

Home and Away: Circular Migration, Mobile Technology, and Changing Perceptions of Home
and Community in Deindustrial Cape Breton

by

Mark McIntyre
B.A., University of Victoria, 2016

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Supervisory Committee

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

This thesis engages deindustrialization as a lived process and applies the concepts of precarity as they relate to communities navigating processes of deindustrialization. Through ethnographic interviews and participant observation research conducted over the summer of 2017 I examine the lived experiences of circular migrant labourers and their significant others, who live in the former coal town of Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, Canada, as they engage in strategies to keep their families in the community. I explore the continuities of industrialization, deindustrialization and labour; the history of work in the region; the present sacrifices that families make to stay in the communities; why families stay; and what they circular migrant labourers and their significant others imagine the future of the region will look like as they raise their children there. Further, as circular migrant labourers are away from home and their families for significant amounts of time, often at irregular schedules, I ask about the strategies that labourers and their families use to eke out a living in a marginalized community. I ask participants what it is like to have to leave the community for work; what it is like to stay behind while your significant other is away for work; what is it like to be home together; and what strategies are used to keep in touch. One such strategy is the use of internet communication technologies to negotiate physical and social distance. However, these technologies do not always necessarily make up for time spent away from loved ones.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to everyone who is trying to get by. Though you may feel alone, you are not. We are in this mess together.

Chapter 1

*In the isle of Cape Breton my father did stay
And his father's father before
Fishing the banks and digging for coal
From the mines that don't give no more ore*

*And I'm goin' down the road, boys
Seeking what I'm owed, boys
And I know it must get better
If far enough I go*

– Bruce Cockburn, 1970

It's a muggy June Sunday in Glace Bay. Just a week ago when I arrived in May I had to put the heat in my rented company house room but now my t-shirt is stained with sweat as I walk through downtown toward the McKinley house. Tim Horton's is a swarming hive of activity as people go in and out greeting some people and ignoring others. Younger folks mix with older men and women as they sip their double doubles. Downtown Glace Bay, a once thriving Commercial street is largely empty of businesses. There are a few chain restaurants and pharmacies, and an oddly placed but thriving hip bar serving craft beer and wine attempting to make a go of it in the land of Coors lite and rum. Large empty spaces pock the downtown's core like missing teeth, as when a building burns down (everyone tells me it is arson scams for insurance) they are replaced with green sod and some park benches while weeds creep in to claim the space. Dandelions and other green things poke out of the crumbling concrete sidewalks while elephant ears (a large invasive Asian plant species once used for privacy hedges) colonizes the edges of empty lots waiting for the public works labourers to perform their annual mowing and clipping. The air, damp and humid, smells of fish from the fish plant and the tang of fried chicken. There is no bus service on Sunday and I wonder how the foreign exchange students (ESL) get around or what they even do on the weekends. My housemate Harry, a 20 something Chinese student, spends days at a time at friends' apartments where they play online video games with other exchange students here on Cape Breton but also with friends at home in

China. I asked him about his online gaming but he was not too keen on hanging out with me. As I walk through town a steady flow of one-way traffic passes me by as men on the corner watch and wave to their friends. Drivers honk and wave back but also stare at me, a long-haired and bearded stranger, with curiosity. Toward the end of my stay in Glace Bay these same drivers, used to seeing me, would also honk and wave— still a stranger but a familiar enough sight as I daily haunt the path of the grocery store, bus stop, tavern, and my participants' homes.

As I reach the McKinley house I see several children playing in the yard and around the house. Bikes are left out on their sides, and a few toys lie waiting on the sidewalks for their owners to claim them before the night sets in. Judith and Daniel welcome me into their house and hand me a bottle of beer, Alexander Keith's, the iconic beer of Nova Scotia. After explaining my project and going through the requisite paperwork concerning consent and ethics, I turn on my audio recorder and we start to chat about their lives as a family that depends on Daniel's circular¹ labour to Alberta resource extraction sites. After I ask several questions Daniel tells me that he's actually leaving for work tomorrow. This statement seems to bring a heaviness into the room as reality sets in and covers the conversation like the dampness of the humid air. - An excerpt from my fieldnotes, June 4th, 2017.

Introduction

This thesis aims to explore the lived experiences of circular migrants and their families who call the economically depressed community of Glace Bay Nova Scotia home. Situated in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality, Glace Bay is a former mining town currently in a process of

¹ Circular migration refers to the temporary and repetitive movement of a migrant worker between home and host areas.

deindustrialization. Glace Bay's residents are attempting to navigate the precarity² and austerity that accompanies deindustrialization as they negotiate ideas of labour, work, community, and home. As Canadian neoliberal policies have resulted in the closure of traditional sites of labour – in Glace Bay's case, coal mines which were in operation from the late 1800s to 2000- navigating precarity and austerity for many Glace Bay families means that many men in households must leave for extended periods of time to work in resource extraction sites across Canada, such as Fort McMurray's tar sands. Meanwhile the majority of wives and partners of circular migrant men stay in the community and perform public and private labour at work or in their homes. I draw upon the months of ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in Glace Bay, beginning May 31st and ending August 5th, to explore and understand the life projects that those engaged in circular migration, as migrants and as those who stay in the community, take on as they attempt to make a life for themselves and their families. I explore the phenomenon of Cape Breton circular migration as a strategy to maneuver the boundaries and obstacles of deindustrialization, such as loss of community, estrangement of families, economic austerity, and permanent outmigration, and how families understand this labour situation as necessary for (and inseparable from) both community and their family's survival. Further, I examine how mobile technology and social media are used by Cape Breton circular migrants and their friends and families in remittance-reliant origin communities as a tool to construct and maintain relationships. I also ask how using these technologies relates to imaginations of home and community, ideas of physical and social distance, how family and community is performed over long distances through internet

² Precarity is an existence life without the promise of stability which can viewed as both a socio-economic condition and an ontological experience that is increasingly global, yet also shaped by the local histories and experiences of global capitalism (Tsing 2015; Millar 2014). For an in-depth discussion of precarity, please see chapter 1.

communication technologies, and how this the use of through internet communication technologies relates to perceptions of home and community. I also consider what the future of Glace Bay can be and how my participants imagine the future of the community for themselves and for their children.

In the following pages I discuss the global neoliberal policies of deregulation and privatization that have worked to deindustrialize communities like Glace Bay across Canada and the world. In order to situate the Cape Breton experience of labour, the links of private and public sectors, as well as the community's reliance on public private partnerships, I consider the processes of industrialization that shaped the region and forged community dependencies upon resource extraction industries. I explore ideas of precarity and social death³ that so often arise from processes of deindustrialization and consider how circular migration helps to sustain communities through remittance-based economies. I also reflect upon ideas of agency and subjectivity⁴ as they relate to my participants and their life projects. Finally, I explore my methodologies for this project before outlining the direction of the subsequent chapters.

³ Please see chapter 1 for more on the concept of social death

⁴ For a discussion on agency and subjectivity please see chapter 1

Circular Migration and Neoliberalism

Cape Breton circular migration is situated within the historical context of regional and global inequalities that have arisen through the global adoption of the neoliberal policies of deregulation, privatization, and erosions of social safety nets (Barber and Bryan 2012; Gibbs and Leech 2009; Ferguson 2011), perhaps beginning in 1990 when the Canadian government ceased supporting and paying into the unemployment insurance program, placing the responsibility on workers to fund it (Gibbs and Leech 2009:38). Neoliberal capitalism has served as a powerful mode of social reorganization since the 1970s (Barber and Bryan 2012) and global migratory patterns, for the past 30 plus years, have increasingly been tied to the economic changes brought on by this version of global capitalism (Bryan 2014). Cape Breton circular migrants are a population that is responding to neoliberal global forces, such as NAFTA and free trade in general (Gibbs and Leech 2009; Ferguson 2011), but also precarious work and living situations that are tied to global fossil fuel markets and shifting environmental regulations that are consistently in a state of flux (Gibbs and leech 2009:88-106). One participant explained the precariousness related to market ties as,

“It’s tied to the stock market and that’s why it fluctuates so much there. [...] Literally I could – in the middle of this interview – I could get a call right now – ‘could you be here in 2 days?’ ‘Yup’. Pack everything and out the door. I literally live in a suitcase. As far as planning life, there is no plan. Planning life is planning to not be on EI.”

As deregulation, privatization, and social safety nets fall by the wayside, due to political forces being persuaded by market dictation⁵ (Ortner 2016:56), individuals and communities experience *precarity*, defined by Judith Butler (Butler 2009:25) as “the politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks . . . becoming differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death”.

Anna Tsing defines precarity as “life without the promise of stability” (Tsing 2015:2). For Tsing, precarity is not an exception for contemporary societies, but the norm. This signifies a lack of hope for the future for present-day precariat, as they “lack handrails for anchoring the future as well” (Tsing 2015:2).

David Harvey (Harvey in Knight 2015:156) states that neoliberal projects which dismantle forms of social solidarity, privatize public institutions, and disassemble the welfare state, create groups of persons who are either included or excluded from the free market. These excluded persons are often blamed for living on the margins of society and blamed for their own lot in life. These technologies of “millennial capitalism” (Shaw and Byler 2016) – which could be considered as more brutal form of neoliberal capitalism as many of the social safety nets have been removed or significantly diminished - place the fault of precarity squarely on the shoulders of those most explicitly afflicted, constructing people’s circumstances of under/unemployment and poverty as the result of an individual choice, and as a direct result of a person’s moral

⁵ For an in-depth discussion of the links between Canada energy policies, global market fluctuations, and the social fallout of global neoliberal capitalism see Gibbs, Terry and Gary Leech. 2009. Chapter 3 The New Economy in Cape Breton and Atlantic Canada. *In* The failure of Global Capitalism: From Cape Breton to Columbia and Beyond. Sydney: Cape Breton University Press.

delinquency and failure to manage their day to day lives, instead of as a correlate of the structural violence that is inherent in neoliberal economies (Shaw and Byler 2016).

While precarity is used to understand the material, existential, and social assemblages of uncertainty that continually form and reform insecurity, Ann Allison (2012:349) also tells us that precarity can become the fuel for “social change, new forms of collective coming-together, even political revolution”.

Kathleen Millar (2014) sees precarity as a condition of post-Fordist Capitalism that exists in the fragile environments of neoliberal labour and the resultant circumstances of anxiety, desperation, and risk experienced by precarious labour situations. She argues that in many countries and for many people precarity has always been the experience of the working poor and thus “full employment nonetheless remained the exception” (2014:35). Millar sees precarity as both a socio-economic condition and an ontological experience that is increasingly a global phenomenon, but also one that is shaped by the local histories and experiences of global capitalism (Millar 2014).

For middle class workers prior to deindustrialization, work provided “not only an income but also social belonging, a public identity, a sense of well-being, and future aspirations” (Millar 2014). Experiments in neoliberalism pushed out Fordism and Keynesian ideologies and pulled apart social ties and individuals’ senses of place in the world (Millar 2014), reminiscent of what Anne Allison (2012:348-349) refers to as social precarity “a condition of becoming and feeling insecure in life that extends to one’s disconnectedness from a sense of social community” experienced by those who contend with irregular and unstable employment.

As Cape Breton communities were built around coal and steel it was a vital actor in the networks and entanglements that emerged between it and other actors. Life in the steel plants, the mines, and the coal towns could very well be construed as always being precarious, yet there remains a nostalgia for the industrial past. “When the mines were open everyone had money; life was hard but it was good; men supported their families; people had a future” (Eddy in Ackerman 2006). Deindustrialization has brought Cape Breton to a more precarious position in Canada and the world, and it is a lack of a foreseeable future which is breeding anxiety for the region. But to talk about the precarity that arises from deindustrialization, we must first consider how Cape Breton was industrialized and how Cape Breton communities are linked to industry.

Industrialization in Cape Breton

Cape Breton is a small island located off the north-eastern tip of mainland Nova Scotia. The island is inhabited by 98,722 people, according to 2016 census data (Statistics Canada 2016), with heritages that range from indigenous Mi’kmaq, decedents of Scottish, Irish, Italian, and eastern European immigrants, African Canadian and American, Acadians, (Gibbs and Leech 2009:13; MacKinnon 2016:11) and increasingly, a number of international English as a Second Language students, mostly of Chinese or Indian origin.

Cape Breton - like much of Canada in the early 20th century – relied on the exploitation of its natural resources for export to drive the regional economy. While primary industries relating to the fishing, mining, and lumber sectors were the economy’s mainstay, secondary industries - steel plants and fish processing plants - were established in coal mining and coastal areas, respectively (Gibbs and Leech 2009:20).

Cape Breton’s experience of liberal era of capitalism saw an alliance between government, both provincial and federal, and corporations as public funds, as well as public

lands, were awarded to the private sector in order to facilitate industrialization (Gibbs and Leech 2009:20-21). It is in this environment in which the original industrial coal and steel plants were established, providing private owners 99 year leases which granted five hundred acres of waterfront property, access to 65 million gallons of free water per day, and a 30 year tax exempt status (MacKinnon 2016:10; Gibbs and Leech 2009:20-21).

Industrial plants radically changed the nature of communities, transforming physical and cultural landscapes into sites of resource extraction and production, as well as company owned residential neighborhoods that housed the booming population. As industries developed housing around their industrial sites, company towns ensured a dependence of workers on the company. Therefore, working and living conditions were interconnected with workers' job performance (Gibbs and Leech 2009:21).

Industrialization also inextricably linked the well-being of its citizenry to the vicissitudes of industry. As Cape Breton's extraction industries were principally export based, market forces largely dictated the lives of workers and their families, a fact made blatantly evident through adventures in neoliberal capitalism.

Deindustrialization

Canada, and the United States, adopted neoliberal ideologies in the 1980s and attempted to dismantle Fordist labour practices by implementing so called free-market policies which shifted production to the global south, allowing politicians, corporate bodies, and other actors to benefit from access to inexpensive cheap labour and cheaper natural resources (Gibbs and Leech 2007:36-37). While the Atlantic Canadian fishery devastation in the 1990s due to the collapse of the northern cod and which left roughly 40,000 people out of work (Corbin 2002) surely

devastated the region, it was the signing of NAFTA, which went into effect in 1994, that dealt the more significant blow as it triggered a rise in imported steel and coal (Gibbs and Leech 2009:16). This forged a new reliance on cheaper foreign coal and steel imported from around the globe and specifically places such as Poland, Venezuela, Japan, Russia, South Korea, Brazil, and Mexico (Gibbs and Leech 2007:42). Subsequently, the Sydney Steel Corporation, located in Cape Breton's largest population centre, Sydney, shut down in 2001 (Gibbs and Leech 2009:41; MacKinnon 2016:247-255).

The federal government purchased Cape Breton's financially struggling coalmines in the 1960s with a mandate to keep the coal mines open for the next fifteen years while restructuring Cape Breton's economy to reduce its reliance on coal. Nova Scotia Power, itself privatized in 1992 (MacKinnon 2016:62), guaranteed that Cape Breton's mines would be decommissioned as Nova Scotia Power began sourcing its coal from Columbia (Gibbs and Leech 2009:45). Consequently, Cape Breton's coal mines were slowly shut down but appropriate restructuring never took place. The last mine shut down in 2001 (Gibbs and Leech 2009).

In lieu of living up to the mandate promised to its citizenry, we may read the federal and provincial governments failure to restructure the economy before commencing Cape Breton's deindustrialization project as deploying punitive governance: "the proliferation of forms of violence by the state against its citizens" (Lancaster in Ortner 2016:56). Consider historian Lachlan Mackinnon's (2016:284) statement, "The plant did not just close, it had *been* closed - by the province, by (Premier) John Hamm, by Halifax." Coal and steel plants were not simply shut down, these were carefully orchestrated events, that took much consideration and planning. Neoliberals saw government ownership of industrial plants operating outside of the purview of

the public good, even though these industrial plants provided jobs for thousands of workers and create spinoff employment throughout the community and bolster the economy (Gibbs and Leech 2009). It is hard to construe the elimination of these jobs as anything but violence against its citizenry, a sort of “war on the poor” (Ortner 2015:58-59).

While unemployment rates in the region increased dramatically after the steel plant and coal mine closures, a combination of outmigration and the creation of new low wage service jobs, mainly call centres, reduced the number of unemployed (Gibbs and Leech 2009:76). In order to obtain the cheapest English-speaking labour force, call centres typically target the most economically depressed regions of North America, ensuring a surplus of cheap workers to service sector jobs that pay below average wages and offer little to no job security. As Cape Breton experienced mass unemployment, Nova Scotia adopted a business-friendly persona that professed to be open to grant corporate cuts in exchange for a few thousand call centre jobs that paid just above minimum wage, with one former steelworker stating that his pay dropped from \$16.00 an hour to \$8.75, and that he and his colleagues were openly struggling. (Gibbs and Leech 2007:75-81)



Photo 1: A “Now Hiring” sign outside of Convergys, a Glace Bay Call Centre⁶. (Photo by Mark McIntyre 2017)



Photo 2: Convergys Call Centre from my bedroom window a few blocks away. (Photo by Mark McIntyre 2017)

⁶ Interestingly, this call centre is housed in the former offices of the Cape Breton Development Corporation (DEVCO).

While a coal mine opened in 2017 in Donkin, a small community neighboring Glace Bay, it employs a very small and limited work force. Friends and participants in my study also told me that most employees in the mine are from Newfoundland and the United States, because this generation of Cape Breton labourers do not possess relevant skills or training that translate to the modern mine. As respondents noted,

“All of our miners are long retired. They worked with a pick and shovel. Now it’s all technology. A lot of people think they’d get hired because they have the family history experience. But machines are doing it now and they [workers] are controlling them. Like me, I don’t know how to dig coal.” – Teddy, a 32-year-old Atlantic offshore oil worker

“It makes sense to have those people [US and Newfoundland workers]. You can’t just throw a bunch of Cape Bretoners in the mine and hope they figure it out”. - Anonymous man at a coffee shop.

