

# RE-INSCRIBING GENDER RELATIONS THROUGH EMPLOYMENT-RELATED GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY: THE CASE OF NEWFOUNDLAND YOUTH IN RESOURCE EXTRACTION

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*Abstract.* Despite the popular representation of the masculine hero migrant (Ni Laoire, 2001), rural youth scholars have found that young men are more likely to stay on in their communities, while young women tend to be more mobile, leaving for education and better employment opportunities elsewhere (Corbett, 2007b; Lowe, 2015). Taking a spatialized approach (Farrugia, Smyth & Harrison, 2014), we contribute to and extend the rural youth studies scholarship on gender, mobilities and place by considering the case of young Newfoundlanders' geographical mobilities in relation to male-dominated resource extraction industries. We draw on findings from two SSHRC-funded research projects, the Rural Youth and Recovery project, a subcomponent of the Community-University Research for Recovery Alliance (CURRA) and the Youth, Apprenticeship and Mobility project, a subcomponent of the On the Move Partnership. We argue that the spatial coding of gender relations in rural Newfoundland makes certain kinds of mobilities more intelligible and possible for young men, while constraining women's. In other words, gender relations of rural places are "stretched out" (Farrugia et al., 2014) across space through the mobility practices of young men and women in relation to work in skilled trades and resource extraction industries. These "stretched out" gender relations are reproduced by the organisation of a sector that relies on a mobile workforce free from care and domestic work and familiar with manual work.

**Keywords:** Gender; Youth; Alberta; Newfoundland; Resource extraction; Fort McMurray; Employment; Mobility; Mobile Workforce

## INTRODUCTION

The gendered nature of rural youth migration is well established both in Canada (Corbett, 2007a, b, c; Norman and Power, 2015; Ommer, 2007) and in other places (Kenway et al., 2006; Lowe, 2015; Ni Laoire, 2001, 2011), with rural young men being more likely to stay on in their communities, while young women are more likely to leave for education and to pursue different kinds of employment opportunities (Corbett 2007b, Cloke and Little, 1997, Lowe, 2015, Rye, 2006; Thissen et al., 2010). In this paper, we tell a somewhat different story of young people's mobilities – one that focuses on how place-specific gender relations enable the employment-related geographical mobilities (ERGMs) of rural young men in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. ERGM encompasses a spectrum of mobility practices related to employment, and their spatial and temporal dimensions, that includes outmigration as well as long commutes to and from work, travelling to remote work locations for extended periods of time and so on (Newhook et al., 2011). Recent public and policy discussions on the (primarily economic) viability of rural communities in the province have focused on the interrelated impacts of young people's ERGMs (e.g., youth outmigration, inter- and intra-provincial labour mobility), the aging demographic structure of the province's population, and a trend toward rural depopulation and expanded urban growth (Simms and Greenwood, 2015). Power (2017) has argued that public and media discourse has attributed rural decline largely to young people's outmigration and their poor decision-making in relation to education and training. This interpretation ignores the complexity and range of mobility practices among rural young people in the province. While outmigration and labour mobility are not new phenomena, a shift in the province's economy from a reliance on wild fisheries to resource extraction in the oil and gas, construction and mining sectors is shaping current patterns of intra- and inter-provincial workforce mobility. As elsewhere, employment in resource extraction remains male-dominated, despite diversity initiatives aimed at attracting women to the industry. Focusing specifically on women's and men's employment and related mobility practices that are differently positioned or orientated (Ahmed, 2006) in relation to resource extraction, we examine how place-specific gender relations shape the mobility experiences of young people at the same time that they are reproduced through mobility. We argue that these gendered mobilities have inequitable consequences for youth, where place-specific gender power relations are reproduced through mobility, privileging some while oppressing others. Taking a spatialized sociological approach (Farrugia et al., 2014), we argue that

by shedding insight on the complex intersections between place, gender and ERGM, this research has important implications for creating more equitable gender relations among young people living in rural contexts.

In order to make this argument, we first review the youth studies literature on gender and outmigration, and make the case for taking a spatialized approach to the relationship between gender and young people's ERGMs. Next, we describe the two research projects, the Rural Youth and Recovery project and the Apprenticeship, Youth and Mobility project, which inform our findings. This description is followed by a brief account of the recent economic and industrial restructuring of the provincial economy from a reliance on wild fisheries to increased dependency on oil, gas, and mining industries, as well as the government initiatives supporting this shift such as efforts aimed at recruitment and retention of young women to the sector. We then present the ERGM experiences of the youth in the studies, focusing on how women's and men's mobility experiences are structured in relation to each other, which produces different orientations to employment in resource extraction. We identify a number of mechanisms that shape gendered mobilities including men's networks of recruitment into resource extraction-related employment, women's responsibilities for social reproductive work, and the gender wage gap. Next, we describe how men talked about work and the types of work that "suited" them, paying particular attention to how rural places shape an orientation towards certain kinds of (masculine) frontier work and mobilities, work that is differentiated from women's work. Finally, we conclude with an examination of how, far from displacing place-specific gender relations, in some instances mobility actually served to reproduce gendered identities and inequalities.

