

**Stuck Between 'the Rock' and a Hard Place: Re-imagining Rural Newfoundland
Feminine Subjectivities Beyond the Global Imaginary and Rural Crisis**

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Abstract:

There has been a growing body of research exploring the mobility experiences of rural youth as they migrate in search of work, education and leisure. In this paper we contribute to this body of knowledge by examining the mobility experiences of young women (16-24 years) living on the southwest coast of Newfoundland, Canada. In contrast to dominant constructions of rural crisis that position out of the way places as in decline, dying or dead, we argue that the young women in our study articulated complex, affective relations to place. In so doing they negotiated localized histories, prevailing social relations, broader discursive constructions and embodied affective connections in forging their emplaced feminine subjectivities. We argue that foregrounding the complex and at times contradictory relationships that the young women articulated with their rural homes is an important step in prying open dominant albeit constraining constructions of the rural, thereby allowing for alternative and more inhabitable imaginings of out of the way places.

Keywords: rural studies, youth, mobility, feminine subjectivities, work and recreation

Just as we make history through the stories that we are told, so also we make geographies through the implicit imaginations we deploy (Massey 2007, 23).

Rural communities in Canada...are in crisis (Ommer 2007, 3).

The dominant story of rural communities in Canada, if not rurality worldwide, is indeed one of doom and gloom (see Corbett 2007a; Kenway, Kraack and Hickey-Moody 2006). Running through the story of the rural is a discourse of crisis that powerfully shapes how we imagine—borrowing Massey's metaphor—out of the way places, constructing them as in decline, obsolete and of the past (Kraack and Kenway 2002; Ni Laoire 2001; Vanderbeck and Dunkely 2003). While the material effects of rural restructuring and neoliberal capitalist globalization (Massey 2007) are undeniable, we argue that the story of rural crisis is partially embedded within a 'global imaginary' (Gibson-Graham 2003) that forcibly produces a particular and incomplete truth about rural places and those individuals emplaced within them (e.g. that they are 'stuck' in place). Taken together, the global imaginary and its associated discourse of rural crisis forges a 'moral geography' (Massey 2007), characterizing some spaces as success stories—connected, lively and full of choice and opportunities (e.g. globalized, urban centres)—while others are represented as 'dead zones' (Kenway et al. 2006), with 'no work,' 'nothing to do' (see Norman, Power and Dupre 2011) and thus as places to 'get out of' (e.g. rurality). Following others, we suggest that such imaginings of the rural are not only reductive and unhelpful, but they are ultimately pernicious for those who stay on—whether by choice or otherwise—in out of the way places (Corbett 2007a; Kenway et al. 2006).

In this paper we push back, so to speak, against the inevitability and truth status of the story of rural crisis and the global imaginary in which it is embedded by examining how young women (16-24 years) living in coastal Newfoundland, Canada experience their rural communities from situated, emplaced contexts. We demonstrate that far from articulating straightforward outwardly mobile subjectivities—the dis(em)placed ideal that is supposedly characteristic of reflexive modernity (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994)—the young women narrated complex and negotiated relationships with their rural communities characterized by sentiments of ambivalence, despair, frustration and, at times, hopefulness (Leyshon 2008; Panelli 2002). We argue that the island of Newfoundland, often euphemistically referred to as 'the rock' because of its rocky, harsh terrain, is indeed a 'hard place' to live in because of larger forces of rural restructuring and their associated social effects (Ommer 2007) but, as we show in this paper, it is also a hard place to leave. This tension is the central focus of the paper.

Review of Literature

If we situate the 'fact of moving' as our point of departure, as Creswell and Merriman (2011: 4) encourage, as opposed to conventional geographies of 'places and boundaries and territories rooted in time and bounded in space,' then the relationship between place and subjectivity becomes significantly more complex. Concepts historically associated with the stasis, fixity and boundedness of 'snapshot' geographies (Adey 2006), such as 'place,' 'belonging' and 'home,' are re-defined as in flux and evolving social processes embedded within prevailing power relations that

give rise to particular affective connections and embodied subjectivities (see Ni Laoire et al. 2010; 2011; Ansell and van Blerk 2007). From the perspective of movement, experiences of 'place,' 'home' and 'belonging' are understood as evolving constructions that are relationally constituted through multiple spatial practices, such as 'moving away,' returning 'home' (Ni Laoire 2007) and 're'-placing in new 'places' (Ansell and van Blerk 2007). In this sense, geographical concepts that were once thought of as rooted in stable places are re-conceptualized in relation to movement and thus are understood as not having an essential ontology of their own (Ahmed 2003; Ni Laoire et al. 2011; 2010). As mobility geographers have pointed out, however, privileging mobility over fixity comes with its own dangers and limits (see Adey 2006; Creswell 2010; Massey 1991).

Adey (2006) cautions that the 'mobility paradigm' runs the risk of smoothing out the power relations embedded in different movement practices, a leveling out that reductively 'render[s] the whole world as a mass of unintelligible gloom, a liquid modernity in which everything flows (Bauman 2000)' (Adey 2006, p. 82). In contrast to this more liquid framing of movement, Adey reminds us that 'mobility, like power, is a relational thing' (83) where the control over mobility of some is enabled through the lack of control of others. Of this relational account of mobility, Massey (1991: 240) poignantly writes that:

It is not simply a question of unequal distribution, that some people move more than others, and that some have more control than others. It is that the mobility and control of some groups can actively weaken other people.

