

Narrowing the Gaps? Gender, Employment and Incomes on the Bonavista Peninsula, Newfoundland, 1951-1996¹

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ABSTRACT

From a local economy based on an inshore fishery, the Bonavista Peninsula in the Canadian province of Newfoundland has been transformed by the emergence of an industrial capitalist fishery. This area provides an excellent case study of women's experience in a process of development on the periphery of core capitalist societies. In the early period, few women were formally employed. Based on survey and qualitative data sources, this paper documents changes in the relative position of women with respect to employment and incomes. Although by 1996 women remained in a disadvantaged position in most respects, growing labour force participation meant that women's patterns were increasingly similar to men's. This increased participation was not marked by an equivalent closing of the gap in incomes, except among the young.

RÉSUMÉ

À partir d'une économie locale basée sur la pêche côtière, la péninsule Bonavista a été transformée par l'émergence d'une pêche capitaliste industrielle. Ce secteur représente un excellent cas pour l'étude de l'expérience des femmes dans le processus de développement dans la périphérie de base des sociétés capitalistes. Au début, peu de femmes étaient employées officiellement. En se basant sur un sondage, et des sources de données qualitatives, cet article documente les changements dans la position relative des femmes en ce qui a rapport à l'emploi et les revenus. Quoiqu'en 1996 les femmes demeuraient dans une position de désavantage dans la plupart des cas, une participation croissante dans le marché du travail signifiait que la situation des femmes devenait de plus en plus semblable à celle des hommes. Cette croissance de la participation des femmes n'était pas marquée par un retrécissement de l'écart des revenus excepté parmi les jeunes.

INTRODUCTION

About 1950, life on Newfoundland's Bonavista peninsula centred around a household fishing economy with a radical sexual division of labour. Over the next fifty years, social transformation took place with the incorporation of this area into an industrial capitalist economy and the Canadian welfare state. In this paper, I explore the labour market experience of Bonavista women living in a local environment deeply penetrated by national and global developments. In particular, I argue that women remained in a disadvantaged position in most respects, but growing labour force participation meant that women's patterns were increasingly similar to men's. However, there was no equivalent closing of the gap in incomes, except among the young.

This paper explains different life outcomes of women and men in a way that avoids implying excessive determination by the social structure. However, it is impossible to account for what

happened in Bonavista without awareness of the impact of broad forces of development, even globalization, which defined limits for local action. Globalization is essentially a process through which the activities of people everywhere become more tightly interconnected and interdependent. Considering at this point only Newfoundland and its fisheries, it is clear that local people's lives were thrown into crisis on numerous occasions in the late twentieth century as a result of their dependence on depleted fish resources that were fished by vessels from elsewhere in Canada and from many other countries (Hutchings and Myers 1995; Sinclair 1987; Wright 2001).

Recently, Neis and Williams explicitly analysed the ecological and social issues in rural Newfoundland as local manifestations of processes that were global in dimension. Their focus was on the impact of "New Right" ideology that allowed uncontrolled overfishing, part of an "ecological revolution" at the global level, with serious consequences for both local people and local

environments. Neis and Williams pointed to the ways in which Newfoundland women working in the fishery were particularly hurt by the depletion of cod stocks and the policies associated with the cod moratorium after the fishery was closed in 1992 (1997). This paper is more finely focussed on the Bonavista Peninsula and covers the period of industrialization. In taking a longer time period, it is possible to identify some positive aspects for women and some compression of differences between the women of this rural periphery and those of mainstream, mainland Canada.

Bonavista had always been part of an international economy in which local participation was built around the export of fish, and people survived by combining what they could purchase from selling fish with a substantial amount of subsistence production. In that globalization focuses on inclusiveness and integration, it is not a new process; rather it is an old process that now operates at a faster pace, more comprehensively and with greater visibility. Capitalism has been a powerful force of globalization. In Bonavista, the extension of capitalism to a position of dominance in the fishery radically changed the lives of women and men in certain important respects, which makes the area an excellent location to investigate processes of restructuring on the peripheries of contemporary capitalist societies. This is but one of many cases in which the fish and local communities are both at risk (Otterstat and Symes 1996).

Is there still space for local action? What difference does capitalist development make in the ways that people maintain themselves and their households? Do women benefit in the sense of participating more equally with men in the labour market and in social life more generally? I did not expect that the sexual division of labour and economic inequality between women and men would vanish, but perhaps differences would be reduced as the expansion of wage labour in the fishery drew women from their homes into the labour market. Did the gaps separating men and women become narrower? A full analysis of these questions requires attention to the sexual division of household labour and subsistence activities (often between households and without payment) as well as the formal economy. This paper, however, is limited to paid employment, incomes and occupational segregation (but see Sinclair 1999).