### **YOUTH, GENDER AND MIGRATION FROM RURAL AREAS**

Despite the prevalence of popular representations that construct mobility as a heroically masculine endeavour (Ni Laoire, 2001), rural young men are more likely to stay on in their communities, while young women tend to be more mobile, as they leave for education and better employment opportunities elsewhere (Corbett, 2007c; Lowe, 2015). This pattern of gendered mobility is partly attributable to the distinct division of labour that stubbornly persists in many rural communities in the industrialized world that have seen widespread restructuring and corporatization of agricultural, fishing and other primary industries that have historically sustained rural communities. Broadly speaking, a male-centric culture has been identified in rural communities (Cloke and Little, 1997; Rye,

2006; Thissen et al., 2010), and this culture coupled with limited and highly gendered employment options in their rural communities (Alston, 2004; Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006) contributes to the outmigration of young women as they search for – though do not necessarily find – more equitable opportunities in regional and urban centres elsewhere. The resultant pattern of gendered mobility of young people has brought about what Alston and Kent (2009, 92), in speaking of the rural Australian context, refer to as a “masculinized population profile”. These shifts have brought a number of rural scholars to question what happens to rural masculinities when “local men’s worlds of work change” (Kenway et al., 2006, 61) and, along with them, place-specific gender relations are potentially re-organized (Ni Laoire, 2001, 2004).

In coastal fishing communities in Atlantic Canada specifically, rigid gender divisions of labour persist (Lowe, 2015), despite the dramatic restructuring in recent years of what Corbett (2007a, 787) refers to as the “patriarchal fishery.” Although the young women in Corbett’s study are more highly educated than their male counterparts, the local employment structure advantages young men, who earn higher incomes with less education in the dominant local industry, the fishery. Those women who do stay in—or return to—their rural communities tend to experience poorer employment outcomes, taking up mainly part-time and precarious employment in the growing service sector. These jobs are regarded as an opportunity to do gender appropriate, stop-gap work for young women who later decide to leave rural communities to pursue education or to stay by marrying a man (Corbett, 2007b).

Describing the context in rural Ireland, Ni Laoire (2001) suggests that rural restructuring represents a threat to certain forms of rural masculinity, namely hegemonic farming masculinities. Many rural Irish men have invested in traditional masculine scripts of self-reliance by staying on and working on family farms, even though it may no longer be economically prudent for them to do so as they lose out to larger commercial farms (Ni Laoire, 2004). They do so in part because of their advantaged position in the local agricultural economy, as well as out of a sense of duty to protect a valued and traditional way of life. This experience, however, sits in contrast to the popular hero narrative of the male migrant who is progressive, pursuing a career and experiencing modern, urban life. The implication is a cultural devaluation of staying “behind” in the agricultural way of life, now considered not only traditional but also backward (2001, 225; see also Farrugia, 2015). Within this context, Ni Laoire explains that many men “struggle to maintain identity (and control) in changing rural society” and she speculates that these changing worlds of work, and the erosion of the masculine identi-

ties they once supported, may be contributing to the high rates of suicide amongst rural Irish men (2001, 233). Despite their lack of commercial success and the changing economic basis of Irish society, these men reject mobile and entrepreneurial scripts of masculine self-improvement (Kenway et al., 2006). Instead, the farmers recuperate their status both within the community and at home by emphasizing their “relationship with land” as opposed to the “managerial aspects” of successful farming, thereby drawing upon “dominant notions of farming masculinity as tough men’s work” (Ni Laoire, 2004, 294). Similarly, youth studies have found that in rural contexts where there are limited opportunities in historically male-dominated occupations, boys and young men turn to outdoor leisure practices as a means of expressing traditional masculinities (see Kenway & Hickey-Moody, 2009; Norman, Power & Dupre, 2011).

Defining rural masculinity as one’s “relationship with land” or through the symbolism of wilderness is widely noted (see Brandth, 2016; Campbell et al., 2006; Pini & Mayes, 2014), where rural boys and men display their acumen through physically fit bodies able to endure, if not conquer, the challenges of nature (Little, 2002) both in work and in leisure-based activities (Brandth, 2016; Kenway & Hickey-Moody, 2009; Norman et al., 2011; Rye, 2006). Indeed, nature-based leisure practices serve as important cultural sites where place-specific masculine identities can be performed and confirmed through intergenerational mentoring in local knowledges about place, which are especially significant given the diminished opportunities for such exchanges in traditional primary industries, such as fishing and logging (Kenway & Hickey-Moody, 2009). The notion of masculinity as reproduced through, and rooted in, a “topographical intimacy” (Lippard, 1997 cited in Kenway et al., 2006, 98) with place-specific geographies highlights that although constructions of masculinity specifically, and gendered identities more broadly, are increasingly homogenized and globalized, they are nonetheless “also produced and reproduced in local contexts” (Ni Laoire, 2011, 315).

Connell’s (1993) notion of “frontier masculinity” captures this relationship between place and gender. The term describes a form of masculinity rooted in mythological constructions of the frontier, embodied in cultural icons such as the ‘cowboy’ and real and imaginary heroes such as Daniel Boone, Paul Bunyan (Anahita & Mix, 2006), as well as constructions more specific to the Canadian context, including Joe Mufferaw (or Montferrand) and the couriers de bois. The frontiersman is the epitome of the “manly man,” a phrase we borrow from one of our young focus group participants, characterized by romanticized ideals of being physically powerful, courageous, fiercely independent and self-reliant; qualities that are all brought to bear in the aggressive domina-

