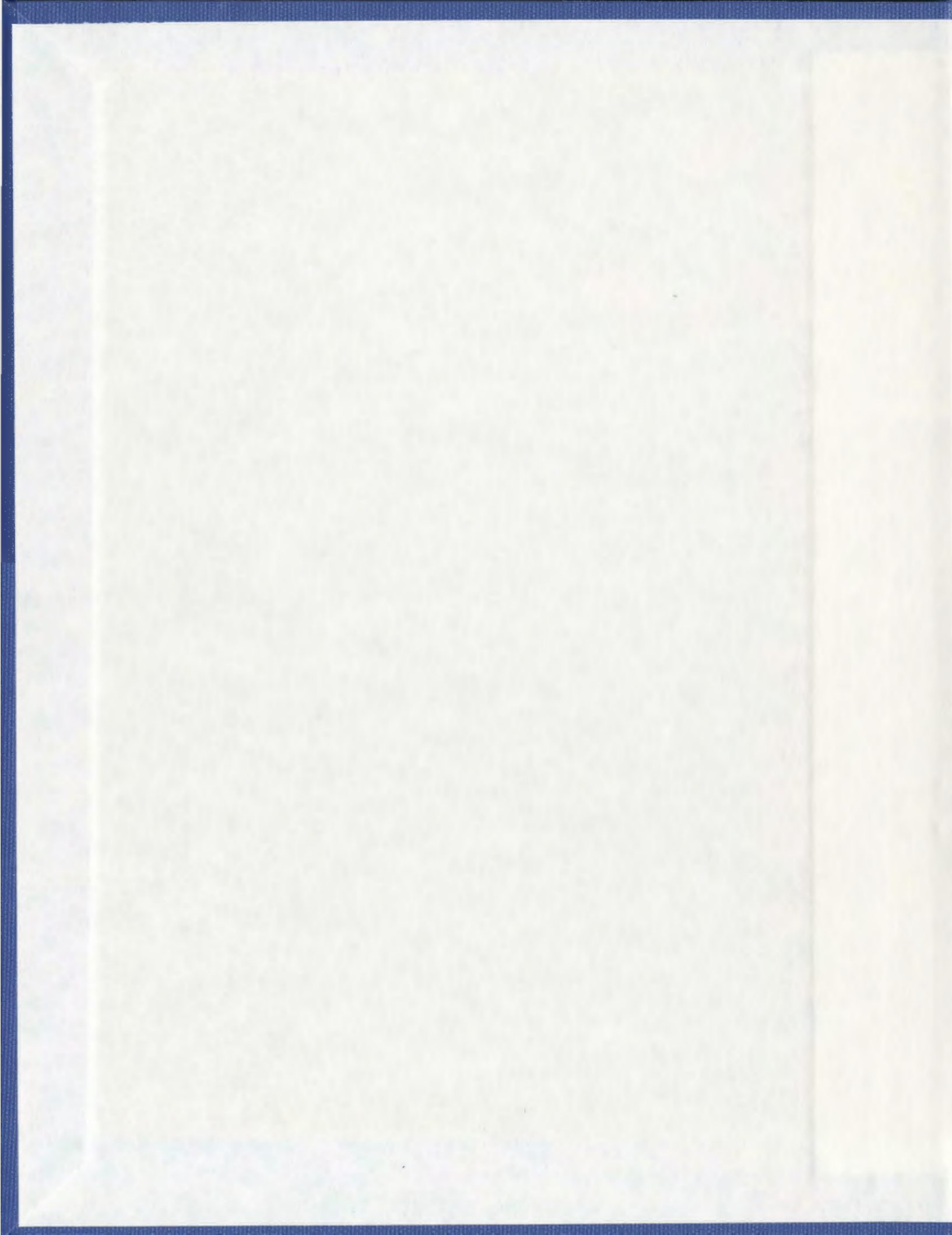


THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POST-SECONDARY
EDUCATION IN NEWFOUNDLAND:
A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE PROVINCIAL
GOVERNMENT'S WHITE PAPER ON PUBLIC
POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION (2005) AND RURAL
WOMEN ENROLLED IN LIBERAL ARTS
UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NEWFOUNDLAND:

A Comparison Between the Provincial Government's White Paper on Public Post-
Secondary Education (2005) and Rural Women Enrolled in Liberal Arts Undergraduate
Degrees

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the significance of post-secondary education for rural Newfoundland women studying liberal arts degrees, and the fit of these experiences and perspectives with Newfoundland and Labrador education policy, as represented in *Foundation for Success: White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education* (2005). The research involves semi-structured interviews with eight rural women enrolled in the Faculty of Arts at Memorial University of Newfoundland in 2006/2007, and a qualitative textual analysis of the White Paper. Data were analyzed comparatively using Smith's (1987; 1990a; 2005) theories of institutional texts, neoliberal and critical theories of education (Hart, 1992), Smith's standpoint theory, and social constructionist theories of gender and place (Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999). I identify five themes in the White Paper collectively portraying post-secondary education as a means to achieve individual and provincial economic success. While rural women do speak of their education in ways consistent with the White Paper, their experiences and perspectives are much more complex, being contingent upon gender and place. I discuss thirteen overlapping themes characterizing the significance of liberal arts education for rural women, and recommend policy strategies that account for the contextual nature and non-economic aspects of rural women's decision making and their liberal arts degrees.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.0. Research Goals, Objective and Questions

Through this project, I capture some of the significance of post-secondary education within Newfoundland¹ through my engagement with data collected from two sources: the provincial government's White Paper² on public post-secondary education, *Foundation for Success: White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education* (hereafter, the White Paper), and women from rural parts of the island who are enrolled in liberal arts university degrees. The *Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (2001) indicates that the word 'significance' refers to the importance, or the meaning of something. Thus, 'significance', referring to both import and meaning, effectively communicates what I aim to discuss in this thesis in regards to post-secondary education. I offer a critical analysis of the White Paper and examine the significance of post-secondary education for rural women undertaking a liberal arts degree at Memorial University of Newfoundland as compared to the vision and significance of post-secondary education articulated in the White Paper.

My interest in the significance of post-secondary education in Newfoundland began as a result of my encounter with literature on women and education when I was employed as a research assistant from 2002 to 2004 at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick. During that time, I performed library research regarding

¹ Labrador is excluded from this project because it is a separate geographic entity with its own unique history, society and economy. Since my research partly comes out of my own experiences of growing up on the island portion of the province, I focus solely on the lives of women from this area.

² According to its authors, a White Paper is "...a document that presents a government's official policy and plans for a particular subject area, usually as the result of study, investigation and consultation" (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p. 1).

the school-to-work transitions of young women in Canada as part of a study being conducted on women and higher education in Atlantic Canada by two of my professors. The purpose of this research was to understand the educational experiences and work plans of women attending university in Atlantic Canada, and the way that social institutions, such as families and schools, help to shape and limit those experiences and plans.

Through my research assistantship, I became aware of persistent disparities in work and pay between men and women in Canada³, and the connection that education may have with the types of work and income available to men and women (Canadian Labour Congress, n.d.; Christie & Shannon, 2001; Drolet, 2001; Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, 2004). Studies such as Gaskell's (1992) *Gender Matters from School to Work* highlighted the important role that ideas about gender play in structuring women's choices within education and work⁴. Other research, such as that of Looker (1993) and Looker & Dwyer (1998) highlighted the role that geography, in combination with gender, may play in shaping the choices of students regarding education and work⁵.

³ Statistics Canada (n.d.) data show that in 2005 men earned \$42,700 and \$42,500 in 2000, while women in 2005 earned \$27,300 and \$26,300 in 2000. Similarly, according to the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency (2006) in 2005 males in Newfoundland and Labrador earned \$34, 067 annually on average, while women earned \$21, 513 on average. In 2000, men earned \$29, 267 and women earned \$18, 341 (Hussey, 2001).

⁴ Gaskell (1992) found, from interview research in the 1970s and 1980s, that women's ambitions and expected responsibilities regarding home and family impacted upon their educational choices and career plans by limiting them primarily to 'vocationally' oriented fields of study, such as clerical work. Correlatively, the women interviewed expected husbands to be primarily responsible for earning the family income.

⁵ Looker (1993) and Looker and Dwyer (1998) argue that youth living outside commuting distance of major cities in Canada in sparsely populated towns, may experience greater difficulty accessing educational (and other) public services, and may identify more strongly with 'place' than youth residing in urban areas.

In addition to the work of academics on the topic of women, education and work, my research assistantship allowed me to become aware of and reflect upon public opinions (and the way that I sometimes internalized these opinions) regarding the differential value placed on various forms of post-secondary education in Canada. A recent article in Canada's *National Post* newspaper is indicative of such public opinions. In the article titled 'Lex Luthor Hearts Superman: Your Tax Dollars at Work', Canadian journalist and cultural critic Robert Fulford (2007), criticizes PhD student Jes Battis for studying Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, and Transgender (LGBT) literature. Regarding Dr. Battis, Fulford states that:

He's an example of the chronic irrelevance that afflicts much recent academic work. Last February, when he was given the fellowship for his LGBT narratives, other scholars received grants for, among other things, 'The culture and aesthetics of amateur movie-making, 1954-2006' and 'Tracing cattle exchanges in the early Iron Age of Southern Africa'. Scholars pursuing cultural studies believe, like historians, that there's nothing too trivial to study (p. 1).

Unlike Fulford, I believe that it is arrogant to presume what kinds of knowledge and research are and will be relevant to society, particularly without providing a rationale for such statements, and by judging the work of others simply based on the title of a research proposal. As Dr. Noreen Golfman (2007), president of the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, suggests, Fulford's arguments are indicative of a widely held view that knowledge, often related to the social sciences and humanities, that does not appear to have immediate and tangible applicability to some aspect of society, mainly the economy, is 'irrelevant'⁶.

⁶ One need only look to the national news to see evidence of its existence (for example, Bright, 2008; Kondro, 2001; Morgan, 2008; Rubenstein, 1999).

The idea that some types of knowledge are 'irrelevant' undoubtedly negatively affects students and faculty who engage in the study of those subjects. Some negative effects of ideas about the differential valuing of different fields of study may be evident here in Newfoundland. Two years after I returned home from New Brunswick to pursue a Master of Arts degree in Sociology at Memorial University, I read in the student newspaper, *The Muse*, that a number of arts students were puzzled and offended that there were few employer and graduate school booths set up at a campus career fair relevant for graduates with arts degrees. The students felt the absence of career guidance at the fair was a reflection of the university staff's prioritization of business and engineering programs to the detriment of the social sciences and humanities, and they felt discouraged about their own career prospects, and the worth of their own studies (Hayward, 2006; Walters, 2006). Indeed, one often hears in Newfoundland student circles the stereotype of the graduate of an arts program who has no career prospects but to 'flip burgers' or drive a taxi. With news article titles such as "The BA and beyond: Why your arts degree may pay off after all" (Grynpas, 2006), the student press in Newfoundland appears to be very aware of such stereotypes regarding the hypothetical economic irrelevancy of arts degrees.

At the same time I was reading studies about women, work and education, and public opinions regarding the differential value of post-secondary education, I was also reading about changes occurring within Canada's universities as part of another of my professor's research projects, this one focusing on the place of Women's Studies courses in universities. I learned that some academics are concerned that Canada's universities are becoming oriented more toward labour market needs than to social concerns (see

Axelrod, 2002; Currie & Newson, 1998; Newson & Buchbinder, 1988). For example, in the introduction to the book *Universities and Globalization: Critical Perspectives*, Currie (1998) comments that, "...we [the editors] are living in universities that are rapidly changing, being restructured, and adopting practices that are more commonly found in businesses" (p. 2). Among the many questions such an observation raises, reading literature on changing post-secondary education left me wondering: If universities were to be completely restructured along the lines of businesses, where would that leave social science and humanities subjects? What would this mean for those of us who have studied such subjects?

Questions about the value of post-secondary education became increasingly pressing for me particularly after I graduated with my undergraduate degree in sociology and criminology. I had great difficulty finding a 'career', and I experienced trouble making payments on my student loan. I eventually found a job working at a call center for a wage slightly above the minimum, but I still felt as though answering billing inquiries was not the kind of job that I went to university to obtain. As a young woman from rural Newfoundland, I had hoped initially that attending university would (among many other goals) help me to avoid the low-paying, routinized jobs that I, my sisters and my parents had all worked at for long periods of time living in a small town on Newfoundland's west coast. Given the prevalence of ideas such as those held by Mr. Fulford in regards to the differential worth of social science and humanities subjects, I felt for a long time as though it was my fault that I had difficulty finding a career after I graduated from university. I felt guilty about the choices I had made regarding post-secondary education. This guilt became even more pronounced when questioned by

some of my hometown peers as to why I had not just moved to Alberta to work on the oil projects to earn money instead of increasing my debt load by attending university. Indeed, working in Alberta or Ontario appears to be an accepted alternative to post-secondary education amongst some Newfoundlanders. One need only look to the opinion section or letters to the editor in one's local newspaper to see evidence of this attitude (for example, see Daniels, 2006; Forward, 2002).

Reflecting upon my feelings about education and my reading about restructuring of post-secondary education in Canada made me think differently about studies I had read about women's educational decision-making. I questioned the extent to which we, as researchers, should place the onus for economic and educational equality upon women themselves. Indeed, as studies have shown, women's educational decisions can only partly explain their marginal position within the Canadian labour market⁷. Thus, instead of feeling guilty about my educational choices, I became critical of ways of thinking that reduce post-secondary education to a unified goal. Instead of problematizing the decisions of women in the quest for equal pay based on gender, for the purposes of my Master's degree, I decided to explore whether or not policy conceptualizations of post-secondary education fit with the ideas and experiences of actual women who are students. I decided to use the experiences of women like me to inform education policy.

⁷ The Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission (MPHEC) acknowledges the difficulty in explaining the persistence of the gendered wage gap in Canada. In their study of the class of 1999 university graduates in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, they found that the link between field of study choice and choice of occupation only explains part of the wage gap and the gap in employment status (full-time versus part time) between male and female post-secondary graduates. They found that 3-10% of the wage differential could not be explained even when controlling for differences in field of study, occupation, province/country of residence, number of hours worked per week, educational background, and career stage.

In this thesis, I explore the significance of post-secondary education for rural Newfoundland women enrolled in liberal arts subjects, and compare their perspectives and experiences with the perspectives and educational policies of the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador. By conducting this research, I attempt to answer the following questions:

- 1) What is the significance of post-secondary education according to the provincial government?
- 2) What is the significance of post-secondary education according to women from rural parts of the island of Newfoundland who are studying toward a degree in liberal arts?
- 3) How is the significance of post-secondary education according to such women shaped by their lives as women from rural Newfoundland?
- 4) What are the policy implications of a comparison between questions 1-3?

1.1. Significance of this Project

The timing was right for a study like mine, given that the premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, Danny Williams, announced in 2004 that he would be commissioning a White Paper on public post-secondary education in the province. A White Paper, "...is a document that presents a government's official policy and plans for a particular subject area, usually as the result of study, investigation and consultation" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p. 1). The White Paper, according to the premier, would be oriented toward making changes to the system of post-secondary education in the province. It would be released in 2005 after a year of research headed by

a White Paper commissioner and assistant commissioner⁸. I argue that studying this document allows me to explore ideas about post-secondary education articulated by the provincial government, as well as the ways in which the post-secondary education system would likely be changed. The White Paper, I concluded, would provide a useful source of comparison with the women I wanted to interview, and would allow me to investigate whether or not rural women's relationships with post-secondary education fit with how the provincial government articulated its policies on education.

In addition to the release of the White Paper, a study of rural women and post-secondary education is timely given that statistics show post-secondary enrollments amongst the population of Newfoundland and Labrador are increasing exponentially and faster than the Canadian average⁹. Women constitute the majority of undergraduate university enrollments at Memorial University of Newfoundland in particular¹⁰ and women continue to be highly represented in the Faculty of Arts at Memorial University¹¹ (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005; Hussey, 2007). Rural students also appear to be increasing enrollment in post-secondary education, particularly rural women,

⁸ More details on this document will be discussed in following chapters of this thesis.

⁹ According to the provincial White Paper on Public Post-secondary Education (2005), since the 1990s the participation rate of 18-21 year olds in post-secondary education in Newfoundland has increased the fastest in Canada, at 24.2% compared to the Canadian rate of 19.7%

¹⁰ Memorial University's *Fact Book* (Hussey, 2007) states that out of a total of 12,634 undergraduate enrolments, 7,726 (61%) of those students are women, compared with 4,907 (39%) men.

¹¹ The majority of females are enrolled in the Faculty of Arts (2,162 total), with the second highest number of females enrolled in the Faculty of Science (1,363) (Hussey, 2007). Similarly, in 2006, 2,251 females enrolled in the Faculty of Arts, compared with 1,330 enrolments in Science, and in 2005, 2,310 females enrolled in Arts and 1,347 enrolled in Science (Thorne & Hussey, 2006). While these statistics show decline overall in the last 3 years, the preference of females for the Faculty of Arts remains consistent over time.

who tend to choose university¹². Despite these trends in enrollment, little knowledge exists about rural women's relationships to post-secondary education in Newfoundland. By examining the processes of how and why rural women undertake undergraduate university degrees in arts disciplines, I address this gap in knowledge, contribute to the existing body of knowledge on rural women, and help other women make sense of their decisions about, and experiences of, post-secondary education.

There is a small body of literature in Newfoundland and Labrador that explores the relationship of rural women to formal education, particularly at the post-secondary level. Some studies have considered formal education as part of larger studies of Newfoundland culture and education (McCann, 1988), or as part of larger studies of women and inequality in Newfoundland (Pope & Taylor, 1987; Porter, 1987). Other studies are quantitative analyses of the factors influencing women's post high school plans (Darcy, 1987) or the post high school career plans of rural students generally in the context of the closure of the fishery (Genge, 1996; Palmer & Sinclair, 2000; Tucker, 1999; Whelan, 2000). Some of these studies include rural and urban comparisons (Tucker, 1999) and comparisons between the post-high school plans of young men and women (Genge, 1996; Whelan, 2000). One study specifically considers how the closure of the fishery impacts the post-high school plans of rural youth in the words of youth themselves through qualitative research (Pinhorn, 2002).

My study differs from the existing research on women and formal education in Newfoundland in a number of ways. First, instead of comparing rural and urban students,

¹² A 2007 survey of 72 rural Newfoundland schools found that out of the close to 500 students surveyed 88% planned to attend post-secondary institutions after graduation. More females than males (53% compared to 28%) planned to attend university (Killick Centre for E-Learning Research, 2008).

recent high school graduates, and/or female and male students, my sample focuses on rural women and includes females of different ages in the context of post-secondary education. This is because my interest is in the different ways in which gender and rurality impact upon the significance of post-secondary education specifically for women. Second, my study considers the place of education specifically in the lives of rural women and not just in relation to career plans. I do not assume that post-secondary education has a relationship to career plans, but explore the many ways that post-secondary education may be significant for rural women. Likewise, I consider not the *plans* of rural women, but how and why they came to their actual decisions. In other words, I am interested in understanding the processes involved in rural women's decision-making, in order to get at the meaning of such decisions. Finally, I consider the fit between rural women's experiences and perceptions about their post-secondary education, and the provincial government's education policy, and explore ways that understanding women's lives can inform policy.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

My study is informed by neoliberal¹³ and human capital frameworks for understanding post-secondary education in contemporary capitalism (as outlined by Lynch, 2002; Olssen & Peters, 2000; Peters & Besley, 2005), as well as critical frameworks informed by feminism for understanding the purpose of post-secondary

¹³ According to Turner (2008), the main principles of neoliberal ideology include: stress on the importance of the market; commitment to the law; advocacy of minimal state intervention; and, the importance of private property. While neoliberal ideology can be attributed these four principles, as Turner argues, there is no 'pure' form of neoliberalism; it is interpreted differently in different nations in conjunction with other ideologies. Following Peters and Besley (2005), and Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2006), I see neoliberal ideology as placing primary importance on the market, particularly in regards to post-secondary education. This is discussed further in Chapter Three.

education. I draw on the work of Dorothy E. Smith, specifically her approach to ideology and institutional texts (1990a), as well as her standpoint theory (1987) for prioritizing and valuing women's experiences and perspectives. Finally, my study is informed by social constructionist theories of gender and place (Little, 1997; Massey, 1993; McDowell, 1999) with their emphasis on understanding ways in which gender and place are socially constructed through social relations and language. This approach can help one understand the significance of meaningful activities in which human beings engage. This is because, according to social constructionism, people's knowledge and experience are shaped by the historical and cultural specificity of their lives, and are sustained by the social processes in which they participate (Burr, 1995).

1.3. Research Methods

I recruited participants for this project from third year classes in the Faculty of Arts at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Specifically, I made presentations to third year classes, wherein interested potential participants were given the opportunity to fill out forms providing their contact information. Through these contact forms, I set up interview dates and times with participants. Overall, eight women participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews that focused on their lives in rural Newfoundland, their experiences of post-secondary education, and their decision-making regarding post-secondary education. . Given the relatively small sample size, the results of this thesis are not intended to be generalized, but instead provide insights into the post-secondary educational experiences of rural women, and point to areas for further research.

In addition to the interviews, I analyzed the White Paper (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005) in order to understand the ideas of government

regarding the place of post-secondary education in Newfoundland and in the lives of Newfoundlanders. I also explored the strategies the authors of the White Paper developed to change the system of post-secondary education in the province.

I analyzed the text and strategies within the White Paper using the textual analysis techniques outlined by Smith (1990a; 1990b) and Ng (1995). I examined the narratives, language and practices of rural women in their accounts of how and why they came to undertake a degree in the Faculty of Arts at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Through my analysis, I identified ways in which post-secondary education policy could be developed further to fit with the perspectives, experiences and goals of rural Newfoundland women earning liberal arts degrees.

1.4. Chapter Outline

In the following chapter (Chapter Two), I discuss some of the context of rural Newfoundland, its historically uneven development, and the lives of women who live there in order to provide background for the reader. I situate the rural Newfoundland economy and society and the lives of its women within a possible national and provincial context of economic and governmental restructuring based on New Right (neoliberal) ideology (MacDonald, 1995; Neis & Williams, 1997). I suggest that this context may have particular effects for rural areas of Newfoundland and the women who live there, requiring many rural Newfoundlanders to find new ways to live their lives, including, for example, participation in post-secondary education. The chapter includes a section on rural Newfoundlanders and formal education in Newfoundland, with particular reference to literature available on women and post-secondary education. Through this discussion, I situate my research within the body of knowledge on women's lives in rural

Newfoundland, and the available literature on rural Newfoundlanders, women and formal education on the island. Finally, I provide a brief section introducing the eight women who participated in this project, in order to further contextualize the data discussed in the sixth and seventh chapters.

Chapter Three is a discussion of the theoretical frameworks I used to make sense of my interview and documentary data. Here, I contrast neoliberal and critical theories of the significance of post-secondary education, and elaborate on the standpoint theory of Dorothy E. Smith (1987; 2005), and social constructionist theories of gender and rurality (Little, 1997; Massey, 1993; McDowell, 1999). In Chapter Four, I outline the research methods used for the purposes of data collection. Here, I discuss how and why I used a qualitative research design consisting of the textual analysis (Ng, 1995; Smith, 1990a; Smith, 1990b) of a public policy document, as well as in-depth semi-structured interviews with women from rural Newfoundland enrolled in liberal arts undergraduate degrees.

Chapter Five contains my textual analysis of the Provincial White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education, *Foundation for Success: White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education*. This chapter includes a brief discussion of the educational policy context in Newfoundland and Labrador prior to the release of the White Paper, in addition to some of the institutional practices leading up to the production of the White Paper. This section shows that significant numbers of administrative representatives from educational institutions, economic development groups, and the business community were included in the official White Paper consultation process. The actual findings of the consultation process are unavailable to the public, thereby rendering unclear how the White Paper contributions shaped the content of the policy document. The final part of

the chapter details my analysis of the text and strategies within the White Paper itself, and concludes that the document represents a one-sided economic view of post-secondary education in the province.

Chapter Six is focused on the data collected from in-depth interviews with eight women from rural parts of Newfoundland studying liberal arts disciplines at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I divide the chapter into four sections outlining each of the themes that I saw as evident in the interviews and compare them throughout the chapter with data from the provincial White Paper. I conclude that, while the women I interviewed do see their university education as economically valuable (as the White Paper would predict), their experiences and perspectives regarding post-secondary education are also shaped profoundly by gender and place.

The seventh and final chapter of this thesis concludes the project by summarizing the major implications of the study and highlighting some ways in which post-secondary educational policy could be changed in Newfoundland based on my findings. My major argument is that one of the ways in which post-secondary education policy in Newfoundland could be more equitable would be for government representatives to involve more students, particularly rural women, in the policy making process, and also to acknowledge the varying ways in which post-secondary education can hold significance for such students. I also suggest that more research should be conducted on the post-secondary educational experiences of rural men and urban men and women in order to make more conclusive statements about rural women's experiences through comparison.

CHAPTER 2: Background to the Project: Literature on Rural Newfoundland and Rural Women's Lives

2.0. Introduction

Prior to discussing the particularities of this research, it is necessary to contextualize the project. Such contextualization is important because people's lives do not exist in a vacuum. Rather, they take place within specific historical, geographic, economic, political, social and cultural contexts. Providing some of the context of the island of Newfoundland, its rural areas, and rural women's lives as represented in the literature will help readers of this thesis understand the choices I have made in regard to the presentation of my data (Fife, 2005). Thus, my goal here is not to sketch a detailed and comprehensive history of rural Newfoundland and the women who live there, but to provide sufficient background for the reader to understand the chapters that follow.

The chapter begins with a brief introduction to the geographic setting. I then outline the settlement and character of the island and its rural areas, followed by a discussion of literature on rural women's lives. I situate the lives of rural women within the development of the island, and I explore the literature addressing rural women's lives, and rural women and formal education in Newfoundland, asking: How does the context of rural Newfoundland shape the way in which rural women engage with post-secondary education? Finally, in the third section of the chapter, I introduce the women who participated in this project as I know them from my encounter in the interview setting in order to further contextualize the project and data.

2.1. A Brief History of the Development of Newfoundland

Newfoundland and Labrador is Canada's newest province. It consists of the island of Newfoundland, in addition to a north eastern part of the mainland of Canada called Labrador. This thesis focuses on the island portion of the province – Newfoundland – which is the most easterly point of North America, separated from Europe by the Atlantic Ocean. Newfoundland's closest European neighbour is Ireland, which is located directly opposite the Atlantic Ocean.

Newfoundland, an island of 43,359 square miles, has a rocky coastline, little soil that is suitable for farming, and harsh, unpredictable weather. The island is commonly referred to as "The Rock" by residents and mainland Canadians alike (Ashworth, 2005; Neary, 1996). Known for its vast natural resources, such as its forests, oil, and minerals, Newfoundland was most famous for its fish stocks on the Grand Banks, which were harvested by Europeans as early as the 1500s (Neary, 1996). Prior to the 16th century, the fish and other natural resources were harvested by Norse Vikings, as well as Aboriginal groups, such as the Beothuk, Dorset Inuit, and Mi'qmaq Amerindians (Ashworth, 2005; Neary, 1996). The capital city of Newfoundland, St. John's, is located on the Avalon Peninsula, and houses approximately half of the province's 507,895 residents (Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency, 2009), the remainder of whom are scattered across the island in outports¹⁴, larger inland centres, and in Labrador. Memorial University, the post-secondary institution attended by this study's participants, is located in St. John's.

¹⁴ An outport is a small settlement along the coastline with access to fishing waters, merchants and markets, but typically lacking land access (Ashworth, 2005).

Over the centuries, the fishery and the outport communities associated with fishing have become central to interpretations of Newfoundland identity, particularly with the rise of tourism (see Ashworth, 2005; Overton, 1996). As such, much of the academic research on rural Newfoundland focuses on outports and fishers¹⁵. Indeed, academics often use the terms “rural” and “outport” interchangeably (for example, Byron, 2003, Ommer, 2002, and Sider, 2003). These academics seem to take the definition of ‘rural’ for granted; it is implied rather than explicitly defined and often equated with small coastal communities in which fish harvesting and processing figure prominently. My study defines rural areas as any community located outside the bounds of the three cities with the largest populations in Newfoundland – Corner Brook, St. John’s and Mount Pearl (including the surrounding communities of Paradise, Portugal Cove-St. Phillips and Torbay)¹⁶.

Newfoundland was ‘discovered’ in 1497 by European explorers, but permanent settlement was not common until much later. According to researchers, settlement patterns on Newfoundland were shaped by the organization of the fishery, in addition to religious and ethnic divisions (Ashworth, 2005; Byron, 2003; George, 2000; Neary, 1996; Rowe, 1964; Sider, 2003). While a primarily male, migratory fishery was dominant for centuries in Newfoundland, a British settler fishery, reliant on household labour and merchant control, became dominant once the island was claimed a colony by England in the 1800s (Cadigan, 2004; Neis, 1999; Porter, 1987; Sider, 2003). In this system, fishers traded saltfish with merchants in exchange for supplies through a credit “truck” system,

¹⁵ Exceptions do exist. For example, some work that focuses on the lives of women considers areas that may not be considered outports (for example Benoit, 1996, 1993; Botting, 2001; George, 2001).

¹⁶ Much more detail on this definition will be provided in Chapter Four.

and the fish were exported by the merchants internationally¹⁷ (Cadigan, 2004; Neary, 1996; Neis, 1997; Porter, 1987; Sider, 2003). Based on the merchant system, Newfoundland's development took the shape of small outports along the shores, and one major center – St. John's – on the east coast of the island (Bindon & Wilson, 1997). St. John's, the home of the colonial elite and fish merchants, operated as the "outpost" of British authority and economic control (Bindon & Wilson, 1997), making it the centre of business and administration for the island (Neary, 1996).

While many residents of Newfoundland participated in an unstable merchant fishery for quite some time, attempts by representatives within the Newfoundland government to modernize¹⁸ the economy through inland industries, such as logging and mining, began to bring change to the settlement patterns and lives of people within Newfoundland at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century (Overton, 1996). By the beginning of the Second World War, new settlements across the island emerged in light of the opening of new mines, pulp and paper mills, and American Air Force bases. Notable settlements include the town of Grand Falls after 1909 and the settlement of Corner Brook, Buchans¹⁹ and Gander (Botting, 2001).

¹⁷ Not all communities in rural Newfoundland were reliant upon the merchant fishery. For example, Stephen High (2002) suggests that on the province's west coast around the beginning of the 20th century, inhabitants of the town of Stephenville made their living through farming rather than fishing, or a combination thereof. For more, see High, S. (2002). From outport to outport base: The American occupation of Stephenville, 1940-1945. *Newfoundland Studies*, 18(1), 84-113. See also George (2002).

¹⁸ The concept of modernization refers to, as Ommer and Sinclair suggest, "...the development of industrial capitalism in the formal economy and to institutional changes such as mass public education, [and] democratic political representation..." (Ommer & Sinclair, 1999).

¹⁹ For more on industrial development in Newfoundland's interior see McBride, M.; Kealey, G. & Cadigan, S. (2002). Jobs at any cost: The political economy of development in twentieth-century Newfoundland. In R. Ommer (Ed.), *The Resilient Outport: Ecology, Economy and Society in Rural Newfoundland*, pp. 265-288. St. John's: ISER.

It is suggested that as early as the Great Depression, Britain was seeking a way out of its ties with Newfoundland because of the financial troubles of the latter (Neary, 1996) and on July 22, 1948, Newfoundland voters decided to become part of Canada. On April 1 of the following year, Joseph Smallwood, a former pig farmer from Botwood, was sworn in as the first Premier (Neary, 1973). From this time onward, pressure was on Smallwood to rejuvenate Newfoundland's economy and the so-called rural areas in particular. He hoped that industrial development and modernization could help stop the flow of out-migration and persistent poverty that had plagued Newfoundland and Labrador as early as the Depression. As sociologist Jim Overton argues, in the 1950s and early 1960s, the dominant ideology was the idea that a transition was required from Newfoundland's semi-subsistence way of life to a 'modern monetary economy' (Overton, 1990, p. 49)²⁰. Indeed, Newfoundland experienced great change under Smallwood's Liberal government. They focused on road construction, electrification, the creation of formal state-funded education (Overton, 1996), wage labour, the creation of new manufacturing facilities, such as those that made chocolate bars and rubber boots (Letto, 1998), the introduction of new mobile trawls, large steel draggers, and factory frozen fish processing to the fishery (Ommer & Sinclair, 1999), and the resettlement of many Newfoundlanders - such as my Grandparents - to 'growth centers'²¹.

²⁰ Premier Smallwood's modernization ideology was not inherent to the Newfoundland situation. Arturo Escobar (1994) points out that after World War II, those countries and regions that did not fit the image of the 'advanced society' were deemed 'underdeveloped' by the world's powerful, and required massive restructuring to conform. The goal was material prosperity and economic progress – the spread of capitalism -- and, for 'underdeveloped' regions, restructuring or 'development' was seen as the solution.

²¹ The 'growth center' approach to development posits that, "...regional development is mostly likely to occur around 'growth centres' containing 'master industries' which have extreme 'propulsive potential' for development" (Matthews, 1993, p. 224-225). This is said to be made possible through large industries which can produce a cheaper product than can be manufactured elsewhere, and which have extensive

Despite spending large amounts of public money and large quantities of publicly owned natural resources, however, by the late 1960s it was evident that most of Premier Smallwood's efforts at modernizing, diversifying and industrializing the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador had failed (Byron, 2002; Matthews, 1993). Moreover, the effects of modernization were uneven and often contradictory (Overton, 1990). Surplus infrastructure, including American Air Force bases that were abandoned in the 1960s and 1970s, coupled with continuing attempts at attracting investment in the province, led to a large debt load (Overton, 1978), and an over-reliance on the unstable fishery, which was now the jurisdiction of the federal government. This situation created some regional disparity, with many communities, particularly those that depended on the extraction of natural resources, such as fish and timber, coping with the flight of capital due to industry closures (Sider, 2003). Thus, despite the promises of a better life through Confederation and industrialization, Newfoundland and Labrador became a peripheral province, reliant on Federal Government support to sustain itself, and unable to create its own revenue (Overton, 1978).

2.1.1. Fishery Crisis, Moratorium and the 'New Right'

The past few decades have been particularly challenging for Newfoundland and Labrador, especially the rural areas. The Atlantic fishery suffered a devastating blow in the late 1980s and early 1990s due to a collapse in fish stocks and a federal government imposed moratorium on the fishing of cod. As a result of this crisis, tens of thousands of Atlantic Canadian workers were displaced, approximately 30,000 of whom were

linkages with regional and extra-regional suppliers and distributors, resulting in a network of related industries in a particular region (Matthews, 1993).

Newfoundlanders (Neis & Williams, 1997). It is further estimated that hundreds of rural fishing communities across the region were decimated economically (Davis, 2000; Neis & Williams, 1997)²².

Federal government representatives took the position that the fishery crisis was the result of 'too many fishermen chasing too few fish', or 'overcapacity' (Davis, 2000b; Neis & Williams, 1997). This position is consistent with what Barbara Neis and Susan Williams (1997) call 'New Right' ideology²³, which emphasizes a lean state, the transfer of public assets to the private sphere, and the enforcement of conservative economic and social policies that reduce the social supports of the welfare state. Neis and Williams (1997) state that, in the New Right view, overly generous social programs, such as Unemployment Insurance, were to blame for the excess of fishery workers. Thus, the solution to the problem was, "...to cut social support programs, limit access to and eventually privatize fishery resources, and transfer responsibility for scientific research and management from government to the private sector" (p. 48).

Neis and Williams (1997) argue that a national and international context of public concern over the onset of a financial recession²⁴, in addition to the provincial context of the fishery crisis, provided the necessary conditions to allow for the institutionalization of New Right ideology in Newfoundland provincial government policy. New Right initiatives included economic policies based on the idea of "restructuring", which were designed to "adjust" the economy and reduce deficit and spending (MacDonald, 1995).

²² The collapse of the fishery is a complex phenomenon and its exact causes are contested (Overton, 2000, p. 5-6). For differing perspectives, see Fairley, Leys, Sacouman & Williams (1990), Neis & Kean (2003), Ommer (2002), Ommer & Sinclair (1999), Overton (2000).

²³ I use 'New Right ideology' and the idea of 'neoliberalism' interchangeably throughout the thesis.

²⁴ For more, see Gaskell and Rubenson (2004).

As research about other areas of Canada suggests, it is possible that the New Right agenda has extended beyond the fishery and into the realm of education policy (among other areas)²⁵ (see Gaskell & Rubenson, 2004; Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006; Marquardt, 1998; Overton, 1990; Workman, 2003).