During my fieldwork research the Kameron company who operate the mine was rumoured to be looking to hire 100 workers for their wash station, and I met with one family who moved back to Glace Bay from Alberta to take advantage of work in the mine. However, around 50 people have been laid off since 2017, including a man from a family who moved back to Glace Bay so he could work “at home” (Cape Breton Post 2017).

When I asked my participants and other locals what they thought of the mine, some told me that that it will be great for economy and the community as the company offers miners \$25 an hour for a six-day work week and is planning on investing heavily in the community. One man, a 33-year-old recent hire at the Donkin coal mine told me “they [the company] are all about giving back! They already bought a new fan for the [Glace Bay] Miner’s Museum and I heard they are planning on opening up new stores.” This comment about new stores reminded me of the region’s history as a company town when BESCO owned the entire town in the 1920s and workers and their families lived on credit to the company and would cut off access to food, coal,

and electricity in the winter if the workers mobilized for better wages and working conditions (Miner's Museum and White Lelou Media Inc 2017).

One participant, a 32-year-old former circular migrant, told me that he did not trust the company, "this company has a history of going to the places with a down-and-out population, on welfare and drugs, places where they'll just beg for work. This company has a take and rape mentality." Other participants, though they thought \$25 an hour was a good wage for "around here", said that it would be a considerable pay cut for them if they stayed to work in the mine. Other people, such as Daniel, a 37-year-old instrumentalist control technician states who primarily works in Alberta, have little to no interest in working underground as their fathers and grandfathers, uncles and family friends had, "the underground thing, no it doesn't interest me at all. The history of the mine is not something I have a lot of interest at all".

While jobs do exist in Cape Breton, their configurations resemble Redfield's (2005:34 in Feldman 2017:50) "minimalist biopolitics," which seek to keep "people alive, rather than help them thrive". Indeed, this arrangement of precarious labour works to create a permanent underclass of disposable labourers potentially rendering them "socially dead" (Allison 2012:358).

This concept of social death speaks to the failure of the nation state to invest in its citizenry and foster a sense of belonging. For members of the middle and working class, work provided a public identity, a sense of social belonging which fosters an investment into community and the future (Allison 2012:358-359; Millar 2014). The sense of precarity that has arisen from Cape Breton's deindustrialization, has disempowered the community (Morgan in Ackerman 2006).

“The days when you had 15,000 people working in coal mines in cape Breton, we can never get that back, but it will always be with us in terms of the culture that developed around it. When so many people go to work together, have virtually identical salary levels, virtually identical homes, and people are tied here – people want to live here. But there is a struggle going on in the community, a struggle to survive.” CBRM Mayor John Morgan (Morgan in Ackerman 2006)

Curiously, the sense of citizenry and belonging seems to be forged outside of the community in work camps and job sites. As one respondent, Brett, a 32-year-old former tar sands worker, told me,

“some of these guys I work with are closer to me than my closest friends... closer than my family. [...] I’m with them 24/7. Eat, sleep, shit. Work all day everyday side by side each other. Go back to your room have a drink together. That’s your best friends that you’re working with. Your actual best family. Guys argue and fight but that’s family. That happens.”

This parallels how Glace Bay’s retired miners talk about camaraderie in the mine, as one miner told a tour group at Glace Bay’s Miner’s Museum,

“the older guys looked after the younger guys down there. You always made sure that you showed up for work otherwise your buddy has to carry your load. We kept a sense of humour about it all, we all had nicknames and all that. I’d go back... I miss the men but not the work. Though some liked the work.”

Deindustrialization and out-migration has weakened the social and economic fabric of the region, resulting in negative implications for remaining families and the community at large (Harling Stalker and Phyne 2010), such as school closures and reduced funding for social programs, and as well as increasingly deteriorating infrastructures⁷. In my fieldwork I had many

⁷ For instance, in 2016 the Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board voted to close 17 schools by 2021 due to a 46% decline in enrollment. Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board votes to close schools CBC News Posted: Apr 12, 2016. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/cape-breton-school-closures-1.3532757>.

conversations with people who were frustrated with hospital and school closures, the crumbling roads and public infrastructure, and the general lack of amenities. The community also continues to suffer through an opioid addiction epidemic which can be linked to high cancer rates, precarious lifeways, mine injuries, and general poverty - earning the town of Glace Bay the nickname Cottonland due to the abundance⁸ of OxyContin use in the town (Ackerman 2006). As such, hypodermic needles are often found in parks and school yards, as well as in the bathrooms of coffee shops and restaurants. As one participant told me as we chatted in her home,

“There were needles on the sidewalk across the street last year. It’s still bad. Kids’ school around playground – fences, bushes - where kids play. They do it [shoot up] down the street and just throw them out the window, syringes. Should have safe needle places. They might have one in Tim Hortons, a big bucket. I don’t go to that Tim Hortons.”

⁸ The prevalence of OxyContin seems to be related to the high rates of Cancer in Glace Bay which can be related to lifestyle choices and as well as exposure to coal dust in the mines and as it burns



Photo 3: A hypodermic needle discarded to the side of a walking path in a Glace Bay park. (Photo by Mark McIntyre 2017)

Much of the out-migration is permanent, some circular migration to resource extraction sites (locations in Alberta/Newfoundland/Saskatchewan/Arctic Circle, as well as Atlantic ocean offshore oil rigs etc.) does occur, with labourers performing shift work where they spend multiple weeks on site (this varies depending on the company, employee position, and the operation) and flying back and forth between the work site and Cape Breton (Gibbs and Leech 2009; Ferguson 2011; Harling Stalker and Phyne 2010).

This labour situation has both positive and negative effects on communities (Storey 2010). On one hand, it offers workers well-paid jobs without the need to permanently leave origin communities, leading to spin off employment and remittances that supports the origin

communities. On the other hand, circular migration puts considerable stress on families, as distance creates a significant obstacle to preserving close knit-family and community ties (Gibbs and Leech 2009:75; Storey 2010), an irony since one of the main reasons (however, there are other reasons such as monetary, lifestyle, sense of home and place, as well as, despite the areas hardships and poverty, a safe space to raise their children) that workers take part in this form of labour migration is to maintain family and community connections and ease the social dislocation that may be experienced from moving away from Cape Breton permanently (Fergusson 2011:113).

Additionally, a remittance-based economy is not a practical long-term solution to Cape Breton's socioeconomic problems that, in part, have resulted from the shutdown of the region's principal industries and historical mismanagement of the region's economy. For a time, oil sands jobs seemed relatively stable as the industry experienced a substantial period of expansion between 1996 and 2008. However, these jobs are highly precarious as they are tied to the instability of global oil markets, as Rudy says

“110% it's all dependent on the price of oil. (M: do you have a say in when you want to work) in the 1st 10 years of my career I could almost pick and choose, it was amazing. People got spoiled, especially with the Fort Mac region. People literally got spoiled they thought they could go there with no legs and 1 arm and still make 45 dollars an hour but... and it was almost that way... but now it's pretty much dead. It's a ghost town and even after the fires it is even worse. So... Yeah and 2008 was a total shit show of a shutdown, because it's all oil dependent. It's tied to the stock market and that's why it fluctuates so much there.”

Agency and Subjectivity

Anthropologist Nelson Fergusson (2011) notes, the economic downturn of 2007/2008 and the resulting recession had a powerful effect on the circular migration patterns among Cape Bretoners; As crude prices dropped (Fergusson 2011:114) so too did the stability of oil sands employment in Alberta. Workers often found the projects in which they worked had been scaled back or cancelled altogether. While workers grasped the precariousness of their employment situations and realized their newfound contingent status, they began to personally take on the various financial costs of mobile work, such as paying their own travel expenses and finding their own housing, costs that had previously been shouldered by their employer. Further, they began enrolling in private training programs in order to improve their chance at being employable (Fergusson 2011). Workers also used their phones as a rolodex, keeping the names and numbers of past and present coworkers running through their contact list and sending messages out when they are looking for work and fielding calls from coworkers in at the work site while they are at home on their time off answering questions about work-related situations.

We might imagine this as an example of circular migrant workers reacting to the particularities of neoliberal capitalism which promote a “radical individuality, self responsibility, and independence” (Shaw and Bylar 2016) as they engage in technologies of the self - “the sets of individual practices through which citizens must discipline themselves that Foucault has argued became a requirement of neoliberal regimes” (Knight 2015:157) – and take on the responsibility of self management, participating in the neoliberal meritocratic project (Knight 2015:183-184).

However, we may also consider this as de Certeau’s (1984 in Guell 2012:520) “tactics” – “creative tools for the weak” – in which the circular migrant workers creatively negotiate the

constellations of precarious labour environments, making do (Dolson 2015) by utilizing whatever tools are available to them to ensure that they are integrated into the labour market in ways that suit their situational convenience.

I apply the concept of tactics to Cape Breton circular migrant workers as it allows us to address the subjectivity and life experiences that inform the life projects of circular migrant labourers and their families, and allows for a richer imagining of agency as a negotiation between actors.

For John Robb (2010), the capacity to act emerges through participatory and historical relationships with other persons, things, and structures within a field of action. Actors act according to culturally specific structures (habitus) which represents a set of possibilities and challenges. These participatory relationships create and recreate ideas and structures; agents act in a dialect with these structures as they improvise throughout their lives (Ingold and Hallam 2007). Agents may conform to the doxa, operate on its boundaries, or push it until it is something else entirely (Robb 2010:501-502). In this regard, then, we may consider that “people are not just the sum of the forces constructing and constraining them” (Biehl and Locke 2010:332) but are active agents who take up particular self-making and life projects. Cape Breton migrant labourers and their families utilize the opportunities afforded by circular migration labour to navigate precarity in neoliberalism so that they can raise their families and keep roots in Cape Breton.

Mobile Technology and Mediating Distance

Mobile technology and social media affords an avenue that potentially mediates long distance tension as it allows for synchronous and asynchronous communication experiences that transcend location and permits people to remain in the communicative sphere and maintain

connections to their origin communities, no matter their physical and geographical distance (Keough 2012; Miller and Sinanan 2014). Further, mobile technology and social media allows labour migrants to preserve connections to Cape Breton Island and work sites in order to ease the transitions between communities and work contracts, creating and maintaining social capital while sustaining links to origin communities and work sites (Keough 2012). As such, keeping in touch through media carries significant economic value as it eases the re-establishment of family, community, housing, and employment for those who transition between home and work.

However, while mobile technology and social media afford a stretching of intimacy and the establishment of an absent presence (Barber and Bryan 2012:231), connected though physically distant through internet communication technologies, mobile technologies may also produce further anxieties as workers and their families are obliged to participate in the double duty of physical and emotional work as they constantly consider schedules, routines, and time zones (Bryan 2014) and perform social labour in two separate spheres: performing social labour expectations through internet communication technologies while they simultaneously navigate social labour expectations while on the job or at home in origin communities (Barber and Bryan 2012). Moreover, frequent long-distance communication may contribute to anxiety, grief, and longing for individuals as it acts as a reminder of physical and geographical distance between communication partners (Madianou 2017:105). As one participant Teddy, a 32-year-old father of 2 young children who works 3 weeks on and 3 weeks off on an offshore oil rig, told me,

“I’ll tell you one thing that I don’t like and I tell the wife not to do it. People be away at work and their wife will post something on Facebook something like, ‘you’re missing a good time here at the BBQ drinking beers’ or something like that, right. But they don’t want to hear that. They know you’re doing it. [...] So people kind of like rub it in.”

The following section details the methodologies that I engaged with while conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Glace Bay.

Methodology

For the purpose of this research I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in the town of Glace Bay between May 31st and August 5th, 2017. Glace Bay is a former mining town that currently relies heavily on the remittances sent back by circular migrant labourers as well as seasonal fishing and an American owned call centre for its economic survival. The town also relies on English As A Second Language (ESL) students who largely come from China and India to learn English because companies tout the town as one that is mainly homogeneously English and thus a great place to learn English. These students rent rooms and apartments from locals and their spending power has transformed what kind of foods are available in grocery stores (more Asian style foods) and has increased the costs of available rooms. I rented a room in one of Glace Bay's infamous company houses which were formerly leased to miners and their families by the coal company and then later sold off as part of a new union contract with the company.

Company houses, the homes of former industrial workers (initially Dominion Steel and Coal Corporation railway workers and later coal miners), are iconic cultural landmarks that signify the community's ties to industry and its beginnings as a company town. Company houses are famous for the sense of place that they invoke, as location – in the heart the former industrial area of downtown next to the railyards and now walking distance from the call centre, their design, lived in character, alterations over time, and even their decline are unique to the region and reflect and reveal the histories and lived aspects of the community. However, they are

infamous for these reasons too as they signify poverty, industrial decline, ruination, and prolific community and industrial abandonment.

These houses, duplexes, are split down the middle designed for 2 families to live in, which often results in two different paint jobs, mismatched windows and roofing tiles. My live-in landlord was himself a former circular migrant labourer who used to work in Fort McMurray as a safety manager (until he got hurt on the job, which is ironic as he was in charge of others' safety concerns) and bought the company house for a few thousand dollars that he earned from working "out West" in 2016. He often told me about the amount of work he put into the house to fix it up. The walls, he said, were yellow from decades of tobacco smoking and the use of a coal stove. The house is far from being fully renovated but it is nice to see these homes getting new life as many houses around town have been boarded up and abandoned as people die or move to

communities that offer access to steady employment and other services.



Photo 4: An abandoned and boarded up company house in the No. 2 (named after the Dominion Number 2 colliery) neighborhood of Glace Bay (Photo by Mark McIntyre 2017)



Photo 5: A company house in the No. 2 neighborhood (named after the Dominion Number 2 colliery) of Glace Bay. One side is boarded up and abandoned while the other side is inhabited. (Photo by Mark McIntyre 2017)

My landlord told me that many landlords prefer ESL students to locals as they view locals as potential drug addicts or serial welfare abusers. I was welcomed as I presented myself as a student pursuing a master's degree in Anthropology and was viewed as a "come from away" as locals dub outsiders. As such, I heard a lot about the shortcomings of other tenants – all locals – with stories beginning with "People from here" and ending with "are all fucked"; "are all druggies"; "are all out to get something for nothing". However, I also told my landlord that I had grown up in the region and was familiar with some of the community's experiences with precarity and poverty, I also explained this to participants. While I presented myself as an anthropology MA student, I also presented myself as someone who grew up in the community,

knowing some of what has been going on there but certainly not as an expert as I have not lived in Glace Bay for 17 years.

I spent a lot of time walking around the town trying to get a feel of its rhythm and hung out in local community hubs such as grocery stores, McDonald's, and the town's tavern, but would also often take public transit to the neighboring city, Sydney, noting the differences and similarities between the two locations. In these spaces I would observe and participate in the mundane activities of daily life, shopping for groceries, having lunch, or coffee while noting and participating in conversations that locals would have regarding work both at home and in migration scenarios (offshore oil and Fort McMurray were both hot topics of conversation). It seems that everyone in Glace Bay has some connection to circular labour migration.

I also attended community events, such as Canada Day celebrations that featured local musical talents, like pop-rapper JoFo and MC/DJ Mr. Mack – both of whom are actively involved in trying to better their community and who I spent time with often. I also attended memorial activities held at Glace Bay's Miner's Museum to celebrate its 50th anniversary. Of these activities at the museum, a screening of "The Mining Day" (Miner's Museum and White Lelou Media Inc 2017), which traces the history of Cape Breton's organized labour movement and tells stories about early and more contemporary life in the mining town - as told by retired miners and historians -, was particularly pertinent as it allowed me to connect the town's past reliance on local industrial extractions to its current situations relying on extraction labour in fly-in/fly-out work scenarios.

I found Museum's 50th anniversary celebration curious because while it was meant to share the region's history with a new generation, the room was largely empty except for a few tourists and older people. Indeed, I, a 35 year old anthropology graduate student, was the

youngest person there by close to 30 years. As I sat through the films scribbling notes the old women next to me joked about the early photos of miners in the films being their fathers or husbands; “Oh! I’m not that old, dear!,” one cackled. Another asked me why I was writing in my notebook. I told her I was just taking notes and she remarked, “Well good for you, dear. My kids don’t even know how to write, they are always on their cell phones! Playing games! Good for you.”

Having lived in Glace Bay from age 10 to 18, where I grew up and went to primary and secondary school, I have some friends and contacts in the area. I contacted these individuals and let them know that I was around and what I was doing. These contacts and friends invited me to parties and social get-togethers where I was able to meet and recruit individuals who either agreed to be participants or directed me to those who might be interested, thus deploying a snowball technique.

Everyone in the town that I spoke to knew someone who actively participates in circular migration, commonly referring to the practice as either “the back and forth thing”, “the two and two”, or simply “going out west”. I had many informal conversations with people in these situations where they shared anecdotal stories and personal reflections regarding migration, labour, and the communicative scenarios that they and their friends and families are participating in.

After parties and get togethers I wrote notes and reflections regarding the topics of the conversations that I had. Even without my prompting, conversations often turned to the difficulties of finding employment, labour migration, and gossip about people on welfare and people who “take advantage” of the system. Workers have great pride in their work and the fact

that they have jobs and can provide for their families. I am grateful for the invitations to these parties and social gatherings as they allowed me to meet and recruit people for my study.

I conducted formal (sit down) semi-structured interviews⁹ with 12 people in 3 groups: 5 men who are circular migrant labourers but currently are at home (group 1), 4 women who stay in the community while their male partners go away for work (group 2), and 3 people who used to be involved in the circular migration process – 1 as a partner of someone who would travel for work and 2 who themselves used to be circular labour migrants - and have since found work at home in Glace Bay (group 3).

