

A SENSE OF THEMSELVES: LEADERSHIP, COMMUNICATIVE LEARNING, AND GOVERNMENT POLICY IN THE SERVICE OF COMMUNITY RENEWAL¹

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Abstract

This paper is about communication for community renewal—its scope and content, the manner in which it takes place, the role of leaders as catalysts for dialogue, and the effect of government intervention on its efficacy. Two case studies, separated by time and location, provide empirical contexts in which the author links assumptions and practices of Canada's rural past to contemporary problems experienced in coastal communities. An experiment in emancipatory rural development at mid-century, supported by adult educators employed by the provincial government of Nova Scotia, offers to present day communities-in-crisis lessons in school and community solidarity, gender representation, and communication that includes artistic as well as discursive forms of expression.

Résumé

Cet article traite du dialogue pour le renouveau communautaire, de son étendue et de son contenu, de la manière par laquelle il est engagé, du rôle des dirigeants comme catalyseurs de ce dialogue et de l'influence qu'exerce l'intervention gouvernementale sur son efficacité. Deux études de cas, menées en des temps et des lieux différents, fournissent des contextes empiriques qui permettent aux auteurs de faire le lien entre les croyances et les pratiques du Canada rural d'antan et les problèmes que connaissent les collectivités côtières d'aujourd'hui. Une expérience de développement rural émancipateur, menée au milieu du siècle [dernier] et dirigée par des formateurs d'adultes au service du gouvernement provincial de la Nouvelle-Écosse, offre aux collectivités en crise d'aujourd'hui des leçons sur le plan de la solidarité scolaire et communautaire, de la représentation des sexes et de la communication sous des formes d'expression liées à l'art aussi bien qu'au discours.

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Adult educators [were] to help people gain the information they needed for the purposes that they themselves had identified. The hope was that each person could develop a stronger ability to think and act with others, to exchange ideas and information, and to build a deeper sense of community. (Harris, 1998a, p. 151)

Introduction

A rhetoric of consensus, team-building, partnership and communication(s) flourishes today. At the same time, global societies drift inexorably towards what Max Weber (1978) described in critical terms as technically rational solutions to age-old problems. While Weber applied the concept of technological rationality in many different contexts, I am concerned here with its application to problems of community renewal in which decisions about education are made far from the site of their application. In this rationalized scenario, there is a paucity of communicative action whereby people define their needs and implement their plans together. I consider here the scope and content of communication for community renewal, the manner in which it takes place, the role of leaders as catalysts for dialogue, and the effect of government intervention on its efficacy. Two case studies—one, an educational life-history of Elizabeth Murray, and the second a study of educational restructuring in the coastal community of Devon Harbour—provide empirical contexts in which assumptions and practices of Canada's rural past speak to problems experienced today in Atlantic Canada.

The passage above, from case study no. 1, paraphrases a major objective of Guy Henson, who in 1945 designed and later directed the Division of Adult Education for the Nova Scotia government. In 1946, Elizabeth (Betty) Murray became the Division's first field representative. Her task was to work at the grassroots of community renewal in the Annapolis Valley and to report back to her colleagues at head office the approaches that worked and those that were less successful. The ability of Murray and her colleagues over the ensuing two decades to bring people to an ever-deepening awareness of their social and historical location—largely through innovative forums of communication—led me to title my recent book about their work *A Sense of Themselves*. The sentiment is also found in the second case study as a contemporary Newfoundland educator describes the motivation behind a community's fight for its very survival: "There remains a strong will to survive, not in Toronto or even in St. John's, but in the community in which the people had chosen to live and work, where they own their own homes

and have a sense of themselves, their culture and values" (Marsden, 1998, p. 34).

This sense of rural identity signifies two premises that underlie this paper. The first is that the most positive forms of change take place as people learn more about their social, economic, and political situations, identify and discuss issues with one another, and explore problems and solutions through various forms of expression. Leadership for informed social change, as Foster (1989) posits, does "not so much create a new idiosyncratic universe" as open doors along existing "corridors of belief" (p. 42). A second premise concerns the important use of history to reveal the circularity of human effort. It is all too easy, especially in an a-historical age dominated by science and technology, to disregard the successes that people in the past have realized in easing social problems (Briton, 1996; Popkewitz, 1991; Welton, 1995). The past holds essential lessons for leaders who confront present issues and, with responsibility, prepare for future generations. Leaders who remain oblivious to history become vulnerable to the dominant forces of their age, that is, to the TINA syndrome which holds "there is no alternative" to present-day constructions of reality.

Purposes and Questions

My own interest lies in the kind of leadership, communication, and government policy that fosters communicative learning [also called transformative (Mezirow, 1991), critical (Greene, 1992), and/or emancipatory (Foster, 1989)] for children and adults alike. My purpose, therefore, is to advance practices of such learning, and to do so in an interdisciplinary manner using the discourse of adult education and leadership studies (formerly known as educational administration) to bridge at least partially the gap between the "marginalized spaces" of school and community interests (Welton, 1995, pp. 127-129). By communicative learning, I mean the process whereby people come to understand more fully their particular social, cultural, economic, and political situations *and are thus* able to effect greater control over their own affairs. It involves people, as Merizow (1995) contends, in "identifying problematic ideas, values, beliefs and feelings, critically examining the assumptions upon which they are based, testing their justification through rational discourse and making decisions predicated upon the resulting consensus" (p. 58). Finally, it incorporates what Mills (1958) called the "sociological imagination" whereby people learn to distinguish between everyday personal problems and larger societal issues.