tion of nature (see Anahita & Mix, 2006). The concept has also been used to describe decidedly masculinized resource extraction industries, particularly oil and mining, in both the Canadian (see Miller, 2004) and Australian contexts (see Carrington, McIntosh and Scott, 2010; Pini & Mayes, 2014). For instance, based on their examination of media representations of the ‘Diggers and Dealers,’ an annual resource extraction conference that takes place in the rural Australian mining community of Kalgoorlie, Pini and Mayes (2014) situate rurality, similar to masculinity itself, as a verb that is performatively embodied. They point to the mostly urban executives in attendance who enact a “voracious and unbridled rural masculine heterosexuality of the frontier man” (432), which is most often performed through the solicitation of sex workers. Interestingly, many authors that use the concept seem to forget the other factor that Connell includes in constructions of frontier masculinity, namely that it is also an imperial masculinity that facilitates historical and ongoing processes of settler colonial dispossession of Indigenous lands. In this regard, mythological constructions of frontier masculinity have served—and continue to serve—broader intersecting symbolic and material logics of globalized capitalism and heteropatriarchy as well as settler colonialism and white supremacy (see Moreton-Robinson, 2016). Although the examples above speak more to the experiences of adult masculinities, scholars have noted that constructions of rugged, closer-to-nature ideals of frontier masculinity have also informed constructions of the proper development of boys and young men. In particular, the ideal of frontier masculinity can be found behind initiatives such as the Boy Scouts and YMCA residential camps, which were designed to (re) masculinize boys and young men who were supposedly ‘feminized’ by urban lifestyles by introducing them to remote and wilderness contexts (see Lesko, 2001).

We contribute to the youth studies scholarship on gender and mobilities by considering the case of young Newfoundlanders’ geographical mobilities in relation to male-dominated resource extraction industries. Our choice to focus on resource extraction is grounded in a shift in the province’s economy and its large mobile workforce that travels inter-provincially, especially to Alberta’s oil/tar sands, for employment in the sector (Simms and Greenwood, 2015). This case differs somewhat from the rural youth literature on migration described above in that it is men, not women, who are more directly engaged in mobilities related to resource extraction, particularly as skilled trades workers and ‘unskilled’ labourers. Research shows that women’s underrepresentation in skilled trades is linked to the tension between the gendered double standard related to child and domestic work, and the expectation of

long hours (Wright 2017) and long commutes (Barber, 2016). Further, men's mobility in resource extraction is enabled by the unpaid care work women do back home (Pini & Mayes, 2012). Unlike the rural to urban flow described in much of the rural youth literature, the young men's and women's mobilities we focus on are largely to and from rural and/or remote regions both intra- and inter-provincially. Resource extraction tends to be situated in rural and remote locales requiring flows of labour from other places, and the related mobility practices are configured by global capitalist logics. This configuration requires us to consider how and why places are connected, how this configuration is produced by and produces the "power geometry" (Massey 1998) of uneven development and inequalities related to global and regional movements of people.

To do this, we respond to Farrugia and colleague's call (2014) for a spatialized sociology of rural youth studies. According to Farrugia and colleagues (2014), such a project involves a nuanced spatial analysis that problematizes the neat and tidy categories that too often characterize rural youth mobility studies. Specifically, they point to reductive constructions that make foregone conclusions about youth as "metro-centric" and "placeless," which not only provide little insight into the messiness and fluidity of young people's lived mobilities, but also ultimately serve to reproduce equally reductive dichotomies between the "rural" and "urban". As an alternative, they draw on the work of Henri Lefebvre, advocating for the simultaneous examination of the broader conditions of possibility that structure inequalities, as well as the everyday place-based relationships that are formative of young people's identities and mobility biographies (Farrugia et al., 2014, 296). Elsewhere, Farrugia (2015) suggests that a sensitivity to the complex spatialities of rural youth mobilities involves simultaneously considering the structural, symbolic and non-representational or affective dimensions that shape youth mobility biographies. The structural dimensions are likely the most common consideration in the rural youth mobilities literature, where regional social and economic inequalities (particularly, rural-urban inequalities) are identified as a primary driver for youth out-migration (see Alston & Kent, 2009; Lowe, 2015; Rao, 2010). Regional disparities, however, must always be understood in relation to broader "power geometries," which include processes of restructuring brought about by neoliberal policies, globalization and environmental degradation (Power et al., 2014a). Moreover, linear analyses of youth migration (e.g., migration from 'disadvantaged' rural to 'advantaged' urban settings for work or education) do not capture the complexity of youth mobilities. Rather, young people engage in a multiplicity of mobilities between spaces acquiring, as they move, "social resources distributed

across different spaces in order to construct biographies stretched across taken for granted rural/urban dichotomies” (Farrugia, 2015, 5). Moreover, we would add to Farrugia’s analysis that social resources are also acquired through mobilities between diverse rural spaces (e.g., more or less industrialized ruralities, such as the oil industries in northern Alberta and rural Newfoundland fishing communities). The second dimension is also relatively well established in the literature, where places are symbolically coded or discursively constructed as, for example, lively, full of opportunity and progressive, in the case of urban spaces, while rural spaces are often constructed as empty, boring and old fashioned—albeit safe and peaceful (see Farrugia, 2015; Kenway et al., 2006; Norman et al., 2015). The symbolic dimensions have been identified as critical factors in how youth come to understand and experience their rural communities, thus shaping their mobility biographies (Ni Laoire, 2000). For the third dimension, Farrugia (2015) turns to non-representational theories to examine the embodied, sensuous connection between self, place and mobility. Here, research examines how place incites feelings of, for example, comfort and belonging or discomfort and disorientation, and how these affective, more-than-rational factors influence mobility decisions (see Farrugia, Smyth & Harrison, 2015; Norman et al., 2015; Power et al., 2014b). Indeed, when taken together, these three dimensions enable a supple and complex analysis of the mobility biographies of rural youth.