I constructed my interview questions with a goal to talk mostly about participant's use of internet communication technologies. My questions had room to talk about ideas of home, what it is like to leave, or have someone leave, etc. but I initially wanted to talk about keeping in touch. However, I quickly learned that my participants had more to talk about than keeping in touch and they often spent a lot of time reflecting upon other, though related topics, such as the future of Glace Bay and the community as a whole.

In designing my research questions, and certainly in our conversations, I drew upon the work of Campbell and Lassiter and their *Doing Ethnography Today* (2015) manual and am grateful for their discussion of interviews and conversations (Campbell and Lassiter 2015:84-112). With their writing in mind I tried to be present in a conversation, rather than the conductor of an interview. Further, as my participants spoke about their experiences and priorities, I reflected upon Campbell and Lassiter's (2015) chapter concerning emergent design and

⁹ Please see appendix 1 for sample interview questions

attempted to have the research take on a dynamic quality, to embrace the shifts and complexities that occurred (Campbell and Lassiter 2015:32).

All formal interviews, except for one, took place in the homes of participants. The exception took place in a roadside tavern in the neighboring community of Dominion. Participants are white cisgendered individuals between the ages of 30 and 40. Half of the participants had children that they supported. Three participants in group 1 were in long term relationships with three participants in group 2. Participants in group 1 had training through vocational school specifically for the resource extraction industry. Participants for group 2 had credentials from post-secondary education that resulted in some sort of professional position, such as teacher, accountant, support worker. All participants were explained the study and the consent process in compliance to University of Victoria's ethical guidelines. I presented and explained letters of consent to participants left them a copy of the letter of consent that included my contact information (along with that of the office of the University of Victoria's Human Ethics Research Board and of my research supervisor). I began, and ended, each interview session by giving participants a chance to ask me any questions they may have about me and my research and to ask them if they felt that there was anything else that they wanted to add or to talk about. All interviews were audio-recorded and I took hand written notes when possible, and not socially awkward, in order to document features of the conversation that seemed to be especially pertinent to me, to note follow-up questions, and also to register details that will not be captured by the audio recording – specifics such as body gestures and the general atmosphere surrounding the interview. In order to preserve the anonymity of my participants, all participants have been given pseudonyms (they were given the chance to choose their own, but each participant left it up to me to choose) and identifying traits have been either altered or left out. I

am extremely grateful for my participants' cooperation, patience, and their generosity in sharing intimate details of their lives.

While I attempted to understand the individual life projects, worldviews, and ontologies of my participants, I recognize that the information that they share with me is framed in the questions and queries that I bring to our interviews and that my *just being there* may reframe the answers and behaviour that they engage in while I am present. Further, my positioning as a researcher with a background of growing up in the community may provide a specific bias to the line of questioning that I brought to the interviews.

Bruno Latour (2005:32) notes that researchers must follow the actors and not define what constitutes the social in advance of research. "Actors do the sociology for the sociologists and sociologists learn from the actors what makes up their set of associations" (Latour 2005:32). Actors are the experts, and thus we should let them teach us. As such, whenever possible I asked my participants if I was on the right track in my questions and to correct any predispositions I may have had. I hope this also has made the work a more mutual construction. However, with my biases and subjective understandings considered I recognize that my results may differ from other researchers with distinct relationships with Cape Breton, Glace Bay, and its inhabitants.

I imagine ethnographers as actors who immerse themselves into places and spaces and act as transducers (Helmreich 2007), translating what it means to be in these spaces and what life is like for our participants. We speak with our participants and engage with them in their communities but then translate their stories through our own understandings, biases and goals. These biases are not inherently bad. If they are reflected upon they may bring a knowledge set that would not be accessible otherwise (Haraway 1988).

To for me to understand the use of internet communication technologies in the lives of my participants as they negotiate precarity and the physical and social distances brought on by circular migration labour schemes, participants and I each followed one another on the various social media platforms that they used. These platforms varied among participants as some were heavy social media users, utilizing Facebook and Instagram and texting through their mobile phones, while others preferred text messaging from their mobile phones. Following participants online allowed me to engage with their activities and juxtapose what they said they did and what they actually did which permitted me to talk with participants about their online activity and habits in a more nuanced and understanding way, as I also participated in their online lives.

Regarding data assembled from online sources, I had some ethical concerns as data may crisscross private and public spheres. As Malin Sveningsson Elm (2009) posits, recent digital media genres have made people's private activities more public and thus we are more accustomed to seeing private matters performed in online public spheres (2009:85). Of course personal messages and emails can be imagined as private, but what about other more ambiguously mediated spaces, such as a Facebook feed, where individual users are able to select which audience they interact with? Further, participants may grant a researcher access to their activities online but as they exist in spheres of communication that are not easily defined as private or public, it is likely that a researcher might also engage with activities of individuals that have not consented to participate.

In response to this conundrum, prominent virtual ethnographer Tom Boellstorff (2012) says that a researcher must use their own best judgement "operating from the core principle of care" (2012:135) regarding public/private from an etic perspective, but also from the emic point

of view of our participants. Therefore, I exercised careful consideration and ongoing communication with my participants, performing consent as an ongoing process instead of a box to check off. To preserve the anonymity of my participants online presence, I black out the profile picture and name sections of their commentary and focus not on their identity but the content that they post. I initially intended to conduct interviews with migrant labourers online while they were engaged in downtime in camp at their worksite. This scenario did not happen as many labourers work long days and spend their downtime trying to talk to their family, socializing with their coworkers, or simply sleeping. I asked several participants if we could continue our conversations online while they were away and none were interested. Further, I intended for participants to keep diaries that documented their ICT (internet communication technology) use, but participants did not want to engage with this practice either due to a lack of interest, a lack of time, or simply thinking it was silly or stupid. I did not press the matter. However, several participants showed me their phones, contact lists, and even demonstrated how to use certain apps. For this, I am thankful to those individuals.

As I was away from home and my partner for the months that I was in Glace Bay, I also engaged in the use of Internet communication technologies to communicate. This allowed me to reflexively experience and consider how individuals may use these technologies to bridge physical locations to cultivate and perform relationships online. Although our experiences were obviously different this provided me some insight into the lived experiences of my participants and permitted me to empathize, to a degree, with my participants regarding communication over long distances. Further these reflections allowed me to engage with shared experiences of distance and come up with prompts for them to talk about their experiences.

In the dissemination that follows I use direct quotes from my participants whenever possible as they are the experts of what is going on in their lives and therefore I try and use their words to guide the content of this ethnography. However, as the work is absolutely framed in my own interests and because I have formulated the interview questions I must recognize that this work is not situated outside of myself and thus it is an assemblage that is shaped by my understandings, biases and predispositions (Haraway 1988). The ethnographer has an authority in having been there, following a method to gather data, as well as a voice that is valued as an authority of knowledge (Stewart 1996:74), but I could imagine the data acquired varying for those with other positionings and relationships in the community. The results of spending time and speaking with my participants are not anecdotal accounts nor representations of a whole community, but stories about people who allowed me to share in their lives (Clifford 1986:100). Despite my own biases, participants expressed many concerns and opinions that have informed and shaped this work. One participant blatantly requested that I “make sure to tell them” about certain issues that shape his experience, therefore I have, whenever possible, let participants’ own words shape the scope of the project.

Thesis Chapters

The following chapters provide an understanding of life as lived in Glace Bay for those who are somehow engaged in circular migration schemes, describing what it is like to leave the community for work, or to stay in the community as your significant other leaves. How participants understand and engage with ideas of home and community while they navigate the precarity and austerity that accompanies deindustrialization, and negotiate the realities of labour, work, and home. This thesis aims to take up these issues in 5 main chapters. This chapter has

acted as a historical, theoretical, and methodological introduction to the research and the main ideas explored throughout the succeeding work. Chapter 2 examines what it is like for people to experience circular migration; the emotional and physical labour of the women and men engaged in circular migration; why men leave for work; what it is like for women to stay in Glace Bay while their partners are away at work; family connections to labour histories and the normalization of migrant labour; and why it makes sense for families to stay in Glace Bay.

The third chapter follows suit and looks at the role of telecommunications and internet communication technologies in regard to keeping in touch and performing family and community at a distance as men travel to work and families attempt to navigate social distance. This chapter pays particular attention to the successes and failures of keeping in touch through these media being reliant upon the infrastructure of internet communication networks as well as the particularities of geographical distance, temporalities, time zones, and work and family routines. This chapter also explores the multisensorial role of visual communication across media platforms and how they are used by participants to perform family. Finally, this chapter, through a discussion of phantom ringing and vibrations, discusses how media may add to feelings of loneliness and the longing for togetherness that it potentially perpetuates.

Chapter 4 addresses the future of Glace Bay and surrounding communities as they are tied to resource extraction industries. As more and more Canadians face precarious work-life situations, and as Neoliberal global trade policies continue to move Canada towards post-industrial models while the country simultaneously struggles to find a balance between resource extraction priorities and global environmental commitments, the futures of communities that rely on extractive industry remain in question. While my participants continue to raise their children

in Glace Bay, unless the region finds a local source for industrial resource extraction it seems that the region's children will be encouraged to either follow in the footsteps of their parents or leave the communities behind.

Finally, this thesis concludes with a summary of the main points of the preceding chapters and ends with a meditation on precarity and those that live within its conditions, which may be uncertain but offer generative potential as individuals attempt to eke out a life in the ruins of labour.

Chapter 2 Going Away/Staying

Cape Bretoners have been traveling long distances for work for a long time. Men would board fishing boats and set off many kilometers into the Atlantic Ocean hauling lobster traps and trawling cod; men would travel many kilometers underground and under the Atlantic Ocean as they mine coal. Families have been leaving Cape Breton for more affluent parts of Canada for several generations as well. For example, my mother and father left Cape Breton for my father's military career, and a better life, as soon as they were married in the 1970s. Families today continue to leave the region in hopes of better lives, reaching destinations across Canada and the world, finding employment in resource extraction industries, health care, business, entertainment, academia, teaching, and other employment strategies.

People who stay in Cape Breton today are also traveling for work. Several of the female participants that I spoke with travel from Glace Bay to the neighboring communities, Sydney, New Waterford, North Sydney, etc. to work in provincial government offices, as nurses, teachers, social workers, retail and restaurant work. Men are still traveling out to sea to fish (though this has been reduced to seasonal fisheries, such as lobster). A coal mine in Donkin, a historic neighboring coal community, has recently opened and is employing a small pool of men, and so men are again traveling underground for work.

Many unemployed Cape Breton men have found work in the Athabasca oil sands where they work six weeks on and two weeks off, flying back and forth between Alberta and Cape Breton (Gibbs et al. 2009; Ferguson 2011). These circular migrants support their families and communities by sending remittances and it appears that the practice has been normalized (Ferguson 2011). However, since the economic crises of 2008 the Alberta boom has lessened and

so has the amount of work contracts available for Cape Breton workers. This has led to workers seeking contracts elsewhere and finding work closer to home, like offshore oil rigs in the Atlantic Ocean, potash mines in Saskatchewan, and other extractive sites across Canada. However, “going out west” or “doing the back and forth thing” as my participants call their migratory practice of traveling to Alberta, is still their principal activity for seeking employment. Regardless of where participants are going, the practice remains the same. Workers fly out of their Cape Breton communities for work contracts, send money back to their spouses and partners who stay behind to work, raise children, and keep the home, and then men fly back out to Cape Breton where they spend several weeks off and at home performing domestic roles, partying, and preparing for their next trip to work.

Systems of migrant labour are typically physically and temporally removed from the processes involved in the reproduction of the labour force (Burawoy 1976) with migrants supplying labour to contribute to economic production in one locale while the family, community, and the state (or in this case, the province) provide education, care and other services that are necessary for reproduction. The host community externalizes the costs of the labour force renewal, benefiting from the need of the members of the origin community to engage in labour migration.

In the case of circular migrant Cape Breton labourers, origin communities raise healthy workers who migrate for work who then return to origin communities to have their social and familial needs met on their time off or between contracts. Additionally, the burden of providing social care, through emotional labour, and family reproduction, falls primarily upon the non-migrating women of the family as labour is extracted by the company, the state, and the rest of

the community while women often engage in double days (Parreñas 2001:71) as they participate in the labour market, as well as perform domestic labour, and also perform the social care, reproduction, and nurturing of future generations of labour migrants (McDowell 2007:87). In addition, women provide care and emotional labour over the phone or through internet communication technologies (See chapter 3 for more on these processes) in their interactions with their working spouses. The state, private industry, and host community all benefit as migrant labour contributes to economic production and the cost of renewing the labour force is externalized to the origin community. The origin community benefits through economic action through the sending of remittances and the spending of money by labourers in their time off. The burden of providing and reproducing labour is placed on the women, who provide social care for migrant men while performing private domestic labour, as well as engaging in public life through the local labour market (McDowell 2007:81). Men, on the other hand, are principally involved in providing physical labour, although men provide care and emotional support in the rearing of their children when they are at home in between jobs. This chapter engages with the normalization of circular migrant labour, why people choose to remain in the community, what it is like for migrant men to leave and return, and the labour of women in these processes.

Family Connections and Normalization

Many of the Cape Breton circular migrants are former miners and/or the children of laid-off miners. Male children of miners in Cape Breton were often expected to grow up and work in the mines (Gibbs and Leech 2009) or take on another trade. These expectations, as well as Nova Scotia's high post-secondary tuition costs (Gibbs and Leech 2009:96), often had an adverse effect on their aspirations towards education and often lead to their just getting the bare

minimum required for work¹⁰. This meant different things for different generations, ranging from minimal secondary educational to none at all, and later to trade certifications and diplomas. Women were often taught to take paths towards nursing and teaching, things that might be considered traditional women's labour in working class societies like Glace Bay. Therefore, many more women than men seem to have pursued post-secondary school degrees in university where men favoured trades. While both career paths are respected, in the Glace Bay and Cape Breton example it seems that women are able to find work in their community due to their post-secondary training, while men, due to a lack of labour options at home, must leave the community for work.

A recent study regarding Mexican migration to the United States has noted that, in certain Mexican communities, migration has been normalized and seen not as just the normative way to gain economic capital, but as a necessary step in the transition to manhood (Kandel 2002). The study states that the odds are higher for Mexican children to eventually out-migrate if someone in their family has done so (Dreby 2010; Kandel 2002). This suggests that there is a cultural transmission of migration which normalizes the phenomenon

It appears that Glace Bay is engaged in a similar scenario, with its male population expected to participate in some form of manual labour due to the economic realities and history of Cape Breton. There seems to be a cultural expectation of physical work that is tied to histories of navigating the precarious lifeways that were afforded by the infrastructure and legacies of company towns and mines. Tendencies and habits of working as often as possible when the work

¹⁰ When I attended Glace Bay High School as a youth I experienced this and saw friends drop out of school entirely.

is available, as it could dry up at any time due to work stoppages, are entangled in histories of labour unrest, accidents, and economic downturns that residents of Glace Bay know well.

As Brett tells me, there is an expectation that labourers will work whenever and wherever they can due to histories of precarious labour situations and the need to sustain the needs of families in times of austerity.

“If you trace back our heritage here it is that of hard working men trying to provide for families, to make as much money as possible to live as comfortable as possible, and I think that kind of gets engraved into you. Like if I work a 2 in 1 shift. Which is you work two weeks, they fly you back home, and you’re home for a week. If I go visit my grandfather he’ll say ‘you’re off for a week? Well why not go work at the wharf for a few days?’”

While some of my participants’ parents engaged in some sort of out-migration for their labour regime, it was not a trend worth commenting on the immediate family level, but that may be because the recent culture of circular migration is too new for the region. That said, however, intergenerational migration does occur in Glace Bay in some instances, and as the community is very small and many families know each other, everyone¹¹ knows someone who is affected by the phenomenon. However, the town’s legacy as a mining and fishing town has fostered a sense of pride that only comes from some kind of physical hard work, whether it be from harvesting coal from the mines, hauling lobster traps or cod trawls, or engaging in modern resource extraction activities. Each of these labour activities involves leaving the community for some time, going underground and under the sea, offshore, or across the country. The fact that men must leave for work has long been the norm. Thus, I believe there is a cultural transmission of

¹¹ Everyone that I have spoken to in Cape Breton knows at least 1 person or family affected by circular migration. It is so prevalent in the region it would be shocking to speak to anyone who did not experience this on some level.

migration. As the mythos of Glace Bay is rooted in histories of labour and hard work with traditional imaginings of men's employment as in the sphere of manual labour it is *expected* that men will have to leave for work in most instances.

Further, since there is little work in the region, leaving for work is seen as the normal thing to do, as there is no viable alternative. The compromises that workers and their families make are thus seen as not only necessary, but are ideal situations when weighing them against the alternative. For Teddy, his choices are either leave home for work, be unemployed, or win the lottery.

“It could always be worse. You could be not working. Which a lot of people aren't, so. It is what it is, I guess. But you gotta keep looking at the positives. Keep buying lotto tickets. But you don't have much of a chance to win, really.”

While some men go away for work one, two, or several times and then use their money to finance careers in different trades or use their skills in local trades, such as construction, other men have continued the practice for close to two decades now. The practice has certainly been normalized with Glace Bay relying on the economic and social support afforded by circular migration and remittance systems, it is simply viewed as what one must do to make money and support oneself and family in Glace Bay. Further, it is so expected that young men will go to resource extraction sites after high school to make quick cash to finance their future ambitions, the practice can also be imagined as a rite of passage for men.