Taylor (2000) points out, however, that theories of emancipatory learning far outstrip detailed discussion of actual cases. The cases presented here provide an antidote to the general trend by exploring points of convergence and divergence between the past and present and, in the process, discussing the emancipatory potential of school and community interaction. Questions common to both cases surround the values evident in, and skills facilitating, action; relationships forged between schools and their communities; leadership conducive to establishing a “sense of self”; and the impact of government policies in the ongoing saga of rural renewal. Although there are many differences in the two contexts, themes of economic peril, community cohesion, social self-determination, and cultural expression connect the two stories. The leadership described in the first case, and proposed in the second, takes place at the grass-roots of community action, that is, where the people—at times aided by government policy and action—express their own interests, identify problems, and formulate solutions.

Research Approach

All researchers, but especially qualitative researchers who interact constantly with participants, bring to each new investigation essential traces of past work. I bring to my current study of Newfoundland coastal communities findings from the earlier Nova Scotian life-history of Betty Murray and her associates (Harris, 1998a) that influence my assumptions, questions, and general approach. While there are overlaps in the design of both cases—for example, both may be considered descriptive and interpretive case studies—details of approach differ.

The Murray study, involving ethnography and historical review, was conducted between 1992 and 1997. In order to document Betty’s leadership-in-action, I lived for three summers in her home at Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia. Here, in retirement, she wrote and produced a series of 16 plays-with-music about village history. In addition to my involvement as a participant-observer in the plays, I conversed both formally and informally with Betty, and interviewed more than 90 people across the province who had worked or studied with her in school and community projects. For records of Murray’s early work and the times in which she lived, I also conducted extensive archival searches. The story of a single woman educator, in this study, illuminates issues of rural education across a time-span of more than fifty years.

The contemporary story, as part of a larger study of educational restructuring, comes from data gathered during six week-long field visits to

the relatively isolated coastal community of Devon Harbour, Newfoundland. (Pseudonyms are used for people and places of the second case study.) This community, once a centre of industry with a vibrant fishing fleet and a year-round processing plant, now struggles to survive the decline of the fishery, the cod moratorium of 1992, and the closure of the fish processing plant. I selected this particular site for study when I learned that the people had purchased the fish plant from its former owner for one dollar, renovated it, and now were attempting to generate new forms of employment.

At Devon Harbour's all-grade school, I ask the staff and students how recent restructuring of programs and curricula affect them; and I ask community members, who are rightly proud of their forward-looking plans, to share their stories of success and disappointment. Once again, I am a participant-observer, but now I spend my time in the school staffroom, teaching classes from pre-school to grade 6 in my area of expertise (music) and, in the town, meeting with community leaders and with other women and men affected by the downturn in the fishery. My questions, for school personnel and community members alike, concern structural and social changes that have taken place in the last five years and the nature of their own efforts to accommodate, or resist, these changes.

To provide a context-of-possibility for the contemporary Newfoundland scene, I turn to the neighbouring province of Nova Scotia and the mid-century story of Betty Murray's early career as a teacher, community *animateur*, and adult educator. In her interweaving of school and community learning, we see a kind of "distributed leadership" (Gronn, 2002) in which people of varying social, economic, and educational levels take part in the conversation about their future.

Murray's Story—The Past

Betty Murray, in her first three years as a beginning teacher (1942-1944), established a reputation among school inspectors and Normal School instructors as a highly innovative rural educator, not only with her students but also with the adults of her school community. Three of her projects, for example, involved adults in weekly visits to the school library, the "beautification" of grounds (see Norman, 1989), and in painting the school. On the promise of such interests and activities, her assignment in 1945 with Professor Mortimer Marshall of Acadia University's Education Department, and a year later with the province's Division of Adult Education directed by Guy Henson, was to circulate among the rural communities adjacent to the University, ascertain people's interests in various kinds of study, and place

each education student in an appropriate study group where he or she could assume some position of leadership and, generally, supply the people with the information they required. The history student would join a community group interested in history, the home economics student would take part in a local branch of the Women's Institute, and so on. The idea, first articulated in Nova Scotia by Professor Marshall, was that teachers, to be effective in their teaching of children, must have first-hand knowledge of the social and economic conditions of their school communities. Betty Murray herself, following her own particular interest, established a different choral group for each night of the week, that is, in seven Annapolis Valley communities. In addition to her work with adults, she started two choirs for children and another for mothers and daughters. In all of this, as stated above, she was to report back to her colleagues in the Division.