2.2. Women's lives in Rural Newfoundland

What role have women played in the history of Newfoundland? According to scholars, Newfoundland families have survived historically by performing seasonal work, combining fishing with farming, mining, logging, and other subsistence labour to support their livelihoods (Felt & Sinclair, 1995; Neary, 1996). The body of research on women's lives in Newfoundland shows that women played, and continue to play, a significant role in Newfoundland life, although this has not always been acknowledged (Antler, 1977; Benoit, 1995, 1996; Botting, 2001; Chaulk Murray, 1979; Davis, 1986, 1988, 1993, 1997; Davis & Nadel-Klein, 1988; Durdle, 2001; Faris, 1966; Kelly, 2005; Porter, 1985a, 1985b, 1993). Collectively, the literature suggests that women's lives in both small towns and in outports (from the 19th century to the mid-20th century at least) may be characterized in large part by unpaid and predominantly household-related 'subsistence' work. Women were responsible for feeding their families (up to 6-8 times daily in the fish drying and catching season), making food and clothing, carrying water and splitting wood, and caring for livestock, gardens, and children (Felt & Sinclair, 1995; Porter, 1993). A small number of women worked as midwives and were sometimes compensated for their labour with money or other goods (Benoit, 1996). Other women worked for wages as domestic workers, particularly around the time of the Great

²⁵ For more on the conditions that enabled the rise of neoliberal ideology see Harvey (2005).

Depression²⁶, and in some fishing communities, women also - to varying degrees - performed the drying and salting of fish on the shores when fishing crews could not (Davis, 1988; Porter, 1985; Neis, 1996).

Porter suggests that women's and men's work on the island in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was structured by a rigid sexual division of labour, in which, "There are clearly and geographically limited spheres of activity" (Porter, 1993, p. 50).

Scholarship on other parts of the island (Chaulk Murray, 1979; Neis, 1999; Power and Harrison, 2005; Davis, 1986, 1988, 1993; George, 2000; Botting, 2001; and Benoit, 1995, 1996) supports this argument, but indicates that such divisions were not so rigid; men's and women's spheres sometimes overlapped (Chaulk Murray, 1979; Ommer & Sinclair, 1999). This suggests that gendered social relations were not given, but were continually negotiated (Siltanen & Doucet, 2008). Nevertheless, research still indicates that women's influence in the so-called private sphere was not matched in formal public and political life (McCann, 1988; Porter, 1993; Davis, 1993). Indeed, Porter argues that even when women participated in economic relations external to the household, they may have done so largely in the name of men. In this sense, rural women's lives in outports (and non-fishing communities) may be seen as mediated by "familial patriarchy" - the tradition of male-dominated fishing (and non-fishing) communities and families, and a sexual division of labour (Neis, 1999). I argue that this social organization helped sustain an image of the rural woman as one whose proper place was largely within the home and the family (Davis, 1988).

²⁶ For more on domestic workers in the early 20th century, see Botting (2001). I discuss wage labour further in the next section of the chapter.

Socioeconomic changes after Confederation led many rural women on the island to work outside the home. According to Neis (1999) and others (Antler, 1977; Antler & Faris, 1979; Ommer & Sinclair, 1999), the creation of corporate owned fish plants after Confederation, combined with the availability of 'safety nets' for the informal sector, including pensions, welfare, baby-bonus cheques, and Unemployment Insurance (EI), facilitated greater reliance on the exchange of cash for goods. As a result, women were no longer needed to 'make fish' or perform many of the tasks associated with subsistence. Thus, they could leave home in order to work for wages (Antler, 1977; Neis, 1999). Rural women took up employment in the increased number of fish plants (a particularly appealing option initially for economically vulnerable women and those with families, which increasingly required two incomes to sustain) or in the health care and service sectors of the Canadian government and its welfare state (Neis, 1999). As a result of these shifts, work in the home that continued to be predominantly performed by women became increasingly separate from the public sphere. This sometimes meant that women worked a double shift of work at home and in the formal economy. Instead of providing many rural women with financial independence, wage work sometimes kept them dependent upon men through discriminatory social support programs and policies, such as the Minimum Wage Act and Unemployment Insurance. Such policies and programs, through a gender ideology of male breadwinner/female dependent, initially kept women's wages lower than those of men and made it difficult for them to qualify for benefits after Confederation (Neis, 1999; Wright, 1998).

While social policies, such as EI, have been purged of their most discriminatory content in recent decades, it is now suggested that New Right provincial and federal

government policies of the 1980s and 1990s have left Newfoundlanders with a weakened welfare state and reduced cash inputs to rural economies, including the outports where transfer payments were an important contribution (Ommer & Sinclair, 1999; Ommer, 2002). Additionally, there is reason to believe that the structure of the provincial (and Canadian) labour market is changing from a goods-based to a service-based economy that includes more women workers (MacDonald, 1995; Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2003). At the same time, so-called 'single industry' regions of Newfoundland that are experiencing restructuring, such as those that employ fishers and loggers, are becoming disempowered both politically and economically (Bates, 2006).

It has been suggested that, since the closure of the fishery, the availability of women's employment has changed on the island. According to Neis and Williams (1997), about 12,000 women lost jobs in the fishing industry at the time of its closure. Women's work in other sectors was affected as well. As Neis and Williams state:

The crisis also affected women doing unpaid work in their husbands' fishing enterprises, such as bookkeeping, supplying and cooking for crews. Other women lost work in child care and the retail sector in fishery-dependent communities. In addition, outmigration and government cutbacks reduced the number of women employed in education, health and social services (p. 349).

Moreover, recent adjustments to income support programs, such as EI, coupled with job loss, have meant that entire families have lost income (Power & Harrison, 2005). In some cases, where the majority of job losses have been those of men, the importance of women's paid work has increased to the extent that in some families, a woman is the sole

breadwinner.²⁷ Furthermore, as MacDonald (1995) suggests, the increased importance placed on women's paid employment, coupled with fewer available social supports such as child care and elder care, burdens some women with extra household and family responsibilities.

Government representatives, as evidenced in the 2006 policy document *Creative Newfoundland and Labrador*, hope that new "cultural" industries, such as tourism, will replace the fishery and other natural resource based industries, such as logging and mining. However, literature suggests that, for women affected by the closure of the fishery who were able to replace their jobs in the tourist industry, work is often seasonal and low-paying (Hussey, 2003). Furthermore, many women who have been displaced as a result of the closure of the fishery do not have the resources to start up their own businesses in tourism or other occupational areas (Hussey, 2003). Home care is a new industry that has become a common source of income for some women in rural Newfoundland (Botting, 2001; Kelly, 2005), but this type of unregulated service work provides little to no training for workers, low pay and little job security (Hussey, 2003; Kelly, 2005).

Given that there may be limited opportunity for secure employment for women in rural Newfoundland, it would come as no surprise that, as literature suggests (Davis, 1999; Kelly, 2005; Pinhorn, 2002), some young women might be receiving messages from parents to leave their home communities for better work and education. Indeed, other Canadian and American literature (Corbett, 2007; Hamilton & Seyfrit, 1994)

²⁷ Women living in non-fishing communities, such as those in which the logging industry is prominent, have also been affected by the degradation of other resources and restructuring (see for example, Bates, 2006).

suggests that women from rural and resource dependent areas are more likely to leave than their male counterparts. However, in their study of the attitudes of outport youth on the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland toward outmigration, Ommer and Sinclair (2000) did not find differences based on gender. Nor did Felt and Sinclair (1995). What Ommer and Sinclair did find was that plans to migrate were often related to the goal to earn post-secondary educational credentials. Thus, the following section considers the role of formal education in the lives of rural Newfoundland women in order to explore the role of post-secondary education in these women's lives.

2.3. Rural Women and Formal Education in Newfoundland

As previously indicated, this thesis considers the place of formal post-secondary education in the lives of women from rural parts of Newfoundland. Informal education also has a history in rural Newfoundland (Mulcahy, 1995), but I chose to focus on formal education because of its increased importance to the provincial government as evidenced by the release of the White Paper, *Foundation for Success: White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education*. Formal post-secondary education is defined here as education or training beyond high school (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005) that is accredited or sanctioned by public authorities (UNESCO, 2003).

2.3.1. Historical Studies

Educational historian Phillip McCann (1988), in his paper *Class, Gender and Religion in Newfoundland Education, 1830-1901*, suggests that the formal educational system in Newfoundland allowed some women in early rural Newfoundland to find a means of intellectual and social advancement, given their absence in other formal public and political spheres. McCann states that women were sometimes able to continue their

studies for longer than men, given that men were needed in the fishery by the time they turned 11 or 12 years old. Thus, McCann argues that, "Women...had few educational deficiencies vis-à-vis men" (p. 19). Sociologist Marilyn Porter (1987) largely supports the arguments of McCann in her data from the 1950s. However, she draws on her own multi-methods life history research on Grand Bank mothers and daughters to suggest further that few students, male or female, from outports could expect to finish high school in the mid-20th century. Domestic responsibilities and obligations to the fishery kept young men and women in the outports from finishing. In contrast, students from middle class families could attend grammar schools in St. John's and students from wealthy merchant families were often sent to boarding schools in England²⁸.

After Confederation there was greater opportunity than in previous years for Newfoundlanders as a group to continue with formal education, given the development of the entire educational system, which grew through funds from the Canadian government²⁹. Memorial College developed into Memorial University in 1949, offering undergraduate and eventually graduate programs to its students, and Premier Smallwood, as part of his modernization agenda, began offering government tuition grants for students to enroll at the university in an attempt to formally educate the population to Canadian standards (Matthews, 1993). Additionally, Porter (1987) states that by 1973, high school graduates in the province increased to 4587 from 896 in 1949, and the proportion of adults with better than Grade 9 rose from 28.7% to 44.5% (p. 29).

²⁸ It is difficult to determine the exact time period to which Porter's research refers, as the date is not explicitly stated except in the title of her paper.

²⁹ For more on the history of the development of the education system in Newfoundland, see Rowe, F. R. (1952). *History of Education in Newfoundland*. Toronto: The Ryerson Press; McCann, P. (1994). *Schooling in a Fishing Society*. St. John's: ISER.

The literature on the educational experiences of Newfoundland women in the post-Confederation period suggests that, despite the increase in educational opportunities after Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada, many women on the island (and in parts of Labrador) still made gender-stereotypical choices regarding their educational and career futures (Darcy, 1987; Pope & Taylor, 1987; Porter, 1987). Those who participated in Pope and Taylor's (1987) study, for example, considered a narrow range of careers, and predicted that lack of money, marriage and fear of leaving home might prevent them from achieving their goals. The female occupations they admired were those of homemaker, teacher, nurse, and fish plant worker. Additionally, both Porter and Pope and Taylor showed high female drop-out rates from secondary school, and Porter showed low rates of post-secondary participation (12.8% of 18-24 year olds). Pope and Taylor (1987) and Porter (1987) attributed such trends to young women's lack of educational role models and their domestic responsibilities, in addition to high levels of teenage pregnancies, which forced adolescents out of formal schooling. The tendency toward gender stereotypical career choices was attributed to encouragement from significant others to pursue a particular career or study field, coupled with young women's self-concept (especially in terms of abilities and limitations) (Darcy, 1987).

Collectively, the literature suggests that the overall factors influencing women's career plans in post-Confederation Newfoundland were related to cultural values promoted in the context of Newfoundland. Darcy, for example, determined that women's pre-conceived ideas and philosophies about the roles of men and women in the workforce were influential on their career plans. As Porter suggests, young women in Newfoundland developed values within a context in which boys were encouraged to think

of themselves as successful breadwinners and “protectors of their families” (Porter, 1987, p. 3). In contrast, girls know that they will have to make choices between having a career and being a wife and mother (Porter, 1987, p. 33). The Committee’s study found that the young women who participated valued ‘helpful, kind and caring’ female characteristics (46%), in addition to those that are ‘family oriented’ (22%). Thus, as Porter states (1987), “In preparation for their role as women and marriage partners, girls try to reject anything that is not specifically feminine, which includes serious consideration of career” (p. 33).

In addition to exploring the factors and values that influenced women’s career and educational plans in Newfoundland in the 1980s, Porter attempted to explain how and why these values are perpetuated. She argued that the cultural values that promote a vision of women as dependent upon men were reinforced by the secondary school system, in conjunction with religious institutions³⁰. According to Porter, these institutions collectively operated to shape women’s values and choices and keep them in a secondary position in Newfoundland society. This was exacerbated because, prior to 1997, Newfoundland’s secondary educational system was denominational; school boards were run by the churches and, hence, curriculum and teaching practices were inevitably influenced by these religious institutions. Consequently, Porter argued, in the 1970s and 1980s the education system in Newfoundland taught a curriculum that supported male breadwinner/dependent female family structures and the capitalist system, as well as a deference to authority and hierarchy. This is supported by Antler (1980), who deplored

³⁰ George (2000) and Benoit (1995, 1996) make a similar argument regarding many women, particularly Roman Catholics, living in communities on Bay St. George in western Newfoundland.

the Canadian home economics curriculum in Newfoundland schools for perpetuating stereotypical sex roles for women. In the conclusion to her report, Porter stated that:

...the education system fails the women of Newfoundland – both as students and as teachers...as a structure it allows girls to continue to be relegated to second best post school choices...The role of religion compounds the fundamentally conservative nature of the structure...It is this wider context of the educational system in Newfoundland that has the most damaging effects on attempts to educate girls as fully independent members of society (Porter, 1987, p. 34).

2.3.2. Post-Moratorium Studies

The research of Pope and Taylor, Porter and Darcy all took place prior to the closure of the cod fishery. Therefore, their research did not explore how the closure and restructuring of resource industries in Newfoundland have shaped students' educational and career plans. However, some research conducted from the 1990s onward specifically considers whether or not economic changes due to the closure of the cod fishery affected the educational and career plans of rural youth (Genge, 1996; Tucker, 1999; Whelan, 2000). These studies were quantitative and oriented toward exploring the career goals of rural youth, the factors that influence their plans, and the barriers they perceived would obstruct their achievement. Gender formed a component of each of the studies to determine its influence on the plans of students.

Based on a survey questionnaire and sample of 240 Level III and Level IV students on the northern tip of the island and southern coast of Labrador, Emma Genge's (1996) Master of Education thesis explored the transition pathways, career aspirations, and the factors influencing immediate career plans of rural Newfoundland youth. Her data revealed gender stereotypical choices among male and female youth in Newfoundland with more females than males planning to attend Memorial University

(44.3% compared to 32.7%), and pursuing stereotypically female careers related to social sciences, medicine and health. Similarly, in a Master of Education thesis focusing on the career aspirations, future expectations and immediate career plans of Newfoundland youth, Calvin Whelan (2000) compared 104 rural and 67 urban students from six high schools on the island and found that more females than males planned to continue with their formal education. Rural females more so than their male counterparts preferred managerial and administration occupations, in addition to those in the social sciences, teaching, medicine and health, and artistic and literary fields. Similarly, Craig Tucker (1999) found gender differences in occupational expectations in his study of the post-high school aspirations and expectations of male and female students in a rural Newfoundland high school. He concluded, overall, that most students he surveyed aspired to careers in the industrial grouping 'services', (which includes cooks, correctional officers, and haircutters), but more males (27.3%) than females (18.2%) aspired to such occupations. I suggest that if Tucker had included a broader range of categories under 'services', the percentage of females aiming for traditionally female work would have increased to a total of 79.9% (see Tucker, 2000, p. 174).

In addition to the career choices of rural students, the work of Genge (1996), Whelan (2000) and Tucker (1999) explored the factors that influenced those plans. Genge (1996) found that rural youth most frequently made career choices that were influenced by "what they wanted to do" (personal desire³¹), in addition to their academic abilities. Academic abilities were also found to be influential by Whelan (2000) and

³¹ 'Personal desire' is taken as a given in Genge's study, and she does not explore the ways in which such desires are socially constructed.

Tucker (1999)³², who discovered that high grades, particularly in academic science courses, were linked to high educational and career aspirations. Most of the students Whelan surveyed perceived that their parents played the most significant role in influencing their career plans, followed by family values about the positive value of education, and perceptions about academic ability. Females perceived that their mothers were most influential above all other factors, while males perceived that their fathers were most influential. Both Whelan and Genge cited family-related factors of influence, with Genge specifying family financial situation in addition to parental encouragement. Additionally, Whelan cited friends, ideas about the value of work, teacher influences, and the students' perceptions of the work opportunities in the economic context of Newfoundland as influencing factors on students' aspirations.

A last study of the post-high school decisions of rural students in Newfoundland is a Master of Education thesis by Lisa Pinhorn (2002). In her research of the post-high school plans of rural first-generation students, Pinhorn (2002) surveyed and interviewed 16 Level II high school students from 2 high schools located in 2 different rural regions³³ in Newfoundland. All of the students in Pinhorn's sample aimed to enroll in post-secondary programs after high school. Her analysis confirmed many of the findings of the previous studies mentioned above, and indicated the importance placed on post-

³² Tucker (1999), in his Master of Education thesis, explored the factors of influence upon the career aspirations and expectations of the graduating class in a rural high school on the island of Newfoundland in the late 1990s. He administered a structured survey he developed to 62 students at a central island high school in 1998 to determine whether or not a number of variables were influential on students' educational and career plans.

³³ Pinhorn's (2002) definition of rural areas is based on Statistics Canada, which defines rural areas as those outside urban areas. Urban communities are defined as those that house populations of 1000 residents and a population of at least 400 per square kilometre (Pinhorn, 2002). Pinhorn's schools were chosen from Statistics Canada's Census Consolidated Subdivisions, which are, according to Pinhorn (2002), geographical areas that enable the organization and presentation of data into small geographic regions. .

secondary education by rural students. Pinhorn, however, in contrast to Genge, found that the students she interviewed were more concerned with the economic outcomes of their education than those polled by Genge. Most believed education would lead to increased employment opportunities and a 'better life'³⁴. All of the students in Pinhorn's study received messages from peers and family that encouraged out-migration from their own community, and particularly stressed the importance of participation in post-secondary education. Students only saw peers with lower grades and low career aspirations as suitable candidates for staying in the rural community. School staff, siblings and other family members besides parents provided information related to further education for the students who participated in interviews.

Pinhorn's study points to the significance of exploring further how rural students might see the significance of post-secondary education, as it highlights a difference from the work of Genge, which indicates that students wish to participate in post-secondary education only to pursue their own interests. Combined, however, the research discussed thus far points to the possible significance of both structural and cultural elements in the significance of post-secondary education in the lives of rural women. My study explores this possibility in greater depth by allowing rural women to speak for themselves and describe their diverse experiences of coming to university, and what it means to them. Based on the theoretical insights of Hodkinson, Sparkes and Hodkinson (1996), Smith (1987; 1990a; 1990b; 1999; 2005) and Hart (1992)³⁵, I explore not abstract 'factors' associated with women's educational decision-making (as does Darcy, 1987 and Genge,

³⁴ This theme is briefly mentioned elsewhere in the research of Davis (1995) on community change and women's lives on the southwest coast of Newfoundland, but it is not explored in depth in that study.

³⁵ I elaborate on these perspectives in Chapter Three.

1996, for example), but regard such influences as embodied. This means that they are tied up with the biographies of rural women, as well as the social and economic context in which their lives are situated. I use women's descriptions of their experiences in order to explore the ways in which the social and cultural context of rural Newfoundland shapes their engagements with post-secondary education. In the following section, I discuss the significance of exploring the experiences of women from rural Newfoundland who are enrolled in liberal arts undergraduate degrees.

2.3.3. Why Study Rural Women in Liberal Arts Programs?

Since the research of Pope and Taylor (1987), Darcy (1987), and Porter (1987), there appears to have been no in-depth research conducted in Newfoundland on rural women's education, or women's education generally in the province. While gender was a component of the studies cited above, no one has explored the plans, goals, experiences and perspectives of women in-depth since the 1980s. Such a study is necessary, given that, since Porter (1987), increases in female enrollments at post-secondary institutions in Newfoundland indicate that more women might be planning for careers away from their rural communities and outside the home. According to the provincial White Paper, in 2000/2001, women had a higher post-secondary participation rate than men, mainly at the university level (p. 7-8). While the authors of the White Paper do not specifically state the participation rate, a Statistics Canada publication shows that in 2003 in Newfoundland and Labrador, 67.3% of all 19 year old females in the province participated in post-secondary education, compared with 51.7% of males (Zeman, 2007).

While I could not locate statistics on the participation of rural Newfoundlanders as a whole in post-secondary education, an unpublished study by a Memorial University

researcher (Kirby, 2008) focusing on rural Newfoundland high school students' post-graduation decisions found that the majority of students surveyed were planning to attend a post-secondary educational institution after graduating. Of these students, more rural young women (53% of those surveyed) than men were choosing to study at university as opposed to another type of institution. Likewise, at Memorial University, women represent a higher number of undergraduate enrollments than men. Memorial University's *Fact Book* (Thorne & Hussey, 2006) states that in 2006, the year in which my interviews took place, out of a total of 12,566 undergraduate enrolments, 7,651 (61%) of those students are women, compared with 4,915 (39%) men. Additionally, women were disproportionately represented in the Faculty of Arts (2,251 total, compared with 1,080 men), with the second highest number of females enrolled in the Faculty of Science (1,330 compared to 990 men) (Thorne & Hussey, 2006). The second highest number of men enrolled in Engineering and Applied Science programs (total 1,014) (Thorne & Hussey, 2006).

Given these statistics, specifically exploring the link between the context of rural Newfoundland and women's actual educational decisions is warranted. It is not clear why rural women might engage in post-secondary education and under what circumstances, nor how they come to take up post-secondary education, particularly at the university level, and within the liberal arts. I want to understand more about these decisions and their meaning in the lives of rural women, and most importantly, explore their 'fit' with provincial post-secondary education policy.

Before I outline the theoretical framework that informs this thesis in Chapter Three, I introduce the women who participated in this study and situate their lives as I

encountered them within the geographic, historical, economic, social and educational context discussed in this chapter. In contrast to the studies discussed in this section, which largely portray women's lives and decision-making in terms of disembodied 'factors', I retain a focus on the women's unique biographies and life circumstances as I came to know them.

2.4. An Introduction to the Women of this Study

Eight women from different parts of rural Newfoundland participated in this project. They vary in age from 21 to 50 years old. Five of the women are from the Avalon Peninsula of Newfoundland, one each from the West Coast, the South West Coast, and Central Newfoundland. Two of the women are married with children, one is a single parent, two are single with no children and three are partnered with no children. At the time of the interviews, these rural women were in different stages of life, but all of them were in their 3rd year of studies in the Faculty of Arts at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I have chosen a pseudonym for each woman and her home community for the purposes of anonymity.

2.4.1. Jennifer

The first interview was with Jennifer, a 24 year old woman from Millbrook, a central Newfoundland community of about 200 residents. Millbrook is located approximately one hour's drive from one of the province's pulp and paper mills. According to Jennifer, many families in Millbrook used to make their living in the fishing industry, but now, most people are unemployed, collecting Employment Insurance or welfare. Jennifer believes that some of the town residents are now teachers or work in home care, while others work in health care in a nearby town with a hospital.

Jennifer is the eldest of two children. She told me that she has a brother who reluctantly moved away from Millbrook to work in Alberta. He does not have post-secondary education. Likewise, neither of Jennifer's parents have post-secondary credentials. At the time of our interview, Jennifer's mother worked in home care. She worked in a hotel when Jennifer was younger and has been employed all of Jennifer's life. Jennifer's mother is a practicing member of the Pentecostal church. In contrast to her mother, Jennifer's father worked seasonally for an adventure company in another province of Atlantic Canada. In the winter he comes home and collects Employment Insurance. As a result of his seasonal employment, Jennifer told me that she could not remember having spent a summer with her father. Neither of her parents worked in the fishery, but Jennifer believed that her community was negatively impacted by its closure, with many people having to leave, or rely on social assistance. Jennifer holds negative views about her hometown and many of the people who live there.

At the time of our interview, Jennifer was in her third year of her undergraduate degree in Folklore. Prior to enrolling in university, she had earned a certificate in Office Administration from a college in St. John's. She lived off-campus and ran a small business in addition to working part-time and attending classes full-time. Jennifer's education is fully funded by student loans.

2.4.2. Julie

My second interview was with Julie. Julie was 23 years old at the time of the interview and comes from a small town on the Avalon Peninsula called Robert's Cove. According to Julie, her hometown has a population of about 900 people, a decrease from her youth when, she believes, the town held over 1000 people.

While she was growing up, Julie lived with her mother, her aunt and her grandparents. She told me that she did not have a relationship with her father, who lives in another part of the province. Julie's mother and aunts are fish plant workers and her mother graduated from high school. Even though her mother and aunts both worked at the local fish plant, Julie did not articulate a sense of being negatively affected by plant closures. Julie held a positive view of her hometown, and said that she returned home whenever she had the opportunity.

Julie is an only child. She is very close to her aunts and grandparents, who taught her to love the outdoors and to love reading. Julie was in the third year of her undergraduate degree in English at the time of our interview. She lives off-campus and does not work while in school. Julie's education is fully funded through student loans.

2.4.3. Joanna

Joanna was the third participant in this project. She comes from a large mill town in Central Newfoundland, Smallwoodville. While the town went through an economic boom early in the 20th century, Joanna perceives that recent drastic cuts to employment at the mill negatively impacted the community and many of the families still living there. Joanna's family did not seem to be directly affected by the cuts at the mill. Her mother was a hospital technician and her father struggled to find steady employment after being laid off from various service positions in the community. On her mother's side of the family, all of the men, including Joanna's grandfather and uncles, were doctors. In contrast to them, Joanna's father held a trade certificate. Just prior to our interview, Joanna's parents moved to northern Canada to work. She did not anticipate that they would return to Smallwoodville, except to visit her grandparents, who still resided there.

Joanna herself holds negative views of her home community and did not enjoy visiting. She said that she never wanted to live there again.

At the time of our interview, Joanna was in the third year of a degree in Sociology. She enrolled in university directly upon graduating from high school. Joanna worked part-time in addition to studying full time so that she would have spending money while attending university. Her university degree and living expenses are paid for in full by her parents' savings, coupled with funds that her mother's parents saved for all of their grandchildren. Joanna has a close relationship with all of her family members including her one sibling, an older sister, who is a university-educated English teacher, working as an English as a Second Language teacher in Asia.

2.4.4. Elizabeth

The fourth interview participant in this project is Elizabeth, a 50 year old mother of 3, who comes from Bell's Cove, a very small community on the Avalon Peninsula. Elizabeth was born in Europe and immigrated to mainland Canada with her parents when she was a baby. However, a vacation in the 1970s to Newfoundland became long-term when Elizabeth decided she wanted to live here permanently.

Elizabeth described her youth as having little direction or focus. She began a post-secondary education in photography while living in a large city in Ontario in her early 20s, but eventually she decided that she did not like living in the city and preferred a slower pace. She stated that she felt a strong connection to Newfoundland for its pace of life and natural beauty. Consequently, she decided to make Newfoundland her home.

Elizabeth held very positive views about her home community in rural Newfoundland. When she initially moved there, few people lived in the community and

there was no plumbing or electricity in her home or in the community. However, more people have since arrived in Bell's Cove, many of whom commute to work in St. John's, and they now have indoor plumbing and electricity. There are also tourist businesses in the surrounding area and a few convenience stores.

When Elizabeth initially moved to Newfoundland at age 23, she enrolled at Memorial University, but dropped out because she felt she needed more career direction than she had at the time. Then, Elizabeth met her husband and they moved to Bell's Cove together, set up a tourist business, and had three children. At the time of our interview, the tourist season had just ended and Elizabeth had picked up in university where she left off in the early 1980s. She was in her third year of a degree in Sociology and Anthropology when we met. She studied part-time and commuted back and forth an hour to university on a daily basis. Elizabeth told me that because she had already established a career for herself, Elizabeth was able to pay the costs of her tuition and did not require a loan.

2.4.5. Marguerite

The fifth interview participant was Marguerite, a full-time student and single mother in her mid-forties. Marguerite comes from a small community on the south-west coast of Newfoundland, Forest Brook, which is located along the Trans Canada Highway. Marguerite told me that Forest Brook was mostly known as a logging town by its residents, but the use of more developed technology in cutting wood displaced many of the male workers and their families. According to Marguerite, there are now few jobs left in the logging industry. In contrast to many women from Forest Brook, who Marguerite described largely as homemakers, Marguerite's mother was a teacher. Her father had not

been a part of the family since Marguerite was very young. Marguerite was the youngest of six children in her family. She described her two sisters as “professional” – they both worked in the education system in Newfoundland – one was a principal and the other was a psychologist. Her three brothers also had established careers; one was a millwright who worked his way up through the ranks of a company in Labrador City; another is a wealthy electrical engineer who had recently returned from working a job as a foreman on a tropical island, and the third was enrolled in the Canadian military, but had recently passed away.

In addition to her university degree, Marguerite holds a certificate in Tourism, and has previous experience working in restaurants. She also worked as a clerical assistant for a pharmaceutical chain in Ontario and received office training from that employer. Immediately prior to enrolling in university, Marguerite was working as a manager at a restaurant in Forest Brook and caring for her elderly mother. In addition, she was caring for her daughter, who was 17 at the time of the interview. This daughter was living at home in Forest Brook with Marguerite’s partner when we met. This meant Marguerite was separated from her family for most of the year while she lived on campus in St. John’s and attended Memorial full-time.

At the time of our interview, Marguerite was pursuing a degree in sociology after having earned a certificate in Criminal Justice. She was hoping to be accepted into the Social Work program at Memorial. After earning her degree, Marguerite told me that she wanted to live and work in rural Newfoundland, but not in her home community. She spoke fondly of Forest Brook, but felt that people were leaving due to a lack of employment opportunities.

2.4.6. Alicia

Alicia was the sixth participant in this research project. She is a 21 year old from a small fishing village on the Avalon Peninsula, Cod Town. Cod Town was a prominent fishing village in the 1960s and 1970s and Alicia feels that it suffered as a result of the cod moratorium. She recalled that during her secondary school years, families were required to move away as a result of the closure. In contrast to those families, Alicia told me that her family was not directly affected.

Both of Alicia's parents were university-educated teachers. Her mother held a teaching certificate and her father held a Master's degree in Education. Her father is now a principal for a high school in northern Canada. Alicia's mother stopped teaching many years earlier when Alicia was small. Alicia made it clear that although she came from a fishing village that was affected by the moratorium, she was not denied anything while growing up. She felt that the community offered many of the same resources, such as health care, that are available in other non-fishing communities and larger centers.

At the time of our interview, Alicia was working towards a degree in French. She lived off-campus in St. John's while studying full-time at Memorial. Even though she lived a few hours' drive from her home community, she did not travel home for visits frequently and stated that she did not get homesick. Alicia herself was not openly critical of her home community, but she did not articulate a strong desire to return. Her one sibling, in contrast – an older brother – was educated at Memorial in Sciences and had returned home to work at a local shop in a position unrelated to his education. Alicia's post-secondary education is funded by scholarships and money she saved while working during the summers. Her living expenses are paid for by her parents.

2.4.7. Colleen

Colleen was in her early forties at the time of our interview. She was working towards a university degree part time in Psychology. Colleen divided her time commuting to work for her job in an administrative support position at an educational institution, taking classes, being a mother to her 23 year-old son and 4 year-old daughter, and wife to her husband, an auto worker. She commuted about an hour's drive to and from St. John's every day. Colleen first began her degree at age 17 and dropped out a number of times, but had resumed her studies part time a couple of years prior to our interview.

Colleen grew up in various places in Canada until she was nine years old, when her parents moved back to their hometown in Holy Harbour on the Avalon Peninsula. According to Colleen, most men in her hometown historically were employed in iron work, boiler making, and some were whalers. Many of these men went to New York City in the early 20th century to help build skyscrapers. Colleen stated that most men went away to work seasonally and came back between jobs to collect Employment Insurance. In contrast to the men, women were homemakers or commuted back and forth to St. John's to work either for the federal or provincial governments or one of the post-secondary educational institutions.

Colleen's mother was a homemaker, and her father was an officer in the Canadian military until he took a job with the provincial government in Newfoundland. She described her parents as strict Catholics, but Colleen was critical of the church and never considered herself to be religious. Colleen lives in the same community she grew up in, and has a house close to her parents. She has five siblings - an older brother and sister,

and two younger sisters. The siblings are all university educated and most live in Western Canada, except Colleen and one of her younger sisters, who lives in another town on the Avalon Peninsula. Colleen spoke very highly of her home community and the fact that it is so private and so beautiful. She feels it is very important to stay close to family and, as a result, Colleen does not anticipate ever moving away from her home.

2.4.8. Cara

Cara is the only one of the interview participants to come from the west coast of the province. Cara was, at the time of our interview, 24 years old. She grew up in Sawmillville, one of the towns on the French Shore of western Newfoundland. The town's population is about 7000. Cara told me that Sawmillville was the site of one of the American bases built during the war and it is known as a mill town. Recently, the town's mill shut down and, according to Cara, this was a difficult time for the community. Nonetheless, Cara told me that growing up in Sawmillville was a great experience. She saw it as different from other communities in Newfoundland because it is the site of the Fine Arts program of provincial community college, College of the North Atlantic (CNA). Cara stated that Sawmillville is an unusually tight-knit community and everyone is very friendly and caring.

Cara herself is very close with her large extended family, with the exception of her one sister, with whom she does not always get along. Cara is the youngest daughter of two, her older sister being four years older than she. Her family was directly affected by the closure of the mill as her father was employed there until its closure in 2006. Cara's mother currently works in a secretarial position at the local community college and has been working there ever since Cara was in secondary school. At the time of our

interview, Cara's father was enrolled at the community college pursuing a trade in order to work with a local construction company.

Prior to her enrollment at Memorial, Cara had earned a certificate in visual art from a community college. She was in her third year of an undergraduate degree in Classics at the time of our interview. She is the only person in her immediate and extended family, aside from her older sister, to enroll in university. Her education is partly funded by money she was able to save during the year she took off after finishing her certificate in visual arts. She also has some student loan funding, but works part-time during the year while attending university full-time.

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discuss some of the social, economic and political context of the development of Newfoundland, and its rural and urban areas. I show how neoliberal ideology may have facilitated cuts to social supports and encouraged corporate restructuring in rural Newfoundland. In the second section of the chapter, I review what researchers know about the historical and social context of women's lives in rural Newfoundland. I explore how the intersection of women's lives in rural Newfoundland with the development of public policies has been taken up in the literature on rural women's lives, and also what this literature has to say about rural women and formal education in Newfoundland. While rural women's participation in post-secondary education is increasing, the link between the context of rural Newfoundland and the significance of university for women – particularly since the moratorium – has not yet been explored in the literature.

In the third section of the chapter, I demonstrate that it is difficult to get a sense of rural women's experiences specifically regarding post-secondary education from the available literature on rural students and post-secondary education in Newfoundland. This is because the existing literature considers either the post-high school plans or career plans of rural students, and compares either rural and urban populations or male and female students. Moreover, this body of literature, being largely quantitative in nature, calls for a study of the perspectives of rural female students themselves regarding their post-secondary education. Thus, in order to retain a sense of the embodied educational decision-making of the eight rural women who participated in this study, in the final section of the chapter I provide a snapshot of each woman who participated in this study as I encountered her in the interview process. In Chapter Three I discuss the theoretical framework used in the conceptualization and production of this thesis.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: Approaches to Post-Secondary Education and Student Behavior

3.0. Introduction

In the previous chapters, I discussed some of the context of women's lives in rural Newfoundland based on academic literature. Chapter two demonstrates that the social and economic changes to the island have been accompanied by Newfoundlanders enrolling in post-secondary education in greater numbers. This increase in participation in post-secondary education includes women from rural parts of the island, who seem to prefer university over other types of post-secondary education. At Memorial University, the site of this research, women in general appear to prefer arts subjects over others (Hussey, 2007). Given these trends, an analysis of the link between the context of rural Newfoundland and women's decisions to study at university is warranted. Likewise, given the proposed changes to post-secondary education as a result of the provincial White Paper, a study of the fit between rural women's engagements with post-secondary education and current provincial post-secondary education policy is needed. This thesis addresses some of that gap in knowledge by exploring the significance of post-secondary education according to women from rural parts of the island as compared to the provincial government's White Paper on public post-secondary Education.

In this chapter, I focus on the theories I utilize in analyzing the data collected for this thesis. In the first section, I draw from education literature in a discussion of the dominant instrumentalist perspective on post-secondary education in Canada, and other Western industrialized countries. This is followed by a discussion of feminist standpoint theory and social constructionist approaches to gender and rurality, critiques of the

dominant perspective most relevant to my study. As I will go on to show, many of the competing images evident in the dominant *versus* critical perspectives I present here: of the individual/student; of her motivations for pursuing post-secondary schooling; of her plans for the future; are evident in the White Paper on the one hand, and in the words and experiences of my women interviewees on the other. These theories thus provide a solid foundation for the comprehensive analyses that follow.

3.1. Dominant Conceptualizations of Post-secondary Education

3.1.1. The Public Roots of Higher Education in Canada and Newfoundland

In Canada, universities began to emerge in the mid-19th century (Jones, 1997). The first Canadian universities were created in the colonies of Nova Scotia, Upper Canada (Ontario), Lower Canada (Quebec) and New Brunswick (Jones, 1997). In Newfoundland and Labrador, post-secondary education came about in the early 20th century with the formation of Memorial University College (Bindon & Wilson, (1997). According to Bindon and Wilson, Memorial University College, "...was created within an educational environment of sectarian tension but had a clearly non-denominational identity and a mandate to provide higher education" (p. 262). Public spending put the new facility into place, and the institution was initially supported by a Canadian curriculum, American funding and an English headmaster (MacLeod, 1990). In 1949 Memorial University College became a full degree-granting university and its name was changed to Memorial University of Newfoundland (hereafter referred to as Memorial).