Therefore, access to and control over movement practices can be mapped onto, and are indeed constitutive of, broader power relations and social identities (see Creswell 2010). Rural geographers attuned to relational accounts, have revealed that there is not 'one rural youth,' nor 'one rural,' but rather 'the rural' is constituted at the nexus of broader social and political circumstances, multiple and contradictory discourses, diversely situated subjects which, when considered together, forge an irreducibly complex entanglement of power relations, relations that rural youth are forced to negotiate in their everyday movement practices. Thus, far from being free to move as they choose, youth living in out of the way places are engaged in perpetual spatial struggles with, for example, adults (see Matthews, Tucker and Limb 2000; Tucker and Matthews 2001), other youth (Dunkley and Panelli 2007), as well as prevailing normative rural gender constructions that constrain the spatial freedoms of some (e.g. girls and women) while enabling those of others (see Little and Cloke 2003; Kenway and Hickey-Moody 2009; Authors 2011). Beyond localized rural movements, rural geographers have also pursued relational analyses of mobility in examining how the countryside is discursively constructed over and against the city (see Leyshon 2008; Narin, Panelli and McCormack 2003; Vanderbeck and Dunkley 2003), arguing that these constructions have implications for the mobilities of rural youth.

Place-based discursive constructions are premised on the hierarchical privileging of urban spaces as modern, lively and full of opportunity as contrasted against the rural as outdated, in decline and devoid of opportunities (see Kenway et al. 2006; Narin, Panelli and McCormack 2003; Ni Laoire 2001; Vanderbeck and

Dunkely 2003). Implicit in these moral geographical codings (Leyshon 2008; Massey 2007) is the 'migration imperative' (Corbett 2005), with its assumption that rural outward mobility equals upward mobility. Indeed, the term 'stay behind,' a phrase commonly used to refer to those youth who stay on in their rural communities, is itself a morally loaded one, with the notion of 'behind' conjuring a 'modernist discourse of rurality, which opposes a traditional, backward rurality to a modern and progressive urbanism' (Ni Laoire 2001, 224). Rural youth migration patterns, Ni Laoire (2000: 229) points out, do not necessarily follow this dominant moral coding in a straightforward manner, rather she argues that 'migration decision-making is a multilayered process' that involves, among other factors, competing migration discourses. In her work with rural Irish youth, Ni Laoire found two prominent migration discourses, including the 'migration-as-exile' discourse, which constructed a stable and enduring relationship between home and rural Irish identity, and represented outmigration as a painful tearing of self from place. In contrast, the 'migration-as-opportunity' discourse represents migration as an uprooting or disembedding from the constraining traditions of localized rural places. The latter discourse is consistent with a broader global imaginary (Gibson-Graham) that privileges the disembedded entrepreneurial neoliberal subject who, supposedly unimpeded by tradition and social location (Beck et al. 1994), creatively charts his or her own biography, adapting to the contemporary global economic climate through migrating for education and work (Kenway et al. 2006; Walkerdine 2003).

However, there is a contradiction at the centre of the discursively constructed global imaginary. Outmigration typically conjures masculinist notions of heroic conquest as males leave their rural communities in search of work, a romanticized masculinist construction that obscures the reality that rural women are more likely to be mobile than are rural men, both in rural Atlantic Canada (Corbett 2007) and in other contexts (Ni Laoire 2000). Indeed, dominant Canadian discourse about rurality and rural mobilities, both in the popular media (www.cbc.ca) and in policy (see Dupuy, Mayer and Morrisette 2000), tends to be based on reductive, melancholic and mythologized constructions of rural migration, failing to appropriately account for the complex and multiple experiences of mobility (Ni Laoire 2007; Ni Laoire et al. 2011). Moreover, despite being important to young peoples' sense of self and place, emotional issues remain poorly conceptualized in youth studies (Robson, Panelli and Punch 2007). In this paper, we aim to build upon and further develop existing work on rural youth cultures by examining the experiences of young women living in coastal Newfoundland.

We focus on the experiences of young women because the work- (Power 2005) and play-scapes (Norman, Power and Dupre 2011) of rural Newfoundland are dominantly coded as masculine, as are the spaces of rurality more generally (Cloke 2005; Ni Laoire 2000). In important ways, the story of rural crisis in Newfoundland's coastal communities can be read as a lament for the decline of a particular way of life that centres around the romanticized ideal of the 'traditional fisherman' (Power 2005). However, the experiences of Newfoundland's girls and women remain largely absent from the dominant story, a narrative blind spot, if you

will, that warrants further research (for exceptions, see MacDonald, Neis and Grzetic 2006; Martin and Jackson 2008; Sinclair 2003). Indeed, the story of rural crisis in Newfoundland is implicitly one of rural *masculine* crisis, that centres around the collapse of the fishery and subsequent outmigration of men as they leave their communities in search of work.

Our objectives in this paper are thus twofold. First, we aim to build upon existing rural geographies of youth (see Panelli, Punch and Robson 2007) by shedding insight into how young women from coastal Newfoundland forged their feminine subjectivities through experiencing and negotiating the tension between place-based belonging and the global imaginary of becoming (e.g. mobility, educational training and creative self-invention). We, however, problematize binary constructions that dichotomize 'the local' and 'the global' (see also Leyshon 2008; Narin, Panelli and McCormack 2003), revealing that constructions of both localized belonging and globalized becoming are multiple, porous and fluid where, for instance, 'belonging' points to the simultaneity of (be)ing in place and longing or yearning (Probyn 1996) to become something more or be somewhere else. Second, we draw upon the work of Walkerdine (2010), and foreground the importance that 'embodied affective' communal relations occupied in how the young women articulated their sense of emplaced belonging. A focus on affective community relations, we suggest, serves to highlight the particularities of the rural Newfoundland context and offers an important leverage point for unearthing the multiple relations that are at play in the participants' emplaced sense of belonging. Ultimately, we conclude the paper on a hopeful note, examining those narratives

that revealed 'place-embedded hopes' (Dorow and Dogu 2010), suggesting that such articulations of hopefulness harbor the potential to engage what Gibson-Graham (2003) refers to as an 'ethics of the local' that breaks with the dominant and largely constraining story of rural crisis.