Taking a spatialized sociological approach to our examination of rural youth mobilities, as Farrugia and colleagues encourage, had a number of important implications for our research. First, it allowed us to understand mobility in complex and non-linear ways (e.g., more than a simple out-migration analysis), where mobility practices are embedded at the structural, symbolic and affective levels, shaping how young people understand and experience mobility. Moreover, it allowed us to examine how social inequalities are reproduced through mobility, as place-specific gender relations are “stretched out” across diverse places. With the mobilities related to largely working-class jobs in the resource extraction sector as our point of departure, we show how local gender relations orientate ERGM possibilities and how they produce and get reproduced by gendered structures of work in resource extraction. Ahmed’s (2006) concept “orientation” is useful here, pointing to how bodies start from particular places, making some directions more possible and feeling more familiar than others. In this sense, the spatialized dimensions of economic development in resource extraction have “stretched out” (Farrugia et al. 2014) gender inequalities across space.



## THE PROJECTS AND METHODS

Our findings emerge from two SSHRC-funded research projects, the Rural Youth and Recovery project, a subcomponent of the Community-University Research for Recovery Alliance (CURRA) and the Youth, Apprenticeship and Mobility project, a subcomponent of the On the Move Partnership. Among other things, both research projects are concerned with understanding the nature and impacts of employment and mobility among young people. Together, the research projects span over a decade and document a period of heavy investment by the provincial government into resource extraction, including initiatives aimed at encouraging youth and underrepresented groups (e.g., women, Indigenous peoples) to enter the skilled trades. We draw on a subset of focus group and interview data with young people ages 16 to 29. This age range captures young people who are the usual targets for training and employment initiatives. For example, the Canadian government's youth employment programs tend to define youth as ages 15 to 30 (e.g., Canada Summer Jobs Program, Science and Technology Internship Program) (Government of Canada, 2018, 2019). Implicitly, defined in this way, the category 'youth' operates to mark and perhaps enact a marginalized relation to the labour market. Pseudonyms are used to protect the anonymity of participants.

The Rural Youth and Recovery project (2007-2014) examined young people's connections to their home communities, their migration intentions and experiences, and their employment and recreation opportunities in rural communities in order to think about possibilities for reimagining life and work in fisheries communities on the west coast of the island of Newfoundland. For a total of four months between April 2009 and June 2010, Norman lived on the southwest coast of Newfoundland, working with community partners, including the Community Youth Network and the Western District School Board of Newfoundland, to recruit participants into the study. Methods included participant observation, focus groups, photovoice<sup>1</sup>, and one-on-one interviews with youth and key informants that worked with youth. We also conducted a province-wide online survey. For this paper, we draw data from the 12 focus groups with 63 youth ages 16-24 (N=28 male, N=35 female).

The Apprenticeship, Youth and Mobility project (2012 -2020) is part of the On the Move Partnership that is investigating the impact of ERGM

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1. For our photovoice project, youth took photos of places, objects, activities and people that were significant to them and were invited to participate in small focus groups to discuss the photos they took (Power, Norman and Dupre, 2014b).

on workplaces, employers, workers and their families, and communities in Canada. The project aims to understand the configuration of the educational- and employment-related geographical mobilities of youth and new entrants, focusing on three cases: skilled trades apprentices, rural youth and university students. Methods included key informant interviews, and work history interviews and focus groups with youth, apprentices and skilled trades workers. Participants were recruited with assistance from community partners including the Community Youth Network, Women's Resource Development Corporation, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Apprenticeship and Certification Board, and stakeholders including the training colleges Academy Canada and the College of the North Atlantic. This paper draws on a subset of the 13 focus groups (N=89, 8 women and 79 men, 2 gender not reported) with students enrolled in apprenticeship programs. These focus groups took place on college campuses and while recruitment focused on apprenticeship status, not age, our analysis here focuses on those between the ages 18 and 29. Of the 89 participants, 64 were between the ages 18 and 29, 23 were ages 30 or older, and 2 did not indicate an age. We also draw on a subset of in-depth work history interviews (N=9) with three apprentice skilled trades workers (ages 23 to 29, 1 woman, and 2 men).

#### **THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF NEWFOUNDLAND YOUTH MOBILITIES IN RESOURCE EXTRACTION**

While not a new phenomenon, rural youth intra- and inter-provincial ERGM in the last 20 years or so must be understood in the context of massive downsizing in the fishing industry, the development of large industrial resource extractive projects in rural and remote regions of the province, and the emergence of a highly trained and mobile labour force (Simms and Greenwood, 2015). There has been a net loss of young people in the province due to outmigration and declining birth rates (Canadian Policy Research Networks 2009), and research predicts that these trends will continue, disproportionately affecting rural regions of the province (Simms and Greenwood, 2015; Simms and Ward, 2017). In the post-moratorium period, provincial and federal governments and industry initiatives have focused on reducing capacity and the workforce in fish harvesting and processing sectors, with virtually no support for succession planning or recruitment of youth into fisheries (Neis et al., 2013; Power et al., 2014a). At the same time, the province has invested heavily in large scale resource-extraction projects, encouraging young people to enter skilled trades training by introducing initiatives such as

wage subsidies and financial support for training, in order to meet the demand for jobs in the sector and discourage outmigration from the province (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2009; 2015a, 2015b, 2015c; Skills Task Force, 2008). The province and industry have also developed diversity strategies to attract non-traditional workers, including women, to skilled trades training and to encourage employers to hire women apprentices and skilled trades workers (see, for example, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2007).