After World War II, post-secondary education expanded throughout Canada and in Newfoundland and Labrador through federal tax-payer dollars (Jones, 1997; Marquardt, 1998). This resulted in large increases in student numbers on university

campuses, which had previously been reserved primarily for the elite (Jones, 1997; Marquardt, 1998; Neatby, 1987). The expansion of post-secondary education in Canada in the twentieth century had a great deal to do with economic considerations (as we shall see later in the chapter). However, it also rested on the development of the welfare state (Jones, McCarney, & Skolnik, 2005) and the ideals of civic responsibility, freedom of speech and the goals of equity and redistributive justice (p. 5). Thus, as Scott (2005) states, the development of the 20th century Canadian university was tied to a, "...commitment to social justice, and espousal of public-service values" (p. 44). In other words, the expansion of the post-secondary educational system in Canada was founded upon the interests of the public through public funds. University administrators and students alike began to see the function of universities as contributing to the development of the nation as a whole (Jones, 1998). As Jones (1998) points out, after World War II, "[h]igher education became a matter of public policy, and universities became public utilities" (p. 9).

From the 1960s onwards, the increasing presence of women and students from diverse social backgrounds in post-secondary educational institutions brought to bear critical ideas about the significance of post-secondary education (Axelrod, 2002; Robbins, Luxton, Eichler, & Descarries, 2008). In the 1960s in particular, many students and faculty were critical of educational institutions for remaining silent on the Vietnam War (Axelrod, 2002), and they increasingly expected their institutional communities to reflect upon and address concerns of the wider society (Axelrod, 2002; Skolnik, 2005). Additionally, Briskin and Coulter (1992) argue that a feminist critique of curricula in the 1960s revealed it to be androcentric, reflecting the political interests of white, privileged

males, and ignoring the experiences of women (see also Robbins et al., 2008). This led some feminist critical educators to argue for a transformed curriculum that would take into account diversity of experience based on gender, race, class, and sexual orientation, and promote the inclusion of voices and participation (Briskin & Coulter, 1992).

3.1.2. Human Capital Theory and Post-secondary Education: From First to Second Wave

The debates beginning in the 1960s around the significance of post secondary education were typical of the long-standing dissention surrounding this issue. Indeed, the history of higher education shows that there has not been one single unified and constant definition of the purpose of post-secondary education (Axelrod, 2002). In Canada today, however, concern exists over the extent to which post-secondary education should or should not be oriented to the demands of the economy (see for example Axelrod, 2002; Currie & Newson, 1998; Emery, 1996; Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006; Reimer, 2004; Tudiver, 1999).

While higher education may have always played some role in fitting individuals for vocations (Axelrod, 2002; Hart, 1992), the role of educational institutions in producing labour for the capitalist market increased around the 1960s when the Canadian formal education system expanded and the concept of 'human capital' appeared (Gaskell & Rubenson, 2004; Marquardt, 1998; Porter, 1993). Gaskell and Rubenson (2004) trace the development of human capital theory to the American economists Theodore W. Schultz and Gary S. Becker³⁶. As an economic theory, the human capital perspective holds that higher levels of educational attainment increase the skills of the workforce,

³⁶ See Schultz, T. (1960). Capital formation by education. *Journal of Political Economy*, 68(6), 571-83 and Becker, G. S. (1962). Investment in human capital: A theoretical analysis. *The Journal of Political Economy*, 70(S5), 9-49.

which serves to expand production in the national economy, thereby increasing prosperity (Marquardt, 1998). In the 1960s, supporters of human capital theory assumed, as Paige Porter (1993) suggests:

...that the provision of and access to education at all levels was directly related to national economic growth...that increases in education levels of individuals were related to higher incomes and to a higher gross income over life...[and] that a significant effect of this was that countries with more highly educated populations were more economically productive (p. 37).

The belief of national government leaders in human capital theory in the 1960s, coupled with a growing demand in the labour market for workers with post-secondary education and training, resulted in heavy federal investment in all levels of the Canadian education system (Marquardt, 1998). According to Marquardt:

...the federal and provincial governments financed the rapid expansion of universities and the creation of an entire new layer of vocationally oriented post-secondary education in community colleges (1998, p. 42).

Right-leaning politicians and corporate leaders, informed by conservative economic theory, saw the expansion of post-secondary education as a way to stimulate the national economy, while simultaneously promoting social equity (Marquardt, 1998). They assumed that if individuals of all backgrounds were to have access to education, their increased levels of skill would contribute to ever-increasing productivity as well as greater equality of opportunity. In other words, investing in human capital would pay off in the growth of good jobs (Marquardt, 1998, p. 42).

But while connections between the economy and post-secondary educational institutions took on greater significance around the 1960s, it is the *degree* to which these connections exist and are encouraged by governments and corporations in the *present* period that is a matter for concern for some scholars (Axelrod, 2002). The increasing

linkage of post-secondary education to economic ends today, however, is framed less by the requirements of the *national* economy than by the ‘needs’ of the so-called *global* ‘knowledge economy’ (Burbules & Torres, 2000; Laidler, 2002; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Peters & Besley, 2006; Porter & Vidovich, 2000; Skolnik, 2005). The knowledge economy, or so the argument goes, is a corollary of neoliberal (New Right)³⁷ economic policies, coupled with the processes of globalization from the 1970s onward (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Porter, 1993; Skolnik, 2005). It requires that education play a key role in contemporary economic relations.

But what is the global knowledge economy? Despite the prominence and causal importance granted to the terms ‘globalization’ and ‘knowledge economy’ there is very little consensus on their meaning (Burbules & Torres, 2000; Peters & Besley, 2006; Porter & Vidovich, 2000). For example, Sandra Taylor, Fazal Rizvi, Bob Lingard, and Miriam Henry (1997) describe globalization as “a set of processes which in various ways - economic, cultural, and political - make supranational connections” (p. 53-54). In contrast, Currie (1998) suggests that globalization is more than just increased connections between different parts of the globe. According to Currie, globalization, “...combines a market ideology with a corresponding material set of practices drawn from the world of business” (1998, p. 1). Similarly, as Peters and Besley (2006) argue, there is little

³⁷ As the previous chapter suggests, New Right ideologies and practices refer to those linked to Ronald Reagan and George Bush in the United States, Margaret Thatcher and John Major in Britain, and Brian Mulroney in Canada. Neoliberal or New Right policies are those that arose in response to supposed growing national debt and economic crisis. These policies stress, as Marquardt (1998) states, the reduction of the role of the state in the economy in favour of free-market solutions. As indicated in the introduction, however, despite the stress on the importance of the market (one of the main principles of neoliberalism) there is no ‘pure’ form of neoliberal ideology. Rather, it is manifested in many different ways (Turner, 2008). In Chapter Five, I elaborate on the specific manifestation of neoliberal ideology in Newfoundland and Labrador post-secondary education policy.

consensus regarding the way the concept of the 'knowledge economy' is used. For example, according to Olssen and Peters (2005), a knowledge economy is an economy in which growth is fueled by innovation, which results from the production and application of new knowledge. This new knowledge, they argue, is a result of the education of highly qualified personnel who have the relevant knowledge, skills, and training. Davenport (2002), advocates a similar definition of the term 'knowledge economy', but strongly emphasizes the role of people over that of technology. According to Davenport:

...I believe that, to understand the knowledge economy, we must focus first on people and organizations, not on technology...As important as facts and basic skills are...the knowledge economy sets a higher premium on the ability to learn continuously, to take risks, and to work in teams (p. 45).

Despite the variation in conceptualizations of the knowledge economy, however, they share the assumption that education is an extremely valuable form of 'knowledge capital' or 'human capital' that will, as Olssen and Peters (2005) argue, determine the future of work, the organization of knowledge institutions and the future shape of society (p. 331). Witness the significance attributed to higher education in Canada (amongst some academics at least) in the global knowledge economy in *Renovating the Ivory Tower: Canadian Universities and the Knowledge Economy*, which Laidler (2006) produced on behalf of the C.D. Howe Institute, a conservative Canadian economic and social think tank.³⁸ Laidler states that the following has arisen as a popular notion in Canada:

...that the key to securing a rising standard of living at the turn of the millennium lies in the creation and dissemination of knowledge, particularly technological

³⁸ While registered as a non-profit agency, the C. D. Howe Institute is funded by large corporations. As such, along with the Fraser Institute, the C. D. Howe Institute has been criticized as producing conservative writing from a right wing perspective (see Carroll & Shaw, 2001).

knowledge. The ‘new economy’ is said to be a ‘knowledge economy’, and within it, universities are often presented as having special roles to play as creators of new ideas in their research function and as producers of human capital capable of exploiting those ideas in their teaching function. In this way of looking at things, the output of universities is a vital input into the material progress of the market economy (p. 7-8).

Similarly, in the same collection of essays, Paul Davenport states that:

One of the striking attributes of the advanced economies during the past three decades has been the strong growth in demand outside universities for university graduates and university research. This long-term trend reflects the transition toward a knowledge economy, in which formal education, life long learning, and fundamental research are central to economic success (p. 39).

As Gaskell and Rubenson (2004) and others (Porter, 1993; Taylor et al., 1997) suggest, the continuing belief in the idea of education as a means to economic success equals a ‘second wave’ of human capital theory after the first wave occurred in the 1960s. The above quotes demonstrate the persistence of human capital theory (in the publications of partisan think tanks and academics supportive of the right at least). I say this because Davenport and Laidler (2006) believe that the development of the knowledge economy necessitates the education of all individuals in order to generate individual and collective economic wealth – a key theme in human capital theory³⁹. As Gaskell and Rubenson (2004) suggest, arguments such as these have become pervasive enough to shape Canadian educational policy.

But the “second wave” of human capital theory differs from the first in significant ways. In addition to having a more global than strictly national focus, during the 1970s and 1980s, neoliberal national governments, such as the Mulroney administration in

³⁹ For an American example of a supporter of human capital theory in the knowledge economy and a more in-depth review of this theory from the perspective of an economist, see Becker, G. S. (2007). *The age of human capital*. In H. Lauder, P. Brown, J. Dillabough and A. H. Halsey (Eds.), *Education, Globalization and Social Change*, pp. 292-294. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Canada and the Reagan administration in the United States, lost confidence in some of the key components of human capital theory, particularly the idea that a publicly funded education system could create the social and economic advantages they once expected (Gaskell & Rubenson, 2004; Porter, 1993; Workman, 2003). In fact, education came to be seen as a *problem* by officials who believed that, if more education could contribute to a strong economy and social reform, then a weak economy and persistent social problems must be the result of an inadequate education system (Gaskell & Rubenson, 2004; Porter, 1993).

The dissatisfaction of neoliberal national governments with the ability of a publicly funded education system to generate economic wealth in the 1970s to the 1990s prompted reforms to the educational systems of western industrialized countries, such as Canada (Gaskell & Rubenson, 2004; Porter, 1993). As Paige Porter argues in her comparison of education policy from the 1960s to the 1980s:

...the objectives...are basically the same...to expand the investment in human capital, but the emphasis is different. The sixties were inclined to stress more the value of the social investment in education at the public expense. The eighties has a more laissez-faire perspective with a much stronger emphasis on education as a private investment (p. 38).

Thus, while neoliberal public policies of the present facilitate privatization in the form of the selling off of crown corporations (Marquardt, 1998) and marketization in the form of the infiltration of corporate interests into the public sector (Axelrod, 2002), privatization also has a broader meaning that includes a range of practices to reduce the state's involvement in a number of industries and social services (Overton, 1998). This has prompted some scholars to charge that:

...the neoliberals of the world have most clearly gathered their ranks under the

banner of the *market* and are rehearsing an attack on the crumbling foundations of primary modernity, such as the welfare state, the nation-state, [and] trade union power (Beck, 2002a, p. 165).

According to the neoliberal view, welfare states are unable to maintain public institutions effectively; they are seen as too costly and wasteful, and their 'clients' too dependent (Brule, 2004). In contrast, the market is hailed as the "inevitable and rationally superior alternative" because it can distribute resources based on supply and demand (Brule, 2004, p. 248). As such, according to neoliberal ideology, what is private is necessarily good and what is public is necessarily bad (Giroux, 2003).

The consequences for post-secondary education of policy based on the rhetoric of the needs of the global knowledge economy are many. According to Sheila Slaughter (1998), universities in developed countries, including Canada, have increasingly instituted policies that encourage, among other activities, university-corporate partnerships and a general re-orienting of higher education with national economic activity, leading to a strong preference for departments and colleges with relevance to the market. With federal government funds to post-secondary educational institutions on the decline (Slaughter, 1998), this tendency comes as little surprise. Drawing on Rubenson (1977), as Anisef et al. (2001) point out, ideas about the new knowledge economy have facilitated a policy focus that is now increasingly on the 'exchange value' of post-secondary education. As a result, as Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2006) suggest, "...universities are increasingly becoming institutions focused on technical training and skill development..." (p. 13). These policies also strongly encourage more student enrollment but at a lower cost to the state. Slaughter states that, "Rather than financing students, all countries raised tuition fees and switched from heavy reliance on grants to greater use of

loans” (p. 46). In Newfoundland and Labrador, provincial student loans were introduced in 1994, but, prior to that time students were able to avail of provincial government grants to fund their post-secondary education (Anthony, 2005)⁴⁰. Overall, neoliberal policies have meant that students pay a much higher portion of the costs associated with university attendance, corporations play a growing role in shaping university policy, and university funding is tied more and more to graduate employment ‘outcomes’ (Anisef et al., 2001, p. 49).

Since its emergence in the 1960s, then, human capital theory has operated as the dominant perspective linking education – particularly post-secondary education – the economy and the labour market. Its major tenets experienced a transformation, however, with the rise of neoliberal governments in the West in the 1980s. While its ‘first wave’ sought to develop the overall expertise of the labour force – and subsequently the economic productivity of the nation – via state-funded schooling, ‘second wave’ human capital theory endorses individually-financed education toward the acquisition of skills directly related to labour market needs and the global ‘knowledge economy’.

3.1.3. Dominant Policy Conceptualizations of the Individual

The shift in the character of human capital theory since the 1980s has had an interesting impact on dominant policy conceptualizations of the individual. As the previous section of this chapter has shown, supporters of neoliberal ideology believe that the market is fair and just, a morally superior alternative to the welfare state (Brule, 2004). This is because, in the neoliberal view, the market can distribute resources based

⁴⁰ However, effective August 1, 2007, a portion of provincial loans was converted to a non-repayable up-front, needs-based grant (Student Loan Corporation of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2008).

on supply and demand, and individual competition. Brule (2004) elaborates on this rationale as follows:

By maximizing competition among service providers, it is argued that, through their economic rational choices, individuals can positively influence the quality and type of services available. Because all producers and service providers are believed to be in competition for a limited number of consumers, who, in turn, express their desires and preferences through their rational purchasing behavior, individual consumers are considered to be in a command of production (p. 249).

Thus, neoliberal ideology underpinned by human capital theory, assumes an economic rationalistic model of human behaviour (Marquardt, 1998; Porter, 1993). People are calculating players who act to maximize their personal economic utility (Porter, 1993).

Neoliberal reforms of education are, therefore, as Peters and Marshall (1993) argue:

...a set of assumptions which reify a form of individualism...The postulate of *homo economicus*, one of the main tenets of new right economic thinking, holds that people should be treated as 'rational utility-maximisers' in all of their behaviour. In other words, individuals seek to further their own interests, defined in terms of measured net wealth... (p. 20).

In line with the above arguments, Brule (2004), drawing on the work of Peters, calls the individual upon which much current education policy in Canada is based, the 'autonomous consumer'. According to neoliberal ideology, by ensuring that 'consumers' have access to a vast array of 'choices', individuals in pursuit of their own self-interest can (and will) make the *right* economic choice (p. 249). Brule notes, "Within this discourse, the self-interested, rational individual is constituted solely as a consumer...where individuals, in their capacity to calculate risk, are responsible for their own success or failure (p. 249). In other words, individuals as conceptualized by neoliberal ideology are treated as though they see education instrumentally - as a means to an end, and one that they must achieve for themselves.

The model of the consumer in neoliberal ideology and second-wave human capital theory has roots in classical economics and liberalism, observes Lynch (2006). She states:

It [neoliberalism] shares with the classical liberalism, a humanist tradition that defines the person as an autonomous and rational being...In line with classical economics view of education, neo-liberalism also defines the person to be educated in economic terms, as 'homo economicus', a labour market actor whose life and purposes are determined by their economic status. These twin sets of values are reinforced with a third set of educational purposes, namely, the conceptualization of the person to be educated as a highly individualized, self-regarding and consuming economic actor (p. 3).

Neoliberalism assumes that students see their education from a consumerist perspective (Brule, 2004), as a ticket to a job or – as Hodkinson, Sparkes and Hodkinson (1996) state – a means to an end. Consequently, students are conceptualized under neoliberal ideology as economically rational consumers as opposed to citizens, thereby making economic considerations the only concerns that matter.

A neoliberal perspective favours education that appears to most directly and obviously lead to an enhanced economic status. According to Hart (1992), technologized work and the 'knowledge' worker are the dominant representations of the current and future direction of work and workers. Hart (1992) states that in a market society where social value is measured strictly in monetary terms, anything that can be appropriated free of cost is deemed essentially worthless. Thus, liberal education, learning that is not primarily oriented toward industry needs, appears to be increasingly seen by federal and provincial governments as irrelevant. Indeed, in the 2009 Federal budget, the Conservative Government introduced a new stipulation for scholarships funded through

the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)⁴¹, requiring that awards be given to business-related degrees (Usher, 2009). This new requirement – to favour research that relates more directly to economic outcomes over scholarship in the other arts disciplines – is significant especially when one considers that SSHRC is already under-funded by a ratio of 2:2:1 in relation to the other federal granting agencies, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) (Usher, 2009). These trends are indicative of the relative worth of liberal arts disciplines according to the federal government.

3.2. The Need for Women's Standpoint in Post-secondary Education Policy

3.2.1. Standpoint Theory as a Critique of Policy

Market oriented conceptualizations of post-secondary education, such as neoliberal approaches, and the conception of the individual associated with them, have been criticized by academics from a variety of backgrounds, including education (Ball, 1994, 2006, 2007; Giroux, 2001, 2004a, 2004b, 2008; Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006), history (Axelrod, 2002), political science (Emberley, 1994, 1996), and sociology (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993; Torres, 2002), to name just a few. Such criticisms are informed by diverse perspectives, including Marxism and poststructuralism. For the purposes of this thesis, I take up the criticisms of feminist social theorists, specifically the *standpoint theory* of Canadian feminist sociologist Dorothy E. Smith (Smith, 1987; 1990; 2005). In particular, I focus on her theorization of the “gender subtext” underlying the seemingly objective language of official texts, and of the “embodied” – as against the

⁴¹ SSHRC is a federal government funding agency promoting and supporting university-based research and training in the humanities and social sciences (Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2009).

abstract – experience. I also draw from the work of researchers informed by Smith in education policy, and in gender and rurality (Hughes, 1997; Little, 1997; Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999; Whatmore, 1993, 1994). These highlight the ways in which gendered identities and behaviours are socially constructed and can vary between and within localities, as well as the way in which localities – as constructed categories and material realities – shape women’s perspectives and decision-making processes.

3.2.2. Standpoint Theory and Text

Dorothy Smith (1987; 2005) argues that the ideas, images and symbols constituting official knowledge and culture (including educational policy knowledge), are created not by average citizens but by specialists, such as social scientists and public servants. As Smith (1987) states, these specialists are part of an “ideological apparatus” that contributes to the ruling of our society (p. 54). This apparatus includes images, ideas and symbols, but also practices, that make up a “coherent structure of social control” (Smith, 1987, p. 54). This structure operates through what Smith calls the ‘relations of ruling’, which she defines as:

...that extraordinary yet ordinary complex of relations that...connect us across space and time and organize our everyday lives – the corporations, government bureaucracies, academic and professional discourses, mass media, and the complex of relations that interconnect them (Smith, 2005, p. 10).

Government documents can be seen as part of this particular apparatus of ruling. Indeed, central to the relations of ruling, according to Smith (2005), are texts of all kinds. As Smith (2005) writes, “The relations of ruling in our kind of society are mediated by texts, by words, numbers, and images on paper, in computers, or on TV and movie screens” (p. 17).

The significance of institutional texts lies in their ability to coordinate practices of ruling and to organize experience. These texts are ‘objectified’ in that they abstract knowledge from the everyday actualities of people’s lives (Smith, 1987; 2005) through a reliance on scientific knowledge. Smith states that:

A mode of ruling has become dominant that involves a continual transcription of the local and particular actualities of our lives into abstracted and generalized forms. It is an *extralocal* mode of ruling. Its characteristic modes of consciousness are objectified and impersonal; its relations are governed by organizational logics and exigencies... We are ruled by forms of organization vested in and mediated by texts and documents, and constituted externally to particular individuals and their personal and familial relationships (p. 3).

Smith (1987) argues that women and their experiences have been historically excluded from the making of official public knowledge and its texts. This exclusion perpetuates existing ruling relations. Regarding Western culture, Smith (1987) states that:

Only one sex and class are directly and actively involved in producing, debating, and developing its ideas, in creating its art, in forming its medical and psychological conceptions, in framing its laws, its political principles, its educational values and objectives (p. 20).

Smith locates this process in the development of capitalism in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. During this time in Europe and North America, the domestic sphere of the middle classes became increasingly separate from the male-dominated worlds of business, politics and science (Smith, 2005). Smith states that while women remained in the home, middle class men were increasingly connected to the impersonal and extralocal sphere of the market, as well as the public spaces where journals, books and newspapers were discussed.

According to Smith, the particular “out of-body modes of consciousness”

necessary to such spheres of work and leisure required a specialization of subject and agency (Smith, 2005, p. 14) that denied a local bodily existence and an embodied knower, an unembodied existence available only to men. Such a subject was nonetheless dependent upon, but left unrecognized, the day-to-day work of women and others oriented toward the pragmatic operation of men's spheres of activity, and the personal care of those working in it. Women's supportive work in the office or in the so-called personal space of the home, for example, enabled the abstract form of consciousness required in the realm of business, politics and science. Women's exclusion permitted the dominance of a form of consciousness that is divorced from the particular social relations, modes of consciousness, knowledge and subjectivities upon which it depended. Thus, while the abstract, context-free knowledge that makes up the relations of ruling appears to be neutral, it contains what Smith calls a 'gender subtext', referring to the appearance of a neutral and impersonal rationality, while concealing its organization.

Smith's (1987, 1990a, 1990b, 1999) work has been used for a variety of different research goals and in a variety of different fields⁴², including, and most importantly for this study, education. Hart (1992) draws from the work of Smith, among others (such as Habermas, 1979), to critique from a feminist perspective the concept of skills for work that prevails in contemporary adult education. She does not just document the effects of education policy on the education and work experiences of women, as other literature does (for example, Leathwood & Francis, 2006; Taylor et al., 1997). Rather, Hart questions the implicit theory underlying contemporary education policy and uses the

⁴² Criminology (McKendy, 1992; 2006), social work (de Montigny, 1995), and Gerontology (Diamond, 1992), to name just a few.

perspectives of those whose experiences do not fit this model as a form of critique.

Recent literature shows policy directions in education continuing along similar lines as when Hart was writing (see for example, Leathwood & O'Connell, 2006; Reimer, 2004). This makes her work even more relevant today, given that little seems to have changed in the realm of education policy

Hart (1992) uses the ideas of Habermas (1979) to suggest that in taking its task as training and educating human capital, adult education, including the university level, in Western industrialized countries has been reconceptualized along the lines of a 'strictly instrumental rationality', geared toward the needs of business and industry, economic growth and profit maximization (p. 140). Instrumental rationality, according to Habermas, refers to the "...rationality of technical means, requiring 'technically utilizable, empirical knowledge'" (Habermas, 1979, p. 117, as cited in Hart, 1992). This kind of instrumentally rational knowledge is abstract, or context-free, and has elsewhere (Hodkinson, Sparkes, & Hodkinson, 1996) been referred to as 'technical rationality'. According to Hart (1992), the instrumentally rational perspective assumes that, "...[t]o be rational...means to use the appropriate technical means to reach a certain end" (p. 141). Education's task, therefore, according to policy informed by instrumental rationality, is to train students to possess the 'right' kind of skills – those that will help towards finding or keeping a job (Hart, 1992, p. 11; Hodkinson, Sparkes, & Hodkinson, 1996).

Increasingly, the 'right' kind of skills are seen to be those related to science and technology, raising questions about the place of liberal arts education, and knowledge that may not be used as a means of profit generation. But as Hart (1992) points out, liberal education is strongly tied to an emphasis on, "...a critique of the status quo, and on

speculating about what could be and what ought to be” (p. 60). Liberal education has a tradition of creative, critical thought oriented toward the wider society (see, for example, Dewey, 1997). Thus, Hart argues that the current conceptualization of work as skills, and its alignment with education, leaves little room for education that is critical of workplaces, among other aspects of life. Moreover, as Hart points out, the prevailing ideas about knowledge work are based on a narrow view of the relationship between thought and action. She argues that the instrumentally rational perspective, “...leaves out or misrepresents the experiences of the majority of people” (Hart, 1992, p. 2), and leaves little room for liberal education. This is because instrumental rationality is characterized by an objectifying attitude, “...where a detached observer is looking at ‘the’ external world” (p. 142), instead of an embodied knower situated within the world.

Other educational feminist social researchers and theorists (such as Brule, 2004; Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003; Leathwood & Francis, 2006; Ruddick, 1996) echo Smith and Hart in their critiques of rationality. In a similar manner to Smith (1987) Leathwood and O’Connell (2003) argue that the reason the experiences of the majority of people are left out of or misrepresented within the prevailing educational policy model of human behaviour is because it is based on a white, middle class, male ideal that is derived from white, Western, liberal humanist cultural ideas about an independent self. This perspective is seen as exclusionary of women (among other groups) by many feminists (see Robbins, Luxton, Eichler, & Descarries, 2008) because, as Davies (2005) suggests, the mental realm is associated with rationality, correct behaviour, and masculinity, and the bodily realm is associated with irrationality, improper behaviour and femininity. Davies argues that this dichotomy results in the exclusion or pathologizing of women as

outside the realm of the mind because one part of the dichotomy is always devalued in relation to the other.

So the kind of objectified scientific knowledge abstracted from people's experiences, documented in texts, and used for the purposes of ruling (as outlined by Smith) is, as Hart (1992) implies, instrumentally rational knowledge. Instrumentally rational knowledge is devoid of any kind of context, bodily or otherwise. The knower disappears and knowledge becomes disembodied and context-free (Flybjerg, 2001; Hart, 1992). But Smith's (2005) concept of a 'gender subtext' allows one to see that the texts that constitute the relations of ruling are, in fact, ideological; they exclude the perspectives of women (among other groups), and knowledge that is not seen as instrumentally rational. Ideology, according to Smith, refers to, "...images, ideas, symbols, concepts, vocabularies, as means for us to think about our world" (p. 54). Such images are given the appearance of neutrality and objectivity but are produced by specialists and people who are part of an apparatus of social control. Smith's (2005) concept of ideology, "...directs us to examine who produces what for whom, [and] where the social forms of consciousness come from" (p. 54). Once one is able to read the gender subtext in the knowledge that constitutes ruling relations, one can work toward using the experiences of others for the purposes of critique.

3.2.3. Standpoint Theory and Decision-Making

While standpoint theory and its accompanying notion of the "gender subtext" can be useful in critically analyzing text, it is also helpful in approaching dominant representations of decision-making processes. The notion of *embodied experience* is especially important here. Dorothy Smith's is an *embodied sociology* (Smith, 1987; 1990;

2005). Smith (2005) explains:

In a sense it reverses the traditional relationship between mind and body wherein mind may examine, explore, and reflect on what is of the body. Body isn't something to be looked at or even theorized. It is rather the site of consciousness, mind, thought, subjectivity, and agency as particular people's local doings. By pulling mind back into body, phenomena of mind and discourse – ideology, beliefs, concepts, theory, ideas and so on – are recognized as themselves the doings of actual people situated in particular local sites at particular times. They are no longer treated as if they were essentially inside people's heads (p. 24).

Thus, social phenomena including beliefs and ideas can be observed in the language of talk and text at the site of their production. The aim of Smith's standpoint theory is to prevent reifying the abstract objectified individual implied in dominant discourses, including educational policy. For Smith, people's experiences and perspectives are of utmost importance. Thus, Smith's standpoint perspective is open to men and women alike, and simply uses bodily experiences as the place to begin when conducting research and producing analyses.

Of course it is with the standpoint and embodied experience of *women* that feminist researchers and Smith herself have been most concerned. Even though there are a number of different theorists who utilize this standpoint theory in different ways (for example, Haraway, 1989, 1991; Harding, 1991, 1998, 2004; Hartsock, 1983, 1998; Rose, 1976; 1994; Smith, 1987, 1990a, 1990b, 2005), in general, women's standpoint can be defined as follows:

This theoretical orientation emphasizes that women's shared common set of social experiences – such as subordination to men, or responsibility for housework and child care, or fewer opportunities in the labour market – provides them with ways of seeing and understanding that differ from those of men (Sachs, 1993, p. 13).

The work of Smith and her contemporaries (McKendy, 1992; Mueller, 1995; Reimer, 2004, 1995) validates the experiences and perspectives of everyday women. According

to Smith, taking up the standpoint of women means giving women's experience expression and attention that it has hitherto been denied. Thus, one interested in conducting a study from women's standpoint can use *language* to explore social relations⁴³ and organization. These experiences and social relations, according to Smith, are contained within language, as language is seen from this perspective as one means by which experience and social relations are organized and expressed. The objectified knowledge of neoliberal education policy may show up in the language and practices of rural women, for example. But how this knowledge actually coordinates the educational experiences of women can be explored through their accounts of how they come to decisions surrounding their education. Moreover, the thoughts and actions that lie outside the 'apparatus of ruling' in education can be explored through women's accounts of their decision-making processes.

3.3. Situating Women's Standpoint *vis à vis* Education and the Rural

In taking up a standpoint in the experiences of women, it is important to acknowledge the question, "...do all women...occupy the same standpoint?" (Jaggar, 2004, p. 63). As Sachs (1996), Smith (2005) and Hartsock (2004) note, standpoint theories have garnered criticism for their supposed essentialism and implicit bias toward the topics and perspectives of the white, middle class. According to Sachs (1996):

Early feminist theories and practices assumed the existence of a 'universal woman' – and the experiences of white, upper-middle-class, heterosexual, Western women represented all women (p. 20).

⁴³ The concept of 'social relation', according to Smith, implies how the work (or other activity) is articulated to and coordinated with others. Smith states that, "[s]ocial relations are embedded in sequences of action that implicate other people, other experience, and other work among institutions and elsewhere" (Smith, 2005, p. 158).

Despite the argument that standpoint theories might be essentialist, Dorothy Smith (2005) suggests that the ability of black women, lesbian women, and working class women, among more, to take up and use experience as a way to critique other standpoint theorists suggests the continuing merit of women's standpoint. Furthermore, women's standpoint does not imply a universal standpoint for all women. Rather, from the perspective of Smith at least, a 'standpoint' is merely a position that anyone can take up in opposition to the ruling relations.

Considering the women in whom I am most interested, it is the *gendered rural experience* or standpoint that I wish to hear and explore, and whether and how this experience shapes and is shaped by dominant ideologies about post-secondary education. Recent literature (Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999) confirms that the experiences and ideas of womanhood vary by location and, hence, gender and geography are linked. My project is organized under the assumption that the experiences of women living in rural areas may differ from those of many women who live in urban areas (Sachs, 1996)⁴⁴. In taking such a position, however, one should be careful not to exaggerate the differences between groups of people living in different areas. As the insights of Hoggart (1990) and Halfacree (1993) suggest, people living in so-called rural and urban areas sometimes have many more similarities than differences. Furthermore, people living in specific geographic areas can be seen to be connected and shaped by social relations that are both local and extra-local (Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999; Smith, 1987, 1990, 2005). This highlights the possibility that what separates geographic locations from one another (as

⁴⁴ I do not compare the experiences of urban and rural women in this thesis, but assume that experiences and perspectives of women can vary depending on geography.

well as women from each other and from men) may be partly our own ways of making sense of them.

As a result of such insights, many feminist geographers now favour a more social constructionist approach to the study of rural areas, and identities, including gender. As Annie Hughes (1997) points out, academics who study rurality are beginning to think about rural places not as bounded entities, but as, "...dynamic and unstable social constructions..." (p. 124). Instead of an emphasis solely on the symbolic aspects of gender and place, some feminist geographers (such as Brandth, 2002 and McDowell, 1999) consider the possibility that social practices and ways of thinking about and representing gender and place are interconnected and mutually constituted (p. 7). They assume that gender and place can be seen as both a set of material social relations and as symbolic meaning, thus incorporating an emphasis on the material as well as the symbolic aspects of experience, identity and place. Thus, the terms 'gender' and 'place' highlight the ways in which men and women, as well as localities (places), are socially constructed through particular meanings and practices (Brandth, 2002). What this means is that the significance of the category 'rural' comes from its construction through, and embedding in, "...historically and spatially specific social and cultural practices which have invested it with particular significance" (Bock, 2006, p. 124-125). Indeed, many researchers interested in rurality and gender (such as Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999) argue that our linguistic 'constructions' or created ideas about rural places play a crucial role in creating and maintaining actual differences between places and people, by shaping local policies, practices and beliefs.

In light of the above insights, some researchers question the usefulness of the

term 'rural' at all (Halfacree, 1993; Hoggart, 1990; Shucksmith, 1994). Hoggart (1990) suggests that research on specifically 'rural' areas has been historically under-theorized. According to Hoggart (1990), "[T]he broad category 'rural' is obfuscatory, whether the aim is description or theoretical evaluation, since intra-rural differences can be enormous and rural-urban similarities can be sharp" (p. 245). Notwithstanding the debates surrounding the term, however, I retain the concept for this research to maintain consistency between the White Paper and the interview data (for more on my rationale for retaining the "rural" concept see pp. 96-98).

To say the rural context affects the experiences and ideas of womanhood is one thing. However, it is quite another to claim that rurality shapes the decisions individual women make concerning education, as well as the manner in which those decisions are made. Such a claim is of course contrary to the (dominant neoliberal) view of decision making around education and other matters as always instrumentally/technically rational. But British education researchers Hodkinson, Sparkes and Hodkinson (1996) suggest that there are other 'types' of rationality besides instrumental (or technical) rationality. They argue that context is central to understanding human thought and behavior and specifically decision making in education. Hodkinson et al. (1996) draw from interviews they conducted with British youth, and the work of Bourdieu (1990) and Giddens (1991), to critique the notion of technical (instrumental) rationality that dominates in British educational policy. Their study was conducted in the late 1980s with youth graduating from compulsory schooling in Britain and preparing to embark on careers. The authors, having become frustrated with either highly structural accounts of student decision-making, or educational policies that emphasized only the freedom of individuals in the

decision-making process, attempted to develop a theoretical framework through empirical research that bridged the structure versus agency problem.

In their findings, Hodkinson et al. (1996) suggest that people act rationally even when it appears to outsiders that they do not. The authors argue that individuals make career decisions through lifestyle choices (Giddens, 1991), which are informed by discursive consciousness – that which can be articulated – but also the non-discursive consciousness of the habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). According to Bourdieu (1990), the habitus includes:

...systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them (p. 53).

The habitus, according to Bourdieu, is made up of dispositions – habits, beliefs, values, tasks, mannerisms, feelings and thoughts – that are socially produced in particular contexts. How people act, therefore, reflects social structures as well as concrete processes of socialization over time, thereby allowing for a wide range of possible action (Bourdieu, 1990; Reay, 2004). For Bourdieu, the concept of habitus captures the way in which the body is in the social world at the same time as the social world is present in the body without being deterministic (Reay, 2004).

From their interview data and the theoretical insights of Bourdieu, as well as Giddens (1991), Hodkinson et al. (1996) develop a theory of career decision making that they call ‘careership’. This theory, they argue, makes sense of the way in which the career decision making of youth is ‘pragmatically rational’ as opposed to technically rational. The theory of ‘careership’ is useful because it accounts for the way in which

career decisions include structural determinations, subjective interpretations, relationships with others, and happenstance, and it highlights the importance of ‘non-rational’ elements of educational decision-making, such as emotion and habit. For Hodkinson *et al.* (1996), educational decision-making⁴⁵ takes place within the situated life course (biography) of individuals. If this is the case, then it follows that rural women’s perceptions and decisions around education would be shaped by factors and forces in the rural context within which they have lived.

When we ask *which* factors and forces most affect rural women and *how* these factors influence their decision-making, the task becomes considerably more complicated. The scholarship on the decisions of women – rural or otherwise – around education is wide-ranging. Certainly, and consistent with the instrumental/technical rational view of decision making, there are economic (instrumental) reasons for women’s enrollment in university and these vary based on social class, age and marital status. Walkerdine (2003), writing about her research on femininity in the UK (Walkerdine, Melody & Lucey, 2001), identifies a narrative of ‘becoming somebody’ in her interviews with working class young women in Britain in the 1990s. Such women spoke of a desire for upward social and economic mobility, often through education and careers. Like Walkerdine, Britton and Baxter (1999) found economic rationales and non-economic rationales for university enrollment in interviews they conducted with 21 mature university students (students over the age of 21) in the UK. Interview themes expressing

⁴⁵ I use the terms ‘choice’ and ‘decision’ interchangeably. Following Perna (2000), who conceptualizes ‘choice’ as the phase of the decision-making process when students select an institution (or a program) in which to enrol, I conceptualize a decision as the point at which a student officially declares her major or begins working toward that goal. In this sense, ‘choice’ is the culmination of a process of decision-making or ‘extensive problem-solving’ (Moogan, Baron & Harris, 1999) that incorporates social and cultural factors (Hodkinson, Sparkes, & Hodkinson, 1996).

economic or instrumental goals were categorized as: 'struggling against the odds', a dominant theme for working class married women struggling to get out of dead-end jobs (p. 186); and 'credentialism', common among middle class women expressing a sense of frustration at unrecognized achievements (p. 187).