Context

The southwest coast of Newfoundland, where the research took place, is a harsh geography of rocky shorelines and landscapes of barren, rolling rock-faced hills and mountains. Although severe in terrain, the land- and seascapes of the island of Newfoundland offer a unique beauty that has resulted in increased tourism over the past decade or so. Rural Newfoundland defines itself as primarily of European descent (www.portauxbasques.ca) although in some parts of the island this is changing given that the Qualipu band has recently been granted Indian status and the effects this will have on the ethno-racial diversity as more Newfoundlanders claim status has yet to be seen.

Historically, the fishing industry was a major contributor to local employment in coastal communities. In the early 1990s the federal government imposed closures on a number of declining groundfish stocks. Subsequent downsizing and restructuring of the industry have severely restricted employment opportunities in fisheries communities. In the last 20 years the province of Newfoundland and Labrador has experienced population decline due to outmigration and a declining birth rate. Population peaked at 580 109 people in 1992, then steadily declined until 2008 when it reached 506 352, and slowly increased to 512 900 in 2011, with a slight dip in 2012 (512 659) (Statistics Canada,

CANSIM table 051-0001). The province (rural areas in particular) is experiencing a net loss of young people (Canadian Policy Research Networks 2009, 6).

This paper draws from the qualitative data of a mixed methods project, the Rural Youth and Recovery project, that examined the experiences of work, recreation, migration and belonging among youth living in communities on the southwest coast of Newfoundland, Canada. This project is part of the Community-University Research for Recovery Alliance (CURRA), an interdisciplinary and community driven program of research that aims to contribute to the rebuilding of fisheries communities on Newfoundland's west coast (www.curra.ca)ⁱ. Our examination of how young women experience their rural communities, and their place within them, unfolds against this backdrop of rural restructuring and youth outmigration.

Methods

Participants for the qualitative component of the Rural Youth and Recovery project, which included interviews, focus groups and photovoice, were recruited through the local offices of the Community Youth Network (CYN), a provincial government outreach initiative and the Western District School Board of Newfoundland and Labradorⁱⁱ. The first author spent a total of four months living on the southwest coast of Newfoundland collecting data between the spring of 2009 and spring of 2010. The largest community in the area has a population of less than 5000 and acted as a service center for the surrounding area, while the population of the smallest community is just over 600 (Community Accounts). All of the participants were living in rural communities at the time of the study; in other

words, the participants were either stayers – they had not (yet) left – or returners – they had left for education or employment and had returned to their home town or nearby. We conducted and digitally recorded 18 focus groups with a total of 91 youth (38 male, 53 female; ages 12-24) and 13 one-on-one interviews (8 male, 5 female).

Although most of the focus groups included young men and women, this paper predominately features the narratives of the young women aged 16-24 years from both the focus groups and interviews (n=40). Interviews and focus groups took place in such locations as a classroom at a local school or the boardroom at the local CYN facility. We asked questions about the kinds of jobs and leisure and recreational activities available for young people in their area and the quality of life for young people in their communities. The participants' names have been changed to protect their identities.

Roots, Routes and 'the Impossibility of Staying Put'ⁱⁱⁱ

Although Newfoundlanders have a long history of migration, seasonal and longer term, to exploit natural resources and to secure employment opportunities (Ommer 2007; Martin and Jackson 2008), the mobility imperative has arguably intensified. For many of the young women, rural Newfoundland was characterized as not only having 'no jobs,' but also as offering 'nothing [fun] to do' and 'nowhere to go,' and these experiences powerfully mediated their mobility practices and decisions to re-locate to more urban centres.

Tanya: Unless you luck out, like me, an' get a job. That's the only way. If you're not in the hospital or Marine Atlantic^{iv} then you're in a dead end job. [22 years]

Jocelyn: Actually, considering this place, I can't wait [to leave] [laughs] there's nothin' here, there's nothin' for anybody actually. [17 years]

Here, a 'dead end job' refers to those jobs that are part time, seasonal, poor paying, located predominately in the service industry and largely gendered feminine, while 'nothing here' indicates an empty space, void of and disconnected from the interwoven network of globalized desires and commodity forms available within more urban spaces.

Although several participants explained that they would consider returning to their communities if they could secure a position with one of the few 'good' jobs in the area, such as professional jobs in education or health care, for most, moving to more urban centres seemed to be the only option.

Margaret: Um, I just graduated from college and prior to that I graduated from university [...] With that I'm still finding it hard to find work in Port aux Basques and surrounding areas because of lack of experience and [pause] I feel that the rural areas now—well, there's no reason to stay around. [23 years]

Melinda: There's like—I don't want to stereotype jobs—but there's like the basic education, like if you're 19 you can more than likely get a job at a convenience store or at the bar. But, like, to come back here after you're done [post-secondary] school is like near impossible to get something in your field. [23 years]

Thus, upward mobility for many of the youth necessarily meant outward mobility. Similar to the findings of others (Corbett 2007a, 2007b; Davis 2003; Jackson et al. 2006), we found that investing in the 'knowledge economy' (Narin and Higgins, 2007) or formal education, and the quality of work and lifestyle that it promised, operated as a primary (albeit, gendered) route for 'getting out'. Although the participants talked about there being 'no jobs' in their rural communities, for many youth—especially older youth located in service-oriented communities—this meant

that there were no 'good' jobs, with most of the available work concentrated in the service industries.