The Folkschools

Apart from her work in the Annapolis Valley, Betty and a team of teachers drawn from both the Adult Education Division and the Department of Health and Recreation in the late 1940s and early 1950s conducted annually first one, and then four, residential folkschools for rural people. These folkschools, based on successful Danish experiments in community learning, involved farmers, fishermen, housewives and teachers in an intensive fortnight of study, group discussion, drama, music, dance, and other forms of physical activity. As the folkschool's format contained many features of emancipatory learning and leadership central to this paper, I include a detailed description of a typical day:

The year is 1950. Sixty-one men and women have gathered for two weeks to attend the third annual Hants County Folkschool at the Kennetcook Hotel. Each day, they meet for breakfast at 7:15 so they can be on time for the first study group. At 8:00 sharp on this Thursday, the fourth day of the school, everyone is on hand to hear Charlie Douglas and Peter Hamilton from the Department of Agriculture speak about farming issues. When Charlie and Peter have made their points, residents break into groups of five or six to discuss how these issues are handled in their respective communities. From 9:00 to 9:30, Betty Murray leads a general sing-along, using some familiar rounds, folk, and action songs and a few others, new to everybody, from the song sheet *Nova Scotia Sings*. Betty calls on some of the participants to practise their conducting skills. Several are too shy at first but her urging—Sure, you can do it!—propels them to try, and then it does not seem so bad. On then, to another

study session; this time to listen to a guest speaker from Antigonish talk about the history and purpose of credit unions in Nova Scotia. Then, in the hour remaining before lunch, Don Wetmore and Elizabeth "Buzzy" Douglas work with everyone on voice production and other presentation skills that will be needed for the skits that each small group will have to prepare for the evening sessions.

Lunch is at 12:00 sharp, and is followed by a reading period. Then, the day's last study session starts at 2:00. There, participants talk about the possible application of credit unions in their own communities. Those who already have a credit union in their area analyse its successes or discuss any problem it may have. Betty, Don, Buzzy and the three fitness instructors on hand—Freda Wales, Dorothy Walker and Maurice Hennigar—make themselves available to any group that has a question. From 3:30 until suppertime, half the participants go outdoors for a skiing lesson with Freda, while the others learn community dancing with Dorothy and Maurice. A team of participants (three men and one woman) take charge of the evening, dramatizing a small-village crisis involving a merchant, two farmers, and a school teacher. The skit leads to a heated discussion about the teacher's responsibility to the parents of her students. Around 10:00, the presenters end the evening with a rousing sea chanty, taking turns dramatizing the verses while their audience joins in the chorus. With much laughter, the folkschools residents head back to their rooms (Harris, 1998a, pp. 64, 65).

The idea behind the folkschools was—and is today in the Philippines, Denmark, and elsewhere (CFPI, 1995)—to develop the leadership potential of people who might otherwise rely on directions from central planners rather than act upon their own environments. Folkschool leaders and participants alike were amazed at the personal growth that took place over the brief period of each school. Canon Russell Elliott, a clergyman who later extended the folkschool idea to the training of young Anglican priests for their rural parishes, told me that

these farmers, many of whom had very little education, were too shy to talk and certainly could hardly speak to a woman. By the end of two weeks, they would put on a stage event and they were just as comfortable and at home on that stage as they would be in their own kitchens.

In many cases the changes, started in this brief fortnight, seemed to endure a lifetime. As Betty remarked some fifty years later, "It's interesting the way these familiar faces keep popping up today wherever a community issue arises."

An analysis of the folkschool day reveals several key principles and practices adhered to by Betty and her fellow adult educators. First, residents followed an intensive program, beginning in the early morning and ending well into the evening, with little free time. Although certain days (the example above not being one) involved reading periods, most activities were social. Next, the program introduced an integrated regime of study, discussion, arts activity, and physical exercise. In this, there was a conscious intention of “getting at the whole person” through developing the skills of public speaking, acting, singing, moving (as in games and country dances), and of thinking on one’s feet (Timmons, 1993). Another essential feature of the folkschool was small group discussion where five or six people would gather in a non-threatening setting to share with others their hopes and fears, and experiences and ideas. Perhaps a more unusual feature for the mid-century era was that all instructors—and even guest speakers—were addressed by their first names. This practice demonstrates an obvious attempt to break down any hierarchical barriers that might exist between instructors and residents, just as the adult educators and resident teachers, in their outreach to schools later, did what they could to eliminate divisions of status between teachers and parents. Finally, our example shows an equitable division of labour between men and women educators and participants. While the two speakers for the day were men, four of the educators were women and two were men. When one considers the particular era, this inclusion of women in leadership positions can be considered extremely far-sighted; it certainly had a profound affect on many young women of the time (Harris, 1998a, p. 148).

Donald F. Maclean, who served as Secretary to the Division from 1954 to 1957, pointed out that the folkschool emphasis on the development of individual competencies in a social or community context was consistent with the ideal of “educating people, not merely training them.” In following the Danish model, the Division placed great importance on helping people, through the study of history, local economic and social problems, and the arts, to gain “a sense of identity, or worth, and of motivation.”

Community Arts Schools

To further emphasize the artistic aspect of leadership, Betty Murray and the Drama Supervisor, Donald Wetmore, introduced in 1948 the first School of Community Arts. This provincial School, held for ten days each August until the late 1960s, grew to include programs in the visual arts and dance and, at their height, saw registrations of just under two hundred. All programs of this School emphasized “community” arts, that is, artistic performance at an

amateur level. Yet no effort was spared by organizers to bring in the very best instructors possible from other Canadian provinces and even from Europe. Again, the objective was to develop leaders who could, with confidence, enrich their communities; in this case, however, the enrichment was through artistic participation and expression.