However, in the gender and education literature, many *non-economic* reasons for women's participation in university have been documented, reasons that vary with social class, geography, family, and age. Studies of women's educational decision-making reveal that middle class students describe coming to university as a 'non-choice', something that is 'assumed' and expected based on familial patterns of post-secondary participation (Brine & Waller, 2004). With regard to rural women specifically there is reason to believe that rural places can act as non-economic forces pushing and pulling women into post-secondary education. Newfoundland, for example, has a long history of out-migration, particularly involving residents of rural areas (Felt & Sinclair, 1995; Matthews, 1993; Palmer & Sinclair, 2000). Felt and Sinclair (1995) argue that in the 1950s women were more likely than men to leave rural communities, but that gender differences have disappeared in recent decades. Ommer and Sinclair (1999) link the tendency toward outmigration in youth in their 20s to the desire for post-secondary education, coupled with economic disadvantages of rural areas. However, Overton's (1999) research on the tourist industry and the related cultural construction of the 'real Newfoundland' and its simple stoic folk suggests that economic success may not be as much of a priority for Newfoundlanders as other research assumes. According to Overton, since the 19th century, Newfoundland has been marketed to the world by its tourist industry and state as a place where one can get back to 'reality' through closeness

to nature. Overton states that, "...Newfoundland was...promoted as a place to realize 'the true import of life' through an appreciation of the lives of the fisherfolk...a source of inspiration for flagging spirits and jaded sensibilities" (p. 18). Such romantic visions of Newfoundland and its people were conjured up in what Overton calls the 'cultural revival' of the 1960s, which academics used to oppose modernization. As Overton states:

Broadly speaking, this movement was an anti-materialist, often romantic, rejection of certain aspects of urban-industrialist society with its orientation towards progress, its bureaucratic rationality and its middle-class values (p. 49).

These images have now become a central part of popular culture within Newfoundland, and central to the province's constructed heritage and identity (Overton, 1999). Such images may influence students' economic engagements with post-secondary education.

A woman's stage in the life course also affects her perspective on education independent of purely economic concerns. This is because gender, age, marital status and the presence of children, intersect to shape rural women's educational decision-making and experiences in different ways. Older women with families, regardless of geographic location, have been noted to speak of participation in post-secondary education in non-economic terms. Some women, who have devoted their lives to family and children, enroll in university as a way to do something for themselves ('for me') (Brine & Waller, 2004; Britton & Baxter, 1999; Tett, 2000). After children are grown, women acquire space and time to think about themselves and to do something based on their own desires. In this way, gendered ideologies and relations, related to women's role as care-giver in the family, can have an impact on whether or not and when women enroll in post-secondary education. Britton and Baxter (1999) characterize these experiences as 'unfulfilled potential'. Here, education is not seen instrumentally, but as a way to fulfill

aspects of the self that were previously denied because of gendered expectations about family and marriage.

Finally, studies of rurality, gender and education indicate that men and women from rural areas will hold different views about formal education, and life after high school graduation (Alloway & Gilbert, 2003; Pinhorn, 2002; Corbett, 2007).

Collectively, this literature suggests that rural women and men make decisions concerning education differently, based on gendered ideals, and these ideals constitute further non-economic push-and-pull influences on decision-making. Regarding Newfoundland, Davis (1988) outlines the definition of acceptable femininity in a southwest island fishing village as, "...the long suffering, ever dependable fortress of community and domestic life." (p. 221). This 'grass widow' sits and passively waits for her husband to come home from fishing while keeping the family together (p. 221). The traits valued in outport women are: indirectness, unassertiveness, and self-sacrifice with, "...little room for individuality..." (p. 222). Porter (1987), Darcy (1987) and Pope and Taylor (1987) all found in their studies of gender in rural Newfoundland, that young women draw from these dominant ideas about femininity in order to construct their post-high school plans.

While research conducted on rural life in the 1980s indicates gendered spheres of activity (for example, Davis, 1988; Porter, 1993) sustained by gender ideologies (Davis, 1993), recent research suggests that such divisions are disappearing (Bates, 2006; Davis, 1993, 1995, 1999). Davis (1993, 1995, 1999, 2003) argues that economic changes have altered interpersonal relationships within rural Newfoundland communities, making people less community- and family-oriented than they were once believed to be. Young

people in particular appear to have adopted such an outlook (Davis, 1995), but with different implications for women and men. According to Davis (2000), young men, while no longer able to work primarily in the fishery, still value ‘country life’ and the ability to hunt and fish. Young women, in contrast, “...are more likely to value education than their male age-mates. Using education as their ticket out of the community, young women are more socially mobile...” (Davis, 1993, p. 470). Corbett’s (2007) research on rural Nova Scotia supports this assumption. He notes that the tendency to leave the rural community is linked with a lack of economic opportunities for women in the rural locale. Research on post-high school plans of rural youth in Australia (Alloway & Gilbert, 2003) confirms the idea that women may see fewer opportunities available for them in rural communities than men. Alloway and Gilbert’s (2003) research suggests that men typically plan to work in manual fields after high school and women’s post-high school plans usually involve education. In contrast, other research argues that women’s work is still evident and undervalued in rural and resource-based economies (Bates, 2006; Davis, 2000b; Durdle, 2001; Harrison & Power, 2005; Kelly, 2005; MacDonald, 1995), making some women, particularly those with families, feel a sense of being ‘trapped’ in the rural locale, preventing them from participating in post-secondary education (Davis, 1995; 1999).

If non-economic factors figure in women’s decisions to pursue or forgo a post-secondary education, so too do they influence their choice of a field of study. Many women choose to specialize in fields traditionally dominated by women, and, as statistics show, in the liberal arts. According to the instrumentally rational perspective on post-secondary education, studying liberal arts subjects is the “wrong” choice, since these

subjects do not supply students with the ‘skills’ valued in a knowledge economy fuelled by science and technology. This is because in a market society where social value is measured strictly in monetary terms, anything that can be appropriated free of cost is deemed essentially worthless (Hart, 1992). Thus, liberal education, learning that is not primarily oriented toward industry needs, appears to be increasingly seen by federal and provincial governments as irrelevant, (Anisef et al., 2001; Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006; Slaughter, 1998) and ‘profitable’ fields, including those related to science and technology, are deemed ‘relevant’.

But according to the gender and education literature, women seem to hold different ideas about math and science disciplines compared to men (Acker & Oatley, 1993; Davis and Steiger, 1990; Lloyd, Walsh, & Shehni Yailagh, 2005). Many researchers have studied and theorized about women in math and science (for example, Mendick, 2005; Montgomery, 2004), yet, as Sandra Acker and Keith Oatley (1993) state, still very little is known about the complexities involved in women’s attitudes toward and experiences of such subjects. Nonetheless, as Davis and Steiger (1990) point out, “...one thing is clear: the way in which individuals view success and failure is a highly gendered matter” (p. 152)⁴⁶. Lloyd, Walsh, & Shehni Yailagh (2005) tested this idea in public schools in one British Columbia school district and found that young women (in a sample of 161 students at least) do indeed measure their success differently than young men. They linked women’s underestimation of ability (Pajares, 1996) to their avoidance of math and related careers.

⁴⁶ See Acker and Oatley (1993) for a review of the literature related to gender and subject choice.

This has led Davis and Steiger (1990) to suggest that a feminist conceptualization of learning (and self confidence) must be incorporated into math and science subjects, which have been built upon the interests of suppression of affective and expressive human traits (such as desire for reassurance and encouragement), and include competitive grading systems, inflexible and timed exams, and the division of courses into units organized around a rigid system of tests and rewards. According to Davis and Steiger (1990), “Women, we would argue, have much less interest, historically and psychically, in the maintenance of these structures...” (p. 156-157). Indeed, as Tett (2000) suggests, the ways in which women and men approach education in general appear highly gendered. Her study of Scottish students indicates that men tend to see university as a means to achieve a qualification, whereas women cite personal reasons for enrolling. Reay, Ball and David (2002) found in their research with 23 mature students in the UK that most mature students study for the intrinsic value of education, even though they must balance financial and time-related pressures. Single mothers in Reay et al’s (2002) and other research (for example, Leathwood & O’Connell, 2003) spoke of earning post-secondary education for their children (pp. 11-2).

Place all of this in rural context and new issues arise. Literature points to differences in the delivery of education in rural areas that will also influence how rural women engage with post-secondary education (Collins, Press, & Galway, 2003; Dibbon, 2001). According to Collins, Press and Galway (2003), recruiting and retaining both substitute and full-time teachers in rural Newfoundland is difficult, given dwindling rural populations, and the provincial government’s reluctance to dedicate funds to schools that are not seen to be economically viable (Dibbon, 2001). As a result, rural schools may

have difficulty recruiting and retaining suitable teachers and this may impact students' learning and discourage them from pursuing particular subjects. Additionally, as Collins, Press and Galway (2003) state, in many rural Newfoundland communities, students have access to few community services, other schools, museums, organized sports, recreational facilities, arts and cultural events, diverse businesses, or visitors. Therefore, they may only have exposure to a narrow range of career and educational possibilities as compared to their urban counterparts.

But women's choice of fields need not derive from their lack of exposure to some subjects over others. Some women may view their rural homes in negative ways and simply wish to escape. For these women, post-secondary education offers a way out of rural communities. Consequently, subject preferences may play an insignificant role. Rural cultures of small town gossip act as an informal type of social control (Davis, 1988), and as a 'push' and 'pull' force on rural women's decision-making processes. According to Davis (1988):

In the local community, the member's personal characteristics and their life and family histories are public knowledge – the 'currency' for public action. Social control does not need a formal or authoritative office. Individuality is subordinated to the community...Assertiveness of any sort is not allowed, unless it is conducted within highly conventionalized and limiting idiomatic forms. Individuality is recognized and legitimized only within rigidly enforced limits (p. 222).

Gossip can encourage people to leave or, alternatively, it can undermine women's assertiveness and discourage them from leaving for school or developing and pursuing ambitions. Research on the meaning of place for residents of rural locations indicates that additional difficulties with moving come from strong attachments to particular locales. Many rural locales in the UK, for example, and also in Newfoundland (Overton, 1999),

are associated with images of the 'rural idyll'. According to British rural researchers Jo Little and Patricia Austin (1996), in this scenario:

Pastimes, friendships, family relations and even employment are seen as somehow more honest and authentic, unencumbered with the false and insincere trappings of city life or with their associated dubious values (p. 103).

Such images can shape how rural women engage with post-secondary education; they can shape the women's goals for where they attend university, what courses they study and what they want to do after they graduate. Additionally, strong attachments to place can contribute to the desire never to leave the rural community.

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter outlines the theoretical literature informing my analysis of both the White Paper and interviews with women from rural parts of the island of Newfoundland. The context of post-secondary education policy in Canada shows a trend toward policy informed by neoliberal ideology and human capital theory which construct post-secondary education in instrumental terms – as a means to employment and economic prosperity – and the learner as a disembodied, autonomous and rational chooser. Consequently, as Smith (1987) and Hart (1992) point out, institutional texts, such as education policy documents, exclude much of the knowledge and many of the experiences of everyday people, especially women. In contrast to the disembodied instrumental perspective, women's educational decisions may be informed by experiential knowledge (Smith, 1987, 2005) and therefore shaped by social relations. Thus, I contrast the dominant view of post-secondary education and the learner with the standpoint theory of Smith (1987, 1990a, 1990b, 2005), as well as insights from social constructionist theory on gender and rurality (Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999; Whatmore, 1991). Social

constructionist perspectives on identity and place highlight the way in which localities and identities are produced materially and culturally through social relations, thereby accounting for the possibility of diverse female lives in a variety of rural places. In contrast to the dominant abstract instrumental perspective on education, the literature on women, rurality and education collectively suggests that gender and place strongly impact women's engagements with post-secondary education, albeit in different ways. Using these combined theoretical perspectives, I explore the fit between rural women's engagements with post-secondary education and the White Paper. In doing this, I aim to explore ways in which rural women's experiences are simultaneously organized by the kind of specialized knowledge evident in the White Paper, in addition to the context of their lives in rural Newfoundland. The next chapter outlines the methods I used in order to elicit and analyze data for this project.

CHAPTER 4: Qualitative Research Methods: Interviews and Documents

4.0. Introduction

In chapter two, I provide a brief overview of the context of women's lives in rural Newfoundland, discuss some of the literature on rural women and education in Newfoundland, and introduce the reader to the women who participated in this project. I show that, under changing economic circumstances in rural Newfoundland, more women are taking up post-secondary education, particularly at the university level. However, despite the increase in women's participation in university, the connection between rural Newfoundland and the significance of post-secondary education in women's lives has yet to be thoroughly explored.

In chapter three, I discuss dominant conceptualizations of post-secondary education, as well as standpoint theories and social constructionist theories of gender and rurality. These theories provided the framework through which I analyse the data collected for this project. Thus, having established a rationale for the project and provided an outline of the theories that inform my analysis, in this chapter, I discuss the qualitative research design for this study. Data include semi-structured interviews with 8 rural women enrolled in liberal arts at Memorial University of Newfoundland in 2006, as well as a textual analysis of the White Paper. My research questions are: 1) What is the significance of post-secondary education in the White Paper?; 2) What is the significance of post-secondary education for women from rural parts of the island of Newfoundland who are enrolled in liberal arts degrees?; 3) How does the context of rural Newfoundland shape the significance of post-secondary education for women?; and 4) What are the implications of questions 1-3 for educational policy in Newfoundland? Here I discuss my

research design, recruitment of participants for the study, and the collection and analysis of the data.

4.1. The Construction of Research Methods

There are many different approaches one can take to conducting social research, and the reasons for undertaking such research vary according to the researcher and the project. For example, Neuman (2004) offers the following definition of social research, “All social researchers systematically collect and analyze empirical data and carefully examine the patterns in them to understand and explain social life” (p. 82). Tim May (2002), however, suggests that *critical* research is often conducted with the belief that it is possible for the world to be other than it is, “[e]ngaged, theoretically informed empirical work, can be conducted in order to illuminate issues and bring to the attention of a wider audience the dynamics and consequences of social relations” (p. 4). Simply by looking at some of the diverse methodology texts available, as well as existing examples of social research, one can conclude that the scope and meaning of such research is highly contested (Ragin, 1994).

Regardless of how one approaches social research, many social scientists now contend that research methodology is not simply the gathering of data that exist completely independently of the researcher (Behar, 1993; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Fife, 2005; Lincoln & Denzin, 1994). According to the sociologist Tim May (2002), “We can now observe that data are produced, not collected, and it is the process of production that is fundamentally related to the product” (p. 3). Thus, it can be said that data are produced through the methodology one uses in a given social research project. Methodology, according to Neuman (2004), involves a philosophical perspective on knowledge and the

way a researcher relates theory and observation. As Neuman suggests, this involves both conceptualization and operationalization of constructs (ideas), which depend upon theories one has about the world. Theories about the world can come from various sources, such as personal experience, and reading literature. However, it is through *method* – a set of tools used to observe and analyse data – that concepts become operationalized (Neuman, 2004).

4.1.1. Types of Research Methods

The way a researcher views the social world and the tools they use to observe and analyse it are shaped by the researcher into a specific research design. Research design can be categorized according to two basic types of methods: qualitative and quantitative. While many researchers demonstrate a preference for one type of method over another, it cannot be reasonably stated that one method is better by nature than the other in all cases – rather, they can complement one another (Neuman, 2004). Quantitative and qualitative research methods differ in the presentation of data, in the assumptions researchers hold about social life, and in the researcher's objectives. Thus, the decision as to whether or not one uses quantitative or qualitative methods is highly context dependent.

4.2. Qualitative Research and the Research Problem

My research seeks to understand the significance of post-secondary education according to the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and according to women from rural parts of the island portion of the province who are enrolled in undergraduate arts degrees at Memorial University of Newfoundland. For these purposes, I chose to use a qualitative research design consisting of the 1) textual analysis of an official policy document, as well as 2) semi-structured interviews with women.

According to Neuman (2004), qualitative research often relies on interpretive or critical social science, follows a nonlinear research path, and speaks a language of “cases and contexts” (p. 83). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) provide a succinct general definition of qualitative research. They state that:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self (p. 3).

Some qualitative data collection techniques include field research (which can include participant observation, interviews, or focus groups, to name a few examples), and historical-comparative research (Neuman, 2004).

The word ‘qualitative’ suggests that researchers are interested in meaning. Data in qualitative research are sometimes referred to as ‘soft data’ because they come in the form of impressions, words, sentences, photos, and symbols, as opposed to numbers (Neuman, 2004). As Denzin and Lincoln point out:

...qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 3).

Similarly, according to Berg (1998):

...qualitative techniques allow researchers to share in the understandings and perceptions of others and to explore how people structure and give meaning to their daily lives. Researchers using qualitative techniques examine how people learn about and make sense of themselves and others (p. 7).

Essentially, the analysis of qualitative data allows researchers to discuss in detail the various means by which human beings create and maintain their social realities (Berg, 1998).

I chose a qualitative research design as I felt it provided the best means to explore the questions with which I am concerned within the theoretical perspectives that frame the project. I aim to understand the meanings the authors of the White Paper bring to post-secondary education through their views and strategies regarding post-secondary education in the White Paper, the subtext and ideology implicit in this policy document. I am also interested in the meanings rural women bring to their post-secondary education from their standpoint, through their talk of how and why they came to study at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Hence, my concern is with *meaning-making* through texts and the language used to talk about post-secondary education and individual decision-making. While quantitative methods can be used in research focused on meaning, I wanted the meanings from my data, the text and language, to emerge organically and not be bound by any prior assumptions or expectations. I believe such an approach is most consistent with Smith's (1987) own methodology:

Rather than explaining behavior, we begin from where people are in the world, explaining the social relations of the society of which we are part, explaining an organization that is not fully present in any one individual's everyday experience. Since the procedures, methods, and aims of present sociology give primacy to the concepts, relevances, and topics of the discourse, we cannot begin from within that frame. This would be to sustain the hegemony of the discourse over the actualities of the everyday experience of the world (p. 89).

The next section of this chapter outlines the specifics of how I used my data sources: a policy document – the Provincial White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education – and semi-structured interviews with rural women studying Liberal Arts subjects at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

4.3. Specific Research Strategy: Policy Document and Semi-Structured Interviews

My project constitutes a *comparative textual analysis* (May, 2001; Ng, 1995; Smith, 1987, 2005) of the White Paper and of interviews with rural women. As we have seen, Smith (1987, 2005) argues that *institutional* texts are a central means of control in society. Such texts are informed by official knowledge produced by specialists located within an apparatus of ruling that organizes the experiences of those external to it. Institutional texts, according to Smith (1987; 2005) and Ng (1995), are said to contain knowledge that is abstract and objectified, capable of translocally organizing the everyday experiences of individuals, particularly women. Such texts appear to be neutral, but in actuality they are ‘constituents of social relations’ (Smith, 1999), produced through the coordinated practices of individuals within specific political, economic and institutional contexts. In contrast to the constructed abstractions that comprise institutional texts, interviews - or *narrative* texts, if you will - with those located outside the ruling apparatus (in this case, women) are grounded in everyday practicalities and social relations. These can highlight experiences and perspectives excluded by specialized knowledge. Thus, textual analysis of institutional texts and first-hand accounts of women’s experiences focuses on language while remaining attentive to specific social and historic contexts (George, 2000).

There are a number of ways in which one can perform textual analysis. In words reminiscent of Smith, John Scott (1990) argues that the ultimate purpose of examining documents is to arrive at an understanding of the meaning and significance of what the document or narrative contains (p. 28). According to Scott (1990), textual analysis involves mediation between the frames of reference of the researcher and those who

produced the text. Tim May (2001) argues that documents are the sedimentations of social practices and are, thus, social constructions. He states that, “What people decide to record is itself informed by decisions which, in turn, relate to the social, political and economic environments of which they are a part” (p. 183). According to this way of thinking, texts are, in the words of Dorothy Smith (1990), “constituents of social relations” (p. 120).

I chose to conduct my textual analysis via examination of *themes* (Boyatzis 1998) emerging from the White Paper and the transcripts of my interviews. A theme is a pattern found in the information that at the minimum describes and organizes possible observations or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon (Boyatzis, 1998). Boyatzis (1998) points to a number of ways themes can be developed, such as from prior data, prior research, or inductively from data collected. Themes can be latent or manifest or, in other words, implicit or explicit in textual data. The following section outlines how I conducted thematic analyses of my data, as well as the processes I undertook to collect my data.

4.3.1. Policy Document: *The Provincial White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education*

Part of this research involves what one might call ‘unobtrusive methods’ in the sense that it involves the use of a document. May (2001), quoting Scott (1990, p. 12-13), defines a document as:

...in its most general sense...a written text...Writing is the making of symbols representing words, and involves the use of...[a] material medium...From this point of view, therefore, documents may be regarded as physically embodied texts, where the containment of the text is the primary purpose of the physical medium (p. 178).

Despite this general definition, there are many different kinds of documents, including statistical reports, journals, and historical publications, to name a few examples, and they are used for a variety of different reasons in social research.

The White Paper is a public document that is open-published and accessible to anyone. I did not require ethical clearance to use it for this research. I chose to examine the White Paper after reflecting on my own experiences with post-secondary education. I heard about the White Paper process in the summer of 2004, the year following the provincial election of the new Conservative party under the leadership of Danny Williams. As part of the process, the Williams Government appointed Dr. Wayne Ludlow and Mr. Cyril Farrell as commissioner and advisor to the commissioner, respectively. Both men were previously employed with the province's public post-secondary institutions, as well as the provincial government⁴⁷. Ludlow and Farrell conducted consultation sessions with various organizations, such as university and college administrators, and the public was also asked to make submissions online. The White Paper was based on these consultations, and was released in the summer of 2005. By reading this document, I wanted to find out more about how the provincial government saw the role of post-secondary education in the province, and how the system would be changed.

When the White Paper was released, I read through it in its entirety. The main content of the document is contained within nine chapters, over 79 pages. The first four chapters outline Ludlow and Farrell's vision of post-secondary education for the province, and describe the current post-secondary educational system, including

⁴⁷ I provide more details on the White Paper, its authors and contents in Chapter 5.

Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic. The five remaining chapters are dedicated to the strategies Ludlow and Farrell developed in order to respond to the identified need for change. From my initial reading of the White Paper, I realized that this document would be a clear statement of the recently elected provincial government's position on post-secondary education, and the changes that they aimed to make to the system. I wanted to be the first to explore these issues in relation to the perspectives of some women like me⁴⁸. Consequently, I decided to make it a major part of my Master's thesis project.

As previously indicated, my approach to the analysis of the White Paper is informed by Smith (1987, 1990a, 1990b, 2005) and her colleagues (Ng, 1995). They argue that institutional texts draw from specialized objectified knowledge that is abstract and appears factual. This appearance of objectivity in institutional texts conceals the social relations through which they are produced. Thus, Ng (1995) concludes that textual phenomena are not naturally occurring, but are shaped by 'ideological frames'. Ng (1995) states that multiculturalism policy in Canada, for example, "...is through and through an artifact *produced* by the administrative processes of a liberal democratic state in a particular historical conjuncture..." (p. 36). Ideology, then, is not simply a set of beliefs, but is *accomplished* in particular social, historical, political and economic contexts. Likewise, I view the White Paper as produced within a specific socio-historical and economic context and intended to achieve specific aims. As Ng (1995) states, "...my analysis treats it [policy] as part and parcel of a social organization having to do with how

⁴⁸ I discuss details about my textual analysis of the White Paper and the interviews with 8 rural women in section 5.6.

Canadian society is regulated by the state” (p. 36). Such an analysis is attentive to, “...interpretive schema embedded in and articulated to the ruling relations within the bureaucratic state apparatus” (Ng, 1995, p. 37). Thus analysis displays how the text makes sense relationally in context.

Taking the perspectives of Smith (1990) and May (2001) into account, my analysis of the White Paper involved considerations of the political and institutional *context* in which the document was produced, and not just the themes discussed and the language used. Therefore, I first considered the socioeconomic context of late 20th century Newfoundland, in addition to the provincial and national public policy context. I also explored, to the extent possible, the practices (including the research) that produced the White Paper. I analysed the government’s goals for post-secondary education and the province as a whole, as well as its proposed strategies, in light of this context. Five themes are evident within the White Paper, portraying post-secondary education primarily as a means to achieve economic success: post-secondary education as an unproblematic good; the supremacy of market-oriented post-secondary education; the necessity of the participation of all citizens in market-oriented post-secondary education; a business model and goals can increase and enhance participation in market-oriented post-secondary education; and the practice of the previous four themes can achieve gender based income equality and individual and provincial economic success

Instead of reading the White Paper in a ‘detached’ manner, I drew upon my own experiences, literature on Newfoundland and Labrador and the interviews I conducted with eight women in order to engage with the strategies within the document, and the language used by its authors. I first read through the White Paper a number of times to

familiarize myself with its content. I then explored some of the recent literature on education policy in Newfoundland, and read about the political context of the Progressive Conservative Government to inform my reading. I also drew on literature describing a neo-liberal turn in post-secondary education policy in Western industrialized countries. I discovered the importance of this body of literature in my encounter with specific key words used in the Throne Speech (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2004). Phrases such as ‘the global knowledge economy’, helped me identify the ideological frame (Ng, 1995) - neoliberalism and human capital theory - informing the document.

I next performed a detailed reading of the White Paper content. I explored the document to identify pieces of text that address how the provincial government constructs the value of post-secondary education. The literature on neoliberalism helped me interpret the data I collected and I explored the White Paper policy strategies to confirm (or refute) and illustrate my analysis. I then looked for sections of text relevant to the lives of rural women. I found that the White Paper deals with women and rural students separately, and I identified the White Paper strategies relevant to these groups. The ideological frames of neoliberalism and human capital theory helped me understand the government’s approach to these groups in relation to the White Paper’s perspective on post-secondary education generally. As the next section shows, I used my White Paper analysis as a way to frame data from the interviews with rural women studying liberal arts at Memorial.

4.3.2. Use of Semi-Structured Ethnographic Interviews with Rural Women

The second component of my analysis included semi-structured interviews with women from rural parts of the island of Newfoundland who were enrolled in liberal arts

disciplines at Memorial University. I did this because I wanted to compare the significance of post-secondary education in provincial government policy with the ways that some rural women actually engage with post-secondary education, and how they see it in the larger context of their lives. I chose rural women studying liberal arts because, as indicated in the introduction to this thesis, liberal arts disciplines are often perceived in the public imagination as irrelevant. With the economic difficulties many rural communities in Newfoundland may be facing, my feeling was that there might be increasing pressure for men and women alike to pursue avenues of post-secondary education that appear to be strongly connected to employment. However, women continue to be highly represented in liberal arts disciplines at Memorial University. What, then, is the significance of a liberal arts degree for such women? Is there a fit between the perspectives promoted in the provincial White Paper and those of rural women?

I chose to approach these questions via semi-structured interviews, specifically, ‘ethnographic interviewing’ (Fontana & Frey, 1998), for I felt such an approach could best capture the “embodied knowledge” (Smith, 1987, 2005) of these women. Ethnographic interviewing is appropriate when the researcher has general topics he or she wishes to know about, but does not use closed-ended questions (also known as a “formal” approach to interviewing). As Fontana and Frey (1998) state:

Ethnographic interviewing is suitable when attempting to understand the complex behaviour of members of society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry...[ethnographic interviewing usually involves] the establishment of a human-to-human relation with the respondent and the desire to understand rather than to explain (p. 57).

Even though every study is different, Fontana and Frey state that some of the basic

elements of ethnographic interviewing include learning about a people, their culture, their language, and their ways of life. Fontana and Frey advocate the use of what they call ‘unstructured interviewing’, but I prefer to use the terms ‘semi-structured’ or ‘focused’ as they better communicate the idea that a researcher is interested in a specific topic or event, but wants clarification and elaboration in order to understand the actions and perspectives of interview participants.

4.3.3. Ethical Issues

Interviews, in addition to the entire research process, do not begin only when the first question is asked:

Preparation by reading and initial exploratory work, understanding the situation into which you are going, clarifying any ambiguities which people might have of the research and eliciting their cooperation and being sensitive to ethical, political and theoretical considerations in the process, form a central part of its practice (May, 2001, p. 132).

For the purposes of this research, an ethics application was required in order to proceed with data collection. In the Fall of 2006 I developed my application following the guidelines stipulated by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Once approval was granted, I began the process of negotiating access to participants.

4.3.4. Choosing and Accessing the Participants

As previously indicated, despite the disagreement and confusion surrounding the concept ‘rural’ in academic circles, I have chosen to retain ‘rurality’ as a central component of my project. My operational conceptualization of ‘rural’ areas is based upon the White Paper’s definition of geographic areas. This has allowed me to provide a consistent comparison between White Paper data and interview data. When I began this

research, however, I found the definition of ‘rural’ areas in the White Paper to be unclear, and I had to contact the Department of Education in order to receive further clarification. Indeed, as Halfacree (1993) argues, definitions of rural are often unclear, particularly in academic research. Moreover, defining localities as ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ is problematic because places are not static, homogeneous and bounded entities, but mutually constituted through sets of material social relations that are continually in flux (Hughes, 1997; Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999).

According to my contact within the department, the White Paper definition of ‘rural’ areas comes from a 2001 provincial government study of high school leavers (Susan Gordon, personal communication, June 19, 2006)⁴⁹. The study *Beyond High School: Follow-up Study of June 2001 High School Graduates* defines urban areas as “...the cities of Corner Brook, Mount Pearl and St. John’s and its surrounding communities, including Conception Bay South, Paradise, Portugal Cove-St. Phillips and Torbay” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2003, p. 13). The cities of St. John’s, Mount Pearl (and surrounding areas) and Corner Brook are the only communities in Newfoundland with a population of over 20,000 residents⁵⁰. By default, rural communities are those located outside the bounds of these major centers and, thus, those communities with less than 20,000 residents.

⁴⁹ Susan Gordon is a Program Development and Policy Specialist with the Adult Learning and Literacy Branch of the Department of Education. Her specific involvement with the production of the White Paper is not clear. However, when I emailed the Department of Education requesting further elaboration on their conceptualization of rural areas, my email was forwarded to Ms. Gordon and she responded to my questions. Ms. Gordon was partly responsible for writing the document *Beyond High School: Follow-up Study of June 2001 High School Graduates*, from which the authors of the White Paper take their definition of rural areas.

⁵⁰ In 2001, the population of St. John’s was 99,182 (Statistics Canada, n.d.). The population of Mount Pearl was 24,964, and Corner Brook had 20,103 residents (Statistics Canada, n.d.).

Even though this definition of ‘rural’ is rather vague, for the purposes of comparison, I felt it was important to retain the White Paper definition of rural areas in order to maintain consistency between my sources of data. Thus, my study defines rural areas of Newfoundland and Labrador as any area any distance outside the bounds of those areas defined as urban according to the White Paper⁵¹. In my analysis, I hoped it would become clear that rural areas are better conceptualized as material and cultural constructions in that they are made and given meaning by people (Brandth, 2002; Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999).

While the definition of liberal arts education is disputed and changing on an on-going basis (Axelrod, 2002), Memorial University, the site of this research project, considers these subjects to be part of its Arts faculty. Therefore, my operational definition of liberal arts consists of those subjects considered part of the Faculty of Arts at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I did not include students studying Fine Arts subjects in this project because that department is situated at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Corner Brook⁵². I reside in the city of St. John’s and attend the St. John’s campus of Memorial University, so for convenience purposes I recruited participants from the Faculty of Arts at Memorial University of Newfoundland in St. John’s. This is a suitable choice for my project, given that previous research indicates that Memorial University

⁵¹ As previously indicated, Labrador is excluded for the purposes of this project because it is a separate geographic entity. Labrador has its own unique social, economic and cultural milieu and, likely for these reasons, Labrador is often given special consideration separate from the island for the purposes of research and policy development. Such is the case with a recent study issued by Memorial University of Newfoundland that focuses on the unique post-secondary needs of Labrador and its residents. Since my research also partly comes out of my own experiences of growing up in an area considered rural on the island portion of Newfoundland and Labrador, I focus on this group of women alone.

⁵²The Corner Brook campus of Memorial University – Sir Wilfred Grenfell College -- is one of two Memorial campuses on the island, and Memorial is the only university in the province

may be the primary choice of institution for Newfoundland youth⁵³ planning to enrol in post-secondary education (Sharpe & Spain, 1991). While it may be the case that more rural women plan to study at Memorial University's campuses (Genge, 1996; Kirby & Sharpe, 2008), it is not clear if geography is a factor in women's campus of choice. Thus, my study is limited by a focus on rural women from across the island enrolled only at Memorial University's St. John's campus. However, it can shed light on why some rural women from the West Coast, for example, may choose the St. John's campus rather than the Corner Brook campus.

The women I sought to interview were both specific and difficult to reach. I deliberately sought out interviewees with specific characteristics: women from rural Newfoundland who are enrolled in the Faculty of Arts at Memorial, in St. John's, and I began the process of accessing participants by using a purposive sampling technique (Neuman, 2004). I recruited participants beginning in October, 2006, by advertising the project to third year classes in the Faculty of Arts. I thought that by their third year of study, students would have given thought to the educational decisions they had made and, as such, they would likely provide rich data.

In order to gain access to the 3rd year classrooms, I searched Memorial's registration portal on the web⁵⁴ and collected the names of professors who were teaching classes reserved for students who had chosen their majors in the Faculty of Arts for Fall 2006 Semester. I printed out a full list of third year courses offered from each of the 15 departments in the Faculty of Arts. Departments that had no classes reserved for majors,

⁵³ Research is needed on older rural women who come to post-secondary years after high school graduation.

⁵⁴ The website for 2006 is no longer available. However, classes for 2008 can be found here:
https://www5.mun.ca/admit/hwsowlb.P_CourseSearch?p_term=200801&p_lvl=01*04

and programs that did not have their own departments, and that did not offer courses reserved for majors were excluded from this study (see Appendix A). I wanted to recruit students who had already chosen their major, and I felt that it might be more difficult to access those particular students in classes that were not reserved for such students. The decision to exclude programs that did not have their own departments was made only to make my sample manageable; I did not know the number of responses I would receive. Also, starting out with a smaller number of presentations allowed me the option of doing more presentations in the remaining programs.

I made a random selection of 2 classes from each of the 15 departments to whom I would present my research and request participants (see Appendix B) so that all classes in the sample had an equal chance of being chosen for a presentation. I then emailed a letter to each professor outlining the details and goals of the project, and requested that I be permitted to make a five minute presentation to their students at the end of class (See Appendix C).

Upon the approval of professors, appropriate dates and times were set up to present the research project to the classes at each professor's convenience. I presented the project to 14 classes out of a total of 30. Linguistics, Economics, Religious Studies, and Classics were not included in the presentation process because there were difficulties in co-ordinating the presentations and class schedules. Additionally, one Classics class was not offered in Fall 2006, and an Economics class was deemed unsuitable for the study as only Science majors were enrolled. Six other professors did not respond to my letter, and I cancelled two presentations due to conflicts in the presentation schedule. Those classes were not included in the study.

I made brief recruitment presentations in third year classes (See Appendix D). I described the project, what participation would entail, and who I wished to interview. Students were also given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the project or their possible participation. I used this approach to build rapport, to gain the trust of potential participants, and to take a more active role in accessing participants than using anonymous advertising methods might allow, such as placing an ad in the student newspaper.

I did not seek a sample of students that represented equally all rural communities in the province because such an all encompassing sample is beyond the scope of this project. While I aimed to interview rural women from all 22 programs in the Faculty of Arts, in some departments, no rural women indicated interest in participating. Ultimately, I obtained a sample of 8 rural women studying in a broad range of liberal arts programs, including Classics, Folklore, Sociology, Anthropology, German, French, English, and Psychology.

During the class presentation, I distributed contact cards (Appendix E) to each class member. I chose this method in order to maintain the most confidentiality and anonymity. With the individual contact cards, other students in the class had less opportunity to see who was interested in participating. Thus, individuals who might be concerned about confidentiality would have this added assurance.

The contact cards included a space in which students could write their name and contact information if they wished to participate. Cards were provided to everyone in the class, but students were given the opportunity to refuse one. Students placed their card in an envelope (regardless of whether or not they were completed) and left them at the front

of the class as they were leaving. In some cases, professors collected the envelopes and sent them to my mailbox through inter-campus mail at the end of the day. On most occasions, however, I collected the envelopes myself after students left the class.

I distributed 376 contact cards and received 33 responses. I reviewed the contact cards as I received them (I received positive responses to the project from students in terms of the number of contact cards filled out). Not all of the contact cards I received were filled out by third year students, so I omitted from the sample those students who were not in their third year of studies. I created a list of all (total 15) of those students who identified themselves as students in the 3rd year of studies during Fall, 2006, and I contacted them.