There are fears in the community that this sort of labour will have intergenerational effects that are potentially harmful to younger generations. One man who has been doing the “back and forth thing” for 17 years making \$3000 a week and having never finished high school

tells me that he saw his father go away for work for long periods at a time and so he lacked a role model that pushed him to do better in school. He has concerns that his children will see him doing the same thing and lower their ambitions. “There’s nothing wrong with this life, but it’s a hard life.” He tells me that when his father was away he put his mother through a lot of anguish and he was able to get away with a lot more troublesome behaviour than if his father was there. During my time in Cape Breton there was a public conversation about bullying as there a lot of reports of problems with bullying in schools. He reflected on this and told me that “I think bullying is an effect from having fathers away and from being poor. You have your dad away and you still have no money. You’re just mad”

Should I Stay Or Should I Go

Circular migration has become a key survival strategy for families and Cape Breton communities. Out-migration by young people and skilled labourers has weakened the social and economic fabric of the region resulting in negative implications for remaining families and the community at large (Harling Stalker et al. 2010) leading to school closures and reduced public services which have domino effects that exacerbate and increase out migration (Harling Stalker et al. 2010). However, circular migration and “fly-in/fly-out” (Storey 2010) labour mitigates some of the social and economic harm that permanent departures perpetuate as it permits families to remain in the community and thus sustain it. Labourers’ contributions to household incomes and sending of remittances provides economic stability and potentially leads to more opportunities for civic, economic, and social growth (Walsh 2012). Further, as fly-in/fly-out contracts often offer on the job training and career advancement at accelerated rates, these skills may be exported to new opportunities or brought back to origin communities. While origin

communities are reliant on remittances for their survival, industrial extraction sites are also heavily reliant on migrant labourers (Ferguson 2011) and I overheard many conversations between labourers at parties that expressed great pride in the work that Cape Bretoners do, stating that it's always the Cape Breton boys who come in to pick up the slack that is left by labourers from other parts of Canada¹².

My participants tell me that in the early 2000s it was easy to find work in Alberta's oil sands as there was a large demand for labour and workers could easily find lucrative contracts where workers could "in 7 weeks make more money than I make in 2 years working around here". However, the economic downturn of 2007/2008 and the resulting recession had a powerful effect on the industry and available work. With the dip in market prices for crude the reliability on oil sands extraction employment opportunities languished as projects were scaled back or cancelled. This has been further exacerbated by the Fort McMurray forest fires. As Rudy, a 37 year oil sands worker tells me:

"In the 1st 10 years of my career I could almost pick and choose, it was amazing. People got spoiled, especially with the Fort Mac region. People literally got spoiled they thought they could go there with no legs and 1 arm and still make 45 dollars an hour but... it was almost that way... but now it's pretty much dead. It's a ghost town and even after the fires it is even worse."

Following market crashes there are fewer opportunities for workers as companies offer less compensation, incentives, and benefits to entice migrant labour. Daniel, a 37-year instrumentalist control technician states that a lot has changed since the 2008 market crash affecting rates of pay, the costs of flights, and duration of contracts.

¹² This statement paraphrases several conversations that I heard during my time in the field.

“When oil crashed everything went downhill. Now it depends on what you’re doing and what the market allows. [...] When oil was expensive they had to offer you 2 weeks on and 2 weeks off, flights paid, and you got a good rate usually. But it’s not like that now. They don’t pay for flights anymore and that usually costs just under a \$1000 round trip, usually \$800. But now with tourist season... my next one-way flight is looking at 700.”

These two examples demonstrate that while relying on circular migrant labour to Alberta was a vital survival strategy for the Cape Breton families and communities, it is increasingly becoming a more precarious subsistence strategy that is not as lucrative and financially viable as it has been in the past. Yet workers continue to participate in the scheme as there is not really any other work available for them even with a lower rate of pay:

“I’d take less money to stay home. [...] the offers here don’t happen very often.”

“If I could be making 15 dollars an hour I would trade that as opposed to what I make, 45 bucks an hour. But there is nothing here like that either. And even when there is it is a month long. Then it’s back on EI or begging for a job out there.”

Community, Experience, Finance and Family: Why Staying Makes Sense

Tim Cresswell (2004) tells us that locations, fixed neutral loci, provide sites for social relations and are transformed into places through personal sentimentality. Space is defined as a site without significance, when humans invest meaning in portion of space it becomes a place. The conversion of space to place is a result of human experience and investment, generating knowledge of space through associations and relations between self and the world. (Cresswell 2004)

Places are meaningful constructions that determine us and are defined by us. They are always in progress and never finished, always being reimagined by the people inhabiting their locale, but also by those who are anchored to them through past experience, family and community ties. Place and the actions that happen in them are constructed and maintained through performances, practice, and reciprocal actions that constantly renegotiate how place is assembled. (Cresswell 2004)

The idea of home for my participants is an important symbolic anchor that allows for interactions with shared memories, performances of family and community, and an engagement with a sense of place. Home is the memories of childhood; the fist fights at school; first loves and first loses; the smells of the ocean; smells of battered fish and chicken frying in restaurants and chip wagons; the way the weather turns on a dime, one minute sunny and hot, the next minute windy and pouring rain; the elephant ear bushes reclaiming the vacant lots; even the potholes that are colonizing the town's streets. Home is shooting the drag of Commercial street and remembering better times, waving to everyone as they drive their cars doing the same. Home is "a vibrant space of intensity where things happened and left their mark" (Stewart 1996:65) Home is what has happened before but also what is happening now, remembering and reimagining times before.

Harry Hiller's 2009 work *Second Promised Land* studies migration to Alberta and the importance of social capital among labour migrants, return migration, homesickness and the significance and role of place, the concept of home, and identity shift among migrants. With a specific focus on specific island origin communities of PEI, Newfoundland, and Cape Breton, Hiller describes what he calls the "myth of return" (Hiller 2009:335) stating that the

normalization of migration to Alberta carriers with its certain assumptions that are held by both migrants and origin communities (Hiller 2009). These assumptions include: the idea that leaving is temporary; that being away from the community is not voluntary, but a necessity; that life in the origin community is vastly superior to life elsewhere (Hiller 2009). While my participant's responses do not refute the assumptions posited in the myth of return, they do indicate that the myth constitutes reality. Being away from the community is necessary as my participants do not feel that they can find suitable work that pays a wage that can support their family. Leaving the community for work is not seen as voluntary but vital as labourers must negotiate economic and political forces that have deindustrialized the region without sufficient economic restructuring and stripped away the ability to sufficiently earn a livelihood and see their families flourish; that leaving is temporary due to a desire to keep roots and ties to the community to engage with family, friends, and experiences; that life in the origin community is superior to life elsewhere because life in the origin community is life lived *at home*. For a variety of reasons, my participants work to live in Glace Bay and Cape Breton. It is their home. As Rudy tells me,

“People say just move out here – but I don't want to live there. I love living home. This is my home and this is where I want to stay. Home means everything. Friends, family, experiences. Love, hate. It means everything.”

Rudy spends large amounts of the year away from home for work. He is constantly chasing contracts and describes his way of life as “horrible” as it affects mental and physical health and his “everything”. “The going back and forth is horrible. It's horrible on your health, your mind, your everything.” But he sees little alternative to participating in the circular migration regime. Rudy wishes that all of his friends and family could live and work on Cape

Breton Island to enjoy life to the fullest there, but even with a lower cost of living than many other communities, if one can even find work in the area it does not pay a wage that is commensurate with the amount of work the job demands. Rudy has looked for and engaged in employment closer to home but has found that safety regulations were as lacking as the monetary compensation and thus it wasn't worth it to him.

“I'd like all of my brothers and sisters to be able to be home and enjoy the natural beauty. With money and their families. As of right now. I can't imagine going down the street and making 30 plus an hour. It would be amazing. I worked at Halifax ship yards for a while. That was horrible. The people are navy down there and the people are barking at you. And it's dangerous. Safety standards were shot. I make 2500 a week out West. 750 a week in Halifax. It's not worth it.”

For Rudy, whose family, friends, and home are on Cape Breton Island, whose roots are in Glace Bay and the surrounding communities, he continues to engage in circular migration in order to support his family and community and enjoys his life between work contracts at home on the island.

This sentiment for roots, family, community, and home is shared across the spectrum of my participants. For other participants the reason to stay in the community is due to the complexity and messiness of their relationships. Kay tells me that they would likely move away if it were not for the fact that her partner has a son from a previous relationship who he shares custody. In an already complicated family situation, negotiating custody across distances would be extremely difficult but “if we could take his son, we'd probably move in a heartbeat.”

When I asked Kay about people moving back to Glace Bay after years of being away, a phenomenon that I had noticed several times during my fieldwork, she told me that it was

because of “people’s families. Deaths and such, it puts things into perspective I guess. People move home for family when they have kids.” Kay continued to tell me about the support network of family that has helped her during her pregnancy that continues to be especially important to her when Rick is away. “Everybody is willing to come by and help me, we have support here. My mother, my sister, and Rick’s family too. We have more support here so it makes sense to be here.” When I asked her if she moved to Glace Bay to be close to her family and access to that support that she experiences, Kay told me that if it were not for Rick she wouldn’t have moved there, “if not for Rick I wouldn’t move home. There’s nothing here, just the crackheads downtown.”

During one interview with Steve, a former oil sands worker who now works for Nova Scotia Power and lives in Glace Bay, his 6-year-old son walked into the kitchen, annoyed that we were talking for so long and not paying as much attention to him as he would have liked. Steve knelt down and started explaining what we were talking about to his son. He then finished with a teachable moment, saying that he should stay in school so he can grow up doing a job that he spends his time talking to people instead of hard labour like his dad. “Sometimes I wonder what these guys [his children] will grow up to have. Unless something really changes around here - which by the look of things, I doubt.” But I asked him why, if he thought the future was so bleak, did he continue to stay and raise his children in Glace Bay? For him it was about his community and family ties. His mother and father and his mother in law are there to help out with raising his children and thinks it would be a lot harder if not for their support. “Mona’s [Steve’s wife] sister lives in Yellowknife and has two kids and has never gotten any help [from family connections] and I think that would be very hard. So, it’s good to stay here for that.” Though Steve sometimes

thinks that he would like to move away and can imagine a better life for his family if they relocated to a more urban centre, like Halifax. “I asked Mona before we built the house if she would move – she didn’t want to – she loves it here.” Mona is a substitute school teacher who, although she had just finished a long stint covering for someone on maternity leave, was unsure about the next school year’s employment options. “If we were in Halifax,” Steve says, “she’d have a good full-time job, but she didn’t want to move.” Mona does not only love it in Glace Bay, it is where her mother, an older widower, lives and so she is unwilling to leave her mother alone.

Steve told me that he was lucky to find a decent job at Nova Scotia Power, he does not like it very much but it pays the bills and he was able to build a very nice house for his family, something he likely would not be able to afford had he lived elsewhere with a similar salary. The relatively low cost of living and property in Glace Bay encourages families to stay in the region regardless of its challenges and my participants stressed that the standard of living that they enjoy, 3-bedroom homes with backyards, for example, would not be achievable in other communities. As Daniel tells me,

“To move to a place like Fort Mac [Fort MacMurray] you’re going to pay 700,000 dollars... we can’t rent an apartment for a family with 3 kids. You have to have a house – a house that would suit the 5 of us would be over a half million dollars, for sure.”

To build on the idea of finances a little bit, women may not be able to find similar employment and wages that they have, nor do they necessarily want to give up their current jobs. As Judith relays,

“That’s probably why we’re still here, because I have a really good job here. It’s an extremely well-paying job for here. But in Halifax it would be close to the same pay but with a higher cost of living. I make more money than my boss does when you consider the cost of living in Halifax.

Mark: so, is the reason for staying in Glace Bay strictly economic for you?

Judith: well, no. I like it here.

Daniel: our families are all here too.

Judith: well not really, your mom is here. That’s it...”

Transitions and Interruptions: What It’s Like, From Work to Home

Camp Life

Brett has been working in Fort MacMurray and around other industrial extraction sites around Canada for 14 years, traveling back and forth from the worksite to his home in Glace Bay. I asked him about his overall experience of traveling and staying in work camps. Brett tells me how his line of work is bad for his mental and physical health as he feels that he and his fellow workers do not get enough sleep while living in work camps, surviving on 5 or 6 hours of sleep. He believes this feeds into his anxiety and depression problems, things he told me he is going to a doctor now to address. Brett says that even though he is usually home from work for 5 days, 2 of those days are spent sleeping and thus he only has 3 days to spend with his family.

“The going back and forth is horrible. It’s horrible on your health, your mind, your everything. The wear and tear on your body is fucked. The anxiety is fucked. The time zone changes. The whatever. You have to change to nightshift to day shift. When I get home I sleep my first 2 days. You only get 5 days and then you get 3 days with your families and you go back adjusted to days and go back and maybe you have to work nights.

Mark: What is a typical day like for you while you’re at work?

Get up in the morning usually like 4 or 4:30, maybe 5. Wake up and have your breakfast. And then you jump on a bus [from the work camp to the work site], and those bus rides are all different. Sometimes an hour each way in the rain, in sleet, in snow. Snow storm! Then after you work a 12 hour shift, or 10 or whatever, you drive an hour back – usually not paid, and that’s 2 hours out of your day. So if you work a 12 [hour shift]. That’s 14. Then the hour you woke up before work, that’s 15. And then you know an hour after work to watch wrestling or whatever. Do the math. The most you can get is like 6 and a half hours. Most guys survive on 5 to 6 hours of sleep.”

Brett’s reflections on time tells us that while they are away at work many labourers do not have much personal time for leisure, personal reflection, or to unwind from the day’s work. If labourers do try and find personal time it is at the expense of a good night’s sleep. Brett also tells me that this also affects how often labourers can talk to their families at home, only having time for a basic check in for routine maintenance without any substantial conversation. (Communication between workers and their families will be further expanded upon in the next chapter.) While Brett is concerned about all of his time being allotted for, and not having enough time for sleeping, Steve prefers to have as much of his time away spent on the job as possible because it is during down time that his mind drifts to his family and feelings of loneliness surface.

“But the hardest days were the days off, because what do you do? And a lot of camps are dry, you just have some Kool-Aid and go to bed. I don’t mind working because you’re busy, but the days off are hard. And it’s during those days off you get to thinking about your family that you’re missing. I remember a few days into my first time being away and my friend Toby was like ‘man, I want to go home! Let’s just go.’ Because he was missing his wife, right. And I was just like ‘man shut up!’ because once you plant those seeds. But I was fine... Then a few days later I was like ‘let’s go home!’ because those seeds were planted!”

As this labour situation involves contracts, labourer's time at home is often cut short if they get a call for work "I could get a call anytime and leave tomorrow really. I have a suitcase packed and ready to go, just in case". One man that I met at a party who has been working in the industry for the past 17 years told me that he is leaving for work in a few days and does not know when he will be back. He says he has been home for a couple of weeks now, but before that he was gone for 5 months. "I'm not sure when I'll be back, soon I hope. But it's unpredictable." Even at home, a labourer's time does not seem like it is their own.

In this regard, the workers who go to Atlantic Ocean offshore oil rigs live more stable lifestyles than those who work in Alberta and elsewhere. They seem to know exactly where, when, how, and what their jobs entail as their days are planned out, while those who go to Alberta face more precarious working environments as they often go for a contract and then chase shutdown operations. Shutdowns, which are the annual total cease of operations in order to fix and replace failing equipment, are unpredictable too as it is difficult to predict when they will be complete. Offshore workers work 2 weeks on and have 2 weeks off, like clockwork, whereas other worker's lives seem random and scattered, and therefore difficult to plan for.

Camp conditions seem to vary across companies, camps, and projects, and so that is difficult to plan for if you are going somewhere new. Often workers will use their connections to ask others if they have been to the place that they are going and how good or bad it is there. I asked Brett about his experience over his 14 years of working in the industry and he tells me that some camps are nice and some are less than desirable.

Mark: And so where do you stay while you're away at work?

“85% of the time I stay in camps. They are like basically a bunch of trailer homes stacked on top of each other. With 1 conjoined meeting area, a front office, and then a lunch room. Everything [meals] provided. And you have this place called the bag up room where you bag up your lunch. Sandwiches, yogurt, they basically have everything – a buffet – go and grab what you want. It’s a solid 6 out 10. I’ve been in 3s. I’ve been in 9s. I’ve been in places where they had cases of Gatorade. I was in one place near long lake and it was like walking into a 7/11 but without the price tags. Anything you can think of. Whatever you need to eat that day grab’er and go. Some places are horrible, some are beautiful. Some are really not the best, not the best conditions, with black mold fuckin everywhere.”

During our conversations about his time as a worker in Fort MacMurray, Steve told me about his experience living in work camps. He talks about the problems of living next to neighbours in housing quarters that are not designed for comfort but efficiency. Steve tells me,

“The walls of the camp are paper thin and you can hear the guy next to you doing everything, snoring or whatever. One guy, his alarm clock would go off at 5 am every morning and he’d get up but leave it on! I’d be in bed saying ‘you bastard! I get up at 6!’.”

Families and the comforts of home are missed by workers while they are away but going can be complex too as workers familiarize themselves with, and interrupt family schedules. The following section examines going home from work from both the perspectives of workers and their significant others.

Going Home

Participants told me that while going away for work is hard, the time that they have at home makes it worthwhile, even though most reported that they need a few days to familiarise themselves with the family schedule and get used to being around their families again. As Bill, a 37-year-old offshore oil worker tells me,

“I’m at work for 2 weeks and then 2 weeks back at home. I like it. Just to be at home and do my thing. Just relax, live life and unwind. My wife usually leaves me alone for the first few days so I can acclimatize to people. I have to ease back into the routine. She’s at work all day too, so I can just chill out and be alone. But we do try to spend as much time together as we can before I go back to work.”

Participants with children use their time at home to spend with their kids and performing domestic chores. Daniel recognizes that his time spent at home with the kids on his time off does not compensate for all of the things he misses while he is away, but sees it is as a worthwhile compromise between work and home life. Judith, Daniel’s wife, points out that Daniel likely sees their children more than she is able to as she contends with her daily work schedule. This, as Daniel points out, is something that other jobs do not afford, and even those newly hired miners who work near the community do not enjoy as they work 6 days a week.