The encouragement of leadership through arts education was not confined to adults and, in the late 1950s, the Federation of Home and School Associations organized a Junior School of the Arts in Nova Scotia to at least partially meet the needs of its youth. At that time, the public schools were poorly served in the arts. In music, for instance, volunteer teachers and government representatives (including Betty Murray) formed provincial committees to develop music curricula, yet very few teachers in the schools—apart from those receiving instruction at the School of Community Arts—were able to deliver instruction effectively. And while the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation offered excellent radio programs in school music, teachers in many situations felt unprepared to lead children in such musical skills as sight-reading, in-tune singing, and games and movement. Leaders of the Junior School, therefore, were able to inspire a core of privileged children in the arts. I define “privilege” here in the usual sense, as social and economic advantage. It applies, as well, to children who were sponsored by volunteer groups such as local Home and School Associations and regional Music Festivals. As with the folkschools and the School of Community Arts, the objective of Junior School organizers was to develop individual competencies and community leadership. These schools—the folkschool, the School of Community Arts, and the Junior School of the Arts—are but three examples of many projects instigated and carried out successfully by Betty Murray and by her co-workers in schools, in government, and in volunteer community organizations.

Assumptions of Democratic Learning

Three motivating beliefs or assumptions, shared and acted upon by Murray and her co-workers in adult education, shed light on the links they saw between open forums of communication and educational leadership. The first concerns the concept of democratic participation by a well-informed citizenry, capable of placing the political claims of the day in a broad perspective. The basic idea behind lifelong learning, in this case, was that education does not end with school graduation but resumes whenever a personal or social need is felt. The role of adult educators and teachers, therefore, was to help people gain the information they needed for the purposes that they themselves identified.

The next assumption concerns the leadership role of teachers in their school communities. Teaching was not an activity that took place during school hours alone; it required, rather, knowledge of the social and economic conditions of the area—not only its major industries and professions, but also the ongoing concerns of blue-collar workers. To teach children without taking the context of their families and social milieu into consideration was recognized as a mission doomed to failure.

The third assumption directly concerns the purpose and form of leading. As applied to community development, this meant facilitating programs designed by the people themselves, through their own organizations, to meet their own economic, social, and cultural needs. The unusual aspect of the Nova Scotian approach—for those like Guy Henson and field workers who had little previous arts experience, as well as for Murray—was that the arts were considered fundamental to the identification and expression of problems, and as venues for their solution. While these educators did not consider every person to be a leader, they noted that those who showed potential leadership ability benefited from intensive experiences in communal living and exposure to the expressive arts. In residential folkschools and in short courses, men and women reflected on community issues and, at the same time, refined their skills of reading, listening, speaking, acting, moving (as in dances and games) and singing. These “how tos,” along with skills needed for conducting discussion groups and meetings, comprised the technical side of leadership.²

Impetus for Social Justice

Although there are few references to overtly political purposes in the official reports of the day, the impetus of several social movements motivated Murray and her colleagues. The most pervasive influence was, undoubtedly, the Social Gospel ethic that affected all Christian denominations in the first half of the 20th century. As Betty Murray said in discussing the historical accuracy of her plays, “In those days religion was everything.” The message to all, inherent in the Social Gospel, was to de-emphasize the saving of

² Habermas (1971) discusses three broad categories of human interest that drive the human quest for knowledge and understanding. These interlocking interests—in science and technology (as means to controlling the physical environment), in broadly based communication, and in the emancipatory power of aesthetics—closely approximate the significant areas of learning posited by the adult educators of Nova Scotia.

individual souls and to assume an increased responsibility for one's neighbour.

This shifting theological emphasis accompanied a politics of social involvement in secular matters. Following the Great Depression of the 1930s, the political pendulum in Canada began its swing—which was to continue for three decades—to the Left. The traditional belief that a laissez-faire (or "free" market) economic system would accommodate society's needs was replaced by a redistributive definition of economic and social justice. With this intersection of sacred and secular values, it was no accident that the early pioneers of socialism in Canada, such as J.S. Woodsworth and Tommy Douglas, were clergymen. The Social Gospel tended to justify, and even compel, the church's intervention in politics (Elliott, 1996; Forbes, 1989).

This involvement of church with the nation's political economy was demonstrated forcefully in Nova Scotia in the work of the Antigonish Movement and in that of the Anglican Federation for Social Action (AFSA). From the 1920s, priests and lay leaders of the Extension Department of St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish held residential People's Schools at the University and, in the villages of eastern Nova Scotia, they helped farmers and fishermen form cooperatives for the purchase of materials and sale of their produce. These early Extension workers also helped to organize credit unions so that the people could more easily obtain loans for their projects. While the Antigonish Movement has lost much of its radical impetus today (Baum, 1977), something of the spirit of founders Jimmy Tompkins and Moses Coady lives on in the International Coady Institute of St. Francis Xavier where men and women come from many developing countries to study, first-hand, practical applications of the Movement (Coady, 1939; Lotz & Welton, 1997).

AFSA, which was formed by a band of socially committed Anglican priests in the early 1950s, borrowed the residential folkschool idea from provincial adult educators. For several years, priests-in-training and those who were assigned rural parishes attended residential training schools in rural leadership. In these schools, to which Betty Murray was invited as "a favoured government facilitator," the clergy learned of rural problems and approaches that they later used in their own parishes (Elliott, 1996).