The degree to which these investments have been successful is debatable. While the number of women in skilled trades training has increased, the percentage of women in the workforce remains low. For example, the Diversity Network reports that the percentage of women in building trades unions has increased from 4.14% in 2013 to 5.49% in 2015 (Porter, n.d.). It also appears that employers prefer to hire journeymen over less experienced, new entrants to skilled trades, and yet apprentices must log hours working in a supervised employment arrangement to complete their certification (Power, 2017). Most skilled trades training is delivered using an apprenticeship model, requiring in-class course work followed by supervised employment. Advancement in the trades requires additional blocks of in-class training, followed by on-the-job mentorship. The province has removed restrictions on and barriers to the inter-provincial mobility of apprentices, facilitating temporary employment outside the province (e.g., Fort McMurray's oil/tar sands) so that apprentices can more easily meet the on-the-job requirements (Department of Advanced Education and Skills, 2016; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2015c). Given the rural and remote locations of most resource extraction work both in the province and elsewhere, employment in this sector is often characterized by a range of mobile employment arrangements that require long hours and long commutes or spending extended time away from home.

### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WOMEN'S AND MEN'S MOBILITIES**

Young women's and men's ERGMs must be understood as relational practices that reflect and reproduce local gender regimes. In some rural communities, there are long standing 'traditions' of men going away for work, including but not limited to, work in resource extraction. For instance, in a small rural community on the south west coast of Newfoundland that once relied primarily on the fishery, men now move to Alberta for part of the year to lay seismic cable. Young men in our study reported being recruited into this particular ERGM by other men in their

community. Like the young men, women have few opportunities for local employment but they described their orientation to mobile work in ways that differ from men's orientations. Young women in this community invest in educational mobility instead. As Brittany explained, "mostly girls go to university, boys go to seismic [oil fields]," with the men coming back with lots of money and "a new car," while the women come back with no money and lots of "student loans" (Focus Group, age 18). In this community, and others we visited, rigid gender divisions of labour are normative, with consequences for how young women and men could take up and think about their biographical mobilities. As Tina said, "Well, ah, girls are not capable of doing seismic [oil fields], it's true [...] I wouldn't be able to put eighty pounds of cable on my neck and walk for that long" (Focus Group, age 19). The seismic work referred to here is labour intensive manual work that requires carrying heavy cable across long distances as part of the seismic testing before drilling for oil; work that for this participant precludes women's participation. Ideas about gender, bodies and work, in this case about men's and women's abilities to do manual labour, clear the way, provide an orientation for men to work in resource extraction away, and for young women to leave their home community for education, making certain kinds of gendered mobilities normative.

For young women and men apprentices in the skilled trades, perhaps like other industries, getting a job in the province or away depends largely on "who you know." These social connections are gendered. Compared to women participants, young men in apprenticeships described getting hired in workplaces locally and out of the province where they already knew other workers from having worked with them on other jobs, or from familial or social networks (see also Earle and Power, 2017). As an apprentice named John put it: "I worked there previously as a labourer, back in 2006. That's the year that I done the trade for welding. So basically I knew a lot of people down there and I had a name as a good worker or whatever, and I got hired" (Interview, age 29). The point here is not only that men are able to activate existing networks of men in the trades or as in the previous example, in one's community to access employment, but that these networks provide a way to recognize "a good worker." In the next section, we pick up the discussion about how local gender relations provide an orientation towards preferring and valuing certain kinds of mobilities and work, but for now, we point to how definitions of a good worker tell us something about one's ability to do a job, as well as something about what is valued about the work. If one of the things that is valued is the masculine character of the work, then being a man accords a kind of recognition not available to women apprentices.

Men's and women's ERGMs are mediated by the heteronormative family-work nexus. By this we mean the way in which the gendered world of paid work is supported by and reinforces gendered care work and dependency. On the one hand, child care and family responsibilities have different implications for women's and men's employment and mobility options, with women's care and domestic work freeing men for mobile employment (Hayfield, 2018; Pini & Mayes, 2012). John, an apprentice introduced earlier, told us that while he prefers not to travel outside the province for work because he has a young family, he wouldn't mind long-distance commuting for work on the island:

John: With regards to leaving now, it's a different story now, because I've got a family, right?

Interviewer: Right, I was going to ask. You have a young baby now. So are your options a bit different?

John: That's right. I wouldn't want to leave now, right? When there's work here on the island, you know...

Interviewer: Would you be willing to work, say, outside [name of home community] but still within the province?

John: Oh yes. If I got a job at [name of rural industrial site], I'd be about 200 kilometers away from home. You know, at least you're on the island, you know.

For John, family responsibilities do not close mobility options, even if he personally desires to work closer to home. It's worth noting here that John's preference for work closer to home still relies on his ability to be mobile and away from home for extended periods of time, and this requires the labour of somebody else to do the care and domestic work required in the reproduction of families (see Barber, 2016 for an argument about the difficulty men experience in terms of opting out of mobile work).

On the other hand, the structure of employment in industrial resource extraction – characterized by temporary work, long hours, shift and rotational work, long commutes, and fly-in/fly-out operations – impedes women's ability to combine employment and child care responsibilities. In the excerpt below, a young new mother – an apprentice crane operator partnered with a male tradesperson – describes her inability to get back to work because she is not “ready and willing and able to jump up and go” due to child care responsibilities.

Rosie: Well, this is my problem now. I don't see myself getting back to work anytime soon because childcare is tremendous. My boyfriend is a journeyman crane operator. He earns much, much more money than I do. I live in [name of town], so I mean I can't get a job anywhere around here as crane operator, because it's just unavailable. But childcare, oh my gracious. I don't know how people do it.