“when I’m home then I have nothing but free time. I don’t have to be anywhere and I’m here with them [his kids] 100% of the time. Though I don’t think it makes up for it, but it’s the balance that you have to live with. But ... it kind of balances out. How much I am with them compared if I was home working 5 days a week... or... like the guys who are working at the Donkin mine work 6 days a week. Every week. So you don’t get to see your kids very much when you’re doing that sort of thing too. There are down sides to it, but it’s kind of the way we’ve been for awhile now so we’re kind of used to it.

Judith: you probably spend more time with them [the kids] than I do.

Daniel: yeah a lot of people don’t realize that... and other people do it differently. Like they’ll go for extreme periods of time. I’ve only had to do that once and I was gone for 9 months.”

Daniel’s comment about other people “doing it differently” reinforces the previous discussion regarding the unpredictability of working contracts away from home, every company and every contract introduces new and varying schedules. Teddy, who works on offshore oil rigs

doing the 2 weeks on and 2 weeks off regime is able to plan his time spent at home to correspond to the family's routine and thus not interrupt the schedule and flow of the household. When I met with Teddy he scheduled our meeting at his house for just right after he put his two young children to bed for their afternoon nap. His wife works days as a nurse and so when he is home he is in charge of the children and domestic chores and she was at work during my visit. I asked him what it's like for him to be home after spending 2 weeks away at work. As Teddy tells me,

“Good, just like a 2 week vacation. It's babysitting and parenting. Or I socialize with friends, have some beers. Maybe a bit of travel whenever you can. Play sports, golf, hockey. Play with the Kids.”

Teddy seemed very comfortable about his job and his home life. While he sees his time at home as a vacation, he also uses this time to perform care duties. He takes his job seriously and tells me that he legitimately likes the work but acknowledges that by being away he misses a lot. For Teddy, however, it is worth it for his time spent at home where he performs as a 24-hour dad and husband. I was honestly amazed at the immaculateness of Teddy's house, considering that they are a dual income household, a nurse and a circular migrant oil worker, with two young children. As he and his wife, high school sweethearts, have been together for 15 years and he has been engaged in his labour situation for 10 of those years, it seems that they have figured out how to make it work.

Marie reflects on what she likes about when her partner is home from work and interact with their infant twins. She also loves to see the excitement of their dog, Buddy, when he comes home after being away.

Mark: what's good about it?

“it’s just good that he’s home. We get to see each other, and it makes me happy. Just to see him with the babies again. He gets to see their progress. I see them every day, so I get to see everything. But he doesn’t. goes 3 weeks. So, when he comes back there is that much of a difference between then and then. So that’s fun to watch to see his expressions when they are doing all these things that he never got to see. That’s the best part, that’s the nicest part. And Buddy [the dog] loves seeing him. When he first came home he said to his mother, guess who was happy to see me? It was Buddy.”

Marie’s tells me that she likes when her partner is away as he makes her happy and it is good to see him with their children. She enjoys watching him engage with their babies and see his expressions when he interacts with them as they do all of these new things that he never got to see them start doing. In this regard she feels like she gets to relive all of the milestones again when he is back. But while she enjoys when he returns, when her partner is away Marie establishes a routine with her daughter and their twins and his coming home throws off the routine causing stress in the household.

“I get into a good routine that I am happy with. His coming home and not obeying my routine is what stresses me out. Because I work so hard to get the babies on a routine, right. So, when someone throws a curveball at it, that’s when I get stressed. Because then I have to start over, I have to start this process again.”

Marie tells me that the shortness of her partner’s contracts, alternating 3 weeks and 2 weeks at a time, is frustrating because the short duration of his time at home interrupts the schedule that she tries to set for the household twice, first when he comes home and again when he leaves. When he is home life is more fast-paced as there is a lot of rushing around as they visit with family and friends or shop for supplies and prepare for his leaving for work. Marie would actually prefer if he was gone for longer periods of time if it meant that he would also be home

for longer durations as it is stressful to make everything that they need to do fit into the window that he is at home.

“So, he has 10 days off, but he is actually traveling for 2 days [and another 2 days back]. So, you’re actually traveling for 4 days out of say 10. So now you’re down to 6 days. And you have to do this, that, and the other thing. Like you gotta do this and gotta do that. Gotta do that before you go. And you have to go to Walmart and get your crap. But you still need a day to do your laundry. You know. And before you now it your time is gone and you’re gone again. It doesn’t take long to fill up those days. So that’s what sucks. There’s always too much to do.

This rushed and fast paced routine is then disrupted when he goes back to work, and Marie must start again. These sentiments of disruption are echoed throughout my interviews with participants, the transition days, the first few days that men are home and when they are gone as being the worst parts of the experience. As Judith tells me,

“the first few days that he comes home I’m really annoyed because he’s now messed up my routines. And then we get used to it and then it’s the same the first few days when he leaves. Oh, I have no help anymore. So, it’s those transition days that are the worst.”

Going to Work

How people get to the job site is different for all of my participants, though it usually involves some sort of air travel. Those going to offshore oil rigs drive to Halifax, roughly a 5-hour journey, where they then board a helicopter to the oil rig. While the company pays for the helicopter, gas money to Halifax is up to them, spending between \$5000 and \$7000 per year. For those traveling to other sites, such as Fort McMurray, it depends on the company and the contract. As Marie tells me about her partner’s experience navigating the financial side of traveling for work.

“Some companies won’t do it [pay for travel], or some companies, you pay your own way, but they won’t reimburse you until you have worked 30 days. Other companies they will pay your first flight be they’ll deduct it from your first pay. There are all kinds of scenarios”

Rudy tells me that that some contracts pay for his flights and even handle the booking and other travel details, however, if he somehow misses the flight it is up to him to pay.

“There are some jobs that companies pay your flights, book your flights, and handle all of the logistics right. But some companies don’t. I’ve missed flights that cost 7 or 8 hundred dollars. Standing at the airport at 1 in the morning and I got to run to another counter and pay \$1400 just to get home, that’s out of my pocket. A thousand different ways you can miss the flight.”

Rudy also recognizes that the circular migration scheme has driven the up the price of flights both from Sydney to Alberta, but also from Sydney to Halifax, an hour-long flight at most, and a flight that many people cannot financially afford to take. The airport is small and has a limited carrying capacity. If Rudy gets a call for work and all flights out of Cape Breton are booked he must drive to Halifax.

“The airport here knows they have all of us by the balls. And that whole airport now is mostly subsidized by us people working, right? So, if all flights are booked you can’t do nothing but drive 5 hours to Halifax. And the companies drive up the price, say from 800 to 2000. They know what they were doing, it’s a money grab. And there are so many money grabs to do with the oil sands it leaves the common man like, what the fuck am I supposed to do, right? Just regular guys who want to jump on a plane to Halifax, they can’t, it’s 800 dollars [for maybe an hour flight] or a 50-dollar shuttle [shuttles refer to private drivers who use minivans to drive people from Cape Breton to Halifax].”

The hardest part about working “away” is the actual leaving. Participants with families report leaving early in the morning, late at night, or when the family is away for the day doing

their routine so that they do not have to face a long good bye from teary eyed children asking when they are coming home and wives who have to do the emotional labour of missing their partner but also explaining to the children when their father will be back. As Teddy has been leaving for work since before his children were born, it is normal to them that he spends periods away from the family, but as they get older they get older they are more conscious that he is away, they look for him when he is gone, and ask when he will be back,

“I’ve been doing it so long now, the good thing about it is that I started before I had the kids, so they were used to it right from the get-go, but the older they get the harder it is. But now they’re waiting for you and asking “when are you coming home” and “when do you leave? But the hardest part is the actual leaving. So, it’s good to leave when they are not here. It’s good to say goodbye or whatever, but it’s good when they’re at daycare or whatever and you can just kind of leave and when they come it’s like, yeah I’m gone to work, right.”

During two of my interviews it was revealed to me that participants were actually leaving later that day. In each, I was a bit taken aback, though extremely thankful, that they would sacrifice so much time to meet with someone who is essentially a stranger to talk about how it feels to be away and to try and keep connections. These interviews were largely positive but there was an air of apprehension, of stress, and an uneasiness in them. Men were never looking forward to returning to work and were often already planning out what they would do when they returned home. When I asked what it was like to have to leave today Daniel put it best, “it sucks.”

This chapter has looked at the lived experiences of Glace Bay circular migrants and their domestic partners who live and work in the community full time. I have tried to provide examples of the emotional and physical labour that each participate in while they attempt to

navigate this labour situation while performing community and home. What it means to them to be home and what is it like to leave or to experience someone leaving. I look at the disruptions in household schedules that perpetuate stress and the constant thinking about travel, coming and going.

The following chapter looks at how participants use internet communication technologies to try and ease the social distance that they experience while separated from their loved ones. Sometimes it works, sometimes it perpetuates loneliness.

Chapter 3: Performing Family and Community At A Distance

“You’re kind of disconnected to a point. But we’re pretty good to stay in contact”



Photo 6: The remnants of an old pay phone sit in a vacant lot in the Caledonia area of Glace Bay.
(Photo by Mark McIntyre 2017)

This chapter looks at how Cape Breton circular migrants and their families keep in touch and perform family and community at a distance. I frame family and community as a “set of practices” (Morgan 1996 in Madianou 2017:104) which members perform through daily activities. Members who are involved in circular migrant relationships perform family and community in multiple spheres, increasingly mediated through mobile technology and social media as a physical co-presence is lacking (Madianou 2017:104). As such, a Facebook ‘like’, a photo shared on a social media platform, a text message, and so on can be read as a practice and a performative avenue which brings family and community into being as they work to establish an “ambient co-presence”, the “increased awareness of the everyday lives and activities of significant others through the background presence of ubiquitous media environments” (Madianou 2016:183; See also Ito and Okabe 2005).

It is within this vast array of internet communication technologies that an engagement in polymedia, or the use of many media platforms (Miller and Madianou 2013) is pertinent. Polymedia allows for a recognition that various platforms constitute varying degrees of emotional engagement and that “media are mediated by the relationship as well as the other way around” (Miller and Madianou 2013:148). The affordances offered by internet communication technologies are used by families to manage relationships. The particular features of a platform, what it can and cannot do, also shape relationships in specific ways (Miller and Madianou 2013; Madianou 2017).

Synchronous and asynchronous (in real time, or with a time delay, such as with platforms like email) communication allows users to perform both active and absent presences through shifts in focus of attention - while we may be present in one space, we may be mentally engaged

elsewhere (Baym 2014:3;8; Broadbent 2012), even multiple spaces simultaneously. The asynchronous and synchronous nature of media platforms, combined with their affordance to communicate across great distances and shift focus of attention, can disrupt traditional sociocultural understandings of spatial relations and attention (Baym 2014:3;8; Broadbent 2012).

Space can be viewed “as a system of possible actions, a virtual body with its phenomenological ‘place’ defined by its task and situation” (Merleau-Ponty 1962:250). Thus, *place* is generated through material and social relations and embodiment. As such, a user’s online social performance happens in the virtual realm that they are participating in and not only in the geographical location in which they or the internet server is located (Boellstorff 2016). Virtual realms exist as spaces on tangible circuit boards and computer servers, but they become places through user activity. That is, users transform the *space* that physically exists on circuit boards and computer servers into a *place* in which they live their lives (Miller et al. 2016) through performance and practice. As Kay, one of my participants, notes “I live through my phone”.

Being in digital realms - just as in physical realms - is a product of practice, as practice can be seen as world making (Boellstorff 2016:392) through performance. Thus, virtual worlds, including social network sites such as Facebook, mobile phone apps, texting, blogs, e-mail, games, and streaming video, are all forms of online socialities (Boellstorff 2016:394) that are made, not only real, but also made into places through their users’ actions of social immersion and practice online, just as is done in offline spaces.

Indeed, virtual spaces are real places that must be understood in their own terms. However, it is also vital to understand that these terms are comprised of effects that originate from outside of

virtual realms (Boellstorff 2016:395). Thus, virtual practice and communication is mediated through the materiality of internet infrastructure, speed of internet connections, server farms, computers, and bodies, as well as sociocultural realities such as time zones, the social lives and goals of individuals and communities, political economies, and language barriers, to name but a few.

The virtual is composed of inherently material and sociocultural attributes, with technology and society constantly affecting each other, as each are shaped through sociocultural action, reflecting and recreating social worlds and processes. Therefore, it is important to note that virtual spaces are very much rooted in, and are continuities of, the offline world – virtual worlds are developed in sociocultural milieus and are themselves sociocultural environments that shape and are shaped by human activity both online and offline (Baym 2014:26; Mackenzie and Wajcman in Baym 2014:51; Baym 2014:177). Online and offline life practices are each grounded in cultural conditions that leak into and shape each other (Baym 2014; Reed 2014) as “our raced, classed, and gendered bodies are encoded into our online behaviours” (Phillips 2015:41) and vice versa.

While social and cultural norms are embedded into online spaces, many rules, structures, identities, and boundaries have been and are restructured and produced through social action by means of internet communication technologies. However, we must recognize that this is not a new phenomenon, as human sociocultural lives have always been mediated in one form or another (Miller and Horst 2012:3; 11-12; Miller and Sinanan 2014:4-11), and internet communication technology mediation does not diverge from offline practice in unrecognizable

ways (Reed 2014). While technology does have effects, technology is developed and realized through human action and relational human mediation (Baym 2014:176-177).

As such, internet communication technologies are used in relational ways that reproduce social and interpersonal connections that are continuities of offline social, cultural, historical, and political realities that are in constant states of flux. Thus, while internet communication technologies may seem to replicate how gender, culture, identity and race are experienced in non-internet communication technology environments, users may also take up technological affordances and appropriate them into their lives, fostering different emergent properties in both online and offline spheres (Baym 2014:74-76;80-81; Davis and Boellstorff 2016). Therefore, our use of technology is always in a process of reinvention and reimagining through practice - it is emergent - just as the boundaries and sociocultural lives that internet communication technologies are a part of are forever in a state of change and becoming (Baym 2014:74-76;80-81).

This is exemplified by Broadbent's (2012) study of personal communication being used in work environments, with worker's pushing the boundaries of work and home, reimagining spatial connections and divides through affordances offered by internet communication technologies and social action. Historically, highly industrialized work environments were separated from non-work environments and individuals were not permitted to regularly communicate with non-work individuals outside of work settings, emergency situations excluded. This separation between home and work was a result of organized models of industrial capitalism that sought to control workers' attentions in order to regulate their labour. But the near ubiquity of mobile phones, coupled with the fact that work computers have Internet connections,

challenges the social boundaries in the workplace and allows workers to, theoretically, gain sovereignty over their attention, potentially collapsing the divide between work and non-work (Broadbent 2012).

This chapter explores how my participants engage with synchronous and asynchronous internet communication technologies to keep in touch and perform family in both work and nonwork environments. Respondents' experiences show that the infrastructures of work and home, time zones, schedules, regulations, and routines, as well as the access to Internet communication infrastructure affect not only the quantity of conversations that my participants are having, but also the quality and the actual media in which they use. Further, while Internet communication technology use may alleviate tensions and patch the separations caused by labour migration it also introduces new tensions, obligations, and often serves as a reminder of physical and social distance. This chapter looks at how Cape Breton circular migrants use internet communication technologies to keep in touch and perform family online. In the following pages I examine the role of internet infrastructure, family scheduling, and routine, as well as the labour involved in keeping in touch.

Going to Work and Keeping in Touch

Some Cape Breton labourers today are traveling long distances for work across the country to Alberta, Saskatoon, Northern Ontario, and the Arctic Circle, while others are traveling to offshore oil rigs floating in the North Atlantic Ocean. Labourers are using Internet Communication Technology (ICT) via smart phones (iPhone and Android) to connect themselves to their family, friends, and community back home, and also to work sites and co-workers while they are home. These men are afraid that they will miss something at home: a

crucial moment in their child's development; a birthday party; opening Christmas presents; or simply the mundane activities of the day to day. They ask their partners to provide frequent updates through text, pictures, and videos that they can engage with after their work shifts and before bed. Spouses and girlfriends in origin communities also rely on this communication scheme to keep in touch with their partners and quell their worries about work safety and accidents, vent frustrations, and maintain bonds through shared experiences.

My participants, both women in origin communities and male migrant labourers, work very hard to actively perform family and community at a distance, taking advantage of both synchronous and asynchronous communication media to compress time and space. While smart phones afford both synchronous and asynchronous communication, workers and their family's communication and performance of family is dependent on, and largely mediated through, the infrastructure of work camps and oil rigs, their access to telecom networks, WIFI and cellular data networks, and their circumnavigating particulars of work regulations and family schedules, as well as time differences (for example, Nova Scotia is 3 hours ahead of Alberta). Thus, the amount of synchronous communication can be extremely limited.

Labour Site Infrastructure

The physical location of the labour site and its internet infrastructure have a lot of effect on the quality and quantity of communication as well as the ICT media which is utilized. As this section illustrates, participants who are employed at sites with reliable internet infrastructure, and which exist in the same time zone, such as Atlantic offshore oil rigs, seem to have an easier time keeping in regular contact with their significant others as they are able to engage in polymedia and model their communication regime to household routines and schedules.

Atlantic offshore oil labourers do not have to cope with time zone difficulties and their work site seems to have reliable access to highspeed WIFI, allowing them to keep in regular contact that follows a family routine. Further, access to highspeed WIFI lets communication partners engage in video chat apps such as FaceTime or Skype. As Teddy, a 32-year-old offshore oil worker (for 10 and a half years), and husband and father of 2 young children aged 4 and 1, tells me:

“I use the site’s WIFI with my cellphone. Just turn it on airplane mode and you’re good to go. [...] We text, email, and just use the phone... I talk to the kids on Facetime. Usually we set up a Facetime for the evening. Every evening. Quiet time in the evening if they are right out of the tub.”