Margaret: It seems that service jobs are in need and everywhere you look there's signs that um for *Tim Horton's* and *Mary Brown's* [Canadian fast food establishments] and what not and if you wanna career I mean many youth our age don't want that as a career. I know especially for myself when I have my education I don't want to [pause] I mean, it's bad but I don't want to go to *Mary Brown's* to work when I know that I'm skilled for something higher. [23 years]

Within the rural Newfoundland context, service work is highly gendered and classed, where women (often older) serve to accommodate the recreational consumption practices of men (Power in prep.). Despite the decline in the coastal Newfoundland fishing industry, an industry that is historically embedded in classed masculine relations (Power 2005), local ideologies of masculinity (Kenway and Kraack 2004) were recuperated and sustained through ongoing gendered patterns of work relations in the service industry. They compared the 'careers' that 'a lot of young people' aspire to with available service jobs, which were situated as lesser forms of work, not offering the 'aesthetic satisfaction' (Bauman, 2001) that characterizes 'higher' jobs available elsewhere.

The place-based economies of rural Newfoundland offered the young women few of the promises for vocational fulfillment mythologized within late modern economies (Davies and Bansel 2007). Work that ignites the senses, offering entertainment, pleasure and challenge is the new aspired for ideal that is set against what is represented as menial, boring and ultimately unfulfilling jobs (Bauman 2001). It is important to emphasize, however, that this idealized 'make-over [of] the world [of] work into something closer to a life of enthusiasm and enjoyment'

(McRobbie 2002, 521) is not to be unproblematically celebrated, but critically interrogated as an emergent form of disciplinary power. The neoliberal yearnings that some of the young women narrated, therefore, should not be simplistically equated with the possibility of a tangible freedom available in a global elsewhere. Rather, we suggest that the youth were faced with an impossible 'choice' between, on the one hand, the metaphorical pot of localized gender relations involving domestic servitude and menial labour and, on the other, the figurative fire of the more liquid forms of modernity (Bauman 2000) of self-governing power associated with reflexive individualism (Gill 2007; Ringrose and Walkerdine 2008). Within rural Newfoundland, the education and career promises of a largely imagined elsewhere nonetheless operated as a pervasive and powerful stratifying force dividing not only 'good' from 'bad' jobs, but also separating the mobile, 'successful' neoliberal feminine subject from its Other, those young women who were constructed as 'stuck' in place who ostensibly did not aspire to 'something higher'. Such divisions played out over the course of the research project, as many participants articulated either a desire to stay in their rural communities or saw no available avenue for leaving.

'Stuck' in a Place of Not Belonging

While the young women who stayed in, or returned to, their rural communities discussed the financial importance of securing quality work, they nevertheless suggested that the significance of work was not reducible in any simplistic way to an economic imperative. Rather, they spoke about work as giving

them independence from their parents, respect within the community, providing youth 'something to do' in communities that they described as having 'nothing to do,' and providing them with the capital necessary to consume a particular lifestyle, all of which were constitutive conditions for achieving what they constructed to be privileged feminine subjectivities. Gainful employment, therefore, represented far more than financial security, but was understood as a significant component of becoming a full and contributing citizen or, as one participant suggested, of becoming a 'functional member of society'.

- Rachel: I perceive older people as functional members of society [...] I look at someone who's like even the same age as me, but has kids, as more mature. [22 years]
- Moss: Than you?
- Rachel: Than me. Jackie is my age, but she has a kid so she's more mature than me, right. So ah having kids or a steady job is a person I perceive as more mature.
- Moss: You just used an interesting phrase—'functional member of society'—do you consider yourself a functional member of society?
- Rachel: Not yet.
- Moss: Why not?
- Rachel: Because I can't hold down a job—I can't get one in the first place, right—and ah if I was a functional member of society nobody would spread rumours about me. No one would bother to tell lies about me.
- Moss: Really?
- Racehl: Because there would be no point! Because they wouldn't care about me, I would just kinda disappear.

Other studies have similarly found that Newfoundland youth face considerable psychological stress as a result of depressed rural labour markets (see Ommer, 2007; MacDonald and Jackson, 2008), findings that were echoed in our research, but what we are identifying here is of a slightly different order. Here, we are arguing that some of the unemployed young women positioned themselves as failing to become subjects in the first place. Indeed, the young women described their

inability to secure work in terms of failures of the self, suggesting that they lacked the independence, experience, maturity and self-management skills that came with work experience. As such, many described themselves as incomplete adults or as stuck in a period of 'extended adolescence,' as one young woman described it. Their failure to meet the very conditions of being, of becoming something, of maturing into 'functional members of society,' rendered them, Rachel suggests, out of place, hyper-visible and thus vulnerable to gossip and rumours.

Rachel, along with other participants, identified three primary avenues for young women to strive for respectability within the rural context—gainful employment, formal post-secondary education and/or motherhood. The inability to plug into or make the right choice in relation to these supposedly available options in the materialization of a viable place-specific femininity served to render Rachel, as well as other women stuck in similar situations, as illegitimate subjects, as not belonging, out of place, 'rural others' (Philo 1992) within their communities. If, as feminist scholars have argued (see McRobbie 2009, 2002; Gill 2007), equality, freedom and independence are re-imagined within a postfeminist ethos in terms of the ability to attain an education, secure work and participate in lifestyle consumer practices, the inability to gainfully participate in these domains has a de-subjectifying force, as we examine below.