4.3.5. The Respondents

The final list of potential participants contained the names and contact information of 15 students who were enrolled in Sociology, Folklore, German/Russian, French, History, English, and Psychology. I contacted these prospective participants by whichever means they provided in order to set up suitable times and places for interviews. I tried in all cases to telephone participants, but in some cases contact was restricted to email. Ultimately, of the 15 potential participants, 3 did not respond to my contact, 4 others did not appear at our arranged meeting time and place, and 1 was a Science major in Psychology, so I initially ended up with 7 participants. The 8th participant was recruited from the Classics program, which was not represented in the presentation process. I told her about the project and offered to interview her. She expressed interest and we exchanged contact information. All of the same ethics protocols were followed in regards to her participation (see Appendix F).

A diverse group of women agreed to participate in this research project. Overall, they represent most regions of the island portion of the province, with the exception of the Northern Peninsula: One participant came from the West Coast of the province, one from the South West coast, two from Central, and four were from the Avalon Peninsula. Five students were in their 20s, two were in their 40s and one was 50. Three of the women had families, and of these three, two were married and one was a single parent. Three of the women had enrolled in university directly after graduating from high school, two had waited between 1 and 3 years after high school before enrolling in university, two more had returned to university after having dropped out many years prior, and one came to university for the first time while in her forties.

While they constitute a diverse group, the experiences of the eight women interviewed may not be representative of other rural women enrolled in the Faculty of Arts at Memorial, or other rural women generally. Therefore, the results of this thesis cannot be generalized. Rather, this thesis offers much-needed insights into the post-secondary educational experiences of rural women, and points to areas for further research.

4.3.6. The Interviews

In keeping with Memorial's ethical requirements for research, participation in the project was entirely voluntary and consensual and participants were advised that they could drop out of the research process at any time up to three months after the interview had been completed. Interviews were audio taped with consent and transcribed by me in their entirety verbatim for the purposes of analysis. Most interviews were approximately one hour in length, but some were almost two hours. I provided my contact information

in the event that participants wanted to add additional thoughts, or if they felt they wanted to discuss the interview and research further. None of the participants contacted me.

Prior to each interview, I distributed an interview consent form (Appendix F). Each party, including me, read, signed and kept a copy of the form. In order to address issues of coercion and power, given that participants were recruited in their classrooms, the consent form clearly stated that the research is solely for the purposes of my Master's degree and is not related to participants' professors or class grades⁵⁵. I also stated this during each classroom presentation. I provided contact information for my supervisors and the Ethics Committee in the case participants wished to speak with someone other than myself regarding the research. I collected the consent forms, explained the project again and provided the opportunity for participants to ask questions pertaining to the research or myself. Eight transcribed interviews are stored in a secure filing cabinet in my home along with the tapes and consent forms. Only I have access to the tapes, data, and consent forms. Confidentiality and anonymity are further maintained by the attachment of a pseudonym to each participant and her home community.

Each interview was organized into four sections (See Appendix G). I created this interview schedule after reflecting upon my own experiences of university, and reading the literature on student decision-making and orientations to post-secondary education and migration (Halfacree & Boyle, 1993; Hodkinson, Sparkes, & Hodkinson, 1996). My questions aimed to explore the possibility that other rural women experienced dilemmas when making decisions about post-secondary education and careers, as I did. Indeed, as

⁵⁵ Each consent form states that interviews may eventually contribute to a published article or a conference paper.

Halfacree and Boyle (1993) point out, there are multiple aspects to decision-making. I also aimed to explore how women's accounts of coming to university might reflect the context of their biographies and lives as women from rural Newfoundland. This is because decision-making exists as part of an individual's on-going past, present and future and is contingent upon cultural values (Halfacree & Boyle, 1993) and interactions with others (Hodkinson, Sparkes, & Hodkinson, 1996). I inquired indirectly and directly about the women's childhood experiences, their decision-making processes, as well as other education and career paths they considered besides an arts degree. I did this to probe 'common sense' knowledge that may shed light on ways in which rural women's decisions are socially organized (Smith, 1987, 2005).

The first section of the interview discussion guide asked about context-setting background information, such as the students' family characteristics, where they grew up, previous educational history, and their experiences of youth. The second section focused on how students made the decision to come to university, to choose their major, and what these decisions mean to them. The third section addressed students' current experiences of their program and their perceptions of what their program of study entails. The final section asked about plans for the future and how their degree fits into these plans. Even though I did not expect the women to articulate an ordered sequence of decision-making processes (Halfacree & Boyle, 1993; Hodkinson, Sparkes, & Hodkinson, 1996), I felt that organizing the interview in this way would help structure and direct the interview.

4.3.7. Analysis of Interviews with Rural Women

When analyzing the interviews, I kept in mind the question of the significance of earning a liberal arts degree for these women. I was not interested simply in their

opinions or perceptions about university, but what university means to them in the context of their own lives in rural Newfoundland. Thus, the first stage of my analysis concentrated primarily on those aspects of the interviews that were related to the themes of how and why the women came to university. I coded the interviews according to these common themes. Themes were sometimes evident in the form of one word, for example, 'work', or from a concept or idea that was created by me through an association of different ideas, such as 'gender'. In the case of the latter, the women need not have spoken explicitly about gender, but their experiences and perspectives could be understood in terms of gendered social relations and ideologies. I learned about such social relations and ideologies from the literature I read on Newfoundland, as well as the data I collected about the context of each individual woman's life. For example, gendered social relations were explored by asking the women about men's and women's work in the community and in their families. In total, there are three main broad categories or themes that emerged from my preliminary analysis of the interviews: gender, place, and work.

It became clear to me upon analysis of the thematically organized data, that even though I could see patterns in the way the women spoke and could categorize them accordingly, there was also considerable variation within each category or theme. I developed sub-categories within each theme in order to shed light on such variation, and further contextualize the data. For example, I could sense that there were differences in the way that women's families encouraged them to enroll in university. I compared the way each woman described her family and then explored related literature in order to make sense of the different ways different women's backgrounds shape their educational

experiences. Thus, themes and sub-themes were not always explicit. The literature on women's lives in rural Newfoundland, and women and post-secondary education, was crucial in analyzing the patterns and variation within the data.

Finally, themes and sub-themes that emerged within my analysis of the interviews were linked with themes within the White Paper in order to explore the fit between the perspectives articulated there and rural women's lives and experiences. Themes were compared reciprocally. Since post-secondary education for employment was the dominant theme in the White Paper, I first acknowledge what the women said about employment and education. However, since much of the meaning of this relationship could only be made sense of in the context of the women's lives in rural Newfoundland, a great deal of the analysis focused on the themes of gender and place. Thus, I scrutinized sections of the White Paper that focus on rural students and women, and compared that data with the interviews. Educational policy implications are explored based on this comparison.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I explore my methodological approach, specifically how and why I use qualitative research methods – comparative textual analysis of a policy document and semi-structured interviews – to answer my research questions. I compare the White Paper with interviews with rural women studying liberal arts because, as indicated in the introduction to this thesis, liberal arts disciplines are often perceived in the public imagination as irrelevant. Does the White Paper reflect this view? What is the significance of post-secondary education according to the White Paper? With the economic difficulties many rural communities in Newfoundland may be facing, my

feeling was that there might be increasing pressure for men and women alike to pursue avenues of post-secondary education that appear to be strongly connected to employment. Nonetheless, women continue to be highly represented in liberal arts disciplines at Memorial University. How is this so? Do rural women's engagements with post-secondary education fit with the government's educational views and strategies?

Following the theoretical and methodological insights of May (2001), and Smith (1987, 2005) and her colleagues (for example, Ng, 1995), as well as the theoretical insights of feminist geographers (such as Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999), my approach to analysis considers the content of interviews and the White Paper, in addition to socio-historical context. This is because institutional texts and interviews alike reflect social relations and context. Consequently, central to my analysis are Smith's concepts of 'gender subtext' and 'ideology' (1987, 1990, 2005), and the concept 'social relations' (Smith, 2005).

The remainder of this thesis focuses on my analysis of the White Paper in relation to the interviews I conducted with eight women from rural parts of Newfoundland who are enrolled in the Faculty of Arts. In Chapter Five, I perform a textual analysis of the White Paper, discuss neoliberal (New Right) trends in post-secondary education policy in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the political context in which the White Paper was produced.

CHAPTER 5: Building a “Learning Culture”: The Value of Post-secondary Education in the Provincial Government’s White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education (2005)

5.0. Introduction

This chapter focuses on my qualitative textual analysis of the education policy document, *Foundation for Success: White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education* (2005). I explore the political context within which the provincial White Paper was produced, as well as the practices involved in its production. This includes examining the increasing significance of post-secondary education for economic development in provincial education policy, and tracing the production of the White Paper from the current Progressive Conservative government’s first term to the document’s publication. I summarize the contents and strategies of the White Paper, and then discuss my analysis of the text, which explores the content of the document in relation to the political and institutional context in which it was produced.

5.1. Post-Secondary Education for Social and Economic Development in Newfoundland and Labrador

The policy approaches of recent provincial governments in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly those regarding education in the 1980s and 1990s (McCann, 2000; Overton, 1998), and the fishery and social benefits policy in the 1990s and 2000s (Neis & Williams, 1997; Overton, 2000; Power & Harrison, 2005), appear to be consistent with New Right ideology. According to educational historian Phillip McCann, since the 1980s education has been seen by some influential government officials as the “key to economic development” in Newfoundland and Labrador (McCann, 2000, p. 715). Underlying this view is a belief in the emergence of a ‘New World Order’ in which the global economy is

shifting from labour intensive to knowledge intensive industries, giving rise to new technologies and uses of human resources (McCann, 2000, p. 715). The belief is that education and training underlie all economic and social developments, whether those developments take place in oil and gas, technology, fisheries or elsewhere. Thus, education must be restructured and tailored to the needs of this emerging economy.

McCann (2000) suggests that the reasons for government officials' adoption of New Right ideology in the 1980s and 1990s are not entirely clear. According to a number of Canadian academics, a 1980s recession helped usher neoliberalism into federal government policy (Gaskell & Rubenson, 2004; Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006), as well as restructuring at the level of workplaces (see MacDonald, 1995; Workman, 2003). Similarly, McCann (2000) suggests that the perception of a growing socio-economic crisis in the 1980s, and the availability of a ready-made ideology promising a panacea to the intellectual elite in Newfoundland, made New Right ideology appealing to some provincial government officials. McCann cites the Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment (RCEU) in the 1980s, and its successor, The Economic Recovery Commission (ERC), both headed by sociologist Douglas House (McCann, 2000), as promoting a view of education consistent with New Right ideology⁵⁶. As far back as 1986, House's RCEU was advocating that Memorial University be mandated to make economic development one of its formal objectives (Newfoundland and Labrador, 1986, p. 131). This was part of a strategy to make Newfoundland and Labrador more 'self-reliant' and less dependent on federal government financial support.

⁵⁶ Overton (2000) also suggests that ideas of the ERC and the RCEU regarding social supports, such as Unemployment Insurance, resemble and support New Right social policy trends.

In 2003, a conservative provincial government led by Danny Williams was elected in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Progressive Conservatives' approach to government has been described as nationalist and populist⁵⁷ (Sinclair, n.d.), while simultaneously raising concerns amongst labour groups for its disregard for workers (Anstey, 2004; Butler, 2005). As Cadigan (2006) points out, the Progressive Conservatives' first term in office was marked by a budget of 'retrenchment' and a public sector workers' strike (see Anstey, 2004; Butler, 2005). During this time, the Progressive Conservative government legislated strikers back to work without negotiating with the union and accepted a Supreme Court ruling that pay equity is only necessary in times when the province can 'afford it' (Cadigan, 2006). These trends can be seen as tied to what Butler (2005) calls a 'global corporate agenda' of attacking labour in the interests of maximizing capital, a tendency reminiscent of neoliberal approaches to government (Workman, 2003). As the following section and, indeed, this chapter shows, labour is not the only area in which the government demonstrates an approach consistent with neoliberal ideology. Post-secondary education policy continues to be an area in which the government demonstrates neoliberal tendencies.

5.2. The Commissioning of the White Paper

Beginning in 2004, the Progressive Conservative provincial government proposed what they called a "new" approach to governance for economic self-reliance in Newfoundland and Labrador. The 2004 Speech from the Throne proposed:

On the 21st of October 2003, the voters of Newfoundland and Labrador elected a new Government with a strong mandate to pursue a new approach to governance

⁵⁷ The Oxford English dictionary defines populism as an approach to policy that seeks to represent the interests of ordinary people, to have general appeal.

and economic self-reliance in our great province. People voted for change, and my Government will deliver change for the better (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2004, para. 4).

This new approach to economic self-reliance was required because the latest offshore petroleum developments had not delivered the revenues to which the province is entitled. Thus, instead of emphasizing just oil and gas, the new approach would be one that also emphasized the role of education in the new knowledge economy. According to the Throne Speech:

My Government believes, as do economic leaders and innovators, that the time has come for Newfoundland and Labrador to set its sights on other opportunities in the knowledge economy. The fuel of the new economy is knowledge...My Government will make world-class education among its highest priorities (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2004, para.17).

Thus, in the official view of the Progressive Conservative government, education is important because of perceived developments in the new global knowledge economy. Such a statement harkens back to the 1980s and the work of the Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment. The work of this Commission led its Chairman, Doug House, to state:

As the Commission's work progressed, it became clear that education and training played a central role in all aspects of its investigations...It is important, not just for training people for jobs, but for improving the human resources of our society for successful economic development and employment creation (The Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment, 1986, p. i).

Thus, changes to the education system were deemed necessary in the 1980s in order to fashion a 'self-reliant' Newfoundland and Labrador.

While it is not clear whether or not members who led the Commission on

Employment and Unemployment were directly involved in the White Paper process⁵⁸, by referring to the economic development potential of post-secondary education, it appears as though ideas about the role of education for a self-reliant province evident in the Throne Speech are consistent with those of the Commission. Such ideas are also consistent with the ideas of the ERC, which advocated aligning the province's education system to industry demand in order to stimulate economic development (see House, 1999, p. 243, 245, 249). In the 2004 Throne Speech, the provincial government backed up its view on the importance of education by making education a policy priority through the commissioning of a White Paper on public post-secondary education. This White Paper was, according to its authors, intended to "renew the system" to prepare Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for the future (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p. 1). After a year of consultation and research, the final White Paper report, titled *Foundation for Success: White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education*, was released in the summer of 2005.

5.3. White Paper Consultation Process

5.3.1. Appointment of White Paper Commissioner and Advisor to the Commissioner

The White Paper process began with the appointment of Dr. Wayne Ludlow and Mr. Cyril Farrell as White Paper Commissioner and Advisor to the Commissioner, respectively, by then-education minister, John Ottenheimer. Ludlow and Farrell were appointed in order to conduct consultations on post-secondary education across the province during the summer and early fall of 2004. The following quote from the White Paper summarizes the purpose of the consultation sessions:

⁵⁸ During the commissioning and publication of the White Paper, Dr. House worked with the Conservative Government as Deputy Minister of the Department of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development (House, 2005).

Advice and guidance were sought on how best to make our Province's public post-secondary education system stronger, more vibrant and better positioned to meet our current and future needs (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p. 2).

Based on information available on the Department of Education web site, it is not clear how Minister Ottenheimer chose Ludlow and Farrell for the positions of Commissioner and Advisor. The only available public information on their hiring is the official biography of each man on the department of education web site (see Newfoundland and Labrador, 2004, para. 12). According to the website, both Dr. Ludlow and Mr. Farrell hold graduate degrees in education, and have accumulated over 30 years of work experience at both the academic and senior administrative levels of the university and the college, respectively. When I contacted the Department of Education about their hiring, Susan Gordon told me that the names of candidates were submitted to the Minister of Education for the positions of Commissioner and Advisor by officials within the Department of Education. Ludlow and Farrell were included on the list because of their expertise with their respective former institutions - Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic - and their position as unbiased in relation to those institutions (S. Gordon, personal communication, April 28, 2008).

Even though neither Ludlow nor Farrell was affiliated with the province's educational institutions at the time of their appointment to the White Paper process, the Department of Education web site states that both men were employed with organizations affiliated with both the federal and provincial governments. Specifically, Dr. Ludlow was employed as the Newfoundland and Labrador Administrator for the Canadian Millennium

Scholarship Foundation⁵⁹, and Mr. Farrell was on secondment to the Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium (APCCC) as its Executive Director⁶⁰ (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2004).

5.3.2. "Stakeholders"

The background document to the White Paper, *What We Heard: A Report of Consultations on Public Post-Secondary Education in Newfoundland and Labrador* (2004), states that the government devised a list of 'stakeholders' who would participate in the consultation process. The general public would also be called upon to make White Paper submissions. The submissions would subsequently make up the content of the White Paper and the direction of the strategies for changing the educational system. The full list of groups consulted (total 21) in the submission process is included with the background paper, *What We Heard* (the Report), as is the full list of individual submissions (total 110). The details of the White Paper process made available on the Department of Education web site, and within the White Paper and the background report do not state specifically who chose the stakeholders, or what criteria were involved in identifying these stakeholders.

According to Susan Gordon, however, the list of stakeholders was developed by the Department of Education and the Commissioner and Advisor (S. Gordon, personal

⁵⁹ According to its web site (Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, 2009), this foundation is a private, independent organization, which was created by the Canadian Parliament in 1998. Among its stated aims is a goal to improve access to post-secondary education for Canadians and to build a national alliance of organizations and individuals around a shared post-secondary agenda.

⁶⁰ According to its website (Atlantic Provinces Community College Consortium, n.d.), the APCCC is a regional organization providing an intergovernmental mechanism for coordination, collaboration, and resource sharing among the public community colleges with the aim of enhancing the quality and cost-effectiveness of the system. The APCCC Board is comprised of community college presidents, senior government officials, as well as a representative of the Council of Atlantic Premiers Secretariat.

communication, April 28, 2008), and included strategic social planning steering committees for each region of the province, representatives from post-secondary educational institutions, economic development boards, and only one student organization - the Canadian Federation of Students (Ludlow & Farrell, 2004). Thus, the majority of the stakeholders involved in the consultations were either members of business and/or economic development organizations or educational administrators, and not students themselves. Susan Gordon could not identify the criteria used to select stakeholders, but referred me to the press releases, which simply state that the government held consultations with stakeholders. Thus, these statements do not offer additional insights.

5.3.3. Consultation Questions

In addition to developing the list of stakeholders, Ludlow and Farrell - in conjunction with the rest of the Department of Education - devised the list of topics and questions to be addressed during the White Paper consultation process. There were three categories organizing a total of eleven questions. The categories were: 'Existing Public Post-Secondary Structure', 'Funding of Post-Secondary Education', and 'Impacts of Population Changes' (Ludlow & Farrell, 2004).

The first category of consultation questions, 'Existing Public Post-Secondary Structure', according to the background paper, aimed to collect information about what the contributors value about post-secondary education and what other principles, besides quality, accessibility and affordability, the contributors would like to see guide the provincial approach to public post-secondary education. These questions aimed to get a sense of how the contributors would like to change the system of post-secondary education to make it more effective for social and economic growth and the employment

prospects of graduates. Questions were also asked about how programs and services should be delivered to accommodate demographic changes, and changes to the labour market.

The second category, ‘Funding of Post-Secondary Education’, asked (out of four options) how the government should address the financial pressures of post-secondary institutions: through operating grants, tuition fees, tax incentives, or “others” (Ludlow & Farrell, 2004). This category of questions also asked how institutions can be more accountable for quality outcomes and effective spending, what role the system should play in linking research to economic development, and how institutions can market themselves to attract investment and generate economic development.

Finally, the last category of questions, ‘Impacts of Population Changes’, asked how the system can better respond to the needs of those who experience barriers to participation, how the system can promote a “culture of lifelong learning”, and how educational institutions can position themselves within Canada and the rest of the world to support the economic development of the province (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005). The full list of consultation questions can be found in the background paper, *What We Heard: A Report of Consultations on Public Post-Secondary Education in Newfoundland and Labrador* (Ludlow & Farrell, 2004).

Data were collected between mid-August and late October 2004 (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005). According to the background report, 21 formal consultations took place with Ludlow and Farrell at shopping mall board rooms, hotels, college and university campuses, community centres, corporate board rooms, and government offices across the province during the three month period (see Appendix A,

Ludlow & Farrell, 2004). In addition to these formal consultations, Ludlow and Farrell held 16 additional meetings with individuals representing school boards, labour groups, and the Provincial Government to aid them with their research (see Appendix F, Ludlow & Farrell, 2004).

The consultation questions were forwarded in advance of the meetings to each participating organization. The Canadian Federation of Students chose their own questions, however, which focused on tuition fees, student financial assistance, university and college governance, and post-secondary education in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly the college system, and institutional funding (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005). It is not clear why this was done. However, one can assume that the Federation had its own priorities and felt that these were not adequately addressed in the session structure proposed by the government. Based on its own research and priorities, the Federation devised 16 of its own policy recommendations for the White Paper, including a reduction in tuition fees and increased student representation on university and college governing boards (Canadian Federation of Students, 2004).

According to the background report (Ludlow & Farrell, 2004), “Each consultation was a facilitated discussion based on the questions which were sent to participating groups in advance of each meeting” (p. 7). Ludlow and Farrell, in addition to a Facilitator and a Recorder, were present at each meeting. The sessions began with opening remarks and introductions, which were followed by the structured discussions organized around the consultation questions. A few minutes were provided near the end of discussion for final comments, and brief evaluation of the consultation process. The Department prepared a report after each meeting.

The way that questions were structured for the purposes of the consultations indicates that Ludlow and Farrell already had a clear framework in mind for the writing of the White Paper. An example of this kind of question comes from the second category, in which Ludlow and Farrell ask, “How can the public post-secondary institutions market their educational systems (programs and services) and their research capability to attract investment and generate economic development” (Ludlow & Farrell, 2004)? Such a question leaves unchallenged the aim to attract investment and generate economic development and closes down space for critical engagement with that goal. This does not mean that I believe no one was able to be critical during the consultation process. Rather, the framing of questions in such a manner suggests that the purpose of undertaking the consultations was to find ways to support the government’s agenda, rather than attempting to learn from the public.

5.4. White Paper Content

While a compilation of the themes found in the White Paper consultation sessions is provided in the background paper, *What We Heard*, the actual process of making sense of the White Paper submissions and the ways these submissions shaped the content of the final report is not public knowledge. In what follows, I outline the contents of each chapter of the White Paper and summarize the strategies that Ludlow and Farrell designed to “renew the system”. This makes clear how the White Paper is organized and what kind of information it contains, allowing a close analysis of the document.

5.4.1. Chapter Outline and Strategies

The provincial White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education is organized into ten chapters, in addition to a Foreword, Executive Summary, and an Appendix that

summarizes the policy strategies described in the document. The first four chapters establish the background and evidence that supports the policy recommendations developed out of the consultation process by Ludlow and Farrell. The remaining six chapters discuss the details of the policy recommendations and conclude the document.

The first chapter of the White Paper, “Purpose and Process”, discusses the importance of education to Newfoundland and Labrador. According to the White Paper, “In Newfoundland and Labrador, education is regarded as a mainstay of our society” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p. 1). This chapter also outlines the government’s purpose in undertaking the White Paper process, and provides details about the White Paper process itself. The content of chapter one was discussed in the previous section of this chapter, as it deals with the purpose of the White Paper process, and the practices involved in its construction.

Chapter Two, “Building on Principles”, clarifies and builds on the principles – *accessibility, affordability and quality* - that purportedly guided the government’s vision of post-secondary education during the consultation process. This chapter also describes additional principles that arose from the consultations – *collaboration, sustainability and accountability*. These principles support the government’s aim to create a “learning culture” in which education is seen as valuable to (and by) all citizens throughout life, and is accessible, affordable and of high quality (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005). The definition of each of the principles developed during the White Paper process is shaped by the notion of life-long learning and the view that higher education is a means to social and economic development in Newfoundland and Labrador.

“Education in Society”, the third chapter, establishes a strong connection between education and social and economic growth. The chapter is organized around two main categories: Education and Growth, and Issues and Challenges. Drawing on statistical data about education and employment, the White Paper makes the case that higher levels of education lead to higher levels of employment and increased labour market participation, and argues that education contributes to economic and community development. Partnerships with business and industry, with a post-secondary education system that responds to industry by supplying students with requisite skills and knowledge, contribute to such development (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005). Based on these ideas, the White Paper identifies some issues and challenges facing the post-secondary education system in Newfoundland and Labrador, including changing demographics that affect affordable access and delivery of education, challenges in providing financial support for students – particularly rural students – as well as financial support for post-secondary institutions themselves.

Chapter Four, “Our Education and Training System” primarily provides a description of the current system of post-secondary education in Newfoundland and Labrador, including the structure of the Department of Education, public post-secondary institutions (Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic), and enrollment at these institutions from 2001 to 2004. Additionally, this chapter considers participation and graduation rates at post-secondary educational institutions (including an urban/rural comparison), and student financial assistance, debt, and loan repayment. Chapter four essentially reiterates the argument of chapter three - that higher levels of education pay off with correspondingly high employment rates and income - by linking statistics on

employment in Newfoundland and Labrador with participation in public post-secondary education.

Chapter Five, “Strategies for Strengthening the Base”, addresses ways to increase participation in post-secondary education in the province, consistent with the report’s argument that education is essential to ensuring individual participation in the labour force, and also to meeting “current challenges” and “future demands” the province faces. The White Paper (2005) summarizes the focus of chapter five as follows:

To ensure that all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are able to participate in our educational system and the labour force, to meet our current challenges and to keep pace with future demands, a strong educational foundation must be in place. This chapter describes specific initiatives Government will undertake to accomplish this goal (p. 29).

Six categories are discussed: Adult Learners, Aboriginal Education, Women’s Participation, Rural Participation and Distance Delivery, Adult Academic Upgrading, and Apprenticeship Training. The accompanying strategies are directed toward removing some of the barriers to participation in post-secondary education for those that have been under-represented historically, and include educational initiatives and financial recruitment incentives geared toward potential post-secondary students, such as women, and the increased use of technology as a way to enhance access for rural students.

In Chapter Six, “Strategies for Improving System Capacity”, the need for post-secondary education to accommodate a more diverse range of learners while adhering to the principle of accountability and the demand for “demonstrated results” is considered (p. 41). Thus, according to Ludlow and Farrell, this chapter is an attempt to, “...reassess and refocus our physical and human resource capacity while enhancing post-secondary programming” (p. 41). Five topics are addressed: Memorial University, College of the

North Atlantic (CNA), Education and Training for Health Professionals, and Distance Education and Economic Development. Strategies to ‘improve system capacity’ (p. 82) include: a) developing the international reputations of CNA, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College and Memorial University through increased funding; b) revising institutional mandates and governance toward development agendas, such as the Provincial Innovation Strategy⁶¹ (p. 43-45); and c) partnering industry, post-secondary educational institutions, communities and the government in health education and training (p. 50), distance delivery (p. 51-52), and economic and rural development (p. 52-53).

Chapter Seven, “Strategies for Helping Students”, stresses the need for a “student-centred approach” to post-secondary education and a collaborative approach to student services that will, “enable students to succeed, as well as encourage learning” (p. 55). Four topics are discussed in this regard: Student Services, Disability Services, Student Housing and Library Services. Included under the student services category is a discussion of an electronic data interchange between Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic, as well as pre-enrolment advising and prior learning assessment, and career and employment services. Helping students, according to the White Paper, requires a ‘system approach’. Thus, the strategies developed for this purpose aim toward collaboration and cooperation between Memorial University and CNA in sharing student data, recruiting and advising (p. 55-7), career and employment services, student housing

⁶¹ The Provincial Innovation Strategy, *Innovation Newfoundland and Labrador: A Blueprint for Prosperity* (2006), is a provincial policy document encouraging ‘creativity’ in Newfoundland and Labrador. According to the document, “Newfoundland and Labrador’s Innovation Strategy is a carefully considered plan...identifying specific initiatives in key areas that will stimulate, support and capitalize on innovation, establishing goals and objectives to support these strategies in specific areas, and taking action to achieve these goals” (p. 12). The plan was implemented by the Department of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development.

(p. 58), sharing the services of the Queen Elizabeth II Library (p. 59), and partnering with other agencies that support students with disabilities (p. 58).

The eighth chapter of the White Paper, 'Strategies for Maintaining Stable Funding', highlights the challenges associated with distributing funds for post-secondary education. Ludlow and Farrell state that:

The benefits of our system, the challenges we face, and the many other issues discussed in this White Paper, must be weighed together as we consider post-secondary education funding both for our institutions and for our future students (p. 61).

Five topics related to funding are discussed: Government's Investment, Infrastructure Requirements, Research Capacity, Personal Investment, and Student Financial Assistance. The White Paper recommends that the government increase its own financial contribution to Memorial and CNA, and encourage private and federal investment in the infrastructure and research capacity of each institution (p. 65-71). For students, the White Paper proposes that the government implement a tuition freeze, increase weekly student loan funds, lower student loan eligibility requirements, increase the income level for eligibility for interest relief⁶², continue the debt reduction program⁶³, and develop an agreement with the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation for additional support for low income students (p. 74).

Chapter Nine, 'Strategies for Enhancing Governance', argues for an "integrated approach" to governance. The White Paper (2005) states that:

If we are to engage the opportunities available to us and answer the

⁶² The Interest Relief program offsets the monthly interest on student loan payments for eligible low income loan holders, thereby allowing individuals to delay repayment.

⁶³ The Debt Reduction program offsets the provincial portion of a student loan for those who borrow at the uppermost limits and complete their program of study within a limited time frame.

challenges...an appropriate governance model is needed which supports further improvements in coordination and the sharing of best academic and service practices...(p. 75).

Thus, Chapter Nine discusses the role of the Council on Higher Education⁶⁴ and strategic planning in fostering co-operation between the government, the education system, and industry, and the White Paper proposes that the government review the institutional mandates of MUN and CNA to such ends (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p. 87). Additionally, MUN and CNA are expected to plan programming in a 'system-wide' fashion to enhance collaboration, and three-year outcomes-based performance contracts between the government, MUN and CNA are proposed. These contracts will measure (among other indicators): financial performance, and links to Provincial economic development and regional diversification strategies (p. 87).

The tenth and final chapter of the White Paper, 'Building on the Foundation', reiterates the fundamental issue that emerged through the White Paper process: how to maximize quality, accessibility, accountability, affordability and equity with limited resources. The White Paper concludes with the following quote:

Clearly, the future success of Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic will depend on innovative collaboration and partnerships between private and public agencies and organizations. It will also require flexibility and responsiveness to balance the unique needs of different students and different regions, and a new culture of efficiency for managing and financing programs, services and special initiatives (p. 79).

The quote above highlights the importance of co-operation between the post-secondary educational system, industry and the provincial government, flexibility and

⁶⁴ The Council on Higher Education, established in 1992, promotes collaboration in the public post-secondary education system through recommendations to Memorial University, CNA and the Minister of Education on shared programming ("About the Council", n.d, see also Government of Newfoundland, 2005, p. 75).

responsiveness in balancing the needs of diverse 'stakeholders' in post-secondary education, and 'efficiency' in the management and finance of educational services.

In sum, the White Paper makes a strong case for social and economic development in Newfoundland and Labrador through public post-secondary education. The strategies for changing public post-secondary education are rationalized by the White Paper's acceptance of the existence of the knowledge economy and the link between economic gains and post-secondary educational attainment. Overall, the strategies appear to emphasize increasing the participation of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in post-secondary education in order to achieve economic prosperity for the province. The strategies also highlight collaboration between post-secondary educational institutions, the government and industry to cut costs and generate capital. Increased provincial government funding is proposed for these institutions, but is justified in terms of economic development (p. 65-72). All of this suggests a neoliberal orientation to post-secondary education reliant on human capital theory, which emphasizes a utilitarian, instrumentalist approach (see Giroux, 2003; Kirby, 2007; Lynch, 2006; Peters, 2001, 2003; Porter & Vidovich, 2000).

5.5. Analysis

This section of the chapter explores how the political and institutional context of the production of the White Paper shapes its content. By analyzing the proposed strategies and the language used in the document, one can gain an understanding of the political contexts and social relations shaping the White Paper purpose and content (Ng, 1995). Such an analysis illuminates the purpose of the post-secondary educational system envisioned in the White Paper.

The information and recommendations contained in the White Paper are largely consistent with a neo-liberal human capital perspective on education and the economy. In this view, education is seen as a key feature in the new 'global knowledge economy' (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Peters & Besley, 2006; Porter, 1993; Skolnik, 2005). According to neo-liberal human capital theory, economic growth is fuelled by innovation, which results from the production and application of new knowledge from highly qualified personnel who have the requisite knowledge, skills, and training. In contrast to earlier years of educational expansion, which retained a sense of civic responsibility, the neo-liberal human capital perspective holds that education is largely a private investment oriented solely toward market needs. Practices borrowed from industry, such as a focus on the 'exchange value' of post-secondary education (Anisef et al., 2001), guide institutional operations.

In my analysis I identify five main themes evident in the White Paper consistent with the neo-liberal human capital perspective on education and the economy: 1) Education as unproblematic good; 2) The supremacy of an economic approach to education (what I call 'Educonomics'); 3) Participation in Educonomics should be encouraged by governments (or the necessity of a 'Learning Culture'⁶⁵); 4) A business model and goals can increase and enhance participation in Educonomics; 5) The practice of themes one to four will achieve income equity between genders and regions and enhance the economic potential of the province (or Educonomics as a Panacea).

⁶⁵ 'Learning Culture' is the term used by the authors of the White Paper (Government of Newfoundland, 2005, p. 3).

5.5.1. Theme One: Education as Unproblematic Good

Throughout the White Paper, post-secondary education is assumed to be inherently positive by Ludlow and Farrell. One could even go so far as to say that the White Paper is a celebration of post-secondary education. In the Foreword to the document, Minister of Education Tom Hedderson states about Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic (CNA):

There is every reason to be proud of the University and College. These institutions have extended skills and knowledge to thousands of our citizens and continue to do so, year after year...Our commitment to public post-secondary education – as a people and as Government – must continue (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p. iii).

While Ludlow and Farrell state that there are some challenges faced by the post-secondary educational system in Newfoundland and Labrador, and they develop ways to improve the system, not one question is raised in the White Paper about the idea of post-secondary education as a “good” itself. Quoting Dr. Leslie Harris, former president of Memorial University, the White Paper states that:

‘...the creation of the University...was the most significant single event’ in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador. Together with College of the North Atlantic, it has provided far-reaching benefits to all the people of our Province (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p. v).

Celebratory statements such as, “...education is regarded as a mainstay of our society” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p. 1), and “Newfoundlanders and Labradorians already place a high value on post-secondary education” (p. 3), are peppered throughout the document (see, for example, p. 7, p. 41, p. 52, p. 61). But is post-secondary education always experienced as positive for students themselves? As the following section shows, the conceptualization of post-secondary education in the White

Paper is not neutral; rather it is informed by neoliberal human capital theory.

5.5.2. Theme Two: The Supremacy of an Economic Approach to Education (Educonomics)

The extent to which the authors laud post-secondary education is illustrated in the first chapter of the White Paper, “Purpose and Process,” in which Ludlow and Farrell state that:

In Newfoundland and Labrador, education is regarded as a mainstay of our society. It strengthens and advances democracy, human rights, economic and cultural development and prosperity. Post-secondary education (education and training beyond high school), in particular, provides us with the means of improving our individual and collective well-being (p. 1).

According to the White Paper, education, particularly at the post-secondary level, plays a host of different roles in Newfoundland and Labrador, incorporating economic, social and cultural aspects (see also p. 3).

The White Paper does not explicitly discuss how education strengthens and advances democracy and human rights, but dedicates a single paragraph to the role of post-secondary education in communities, particularly regarding cultural development and ‘outreach’. The report states that:

Our public post-secondary institutions have a critical role to play in communities, as social and cultural centres and in community leadership. Their presence is felt throughout the Province, through extensive outreach and support activities, as well as through their graduates, who work in every region (p. 12).

The Telemedicine⁶⁶ program of the Health Sciences Centre, and the social, cultural and economic advocacy work of CNA faculty and staff are cited as examples of the contribution of post-secondary institutions to communities. The remainder of the White

⁶⁶ The Telemedicine program, operated by Memorial University’s Faculty of Medicine through the St. John’s Health Sciences Centre, uses communications technology to provide health and education services to clients throughout rural areas of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Paper appears to connect the social benefits of post-secondary education to economic development⁶⁷, as did the Economic Recovery Commission (see House, 1999). Indeed, as this chapter has already shown, the White Paper process was initially an attempt by the provincial government, through the appointment of Ludlow and Farrell and consultations with specific stakeholders, to integrate Newfoundland and Labrador into the knowledge economy. According to the Throne Speech, “The fuel of the new economy is knowledge...My Government will make world-class education among its highest priorities” (Newfoundland and Labrador, 2004, para.17). This statement was the basis for the commissioning of the White Paper.

According to Ludlow and Farrell, the purpose of the White Paper consultation process was to understand what they state are “unprecedented social and economic challenges” (p. 1) faced by the post-secondary education system and students in Newfoundland and Labrador, and to decide on the best responses to these challenges (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005). As stated in the Executive Summary, the White Paper process was intended to:

...examine the effectiveness, affordability and accessibility of our two public post-secondary institutions, Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic, and determine whether they are fulfilling the educational needs of all our people. A further aim was to consider whether our institutions are achieving their potential to attract investment and support economic development opportunities for our Province (p. 1).