Access to reliable WIFI affords a vast array of communications media options and allows Teddy to keep in regular contact with his wife and children in a way that follows the schedule of the household. Teddy texts and sends emails to his wife on his breaks throughout his work shift and then participates in video chat with his children before they go to bed for the night. This fosters routine and allows a relatively smooth navigation of less than desirable circumstances for Teddy and his family, and while it does not make up for the fact that Teddy feels like he is missing his wife and children and that he is not more active in their lives while he is away, he feels it does relieve some of the stress and loneliness that accompanies his work situation and facilitates an easier transition from home and work site.

In contrast, labourers on sites and work camps “out West” have to navigate time zone differences and family schedules, as well as breakdowns in communication due to unreliable WIFI connections. Participants told me that many sites, depending on their remoteness, often do

not offer reliable WIFI or cellular reception. While labourers purchase data plans and cellphones that they try and use to keep in touch with their families, the limits on internet infrastructure in these remote work camps restrict access to the various media and similar family routines that Teddy and his family (see above) participate in. Workers instead must search for WIFI and data hotspots in the work camp and utilize pay phones, which offer limited privacy, to communicate with their families.

One participant Rudy, a 37 year old man who has worked 14 years doing construction, maintenance, and shutdown work in the petrol chemical industry in Fort McMurray, but also did similar work in southern BC, Newfoundland, and other places around Canada, tells me about his experience and frustrations of trying to keep in touch on such sites:

“[...] some [camps] are so secluded you can’t do shit. You have to wait at a pay phone just to call your family. There’s no service for your cell because you’re too in the middle of nowhere. I was in one place, a uranium mine, so far up north 60/70 clicks from northern territories border. Fucking freezing all the time. Minus 45 or whatever. And everybody, all the guys, would get off work and run to this little area in this little room with TVs and everybody would stand there with their phones like this: [Rudy holds his own phone up in the air and waves it around mimicking how he would look for a cell signal] just trying to get reception to talk to your family. When I first started it was all pay phones so there would be line ups and guys fist fighting “hurry the fuck up! I want to talk to my wife she’s going to bed!” because of the time change.”

Here Rudy talks about remote camps with unreliable WIFI causing workers to crowd WIFI and data hotspots around the camp and even fight over access to payphones. However, even on sites with otherwise reliable internet infrastructure, the sheer volume of people using the network at the same time (after a shift) puts considerable strain on the system.

Kay, a 35-year-old new mother on maternity leave and her partner Rick, a 33 year old miner in the Arctic Circle and a father of 2 (his newborn child with Kay and a son from a previous relationship), have to contend with the fact that they are sharing a WIFI signal with other people on site as they try to navigate communication within Rick's employment situation. Hundreds of labourers finish their work shift and check their phones through WIFI at the exact same time as Rick, and therefore the network slows down considerably. For Kay and Rick, this strain on internet infrastructure mediates the quality and quantity of the conversation, it also affects the choice of media in which they use to communicate. As Kay tells me,

“I send him pictures all the time. Pictures and videos, like last week his older son learned how to swim and I sent him a video of him swimming, but it depends on the WIFI. Sometimes when he gets off of work there's a couple hundred guys using the WIFI, so it gets really slow and sometimes it doesn't work. So that's why we never ever Facetime or Skype from work because it won't really work. It's too slow.”

The position and type of work that labourers do also plays a role in the communication infrastructure and mediates the platforms that people use to communicate. Daniel, a 37-year-old husband and father of 3 teenagers who works as instrumentalist control technician during shut downs at Fort McMurray, told me that because of his position he is able to have his phone with him a lot of the time while he is in his office. Working in his office allows him to send regular messages to his wife, Judith.

Judith and Daniel's communication schedule seems to be a form of near-synchronous texting that they see as an improvement over the days that they had to rely on telephone calls. The couple has been together for 16 years and for them keeping in touch throughout the day is a

way to vent about work and other frustrations, chat casually about what is going on in the moment, and build rapport while Daniel is away. As they used to rely on telephone calls at the end of the day they see texting as an easier alternative that alleviates their loneliness and allows them to develop a long drawn-out and in-depth conversation that spans multiple days and weeks as opposed to a quick 10 minute phone call at the end of the day that often ended in a fight due to the stress related with of Daniel being away, the limited availability to converse, and stress of scheduling daily telephone calls. When I ask them how they communicate while Daniel is at work they tell me,

Judith: we text.

Daniel: pretty much always just text.

Judith: and if the phone rings I get worried. He only calls if there is an issue, if something is wrong or needs to be dealt with immediately. He leaves tomorrow for 3 and a half weeks. We'll probably only text for 3 and a half weeks. We stopped with phone calls a long time ago. It's easier. With text we have one conversation that goes on all day. As opposed to not talking all day and have a 10-minute phone call [at the end of the day].

Daniel: And you don't always have a lot time to sit and do the phone thing.

Judith: it's kind of one long conversation. Depending on what we are doing we might respond for a couple of hours but sometimes it's back and forth quick. It's gotten to be a habit I guess. It works.

Daniel: the back and forth happens so much during the day. That if you get to the phone call there wouldn't really be much to say.

Judith: even in [their kid's] hockey games I'll be texting the score and say this is how things are going and stuff like. It works.

Mark: Does your communicating all day, does that alleviate the stress of loneliness?

Daniel: a little bit

Judith: it's easier now than it was a decade ago. We used to talk on the phone a lot.

Daniel: you're kind of disconnected to a point. But we're pretty good to stay in contact all day. The kids, usually for the first week or so, I hear from them. And then... if I want to hear from them I'll text them if I want to know what's going on. Yeah you're a little disconnected from everything. But I can't imagine not having the cell phone it because we use it so much

Judith: we'd probably be split up by now. Because it can be tough enough sometimes. It wouldn't work.

Daniel: You'd have nobody to vent to about how everything is going or, how awful they were today, or how awful work was today.

Judith: Yeah I'm here alone most of the time and so if it wasn't for this. At least then it's not as much. It's someone to vent or to talk to.

Daniel: that's accurate.

Judith: don't really fight over text. It is different because before the kids would go to bed and then we'd sit on the phone and fight. There's a big difference as we just text throughout the day.

Judith and Daniel's ongoing dialogues throughout the day works to build what Ito and Okabe (2005) frame as an *ambient virtual co-presence*, the regular sending of mundane updates back and forth to keep the other up to date on the regular goings on within their immediate lives. In Judith and Daniel's situation, the constant stream of updates about their children, venting about their work life, and other routine conversation alleviates stress and loneliness on both sides as it allows each partner to express and reflect upon their routines in near real time. Thus, the afforded ambient co-presence through near synchronous texting mediates the quality and quantity (as they are able to text seemingly all day, where it would be nearly impossible to carry on a telephone conversation in the same manner) of Judith and Daniel's conversations and eases the tension that each used to release during telephone conversations that resulted in fights prior to their texting regime.

However, not all participants are fortunate to be in situations where their work environments allow for near constant synchronous communication that leads to an ambient co-presence. For instance, Marie, a 28-year-old care worker for people with autism and mother of 3 (newborn twins and a 7-year-old from a previous relationship), tells me about her communication regime with her partner Stan who is an iron worker and father of 3 (including the aforementioned new born twins and a 7-year-old from a previous relationship), who recently began work in Alberta after several years of working on mainland Nova Scotia. For Marie and Stan, the ongoing hands-on nature of his work along with the work camp's internet infrastructure does not often afford opportunities for ongoing conversations throughout the day that might foster an ambient co-presence similar to what Judith and Daniel experience. As Marie communicates to me,

“Communication is not always the best when he's away but it's because he works 12-hour days and he's *working, working*. He's not ... he doesn't sit down. He's always using his hands and he can't just pull out his phone to answer a text. That would be so unreal.

Mark: Are they allowed to do have their phones on site?

Marie: I don't think so, because of safety concerns.

Mark: Do you know if he is using data or the camp's WIFI when he calls or texts you?

Marie: I think he'd be able to text message just about anywhere. I know when he's in certain camps when we first started dating and stuff he'd have shitty reception and that kind of thing but where he is now it doesn't seem like he has bad reception. Once he was on a bus though, like when he gets the planes out there to and from work and he calls from the bus on the way to the job site I can't understand him, so I just hang up on him. You know when you're telling someone ten times that you can't hear them and they are still talking. You just gotta hang up and end it! So, yeah he might not have reception sometimes. I have no idea. If it was important he would have texted I guess.”

Marie and Stan's communication regime seems to be shaped by the essentials of Rick's occupation, as he works a physically demanding manual labour job that places restrictions on cell phone use and demands the use of his hands and full attention, he does not have the option to call, read, answer and send texts, or emails to Marie throughout the day. Further, the job site's data, wireless, and internet infrastructure, as it is on a remote location also does not encourage this sort of communication and only leads to frustrations over dropped calls and bad reception. As Marie is preoccupied with taking care of her young family, she mostly does not bother dealing with the poor reception of Rick's calls preferring the directness of a text message over a phone call: "If it was important he would have texted I guess."

Time Zones and Temporality

The difference in time zones (for example Nova scotia is 3 hours ahead of Alberta) change and temporal nature of work also plays a large role in communicative practices and serves as an added stressor in the lives in many of my participants as well, dictating the frequency and overall ability to communicate with their families, as well as the content of the conversation. In the early days of Judith and Daniel's navigation of his labour situation they used to talk on the phone most nights and "with the time change it was usually late". These late-night phone calls, due to the pressure to perform family at a distance while navigating time zones and familial obligations, often resulted in fights between the couple.

Rudy tells me about the tension he experienced while trying to negotiate work, family, and time zones,

"That's another fuck up too if you have young children. Sometimes you never get to talk to them because you wake up at 4 in the morning. It's 7 there your kids aren't up yet. You go to work, and you can't use your phone at work. You get off work, it's 6 o'clock and 9 there. Your kids are asleep. Those are normal occasions. That happens all time."

This also seems to mediate the quality of conversation that my participants have with their children and significant others. When I asked Rudy how often he talked to his teenage daughter he responded that it was rare for him to talk to her and when he did, the quality of the conversation was lacking, being more about maintenance and attempting to keep in regular contact than deep substantive conversation.

M: How often do you talk to your daughter?

Rudy: “When I’m at work? Not very much. Basically, everyone sends texts. You’re at work, sending texts. “how ya doing hun? House not on fire? Good”; later on, “hey how ya doing? How was supper? Love ya. K Talk to you tomorrow”. Click. That’s it.”

Rudy also told me that parenting long distance was extremely difficult and that you miss a lot of important milestones: “first steps, first everything. I missed. I missed all that stuff. Grading days. Dances. I missed all of that stuff”. He is now divorced from his wife and she will call him to ask that he call and discipline his daughter. Rudy relayed a story about this scenario once when his daughter was not doing well in school and he called her to talk about it:

“Hey babe how are you doing, I heard you’re not doing well in school” “I don’t care what you say dad!” *click* so what do you? Call back and she doesn’t want to talk to you. What do you do? Hang up the phone and go back to my mental anguish for the day and pour another drink. It’s very hard to parent over the phone.”

Rudy told me that he would then send money to his daughter as a way to show her that he still loved her, perform being a dad, and ultimately make himself feel better about being away.

This sending of remittances is what Parreñas (2001; McKay 2007) refers to as a common, yet commodified, strategy for stimulating intimacy and interdependence between family. While Rudy knows it goes against the initial reason for calling his daughter, which was to discipline her, sending money works to alleviate his tensions, loneliness, and the guilt he feels for not being there. Further, this interaction, though monetary and commodified in nature, reminds him of the reason why he participates in labour migration in the first place, to provide for his family.

“That just makes a guy feel better. She’s like I don’t want to talk to dad *click*. And right after that I’ll send her money. Just reinforcing that attitude. In my head it’s ‘you got money so give her money’. And in my head, whatever she is doing with that money – she’s smiling. So that gives me a smile. Whatever she asks for, she got it. She got it, no surprise. She got that.”

Communication and Gender Roles

In a way, circular migration and keeping in touch reproduces Glace Bay’s traditional gender roles as the man leaves his partner and children behind as he travels for work and therefore the woman is left with the obligations to perform care labour for the children and as keeper of the home (Miner’s Museum and White Lelou Media Inc 2017). In my research, however, I documented how women also perform labour in paid occupations – often, at least with my participants, in some sort of care work occupation, such as nursing, care support work, social worker, teacher, etc., and also perform labour as a life partner at a distance through digital communication. Performing labour as a partner can mean sending texts, photos, and videos throughout the day to keep the man up to date of the goings on in the house and community, being available for a quick phone and video calls in the morning or at night, or even serving as an alarm clock, calling to wake their partners for their work shift.

Women must also contend with time zones, work, and family restrictions while simultaneously running the family household, parenting, and performing family through their phones. While men are largely disconnected from family life except for the brief snapshots that their partners provide in the form of photos, replies to SMS messages, videos, and brief telephone calls at the beginning or end of the day, they thus rely on and sometimes expect their partners to send messages and photos documenting the day's events to their partners.

Male participants realize that this is what is going on and they are not necessarily happy about not being able to perform more domestic duties. However, they recognize that it endures because of the large amounts of money that the men make while away at work and are able to send home. Brett, a 32-year-old former tar sands worker tells me that he sees women filling the familial gaps that men leave behind while they are at work and draws a connection to previous generations of Glace Bay families where the men were gone for long shifts in the mine and their wives were at home,

“The women are picking up our slack. And you hate to admit, but you're bringing in the bread. No different than years ago when the men are out getting coal. Then they come home drinking or whatever and mom's at home cooking taking care of the kids. Just weird that we're still doing that.”

One participant, Kay, a 35 year old new mother currently on maternity leave from her graphic design job in Ontario (though she lives full time in Glace Bay), describes her daily routine as it relates to juggling time zones and commitments to communicating with her partner, Rick, a 33 year old miner in the Arctic Circle:

“We can't talk once he goes in the mine, because there is no signal, but when he is on day shift I know by 7:30 in the morning my time, that's 4:30 in the morning

his time, I can start texting him. I used to, before we had the baby, call him between 7:30 and 8 every morning and talk for 20 mins. But at 8:30 when he goes to work, I don't hear from him until about 10:30 at night. So he'll start texting me when he starts making his way back to his room. And we usually call and talk every night. But when he's on night shift it's a lot easier, because obviously he can't talk to his son when he is on day shift because they can only communicate when he gets up out of bed or before he's in bed at night. So, when he's on night shift he gets up at 10:30 in the morning... so he gets off at 10:30 and I call him at 5 o'clock to wake him up and to talk to him and get him up for work."

Kay has assigned Rick his own ringtone on her phone, so she knows to look at her phone and answer it as soon as she can, while she often ignores other calls throughout the day. When he calls, she tells me, Rick's picture and name shows up, so she knows it is him. When I asked if she felt pressured to answer right away when Rick called, Kay tells me that she does not feel pressured and answers because she wants to. She tells me that if she does not answer she knows that she might miss the opportunity to speak with him that day.

"I know I only have a certain window to speak to him, so I have to answer it right away. And when I had the baby I said, "you know how I used to be on top of your texts and answer right away, don't expect that anymore." But I'm still pretty good at it, still pretty on top of it.

Mark: Do you find that it's a lot of work?

Sometimes it is. Sometimes I think oh I'd like to go to bed but I wait because I want to talk to him. And other times when we are texting back and forth I'm like – oh I really want to do *this* [some other activity] but I got to wait and answer and text and explain something throughout the day. And he kind of does expect me to text him throughout the day – we have had this argument before and I'm like you're not even getting my messages until the end of the day so what's the point of texting you when I know you're not going to get my texts – so why do I have to text you? But he just likes getting off of work and having some messages there and knowing what we did throughout the day and it's sort of his way of being part of it I guess. Or I'll send him pictures of the kids and he just likes getting them all as soon as he gets off of work."

Kay balances her schedule in a way that enables her and Rick to find time throughout the day to converse, bond and share moments even sending updates through the day when she knows that Rick will not receive them for several hours because she knows that receiving notifications at the end of his work day makes him feel less isolated and removed from home life. However, this does put an added burden on women like Kay as they have to constantly provide updates while they are juggling their careers, providing care work for children, and participate in their own social lives.

From an analytic perspective, we may read this as employers extracting care work from women through Internet communication technologies to keep their labour force happy and connected. Essentially this form of care work outsources the employers' burden of providing a labour environment of social cohesion to women in Glace Bay and introduces double burdens (Barber and Bryan 2012:232) on to women as they must attend to the social reproductive needs of male migrant labourers as well as care for families and work full time.

However, male migrant labourers also feel double burdens (Barber and Bryan 2012:232) as they too cope with dual obligations and the background awareness (Komito and Bates 2011) that social media affords. Komito and Bates (2011) write that Polish and Filipino migrants' social media usage in Ireland permits an awareness of what activities friends and acquaintances in the origin community are engaged in, and thus allows bonding and shared experiences through social media practices. At least in the case of my participants, it also feeds into labourers' anxiety, stress, and the longing to be home with their family and friends to take part in those

activities, creating double burdens as labourers attempt to negotiate attention to work life and home life. As Daniel, the instrumentalist control technician working in Alberta notes:

“this place that I am at you can’t have your phone when you are out working. In the office you can have your phone but, as soon as you leave the office the phone has to stay. So that definitely keeps it easier to keep your mind in the moment and keep focused on what you’re doing. But you are certainly at two different places, for sure. Especially if anything is going on like the kids have a soccer or hockey game. You are wondering how it went. And I’m anxious to get back to the office for updates. I feel like I’m split in two at that time.”