Interviewer: So in your line of work, mobility is part of the job. You have to go where the jobs are.

Rosie: Yes, you have to go. You have to be ready and willing and able to jump up and go. You can't stay home and work; it's not going to happen. ... I don't have any family who are here or anyone willing to look after my kid for me to go to work. ... (Interview, age 29)

Rosie identifies her responsibility for child care as an impediment to her ERGM. However, that *she* is responsible for child care needs some unpacking. The expectation that she is primarily responsible for child care is reinforced by the gender wage gap (“he earns much, much more money”) — he is a certified journeyman, and she is an apprentice, so presumably it makes financial sense that he is the one freed for mobility by her child care work. (Though, an alternative and also financially sound approach would prioritize her employment so that she could advance in her apprenticeship and earn higher wages, more quickly.) While she points to the built-in labour mobility of the industry, and the lack of local employment for crane operators in her area (“I can't get a job anywhere around here”), it is not clear that even if there were local employment opportunities, she could avail of them. Rosie has few supports in her rural community to help make her employment possible; she does not live near family and there is no formal daycare (“I don't have any family who are here or anyone willing to look after my kid for me to go to work”). She is responsible for child care, because there is no one else. Rosie and her male partner hold different structural positions in relation to familial work that enable his mobility and constrain hers. Furthermore, Rosie's articulation is a very different positioning in relation to family and mobile work from John's. Juxtaposing these two excerpts makes visible the gender work that enables ERGM for some (i.e., men) and the way flexible, mobile labour is part of the “organizational logic” of the industry (Stokes, 2017; Williams et al., 2012; see also Acker, 1990). Child care responsibilities and a lack of available and reliable child care in rural places restrict women's ability to engage in certain kinds of ERGMs -- those that require travelling long distances and spending extended periods of time away from home. The juxtaposed excerpts also illustrate how the structure of apprentices' employment in

resource extraction relies on labour mobility of a certain kind, one that relies on gender conventions of paid and unpaid work in rural environments that make rural and remote work familiar to men (a point we return to below) and that assumes familial care and domestic work will get done by someone other than the mobile worker.

Just as women's immobilities are often defined in relation to the mobilities of the men in their lives, so too are certain kinds of mobilities. Young women whose partners work in resource extraction often follow their husbands and boyfriends to faraway places. Below, we share Darius' account of following her boyfriend out west for work and finding her dream job, only to have to move back home to the southwest coast of Newfoundland when he is laid off.

Darius: ...I moved to Fort McMurray, Alberta. I was there for a year and a half, boyfriend got laid off, we had to come home and we're out of a job, both of us [laughs].

Interviewer: So you were working out there as well?

Darius: Yeah, I was doing early childhood education. I was working in the YMCA daycare there, but he got laid off and we couldn't stay there just on my income. Just could not do it, we were paying a lot of money for rent and stuff, so (Focus Group, age 22, 2009).

Here, Darius describes the 'boom and bust' cycles that are common in the oil extraction industry in Alberta. Her account tells us something about how gendered heteronormative expectations in her home community shape mobility biographies, as Darius follows her boyfriend to Fort McMurray and later back home. It also tells us something about how gendered divisions of labour and the wage gap in the *host* community serve to make women's mobility dependent on men's. In the case of Fort McMurray, the oil extraction industry supplies most of the highest paying jobs, while the wages paid to jobs in other, more feminized sectors such as education and the service sector are much lower (see Dorow, 2015). This gap makes living in places like Fort McMurray -- where the cost of living is high -- difficult without a 'male wage'.

### RESOURCE EXTRACTION WORK: A FAMILIAR FRONTIER

In the previous section we focused on the relationship between young women's and men's ERGMs, in particular the ways in which mobile work in the extraction sector is made more possible for men than women, arguing that place-specific gender relations shape the mobility

experiences of young people at the same time that they are reproduced through mobility. In this section, we focus on the masculine homosocial character of mobile work in resource extraction, and consider how in the context of changing local employment opportunities, mobile work serves to entrench local gender relations as they are stretched out and performed in other places.

Elsewhere, it has been suggested that within rural contexts gender relations are spatially coded, where the “‘great outdoors’ is valorized as a masculine space,” while “‘life indoors is feminized” (Kenway & Hickey-Moody, 2009, 847; see also Norman et al., 2011). In the context of employment in rural Newfoundland, this spatial coding translates into young men valuing working with “my hands” in the outdoors. As Jason put it: “Anything that works with *my hands*—switching tasks *outside*. I tend not to like to do the same thing over and over again. So, I would like to be *out there* everyday with something different to do” (emphasis added, Focus Group, age 18). Young men’s preferences for working outside with their hands do not just emerge from nowhere; instead they are embedded in repetitive practice over the course of one’s life. As Tony described it: “My ideal job is spending most of my time outdoors. Ever since I grew up that’s it and that’s part of my life was always outdoors” (Focus Group, age 19). These spatial mappings are rooted in generations of men working both the land (e.g., cutting firewood, hunting and, in some regions, logging and mining) and, of course, the sea in terms of fishing and sealing. In this way, traditional conventions of masculinity are confirmed through historically embedded linkages between gender performances in space and place (Kenway & Hickey-Moody, 2009).