THE SETTING

This research investigates the sexual division of labour on the geographical edge of North America. The Bonavista-Trinity area forms part of the northeast coast of the isolated island of Newfoundland. For the most part, this paper focuses on the peninsula from Keels on the south shore of Bonavista Bay, around Cape Bonavista, then along the north shore of Trinity Bay as far as New Bonaventure. I also refer to the Bonavista Bay-Trinity North subdivision of the census when data from this source are required. Stretching beyond Trinity to Random Island and Clarenville in the south and from Bonavista to Cape Freels in the north, this area is about four times larger in terms of population.

The Bonavista Peninsula is a harsh environment where the Atlantic Ocean pounds the outer coasts, soils are generally thin, the growing season short, and tree cover sparse until the inner part of the land mass is approached. Settlements are scattered around the coast wherever some shelter might be found from high seas and winter pack ice. Without the fishery, there was little reason for any to dare live in these parts, even if land and seascape are often majestic, sometimes peaceful, wild and beautiful.

In 1996, the Bonavista Peninsula contained 9,975 people, which represented a significant decline of 6.7 percent since 1991. This loss of population was quite uneven as some of the outports fell 15 to 20 percent, whereas the town of Bonavista, with 4,526 people, declined only 1.5 percent (calculated from Statistics Canada no date). These changes should be linked to the historical dependency of the area's economy on the cod fishery, on which a moratorium was placed in 1992 after overfishing and inadequate management decimated the stocks. By 1998, there was no sign of recovery. Although some people found employment in alternative fisheries such as crab, the major plant in the area, which had employed over 1,200 people at times, was shut down. The second largest plant, in Bonavista town, was limited to crab processing and operated with reduced work hours compared with the past. Displaced fishery workers received financial support and retraining until 1998 through a special federal government program known as TAGS (The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy).

It is thus no surprise that the area should exhibit some statistical evidence of economic decline. Low participation in the labour force was accompanied by an exceptionally high unemployment rate of 41.8 percent. The median personal income of \$11,760 per annum was actually slightly above the Newfoundland median, but well below that of Ontario (\$16,004). However, in Bonavista, government transfer payments made up 43.8 percent of incomes in contrast with 24.6 percent for Newfoundland and 12.5 percent for Ontario (Census of Canada 1996). Following a short summary of sources of data, the analysis begins with a review of the division of labour in the pre-industrial economy.

Apart from Statistics Canada data, the analysis is based on two main sources from the eco-research program at Memorial University of Newfoundland. The study included a general social survey in which we hoped to interview each person 16 and older in 320 randomly selected households on the peninsula; this strategy generated 619 completed interviews. In addition to the survey, 45 detailed life history interviews were conducted separately in 1995 by the project's field researchers. Several of these interviews will be used to complement the survey material.

BONAVISTA BEFORE INDUSTRIALIZATION

Economic life on the Bonavista peninsula about 1950 was essentially non-industrial in form, based on a household labour and capital, which Sinclair has analysed as domestic commodity production in his study of the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland (1985). Cod were fished with hand-lines, traps and baited hooks, depending on the season. Crews were normally composed of related men, often from the same household, while women frequently participated in processing fish on shore and putting them out to dry on the flakes² or rocks. Dried fish would then be sold to a local merchant, but rarely for cash in the period prior to confederation. In the first part of the twentieth century, the fishery was more capital intensive in that local schooners sailed to the Labrador coast where they caught fish close to shore, salted them, and then returned to the island for final processing. By 1950, the Labrador fishery

was almost exhausted, draggers had not yet appeared in this area, and the fishery was more clearly a household fishery than at any other time.

One of our respondents, reflecting on his youth in Keels in the 1930s, provides a useful description of the household fishery, which absorbed the men from childhood. It may be observed that the division of labour was quite flexible, being influenced by the age and sex composition of the household in relation to the tasks of fishing and household production. "We was taken out of school when we was 12 year old and put in a boat. In those times, see, you had to." As a boy-fisher, Jack cut the cod tails, which he marked and kept for himself as he was not considered old enough to receive a share of the catch. Jack worked on his father's boat, part of a crew of five that also included an uncle and neighbour. "I was hand-lining, see. And I never got no part of the cod trap at all. Whatever I caught myself I owns." However, Jack would buy what his mother asked him to at the store, once he had been paid. Normally his father had an account that was paid off in the Fall, when supplies ("winter scrub") would also be purchased. To reach that stage, the fish would have to be dried and that was a key part of his mother's labour:

Most of the time they'd (mother and others) be out up on the cliffs. Most of the times on the cliff, see. They never had enough flakes, right. They'd go out on the rock, see. Once they get a couple of days of drying in on the fish, they'd switch it over then to the rocks. There was no cold storage then, see. There was no draggers or nothing on the go... They'd leave it on the flake perhaps for a couple of days - hot days. Then it would go on the rocks. Then in the evening it would be put into the big piles.