Daniel’s experience exemplifies that while he is grateful for the constant updates about his children that his wife provides through ICT it does contribute to his feeling “at two separate places” and being “split in two” as it reminds him of what is going on at home and sustains a longing for being there. He is not physically able to be at the hockey to perform his role of being a “hockey dad” and thus, he is anxious for more updates to prolong an ambient co-presence.

Negotiating Family Performances Through Visual Communication

Kay tells me that while sending texts about what she is doing throughout the day or the sending of photos her and her partner’s kids is a lot of work, she does it now as a sort of mnemonic device or a way to instantly relay news and her thoughts and feelings to her partner. She tells me that now that they have a newborn baby it is easier to send texts about things throughout the day as they happen instead of trying to recall the day’s events in a telephone conversation before bed.

This use of photography as media to communicate the mundane activities of daily life is something that Miller et al. have reported in their cross cultural studies of social media with

postings being “overwhelmingly visual” (Miller et al. 2016:155), allowing people to have “conversations” through the exchange of photographs.

In the case of Kay and my other participants, the sending of photos generates a sense of being together and bonding over moments where one partner is not physically present in and yet is able to share phatically through viewing photos sent hours earlier. Photographs, as Pink (2011) postulates, are produced and consumed in entanglements of meaning making and are instrumental in the construction of place and are produced and consumed in a meshwork of interconnected performances of visual events that involve people, everyday movements through space, cameras, skills, discourses, and interpretative processes that simultaneously emerge from and produce place and sites to perform relationships. While photographs, and other digital images, might represent the environments and moments in which they were produced, the audience’s consumption of them does not simply transport them back to the moment in which the images are produced, but instead institutes original assemblage processes which move the viewer forward as they participate with the photograph multisensorially. When a photograph is shared it creates a new site through which the relationship may be performed.

Kay’s photos, she says, serve as device that arbitrates the conversation that she and her partner have at the end of his shift. Whereas she may not otherwise remember what she and their infant did throughout the day, the photos serve as a record in which Kay and her partner may reflect upon and share with each other, serving to maintain their relationship and create new bonding experiences and memories.

“I have so much to tell him because with the baby and everything going on. I do it now, text throughout the day and tell him little things, just so I don’t forget. Because at the end of the day I have a list of things to talk to you about and I get

off the phone and I'm like shit! I forgot to tell him this. And so, I find it easier if I text him throughout the day random things and we can talk about whatever I texted him throughout the day. I find it easier because I have baby brain. I enjoy it. Yeah.”

Some participants, however, do not appreciate such practices as it reminds them of the times they are missing. For instance, Teddy prefers not to receive photo updates throughout the day, especially if they occurred during significant occasions such as birthdays or Christmas, as they remind him of the special moments that he misses while he is away at work. However, on his downtime and during breaks at work he does scroll through the Facebook photos that he posts of his children for a quick “pick me up” when he is feeling lonely. “It helps for sure. Like if you're just sitting there on your break and you're getting low [...] I just flip through my pictures. It definitely helps, yeah.” For Teddy, receiving photos of events that are happening in real time seems to remind him of the physical and emotional distance that comes about due to the peculiarities of his job. Interestingly it is these same distances that communication technologies are mythologized to transcend, fostering intimate connections across time and space (Kluitenberg 2006). These technologies instead sometimes prolong feelings of loneliness and disconnection and the need for physical contact. This is conveyed by Rudy's response to my questions about whether access to cell phone and other ICTs work to alleviate loneliness. “Well, no. I feel disconnected. That stuff is there, it's technology. But I can't go give someone a hug or a high five.”

Phantom Rings

In their 2014 book *Web Cam* Miller and Sinanan (2014) refer to the concept of being “always on” (2014:54) regarding the production of intimacy among Trinidadian web cam users.

Web cams and video telephony programs and apps such as Skype and FaceTime afford the opportunity for users to develop or reproduce strong domestic co-presence between communication partners while left on for continuous periods and users go about their daily activities. While none of my participants had the opportunity to experience such a phenomenon, because most lacked full-service internet infrastructure, conflicting work and life schedules, and time zone challenges (all discussed previously), several had experienced what has been referred to as *phantom ring* or *phantom vibration* (Laramie 2007; Haupt 2007; Rotherberg et al. 2010; Drouin et al. 2012) to describe the imagined feeling of a cell phone's vibration.

The limited literature regarding this phenomenon is often pejorative in tone, describing those who experience it as “mostly young” (Drouin et al. 2012), somehow addicted to their cell phones, or conditioned to constantly check their messages after repeated experiences of actual exposure to vibration alerts from their devices.

As I was conducting my fieldwork I was away from my significant other who was on the BC coast in a different time zone (4-hour difference). I would often keep a cellphone in my back pocket as I walked around Glace Bay to interview appointments, get together, or just walk around and hang out. As I missed my partner considerably and we had to contend with schedules and time zones, much like my participants, I was often worried I would miss her phone call or a text message that would afford a synchronous exchange. There were often feelings of anticipation as I hoped the phone would buzz with a message or a call to take me away, even momentarily, from my work to share and bond with my partner. I remember the first time that I experienced the phantom ring: I was shopping in a Sobey's grocery store in Glace Bay and I could swear that I could feel the vibration from a text message. I checked the phone and there

had not been any messages for the past few hours. It confused me and I took some notes about the feeling when I got back to my room. The feeling continued throughout the rest of my fieldwork, always when I was alone, always when I was out of the house doing some mundane task like walking to appointments, shopping, etc. From this point on during our interviews I explained the phenomenon as it happens to me and then asked my participants if they experienced this as well.

Teddy: I get that all the time. You think you felt it ring in your pocket. Sometimes I don't even have my phone in my pocket and I feel it buzz. And I go to grab it and it's not even there.

Kay: Oh, all the time. I think I hear the ringing. [...] But I think it is about anticipation. Expecting something. In the grocery store I'll check because I only have a certain window to talk. So only his ringtone if you think you were it. Especially when it's in my back pocket. I look at it constantly. I have enough cushion back there I shouldn't even feel it!

Brett: I think it's because we're just hoping it's going off. Like oh, is that her? Or you're sitting there bored and its like I wish someone would text me, and then you're like, who's this going to be. And you're like shit – there's no one there.

My participants and I decided, at least in our cases as we deal with schedules and obligations across time zones, that phantom vibrations or phantom ringing is not the result from being addicted to our phones or even to the endorphins that are released when we are excited to get messages from our friends and loved ones. Instead, the imagined feelings of vibrations are more about the loneliness and the longing for togetherness that we feel; the anticipation and the hope that a special someone is reaching out to communicate with us; the worry that we will miss a vital opportunity to converse with those we care about most.

Facebook and Social Media

During my interviews I asked my participants if they often used Facebook or other social media in their day to day social lives, communicating with their partners, and how heavy a role these media played in their lives. Some of my participants and myself had already added each other on the social media networks that they used prior to our interviews sessions and so I was already aware of their use of it to some capacity. While all but 1 of my participants said that they have Facebook, most said that they did not use it regularly and that they certainly did not post very often. Rudy, the participant who did not use Facebook instead uses Instagram heavily, posting several photos, videos, and “stories” on the app every day. Rudy says that he deleted Facebook due to the amount of drama and “fakeness” that he saw in his Facebook feed.

“I got off of Facebook because it’s fucking Drama-book and I deleted it 4 years ago. Just too much arguing and fakeness on there. And I got a fuckin mouth I can’t help but call people out. Like “I know you you’re full of shit. I just saw you in the welfare line you didn’t just buy that house.”

Rudy’s comments about drama echoed a lot of conversations about Glace Bay in general, with many people telling me about “the people around here” and the gossip mills of the small town. One of the intricacies of small town living, with large swathes of the population knowing each other since birth and knowing each other’s families intergenerationally, and thus everyone knowing each other’s comings and goings, may foster drama and gossip. As Horst and Miller (2006) note the speed afforded by cell phones and platforms such as Facebook amplify the speed of gossip (Miller 2006:24), and even allow for it to spread outside of communities. It appears, from my participants’ responses to Facebook, that this particular social media may work to amplify the voices of those who start drama and gossip. Therefore, many participants choose not

to actively engage with the platform for any substantial reasons, using it, and the drama they see in their feeds for entertainment purposes.

However, as Rudy admits, social media in general is fundamental to his keeping in touch with family, friends and, especially, co-workers. While he tells me that he sees social media as a way to broadcast trivial material, and what Rudy calls “status things” -posting photos of newly purchased cars or other material goods as a way to gain social and capital-, he also views it as a way, in addition to texting and calling, to develop and maintain relationships which is especially important for him when there is a scarcity of work contracts.

Rudy here tells me about how he uses Instagram to build and maintain friendships with coworkers, describing an instance where he met someone on the job and keeps regular contact with him through the app, even vacationing together.

“Because you’re not going to *call* everybody. It’s so easy to add someone to Facebook or Instagram. Just one click and you’ve got them for life. And you look at his new sled. Or so and so are in Cancun. That’s what you do. When you meet those real guys you develop a relationship. You plan jobs together. You look at them as a best buddy. And I may have hung around with him for 60 days, 12 hours a day as partners. He’s a welder and I’m a fitter, say. We call each other and plan trips.”

Mark: So you’re on Instagram scrolling through, and then how to decide to call or text your friends?

Especially when I’m drinking. Usually it depends on jobs and stuff too. The whole industry is word of mouth, who you know. “I heard about the job at red water are you going” “oh I didn’t hear about it, can you give me the email for the HR” that’s the whole game. Just looking for that next thing. And when the droughts happen everyone else go through our phones [contact list] and just mass text “hey do you know of any jobs” all the way through. Finally, you’ll hook someone. It’s like a dating site but for work. Every number will be listed with the person’s name and the company. Mark at Clearstream. Easier to remember the jobs than the people because I meet so many people.”

Rudy describes how he uses multiple media platforms, at once scrolling through Instagram and calling the people on his phone's contact list that the Instagram platform shows him in his feed.

Teddy says he uses Facebook to keep up with what is going on in the community and will scroll through his news feed for entertainment while at home or at work. Teddy says that unlike many people in his feed he does not post status updates about the activities that he is doing on a regular basis but will very rarely post a picture of one of his kids. Although he says he uses it daily, he is not a what he calls a "Facebook person"

"I'm not a big Facebook person but I'll scroll through and see all the drama, and all of what else is going on.

Mark: do you ever post your own drama?

No, no. [I just post] that odd picture and that. Just change my profile picture or put a picture of the kids. Me and the kids or something we've done or something like that, right. But I am not much of a Facebook person – though I do use it daily – I flip through and see the news. I see someone that did something stupid or just laugh at peoples', you know, the stuff that they don't need to post. Like, their day to day activities: "I made coffee; I'm going to get a shower" type of thing."

Mark: do you 'like' stuff?

I might have liked 4 or 5 things, that's about it. I mostly don't post at all, just pictures of the kids¹³.

Marie says that she uses Facebook and texting (SMS) as her primary means of communication as she dislikes and does not have time for standard voice phone calls and

¹³ Although I did not have access to Teddy's Facebook history, he did show me his SnapChat contacts. There was only one person listed as a contact, his wife.

because both platforms are easy to use to communicate and to share photos. She shares photos of her kids by tagging her family members in her private posts as it saves her time and so her family members do not have to go to any trouble of downloading them. Marie also performs community online through liking and leaving emojis on her friend's posts and gauges the type of emoji that she uses in reference to levels of support that she feels she needs to express due to how much she likes the individual. However, she is annoyed by Stan's posts of constant iron worker union memes.

"I'm not a very tech savvy person to be honest. Texting and Facebook, that's pretty much it. When I take pictures of my kids I usually just tag like my mother and my grandmother, Stan [her partner] and his mother.

Mark: why do you tag them?

Just so they have it on their Facebook profile. Because my profile is private so, if we're not friends you can't see it. And then it just goes right to their profile, they don't have to download it, or I don't have to send it, it's just there. It changes so often it's hard to tell.

Mark: does Stan do the same thing?

No, he usually never tags anybody in anything.

Mark: do you 'like' stuff on Facebook?

Oh yeah. If they are funny or something. But mostly if I'm scrolling through Facebook I'm really not paying attention. I'm really just looking for those funny sayings and pictures and stuff. Memes. I usually use love or like. If something is hilarious I'll use the laughing one.

Mark: how do you decide?

I don't know what determines it, to be honest. It depends on whether I really like that person or they are just a buddy or something. My best friends' pictures I'd probably love. I don't like a lot of things. I find when I do like a lot of things, I do it a lot. But then like 4 days straight of not. But I like nothing on Stan's [wall]. Everything he shares has to do with iron working and the union and I'm just like, oh this is stupid stuff. If there was an eye roll option I'd press it every time."

While scrolling through Facebook during my fieldwork I would often see participants' checking in when they are traveling for work. I asked my participants if they and their friend's use this feature and why they do it. Most of my participants say they do it to show their family and friends that they are safe and traveling to work and sometimes check in with coworkers that they run into at the airport on the way to a job site. As Kay tells me:

“Rick checked in on Facebook because he was traveling with someone that he doesn't usually travel with, because he meets up with people while traveling that he is on the same schedule with. I think he's doing it less now. So, I think he does it to just say 'I'm having a beer with Todd'. And every time that he's traveling – he's having a beer! Because the camps are dry camps. But he makes up for the dry camp when he is at home!”

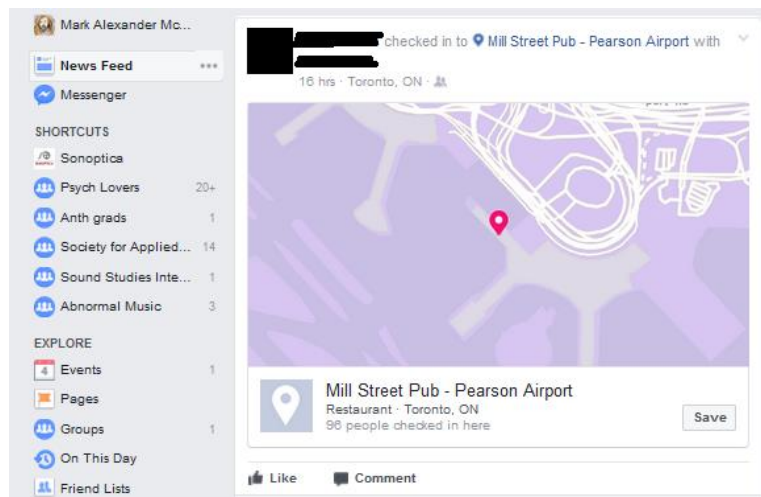


Figure 1: A Screen shot of a Facebook check in.

However, Rudy had a more cynical response related to stature and the poverty in Glace Bay to Facebook check-ins. Stating that while labourers do it to advertise that they are working in order to earn social capital and high stature in the community, he also sees that other

individuals in the community view these posts in order to see where they can benefit from free drinks at the bar, or to borrow money.

“Yeah they are advertising that they are going to work. People like someone who works. People notice “woah! you make that money”. That’s a stature thing. They look up to them. “I see him in two or three weeks when they get home well they are def. buying shots for the bar”. “Or I know where to hit someone up for a hundred bucks”. There’s a lot of whores out there.”

While Rudy is cynical about these types of posts, his Instagram account is full of photos of his truck, motorbikes, and other material wealth. When I ask him about it he laughs,

“It’s funny I have all of this stuff, but I don’t have oil [for his furnace]. [...] You see a guy driving around in a lifted Dodge Ram and he’s suckin back a smoke and heading to the bar and buying shots. Looks great, like he’s a fucking drug dealer. But he’s probably breaking his ass every day. And truth be told he doesn’t own that truck, the bank owns it. The money I get goes to my mortgage, my child support, and insurance on my truck. That’s it, But, yeah, it’s a stature thing.”

As Rudy tells us, Facebook check ins that signify that they are going to work and posting photos of high end material goods, such as trucks and motorbikes, is a way to build social capital in the community. Glace Bay is a town where work is scarce and so people who have a job and can purchase high end material goods are held in esteem. As Rudy tells me, “everybody loves a worker.”

Women seem to use Facebook to perform care work for their partners by posting photographs of their daily routines and of the children. Meanwhile men seem to be the ones most actively consuming these photographs while they are away at work. My male participants did not talk about sending or posting photos of themselves while at work, this may be due to poor

internet connections while on the job, not wanting to show the conditions that they are living in, or simply lack of interest. Men do seem to post Facebook check-ins while they are traveling to and from the worksite, seemingly advertising that they are going to work, or that they are coming home from work, in an attempt to gain social capital.

As labourers and their families navigate labour, work, and home by engaging with the affordances and limitations of internet communication technologies I am left wondering how long can these practices can continue. Canada is attempting to be both a natural resource powerhouse and a leader in environmental initiatives, yet it is hard to imagine how the two are mutually inclusive. My participants say that despite the physical and emotional hardships of the work, they will go where the money is. However, as participants continue to raise their families they question the future of the community that their children are being raised in. The next chapter attempts to consider what the future holds for Glace Bay.

Chapter 4: Future

While some cities have replaced an industrial base with knowledge and service economies, this “post-industrial” development model remains an ideal but not a reality for many deindustrialized communities (Mah 2009:15-16). Glace Bay is, of course, no exception as it is mostly lacking a knowledge-based economy, save for a call centre that changed ownership several times over the past 20 years. As this thesis has shown, many in the community instead rely upon the labour of families involved in regimens of circular migration to industrial extraction sites in order to sustain the economy and navigate precarity. Despite deindustrialization Glace Bay still relies on fossil fuel extraction to drive its economy. This chapter examines labour infrastructure and Glace Bay’s past and present ties to industry in an effort to understand its future.