As we see, each organization—the Antigonish Extension Department, AFSA, and the Division of Adult Education—undertook to bring about a more equitable society. Each group faced opposition from certain businessmen who held, until then, a large measure of social and economic power over rural people. In one case, an activist priest's salary was withheld

until his equally active colleagues intervened. Not surprisingly, as well, the rural priests as a group were accused from time-to-time of “communist” leanings. Opposition to social action was a national phenomenon then, as it is today. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation’s (CBC) coast-to-coast *Farm Radio Forum* and *Citizens’ Forum*, for example, faced as fierce an opposition to their educative content in the 1940s as does the CBC today for its so-called left-of-centre news coverage (Faris, 1975). In any era, we can be assured that many of those who hold power and wealth will be reluctant to abandon their advantage by fostering free and open discussion among the citizenry.

In the coastal community of Devon Harbour, dramatically removed from the first case in time and political context, yet not so far in rural setting, we meet another set of barriers to civil action.

Devon Harbour Today

Although I came to the Harbour to study educational restructuring as it affects administrators, teachers, and students of St. Justin’s All-Grade School, I soon realized that education in a community-in-crisis must be considered in its broader context. The school, officially deemed a “community school,” reflects both the assets and the problems of Devon Harbour as a whole. On the positive side, the school, like its community, radiates an ethos of accomplishment. The principal Sam Milburn, and vice-principal Donald Vokey, expect and for the most part receive a high level of cooperation and excellence from staff and students. The administrators, in turn, do their best to represent school and community interests as they negotiate with government to maintain the present allocation of teachers.

The school has experienced declining enrolments since the early 1990s (from over 300 students to 120 today), as young parents in search of employment continue to leave the Harbour. Declining enrolments, in a province that bases its teacher quotas on numbers alone, lead to truncated program offerings. High school students, for instance, no longer can take home economics, industrial arts, music, drama, visual art, or a full program of physical education—each of which was available at some point in the school’s history. Limited learning opportunities, in turn, tend to produce under-active imaginations and students less willing than their urban counterparts to take risks. Of the eight “advanced” students I questioned about long-term ambitions, all but one—a young woman who intended to study English at university—declared that they would study to become “computer support persons.”

Looking Back

A little more of the community's history further establishes the inter-relationship between the school and Devon Harbour's adult population. The people have participated in at least three periods of dependency. The first, which I will call the colonial period, was established in the 19th century through an arrangement whereby a single family, the Laceys, provided for the Harbour's fishermen and became wealthy from their labour. Roger Lacey owned the fish plant, the skiffs and schooners (and later the trawlers), as well as the Harbour's general store. He and his descendants, from their home overlooking the town, treated the fishermen well and even took an interest in the personal affairs of each family. The fishers, plant workers and their families in turn expressed both admiration and loyalty towards their benefactors. Nevertheless, as one resident noted, though the people "realized that Lacey provided the jobs, no one encouraged them to realize they had built the Lacey fortune." This was a paternalistic economy and the fortunes of Devon Harbour's people rode the waves with the Lacey family business.

There were good times and bad. The fishery expanded from the beginning of the 20th century, through the years of WWI, and then dipped through the 1920s, and even more so in the 1930s. Again, business picked up during WWII and considerable growth was experienced, with the advent of frozen fish foods, well into the 1970s. The coming of a union to Devon Harbour, in this case the Fish Food and Allied Workers (FFAW), was accomplished with relatively little resistance from the Laceys, and the company's negotiations with the union resulted in higher wages for the fishermen and plant workers.

Nevertheless, a series of company miscalculations (e.g., about high interest rates and low fishing quotas) and acts (a too-rapid expansion and an overly-opulent Lacey lifestyle) led to foreclosure of the Devon Harbour fishery in the early 1980s. The people were devastated for, until then, they had considered the Laceys to be invincible. As a resident told me, "the people lived in a stratified society where economic structures maintained and promoted the dominance of the rich and powerful over the mass of ordinary people."

The loss of the Lacey establishment was eased somewhat when a large corporation, Fishery Products International (FPI), assumed ownership of the plant in 1983. This began a period of no-nonsense business, as FPI made clear to all that their purpose for being in Devon Harbour was purely to make a profit. Although the dependency changed in nature, from the former colonial situation to that of "market reality," the fishers and plant workers

continued to enjoy wages and a way of life adequate to their needs and expectations.

All this changed in 1989 when the trawlers were transferred from Devon Harbour to other sites operated by FPI. Although the people were told that the Devon plant would continue to process fish as before, the departure of the trawlers affected the community in two ways. The quotas, given out by the federal government (the Department of Fisheries and Oceans or DFO) went with the fishing fleet, and the plant saw indeed an immediate reduction in the quantity of fish processed. The most dramatic blow to the fishery occurred, however, in 1992 with the DFO announcement of a cod moratorium. Suddenly, a town that lived by fishing alone no longer had a viable economic base; they were set completely adrift.

This year also marked the beginning of the third stage of dependency as the federal government launched a series of major funding initiatives to save coastal communities, according to some sources, or to re-locate their populations, according to others. The latest structure of dependency was built around The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy, known by its acronym "TAGS." Contrary to common belief, TAGS was not a simple program of hand-outs but, rather, a combined plan to keep the coastal people afloat while they retrained for an economy outside the fishery. About 20% of the TAGS money, allocated to help the fishers who were now out-of-work, went towards various kinds of retraining.