After the drying process had been successfully completed, two or three times a year they would make the two hour boat trip to Bonavista town where his father dealt with the old firm of Templeman's. These were occasions for special treats from "old man Templeman's bag of knick-knacks." There was little additional cash after the accounts were settled, and most people engaged in extensive subsistence production to supplement

fish sales or exchanges. "Everyone reared their own animals, see, kill them in the Fall of the year." Horses, goats, pigs and sheep were kept. His family also maintained extensive gardens and all members shared in this work. "With the horse there was one square you couldn't get around with the horse, and we'd have to dig it up with a digging fork." Rabbits and other animals were hunted. With two brothers and four sisters, Jack found himself part of an extensive producing and consuming household in which he also had indoor work.

Interviewer: So did you have to do certain things around the house?

Jack: Oh yes, my son. Carding, card the wool, because everyone had so many sheep, see, and they carded their own wool, see, for socks and that. I used to card the wool and help Mother card the wool. And I used to help her spin it on the big spinning wheel. I had to do all that. Mother and them would be out on the flake, right.

Although this is only one case, it usefully prevents us from subscribing to a view of the sexual division of labour that is overly rigid. Some boundaries (e.g., the reservation of fish-catching for men) were rarely crossed, but practical adjustments to the "rules" of what men and women should do did take place.

This having been said, the 1951 census indicates an extremely low proportion of women working for pay - only 8.1 percent of those 14 and over were employed at the time of the census - in contrast with men (64.7 percent). Three-quarters of the women were recorded as keeping house, but this should not be taken as evidence that they had no involvement in the *production* of food, clothes and fish. Such labour, as evidenced in the Keels household, was unpaid and unrecorded. It is likely that scarcely any married women were employed outside the household. This was to change.

How dominating were local men around the middle of the twentieth century? Some authors (Antler 1981) claim that women in rural Newfoundland had equal power with men because they were so important for the economic survival of the household. Their tasks included making (i.e.,

processing) dried cod, which was the principal source of either goods or income, depending on time and place. Women were considered in control of their sphere of operation in the struggle to get by. Their independence and importance were never greater than on the numerous occasions when husbands were away for weeks or months, fishing in Labrador or working in the woods. Others (Firestone 1967) point out that men worked less hard, were served first by women, took the key economic decisions, inherited fishing places and property, and generally expected their women to move to their home village.

For the Bonavista area, much interesting evidence is presented in Murray's (1979) book based on interviews in her home village of Elliston. In general, it supports a male-centred view of the period in which women performed important labour, but with tight limits on what they could do with their lives. There was little questioning of what life could be; so mothers brought up their daughters to fill the same roles they did themselves. There is some indication that men, some anyway, did value the contribution of women's labour, even to the point of recognizing it as "more than 50 percent." And no doubt there was variation in the degree to which both men and women attempted to impose their own wishes on the patterning of their lives. Yet, it was difficult for a woman to live any other way than as the domestic labourer for a fisher unless she was part of the small educated elite or was able to move away. Moving away to anything but domestic or unskilled labour was unlikely for people with minimal levels of education.

The limitations on women and also the possibility of resisting them are well illustrated by Susan. When Susan reflected on her early life as a young married woman in the early 1940s, she recounted how angry she felt when, after living with her in-laws for two years, her husband and brother purchased a house that she had not even seen until she moved there. "I never saw it until I moved in. So I kind of felt a bit rebellious about that, that they could do things like that. And I vowed and declared first chance I get I was going to be out it." Seven years after moving to the home she had never seen, Susan's husband moved to Toronto because the Labrador schooner fishery in which he worked was providing a poor living. A few months later she followed with their children. Although her story of

powerlessness with respect to where she lived is evidence of patriarchy in operation, it also shows the limits of this patriarchy because this domination was not accepted as legitimate and change was possible. Susan resented moving to that house under the conditions described. She vowed to leave and eventually she made good on that vow.

An avid reader and largely self-educated, Susan fought against the limits that local culture, political economy and chance brought to her. Indeed, she became the first woman elected to council in her area:

I was on the council four years. Yes, that was a big thing. I ran for council and beat everyone out, and I was interviewed on radio. Oh, I enjoyed that. Oh, if it was my time now, I'd be in politics... I just figured that women should be doing more than they were doing. T'was a man's world when I was growing up and I resented it a lot.

It was a man's world for the most part and one success story does not change that. It does, however, show that women were not and need not be powerless.

It was not impossible, but certainly not easy to escape from the limitations of available occupations and marriage. Growing up, most people had no examples that suggested something different to them. Although Susan now believes that changes have taken place, she describes the women of her youth as being uninterested in taking any action, not even voting when that became possible. Why not? "Cause it didn't matter... It was a man's world." It is no longer as difficult to be different as it was for Susan, although equality is not at hand. We now examine some of the changes that took place.

INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM, THE FISHERY AND LOCAL SOCIETY

As Ommer and Sinclair have noted elsewhere in more detail, after Confederation with Canada in 1949, industrial capitalism and the welfare state became the dominant formal economic forces (1999). At this time, the provincial government's push towards an industrial fishery coincided with the objectives of Canada's federal

government. By the early 1970s, the dominant technology had shifted from the fixed gear, small boats and household processing of the salt cod fishery to the mobile trawls, large steel draggers and factory processing of the more diversified frozen groundfish industry. At the same time, commercial forestry and thus the prospects for winter wage-labour by inshore fishers contracted in the Bonavista-Trinity area.

The industrialization of the fisheries had several key dimensions and effects. First, the fishery became more socially fragmented as outporters adapted in different ways to the pressures for change. A large number persisted with an inshore fishery aided directly by state income support (unemployment insurance for fishers dates from 1957) and state capital infusions, as well as indirectly by the paid labour of other household members in fish plants and service industries. Increasingly, however, domestic commodity producers found it hard to get by when the federal government's licensing policy limited movement from one species to another and the cod stocks were pressured by industrial technologies.

Bonavista saw the first experiments in Newfoundland (in the early 1950s) with fisher-owned decked vessels, longliners, that were capable of going well offshore and used more productive gear. With a labour force less than ten percent of the small boat sector, these vessels accounted for about one-third of the province's cod catch by the 1970s. On the Bonavista Peninsula, however, they were much less important than the deep-sea trawlers owned by Fishery Products (later FPI) that supplied Catalina's modern processing plant, the second largest on the island. Established in 1957, this plant for frozen groundfish became a year-round operation in 1973 when trawlers were allocated to supply it and a shift system was introduced. With the expansion of Canadian cod landings after extended jurisdiction (1977), the plant's capacity was doubled in 1980 (Porter et al. no date, 208). In Bonavista, the old cold storage plant continued to function as an inshore-midshore seasonal cod plant, to which an important crab processing line was added.

The second major change occurred with the emergence of wage-labour in the fishery. This involved the substitution of wage labour for self-employment among men engaged in the fishery and

the transformation of women's seasonal unpaid labour in "making fish" into full-time, sometimes full-year employment in the plants. The Catalina plant alone functioned year-round and employed over 1,000 people as wage workers following its modernization in 1980. Apart from its significance for work experience, a critical consequence of this innovation was that outport people became increasingly dependent on cash income from some source to combine with their well-developed informal sector of subsistence production and inter-household cooperation.

A third change is that it became more difficult to meet outport people's expectations in the late twentieth century by relying on past formal and informal economic practices. Education levels rose and mass media brought knowledge of the consumption patterns of mainland North America into most households so that few were satisfied with the deprivations that earlier generations endured, even if some regretted the perceived decline in cooperation and sharing that characterized pre-industrial life. In an area where incomes were usually low, the desire for more consumer goods, for other household members as well as for themselves, probably drew some women into wage labour when the opportunity arose in the fish plants. Thus industrial capitalism changed the culture as well as economic relationships in the old outports.

A useful way to appreciate the socio-economic change involved in this industrial transformation is to examine the structure of occupations. Historical series are difficult to construct because of changes in definitions of the labour force and occupational groups. Another issue is that fishers are under-reported, perhaps to a serious extent, in that the census labour force was determined on the basis of those at work or actively seeking employment in the week prior to the census, which is held in the first week of June before the inshore fishery is underway. This rule is probably why federal fisheries estimates show many more engaged in the fishery than are reported in census years. With this qualification, the data nevertheless illustrate important changes for both men and women.

In 1951, 54.2 percent of men were engaged in primary industries with forestry in a strong second position to fishing (Table 1). Local economic dependence on primary production was

substantially greater than that of the province as a whole. Secondary industry was little developed, and relatively few men were engaged in services. The small number of women with formal employment worked in trade (mostly as sales clerks) and services, which included professional teachers. The most impressive changes since 1951 are the rapid relative decline of primary employment for men, the growth of women's employment in general, and the expansion of processing occupations for both sexes.

By 1961, the percent of men engaged in forestry had fallen to 15.2 percent from 19.5 percent (in 1951), whereas in fishing the change was from 28.3 to 15.6 percent (Census of Canada 1961). Thirty years later, only 11.3 percent of men were listed as fishers, slightly less than those engaged in processing work, which must have been largely fish processing. By this time, forestry had contracted so much that it only employed 2.2 percent (Census of Canada 1991).

