community before starting the survey.<sup>90</sup> The use of ethnography limited competition for research positions within sociology because it was not the most popular method of research. Spending a year in an outport must also have conflicted with the plans of many spouses. ISER grants were insufficient for a married researcher with children, although a family was a great asset for making social contacts in the outports. Newfoundland in the 1960s was probably not “exotic” enough to attract many anthropology students. The exception would have been students who wanted to live among the Aboriginal populations in Labrador, those interested in small-scale fishing, and those who wanted to conduct research about the Irish diaspora.

87 Nels Anderson to Conrad M. Arensberg, 1 April 1965, Coll.-454, 2.01.001, ISER Archives, ASC, MUN.

88 Allen H. Barton, “Paul Lazarsfeld and the Invention of the University Institute for Applied Social Research,” in *Organizing for Social Research*, ed. Burkart Holzner and Jiri Nehnevajsa (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing Company, 1982), 69.

89 Bell and Newby, *Community Studies*, 17.

90 Webb, *Observing the Outports*, 300. See also Noel Iverson and D. Ralph Matthews, *Communities in Decline: An Examination of Household Resettlement in Newfoundland* (St. John’s: ISER Books, 1968).

In Britain, community studies declined during the 1970s. Neo-Marxist political economy became popular and shifted attention from communities to larger social structures such as the state.<sup>91</sup> The same happened in Newfoundland. Prior to the 1980s few MUN sociologists were engaged in research about Newfoundland. In the last two decades of the 20th century the sociologists who contributed the most to Newfoundland Studies were typically British or Canadian rather than American. Almost all of them were influenced by neo-Marxist political economy.

Multidisciplinary departments make sense intellectually. However, their optimal functioning requires a head who altruistically looks after the interests of all the disciplines under his or her leadership and has a wide network of professional contacts while at the same time having a bureaucratic arrangement that can restrain the head's influence. In the 1960s this organizational structure was not in place at Memorial. By the early 1970s, there had come to be an imbalance in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. The anthropologists were more accomplished than the sociologists. This article has emphasized the actions of Whitaker and Paine, which contributed to this imbalance. But it must be noted that this was not the only cause. Before coming to Memorial the anthropologists had typically engaged in ethnographic studies in rural areas and were more tolerant of life in a small city like St. John's.<sup>92</sup> The department split went into effect on 1 September 1973. The sociologists probably thought that without the interference of the anthropologists they could work out their priorities better. A majority of the anthropologists probably thought that they would have a much better department if they could just get rid of the sociologists.<sup>93</sup>

A fundamental idea of the sociology of knowledge is that theory and methods are more than technical devices for solving intellectual puzzles. What counts as sociology and anthropology depends on location and generation. Neither professional nor commonsense knowledge is based solely on the rational assessment of evidence. In that respect social scientists are no different than, let's say, homemakers and small-scale fishers. The aim of this article has been to bring to light the professional networks, institutional resources, and disciplinary dynamics that influenced the early community studies of Newfoundland. While they were not the only forces shaping the early community studies, they are among the forces best documented in the surviving archives and in the recollections of the oldest sociologists and anthropologists at Memorial University.

91 Martin Bulmer, "The Rejuvenation of Community Studies? Neighbours, Networks and Policy," *Sociological Review* 33, no. 3 (August 1985): 430-48.

92 Tom Nemec, commentary on a draft of Stephen Riggins's history of sociology at Memorial University, 17 June 2008. The different state of the two disciplines is evident in Anthony P. Cohen's article about the "Memorial University School of Anthropology" as no one would have thought there was a Memorial University School of Sociology. See Anthony P. Cohen, "The Anthropology of Proximate Cultures: The Newfoundland School and Scotland," *Scottish Journal of Sociology* 4, no. 2 (May 1980): 213-26.

93 This last sentence is a remark Volker Meja made to the author (personal communication, St. John's, 2009). It is more than an impressionistic comment. Meja began teaching sociology in St. John's during the last year of the joint Department of Sociology and Anthropology. He became the first head of Memorial's independent Department of Sociology. The author's unpublished examination of the careers of early MUN sociologists is consistent with Meja's remark.