[Re]Training vs. Communicating for Survival

Almost immediately, a wide variety of courses offered by private and government agencies became available to the men and women of the fishery. The first, called "Improving Your Odds," was designed to improve the self-confidence of adults and to prepare them for further retraining. This course was delivered in a wide variety of ways but, in its best forms, it encouraged reflective practices and enhanced communication skills. Then there were the Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes, for many residents of Devon Harbour had left school early to join the fishery and to work at the plant. The ABE classes, which were fairly well attended, were followed by courses in computer technology, and in entrepreneurial planning. Still another, that I was told by registrants was of great benefit, was a seven-month course in Business Administration. Of the thirteen women and one man taking this course, all have found temporary work from time-to-time in Devon Harbour, or permanent employment on the Mainland. The idea behind the courses—and the government's more or less explicit agreement with the people—was to direct them away from the fishery and towards alternative employment.

An important experiment in community activism, centred on the Harbour's community broadcasting system, took place between 1995 and 1997. In these years, two community amateurs, initiating and directing a program called Communication for Survival (CFS), involved men, women, and school students from five rural communities in either developing or, in the case of Devon Harbour, enhancing their local broadcasts. Discussions centred primarily on the future of the fishery and alternative economic schemes, while local culture was explored through a variety of artistic performances. The CFS initiative itself, eventually to gain a prestigious award for community development, drew together "an informal partnership of communities, agencies, groups and individuals from [the province who worked] together to promote the survival of rural communities through the sharing of ideas and information with the long-term goal of solving community and regional problems of common concern" (Campbell & Gilbert, 1997, p. 2). In many ways—such as in planning meetings, surveying public opinion, and televising panel discussions—CFS, like the Nova Scotia folkschools, involved the people themselves in deciding upon their own priorities and approaches to community economic development. In one woman's opinion, CFS

got the people talking. Dialoguing, in turn, created reflection, understanding and awareness. Then too, it gave people confidence to express things and go about doing things themselves. In smaller communities people traditionally keep their mouths shut. People don't want to rock the boat; they want to live their lives in peace and be left alone. (cf A. MacIntyre, 1998)

When I asked this participant if the CFS initiative also stimulated the people to work together, she replied, "Yes, but you don't do that with a one or two-year project. This was almost three years, and even then, it left far too soon." I was to hear many similar tales of promising projects, discontinued prematurely as funding agencies changed their focus of attention.

Separate Voices

Until recently, many people continued to hope that the fishery would rebound. Meanwhile, some men leave the Harbour for winter employment elsewhere, returning in the summer to their homes and families. Others remain at home, taking TAGS for their survival but busying themselves with repairing the fish plant, mending their gear, and picking up a little inshore fishing. On two occasions, the plant was leased and a modest catch was landed and processed. The lessee then moved on, considering the profit margin to be too low and government assistance to be inadequate. As I left

the Harbour in the spring of 2000, its people were still hoping that a buyer would be found and that the government would allocate to them a decent quota of catch to process.

There is no shortage of leaders in the town. Immediately after the fishery closed, the Council appointed Rex Brake, well known for his initiative and perseverance, as their Economic Development Officer. Rex, together with the councillors, town manager and major, within a few months produced an ambitious plan for the community's survival and growth. Now, almost ten years later, two of the six development projects have materialized, a few are still under negotiation, and one or two have failed entirely. The list of possible projects today includes aqua-culture, kelp processing, limited inshore fishing, clam and mussel processing, a care facility for seniors, adventure-tourism, and a small-scale garment industry.

Although the people are resourceful, cooperative, and usually in agreement as to goals, several problems exist. One, identified by several town leaders, is that the people of Devon Harbour, while desperately hoping for work, do not want to take risks. They have always been provided for by the various company owners, and they wish this pattern to continue. At one point, a person knowledgeable about cooperatives was brought in to speak about this alternative means of buying and selling. The townsfolk, however, voted not to invest in co-ops but, instead, to make the plant so attractive that a buyer would be found. In another example, women were equally sceptical of joining forces to produce high quality clothing and crafts. They knew they had the skill to do fine work and, therefore, did not reject the idea. On the other hand, they wanted to avoid being seen as different. One woman told me that "each time one of us offers sewing for anything like the market price, others in the community say 'Who does she think she is?'" The women of Devon Harbour have yet to form a plan for marketing their crafts.

In addition to the common hesitancy to take risks, or even to try new ventures, there seem to be significant gaps in communication among townsfolk. In attending a meeting for "community leadership," offered by a freelance worker for women's economic development, I was surprised that the women of the town knew very little about the master plan for Devon Harbour. The reason for this became clear as the afternoon progressed.

Once a certain level of trust and humour had been established at this meeting, the women started to talk freely of the ways they could improve their town. Specific ideas concerned a greater community use of the school (i.e., for sports and for meetings as well as for the present library and computer services), and a more equitable time allocation for boys' and girls'

athletics. At present, one women told us, the boys receive ten hours of Physical Education while the girls get only two. Another women pointed out, as well, that not one woman serves on the town council, or in any other major decision-making capacity. I had the distinct impression that in speaking about these discrepancies, the women were realizing them for the first time. I realised, as well, that their lack of direct involvement probably accounted for their limited understanding of the town's master plan.