Nowhere to Go, No One to Become

The young women in our research came to understand their rural communities as stuck, in decline and disconnected in relation to both constructions

of a romanticized past (Power, Norman and Dupre forthcoming), where rural Newfoundland was characterized by the participants as full, vibrant and happening, as well as in relation to a globalized albeit somewhat abstract elsewhere. They characterized their communities either in terms of what businesses used to be there (e.g. 'there used to be a theatre here') but were no longer or in relation to the absences of recognizable global retail forms (e.g. 'we don't even have a McDonald's'). Although many of the young women spoke of being 'bored' and pointed to the lack of signs and commodity forms of global market economies as evidence that there was 'nothing to do' and 'nowhere to go,' we suggest such lamentations were in fact frustrations related to the inability to fulfill or realize the promises of a consumer society; in short, the failure to embody the subject position of the empowered consumer, to consume a particular lifestyle, to literally *become* a particular type of feminine (upwardly mobile, middle class) subject. Thus, it is not so much that there is 'nothing to do' in rural Newfoundland (indeed, many of the youth—particularly boys and men—spoke of there being 'lots to do'), but that there is nothing to do that is recognizable—culturally meaningful, worthwhile and so on—to a broader globalized consumer imaginary.

Many of the young women (as well as the young men) shared stories of being blocked from the spaces and flows of consumer capital within their rural communities, experiences that highlighted their status as failed subjects.

Kerri: We have this woman who works at the store, she's like sixty some odd, we put music on and she gets mad. She's like 'young people don't shop here!' We're like 'Yes they do! You just don't notice. We shop here, where do you think we pick up our drinks and where do you think we pick up our junk food?' [17 years]

The young women stuck in rural places articulated sentiments of frustration, anxiety and a sense of consumer incompetence as they neither had the multitude of choices available to them within their communities, nor the respect as bone fide consumers within those few retail outlets that were available (see also Tucker and Matthews 2001). This, of course, is not to suggest that the young women were completely blocked from consumerism. As consumerism has gone virtual and with the time-space compression of late modernity, complete isolation from consumerism is increasingly difficult, if not impossible (Kenway et al. 2006; Matthews et al. 2000). Nonetheless, subjectivity is emplaced, and one of the ways the emplaced femininities of rural Newfoundland were constructed was in terms of lack—particularly as a lack of access, not simply to consumer goods and their inscribed cultural meanings, but to the spaces of consumerist vitality and liveliness mythologized within a global imaginary. Indeed, the promise of choice—to possess the ability to choose—is one of the great and supposedly empowering seductions of neoliberal capitalism (Bauman 2001; Gill 2007), and to live in a place emptied of choice, whether in terms of career or in recreation options, is to curtail the choice biography of the individual thereby effectively foreclosing her 'very conditions of being, of being someone, of becoming something or someone else' (Bansel 2007, 284). Despite the lack of choices and the curtailed access to a feminine subjectivity privileged by a global imaginary, outward mobility was not a foregone conclusion for the young women; rather, moral considerations and affective relations also figured prominently in how the young women negotiated the mobility imperative.

Disrupted Mobilities and Ambivalent Routes

Accounts of the self-inventive, reflexive individual tend to overemphasize the 'fiscal economy' or the rational, calculating managerial self, to the exclusion of the 'emotional economy' (Bansel 2007, 231) that also profoundly shapes an individual's projects of the self (Narin and Higgins 2007; Svasek and Skbris 2007). While other scholars have identified the emotional hardships rural Newfoundland youth experience as they transition to larger centres, leaving friends, family, community and rural landscape behind (see Davis 2003; Jackson et al. 2006; Martin and Jackson 2008; Ommer 2007), the emotional strife we want to draw attention to here highlights a tension between *becoming* and *being*. While the youth likewise articulated the emotional ambivalence associated with 'disembedding' (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994) self from place, we want to highlight the emotional negotiations that went into delicately balancing the competing discourses between both *becoming* the privileged neoliberal subject, while simultaneously *being* part of the affective connections and place-based subjectivities of their rural communities. In other words, many of the young women did not reductively take up a neoliberal subjectivity as defined over and against the Other of neoliberalism—those young women 'stuck' in rural out of the way places—but rather articulated a liminal subjectivity precariously oscillating between what they constructed as, on the one hand, the global routes and neoliberal dreams situated beyond their rural localities and, on the other, the comfort, security and 'roots' associated with 'home'. In this regard, the young women drew upon, and were thus situated somewhat precariously between, both the 'migration as exile' discourse, with its

representation of place as powerfully embedded in fabric of the self, and the discourse of 'migration as opportunity,' where getting out is constructed as freedom (see Ni Laoire 2000).

- Tanya: Are you from Newfoundland? [question posed to researcher]
Moss: No, I'm not.
Tanya: So you kinda don't understand our roots we have to our community. Even though you could hate the place, when you go away you're still comin' back.
Melinda: It's still home.

Here, 'home' represented powerful points of affective connection to rural Newfoundland, affective connections that would eventually and consistently pull the young women back to their communities, whether for visits or more permanent return migration (see also Sinclair 2003). The young women drew upon discursive constructs of the local/global binary, characterizing their rural homes as presenting a different set of connections than the assemblage of globalized flows, this time rooted in community, family, history and home, as opposed to global flows of capital and commodity forms (Massey 2007, 1994). In particular, the young women expressed a fear about having children in an abstract, global elsewhere as compared to the familiarity and affective connections associated with 'home'.