Table 2, which compares occupational distributions for men and women between 1961 and 1991 shows quite different profiles, not only in that women were much less engaged in primary production (fishing), but also in their predominance in routine white collar work (clerical, sales and service). The most significant change evident in this table is the major expansion of women's participation in paid work as a whole, which will be amplified below. Over time, it became more common for women to fill blue collar jobs, mostly in fish plants, where men and women were found in almost equal numbers. The key point is that occupational gender-typing remained widespread, even more so than would be evident from either the census or the survey. For example, semi-structured interviews indicate that women and men, listed as engaged in processing work, actually worked at different jobs in the fish plants, for the most part. The decline in the percentage of employed women in managerial and professional employment is somewhat misleading because it masks the growth in absolute numbers of women in these categories. Clearly, total employment for women increased at a faster pace in the less prestigious occupations.

PARTICIPATION IN THE PAID LABOUR FORCE SINCE 1950

We should expect that Bonavista-Trinity

women would figure more prominently in the formal labour force as the labour market expanded around an industrial capitalist fishery. Indeed, Figure 1 captures the radical shift that took place all over Canada as women's labour force involvement rose to approach that of men, which changed little over the 45 years from 1951 to 1996. The male-female difference was reduced by about three-quarters. Also noteworthy is the strong geographical dimension to labour force participation as both women and men changed at roughly similar rates so that Bonavista-Trinity consistently lagged Newfoundland which remained below Canada as a whole. Unemployment rates tell a different story. After 1970, Canadian national unemployment for men and women remained under 10 percent at the census dates, whereas sharp increases were evident in Newfoundland as a whole and in Bonavista-Trinity, where they peaked at just over 40 percent in 1991 (Census of Canada, various years). Thus, being in the labour force did not necessarily mean having a job for most of the year.

Focusing more narrowly on the Bonavista Peninsula in the 1990s, the level of employment presents a bleak picture - opportunity for paid work was clearly limited compared with many other parts of the country. In 1996, the overall employment to population rate of 25.2 was less than half that for the rest of Canada. In part, this reflects the decline of fisheries employment after the moratorium of 1992. A low labour force participation rate of 43.7 was accompanied by an extremely high unemployment rate of 41.8 (Statistics Canada no date). In the eco-research survey, conducted in the fall and early winter, when seasonal employment would normally drop away, only 21.5 percent of the sample was employed.

Were women or men more likely to be included among the employed minority? Overall, there was no significant difference (Table 3). Older men (those 50 and over) were more likely to be employed than older women, but no difference was evident for the middle aged, and young women (under 30) were employed more often than young men. Although the difference of 12.8 percent between young women and men was not statistically significant, this evidence is consistent with the 1996 census, which provides labour force information for those under 25 in the same geographical area. Although only 16 percent of

young women were employed, they still fared better than young men (12 percent employed). However, men 25 and over had a higher employment rate (33 percent) than women (22 percent). Thus, both sources suggest that young women were actually employed more often than young men, which is true also for Canada as a whole. Whether these women will lose their advantage as they age, marry and have children is uncertain, given the falling birth rates and increasing propensity of married women to be employed.

Women's greater participation in the paid labour force arises because of changes in the local economy that provided new opportunities, but it is partly a product of their own action to create better conditions by directly challenging barriers in the work place. Karen provides an excellent illustration. Middle aged and divorced at the time of the interview, Karen was an independent woman who had experienced a life of great emotional stress. Rather than be limited to what had become recognized as the low status women's work of packing in the Bonavista FPI plant, Karen asked to join the weighers and established herself as highly efficient, able to do the work of two normal weighers. After becoming proficient on some new weighing equipment, she felt able to do anything a man could do. Breaking down the barrier in the fish plant also had a physical component as well as the need to build up confidence among the women:

Before, it was two separate rooms. The women were in one side and the men was in the other room, and everything would come through little holes in the wall, come through on conveyor belts. So we never had no contact with the men at all until someone finally decided "this wall needs to be knocked down" and made more convenient. So, when the walls got knocked down all the inhibitions that the women had, you know, from the men, started to give way. So anyhow, the women didn't mind if they wore their jeans and wore the jackets like the men did. The women started givin' up the white bibs and wore the cap like the men. You know, the paper caps. So then they said, "Well, maybe the women can do it." And then I set it all off.

When the wall came down, interaction with men increased and women felt more comfortable doing what men did, first in dress and later in work. Up to then, only men had been employed at cutting out the bones, but several women felt they could do this work just as well:

At that time I was already on the union and so I wanted to see if I could de-bone a fish like the men could. And so I went to the foreman and we had a little meeting about it. He said, "Okay, if you want to try your hand at de-boning a fish, fine. Go ahead." Then there was another couple of girls got brave and wanted to do it as well. So anyway, we went out there and they found that the women was just as fast, and even better boners than the men, because we didn't leave as many bones in the fish.