The White Paper process, as described in the quote above, is represented as an attempt to balance the educational needs of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador with the needs of the economy under challenging circumstances (see also pp. 12-5, pp. 64-68, p.

⁶⁷ This will be illustrated further throughout the analysis.

79). The common sense or factual tone, coupled with the assumption of natural and inevitable social and economic challenges to post-secondary education, make the statement seem apolitical or even progressive. However, one can discover the meaning implicit in the text by questioning concepts such as “attracting investment” and “economic development” in relation to the Throne Speech statement about “the knowledge economy”. Are these kinds of ideas ones we want to associate with post-secondary education? Do these goals, in fact, serve and reflect the interests of Newfoundlanders, particularly rural women? An analysis of the meaning of ideas, such as “attracting investment”, may provide some insights into the meanings of these questions.

Following the idea that the political and institutional context in which language is used shapes its meaning (Apple, 1993), a reader of the White Paper can get a sense of the underlying meanings operating throughout the document. The idea that economic development can be achieved through integration into the knowledge economy can be traced to wider international trends in post-secondary education policy that are influenced by economic theories. Michael Peters (2001) states that the Organization for Economic and Cultural Development (OECD) and the World Bank have both stressed the significance of education and training as keys to the development of ‘human resources’, for upskilling, for increasing the competition of workers, and for the production of research and scientific knowledge. As Peters (2001) argues, the belief of members of the OECD and World Bank is that knowledge is the basis for national competition within the international marketplace. This is consistent with Smith’s (2005) argument that public discourses inherent to the ruling relations connect distant sites through a complex of

objectified forms of organization and consciousness that co-ordinate people's everyday lives (p. 18). Following this idea, the Provincial White Paper reiterates the OECD and World Bank approach to education:

The provincial education system plays a central role in developing the knowledge and skills that are essential to our economic success and our quality of life....The economy increasingly demands technical and reasoning skills, and the fastest growing job categories require post-secondary training. Higher skill levels enable higher productivity, foster innovation and result in higher earnings. Having skilled labour also facilitates industrial restructuring by allowing economic resources to shift to more technology intensive and productive activities that support higher wages. It also helps to attract investment from both local and outside forces" (p. 11).

Thus, an increasingly educated population is portrayed in the White Paper (as well as by organizations such as the OECD and World Bank) as the key to social and economic development. In this way of thinking, education increases productivity, encourages creativity, and allows individuals to accrue higher incomes. According to the authors of the White Paper, greater participation in post-secondary education, coupled with investment in post-secondary education from private sources, will enable Newfoundland and Labrador to shift from its old economy based on natural resource industries to a new information- and knowledge-based economy (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005).

The presence of human capital theory is evident in the work of Ludlow and Farrell. As Paige Porter (1993) argues, human capital theory - as an economic theory - assumes that the provision of and access to education at all levels is directly related to national economic growth, and that increases in the education levels of individuals are related to higher incomes and to a higher gross income over the life course. A significant effect of this is that countries with more highly educated populations are more

economically productive. As such, under human capital theory, education is conceptualized as an ‘investment’, and governments subscribing to the human capital approach to economic development - such as the Newfoundland and Labrador government - urge the public to consider ‘investing’ in post-secondary education (see for example Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment, 1986).

The White Paper raises questions about the place of liberal arts education in Newfoundland and Labrador and in the lives of its residents. The authors suggest that achieving prosperity and economic development requires all citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador to gain the ‘requisite’ skills as determined by industry (see p. 9). Chapter One suggests that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador want the government to do a better job of preparing students for work. According to the White Paper, “The people of this Province feel that we can do a better job attracting youth and others not participating in post-secondary education, and helping them make the right career choices” (p. 2). What are the ‘right’ career choices and is this the message we want to send students?

In Chapter Three, ‘Education and Society’, the White Paper states that one of the aims of public post-secondary education in the province is to ‘close skills gaps’ between industry and residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. The authors state that:

...within industry, there are perceptions that some current post-secondary programs, particularly in trades-related areas, are inconsistent with industry’s needs. To close productivity gaps, we must close skills gaps and that, in part, means creating a provincial public post-secondary system that is more responsive to needs and more regionally relevant (p. 11).

‘Technical’ and ‘reasoning’ skills are seen as most relevant to today’s knowledge economy, as evidenced by the following quote:

...our efforts to shift from primary resource-based industries and manufacturing to

knowledge-based and information-intensive industries have precipitated changes in the skill sets required. The economy increasingly demands technical and reasoning skills, and the fastest growing job categories require post-secondary training (p. 11).

The White Paper is vague about specifically what kinds of post-secondary education are relevant to today's economy. Calling for technical and reasoning skills does not say much about which university major or college certificate one might need to be successful in the labour market. The quote above, by emphasizing that the fastest growing job categories require post-secondary education, seems to be advocating for participation in post-secondary education in any field and at any level. As Theme Four suggests below, however, emphasis on collaboration between Memorial, CNA and the government, and the alignment of the mandates of these institutions with the regional diversification and social and economic development strategies of the government, indicates that post-secondary education will be changed to make it more market 'relevant' (see p. 2). This implies that certain educational fields are better than others.

While 'relevant' skills are advocated throughout the document, the relevance of liberal arts degrees to the labour market (or to life in general) is not mentioned anywhere within the White Paper. This suggests a move toward a more 'instrumentalized' (Giroux, 2003; Hart, 1992) or 'utilitarian' (Kirby, 2007) curriculum. Is this really the kind of post-secondary education system we want to promote and create in Newfoundland and Labrador? What other roles does (and can) post-secondary education play in the lives of individuals and in Newfoundland and Labrador? How do students see the worth of a Liberal Arts degree?

5.5.3. Theme Three: Participation in Economically Oriented Education (Educonomics) should be encouraged by Governments: The Necessity of a 'Learning Culture'

The White Paper strongly advocates the participation of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in post-secondary education and suggests that the public is in agreement with this viewpoint. To that end, Ludlow and Farrell state that:

The public has a strong appreciation of the value of post-secondary education in today's labour market. We recognize that if the Province is to maximize its potential for economic growth, it must build on the skills and abilities of all our citizens – our youth and adults – including those who are experiencing difficulty acquiring the requisite skills and education, and those who live in remote areas of the Province (p. 9).

Thus, the participation of *all* Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in education is seen as critical to the economic growth of the province, and to the benefit of individuals themselves (p. 4, p. 29). Indeed, the first five chapters of the White Paper are all dedicated in different ways to describing the various benefits of post-secondary education, and to encouraging Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to enroll. Thus, the commitment of the White Paper to equitable access for all Newfoundlanders in post-secondary education can be interpreted through the human capital theory. The discourse of access within the White Paper is not simply a neutral or progressive goal, but is also tied up with the economic development goals of the Provincial Government.

In order to encourage more Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to participate in post-secondary education, Ludlow and Farrell advocate the creation of a "learning culture". They state that:

To meet our challenges and address the needs of our educational system and its clients today and for the future, we need to foster a true 'learning culture'. Within a learning culture, society recognizes the value of education for all citizens throughout their lives... (p. 3).

Implicit in the aim of creating a learning culture is the concept of ‘life-long learning’. While this concept has many different uses in many different contexts, a primary assumption underlying this notion is that a “new work order” has replaced the ideal of a full-time single career pathway with what Blackmore (2006) calls a “portfolio” or “boundaryless” career. In this scenario, flexibility, mobility and serial jobs require continuous upskilling and retraining. The White Paper reflects this definition of life-long learning. According to Ludlow and Farrell:

Newfoundland and Labrador’s economic and social growth depend on a population that possesses the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in an evolving labour market. The pace of both social and technological change means that education, including post-secondary education, must be a lifelong pursuit. Today’s young adults will need to return to learning – full-time or part-time – more than once during their lifetimes to refresh their knowledge, upgrade their skills and remain employable. This means that education should be available to all of us, throughout our lives (p. 4).

As noted above, the White Paper encourages the participation of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in post-secondary education that will provide them with industry-relevant skills. Based on the presumed necessity of this type of life-long learning in an evolving labour market, Ludlow and Farrell advocate a post-secondary system that is responsive (to what they have defined as the needs of individuals and industry), of high quality, equitable, affordable and accessible to all (p. 3). Other principles guiding the White Paper process are collaboration, accountability and sustainability (p. 3). While these terms all have the appearance of neutrality, they are all inflected with meaning based on Ludlow and Farrell’s conceptualization of post-secondary education as a “handmaiden” to business (Currie & Newson, 1998).

5.5.4. Theme Four: A Business Approach can Increase and Enhance Participation in Educonomics

The fourth theme identified in the White Paper revolves around the idea that a business approach to post-secondary education and potential students is necessary to maximize the economic potential of the province and its citizens. In Chapter Nine ‘Strategies for Enhancing Governance’, the White Paper stresses the necessity of ‘coherence’ between post-secondary educational institutions. To that end, the White Paper encourages the government to align the institutional operations of CNA and Memorial in the name of ‘coherence’ (p. 75) or collaboration. According to the document:

If we are to engage the opportunities available to us and answer the challenges, today and in the coming years, this practice [institutional autonomy] must be replaced with an integrative approach, where all parts of the educational system work closely together (p. 75).

The White Paper suggests amending the provincial legislation governing MUN and CNA to, among other things, require them to appoint common individuals to serve on college and university governing boards. This will require both institutions to demonstrate their greater connectedness.

In addition to greater connectedness between educational institutions, the White Paper recommends greater connectedness with the government. Chapter Nine of the White Paper states that:

In addition to strengthening linkages among the various components of the education system, any review of governance should consider greater coherence between the institutions and the strategic plans of Government for the Province. For the post-secondary system to respond to the Province’s future education and economic development needs, an appropriate governance model is needed which supports further improvements in coordination and the sharing of best academic and service practices... (p. 75).

The vision for how to achieve ‘best’ academic and services practices can be seen later in the chapter, when the White Paper urges the government to implement performance indicators for Memorial and CNA. A number of measurement criteria are proposed: financial performance, efficiencies for shared service delivery, performance reporting on programs, research and administration, an enhanced credit transfer system, enhanced delivery of academic upgrading and strategies to improve access, links to economic development from applied research and innovation, and links to regional diversification strategies of the Province (p. 77).

All of this seems rather benign until we recall that in Chapter Six, ‘Strategies for Improving System Capacity’, the White Paper proposed a transition plan for CNA to align its mandate with the provincial social and economic development initiatives, including the Provincial Innovation Strategy and the Regional Diversification Strategy (p. 45). This indicates that Memorial’s mandate may be implicitly linked to the Provincial Government’s social and economic development plans through its connections with CNA. Moreover, the sharing of services and reporting on the ‘performance’ and ‘efficiencies’ of programs and finances suggests that the government is seeking to make institutions function in the most cost-effective manner possible, a business-oriented strategy associated with neoliberal education policy (Giroux, 2003; Lynch, 2006) based on ideas about the “global knowledge industry” (Polster, 1998).

By encouraging linkages to regional diversification strategies, and economic development through applied research, post-secondary institutions are urged to generate profit in addition to cutting back on operating costs. While proposing an increase in

provincial funds for the operating funds of post-secondary educational institutions, as well as a tuition freeze for students, the White Paper recommends providing research and infrastructure funding only as matching funds for private and federal government investments (see p. 67-71; p. 84-85). Such privatization initiatives are key features of neoliberal policy (Giroux, 2003; Lynch, 2006). Moreover, there are only two indicators that appear to advance specifically social concerns, and these are strategies related to student access to post-secondary education. When one accounts for the influence of the human capital theory on the White Paper, seemingly progressive indicators measuring accessibility can be seen not just out of a commitment to social justice, but also in terms of economic considerations related to the Provincial Government's development agenda. This idea is developed further in the next section.

5.5.5. Theme Five: The Practice of Themes One-Four Leads to Income Equity between Genders and Promotes the Economic Growth of the Province: Educonomics as Panacea

One of the major assumptions made by the authors of the White Paper is that access to and participation in post-secondary education can help achieve income equity - that is, alleviate income and employment disparities - between men and women in Newfoundland and Labrador (p. 31). Chapters Three and Four of the White Paper further imply that, despite the financial difficulties associated with living away from home while attending a post-secondary educational institution, combined with low income of many rural families (p. 32), possible barriers to participation, such as the high costs of attending a post-secondary educational institution pay off in higher incomes upon graduation. Chapter Eight, 'Strategies for Maintaining Stable Funding', reiterates this argument by referring to the benefits of earning post-secondary education in economic terms.

According to the White Paper:

Participation in post-secondary education requires a considerable investment by the student. However, the investment is generally a profitable one since, on average, post-secondary graduates enjoy higher employment rates and wages” (p. 71).

Programs of longer duration than those at the college level are portrayed as most profitable for students, despite their high cost, due to comparatively high rates of return on ‘investment’ (see p. 25, 27). Graduates of Memorial University master’s programs, for example, are said to have earned the highest annual income out of other graduates of post-secondary programs in the province in 2001⁶⁸ (see p. 25). The White Paper does not question whether or not the labour market can supply employment for everyone who earns post-secondary education credentials, and does not account for non-economic considerations for earning such credentials. All of this suggests that those individuals who come from low income families can achieve upward mobility through post-secondary education. Indeed, the first four chapters of the document, by drawing on statistics linking education levels with employment and income, are dedicated to illustrating this point.

Chapter Five, ‘Strategies for Strengthening the Base’ argues for the increased participation of groups that have not historically been represented in post-secondary education - adult learners, Aboriginal students, women and rural learners – and strategies are outlined to achieve this goal. In that chapter, the White Paper acknowledges the problem of gendered income disparities with women’s income being lower than that of men. The authors advocate increasing women’s post-secondary participation in high-

⁶⁸ See Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (2003b).

income science and technology related fields to reduce such disparities. This way, they assert, women may avail themselves of the economic benefits of post-secondary education and achieve greater equity. According to Ludlow and Farrell:

Because economic opportunities within the Province's oil and gas sector are forecast to require engineering, applied science and skilled trades, women's advancement in these areas is critical if they are to share equitably in our economic benefits (p. 31).

To increase the participation of women in these fields of study, the White Paper recommends that the government encourage educational institutions to ensure that their recruitment strategies support women's participation in engineering, applied science, technology and skilled trades programs, and that institutions identify more scholarship opportunities for women in these areas. Additionally, the White Paper suggests that the provincial government improve women's representation in decision-making positions, and work with the federal government, business and industry to enhance apprenticeship employment for women (p. 31).

Rural Newfoundlanders are also identified in the White Paper as experiencing barriers to participation in post-secondary education because they are presumed to be less financially well-off than other students (p. 32). The White Paper states that:

...rurality and low income, in combination, have a particularly powerful impact on a person's ability to participate. There is a relationship between university and college participation and family income and distance from school. Costs can deter students from pursuing a university or college education, regardless of interests and abilities (p. 32).

In addition, rural students tend to have high attrition rates, and fewer rural students than urban students enroll in post-secondary educational institutions (p. 32).

The section 'Strategies for Strengthening the Base' suggests measures that can be

taken to eliminate the barriers that discourage rural students from enrolling in post-secondary education, and to ease some of the financial struggles they experience during school and upon graduation (pp. 72-74). The White Paper recommends the enhancement of funding for distance education to rural areas (\$0.5 million for 3 fiscal years up to 2007/2008), and continuing with the Debt Reduction Program⁶⁹ and the College/University Transfer Year⁷⁰ at CNA campuses (see p. 34). Additionally, in 'Strategies for Maintaining Stable Funding', the authors recommend a tuition freeze for Memorial and CNA students from Newfoundland, continuing with the Debt Reduction program, enhancing access for the provincial student loan program for more low- to middle- income students, increasing the income threshold by 5% for loan holders to qualify for interest relief on loan repayment, and negotiating an agreement with the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation to create greater financial support for students from low-income families (p. 74). The White Paper claims that Memorial has already identified ways to enhance orientation activities for first-year university students from rural areas in order to combat attrition. Therefore, no White Paper strategies are developed to address this issue.

In Chapter Seven, 'Strategies for Helping Students', the policy recommendations do not identify ways in which the government or post-secondary education institutions could help rural students (and women) integrate into the post-secondary educational

⁶⁹ The Debt Reduction Program, introduced in 2002, assists graduates of post-secondary institutions who, as a result of financial need, borrowed at the upper limits of available student loans. If a borrower meets the eligibility criteria, the provincial government arranges with the lender to reduce or eliminate the principal amount owing on the provincial loan (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p. 24).

⁷⁰ According to CNA's web site, this program allows students to complete their first year of university studies at a number of College of the North Atlantic campuses in the province ("Top Ten Reasons", n.d.).

environment and non-traditional fields of study. Indeed, it is not even known if such goals are consistent with what students want. Thus, the strategies outlined in Chapter Seven address issues of ‘access’ to post-secondary educational institutions, particularly as regards the presumed necessity of student data sharing between Memorial and CNA. Additionally, ways of sharing resources and infrastructure between Memorial, CNA and other community organizations in regard to library services, housing, and disability services are highlighted (pp. 55-8). While strategies encouraging sharing could ease the transition process for students transferring to Memorial from CNA and vice versa, as well as disabled students, library patrons and students who live in residence, it is largely unclear how any of these strategies could help rural women specifically. It appears as though the strategies highlighted in the chapter focus on ways to cut institutional costs as opposed to addressing real issues of students.

Given the emphasis on one kind of post-secondary education (for economic and social development), the emphasis on linkages between post-secondary education and industry, and the pre-occupation with financially-oriented policy recommendations, I argue that implicit in the White Paper approach to education is a model of the learner based on economics - an autonomous consumer (Brule, 2004) - and what some feminists have termed a ‘masculinist’ conceptualization of the individual (for example, Leathwood, 2006). This means that the White Paper expects individuals to approach post-secondary education in an autonomous and instrumentally rational way by exercising ‘free’ choices in education, thereby prioritizing the kinds of post-secondary programs the government has deemed economically ‘relevant’, and excluding others. Moreover, the White Paper considers women and rural people only as distinct and separate groups, and in doing so,

does not consider ways in which rurality and gender intersect and how this intersection can affect the engagement of students with post-secondary education.

That a masculinist model of the individual underlies the policy recommendations of the White Paper is not surprising once we consider the formal consultation process, which primarily included representatives from industry, economic development boards, and administrators of educational institutions. The structure of the consultation sessions was rigid, and the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) was the only student group that took part in the official consultation process. The CFS raised questions about tuition fees, student financial assistance, university and college governance, post-secondary education in Newfoundland and Labrador (particularly the college system), and institutional funding (Ludlow & Farrell, 2004). Given that the CFS was the only student group represented and their questions deviated from the format devised by Ludlow and Farrell, it is not surprising that the White Paper does not present information about the desires of students, as articulated by students themselves during the consultation process. It appears as though the government already had a framework in mind for how to gather information to support their goals for post-secondary education and economic development, and this excludes the perspectives of many students, including rural women.

I believe that the White Paper's gender equity and economic development strategies unfairly place the onus for achieving gender equity and development on women and students generally. As Paige Porter (1993) suggests, making equity an issue of equal participation in post-secondary education is a heavy burden to place on women. Such a strategy individualizes the problem of equity and reduces its solution to making the 'right choice' of post-secondary education. It effectively downloads the responsibility of equity

(and development) to women, and confines their choices to those that the government defines as 'instrumentally rational'. Instead of being conceptualized as a broader social problem, equity is reconfigured as an individual problem to be solved through choice. Such an approach is consistent with the neoliberal perspective (Giroux, 2003; Leathwood, 2006; Lynch, 2006; Porter, 1993). All individuals are expected to adapt to the 'new times', with the implications that those not doing so will need to change (Leathwood, 2006, p. 47). Thus, as Leathwood (2006) suggests, underlying this way of thinking is a 'deficit discourse', which constructs non-conformists and their choices as individual failures, thereby placing blame on those who do not adapt to policy conceptualizations of post-secondary education. Is it sufficient to aim to achieve gender based income equity by encouraging the increased participation of women in fields of study that *government representatives* think may be profitable in the future? Moreover, is the White Paper's one-size-fits all economic orientation to post-secondary education representative of the educational experiences, perspectives and goals of rural women? Is an instrumental, economic approach to education desired by all students? What do rural women in particular want from their post-secondary education? Are rural women studying liberal arts really educational failures? Questions remain regarding what kinds of barriers rural women specifically encounter in access to, and engagement with post-secondary education. Will the White Paper model of education work? Are its strategies regarding access, student support and student funding appropriate for rural women? The next chapter explores these and other questions raised in this chapter through interviews with eight women from rural Newfoundland studying liberal arts subjects at Memorial University.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter focuses on my qualitative textual analysis of the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador's White Paper on public post-secondary education. I show how the commissioning of the White Paper by the provincial government drew upon New Right and human capital approaches to social policy, by constructing post-secondary education as a key to the future economic prosperity of Newfoundland and Labrador. By exploring the practices involved in the consultation process, I show how the perspectives of students, particularly rural women, were largely excluded in favour of representatives from industry and educational institutions. Such exclusion is reflected in the content of the White Paper, which advocates the participation of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in post-secondary education (among other strategies), for the purposes of economic (and subsequently social) development. Strategies that focus on the recruitment of students solely through financial and educational initiatives, which subsequently construct a one-dimensional learner based on a masculinist model, are indicative of the exclusion of many students, rural women included, from the formal consultation process. Overall, five themes emerged from my analysis of the White Paper: 1) Post-secondary education as an unproblematic good; 2) The supremacy of an economic approach to post-secondary education (what I call 'educonomics'); 3) Participation in educonomics should be encouraged by governments; 4) A business approach can enhance and increase participation in educonomics; 5) The practice of themes one to four will achieve gender-based income equity and increase the economic potential of individuals and the province (educonomics as panacea). The main question I ask in the next chapter is: How does the White Paper's construction of post-

secondary education and the learner align with rural women's engagements with post-secondary education?

CHAPTER 6: The Significance of a Liberal Arts Degree for Women from Rural Newfoundland

6.0. Introduction

The previous chapter revealed the perspective of the Newfoundland and Labrador government on education as represented by the White Paper. Here I found an approach to education that, consistent with neoliberal human capital perspective, promotes education for economic success. In this chapter I ask eight women from rural Newfoundland studying in liberal arts disciplines how they understand their education. I explore how their perspectives compare, contrast, align with or differ from the views and concerns expressed in the White Paper. Interviews focused on the women's experiences of enrolling in and earning a liberal arts undergraduate degree. My analysis concentrates on the diversity of social and cultural influences that shaped the women's educational decisions, with particular attention to the role of the context of rural Newfoundland. In what follows, I discuss the various ways that university holds significance for rural women based on gender and place. These themes characterize the major concerns that were voiced by the women themselves when I asked them to discuss their experiences of undertaking a degree. All of the themes over-lapped at different times, as will be seen in the following discussion, but I have organized the chapter according to broad White Paper themes to facilitate comparative analysis between texts, and for organizational purposes and readability.

6.1. A Brief Summary of Education and the Learner in the White Paper

The White Paper process was undertaken as part of the Progressive Conservative provincial government's plan to integrate Newfoundland and Labrador into the global

knowledge economy. Rural women were not represented in the White Paper consultation process, which included mostly representatives from academic institutions, and from industry. My textual analysis of the White Paper revealed five themes: 1) Education as Unproblematic Good; 2) The Supremacy of an Economic Approach to Post-Secondary Education (Educonomics); 3) Participation in Educonomics should be Encouraged by Governments: The Necessity of a 'Learning Culture'; 4) A Business Model and Goals can Increase Participation in Educonomics; 5) The Practice of Themes One-Four will Achieve Gender-Based Income Equity and Enhance the Economic Potential of the Province: Educonomics as Panacea.

Despite their concern regarding the full participation of disadvantaged groups in post-secondary education, the authors of the White Paper refrain from asking what these students themselves might want out of such an education, and they assume that labour market relevance is of primary importance to students and residents of the province at large (see p. 2, p. 26). My research asks: Will the White Paper goals and strategies for post-secondary education work? Are the suppositions on which the White Paper and its strategies are based adequate? For example, is the White Paper's characterization of education as an inherent good held by the women who participated in this project? Do rural women's responses suggest the accessibility and promotion of more 'lucrative' fields of study to citizens are all that is needed to enhance economic success gender and income equity? Is economic success/potential the only or primary consideration of rural women pursuing education in Newfoundland? In other words, is the 'one-size-fits-all' solution to individual and provincial development (namely, job-oriented education) appropriate for these women?

6.2. Interview Analysis

I interviewed eight women from rural Newfoundland studying liberal arts degrees at Memorial University: Jennifer, Julie, Joanna, Alicia, Elizabeth, Marguerite, Colleen and Cara. While their views cannot be generalized to the entire population of rural women in Newfoundland, discussions with these eight women suggest the educational decisions made by women from rural Newfoundland are shaped by a much broader array of forces than the White Paper assumes. Economic considerations of various kinds have affected their choices to some degree, but other influences have shaped and continue to shape their understanding of their studies and future. As we shall see in this chapter, these influences have limited, and at times counteracted, a strictly economic view of education. These additional and interactive influences reveal that the White Paper's focus on promoting education to women in rural Newfoundland exclusively as a means to economic success may not result in the predicted outcomes.

This section discusses the significance of a liberal arts university degree for the eight women I interviewed in relation to gender and place. These themes were articulated by the women themselves in their own words, but stood out to me based on my own experiences of coming to university, as well as theoretical literature, and literature on women and rural Newfoundland, and women and education. While the women's responses cannot easily fit into categories due to a great deal of overlap, I organize data according to the themes I found in the White Paper for the purposes of comparison. This allows us to see more clearly the 'fit' (or absence of fit) between rural women's experiences and perspectives of a liberal arts degree and the White Paper.

6.2.1. Education is 'Good': Economic Aspects of Post-Secondary Education in Rural Women's Accounts

A key theme of the White Paper is the idea that post-secondary education as an unproblematic good. The second White Paper theme involves the dominance of an economic conceptualization of the benefits of post-secondary education. All of the women I spoke with viewed education in positive terms, at least in part because of the economic opportunities they or their families believed it would afford them. For some women, post-secondary education was a way to do something better than their parents. This was also the case for others, particularly the older women who were looking to upgrade their credentials and provide an income for their families. Much of this sits well with the White Paper perspective on post-secondary education.

6.2.1.1. Upward Mobility

Jennifer (24, Folklore major, Millbrook) articulated coming to university as 'good', but in part because of her family. Jennifer's mother worked in home care, and her father worked in another province for a tourism company in the summer, and in the winter he collected Employment Insurance. Jennifer told me that neither of her parents had any post-secondary credentials, and they struggled financially to provide for their family. A reading of the White Paper might lead one to believe that Jennifer would be a very unlikely candidate for university given that finances, in addition to low parental education levels, are said to act as a powerful barrier to participation (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p. 32). In contrast to this view, however, Jennifer said that her family "pushed her" to get a university education. According to Jennifer:

Yeah, I think they, cause they know, well I guess they haven't been that well-off, like financially probably 'cause, you know, raising 2 kids and just on their

incomes is not the greatest. Well, yeah, I think they want me to be something more than they were, like, just, working, like, the fishery, or like homecare... They know, like, everyone out in Millbrook, like I said before, they're just drinkin', they're on welfare, they don't do nothing, so they know..." (p. 27).

Explicit in Jennifer's interview is her parents' desire for her to avoid the lives they and others in the community lead. Thus, Jennifer's view of education is partly bound up with images of financial struggle, addiction and poverty in the lives of those who live in Millbrook. According to the view of her parents, Jennifer can avoid such struggle and destitution by leaving the community, enrolling in university and becoming "something more".

6.2.1.2. Unfulfilled Potential

Marguerite (single mother, 40s), like Jennifer, also spoke of post-secondary education as a way to become 'something more'. Growing up in Forest Brook, a logging town, in the 1960s and 1970s, Marguerite's mother was a teacher and a single parent to six children, of whom Marguerite is the youngest. Marguerite expressed feeling pressure in her youth from her family to become a "professional" (her words) after high school as all of her sisters attended university, and all of her brothers were employed in the military or trades fields. Marguerite said:

Um, well, my mother was a teacher. Her standards were very high. Very high. Um, my family, we had to kinda fight to survive. Poor family, you know, like. To beat the odds, you had to go on and do something with your life, like, you know. To be successful, you know? ... You had to go on and make something of your life to be somebody (p. 9).

Despite the pressure Marguerite felt from her family to become 'professional', she said that low self esteem, the desire to rebel from familial expectations, and the birth of her daughter, kept her from enrolling in university for many years. Marguerite described a

sense of having little career mobility, coupled with her duties as a mother, as contributing to her decision to return to school. Marguerite stated that:

...I paid off my loans and then I thought, 'My daughter's getting older. She's gonna leave. Um, I work a waitress job. Like, my education and that is redundant now it's so long ago, you know. And I want to see her, I want to be around her and my grandkids. If she's in BC how am I going to go see her with a minimum wage job?...Okay, you work in the local restaurant, uh, now my boss is expanding and stuff, but what if he decides one day that he doesn't want it anymore? Where am I? I'm in a rural town that's getting smaller all the time. Like, where's my future? Where is my daughter's future (p. 13)?

The accounts of Marguerite and Jennifer reflect the view of education as a credential (Britton & Baxter, 1999). For them post-secondary education is an attempt to achieve upward mobility, a meaning associated with students and families of working class backgrounds (Archer & Hutchings, 2000; Brine & Waller, 2004; Britton & Baxter, 1999; Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003). Even though Marguerite's mother was once employed as a teacher, she was also a single mother who struggled to provide for her family in a similar way to the struggles of Jennifer's parents. Thus, the accounts of Marguerite and Jennifer subscribe to the view advocated in the White Paper – that post-secondary education is an individual endeavour that can help overcome social problems, such as poverty, through upward mobility. However, Marguerite's account indicates that her duties as a mother are paramount. She does have a partner, but feels financially and personally responsible for her daughter and told me that she considers herself to be a single mother. Additionally, like other women in rural Newfoundland, Marguerite performed unpaid care work for her elderly mother. Marguerite, like many other rural Newfoundland women since the closure of the fishery and restructuring of the logging

industry, was burdened with a heavy workload, involving paid and unpaid care work⁷¹ (Bates, 2006; Durdle, 2001; Kelly, 2005; Harrison & Power, 2005).

While the women discussed thus far spoke of the relationship of their post-secondary education to work in general terms, the women in their forties with families spoke more specifically about this relationship. These women discussed university as a way to improve their work situation by providing credentials or expertise. Britton and Baxter (1999) suggest that post-secondary education as a means to validate or further a career is associated with the lives of middle class married women. However, my interviews indicate that such meanings may not be restricted to this group. Marguerite, a single mother and former restaurant worker, saw her degree in Sociology partly as a way to enhance her performance as a social worker. Regarding her degree, Marguerite said:

I've had 50 backup plans. This is why I'm doing...the Sociology...Deciding to do Sociology, yes it was hard and actually doing it because you're doing it, the degree, but as you know – what am I going to do with a BA in Sociology? Really, realistically (laughter). Right? So...Do you know, it's got to be more than just, well, I'm going to do this with it...So this is just a credential, or just something to help me learn that I'm hoping I can take with me and help me do Social Work much better (p. 31).

Thus, a degree in Sociology is in part a preparation for getting a degree in Social Work, which will allow Marguerite to achieve her career goals and her goal of making a difference in the world. She feels that a degree in Sociology will help her do her job as a social worker much better, given that it focuses on society and helping. It will give her the credential or recognition that she has gained knowledge related to her job.

Likewise, after taking more courses part-time towards the completion of her degree, Colleen (married, mother of two, 40s) received a promotion at work on the

⁷¹ I return to this theme later in the chapter.

condition that she complete her degree. This acted as additional incentive for her to persist in university. Colleen said:

...it [the promotion] was given to me on the premise that going to finish my degree essentially and that's when I moved from the secretary position into the coordinator position. Um, so- so I had that weight as well, that they were expecting me to finish...(p. 17).

Thus, a degree is an essential part of either improving the women's performance at work, or contribute to improving their position at work. Both interviews reflect some pressure to earn credentials, but in different ways: Marguerite was using her degree in Sociology as a 'backup' in case her goal of social worker was not realized, or, alternatively, as a way to help her be a better social worker; and Colleen felt pressure to complete her degree, as she received a promotion was given to her on that premise..

In a similar way to Marguerite and Colleen, Elizabeth (married, mother of three, 50s), the owner of a small tourism-related business was back at university to gain knowledge that would help her improve the way she interacted with her clients. She stated that:

And that's another reason I'm back here...that's why I'm back studying German because I have a lot of European people coming and it just will help me. So, I get the- the Folklore part of it [through sociology and anthropology courses], which is nice cause when people come they wanna hear nice things about Newfoundland and I really don't know that much and if I- they're speaking German, it's easier for me to slide into German than stumble my way through now (p. 8).

As the oldest of all the women I interviewed, Elizabeth's interview reflects some insecurity related to being a business owner in rural Newfoundland. When I asked what she wanted to achieve with her degree, Elizabeth stated that:

I don't know how long I want to do [the business], I don't know. But I know that I have to start preparing because if I wait for something to happen, it's not

going to...and so that's part of it now is that I have to start taking baby steps in a direction that I don't even know why... (p. 32).

Thus, coming back to university for Elizabeth was partly to prepare for an unknown "future". There is a sense of excitement in the unknown evident in Elizabeth's interview, but she recognizes that if something were to happen to her or her spouse, neither would be able to run the business on their own. She said:

Maybe one day I wouldn't be able to do it anymore or maybe my husband can't do it anymore or maybe he would die or I would die. Then we have to think about changing things cause, boy, he can't run it himself and I can't run it myself so we're getting older and then you think, well, do you want to do this the rest of your life? In ten years I will be 60 years old. Do I just wanna do that or do I wanna do exciting things in the summer...? (p. 34).

Elizabeth told me that her husband is now semi-retired due to illness. In addition, as the above quote indicates, both she and her husband are getting older. This highlights the role that Elizabeth's stage of life plays in the significance of her university degree. However, she is not certain about where her life is going, and university is a way for her to explore some options. Post-secondary education is a way to ensure that Elizabeth has the opportunity to pursue meaningful activities in the future, with or without her business. Her degree is a backup plan in preparation for a future that could possibly involve different work.

By discussing post-secondary education as contributing to the women's work lives, each of these interviews reflects credentialism. Even though the White Paper acknowledges that formal post-secondary education may be a lifelong requirement for skills 'upgrading' in the new economy, there is no indication in the document that the consultation process or policy strategies take into account the variety of ways in which post-secondary education can relate to the world of work. The rural women I interviewed

did not see their post-secondary education as a way to earn jobs in any of the industries the White Paper forecasts to be profitable in the future. Rather, the women discussed post-secondary education as a credential in the context of their lives as middle- and working-class young women, single mothers returning to university in pursuit of a profession, and as working wives and mothers looking to create a secure future for themselves and their families. As the following section shows, there were also non-economic reasons education was viewed as 'good' for some women.

6.2.2. Post-Secondary Education as 'Good': Non-Economic Aspects

In contrast to the accounts discussed above, on other occasions in the interviews, the women articulated non-economic reasons for their enrollment in post-secondary education. For example, some women indicated that they wanted to make their parents and families happy. For these women, university was 'normal' and unquestioned. At other times, a university degree was related to status, particularly for those from rural families that do not have a family legacy of university graduation and who were the first person in their extended family to enroll. For still others and at other times, post-secondary education was articulated as valuable for its own sake and as something that makes one happy. For some older women with families, university is 'something for me' after a life dedicated to others. Fewer employment and leisure opportunities for women in rural areas than for men were also articulated as significant reasons for enrollment in university. In contrast to rural women, post-secondary education is understood as less necessary for rural men, who frequently move to Alberta to work, or join the Canadian military.

6.2.2.1. University is 'Normal'/Expected

The White Paper portrays rural students as experiencing financial barriers to participation in post-secondary education, and difficulty integrating into the academic environment while living away from home. Strategies aimed at bringing post-secondary education to rural students are among the possible solutions the White Paper authors devise to address this problem. While the White Paper assumes that rural students require assistance participating in post-secondary education, my data shows that for some female students from rural Newfoundland, enrolling in post-secondary education is not problematic, at least not initially. Such was the case for Joanna (20s, Sociology major, Smallwoodville) and Colleen (40s, Psychology major, Steel Harbour). These women expressed going to university as largely taken for granted and inevitable due to familial expectations. The following quote from Joanna expresses the expectations surrounding this decision to enroll in university:

There wasn't really any question on whether or not I was gonna go to university. Like, I didn't even think that I wasn't at any point in time. Just kinda like- my sister went away right after she graduated. It just wasn't even spoke of, I just thought I would be going away... (p. 5).

Thus, enrolling in post-secondary education seemed to be a 'normal' part of the lives of Joanna and Colleen.

That university is 'normal' for these two women indicates ideas about education passed down through the family. Colleen, who first enrolled in university in the early 1980s, expressed the rationale behind her enrollment as follows:

...just because education was always so important in the family. You know, all of my brothers and- all of my aunts and uncles are all, you know, university graduates and...Um, it was just expected. You didn't even question it. It didn't occur to me that there was anything else (p. 12).