These conventions of ‘manly work’ are, as can be expected, largely understood in contrast to feminine or ‘women’s work’, which the men characterize as working indoors, often in offices or retail settings, serving customers or working with the public. In the CURRA focus groups in particular, young women and men alike drew attention to the stark division of labour that exists in the service industries in their communities, where women serve, while men are served. Indeed, service work in rural contexts represents a contested site where the changing perspectives on the place-specific gender order of rural Newfoundland are foregrounded and challenged. Many of the youth see service industry work—particularly food service—as reflective of the “old fashioned” ways of their rural communities. However, as this exchange among a group of young men shows, there is a tension between contesting stark gender divisions of labour as sexist and accepting, even endorsing the prevailing gender order:



Eoin: One feller was sixteen, he went up there and tried to put in a resume, he wanted to be out front to serve the coffee n' that. They wouldn't take him [Laughs] (age 19).

Mitchell: Jesus, you see half them that works there looks like men [Laughter] (age 18).

Interviewer: So what do you think about that, um, that Tim Horton's<sup>2</sup> wouldn't hire a man?

Eoin: Doesn't matter to me, I wouldn't work there.

Kevin: I think it's discrimination (age 23)

Mitchell: Yeah.

Neil: Sexist bastards [Laughter] (age 18)

[...]

Interviewer: What were you thinking Eoin?

Eoin: I really wouldn't work there either, so I really don't care.

Mitchell: I wouldn't wanna work there either. I'd do the renovations, but not servin' coffee [...]

Kevin: Punching holes in the donuts [Laughter]

Mitchell: That's a job for ye!

Interviewer: Kevin, you said it's discrimination, what did you mean by that?

Kevin: Well, if they don't hire no men, all women, men and women could both take the coffee pot to pour out the coffee (Focus Group, 2009).

Service work is thus a site where place-specific conventions of gender and sexuality are reproduced, policed, and contested, as clearly illustrated in the above narrative. For our purposes here, we want to draw attention to both the deeply entrenched gender conventions that structure the place-specific workscapes of rural Newfoundland, but also the emergent conventions that are pushing back against this specific gender order. Rural scholars have pointed out that gender relations are changing in rural communities, which has implications for traditional masculine identities (Brandth, 2016; Li Naoire, 2001). As women migrate from

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2. Tim Horton's<sup>®</sup> is a popular fast food and coffee franchise.

their rural communities in search of education and better work opportunities in larger regional or more urban centres, traditional conventions of place-based gender order, and more specifically the place of working-class masculinities within it, are argued to be under threat (Ni Laoire, 2001). However, our argument here is slightly different as we suggest that rather than operating to disembed the traditional gender order of rural Newfoundland, ERGM related to resource extraction actually works to stabilize and re-embed the gender order.

For many of the young men we talked to, mobility is positioned as an opportunity to move to other rural contexts where they can secure good, high paying jobs working outdoors with their hands:

Craig: I like the [oil] rig because it was really suited for me. You know, it was pretty rough. Everybody's jus' kinda, you know, you're out, you're doin' your own thing, you got your own responsibilities. If it doesn't work, beat it with a sledge hammer long enough [laughter] (age 20).

Interviewer: Okay, so I'm picturing a physical job and you liked using your body...

Craig: Yea, definitely. I like buildin' stuff, fixin' stuff.

Jackie: He's a manly man! [laughter] (age 19)

Craig: Nah, it's just what I do (Focus Group, 2009)

Tellingly, this description of the type of work done on the oil rigs in northern Alberta contains many of the characteristics the young men in rural Newfoundland covet in work, such as “rough” physical work in outdoor contexts that involves self-responsibility and independence (i.e., “you’re doin’ your own thing”). In response to this description, a female member of the focus group playfully mocks him as a “manly man”. Far from being a benign gesture of playfulness, we point to this as an indication of how traditional notions of working-class masculinity are contrasted against, and must compete with, emergent constructions of softer, supposedly less manly performances of masculinity that, while not definitively outlined in the above narrative, nonetheless are implied in such mockery. For us this exchange is particularly rich because it highlights the degree to which place-specific rural Newfoundland masculinities are not exclusively performed in place, largely because there are “no good jobs” left in rural Newfoundland, but that their performances are “stretched out” (Farrugia, 2014) across space as young men search for work in other contexts, such as the oil fields in northern Alberta. At the same time, place-based performances of working-class masculin-

ity rooted in the historical, cultural and geographical contexts of coastal Newfoundland must compete with other and, as in the narrative above, ill-defined, conceptions of masculinity. In an examination of rural masculinities, Brandth (2016) notes shifts in the fathering practices of rural men, ushering in diverse masculinities that in their diversity may well undermine traditional versions of hegemonic masculinity (see Anderson, 2009). Research also shows how men's ERGM can open space for new forms of non-hegemonic involved fathering (Aure, 2018) or respatialize masculine forms of household care that reinscribe gender divisions of labour (Dorow & Mandizadza, 2018). The point here is that while rural masculinity is multiple and shifting, the narrative above shows how traditional versions persist as local gender relations are stretched out across places.

We heard from young men that in addition to the physicality of the work, geographical remoteness and male environments make workplaces inhospitable environments for women.

Craig: On a rig, I wouldn't have liked working with women. (age 20)

Jackie: And why is that Craig? (age 19)

Craig: It's just 'cause you're gone all the time, right, and everybody's in a camp and it's hard to have a relationship, you know. If you're leavin' your girlfriend for two weeks and staying at a camp with some other girl, right [...] 'Cause I know what we're like, we're all pigs [...] They call us "rig pigs" (Focus Group).