- Margaret: If I have a kid I might want to come back here, 'cause your family, you know, you might want your baby to be around your family. Right now I'm speakin' as a single woman, even know I'm in a committed relationship, I'm still technically a single woman, and opportunities for me right now are endless and I have that mindset that nothin's gonna stop me. I could move away to St. John's an' call up Jackie [another member of the focus group] in October, 'holy goddam, I needs to come home,' I don't know, right.
- Jackie: I always said I was gonna get outta here [rural Newfoundland], but havin' a kid, I'm not going anywhere but here [...] I went to Alberta with a really, you know, dead set: 'I'm not comin' back!, an' I was

pregnant an' I was out there an' I got scared, an' [thought] 'If I'm gonna raise a daughter, it's not gonna be out there. I'm comin' home'

Thus, even for those young women who took up a subject position within the 'migration as opportunity' discourse (Ni Laoire 2000), place-based roots still held sway in their biographies as these places were associated with more traditional discourses of family, motherhood, emotion and romantic commitment, yes, but also affective embodied relations that spoke to a connectivity to community. Indeed, discussions about leaving their rural communities stimulated 'affective responses' (Walkerdine 2010) characterized by deep ambivalence, anxiety and uncertainty, emotions that have been found in research on youth living in other rural contexts (see Leyshon 2008; Panelli 2002). These narratives bear witness to an affective connectivity that powerfully mediates what are too often assumed to be rational projects of the self (Bansel 2007; Walkerdine 2009). Thus, the transition from what the young women constructed to be the place-based femininities of their rural Newfoundland homes to the free, mobile subjects of neoliberalism was not smooth and seamless, but rather was rife with anxiety and fear. Indeed, the young women often took up ambivalent and even contradictory subject positions within available discourses, where their aspirations for autonomy and empowerment (e.g. 'nothin's gonna stop me') were positioned in uncomfortable tension with connections to the affective community of 'home' (e.g. 'holy goddam, I needs to come home'). Indeed, while scholars have recognized the hybridity at the core of subjectivity (Bhabha 1994), and increasingly point to the ability to simultaneously occupy the position of the mobile subject and remain connected to local place (Easthope 2009), the emotional toll such hybridity takes is also an important consideration (Svasek 2010;

Svasek and Skbris 2007; Kenway and Fahey 2011). If interpreted in a particular way, these stories of ambivalence and emotional angst, we suggest, speak back to and deconstruct the global imaginary and harbor the potential for an alternative construction or an 'ethics of the local'.

Imagining Otherwise: Towards an Ethics of the Local

In this section we argue for an alternative, potentially deconstructive, imaginary that both recognizes the disproportionate power relations embedded within the global imaginary as well as speaks back to not 'globalization itself...but the meanings of globalization that come to bear on social possibility' (Gibson-Graham 2003, 51). Following Gibson-Graham (2006, 2003), we pursue an 'ethics of the local' that imagines the potential of alternative or other ways of existing in relation to the global imaginary and its broad brush strokes that reductively paint rural locales in terms of economic decline and social backwardness. The dominant story, as we have shown, renders out of the way places subject to a moral geography, constructing them as disconnected from the flows of global capital and the promises of prosperity, while the people 'stuck' in such places are positioned as 'reflexivity losers' (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994), unable to re-invent themselves in the image of the free, empowered, willful subject of neoliberalism.

Indeed, if we stopped our analysis here we could easily perpetuate the dominant discourse of rural Newfoundland crisis and decline. For instance, Davis (2003: 177) in her ethnographic account of the same region where our research was conducted, concluded that: 'women and men, young and old alike, presciently saw this crisis not as a temporary setback, but as the end of a way of life...if not the end

of the community itself' (p. 177). Such conclusions, rife with melancholy, are easily arrived at if we focus exclusively on the participants' narratives of hopelessness and inevitable decline, of which there were many.

Marcie: I just think that this town generally needs a better sense of security, if that makes sense. If you're young and somehow you get a great job, there's a few places to build a house, but not a whole lot, you can't have baby here, you can't—like there's a steady decline in enrolment in schools. Like it's just like the town is shrinking year by year. [22 years]

However, it behooves us as researchers to not only examine the ways in which rural Newfoundland has been subjected to the 'interactive effects of rural restructuring' (Dolan et al. 2005) with its associated social, cultural, health, economic and political consequences (for a more extensive overview, see Ommer 2007; Martin and MacDonald 2008; Power 2005; Sinclair and Ommer 2006; Davis 2003) but, at the same time, to draw attention to the small but arguably significant glimmer of *hopefulness* that exists alongside and often in stark contradiction to sentiments of insecurity and decline. For instance, in the above narrative the young woman suggests that what is needed is a 'better sense of security,' a suggestion that points to other possibilities, a different reality, from one of economic hardship and community erosion. Another participant echoes this sentiment of hopefulness, commenting that her home town needs 'town spirit,' and continues, 'we need to feel better about ourselves 'cause everyone complains about it [the town]'. At the very real risk of romanticizing rural life and trivializing the social, cultural and material implications of rural restructuring, we want to highlight those narratives of hope, community continuity and vitality where the participants seemingly yearned for and invested in a different vision for their rural Newfoundland homes. Far from

reductively focusing on economic solutions to the crisis of rurality, the participants drew upon emotional or affective responses (Walkerdine 2010) in re-imagining another community that is constructed in terms of 'spirit' and a collectively wrought 'sense of security'.

Following Walkerdine (2010), we suggest that 'affective processes need to be much more strongly foregrounded in work with communities' (94). She argues that a sense of community continuity is forged through the formation of a collective psychical boundary or skin-ego (see Anzieu 1989) that 'provides a feeling of ontological security for a community beset by uncertainty and change' (91). This skin-ego holds the community together, providing its citizens with a sense of boundary or 'containing envelope delimited and protected' both from the intrusion of the outside in or the collapse and pouring of the inside out. Thus, any rupture in the boundary or skin-ego (e.g. collapse of the fishing industry, outmigration of populations, loss of jobs and community assets such as schools and retail outlets etc.) is experienced as a catastrophic disruption of individual and community sense of being, wholeness and continuity. Therefore, when the participants suggest that what is needed is greater town 'spirit' or a more robust 'sense of security' they are indeed talking about economic recovery and viability, to be sure, but they are also referring to forging a set of 'embodied affective relations' aimed at (re)creating and healing the psychic ruptures in the affective boundary of the community, wounds incurred through catastrophic shifts in the social, cultural and economic fabric of the town and, consequently, its people. In particular, (re)creation, leisure and somewhat

abstract notions of youth figured prominently in the participants' imaginings of collectively forged affective boundaries.