Once it was evident that women could do "men's" work, inequality in pay had to be sorted out as well. Initially, some women were allowed to work at de-boning, but received much less than the men, who were actually slower at the job. Faced with this pay equity challenge, management agreed to adjust rates provided that the women passed the official de-boning test. As many men had not taken the test, this led to wholesale testing for speed and quality.

And they had timing set out for how long it takes you to do this one particular pan of fish and everybody was given their pan of fish. I was going right to town. The foreman came along he said, "Karen, what are you doing? Are you eating that fish?" He couldn't believe I was getting done so fast. And here was the men, they didn't know what they were at. I mean they lost on their yield. They lost on their defaults that they were supposed to have, like bones. The time was up and fish was still left in their pan, not gettin' all done. And here am I, I've got mine all done. The girls got theirs done. Some of the men, yes. And anyway, now you had to get the quality control guys in. Now they had to be all checked, you know. Came back, I had the fastest time and the cleanest fish (laughing). And the girls, they did good. I

was the fastest on the plant that did the timings, that did the test and they had no choice [but] to give us the rate of pay. Plus they had to cut some of the men's rate of pay, because now, I mean, they weren't getting [done] what they were supposed to get. Until they got what they were supposed to get, their rate of pay went down.

This appeared to be the end of any automatic or systematic segregation in the plant's manual labour force: "After that, women started trying their hand at other things. Whenever a job came up, man's job came up, women would apply for it and women would get it and prove to be just as good as the men." Karen's story is one full of determination and change, as this working class woman took action to reconstruct her own work role and contribute significantly to the experience of other women by opening up new possibilities.

INCOMES

Although labour force participation was fairly evenly distributed among younger men and women, this does not mean that their incomes were equal. In this respect there has been much less progress for women than might be expected from rising labour market participation. For Bonavista Bay-Trinity North, Table 4 provides information on women's incomes as a percentage of men's for both to total income³ and income from employment between 1961 and 1996. Unfortunately, census reports do not provide a complete series at the level of subdivisions, but enough information is available to point to slow progress regarding employment income, where women's failure to gain much ground reflects the on-going problem of working fewer hours than men. For total income, the data are limited to 25 years over which time women made greater progress, but by 1996 their mean employment and total incomes were still only about 55 percent of what men earned. Provincial and national figures for women were only slightly better.

To give a better overview of income differences on the Bonavista Peninsula, we can refer to the 1996 census (Figure 2) in which women's total personal incomes are more heavily

skewed towards the low end of the distribution. For Bonavista town, the median income for women was \$11,760, which was 78.5 percent of that for men. Total personal income is based on employment, transfers and investments. Considering only income that is directly connected to employment, the position of women is clearly inferior (Table 5). Except in the town of Bonavista, full-year, full-time workers earned from 60 to 70 percent of men in the same labour market status. In comparison, women in Newfoundland and Ontario were less unequal with respect to employment income. Part-year or part-time female workers, who were much more common than full-time workers in the study area, fared worse as they earned slightly less than half of their male counterparts (Table 5).

Our eco-research survey generated a similar structure of incomes and will be used to allow the introduction of factors other than gender that might explain variation in incomes. In this 1994 sample, women received on average 65 percent of both men's total and earned incomes. We might expect younger women to be less disadvantaged than older women simply because they are more likely to be in the labour force. Therefore, the relationship between income and gender is examined separately for three age groups (Table 6). There is evidence of a fairly strong relationship among older people for total income (i.e., women had significantly lower incomes than men in this age group). Among those between 30 and 50, the income differences for women and men were not significant, and there was no hint of a difference among those under 30. For employment incomes, the pattern was similar, but even weaker in the older age groups.⁴ It is possible that greater inequalities of income by gender will emerge if the young women unmarried in 1994 should marry. Marriage is connected to the lower incomes of older women, because they lived through a period when married women were expected to remain full-time housewives, thus restricting their labour market experience.

ENDNOTES

1. Lynn Downton in Catalina, Theresa Heath in Port Rexton, and Heather Squires in Bonavista conducted the field research and collected the life history interviews which provide an important base for this paper. Angela Watson assisted with the general social survey. I am grateful for their work on the project. This paper is part of the interdisciplinary research program, Sustainability in a Changing Cold Ocean Coastal Environment, funded by Environment Canada through Canada's three academic research councils. Thanks to Marilyn Porter, Peter Baehr and *Atlantis* reviewers for comments on earlier drafts.