As indicated in Chapter Two, Colleen came from an educated, Catholic family, and her father was employed with the Canadian military and the provincial government. Her interview reflects the view that post-secondary education is a family expectation. She told me that, "...I wasn't aware that there was another option [besides university] because I was always told, 'You're going to university'. The teachers told me, my parents told me, so I went" (p. 12). Likewise, according to Joanna, the obviousness of a university degree was partly due to the encouragement of her parents and the history of post-secondary education in her family. She stated that:

...and if I didn't want to, like, my Mother would never pressure me. It's that I never, ever, I never not wanted to go, like, you know? I- I really wanted to, so...It wouldn't be, like, my parents never pressured either one of us to do anything, it's just we both wanted to leave Smallwoodville and go on and do other things, you know? And, like, my parents were financially, like, you know, steady. Like, they could provide for us to go, so there wasn't any problems with it. Out a- like, the majority of people in my family, like, my cousins and stuff, like, all of them have gone and...My Mom's family is really well-educated, like, my Grandfather and all her brothers are doctors and, right (p. 6)?

As we shall see in the following paragraphs, participation in post-secondary education by these middle class women was tied to ideas about work.

Joanna described her parents' beliefs about the contribution of education to gaining meaningful employment. Her father had some post-secondary education in a trades-related field and, while Joanna's mother had steady work at the local hospital, her father had difficulty maintaining stable employment in Smallwoodville. In contrast to her parents, Joanna's maternal grandfather and all of his sons were university educated doctors. Like them, Joanna's mother began to be educated to become a doctor, but dropped out to get married and took a trade to become a medical technician. Both

parents stressed the importance of Joanna's education in part because of her father's dissatisfaction with his work situation. Regarding her parents' encouragement, Joanna stated that:

...my parents, they always stressed, like, you know, it's important to do well and education is very important and- and, you know, my Father has stated to me numerous times that he wishes that he could have done more...type thing. When you work...I don't know, when you go away to university, I guess you have a better chance of workin' somewhere that you enjoy. Like, I know my father always hated every job he had, but he kinda had to work, you know? Menial, like, job that he didn't enjoy, so... (p. 5).

Similarly, Colleen stated that education was important to the family in order to:

Uh, well, you know, to secure your future, to have a career, you know, just to be educated. Just the emphasis on education. And they didn't have to talk about it much 'cause we were the kind of kids that we just- we just excelled in school. Like, my mother never, ever asked me if I had my homework done. She wasn't an interfering parent, they just expected you had it done and they expected the good mark on your report card. It didn't occur to them that it would be otherwise. They just believed in us so much that... (p. 12).

These interviews hint at the possible intrinsic value of education by stressing the importance of 'being educated' and 'doing well'. However, by discussing university as a way to have a career and to secure a future, they also reflect the view of education as a middle class⁷² credential. The parents of both Colleen and Joanna expected their children to attend university, to have a career and to have meaningful and secure employment⁷³.

For Colleen, the expectation to attend university could be seen as a way for her parents to

⁷² I use the term 'middle class' hesitantly, not to refer to a homogeneous and bounded entity, but to indicate shifting and dynamic sets of relationships that produce particular identities, ways of living, sets of perspectives and further relationships (Ball, 2003). As Davis (2000) argues in regards to her study of one rural Newfoundland community, the permanently employed, including schoolteachers and health and welfare service workers, represent the elite in changing rural Newfoundland communities. At least one parent of Joanna, Alicia and Colleen, worked in a well-paying public service job (in the fields of medicine, education and the military, respectively).

⁷³ However, a medical degree in Joanna's family may not be seen as an appropriate option for a female wife and mother, given Joanna's mother's decision to drop out upon marriage, although Joanna did not discuss this decision in-depth explicitly.

ensure that she achieved a lifestyle similar to theirs by obtaining a 'career'. For Joanna, university was a way to obtain meaningful employment and avoid the struggles of her father in relation to employment. Overall, for both of these women, going to university and performing well in school are seen as "normal" by their families, which is, as literature suggests, a meaning associated with "middle class" families (Ball, 2003; 2005; Walkerdine, Lucey, & Melody, 2001).

6.2.2.2. University for Status

For other working class students without a post-secondary education legacy in their family, university is related to social status. The fact that no one else in Jennifer's extended family had post-secondary education served as a motivation for her. According to Jennifer:

...I'm the only one in my family's ever went to university too, so I think that's a big thing. Like no- my Mom has a really big family, like 10 brothers and sisters, none of their siblings, none their sons or daughters ever went to trade school or anything. So, I think that's another reason my Mom and Dad really pushes me, cause... (p. 33).

This part of Jennifer's account indicates that being the first-generation university student is a non-economic benefit in and of itself. Enrolling in university was a way for Jennifer to distinguish herself from her relatives and other members of the community, who she perceived as 'going nowhere' in life.

6.2.2.2. Time 'for Me'

The salience of gender ideologies in some rural women's decisions to enroll in university becomes most evident in interviews with the women with children. In contrast to the authors of the White Paper, who view post-secondary education as meaningful mostly for its economic value, the women with families spoke of attending university as a

time for themselves; going to university was something these women did 'for me'.

Before committing herself to finishing university, Colleen described herself as "Mommy Homemaker". However, after the passing of her young child due to illness, Colleen said that she experienced a change in her perception of herself and a change in her behaviour.

She stated that:

Um, and then after Amanda, it- I just felt driven and that's never really faded from that time because I went through a whole period of personal growth and change after her death. Um, before that I was 'Mommy Homemaker' and I catered to my husband and my needs were never met and then after Amanda died, some of my needs were starting to be met, um, because I was being confident and I was making a stand at home and I was making a stand at work and, you know, and now it's time for me and I need to do things that are important to me and- and so that kind of all came out of that period of time (p. 29).

Thus, the illness of her child allowed Colleen to make demands from other people instead of "catering". However, between the time of her child's death and the time of our interview, Colleen had a third child whose birth prompted her to postpone university again. She stated, "...so I took another year off and then another year before I decided, okay, she's at a good age now, I'll tackle it again. So that was, what- 2004/2005 maybe I came back again" (p. 17). Once Colleen's obligations to her children lessened, she felt she was in a position to consider her own needs again. This included going back to university.

In addition to Colleen, Marguerite spoke of university as a time for herself after living for others. Marguerite described coming to university in part out of a desire for "self-fulfillment". When I questioned her about how she came to enroll in university, Marguerite stated that:

Um, I wasn't feeling that sense of self-fulfillment...You know, I had worried so much about other people and other things and society but I didn't think about me

as such, and being a mother and that, was just really hard to come back [to school] (p. 13).

At the time of enrolling in university, Marguerite felt she needed to escape the stress of caring for her mother and her daughter while working a low-paying job in a town that she saw to be dying. She described herself as part of the “sandwich generation” (her words) of adult women who are responsible both for the care of a child and for the care of one or both parents. Marguerite articulates her experiences as follows:

It was very hard because I was still working at the time. Um, being a mother and having my own home and my mom and I’m working and I’m doing courses. It was very, very, uh, overwhelming at times. Very overwhelming. And, uh, I don’t know how to explain it. I don’t know if it was, uh, psychological or physical but I started to have some physical problems as well and I was just drained. Really drained and I think it all just came in on me and I j- I was just- I got to the point where it was just total burn out. Just total burnout. And I was just like, ‘Okay, I just- I need out’. I- I tell people and I joke about it but it actually is almost realistic that I ran away from home (p. 21).

Marguerite’s interview supports research in Newfoundland that suggests women’s paid and unpaid work has taken on increasing significance with the closure of primary industries, such as the fishery and the logging industry (Bates, 2006; Harrison & Power, 2005; MacDonald, 1995). According to this and other literature (Durdle, 2001; Kelly, 2005), women living in communities that are affected by such restructuring often work a double shift by performing paid work in the formal economy, and the care work associated with their own immediate families. Additionally, women increasingly perform unpaid and sometimes paid home care for elderly family members and others in the community, due to lack of adequate elder care in rural communities. In the above quotes, Marguerite describes how she avoided enrolling in university because of obligations she felt toward other people. However, when her daughter was ready to graduate from high

school, and once Marguerite had as much stress as she could physically take, she was ready to leave home to study. Now, as a university student, Marguerite sees education as a way to “find” herself. According to Marguerite, “I need more than the restaurant and not for the job or the status or anything else, I just needed something for me cause I’m not finding myself there, like, you know” (p. 47).

As we can see from the way that Marguerite and Colleen both put off their university education to accept primary responsibility for childcare, gendered familial expectations and gendered work patterns, which had led both Colleen and Marguerite to avoid thinking of themselves, kept them both away from post-secondary education for a large part of their lives. For Marguerite, treating her own needs as secondary changed once caring for her family while working became too stressful, and once her daughter grew ‘old enough’ to be without her mother. For Colleen, the pattern of living for others changed with the death of her child and once she felt her third child was old enough for her to take time for school. While both of these women had partners, both took on the position of primary care-giver. Post-secondary education for Colleen and Marguerite is a way of realizing unfulfilled potential (Britton & Baxter, 1999). University is an opportunity that had previously been refused because, as mothers, Marguerite and Colleen could not imagine taking time away from caring for children.

In addition to Colleen and Marguerite, Elizabeth also spoke of university as a time ‘for me’, but in different terms. At the time of our interview just before Christmas of 2006, Elizabeth had returned to university after many years. Elizabeth said that her decision to return to university was in part because of a gap in her life that she needed to fill once her children grew and moved away from home. She stated that, “I’m starting to

have more time to think about myself now 'cause my kids are grown up [laughter]. When you're raising a family, it's just you're focused on other things" (p. 17). Thus, since her children were old enough to move out, and since she had established a stable business and income, Elizabeth describes her university degree now as a "pastime". According to Elizabeth:

I think that's why I stopped when I did and made something concrete like my little store and I go, 'Okay, that's my store' and I know what I'm dealing with, I know I'm making money and that was okay, that was good. And then I really did not have the desire to go back to school for a very long time after that until my kids started getting a little bit bigger and then I started to miss it but I had already been doing things that I could make money with and I knew which direction I was going and then there was a gap in my life again and that's what I'm filling this with, right? But, again, I'm older and I've done all those things are behind me now, this is just for past time really (p. 13).

Like Marguerite and Colleen, Elizabeth only considered enrolling in university again once she felt her children had grown enough to not need her constant care. However, in contrast to some of the pressures experienced by Colleen and Marguerite regarding familial expectations about educational achievement and the stress of living life for others at home, Elizabeth described university as a 'past time', given that she did not have familial expectations to live up to or a desire to change or begin a career.

Even though Elizabeth did not appear to experience pressure to enter or to finish university as Marguerite and Colleen did, this does not mean that university was a simple transition for her. Similarly, going to university was not an unproblematic 'escape' from oppressive circumstances for Colleen and Marguerite. Certain expectations about women's role in the family (as primary care-giver in the home) made coming to university awkward at best for these women. When I asked how her husband felt about her coming back to university, Elizabeth said:

Uh, my husband at first I think probably wasn't really pleased. I think. I don't know...I think he thought that- he's used to having me home. I'm very home people cause we work at home, we live at home, we are at home all the time. That's- that's our base. Uh, I think he thought it would take me away a lot and he had to get used to that. So I think he's okay with it now, but at the beginning I don't think he was very thrilled about it (p. 43).

Elizabeth's perception of her husband's lack of desire for her to return to university was likely exacerbated by the fact that they both work from home and are accustomed to always being in the home. Elizabeth's return to university, therefore, required some adjustment on the part of her husband, who seemed to come around to accepting her return to university over time.

While it just took some time for Elizabeth's husband to get used to her periodic absence from home while attending university, the other mothers I interviewed spoke about family and community members' explicit disapproval of their enrollment in university. When I asked Marguerite how she felt about leaving her home to come to university in St. John's, she had the following to say, "Um, I felt like a traitor. I felt like, uh, like I was the worst mother ever. Like, you know. A lot of...selfish. Very selfish, that's how you feel, how I felt. And scared" (p. 20). Marguerite stated that many people she knew in her home community were very surprised by her decision to leave home. She felt that people in the community thought she would remain in Forest Brook and run the restaurant for the rest of her life. People wondered what Marguerite's motives were and whether or not she was ever coming back. Her decision was not approved of in the community. According to Marguerite :

...friends and stuff are like, 'Why are you going in there? What are you going to do? Oh, you're leaving'. You know, and it's all this 'Oh, she's going to look for someone, you know, with money' or 'They're gonna do this', or, you know, cause there's all this speculation that just doesn't make sense (p. 15).

Colleen told a similar story to that of Marguerite regarding the reactions of family members to her return to university. She stated that:

My husband thought that I- you know, 'Why do you need to go to university? You have a job'. 'Cause that was his upbringing. You know, they thought I had some big fabulous job 'cause I wasn't working 10 weeks and collecting employment insurance. I said, 'Yes, but it's not enough for me'. So he thought that this was part of my devious plan to get an education and then leave. Uh, it wasn't, but those were his insecurities (p. 18).

In Colleen's account, university is viewed by family members as a place one goes in order to leave the community. Thus, these women are viewed with suspicion by family members and friends.

Such accounts of surprise and disapproval on the part of community members⁷⁴ and family towards the women with children implies community expectations about women's place being primarily in the home, and women's lives being devoted primarily to the needs of their families. Attempts by the women to either improve their own material circumstances (and those of their families) or to assert some independence seem to be viewed with suspicion and scorn. Even though these women struggle with how they think they are viewed by community members, the accounts of women with children and spouses demonstrate that university for such women may be partly a way to break out of dominant rural constructions of womanhood that confine women's place as within the home, family, and community. Simultaneously, for the women with families and spouses, university can be seen as a way to assert autonomy. This theme is evident below

⁷⁴ Corbett (2007), in his study of formal education in rural Nova Scotia, suggests that community attitudes toward formal education may be theorized as 'resistance' based on community- and gender-based 'habitus'. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to develop the notion of resistance further here, but see Corbett (2007) for more.

in the accounts of young women, which, in contrast to the older women with families, indicate that university may be a gendered option appropriate for women, but not for men.

6.2.2.3. *University is for Women?*

Jennifer explicitly spoke of university as a gendered option for youth who are finishing high school. She acknowledged that her parents never encouraged her brother to attend university, even though they pushed her. She stated that:

...my family pushed me to go to school, but, see, then for all they didn't tell my brother to go to school so that's why I'm wondering, like, why would they tell me to go to school, but they don't tell my brother to go to school" (p. 42)?

In contrast to Jennifer, her brother had just moved to Alberta to work as a roofer, and he was hoping to be accepted into the military. Jennifer told me that her brother ridiculed her for going to university. He said that it was a "waste of time" and a "waste of money".

Research on rural and resource dependent areas suggests that males and females from these regions hold different views about the kind of post-high school options that are valuable and desirable (Alloway & Gilbert, 2003; Corbett, 2007; Pinhorn, 2002). Indeed, Jennifer told me that she knew of some young women from her home community who attended university, but no men. (p. 42). Literature indicates that this is related to the kinds of work young rural men and women see around them as they grow up (Corbett, 2007; Pinhorn, 2002). Corbett (2007), in his study of the relationship between migration and formal education in Digby Neck, Nova Scotia, argues that rejection of education among males in single industry towns fits into a longstanding male tradition of being "born and bred" for such industries as fishing. The power of this representation of male identity persists even in the absence of a stable industry (Corbett, 2007). According to Pinhorn's (2002) study of rural Newfoundland youth, the military appears to be an

appealing post-high school option for young men because they see it as involving outdoor activities similar to the ones they engage in as youth, such as hunting. Indeed, Jennifer acknowledged that among men, outdoor activities are popular in Millbrook. She said:

...I think it's like difference for guys and girls in Millbrook 'cause, like, you can go hunting and like hunting's big thing in Millbrook. People will, like, go out and catch rabbits in back of their house 'cause so much woods or they'll go cuttin' wood in the winter and stuff (p. 3).

In contrast to men in a rural setting who might be encouraged to work outdoors, university may be seen as an appropriate option for rural women, who may be more accustomed to doing 'indoor' work. While Jennifer perceived a variety of outdoor recreational and employment activities seen as desirable and appropriate by men in Millbrook, she perceived few opportunities available for women. When I asked her what women did in Millbrook, Jennifer replied:

I guess like what you would consider just housework probably...there's a fire hall in Millbrook and that's like the centre of activity sometimes like they'll have darts leagues and card games and that's basically it (p. 3).

In the above quotations, Jennifer describes her home community as one divided along gender lines, with the male outdoor sphere dominant, while there appears to be limited options for work and leisure for women, particularly those who subscribe to the idea that a woman's place is within the space of the domestic.

Like Jennifer, Colleen, Marguerite and Elizabeth spoke of a gendered division of space in rural Newfoundland. Despite having partners, they appear to have taken on the role of primary care giver to children. Additionally, Colleen and Marguerite worked in traditionally female fields and had partners who worked in the stereotypically male occupations of seasonal farming, auto repair, and bricklaying. Some of their brothers

were university educated, but all of their female siblings were university educated. These accounts of families and communities divided along gender lines challenge, as did Felt and Sinclair (1992), the suggestion that gender identities and relations have been reorganized in line with changes to rural Newfoundland economies (Bates, 2006; Davis, 1993; 2000). According to some of my interviews, there still may be rigid spheres of work and leisure in some rural Newfoundland communities and gender ideologies may still persist among today's youth and adults regardless of socioeconomic background. These ideologies can play a role in pushing some rural women into post-secondary education (and pulling others away). Such non-economic aspects of the rural experience are not accounted for in the White Paper, which conceptualizes a unified economic definition of post-secondary education and learners. If increasing the participation of rural students is a priority for the White Paper authors, engaging with dominant constructions of rural womanhood will be necessary as they can act as a barrier to participation. Such constructions can also act as a barrier to rural social and economic development because some women, including Jennifer and possibly Marguerite, may not wish to return to their rural home communities⁷⁵.

6.2.3. Why Liberal Arts Education?

According to the White Paper the women's choice of a liberal arts education is the 'wrong' one in that liberal arts appears to be less marketable than a degree in science or technology. The White Paper says that women such as these just need to be educated and made aware of the benefits of the 'right' education (through outreach programs and financial incentives). This suggests women just need to be 'enlightened' and streamed

⁷⁵ This theme is developed more later in the chapter.

into careers such as engineering. The 'right' education can promote gender equality by enhancing employment opportunities available to women in male-dominated fields, such as science and technology. However, the reality of women's decision-making is much more complicated than the White Paper assumes. These women were well aware of how others perceive their liberal arts education; they are told it is useless. The following quote from Joanna is representative:

...even in the Muse, like, they had this, like, Editorial, like two homeless people burning Arts degrees to keep warm, right? Like, people- it's just a common kinda- everybody says it, you know what I mean? (p. 16).

Even the women themselves express acceptance of the idea of the worthlessness of an arts degree. When I asked Cara if getting a job after graduation was important to her in her decision-making, she said:

...I'm doing Classics, I mean, unless I decide to go on and do, um, my Master's...this is what people ask, they're like, 'Oh, you're doing Classics. What the hell are you going to do with that when you graduate?'...right? I mean, lot- that could be said for a lot of the Arts degrees, actually, you know... (p. 14-15).

Thus, all of the women (with the exception of Colleen and Elizabeth, who already had careers) were considering earning additional credentials as a librarian, teacher or social worker, to name just a few examples. These traditionally female dominated occupations are 'suitable' for women in that they involve stereotypically female service and/or care work, and they provide a 'professional' status in communities, and a potentially stable and secure middle-class income level.

If arts degrees are viewed as worthless in the job market, possibly requiring additional credentials, and women who choose these subjects accept this to be true, why do they continue to pursue such degrees? I argue that these women are not simply

behaving irrationally. Their decisions are based on much more than the potential economic gains that may result from their education. Whether or not women decide to attend post-secondary education, and what they choose to study depends upon their perceived abilities, age, class, marital status, and family. All of these factors affect women's perspectives on money, their choice of major, area of academic study, and the timing of their education. The White Paper does not address gender imbalances, unequal social relations, and gendered ideas in the family and community that are evident in these interviews and that shape women's engagements with post-secondary education.

6.2.3.1. Women's (Gendered) Academic Inclinations: 'I'm no good at Math'

In addition to the interview data supporting the idea that gender helps shape the women's decisions to enroll in post-secondary education, the women also expressed gendered outlooks on university subjects. What was most noticeable about the interviews was the consensus that male-dominated subjects, which the women named as math and sciences, are uninteresting and/or difficult. Each woman I interviewed rejected these disciplines. According to Joanna:

I didn't really like my first year [at Memorial]. Like, I didn't like the math courses I had to take. Like, I did advanced math in high school and stuff, but I never ever really enjoyed it and...I'm not too much into math, like math courses I don't find enjoyable in any sense. Um, but other than that, I- I like to learn, like I like being in school and all that stuff, so... (p. 16).

Similarly, Alicia articulated that she had performed well in all of her classes during high school, but simply did not have an interest in the sciences or math, and therefore, enrolled in the Faculty of Arts. Regarding her decision to study French, Alicia stated that:

...I can't see myself coming in here and doing like a math degree and I'm not i- it must be an interest thing cause, like, I'm not interested in sciences enough to do that. Like, I've gone back and, like, spoken to people and they've said, 'You're

doing an arts degree?' and I say, 'Yeah' and they go, 'Why aren't you doing a science degree? You had good enough marks to do a science degree', but I don't know (laughs). You know, that's- if that's not what you're interested in, that's not what you're interested in. So, I think it was just basically an interest thing (p. 13-14).

As a student who earned high grades in all of her courses in high school, Alicia claimed that since she did not have an interest in studying science courses, she did not want to choose one as her major in university.

Other women spoke of math and science being too difficult to pursue in university (Jennifer, Julie, Marguerite). Julie told me that she originally wanted to study biology, but felt that she could not maintain the average required. Likewise, the women who came to university after years of being out of school also articulated a sense of math and science being too difficult. Marguerite spoke of being intimidated by all of the learning she would have to do to catch up to the 'young people' in the class. She told me that:

...I decided that I wanted to do, um, I really like psychology. I've done 7 psychs, actually, but then I thought, 'Okay, then that means I have to go back and do math', which puts me at a disadvantage from a lot of young people coming out...Like, I would have to go and do extra math and stuff and I just don't know if I have the confidence to tackle that or the fight to do it or the what it takes, I just don't know if I can do that. So I wanted something that geared away from that... (p. 24-25).

Jennifer similarly expressed disappointment about having failed Economics in her first year of being a university student, likely because she was 'scared' of the class, the teaching methods of the professor, and of the subject matter. Jennifer told me that:

I think it was my first year in university, like the first term and, like I was out of high school for almost two years so I wasn't used to studying so it was hard and, uh, I don't know, it just scared me cause they were writing all these charts on the board and I just didn't understand it and, yeah, and it was a really big class. I think it just scared me, for the most part (p. 21).

Like Marguerite, Jennifer had been out of school for some time before returning and being exposed to math again. Marguerite and Jennifer both expressed a lack of self-confidence in their abilities to do math after such an absence. Thus, the fact that these women were absent from school for a number of years prior to returning, exacerbated their experience of math as an intimidating subject.

While all of the women articulated a sense of math and 'hard' sciences as uninteresting and/or difficult, some spoke of their choice of university major in terms of a continuing interest arising directly out of their experiences of living life as a woman from rural Newfoundland and/or based on gendered ideals. For example, Julie, after having switched programs three times, finally decided on her choice of English because English was always a "passion" (p. 9). This passion, Julie stated, developed as a result of her experiences of reading with her mother and aunts as a child. Each night, her mother would read a number of stories to her and, in addition to this nightly ritual of reading, Julie, her mother and aunts would have tea together weekly and informally exchange books. Regarding these events, Julie said:

Mom has a, uh...her and a couple of our family members who are from other smaller communities, when they all go to my Aunt's house, they'll all meet up, like, Sunday evenings it's tradition to go to my Aunt's house and have a cup of tea and when they go, they'll, uh, one of 'em will bring in a bag of books and that's what they do. They- they trade off books and then whoever's...it's like their own little private book club (p. 13).

The gathering for tea and the exchange of books at the home of Julie's aunt each week reflect the literature on women's lives in rural Newfoundland describing the salience and prevalence of exclusively female social relations in rural parts of the island (Benoit, 1990; Chaulk Murray, 1977; George, 1995). According to Julie, the informal all-female

gathering space of her aunt's house and the focus on reading there, coupled with the habit of reading nightly with her mother, shaped her decision to study English at university.

Colleen saw psychology as a subject that was well-suited to her experiences as a girl in rural Newfoundland, and the kind of person she perceived herself to be. Colleen told me that her interest in studying psychology came from a desire to understand why people do the things they do. She said that many people tell her she is a 'people person', meaning that people feel comfortable talking to her. She stated that:

...people have always said to me, you know, you're a people person. People talk to me, I mean, they joke about me in the office being, you know, 'you should do counseling if you're gonna do psychology' because...I mean, I have everyone in my office (p. 19).

When I asked Colleen to elaborate on how she thought that she came to be a 'people person', she told me that she just always seemed to be curious about other people, and to want to care for them. According to Colleen:

...I was always that way even as a child, my mother said to me. If I saw somebody that was left out of a group, 'cause I would always drag some child home from school every year in class that nobody else would play with (p. 19).

This desire to care for others even translated into caring for sick or hurt animals that Colleen sometimes found outside near the barn. She told me that she would bring them inside and try to nurse them back to health. Such experiences reflect the kind of childhood activities associated with dominant notions of femininity and the specifically female role of caring work.

Like Colleen, Marguerite also described herself as a caring person, who wants to make a difference. Marguerite was the only woman I interviewed who expressed that her decision to enroll in university was partly in order to work towards a specific career, that

of social worker. She told me that this desire came out of her experiences of growing up and her desire to live a “down to earth life”. Specifically, Marguerite told me that her own experiences of needing help in her youth shaped her desire to want to become a social worker. She stated that:

I think that, uh, I know that everything I’ve experienced, um, there’s times when you think that people don’t understand, that you’re the only one, or even as a teenage girl I’m sure you know like you think ‘Oh my goodness, why do I feel this way?’ But everybody feels... That is the norm. That is down to earth, that’s average, it’s life. Like, uh, the average person doesn’t have more money than what they know what to do with or they don’t have these big beautiful paid homes or you know, they have issues, they have problems, they have things they have to deal with and I think that gives you a better sense of fulfillment if you address things, you know, from the level of the average person, like, the down to earth people, the real people (p. 6).

While Marguerite was vague about the specific struggles she experienced growing up, given her emphasis on helping those who may be troubled, and making those people feel good, it is clear that her interests in post-secondary education are related to social concerns, in addition to the way she sees herself, her life and her home.

The literature written on the topic of women and academic subject choice points to the pervasiveness of women’s disassociation from male-dominated subjects, such as math and science, and preference for ‘caring’ subjects, perceived to be based in liberal arts disciplines, and the complexity of this issue (Calabrese Barton & Brickhouse, 2006; Davis & Steiger, 1990; Mendick, 2005; Montgomery, 2004; Mura, Kimball, & Cloutier, 1987; Tripp-Knowles, 1999). However, no literature on this topic is cited by the authors of the White Paper. Engaging with women’s ideas about math and science, as well as their perceptions of their abilities, should be a part of post-secondary education strategies if policy-makers aim to encourage more women to study non-traditional disciplines.

Recruitment initiatives and scholarship opportunities will not be enough. Additionally, leaving such initiatives to post-secondary educational institutions to take up (or not) is not sufficient for a government that claims to be interested in the educational choices of students. Taking into account Davis and Steiger's (1990) argument about the gendered structure of math and science curricula in Canadian schools and universities, the White Paper strategies could also recommend a review of post-secondary and secondary level math and science curricula with the aim of making such subjects more accessible to women. A review of the White Paper should also be conducted in order to re-conceptualize post-secondary education in ways other than its contribution to economic success. I see Marguerite's social concerns as being in direct opposition to the constructions of post-secondary education and the learner evident in the White Paper. The document dedicates only one small section of its entirety to the topic of community development, and social concerns, such as equity, are reconfigured in economic and individualistic terms. A liberal arts education, long associated with the goal of social justice, should be a part of education policy, lest the provincial government risk reducing its definition to economic competition. The 'social' need not be taken out of social concerns.

6.2.3.2. Rural Education and Gendered Academic Subject Inclinations

In addition to experiences in gendered communities, the specificities of education in rural places also shaped the women's engagement with math and science subjects. Cara told me that she used to perform well in math class, until her 11th grade teacher became ill and the school had difficulty replacing him. After that, she did not like math. Cara told me that:

...[W]e had a series of substitute teachers who didn't know what the hell they were doing. I mean, these were, like, gym teachers, right? Um, and I think- well, I had to go to summer school...I went with over half my class. Everybody failed. Cause again, your standard class test at the end of the year and everybody was, like, you know, 'What the hell is this?' Cause you had substitute teachers all semester (p. 8).

Cara's account is indicative of an inability on the part of the school board to replace the regular math teacher with a qualified substitute. Her experience highlights the ways in which such problems with the school system on the island have profound effects on the educational experiences of students. Alternatively, given that Sawmillville is the site of one of the few rural community college visual arts programs, Cara was able to cultivate a keen interest in art and relationships with peers who nurtured her interest.

Jennifer intended to study business at university, but after failing Economics, she was required to rethink her decision and choose something else. Eventually, she landed on the decision to study Folklore. Jennifer told me that she took folklore on the recommendation of a friend, who said that it was a good elective to boost one's Grade Point Average (p. 21). This is an instrumental orientation informed by Jennifer's failure in economics. She links this failure to her experience of learning in rural Newfoundland. Jennifer told me that:

...I think that, like, I grew up with parents who didn't really know how to read and write so I've been struggling with that for a long time because I didn't have no one to read to me or show me what these words was or all that, so...(p. 17).

Furthermore, Jennifer perceived her schooling in rural Newfoundland to be different from that which is offered in St. John's. According to Jennifer:

...they stick you into Academic English and they were- then you get a paper back and they're like 'run-on sentence' and all this, and like, 'your sentences are not complete sentences', but they never would teach all that, like, our school didn't teach people what nouns was, verbs, and you probably heard this from other people, like...like, it's a big thing out in rural Newfoundland, like, they don't

teach you proper things. So I think the education systems are really different from, like, St. John's to Millbrook (p. 22).

As a result of her struggles with schooling in Millbrook, Jennifer found that academic work was a genuine struggle, one that she sought help with through student services offered at Memorial, such as the writing centre.

In a similar way to Jennifer, Colleen wanted to study a different subject (biology) than the one she ended up choosing as her major (psychology). Colleen had always excelled at all subjects in secondary school, particularly sciences, and strove to study biology at university. However, her performance in science subjects suffered in her first year at Memorial, and she felt that she was not doing well enough to choose biology as her major. In contrast to Jennifer, Colleen did not actually fail her biology classes, but did not achieve the grades to which she was accustomed in high school. As a result, she experienced pressure from her parents, and low self esteem. Colleen stated that:

We never- we hadn't done calculus in- in high school at that time...and I got a 65 and I did the homework and the practice and so, like, this was a huge blow to my ego. And then I thought, 'Maybe I'm not university material' (p. 13).

Furthermore, regarding chemistry, physics and biology labs, Colleen said that:

...[I] just didn't have any exposure to it. We never did labs in high school. And maybe the other kids didn't either, but I just found I wasn't able to apply to knowledge from the classroom to the lab. Um, and maybe that was me. Maybe I was intimidated. Maybe it wasn't the environment, cause I was quite young...but then, I couldn't deal with not doing well, especially when other people were. 'Cause I thought if they can get a 90, I can get a 90. So the problem was with me (p. 14).

As the above quote shows ('...the problem was with me'), Colleen ended up internalizing as her fault her lower grades in university biology despite the fact that she was learning material that she had not been exposed to previously. Consequently, Colleen dropped out

of biology and chose to major in psychology, a subject she took on the advice of her brother and one in which she was able to achieve grades in the upper 80s and 90s.

While the White Paper addresses the difficulties of providing a quality, affordable and accessible post-secondary education to rural areas (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p. 14), nowhere does the document mention how rural secondary education may impact students' engagements with post-secondary education. Consideration of rural schooling must be taken into account in order to effectively achieve an accessible post-secondary educational system. It will not be sufficient, as in Chapter Seven of the White Paper, 'Strategies for Helping Students', to focus on the sharing of student services between Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic. Addressing the real educational needs of students, particularly rural women in the areas of math and science, is necessary. Moreover, it is necessary for governments and educational institutions to encourage women who want to study liberal arts subjects, and help them visualize and achieve career goals. This is important, given that the women who did not already have careers each felt confused about her career options, and expressed the belief that her education would not be sufficient to find and keep adequate employment. As we shall see in the following section, some of the vagueness about the women's career options comes from the possibility that the desire to enroll in post-secondary education is related to some of the women's desire to simply leave rural communities.

6.2.3.3. *"As Soon As I Graduated, I Wanted to Go": Negative Views of the Rural People and Place*

Two of the women I interviewed (Joanna and Jennifer) were critical of their communities and the people who continue to live there. Joanna told me that she has little desire to ever return to her home community, except to see her grandparents, who still reside there. A major problem Joanna experienced with her home community was the gossip she perceived to take place between the local people, coupled with what she saw as their "small town mentality". At the beginning of our interview, Joanna stated that:

I don't like Smallwoodville. It's really...it's pretty crazy there. Like, uh, I don't know. Small town mentality, the people are kinda gossipy, yeah, like, I've heard that there's kinda like a- they have a reputation for being...like, gossip central, I guess [Laughter], but I don't know. I didn't particularly like living there and as soon as I graduated, I wanted to go (p. 1).

Furthermore:

...that's horrible for me to say, but, like, it's just like, people's minds are so closed and the same crap. People talk about one another...now that I'm out here and I'm surrounded by people who I enjoy, people who are more like me, why would I go back and put myself in that position?...Those people aren't the type of people I wanna surround myself with (p. 25).

The interview with Jennifer echoes the sentiments of Joanna. Regarding Millbrook, Jennifer stated that, "It's very small and everybody knows all your business..." (p. 1). Consequently, like Joanna, there was no question that Jennifer would be leaving the community once she graduated from high school.

Both Jennifer and Joanna stated that they perceived themselves as different from those who still reside in their home communities. According to Joanna:

...the people in the town are, like assholes, like really, they are. Like, (laughs) I don't mean to generalize, but, like, it sounds so bad, but like...I don't know. J- they're just completely different from what I consider to have a good time and I just don't like their attitudes on a lot of things and it just- I like variety, like,

extreme variety and there's none of that. There's, like, it's just everybody's the same, and, like, I don't know (p. 26).

Like Joanna, Jennifer believed that she is very different from the people at home.

Jennifer told me that there is nothing to do in Millbrook and, as a result, many of the people who live there abuse drugs and alcohol and have little ambition. Jennifer stated that:

...I think that's probably why I don't go home much because I find everyone just gossips about each other and they talk about foolishness...And I find that really hard now because I'm used to all these intelligent conversations and stuff, and then when you go home when they're talking about, oh Susie down the road and all this, like, what do I care? I don't care about all that (p. 32).

While it is not exactly clear what kinds of topics constitute those that are 'educated', it is clear that Jennifer prefers not to have conversations with the people from her home community, and prefers not to gossip.

Joanna and Jennifer both expressed a sense of being different from the people they grew up with. Moreover, freedom from gossip and the freedom to be and think differently from peers appear to have played a role in their decisions to leave. I see their accounts of home as being shaped by the desire to be free from the social constraints of gossip (Davis, 1988). Joanna described feeling intense surveillance after shaving her head one summer, and also (as indicated in the quotes above) expressed feeling confined to what she perceived to be the hegemonic views of her peers. Furthermore, Joanna expressed that she wanted to experience some diversity and the ability to think in her own way without being judged.

In addition to the view that the people in the community are gossipy, small-minded and homogeneous, Joanna and Jennifer expressed the view that there is nothing to do at home and, as a result, they saw no reason to stay. Jennifer stated that:

Oh, I hated Millbrook, I always wanted to leave, so I knew when I turned 18, or when I got out of school I was going to leave and I wasn't gonna come back and I've never went back. So I think that's why I study so much 'cause I know that if I went home, like, what am I going to do? Like, just sit down all day and watch soaps? Like, I'm not going to do that [laughing] (p. 27).

Likewise, Joanna did not approve of the activities of those who remain in her home community and she complained that there was nothing there for her anymore. Regarding the young women her age who stayed in Smallwoodville, Joanna stated that:

...I don't know, the chicks I knew, like, pregnant and just like, doin' nothin' at home, it just burns me out. And, like, how? I- different strokes for different folks, you know what I mean? Like, some people wanna just live in Smallwoodville [laughs] the rest of their life and, like, marry the local hero. Like, I don't know, it's crazy [laughs]. 'Cause it's like, I can- I can't even fathom being there myself. But, like, lots of girls I know are still there and just workin' part-time at Canadian Tire, havin' boyfriends and goin' to the local pub and gettin' drunk with, like, old men. Like, god. You know what I mean? Just really, really outrageous, like. I just can't imagine (p. 25-26).

In the above quote, Joanna implies that the only opportunity for young women in Smallwoodville is to become the wives of the men who also remain there. Such wives have babies young, work part time at local shops, and drink for entertainment at the local bar with 'old men'. For Joanna - a young woman who told me that she wanted to help make the world better in her own way - such a role was not appealing.