And, Craig continues a little bit later on:

Craig: ...I mean, I was nine hours away from home pretty well every time I went to work. We would be two, three hours off the highway, right in the bush. There's no cell phone service, no nothin', you're just in there, and you can't get out. Roads get all closed when you go in, there's no service, there's no internet, there's no nothin' [...] But, you're in some sort of community, though, so there's always something you could go and do. We weren't even allowed to walk off the site because there's bears everywhere. You're just stuck in a camp with, you know, [a bunch of men].

In these descriptions, a particular version of masculinity is articulated; namely a rugged, "frontier masculinity" that is performatively constructed in remote, harsh geographical climates and sexist ("we're all rig pigs") (homo)social spaces. It is assumed that the presence of women would disrupt the communal homosocial bonds that exist between men in these contexts. Equally important here is the assumption that men's violent sexuality cannot be controlled in these environments, which in

turn, acts as a rationale to exclude women from this line of work. Although the stories of this type of frontier masculinity are told in relation to geographically distant places, we would nonetheless suggest that their telling is culturally meaningful within the context of southwest Newfoundland, that also has a historical legacy of a deeply gendered division of labour, making far away homosocial spaces feel familiar, if not like home.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the parallels between the two contexts are obvious — dangerous frontier work, whether in the bush or on the ocean, in all male contexts, and in geographically remote locations. We hasten to add, however, that this is not the only version of masculinity that was performed in the focus groups. Indeed, a range of masculinities were performatively narrated, but the above narrative is significant we argue, because it draws attention to how mobility is more complex than a simple process of displacing and disembedding, and we suggest that mobility may also be used as a resource to stabilize and re-embed masculine identities and gender relations that are otherwise ‘under threat’ in contexts of rural restructuring and “no work” in coastal Newfoundland.

## CONCLUSION

We have argued that outward mobility from rural places does not equal upward mobility in any simple way, and in fact in the case of resource extraction, actually serves to entrench—rather than dis-embed—the place-specific gender relations of rural Newfoundland. Drawing on qualitative focus group data from two separate research projects, we have shown how gender relations in rural Newfoundland communities produce orientations to employment and mobility in the context of industrial resource extraction. Ideas and practices related to gender and sexuality, bodies, and paid and unpaid work clear the way for men to work away from home in resource extraction, in turn making certain kinds of gendered mobilities normative. Such orientations produce a kind of familiarity for men in remote workplaces that are male-dominated, and doing work that requires independence, self-responsibility, and physicality. In other words, the spatial coding of gender relations in rural places that we have described inform and make intelligible the articulation and rendering of possible mobilities – a spatial coding rooted in the historical, cultural and geographical contexts of coastal Newfoundland. Another way of saying this is that gender relations of rural places are “stretched out” (Farrugia,

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3. To say that young men experience homosocial spaces as familiar is not meant to negate other possible experiences of exclusion, including encountering stereotypical attitudes about Newfoundlanders.

2014) across space as young men and women engage in different types of mobilities related to work in trades and resource extraction industries, and are reproduced rather than disrupted in these distant places.

At the same time, the “organizational logic” (Stokes, 2017; Williams et al., 2012; see also Acker, 1990) of industrial resource extraction that relies on a mobile workforce is supported by the local gender order that frees male workers from care and domestic work for mobile work and reproduces men well “suited” for frontier work. The local gender order also renders invisible this organisational logic, as ERGMs are reduced to individual preferences, rational financial decisions, and gendered abilities. The mobility requirement of much of the employment associated with resource extraction in the province and elsewhere serves to limit access to women and preserves the male-dominated character of trades and resource extraction workplaces.

Despite diversity policies and initiatives aimed at supporting women to enter relevant skilled trades training programs, as elsewhere, the sector continues to be male-dominated. While an examination of the effectiveness of such policies is beyond the scope of this paper, our findings offer insights regarding the complexity of power relations that produce rural Newfoundland places, both structuring young people’s relationships to work and mobility and, in so doing, producing place-based (although not place-bound) gender meanings and identities. Rather than addressing such complexities, diversity policies that target the recruitment and retention of women into resource extraction industries as the ‘solution’ to broader structural conditions of possibility end up positioning women as the ‘problem’ and as in need of ‘fixing’. The consequences for women who work in these industries may be severe, including being perceived as not belonging, and worse, being the targets of sexual harassment and assault, and while not discussed here, these are common experiences reported in interviews with women apprentices. Also severe are the consequences for communities dependent on resource extraction industries that rely on and reproduce local gender inequalities. A spatialized approach to young people’s ERGMs helps to make visible some aspects of this “power geometry.” We suggest that fair and equitable gender relations, and perhaps relations in general, in and across local communities are tied to broader changes related to the intersecting material and symbolic logics of globalized capitalism.

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The On the Move Partnership is a project of the SafetyNet Centre for Occupational Health & Safety Research at Memorial University. It is supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council through its Partnership Grants funding opportunity (Appl ID 895-2011-1019), Innovate NL, CFI and multiple universities and community partners. The authors wish to acknowledge Madeline Bury, Gary Catano, Sylvia Grills, Jenna Hawkins, Julia Lawler and Michelle Porter who contributed research assistance to the Apprenticeship, Youth and Mobility Project.

The Community-University Research for Recovery Alliance (CURRA) initiative is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) through its Community-University Research Alliance (CURA) program (grant number 833-2007-1027), by the Newfoundland and Labrador Research Development Corporation, Memorial University of Newfoundland, and additional financial and in-kind support from numerous community partners and groups ([www.curra.ca](http://www.curra.ca)).

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