A third area of discontent—voiced not only by the women at this meeting, but also by men and women around town in general, and by the staff and parents of Devon All-Grade School—surrounded the lack of arts education for students. Although the community enjoys strong traditions of music-making, acting, wood-carving, and painting, the school has lost these subject areas during recent staffing cuts. Yet the people see the arts, in cultural terms as their route to community exploration and expression and, in more instrumental terms, as a means to reach the outside world and attract tourists to their region.

Discussion

In a paper such as this, it is inevitable that descriptions are inadequate to the complexity of each story. In the case of Devon Harbour, for instance, I have not discussed the nature of the fishery collapse (Ommer, 1994; Palmer, 1997), the effects of a seemingly unending restructuring of school districts, schools, and curricula (Harris, 1998b), the outcome of state interventions on the lives of outport women (Connelly & MacDonald, 1995), or the community planners' struggle to satisfy the bureaucratic demands of state funding (see Ng, 1996). The single day in the life of a Nova Scotia folkschool and an initial meeting among the women of Devon Harbour serve here as symbols of contexts rich in history, tradition, and personal and collective meaning. From the Devon Harbour women's meeting, however, I have extracted four topics, each relevant to sustaining equitable communication (Armstrong, 2000) and all having wider implications for leadership and government action.

Educative Models of Learning

With the many forms of communication at our command today (and residents of Devon Harbour lack little in computer technology) we sometimes forget to take advantage of the most important, that is, of face-to-face discourse. Fay (1977), in what has become a classic contribution to the discussion of relationships between theory and practice, speaks of an "educative model" of learning whereby people come to understand their own

needs and the impediments that stand in the way of their achievement. He sees purposeful discussion, carried out among people in need, as a possible “first step [toward] radically altering the self-destructive patterns of interaction that characterize their social relationships” (p. 204).

Habermas (1984) points out that discourse, to achieve such common understandings, must be non-coercive and non-threatening, and it must be conducted in an atmosphere of mutual trust. Also, as Freire (1986) maintains, speech acts must not be unidirectional, simply from teacher to students, and “detached from [students’] reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and [gave] them significance” (p. 57); it must be situated in the midst of human action. Knowledge and understanding, emerge “only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men [sic] pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p. 58).

Such “hopeful inquiry” was a benchmark of the Nova Scotian educators’ approach. They enabled the farmers and fishers of Nova Scotia to expand their understanding of everyday reality (what Habermas (1971) refers to as their *Lebenswelt* or “lifeworld”) and to formulate a vision of new economic, social, and cultural possibilities. While their site for learning was the residential folkschool and the vision accepted and acted upon by the people focussed on credit unions and consumer cooperatives, these are not the important details of transference. Other forums for economic discussion and action exist today, including mixed models of cooperative and corporate business. Whatever the outcome of discussion, it is in the exchange of ideas and approaches, carried on by a diverse group, “educated and uneducated, poor and rich, tradesmen and farmers and professionals, men and women, of all ages” (Gründtvig in Warren, 1987, pp. 10-11), that people realize maximum benefit from one another’s beliefs, attitudes and values.

School and Community

In the Nova Scotia folkschool scene, I alluded to the close relationship between school teachers and their adult communities. We noted as well, at Acadia University, that the teacher was expected to play an active role in his or her community and, in this way, become familiar with parents’ hopes and disappointments. The teacher was to learn first-hand about the “lifeworld” of her children and, thus prepared, be in a better position to expand their horizons of possibility.

Teachers at Devon Harbour, perhaps because of the town’s relative isolation, participate in a wide range of social, service, and educational committees. They serve with the Fire Department, the Lion’s Club, the

School Council, the Home and School Association, and the Economic Development Committee. They know the home situation of each child, and even teachers originally from other parts of the province come to share the town's common objective of achieving economic and cultural sustainability. Nevertheless, the women with whom I met saw the possibility of additional linkages between school and community. While they did not for a moment think that teachers should do more for the community, they believed they themselves could do more for (and in) the school than visit as parent volunteers. They could work toward greater equity between the sexes and they could make much better use of the building and its facilities.

Gender Representation

Perhaps gender marks the most dramatic difference between the two settings above. The balance between male and female facilitators at the folk and art schools, it should be noted, was far from representative of the 1940s and 1950s. The Nova Scotia group of educators was unusual, and the gender balance was but one aspect of their enactment of equality and one expression of what they meant by social justice.

Although many would consider the economic initiative of Devon Harbour residents remarkable, planning without the contribution of women is half as effective as it could be. At present, a dozen men command leadership positions in economic development, the school, the local community broadcasting system, and the town council, while the leadership of women in mixed groups is limited to the Church, the School Council and the Home and School Association. Any move toward the inclusion of women on vital decision-making committees concerning the town's economic development will depend, I suspect, as much on the women's initiative to become involved as it will on the men's willingness to be inclusive.

As pointed out by Murray and her associates, successful development needs to be tackled on several fronts. Material security, while basic to human survival, goes hand-in-hand with broadly based awareness of one's political and social situation and with skills and attitudes developed *through* explorations of culture. The women of Devon Harbour have much to contribute to the total project of sustainability.