Alicia also discussed a lack of opportunity at home. However, in contrast to Jennifer and Joanna, Alicia articulated coming to university simply as a desire for change because she was 'ready' to leave her home community. She said that:

I was ready to leave and...I don't know. You know, high school was over and you want something to do and, I mean, I'm not super, like, go out all the time, but it was nice to know that you were coming to a place where, you know, Friday night you can do something. Um, so yeah. I don't know, I was ready for it. I wasn't like one of those people who were homesick. I don't, like I said, I don't go home very often (p. 17).

While she did not regularly 'go out' in St. John's, Alicia liked that she could take part in activities not available at home. Given the lack of leisure activities in Cod Town, distance education was not an appealing option for Alicia, who told me that, "...there would have been no reason to stay there. It's not like- I could understand it if I had like a job that was full time or, like, throughout the year" (p. 18). Thus, in addition to the lack of availability of suitable entertainment at home, there was also a lack of desirable full-time work, and this made Alicia feel as though leaving home to study in St. John's after high school would be a good decision.

In a similar manner to Alicia, Cara also spoke of her decision to enroll in university as part of feeling ready to leave home. However, in contrast to Alicia's desire to have different work and entertainment opportunities, Cara seemed to want to be on her own and away from the familiar people and environment of Sawmillville. Cara stated that:

Um, I could have done it [a trade] in Sawmillville, my hometown...but, um, yeah, I wanted to come out here and kind of live on my own and...I didn't know anybody when I got here and I just was excited about that- not knowing anybody or knowing where I was or...(p. 12).

Cara told me that she waited three years after high school graduation before coming to university, and after living with her parents during that time, she felt she was ready to leave home for university. Being excited about not knowing anyone and not knowing where she was implies that Cara was looking forward to new experiences and to being

independent. Thus, for Cara (and Jennifer, Joanna and Alicia), going to university is a very positive development and leaving home was not very difficult.

6.2.3.4. Cutting Ties and Sacrificing Time: Positive Aspects of Home

Not all of the rural women spoke of leaving home in positive terms. The older women spoke of the difficulties of being a university student with a family. For example, while Marguerite's decision to leave her home was partly to escape a stressful life there, her decision was not easy. Marguerite struggled with the perceptions of her friends and family, and she also expressed sadness about the difficulty of leaving her home and family to come to Memorial. When I asked her how it felt to be in St. John's, Marguerite told me that:

Some days, it's just really, really hard and...Last semester I had 3 international roommates and, uh, they would say, well, 'I miss home' and like I told them, you know, 'I miss home. I may be a Newfoundlander, but I'm not from St. John's and all my family is away. I miss them'(p. 17).

Marguerite was the only student I interviewed to articulate a strong sense of missing home, but every woman (except Jennifer, Joanna, Colleen and Elizabeth) expressed sorrow over their belief that they would likely not be able to return to their home communities to work in the future. Regarding this predicament, Marguerite stated that, "You have to do more. And then you do more. You're not going to move back to rural Newfoundland. So you gotta be willing to give up everything" (p. 31). Marguerite said that work opportunities in rural Newfoundland are not enough to survive on. According to Marguerite, "...you have to be willing to cut your ties and leave. This is probably why I didn't return earlier because I couldn't cut my ties. My daughter was too young, like, you know, my family..." (p. 32). Thus, in addition to Marguerite's guilt about having left

home, coupled with her feelings of missing home, is the belief that it will be impossible for her to permanently return.

The two married women I interviewed (Colleen and Elizabeth) commuted to St. John's to attend university. Even though they commuted nearly an hour by car to school a few times a week (and in Colleen's case every day), they both appeared to prefer the commute over leaving their homes. According to Colleen:

I like the outdoor aspects of it and the simplicity of life there. It's quiet, you don't have busy city streets, you didn't- I didn't have to worry about my children. Um, like I probably would in St. John's, um, and I like the quiet, simple life... There's a swimming area there that's actually a waterfall and it's just quite beautiful. It's very relaxing being there (p. 9).

Furthermore, she added:

We- we owned so much property... it's just the privacy factor, um, and the- and the simple way of life, you know, guitar kitchen parties, you know, this kind of thing, very simple, you know, and family... everyone is fairly close by so you- you have the opportunity to actually spend time with your family... (p. 10).

In a similar way to Colleen, Elizabeth also articulated a strong attachment to her home community and to the kind of slow-paced life "on the outskirts", (as she put it) that she was able to lead there (p. 25). The language used by both Colleen and Elizabeth – describing picturesque scenery, quiet and isolated homes in the woods, a slow pace, and the safety of children – evokes images of rurality as a place where kinship ties prevail and communities are "tight-knit" (Little & Austin, 1996). The simple life, while acting as a 'push' force for young rural women, acts as a force that keeps older women with families from leaving.

Colleen spoke of the time constraints and stress she experienced trying to balance all of her multiple duties during the day. Most of Colleen's time is spent on school, work,

family care, and the commute. When I asked Colleen how she felt about her decision to return to university, she stated that:

I'm happy with it. It drives me crazy that I don't have the time to dedicate. Like, I'm always struggling with the time. I don't want my daughter to lose any, but, so I'm the one who's being sacrificed because I have no time for myself. I never have a moment where I do something I enjoy. I'm either working at work, I mean, I enjoy spending time with my family, but it's usually that they need me to be with them, uh, and, you know, and part of that is my time, I suppose, but, you know, it's nice for people to have time to themselves, too. So my commute, that's where I get that time alone, but...[t]here's no soaking in tubs, there's no going to a spa, there's no...and I'm not complaining about that, but it's healthy to have that and when you don't, it does create some, you know, extraordinary stress levels at times (p. 35-36).

Elizabeth did not articulate the same struggles as Colleen, given that she was able to take time away from paid work in the winter with her seasonal tourist business, and she did not have a small child to care for. As we can see from the amount of time Colleen spends on work, school and her family, the irony of going to university 'for me' is that Colleen actually has very little time for herself, and finds herself at times exhausted. The expectations that Colleen's family has about her as care-giver, coupled with paid employment and school make spare time rare for Colleen. Nonetheless, Colleen (and Marguerite also) told me that distance education would actually take up greater time because the women would not have the teacher's lecture and the class to learn from and would have to spend extra time teaching themselves. For rural women with families and full-time work, then, distance education may not be the best post-secondary educational option.

6.2.3.5. Something Just "for Me": Family, Gender and Academic Subject Choice

As previously indicated, the women with families spoke of university as a way to do something for themselves after living for family members. For these women,

economic considerations of subject choice were not so important. According to

Elizabeth:

I just wanna- I wanna make this schooling count for myself that I get something out of it. I don't wanna just sit there and...oh, there's another credit. It's like getting another dollar in your bank account...and I don't wanna do that. That's not why I'm here. I wanna be able to walk out of this with something besides that dollar or that credit or whatever it is. I wanna be able to have the experience...So, I think that's the difference that I've gotten now in my attitude towards education than when I was younger. Before, that- oh, another credit, you know? It's not that for me and that's why when you ask me about graduation, it might be when I'm 56, I don't really care. I don't care about that. The thing is that I wanna make, I wanna be able to speak German when I come out of this, I want to be able to know lots of good music from Folklore, I want to know lots of good literature. I want to be able to enjoy it...(p. 37).

Similarly, Colleen stated that her education, in addition to contributing to her promotion, was not simply about employment. When I asked her what she thought she would do with her education, she told me that:

I guess I'll wait and see what happens when I get there. 'Cause who knows what'll be going on in my life at that time. By the time I'm 55 my parents are going to be that much older. You know, and maybe I'm going to be taking care of them then...and because of Amanda, I can't plan that far ahead. You know, 4 or 5 years away is too far to plan for me. It's, you know, one day at a time, one term at a time. And I love my job so I'm not looking to move, that's not why I'm in university (p. 23).

Likewise, for Marguerite, who experienced economic pressures associated with her need to provide for her daughter as a single parent, it was still important that she do something just for her. When I asked about her experiences of being a student now that she's older, Marguerite said:

I don't have the pressure of- I mean, I do, but- I've been there, I've done my family, I've worked, I kinda, I feel better in my skin now than I ever have. You know? Like, so now it's like, I came to university with the sole purpose of being a Social Worker. Um, I've done the Criminology Certificate because I kind of fell into it. I'm interested in it. I wanted to be a Child Protection Social Worker. Now I think I may like to do, you know, the Corrections. Who knows? 'Cause

my mind changed and now I'm doing a Sociology degree and I'm going to apply to Social Work but I mean, I'm just doing these things because they come up. I have an interest in that, so I can do it. Because even though I'm older, I have all the time in the world. Do you know? You don't, I think I've learned not to push it, like, not to worry about it, stress about it (p. 7).

Thus, for Marguerite, Colleen and Elizabeth, studying for the experience and for themselves means that economic considerations of earning a degree are not of sole importance. There are other factors involved associated with the fact that they are older women who no longer have the urgent priorities of providing and caring for a family. Such non-economic considerations are not accounted for in the White Paper conceptualization of post-secondary education for economic success.

As we shall see in the following section, university as something one does for oneself is not solely common for the older women with families. Young women spoke of university as a way to do something that makes them happy. Such priorities are passed down through the family.

6.2.3.6. University for Happiness: Place, Family and Academic Subject Choice

In addition to its role of the rural place in shaping rural women's enrollment in post-secondary education, the rural place also shapes their academic subject preferences. According to all of the interviewees, happiness was a major priority in terms of deciding what to study in university. Studying something that did not interest them would not make them happy, and they were not willing to sacrifice happiness for an educational pathway they thought would get them a job quickly after graduation. Cara told me that, prior to enrolling in university, she considered a skilled trade. She said:

Actually, I- there's a- a friend of my Mother's who's a- a welder and she...said it was, um, very rewarding...and she really enjoyed it...and it was a great skill to have and the pay was excellent. You didn't have to go to school for very long,

like, you know, you got out there and you were part of the workforce right off the bat. You were guaranteed a job, basically. So, I did consider doing that, but, um, I don't know if I would be that happy. I don't know, I mean, yes, you wouldn't have to worry about money, but, you know... (p. 14).

Thus, doing something that is interesting and that makes one happy is much more important than doing something for its perceived relevance to the job market. It seemed to me that the women were willing to sacrifice money for happiness, as it appears they thought it difficult to have both simultaneously, indicating a gendered non-instrumental approach to post-secondary education (Tett, 2000, p. 189).

The prioritization of what makes one happy, according to some of the women (Joanna, Marguerite, Cara, Julie and Jennifer), was a value passed down by parents. For example, Joanna, who changed from attempting to major in Social Work to majoring in Sociology, stated that:

And everyone I talk to when I'm- when I said that I was going to do Social Work, like, they were really discouraging. Like, not my parents, they were always- and my Mom is always like, 'Do whatever makes you happy', but a lot of people were like, 'Oh, no. I know so many people who did Social Work and they burned out by the time they were 35'" (p. 11).

Similarly, Cara adamantly stated that, while it was important that she eventually be able to get a job with her degree, she wanted to be happy in her job above everything. She told me that one of her goals in life was not to disappoint her family. When I asked her to elaborate on what she thought might do so, she stated that:

...if I didn't follow up on what I really wanted to do. I think more so than making money and, like, being, you know, hard up for money, but being happy. They would be more- they would be more happier if I did that than if I was stuck in a dead end job that I friggin' hated and was, you know, sucking the life out of me (chuckling), they wouldn't be happy with that (p. 28).

As someone who told me that she is extremely close with her family and consults them over all the decisions she makes in her life, Cara did not want to disappoint her parents. Therefore, in her studies and her job, it was important to be happy, as this is a value that her parents taught her.

The prioritizing of happiness was not evident only in my interviews with women without children and those who come from families that are financially stable. Jennifer and Marguerite, who come from families that have struggled financially, reiterated the importance of happiness. When discussing other paths she considered besides a major in folklore, Jennifer stated that:

I like legal things, so...I know you make great money....I think it's more being happy. Yeah, I don't think money...to me, I do work hard, but to me, like, I just want to be happy, I does... What makes me happy is learning [inaudible]. It's not like, buying designer clothes or going on big fancy trips or going out. Like, I, like, I enjoy all that stuff, but I'm happy with just, like, a computer and a word processor and typing (p. 16).

Marguerite also prioritized being happy over material wealth and this involved being 'down to earth'. According to Marguerite, "...[m]y goal eventually is to be a Social Worker and I don't want to think about the elite or anything like that, I just wanted real people, people with everyday issues, you know, like, real life..." (p. 5-6). The importance of being 'down to earth' is what Marguerite learned from her mother, a hard working single parent.

From the above quotes, one gets the sense that each woman's specific definition of what will bring happiness varies. Joanna wants to avoid stress, Jennifer enjoys learning and writing, and Marguerite wishes to give something back to others. However, while recognizing the necessity of money in order to survive, happiness appears to be a

state that is achieved apart from material wealth, and is prioritized above all else in life. In this way, these accounts reflect the rejection of material wealth that is part of pervasive ideas associated with life in 'real Newfoundland' and its stoic rural folk (Overton, 1999). Such cultural values are not accounted for in the White Paper, which conceives of rural places only as geographic and financial barriers to participation.

6.2.3.7. I'm the First: The Significance of Being First-Generation

Three of the women (Julie, Cara and Jennifer) I interviewed were first-generation university students. All three expressed a strong love of learning and a strong love of university. Jennifer, however, who comes from a family of semi-literate parents, explicitly articulated the significance of this for her decision to enroll in university. She stated that being the only one in her family to attend university was a significant reason for the encouragement of her parents. She told me that:

Yeah, I think that, like, I grew up with parents who didn't really know how to read and write so I've been struggling with that for a long time because I didn't have no one to read to me or show me what these words was or all that, so... (p. 17).

Despite her struggles with learning, Jennifer said that she missed university when she went home on holiday, and she experienced great happiness from doing her work and earning good grades. She seemed proud simply of the fact that she was in university and told me that she loved her major, Folklore. For Jennifer, the economic implications of her degree were enough to cause her concern, but were not enough to make her change her mind about her choice. Again, given the economic orientation of the White Paper, such non-economic considerations influencing subject choice are not taken into account. First-generation students who express a love of learning should be encouraged to participate in university in the way that they see fit. However, their struggles with learning likely

cannot be addressed solely through increased sharing of resources, as in the White Paper chapter, 'Strategies for Helping Students'. Real engagement on the part of the government with the learning struggles of first-generation students should be made a priority in order to ease their possible experiences of struggle with learning.

6.3. Conclusion: Embodied versus Abstract Education: The Influence of Gender and Place

This chapter discusses my analysis of interviews with rural women, and highlights ways in which their accounts do not fit with the White Paper's portrayal of post-secondary education as a means of economic success. The interviews show that rural students and women are not homogeneous and distinct groups, as they are represented in the White Paper. Rather, gender intersects with place and other aspects of identity including age, social class, family and marital status to shape the way rural women engage with their liberal arts education. In contrast to the portrayal of rural students in the White Paper, not all of the women I interviewed come from families that struggle financially and none of the women see their post-secondary education solely in economic terms. While some of the women, namely working class young women and older women with families, spoke of their education in terms of upward mobility and unfulfilled potential, economic considerations are just one component of their experience. Moreover, the form these economic considerations take depends upon social class and age, meaning that rural women do not simply choose to enroll in university to maximize their economic potential. Rather, their choices are contingent upon their lives as women (of various ages, classes and family backgrounds) from rural Newfoundland. Other non-economic benefits of post-secondary education include: making parents happy, improving

social status, the intrinsic worth of post-secondary education, a way to assert autonomy, and one of the few opportunities available to women from rural communities (as compared with men).

All of the women said they believed their degrees would not be enough to secure them the kind of work they wanted. This raises the questions: Why do rural women engage in liberal arts degrees? Are they irrational, misguided, or stupid? The answer to both is no. Rather, this thesis finds that the factors contributing to some rural women's choices are not adequately accounted for by the economic and masculinist model of the learner as a rational and autonomous chooser described in the White Paper. Because rural women are so much more than the economically rational and autonomous man implied in the White Paper, they may not simply make the 'right' educational choices with the government's provision of increased financial incentives and outreach programs. This is because many forces are at work in women's educational decision-making, forces that are dependent upon their on-going lives as diverse women from diverse rural communities. This chapter shows that women's decisions about post-secondary education are intelligent ones, informed by their gendered perceptions about their abilities, their interests, age, class, marital status and family. All of these factors are shaped by gendered experiences of life in rural places, as well as gendered experiences and ideologies, which in turn shape women's subject preference. All eight women described the influence of gendered experiences of growing up in rural communities, as well as limited exposure to math and science subjects in rural schools, as shaping their choices. Additionally, rural places pulled and pushed the women, keeping them in place, or acting as a catalyst for leaving, depending on age and family considerations. For older women enrolling in university

'just for me' economic considerations were not the sole educational priority, and for younger women, messages about happiness passed down through the family also meant that economic educational priorities do not always take precedence. For first-generation students, university is an accomplishment in and of itself, making subject choice contingent upon abilities and not economic considerations.

Many of the experiences and priorities of the women I interviewed resemble, in nature and diversity, those expressed by women in other research concerned with the educational decisions of women, rural or otherwise (see above, pp. 73-80). They are not, however, considered in the White Paper. In order for post-secondary education to be truly equitable, policy makers need to take into account the perspectives of all citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador when creating policy directions, and this means engaging with the variations in students' experiences of post-secondary education based on gender and place, in addition to age, marital status, social class and family. Non-economic priorities need to be taken into account in order to devise appropriate strategies to achieve the goals within the White Paper. My interview data point to the possibility that the overall educational purpose in the White Paper – a means to achieve individual economic success - needs to be re-conceptualized. In the following chapter, I outline a number of policy directions that could be implemented based on this research. My policy recommendations account for the embodied and contextual nature of rural Newfoundland women's lives and their experiences of and perspectives on post-secondary education.

CHAPTER 7: Conclusion: Towards an Embodied and Experiential Definition of Post-Secondary Education in Newfoundland and Labrador

7.0. A Brief Overview of the Research

This thesis compares the significance of post-secondary education for a diverse group of rural Newfoundland women enrolled in liberal arts degrees with the provincial government's White Paper on public post-secondary education, *Foundation for Success: White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education*. The purpose of the project is to get a sense of how post-secondary education relates to women's experiences of life in rural Newfoundland, given recent economic changes to these areas as a result of the closure of the cod fishery and the restructuring of rural labour markets. I also explore the fit between rural women's perspectives and experiences and the perspectives and policy recommendations in the White Paper.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, rural women's participation in university appears to be increasing (Kirby & Sharpe, 2008; Porter, 1987), and women continue to be highly represented in the Faculty of Arts at Memorial University of Newfoundland (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005; Hussey, 2007). Despite these trends in women's enrollment, there exists little knowledge on the relationship of rural Newfoundland to the way in which women from such areas engage with post-secondary education. Such a study is important to me because, as an arts student and a woman from rural Newfoundland, I cannot accept the widespread public belief that liberal arts education is worthless in the 'new' global economy, and I disagree with those who would blame students for not being able to find jobs on the basis of their educational choices. However, despite evidence dispelling the myth that liberal arts graduates have difficulty

finding jobs and earning equal salary to their vocationally-oriented counterparts (see Adamuti-Trache, Hawkey, Schuetze, & Glickman, 2006; Anisef, Axelrod, & Lin, 2001; Walters, 2004), the public view still persists that a liberal arts education is worthless, and even silly (see, for example, Fulford, 2007). How do other rural Newfoundland women see their post-secondary education? Do they experience conflicting pressures (as I did) when deciding what to do with their post-secondary education? This study is a way for me to fill some of the gap in knowledge on rural women and education, and a way for me to use research and my experiences to critique dominant views about post-secondary education.

The timing was appropriate for a study such as this one, given that just around the time I commenced my Master's degree the Progressive Conservative provincial government committed itself to changing the post-secondary educational system in the province. How does the government see the significance of post-secondary education in Newfoundland and Labrador? How does the government aim to change the system of post-secondary education on the island? Do the views and strategies evident in the White Paper align with those of rural women studying liberal arts subjects at Memorial? Based on reflections upon my own educational and work experiences, for my Master's thesis I decided to explore the fit between rural women's perspectives and experiences of a liberal arts degree with the strategies and ideologies in the White Paper.

I recruited a total of eight rural women from the island of Newfoundland to participate in semi-structured interviews regarding their educational decision-making. In addition to these interviews, I analyzed the Provincial White Paper on public post-secondary education, *Foundation for Success: White Paper on Public Post-Secondary*

Education (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005). I used insights from Dorothy E. Smith (1987, 1990a, 1990b, 2005) and her colleagues (Ng, 1995) to inform my qualitative textual analysis of the White Paper, as well as Smith's standpoint theory, in addition to social constructionist theories of gender and place (Little, 1997; Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999; Whatmore, 1991; Whatmore, Marsden, & Lowe, 1994) to analyze the White Paper and my interviews.

7.1. A Brief Summary of the Research Findings

My analysis of the White Paper revealed that its content is shaped by neoliberal ideology and human capital theory. I found five main themes in the White Paper, all consistent with this ideology: 1) that post-secondary education is an unproblematic good; 2) that the benefits of post-secondary education derive from the economic opportunities it provides to individuals and by extension the province, and subjects that are most directly relevant to the economy are the best way to achieve the benefits of post-secondary education; 3) that governments should advocate the increased participation of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in education for economic success, especially non-traditional groups – including women and rural students – who are in need of greater encouragement to participate in post-secondary education generally and in directly marketable programs, such as science, technology and engineering; 4) that a business model is the best way to achieve goals; and 5) that the practice of themes one to four described above will eliminate gender based and regionally based income disparities and increase the economic potential of the province.

In a similar manner to the White Paper, all the women I interviewed spoke of their education in positive terms - as 'good' - and most linked their education in some way to

their careers, future work, and the economy. However, these themes were only part of the women's accounts of their educational decision-making. In contrast to the White Paper, non-economic themes were prominent in the women's discussions of the benefits of their education. Some of these themes one would likely hear from women – and indeed men – from places other than rural Newfoundland: that they enrolled in university to make their parents happy; that university enrollment was “normal” and expected of them; that it was something they did to enhance their personal happiness (“for me”). Other themes reflected directly the women's rural experience however: there were fewer opportunities in rural areas for women than for men; there was little for women to do in rural areas but to go away to school; university enrollment represented an important marker of status for women with illiterate parents (in the case of Jennifer), or those who were the first in the family to attend university. Of course, university attendance can serve as a status marker for others as well, but it might be more representative of rural than urban families.

Similarly, some of the reasons these women gave for choosing to pursue a degree in the liberal arts could be associated with women and men from elsewhere: they found math and science “too hard”; and they wished only to study a subject that was interesting to them, regardless of its future economic potential. But the rural experience was evident in some of my interviews with the women who stated that: the math and science curricula in their community schools did not prepare them adequately for university-level study of these subjects; getting out of what they perceived as a stifling environment in their small towns mattered more to them than what they studied; the gendered social environments in which they grew up pushed or forced them in the direction of the “caring” (traditionally female) fields; and that, as the first to attend university in the family, university

attendance was more important than the subject studied. This last theme may not be confined to the rural experience, but may be common among first generation students more generally.

Further research is required to understand the post-secondary educational experiences of rural women as distinct from those of rural men, and urban men and women. Overall, however, the present research suggests that if education policy makers truly wish to encourage rural women in Newfoundland to pursue post-secondary education, then they need to acknowledge the influence of not only economic but *non-economic* social forces that impact the educational decision-making of students (and possibly of rural women in particular. Such forces include ideologies about gender and place, as well as gendered social relations, that push and pull women away from, and into, post-secondary education and specific subjects of study. Provincial education policy must be developed to address these forces. Thus, I end my study with some tentative suggestions for future policy.

7.2. Policy implications

In suggesting that government education policy should consider and incorporate responses to non-economic factors influencing rural women's participation in post-secondary education, I do not wish to diminish the importance of *economic* incentives to this end. Tuition freezes, debt reduction and improved access to student loans should be part of any government policy designed to improve rural women's access to education. However, my research shows that financial considerations are only *one of many factors* that shape the education decisions of rural women in Newfoundland. Education policy should better reflect this complexity.

Most of the women I interviewed were subject to and recognized the gendered expectations of family members and others in their communities, and many struggled with the animosity, pressures, guilt and time constraints that can accompany such expectations. Explicit recognition of what may be a gendered social environment in rural areas could be a first step in helping to overcome some of the barriers preventing women – and men – from these areas from continuing their education and/or pursuing certain kinds of post-secondary studies. Such recognition is important if government wishes to promote non-traditional fields of study among rural women and men, as it acknowledges that change requires more than simply enhancing rural Newfoundlanders' access to formal education. It also demands engaging with community initiatives, providing non-traditional gender models to rural students, and encouraging family participation in these initiatives in order to address students' experience with more traditional family patterns in rural areas. With respect to rural women in particular, government would be well advised to take up the considerable literature on women, math and science and the way women experience male-dominated subjects, including math, when formulating their education policy responses. Clearly, government officials need to be concerned with the delivery of math and science in *local* schools, at early levels of education, and particularly in rural areas. My interviews reveal that early experiences of schooling in math and science strongly influenced the women's lack of preference for these subjects.

If government officials wish rural students to enroll and stay in university, they need to pay more attention to promotion and retention issues and be sensitive to the connections with place characteristic of rural students. The White Paper says that retention issues are not the concern of the province, and that these are the responsibility of

Memorial University (see Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2005, p. 32), but the government can support this work by funding more distance or outreach programs that allow students to stay in or near their communities to study and also by providing research and funding toward university-based student support programs that address specifically rural students' experiences in post-secondary education with the aim of better integrating them into the post-secondary educational environment. Alternatively, the government could provide access to funding for students attending university to travel home more often, or expand the university system within the province so that rural women seeking a degree will not have to relocate. Interestingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, it is the older women and women with families that are most affected by leaving their rural communities to attend school. Thus, it appears more than a matter of homesickness expressed by young students living away from their families and communities for the first time; older women too, who have made a life for themselves and their children in rural areas, feel the "pull" of home. Their needs and concerns are different from younger women's and so, necessarily, should be the response. My analysis suggests that more research must be done to shed light on the supports needed for young rural women and older rural women with families who must live away from home while attending university.

Overall, my data highlight the necessity of re-evaluating the purpose of post-secondary education as presented in the White Paper, and the model of the individual upon which it is based, to account for the many non-economic, social benefits of post-secondary education evident in my interviews with rural Newfoundland women. This thesis shows that rural women's educational decision-making is embodied and contextual,

contingent upon gender and place, and varying with age, marital status, family and social class. Thus, the significance of post-secondary education for such women is multiple and varied. Instead of assuming a direct link between education and employment, and that economic considerations are the most important for individuals and the province, it is necessary to acknowledge the multiple ways in which post-secondary education, particularly in liberal arts disciplines, is significant for *students themselves* in ways not directly related to economic success. In the words of Albert Einstein (in Golfman, 2007), “...not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts” (para. 1). Thus, the provincial government’s prioritization of science and technology, while possibly enabling the “delivery of marketable products” (Golfman, 2007, para. 1), will not create the economically successful province imagined in the White Paper. This is the case because, as this research shows, some students will not choose to follow science and technology educational pathways. Moreover, as Golfman suggests (2007), questions about the society in which we want to live cannot be answered alone through developments in science and technology. Rather, *social* issues including income redistribution (among many others) need “...innovative, creative solutions that will come from the development of human competence and imagination” (Golfman, 2007, para. 7). Liberal arts disciplines, including the social sciences and humanities, address such social issues, create such human competence and imagination, and therefore must be made a priority in provincial education policy.

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APPENDIX A: Programs Excluded from the Study

Applied ethics
Aboriginal Studies
Canadian Studies
Communications Studies
Creative Writing
Drama and Music
English as a Second Language
European Studies
Film Studies
Geographic Information Sciences
Heritage Resources
Law and Society
Newfoundland Studies
Performance and Communications Media
Police Studies
Professional Writing
Russian Studies
Women's Studies
Humanities
Medieval Studies

APPENDIX B: Initial Sample of Class Presentations

ANTH 3409 War, Violence and Society

ANTH 3064 Anthropology and the Study of Social Problems

CLAS 3070 Theme and Genre in Greek and Roman Poetry

CLAS 3310 Greek Tragedy

ECON 3550 Mathematical Economics I

ECON 3000 Intermediate Micro Theory I

ENGL 3901 Introduction to Creative Writing: Poetry

ENGL 3819 Gothic Fiction

FOLK 3100 Folktale

FOLK 3950 Women and Traditional Culture

FREN 3503 Study of Theme

FREN 3101 Stylistics and Textual Analysis

GEOG 3140 Biogeography

GEOG 3610 Cultural Landscape

GERM 3000 German Film I

GERM 3010 Advanced German I

HIST 3110 History of Newfoundland to 1815

HIST 3490 History of Ireland Since the Great Famine

LING 3000 Morphological Analysis

LING 2301 Generative Phonology

PHIL 3800 Descartes

PHIL 3730 Plato

POSC 3791 Newfoundland Corrections: Policy and Practice

POSC 3430 Latin American Politics

PSYCH 3900 Design and Analysis III

PSYCH 3100 Social Psychology

RELS 3811 Contemporary Alternative Spirituality

RELS 3650 Religion and Social Justice

SOCI 3150 Classical Social Theory

SOCI 3395 Deviance

APPENDIX C: Email to Professors

Hello,

My name is Monique Bourgeois and I am a Master's student in the Sociology Department at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I am currently working on my thesis under the supervision of Dr. Karen Stanbridge and Dr. Linda Cullum.

I am writing to request permission to make a five minute presentation at the end of your class (*insert class title, time slot, course number*) at your convenience for the purposes of recruiting interview participants for my thesis project.

My study will focus on ideas about the value of post-secondary education in Newfoundland and Labrador. Specifically, I will explore the reasons given by women from rural Newfoundland and Labrador for enrolling in MUN's Faculty of Arts, and the significance of these decisions for their lives. Interviews conducted with rural women will be compared with ideas present in the Provincial Government's White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education. Through this research I hope to learn more about how and why women from rural Newfoundland and Labrador come to university and the role that culture plays in such decisions.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Memorial University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research. If you are interested in allowing me to recruit participants for my study through your class, or if you would like additional information, please contact me using this email address or by telephone at (709) 753-8076 and I will be in touch with you. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Monique Bourgeois

APPENDIX D: In-class Presentation

Hello,

My name is Monique Bourgeois and I am a Master's student in the Sociology Department here at MUN. I am currently working on my thesis, which focuses on ideas about the value of post-secondary education in Newfoundland and Labrador according to rural women and the Provincial Government. I'm here today looking for volunteers to participate in the interview part of my project. I'm specifically looking for women who come from any communities on the island portion of the province that are outside Corner Brook, St. John's, Mount Pearl, CBS, Paradise, Portugal Cove-St. Phillips, and Torbay. *So if you're a woman who's not from one of these areas you're eligible.* In addition, volunteers must be majoring in one of the departments located in the Faculty of Arts. *I thought about asking people to raise their hands, but I don't want to put people on the spot so I'll ask that you distribute these sheets among yourselves while I tell you a bit about the project.*

If you volunteer as a participant in this study, you will be asked to take part in a tape recorded confidential interview with me that will focus on your feelings, experiences, ideas about and goals for post-secondary education, and your observations of others in this regard. The session should take approximately 1 hour of your time.

The purpose of the interviews is to find out more about how and why women from rural Newfoundland and Labrador come to university, and the significance of these decisions for their lives. I will compare data collected through the interviews with ideas present in the Provincial Government's White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Memorial University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research. However, the final decision about participation is yours.

If you are a woman from rural Newfoundland enrolled in the Faculty of Arts and you are interested in participating in the interview, please fill out the contact sheet provided. *Even if you don't fill out the sheet, please return it to me on your way out of the class (or I can collect them myself).* You can fold them over if you wish. Under no circumstances will your contact information be shared with anyone. Additionally, your professor will not be informed of who did or did not participate in the project and participation will not have an influence on course grading.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time. Thank you for your time and consideration.

APPENDIX E: Contact Card

<u>Name</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Email</u>	<u>Phone</u>
_____	_____	_____	_____

Best Days/Times

APPENDIX F: Interview Consent Form

Valuing Post-Secondary Education in Newfoundland: A Comparative Study of Rural Women Studying in MUN's Faculty of Arts and the Provincial Government's White Paper

This project is about the role of post-secondary education in the lives of women from rural Newfoundland and Labrador. It focuses on the experiences, ideas and feelings expressed by these women in relation to post-secondary education, their reasons for enrolling in the Faculty of Arts at Memorial University, and the significance of this decision for their lives. The project will involve a comparison of the ideas of rural women with ideas present in the Provincial Government's White Paper on Public Post-Secondary Education. The confidential interview I give will be transcribed and used only by Monique Bourgeois for her Master's thesis research and possibly for future research, conference presentations and publication. All tapes and transcripts of the confidential interview will be safely and securely stored in a locked cabinet in the home of Monique Bourgeois.

_____ I understand that my personal confidential interview will be audio taped by Monique Bourgeois.

_____ I agree to alter my name and the name of my home community to provide anonymity.

_____ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am not obligated to answer any questions during the interview.

_____ I understand that I may withdraw from the research at any time during the course of the project up to three months after the interview has taken place. I will contact Monique Bourgeois if I wish to withdraw from the research.

I HEREBY GIVE MY CONSENT UNDER THE CONDITIONS LISTED ABOVE.

PARTICIPANT _____ DATE _____

RESEARCHER _____ DATE _____

RESEARCHER: *Monique Bourgeois* PHONE: (709)753-8076
ADDRESS: *48 Prescott St., St. John's, NL A1C 3S6 OR Sociology Department,
Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL A1C 5S7*

This project has been approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) of Memorial University of Newfoundland. If you have concerns about the research, the way in which you have been treated, or your rights as a

participant, and wish to discuss them with someone other than Monique Bourgeois, please contact: Chairperson, ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 737-8368.

APPENDIX G: Interview Discussion Guide

Introductory Discussion

This is a study of post-secondary education, of what an Arts degree means to women from rural areas of the Province in relation to Provincial Government's ideas about the value of post-secondary education. I'm asking women to tell me about their experiences of coming to university, its importance, and about the pleasures and difficulties of such experiences. There are no right or wrong answers to any of my questions; rather, I'm just interested in learning your experiences, and about what you believe and how these beliefs were formulated. Please answer questions with as much detail as possible.

1. Background

- a) I'd like to start off the interview by learning a little about you and where you're from. Can you tell me about where you grew up?
- b) What was it like growing up there? What's it like now?
- c) What were your living arrangements while living there?
- d) What is your family like?
- e) What do/did your parents do?
- f) What formal education do family members have?
- g) Do you have siblings? Where are they now?
- h) Do you have a spouse/children? What do they do? Where are they?
- i) How would you describe your childhood/growing up? What kinds of things did you do?
- j) What previous education have you had?
- k) How would you describe yourself as a student back then?
- l) What did you like about those experiences?
- m) What did you dislike about those experiences?
- n) What subjects did you prefer studying, if any? Please discuss.

2. Educational Decision-Making:

- a) I'd like to know more about your experiences of the process of deciding to come to university and to your program. Please tell me about how you came to be a student in (insert Faculty/Department) at MUN.
- b) At what time did you start thinking about coming to university? How did it happen that you began to consider university as an option?
- c) How did you learn about university?
- d) Who did/do you talk to?
- e) Did you consider other options besides university? If so, why was university chosen as opposed to something else? Ask about distance education, in particular.
- f) How did you feel about coming to university then?
- g) At what time did you start thinking about what to study at university?

- h) How did you learn about your program?
- i) Who did/do you talk to?
- j) Did you consider other options besides your program? If so, why did you choose this particular program as opposed to something else?
- k) Have your educational plans changed over time?

3. Current Experiences/Opinions of Post-secondary Education:

- a) I'm interested in learning about your experiences of and attitudes toward post-secondary education. Can you tell me a little about what you're currently studying?
- b) How are you finding university/your program/St. John's so far?
- c) How is your education funded?
- d) What is your understanding of what your program is about? What classes are you taking/have you taken?
- e) How much time do you have left?
- f) Can you tell me about some things you like about your program (university)?
- g) Can you tell me about things about your program/university that are challenging? Probe: Is it worth it?
- h) Have you had experiences with services provided by student services?
- i) Have you ever thought about switching post-secondary institutions (degree programs)? Discuss.
- j) Do you enjoy university (your degree program)?
- k) How did/do you know it's what you want to do?
- l) Do you think that university (your program of study) is important? How?
- m) What keeps you in university (your degree program)?
- n) Do you feel your choice to come to university (of degree program) is a good one?
- o) What do your friends (family) think about your decision to come to university (of degree program)?
- p) What are friends from home/friends here doing?
- q) Are you satisfied with your choice to enroll in university (of degree program)?
- r) Are you concerned about graduation?
- s) Have you heard of (read) the Provincial Government's White Paper on Post-Secondary Education? What is your reaction to this document?

4. Plans for Future

- a) What do you plan to do after graduation?
- b) What has influenced or shaped these plans for after graduation?
- c) Do you plan to return to university or other post-secondary institution in the future?
- d) Do you think you'll have to? Do you think it's a good idea?
- e) What do you want in life?
- f) Is there anything else you'd like to talk about that I may have left out?