The participants, generally, and the young women in particular, frequently advocated that their communities needed to 'stop being afraid of youth' and provide them with 'somewhere to go' and 'something to do'; in short, they consistently and somewhat passionately insisted that dominant adultist cultures of their towns re-invest in the youth. This was especially significant for the young women who, as we have talked about elsewhere (Norman, Power and Dupre 2011), experienced less recreational access to 'the woods' or the land- and sea- playscapes, and were more likely to experience constrained leisure pursuits within the adultist spaces of the town (see also Tucker and Matthews 2001).

Margaret: ...the attitude towards youth needs to change [...] I really think that the youth needs to be aimed at in rural Newfoundland because if not without them, you know what, you're gonna have nothin' in the future.

And a little later on in the focus group she continues:

To me, I feel that there needs to be more youth programs, the youth is our future [...] Ah, people need to stop being afraid of the youth.

There are, of course, multiple readings of the construction of youth as the 'future'. In one sense this notion draws upon a developmental discourse that positions youth as adults in becoming, where youth are valued not so much for what they represent currently in their youthful Otherness, but for what they will become as functional, contributing and docile members of society (Jenks 2005).

It is possible, however, to accord a second reading to the construction of 'youth as the future'. Here, children and youth are understood as important, indeed

constitutive, components of a community's affective relations. They harbour the potential to sustain the community's continuity of being by carrying forward the particularities of the local, embodying the desires, spatial relations, affects and performances that mark the town as separate and distinct from the sameness envisioned within a global imaginary. Therefore, rather than seeing 'the youth' of rural towns as a disruptive and threatening Otherness that needs to be regulated and tamed into docile, future-oriented and productive neoliberal subjects, technologies of governance that we would suggest are likely to incite outward mobility, youth could also be seen as allowing 'generational continuity to happen' (Walkerdine 2010, 112). Such embodied affective continuity, we argue, could serve to ward off the terrifying psychic threat of collective disintegration and collapse that all too often accompanies the ravages of rural restructuring, thus providing the community with a much needed 'sense of [ontological] security' in the face of unfathomable change, uncertainty and insecurity. Accomplishing this, however, requires that we observe the aspects of those noncapitalist social possibilities that are always already present, albeit largely obscured. To this end, we argue that adolescence and recreation offer two principle sites for actively carving a space for nonproductive, non-capitalistic elements to flourish. Recreation and youthful Otherness harbour the potential to forge social and discursive spaces for ethical practices of self-formation to proceed outside of the constrained intelligibility delimited within the master signifier of the global imaginary and its rural crisis discourse that posits the inevitability of rural decline .

We argue for a localized re-investment in the collective or the affective community, the skin-ego, if you will, of rural Newfoundland towns. Alternatively, if we explore the 'diverse economies' that make up the affective, social fabric of a given community and the potential it holds to 'cultivate a new range of *capacities*' through 'supplanting representations of economic sameness and replication with images of economic difference and diversification' (Gibson-Graham 2003, 55), we can imagine new ways of contributing to the affective fabric of the community. Although the participants did not use this sort of language, many of them nonetheless recognized the need to move beyond the Economy as a means of creating a community worth living in, particularly for children, youth and women. Below, we draw extensively from an exchange that occurred in a focus group comprised mostly of young women (although we include the voices of the young men as well) as they collectively, and somewhat passionately, re-imagined their community and the role of its citizens in it.

Shelly: ...we have an old theatre down there that isn't being used [...] and I know these two girls [indicates two other participants] would also like to have a place, and everybody at this table would like to have a place where we could go. We could have like open mic[rophone] nights, we can have like theatre coaching, we could even have like art classes. Like my dad did visual arts in college and you know where he works? Marine Atlantic, 'cause there's nowhere around here for him to use that skill. We could have art classes, we could have anything—music shows, guitar lessons [...] Yeah, I don't understand that actually, why do you let a perfectly good building go to waste when you got rooms upstairs [...] There's a viewing room, all that stuff, that could be rooms for art, music, anything. [17 years]

Kerri: You could have art shows, art auctions, you could get like classes of kids who would come over there, you know parents love putting their kids into stuff like that.

Bryan: An arts and culture centre! [16 years]

- Kerri: You could have auctions that would go to charity or fixing up the town.
[...]
Tom: Yeah, everybody could have something to do there. [17 years]
Shelly: Like there are so many bright musicians around town that nobody even knows.
Bryan: Port aux Basques has so much talent that you don't understand.
Kerri: And our music program is brimming over at school.