Artistic Expression

Just as the arts have always played a pivotal role in critical pedagogy (Brookes, 1988; Doyle, 1993), their inclusion in Canadian adult educational projects was not unusual at mid-century (Welton, 1987). Nevertheless, the *community arts* of music, drama, dance, and painting reached their zenith in

the Nova Scotia experiment. And as I pointed out earlier, the arts were not simply to provide mixers for adult activities, or to be for the enhancement of performance skills alone but, rather, they were viewed as essential for a particular kind of learning, one that followed an educative model that focussed both on oneself and one's community, and on imagining ways that the world might be ordered differently. Scores of adults and youth, who have in turn influenced hundreds of people in communities across Canada, first encountered the arts in the jointly sponsored schools and festivals described above.

This focus on the arts is particularly relevant to Newfoundlanders who, over the past twenty years, have participated in outstanding school performance groups, have attained a high level of arts literacy (e.g., as in coding and de-coding music notation) in their schools, and continue to enjoy a rich popular culture of arts and crafts. Political satirists Ray Guy and Rex Murphy, and satirical drama troupes such as "Codco" and "This Hour Has 22 Minutes" have become the province's best known exports. The arts are important to the people and are integral to their sense of identity.

I do not view the disappearance of the arts from Devon Harbour School and from other Newfoundland outports as the inevitable fate of people who live in isolated communities; nor do I see it as a trade-off for additional computer technology and television services. It is, rather, the result of choices made centrally by people who, in most cases, make quite different decisions concerning their own children (Harris, 1996). These decisions, like so many others that affect the citizens of Devon Harbour, can be examined, challenged, and resisted by them in artistic forms, as well as in discussion groups. The arts can be studied and applied by individuals, as personal expressions, or by groups, as "community arts."

Concluding Comments

In connecting these two stories, I am not recommending that the approaches of one scene be transported, wholesale, to the other. To do so would be to propose what one Devon Harbour participant called yet another "flying saucer approach," like those all too often visited upon rural communities by government agents and private companies. As a School District official said, "If they weren't so tragic, these [approaches] would be laughable." In each community, stories abound of disinterested instructors, intent only on realizing a portion of TAGS money, who came through town, "flogging programs straight from the book." The more successful programs, I found, spoke to the needs of individual people, providing them with skills they

could use to find employment beyond the fishery. Apart from the initial course in "Improving Your Odds," and the highly successful but short-lived experiment in Communication for Survival, I saw few signs of education conducted as a social pursuit, to highlight men's and women's sense of themselves. Restructuring of the economy, as it has taken place over the past decade, further deepens the community's condition of dependency. This condition, first initiated by colonial arrangements and solidified by corporate values, today finds expression in a series of wage subsidies, work schemes, contracts for economic development, and training programs. The common feature of each arrangement is that decision-makers, far distant themselves from the people of Devon Harbour, maintain a high level of control over the nature and direction of change. Ng (1996), in a study of immigrant women in urban contexts, casts light on this latest version of dependency. She points to government strategies "to reduce and rationalize social spending by establishing funding programs to community groups as a cheaper alternative to direct service provision while maintaining control over service delivery" (p. 11). Ng further analyzes how shifting funding priorities, complex guidelines, and accountability procedures permit "close monitoring of the funded groups" (p. 11). She notes that this type of funding, with its rhetoric of grassroots autonomy, became much more prevalent in the 1990s.

Despite these criticisms of the system, Ng acknowledges the potential of communities to make use of state funding to effect social change. Devon Harbour and other coastal communities, if they are to survive, desperately need funding for their projects. But the people themselves must have a larger role in the setting of priorities. This will become increasingly probable as the people move toward an educative model of learning in which they will explore together the moves that best serve their purposes.

There are critics who will contend that we live in different times today and that the "real world" precludes the kind of participative communication advocated in this paper. I agree that the odds are unfavourable. Market imperatives dominate economic life in Canada, and deficit/debt reduction, as a collective goal of successive governments, overshadows the maintenance of social services such as health and education. Nor is there any longer, as there was in the past, a government or university Extension Service in Newfoundland that specifically fosters adult learning for citizenship. Nevertheless, the political will of a state (or province) can change, as I have shown here, and as happened recently in New Zealand, the home of neo-liberal restructuring (Rosenberg, 2000). At the community level, the Communication for Survival initiative demonstrated that democratic change

is possible and that, given assistance, people in traditional communities are eager to participate in their own future. For such change to be lasting, however, short-term funding must be replaced by more enduring support equal to the task. In terms of policy, such support needs dedicated educators and government or other public funding, and it needs to reintroduce the concept of adult learning to replace that of job training.

The Nova Scotian story of leadership, as distributed among several leaders and as a potential attribute of most community members, reclaims the now-overused concept of "grassroots." For Betty Murray, and those government agents with whom she worked, action at the community level involved the very people who had developed its guiding theory. Grassroots action today can be equally effective in bringing about desired change; that is, if the change is truly desired—and not merely implemented—by the people who experience it. This kind of leadership involves men and women, exploring issues together and acting cooperatively to pursue the ways of living that they value most highly, as well as the technological goal of finding a way to make a living.

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