2. Flakes were wooden stages at the edge of the water, part of the fishing premises where fish were dried.

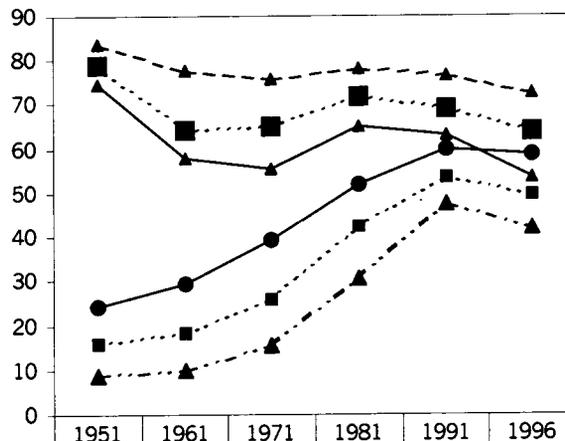
CONCLUSION

In Bonavista, if we look only at the 1990s, we see local people at a moment in a long process of constructing or structuring social life. However, the past enters the present as the source of taken-for-granted assumptions and because past actions impact on the distribution of resources today. I have shown elsewhere (Sinclair 1999) how women typically do most of the housework and child-care tasks, whereas men undertake more intermittent outside work. It is likely that most women's acceptance of their role in the household made it difficult for them to participate equally with men in the paid labour force, although there is some indication that changes are underway among young people. I have demonstrated that women's overall participation in the economy of the area has become more like that of men, although it is certainly not the same; and women, the young excepted, remain well behind in terms of income. I have also shown that the gendered character of economic relationships still leaves space for women actively to change their roles. The cases of Karen and Susan, fairly successful activists, do not prove that the Bonavista-Trinity area was once patriarchal and is now close to being gender-neutral in economic life. Other women, following more conventional life paths, could have been selected from this research to give a difference impression. The point I wish to stress is that some women could resist dominant ideas and take action that contributed to a new structuring. This is encouraging in a situation where global level forces of change appear to threaten and even eliminate the possibility of local action that makes a difference, whether to the environment or to social practices. Women are narrowing the gaps.

3. Income from all sources including wages, self-employment, investment, private pensions and state transfers.

4. A correlation analysis showed no significant difference between men and women in hours of employment ($r=-.08$) or level of education ($r=-.04$).

**Figure 1: Labour Force Participation Rates
Men and Women, 1951-1996**



	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	1996
--▲-- Can. men	83.8	77.7	75.7	78.2	76.4	72.7
...■... Nfld. men	78.9	64.4	65	71.8	68.9	63.7
—▲— Bon-Trin. men	74.5	57.9	55.4	65	63.2	53.7
—●— Can. women	24.1	29.5	39.2	51.8	59.9	58.6
...■... Nfld. women	16	18.4	25.7	42.4	53.7	49.7
--▲-- Bon-Trin. women	8.7	9.9	15.4	30.7	47.4	42.2