This exchange contains the seeds of an ethics of the local, whereby the participants re-imagine and desire another community, re-signifying place-specific rem(a)inders of rural restructuring and economic collapse (e.g. old, out of business theatre) as spaces of vitality, growth and re-creation. Here, (re)creation assumes a dual meaning, both in terms of leisure and recreation practices existing outside of work as well as a literal healing or recuperation of those elements (e.g. physical structures, dis-integrated souls, and affective wounds) of the community lost to the ravages of restructuring. Far from seeing their town as dead, these youth point to those invisible 'talents' (e.g. 'nobody even knows') that comprise an important, albeit often ignored, element of the situated 'diverse economies' of Port aux Basques. By shifting from a focus on the master signifier of the capitalist economy, which has savagely rendered some citizens employed and employable and others unemployed or underemployed and thus less than 'functional members of society,' these youth yearn for a community space where 'everybody...[has] something to do,' a desire that bespeaks an affective connectivity, a healing of sorts of the collective community skin. The extra-capitalistic imaginings of this sort envision a re-created community and the place of individuals within it that extends beyond constructions of rural crisis, powerlessness and despair in the face of a paralyzing global imaginary. It allows for the cultivation of, even if only imagined, another way of

doing rurality and rural subjectivities. Importantly, the youth in this focus group (as well as other focus groups) yearned not for a global elsewhere, but a re-created here, with 'something to do,' 'somewhere to go' and possibilities for them to contribute to the fabric of the affective community. By drawing upon historically congealed communities of practice and the affective embodied relations they conjure, the participants engaged in an ethics of the local, even if only in their imaginings, that aimed to free up social and discursive resources to become something other than disembedded, mobile subjects of a global order or powerless, excluded, disaffected others within 'dead' or 'declining' communities with 'no work'. The re-created community they yearn for is an inter-generational and arts-based one that, arguably, draws upon the deep cultural roots of rural Newfoundland. Indeed, Newfoundland is a musical and oral culture and the suggestion that community vitality lies in the arts serves to forge an affective continuity between past, present and future that stands in stark contrast to the ethos of disembeddedness touted within neoliberalism.

It is possible to envision the localized ethical re-creation that the participants imagined above being recuperated by the capitalist imperative to produce wealth in the form of, say, a tourist attraction, where only certain, consumer-appropriate art forms and artists (e.g. capital intensive and adult-tourist friendly) would be deemed palatable. In this vein, we are not arguing for regional growth through the 'creative economy' that Florida (2002), for example, advocates, which has been identified as an intensified form of neoliberalism, downloading responsibility for economic growth on individuals and regions all the while instilling new levels of social class

and divisions (e.g. the creative class) (Gibson and Klocker 2005; Gill and Pratt 2008; Ravenscroft and Gilchrist 2009). Additionally, there is no guarantee that the re-imagined community will be any less patriarchal. We recognize that what we are exploring is not a prescriptive map for producing a utopic community. Rather, there are inherent pitfalls and shortcomings in the ethics of the local that we lay out here and as with any politics that resists the temptation to rely on a pre-fabricated recipe for change, contingency, flexibility and reflexivity are key components of an ethics of the local. Finally, our exploration of an ethics of the local has not as yet given pause to consider the pervasive gender, class, racial, sexuality and ethnic power relations that continue to enable the opportunities of some at the expense of others within rural Newfoundland. Our analysis is, of course, preliminary and somewhat naively optimistic, albeit deliberately so. There are still pressing material questions to be pursued and jobs and economic wealth should not be discounted or trivialized. Nevertheless, there are, we have argued, alternative stories to that of crisis, and these alternatives carve out spaces and places of hope, opportunity and possibility as opposed to closure, despair and powerlessness (Davidson et al. 2010; Dorow and Gogu 2010).

Conclusion

If space is genuinely the sphere of multiplicity, if it is a realm of multiple trajectories, then there will be multiplicities too of imaginations... (Massey 2005, 89)

The idea of imagination has been useful in that it enables us to explore how the effects of rural restructuring are simultaneously material and discursive and how young women living in out of the way places must negotiate this terrain in

forging emplaced feminine subjectivities. On the one hand, we demonstrated how the young women were interpellated by a 'mobility imperative,' or a global imaginary that privileges the flexible, self-inventing neoliberal subject. This imperative conjured ambivalence, angst and uncertainty amongst many of the participants. Such ambivalence to the prospective of outward mobility points to the frictions and fractures that accompany reflexive constructions of the self, thereby exposing the impossibility of fully embodying—arriving at and *being*, rather than always already *becoming*—the neoliberal promise of the upwardly (and, in the case of rural Newfoundland, outwardly) mobile (feminine) subject (Davies and Bansel 2007; Ringrose and Walkerdine 2008; Walkerdine 2003).

On the other hand, however, the notion of imagination also enabled us to reveal the 'multiplicities of... imaginations' that circulate within rural places, multiplicities that, we argued, opened up the potential for doing rurality and rural feminine subjectivities otherwise. In mining the potential of alternative imaginings of place we turned to an ethics of the local, which we positioned as a possible alternative to the 'mobility imperative' (Corbett 2005) facing rural Newfoundland youth—and young women in particular. An ethics of the local presents a different story or imaginary of rurality, one embedded in possibilities, unseen talents and regeneration, as opposed to inevitable decline and despair. Ultimately, our aim with this paper was to add complexity to the dominant story of rural (Newfoundland) crisis by highlighting the multiple and emotionally wrought experiences that our participants had with the places of rural Newfoundland ('the rock') as well as the troubled affective relations they had with a largely imagined global elsewhere ('the

hard place'). In so doing, we complicated—if not undermined—the reductive story of crisis that commonly paints a particular imaginary of depressed, declining and dead rural places, and revealed parallel—albeit largely subterranean—imaginaries that conjure hopefulness, vitality and community regeneration.

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- ii Vanessa Farrell, coordinator for the southwestern branch of the CYN, was instrumental as a community contact in helping to recruit participants. This research would not have been possible without her local knowledge and dedication to the project.
- iii Phrase taken from Bauman (2001).
- iv Marine Atlantic is the government funded ferry system that runs between Newfoundland and continental Canada. The youth frequently described Marine Atlantic as offering 'good,' unionized jobs.

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