**Figure 2: Distribution of Personal Income by Gender
Bonavista Peninsula, 1996 (%)**

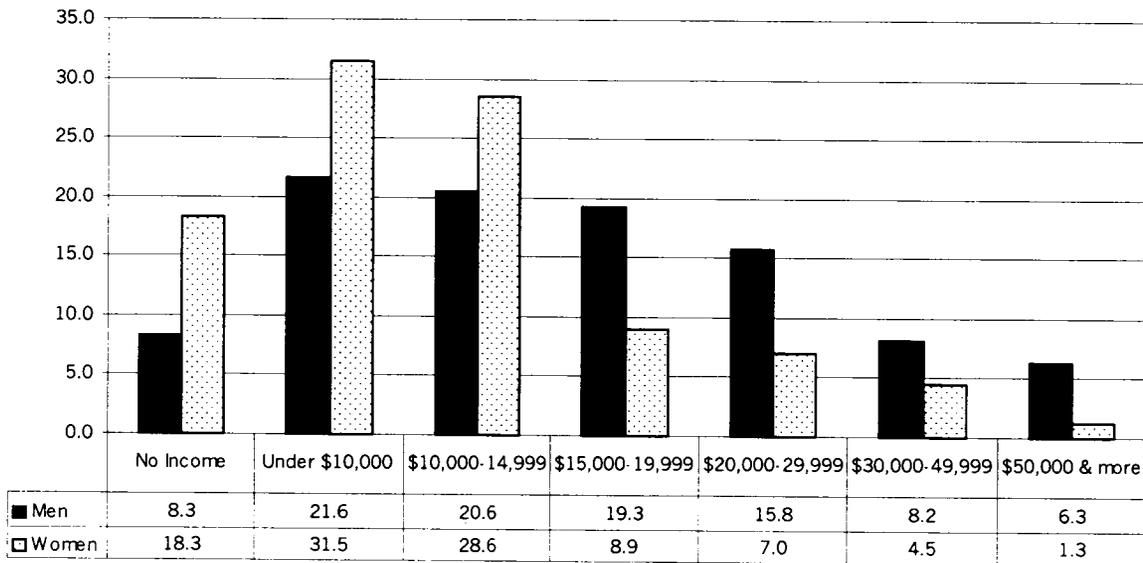


Table 1: Percent Distribution of the Labour Force

<i>Industry</i>	by Industry & Gender, 1951			
	<i>Newfoundland & Labrador</i>		<i>Bonavista-Trinity North</i>	
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Agriculture	3.8	0.7	6.0	1.3
Forestry & logging	11.7	0.2	19.4	0.2
Fishing & trapping	20.6	0.2	28.1	0.2
Mining	4.0	0.4	0.7	0.1
Manufacturing	14.5	9.5	9.8	5.0
Utilities	0.7	0.2	0.3	0.1
Construction	8.1	0.3	9.4	0.2
Transportation & communication	10.6	3.2	11.0	2.0
Trade	11.0	25.7	9.1	36.6
Finance	0.4	1.4	0.1	0.5
Personal service	1.0	23.7	0.3	23.0
Other service	12.1	33.9	5.1	30.2
Total Number	89460	17080	8870	935

Source: Calculated from Census of Canada, 1951.

Table 2: Occupational Groups by Gender, Bonavista Bay-Trinity North, 1961-1991

Number	<i>1961</i>		<i>1991</i>	
	<i>Me</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Managerial & admin.	39	206	635	375
Professional	33	232	930	1,135
Routine white collar	64	564	1,500	4,115
Primary	2,20	10	1620	270
Blue Collar	3,36	41	5,360	1,560
Total	6,94	1,053	10,045	7,455
Percent of All Occupations				
Managerial & admin.	5.	19.6	6.3	5.0
Professional	4.	22.0	9.3	15.2
Routine white collar	9.	53.6	14.9	55.2
Primary	31.	0.9	16.1	3.6
Blue Collar	48.	3.9	53.4	20.9

Table 3: Employment Status of Men and Women by Age, Bonavista Peninsula, Fall 1994 (N=471)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Percent Employed</i>		<i>Chi-sq signif.</i>	<i>eta</i>
	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>		
Under 30	22	32.8	0.19 (ns)	0.12
30-49	22.9	22.4	0.93 (ns)	0.01
50-64	35.3	15	0.01	0.24

Table 4: Women's Mean Total and Employment Incomes as Percent of Men's Incomes, 1961-1996

Total Income	<i>1961</i>	<i>1971</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>1996</i>
Canada	na	44.1	49.7	58.2	na
Nfld. & Labrador	na	41.2	50.8	57.3	59.1
Bonavista-Trinity North	na	40.7	51.2	55.6	55.6
Employment Income					
Canada	54.2	48.7	51.5	59.5	na
Nfld. & Labrador	51.0	47.1	53.2	58.2	60.5
Bonavista-Trinity North	53.2	46.9	55.0	na	55.5

1961 income does not include self-employment.

na = not available

Sources: Census of Canada, various years

Table 5: Persons with Employment Income, Employment Status and Gender, 1996

Area	Gender	Employment Status			
		Full-year, Full-time		Part-year or Part-time	
		Number	Average employment income	Number	Average employment income
Ontario	Men	1,794,665	\$45,477	1,131,880	\$18,877
	Women	1,221,455	\$32,645	1,349,945	\$13,373
	W. as % of M.	68.1	71.8	119.3	70.8
Newfoundland	Men	56,850	\$40,064	76,110	\$15,153
	Women	43,220	\$26,353	65,520	\$8,568
	W. as % of M.	76.0	65.8	86.1	56.5
Bonavista- Trinity North	Men	2,895	\$36,876	6,615	\$15,083
	Women	2,200	\$22,889	5,015	\$7,305
	W. as % of M.	76.0	62.1	75.8	48.4
Bonavista town	Men	220	\$28,088	625	\$17,441
	Women	200	\$26,719	510	\$8,560
	W. as % of M.	90.9	95.1	81.6	49.1

Source: Census of Canada 1996: <www.statcan.estat2.ca>

Table 6: Annual Total Income of Men and Women by Age, Bonavista Peninsula, 1994

Age	Annual Personal Income	Percent of Gender		Chi-sq p.	eta
		Men	Women		
Under 30 (N=116)	<\$1,000	30.4	26.7	0.831 (NS)	0.01
	\$1,000-6,999	30.4	40.0		
	\$7,000-14,999	23.2	18.3		
	\$15,000-24,999	8.9	6.7		
	\$25,000 & over	7.1	8.3		
30-49 (N=185)	<\$1,000	5.7	9.3	0.000	0.311
	\$1,000-6,999	4.5	22.7		
	\$7,000-14,999	36.4	44.3		
	\$15,000-24,999	31.8	15.5		
	\$25,000 & over	21.6	8.2		
50 & over (N=153)	<\$1,000	1.5	15.9	0.000	0.422
	\$1,000-6,999	6.2	21.6		
	\$7,000-14,999	50.8	52.3		
	\$15,000-24,999	27.7	6.8		
	\$25,000 & over	13.8	3.4		

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