Labour Infrastructure

Coal has left marks in the physical geographies, communities, and individuals of Cape Breton, traces of which may be observed in the relationships between actors long after industrial coal extraction ceased operation. I am reminded of Jussi Parikka’s (2015:84) writing on dust, which he calls a “collective assemblage” of “social, political and media issues”. Dust for Parikka is a way to track materialities and media that are entangled in issues of labour, economy, representations, and discourses – “dust forces us to think of surfaces as it exposes them” (Parikka’s 2015:88). Surely, we may also trace Glace Bay’s past, present, and future through the dust. Coal dust, metaphoric dust, or otherwise.

Susan Leigh Star (1999:381-382) tells us all infrastructure is built upon an already installed base with new systems embodying certain standards, linked to conventions and

communities of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991) and built upon existing systems. Labour networks of the past leave traces and it is these traces that serve as the base that new networks are built upon. Glace Bay's labour infrastructure with its embodied standards, conventions, and communities of practice - the normalization of resource extraction labour and migration – are all rooted in historic labour networks and infrastructure that seem to locate Glace Bay's present and future in the dust of past coal networks.



Photo 7: Danny Sparrow, CEO of ECTOGroup and Pitbull Printing holds up the Glace Bay town flag. (Photo by Mark McIntyre 2017)

My friend Danny, a man who has lived his whole life in Glace Bay and owns and operates several small businesses with an aim to give back to the community by providing services and employment, showed me Glace Bay's flag, given to him by the Glace Bay Heritage Museum Society. The flag's crest, positioned on a background of blue (for the ocean) and black (for the coal) portrays two miners with shovels and pick axes, head lamps and lanterns, and a train loaded with coal. The motto on the top of the flag boats "From the Depths of the Sea and

the Earth”, situating the town as built upon the labour of fishing and mining. Locals still consider Glace Bay a fishing and coal town due to its historic ties to labour as well as the memorialization of sites of industrial work as they are transformed into sites of leisure and memorial (Stoler 2008). Whereas some sites, for example, mines, and tailings ponds, have been formally transformed into deliberate memorials to the region’s industrial past, with plaques and statues marking a site’s history as they are reserved as public parks, other sites, such as former rail lines used by residents as walking and dirt bike trails, have been repurposed through performances of individual life projects. One participant told me that he often takes his ATV on dirt bike trails that were formerly railroad tracks used for transferring coal on the initial days that he is home from work on an offshore oil rig as it allows him to relax and eases his transition from work life to home life. As he uses these trails for leisure he also retraces the routes of coal production and entangles his life project in those of the past. These sites, regardless of their use, link lifeways to industry, past, present, and future.



Photo 8: (Left) A display outside of a Glace Bay private pharmacy shows photos from Glace Bay’s industrial past, seemingly showing that it has been part of the town since its incorporation; (Right) A memorial that marks a park as a former mine, Dominion Colliery Number 20; similar memorials are placed around the town’s other former mines. (Photo by Mark McIntyre 2017)

Proud People and a Future that is Unwritten

As you enter the community of Glace Bay you are greeted by a sign on the side of the road that reads “Welcome to Glace Bay Proud People Strong Future”. While the people in the community are most certainly proud – of their families, of their historic ties to the community, of their work ethic and traditions – what a strong future *means* seems vague as the present is etched in uncertainty.

There is joy in Glace Bay and there are people living good and happy lives despite somewhat dire economic circumstances that much of the community contends with. Much of the joy in the community stems from children’s sporting events, seeing their children run and play, skate and score make parents feel like their sacrifices are worth it. The kids are the future and this is reflected in Glace Bay’s focuses on children’s sports, such as Little League baseball, minor hockey, t-ball, and soccer, which are all heavily subsidized through community events, draws, and the sale of 50/50 tickets that offer relatively large pots (the last I saw was over \$27,000). In my experience throughout the summer there were Little League baseball games or practices every other day and my participants with children old enough to participate in organized sports were often rushing their children to and from practices and games and selling tickets to help subsidize the sporting fees. As Judith tells me,

“Kids like it here. It’s good. Their sports would cost me a fortune in Halifax. It’s cheap here. It doesn’t cost anything to play hockey here. The 50/50 draw pays for it all.”

Wherever I go there are a lot older folks around, and I am told about Glace Bay's (and Nova Scotia's, as a whole) aging demographic and about the young people moving away permanently for work. I would often hang around in the local McDonalds drinking coffee and chat with or listen to the conversations of old men and women who haunted the space, and their sheer numbers, as well as those who hang around smoking and drinking coffee while gossiping and waving at their friends downtown, are enough to convince me about the ageing, or aged, population. However, my participants and their friends are all between 30 and 40, hardly old and still residing permanently in Glace Bay. Further, many of my participants, and others that I associated with during my research, have several children, some couples with 4 or 5 children.

While, many people reported to me that they have surprised themselves for opting to raising children in Cape Breton, as they do not imagine much hope for the community's survival or ability to flourish, they are in fact raising their children in the region and thus sustaining the community as the increased population prevents school and hospital closures as well as justifications to fund other amenities. How these amenities are funded in the future, as governments privatize more and more public services, is a serious question.

The community's reliance upon remittances is far from sustainable and the uncertainty that accompanies the lack of self-determination encourages precarious lifeways and brings doubt to positive conceptions of future. As Kay relays to me, she has a hard time imagining any kind of future for Glace Bay without some sort of local industrial resource extraction operation creating well-paying local employment opportunities.



Photo 9: Upon entering the community one is greeted by the Glace Bay Proud People Strong Future sign. (Photo by KrazyFella.com)

“There is not much of a future here. Unless they find a huge natural gas or oil, I don’t think there is much. And the first thing I’ll tell my kids is go get your education and get out of here. I always said I’d never raise my kids in Cape Breton but – I guess it’s how you raise them. It’s bad everywhere.

While Kay is willing to raise her children in Glace Bay, despite its short fallings of crime and poverty, she will encourage them to get a formal education and leave the community to establish a life in a locale with a *future*. Something that she herself did, as she moved to Ontario for school and work, but moved back to Glace Bay after a previous relationship ended to start a family with her current partner. As more and more Canadians face precarious work-life situations, and as Neoliberal global trade policies continue to move Canada towards post-industrial models while the country simultaneously struggles to find a balance between resource extraction priorities and global environmental commitments, *where* the next generation find their futures is cloaked in ambiguity.

Fossil Dreams and 21st Century Realities

Obviously, there is some sort of a future for Glace Bay. But what will that look like and what will that future be tied to? Coal, as it has been in the past? It does not seem likely.

However, the reopening of the Donkin mine has invigorated pride in the community and I met several Cape Bretoners who moved back to Glace Bay to work as coal miners. There is an idea that this mine will bring steady employment back to the area along with a revitalization, and several community groups and entrepreneurs are working hard to capitalize on any new money that the mine might bring in.

One young family of four, Dylan, a former Fort McMurray labourer, his wife Christa, a nurse, and their two young daughters, recently moved back to Cape Breton to get away from life in Alberta. Dylan, happy to be living in Glace Bay but unsure of his future told me,

“10 years away is enough for me. I don’t know what I’ll do for work, I can always do the ‘back and forth’ thing in Alberta. I got the connections and I’m in the union. I might try and get hired at the Donkin mine. I don’t know yet.”

Dylan quickly got hired on to work in the mine but the work has been unsteady and precarious with cycles of work shutdowns and layoffs tied to ongoing safety concerns, and subsequent rehiring after regulations are satisfied. The screen capture of a Facebook post (below) shows Dylan’s excitement of being rehired at the mine after a round of layoffs. He had been planning to fly back to Alberta to work in the oil patch. Christa has had trouble finding nursing work, even though the region is in need of medical professionals, and so has been working in a bar. “I never thought I’d be raising my kids in Glace Bay,” Christa told me before suddenly realizing out loud “Oh my god... I can’t believe I live in Glace Bay...”



Figure 2: A screen capture of Dylan’s Facebook post about returning to the mine.

Glance bay is so tied to its heritage of the company town. Murals and tributes to the old days of the mine and the heyday of the town line old buildings, museums, and displays in shop windows. Displays that offer a glimpse into some sort of a past of better times, a nostalgia for a workers’ paradise that never was. Listening to miners’ stories you can tell that they loved their jobs, but they worked very hard lives, and they and their families lived in fear of disaster.

The coal mines were planned to have been shutdown in the 1950s but government subsidies kept them operational, ultimately using the cheap coal to subvert the 1970s oil crisis. The government played the role of the de facto company and kept these mines afloat while planning to restructure and diversify the economy. The restructuring never took place outside of a few call centres, big box retailers, and, more recently the English as a Second Language industry.

The English as a Second Language industry is very lucrative for locals who over charge students for room rentals and reap the benefits of foreign money as students pay for bus services, groceries, and clothing. But I am curious as to how long this industry will continue. I also wonder how welcome foreign students feel in a largely xenophobic community. However, not all

of it is based on race but on bitterness over the rising costs of living in a community that is depressed economically. While landlords and business owners increase their profits from students' foreign money, nonparticipating members of the community struggle to see the benefit as the costs of amenities are propelled skyward. As Kay tells me,

“I think it’s the only thing keeping the economy going here, like shops and business, because they have money and they rent rooms. A lot of [local] people have a hard time renting a room because they [landlords] want the international students because they know they are going to get their money. You used to get a whole apartment or a house for 400 dollars and now you might get a room.”

Perhaps the future is in Alberta’s tar/oil sands? It has been sustaining the community, and much of the country, for awhile now, but it does not seem like it can really last for another generation due to increased domestic and international political pressure tied to environmental regulations, as well as a shrinking market. Oil and our dependence on it, both for finance and for our energy needs, does not seem to be going anywhere soon, but can Glace Bay and Cape Breton’s futures rely on resource extraction as it has for much of its past?

Nova Scotia Power (2017) prides itself as a Canadian leader in a transition to renewable energy and they seem to currently be using a blend of sources for their energy needs, from tidal power, natural gas and oil, solid fuels such as coal, as well as wind powered from turbines. It is possible that the future is powered by so called “green” initiatives, and Glace Bay is home to several locations that host large wind turbines, but as I was reminded by one participant, the steel and other materials used to build “green” energy infrastructure is made from mined ore and other resources that must be extracted from *somewhere*.



Photo10: A Nova Scotia Power plant on the coast boasts two iconic smoke stacks and several wind turbines. (Photo by Mark McIntyre 2017)

Revitalization, Tourism, and Resource Extraction

The downtown core is literally falling apart as buildings crumble and fall victim to arsonists or are bulldozed and replaced by empty lots and park benches as weeds colonize these unused spaces. There are movements to revitalize the community with grass roots groups organizing events, such as craft fairs, out door markets, and public meetings to make Glace Bay more “liveable”. There is a push towards revitalization and encouragement to open and support local businesses. With locally owned cafes, vapour shops, take out pizza parlours, printing shops, and hair dressers popping up downtown and beyond, the buy local movement has some momentum. However, it is Tim Hortons, chain grocery stores, and big box stores located outside of Glace Bay that attract most customers and are actually slammed with business. While small cafes manage to stay open and turn a tidy profit, for example, there are now 3 Tim Hortons in Glace Bay alone and each are constantly busy with overflowing parking lots and lineups at the drive-through. Two competing grocery stores, Sobeys and Superstore, were built directly facing

each other on opposite sides of the road outside of the downtown core. Curiously, these two stores seem to have taken consumer traffic outside Glace Bay's traditional downtown and may end up creating a new centre as other shops pop up close by to take advantage.



Photo 11: (Left) An empty lot sandwiched between two vacant buildings, one being the former post office; (Centre) For locally owned businesses operating in Glace Bay's downtown core; (Right) One of Glace Bay's three Tim Hortons with a full parking lot and lineup at the drive-through. (Photo by Mark McIntyre 2017)

Long term aspirations for Glace Bay, however, are tied to dreams of some sort of large scale resource extraction industry coming to the region to bring big money in to rejuvenate the economy, as previously mentioned by Kay's discussion about the future.

While these projects are welcomed by many, especially those who currently must leave the community for work, they are discouraged by others who see developments as detrimental to the region's natural beauty and a threat to the tourism industry. Which is, of course, frustrating to those desperate to work close to home, such as Brett, who understands both the value of tourism and loves Cape Breton's picturesque landscapes, told me,

“We have to get out of the whole – this place is only tourism. Cuz there is tonnes of oil off the coast... mining, natural resources. You don't *want* to cut down the forests, it *is* the natural beauty. But when I see things coming in [industrial projects] it's no, we are tourism and can't fuck it up”

Cape Breton has long been a tourist destination for many people from around the globe wanting to experience long winding roads, beautiful coastlines, and small quaint coastal towns around the famous Cabot Trail. Sydney, the bureaucratic and financial heart of the municipality, has benefited from cruise ships full of tourists docking in its harbour and tourists spending money on souvenirs such as “I ♥ Cape Breton” t-shirts and mugs with a lobster on them (like the one I bought) as they are funneled into Sydney’s downtown where they can dine at a few contemporary style pubs and restaurants and participate in walking tours of churches that been transformed into museums.

I spent an afternoon at the cruise ship terminal as American tourists returned to port. I overheard one group’s conversation as they reassembled after an afternoon seeing the sights. “What did you do today?”, one man asked. “We went on a church tour around Sydney. It was a bit disappointing because they have all been turned into museums. We were hoping to watch a mass”. This conversation struck me as curious as tourists hoped that the tour that they paid for would bring them into the authentic Sydney. I almost told them that from my experience the authentic Sydney is in the Tim Horton’s down the street, but I bit my tongue instead. To me, this showed that while tourists might be visiting the area, they do not seem to get much out of the experience outside of visiting church cum museums and learning a bit of the white washed history of the region. Indeed, the tourist infrastructure - things to do, places to shop, fine dining etc. – are lacking.



Photo 12: A hopeful flag hangs near downtown Glace Bay hoping to greet tourists and finding me, a student of ethnography, instead. (Photo by Mark McIntyre 2017)

Cruise ship tourists rarely seem to venture far from the cruise ship terminal and seldom do they visit Glace Bay, a half an hour drive by car away. Glace Bay does have two points of interest for tourists, the Miner's Museum, advertised at the cruise ship terminal as a tourist destination (but seems to function as a community centre for Glace Bay), and the Marconi Museum (the later was shuttered when I attempted to visit on June 12th, 2017) but without infrastructure that promotes and sustains tourism in Glace Bay – there is no hotel, for instance – the community is unlikely to benefit in a meaningful way from Cape Breton tourism. Therefore, it must be frustrating for communities like Glace Bay that do not see the immediate effects of the tourism industry to justify pro-tourism arguments against development.

Beyond the threats to the tourist industry are fears that development will negatively affect the ecological relationships that fishermen and farmers depend upon (Rankin 2017) which would also obviously impact the community's ability to sustain itself in the future. There are

uncertainties, for example, around seismic testing required for expanding coal mining and the impacts it would have on the larvae and plankton that support fisheries, as well as fears that developments will drain groundwater aquifers and destroy wetlands.

Should I Go Or Should I Stay

The presence of family roots and community connections seem to be a major reason why individuals and families return to Glace Bay and choose to stay in the community. While people are moving back to the community the amounts hardly rival those who have left permanently and those who move to Glace Bay do so because they have families there. As Kay tells me, “The only people who come here have roots. But with every generation the roots are getting thinner and thinner”.

For other people in the community the thought of leaving behind their families and community is an unthinkable option as Glace Bay is the only place they have ever known, and their fears of thinning roots is not something that they want to experience. For others, however, they see their families as burdens that force them to stay in the community despite their dreams of something more. They feel a responsibility to stay in Glace Bay to look after their parents and siblings and thus sacrifice their own desires.

In one case, Kay and Rick’s, Kay moved back to Glace Bay after living in Ontario for years because she fell into a relationship with Rick who has lived in Glace Bay for his whole life but has worked in mines outside of the province for his entire working career. Kay told me that while she enjoys being in the community she would leave again if it was feasible, but Rick has a child from a previous relationship and he shares custody with his former partner. I find this case fascinating as Rick leaves the community often as he goes away for work and Kay stays in Glace

Bay raising their children and working remotely at her job in Ontario. It demonstrates how the messiness of family and connections work to sustain communities. While both Kay and Rick enjoy living in Glace Bay, each would likely leave, but the relationship with Rick's child and his ex partner keeps them living in Glace Bay. Kay tells me about the reasoning behind their choice,

“If we wanted to make it work I'd have to come here. Because he has his son. And if he could take his son he'd move there [Ontario] in a heartbeat. But there is no point of moving away to Ontario so I can keep working because we have family to support here.”

Another case exemplifies the burden of responsibility that individuals feel to look after their family and thus they feel obliged to stay in Glace Bay. One night I was talking to a friend, Melissa, over a few beers. Melissa is in her early 30s, she has a good stable job in Cape Breton where she works with children with special needs. Melissa has beautiful home that is fully paid for, a nice car, and a dog. Her partner, Jeremy, who Melissa calls “her soul” works in Alberta chasing shutdowns and is often away for extended periods of time.

Melissa tells me that she wants to leave Glace Bay and move to Alberta to be closer to Jeremy, but she feels lost and uncertain as she does not know what to do. On one side she wants to leave to be with Jeremy who she says cannot find good work locally, as he is schooled in the trades and thus must leave to find employment. On the other side of things her family and community connections keep her in Glace Bay. Her father recently passed away and she feels like she needs to be around to support her mother and brother who are having trouble coping with the loss and who she says will never leave the community. Melissa feels torn. Does she leave her family and community in Glace Bay to be with her partner in Alberta or does she stay

in Glace Bay to support her mother and brother and continue to be sad, lonely, and longing for her “soul”, Jeremy?

The above example is one of a burden that people in Glace Bay experience everyday, should they stay or should they go? Each has consequence, both positive and negative. Leaving Glace Bay would afford Melissa the opportunity to be with her partner and live the life that she dreams of, full of new prospects and possibilities. But leaving may also unravel lifelong connections that she has in her home town and may negatively affect her relationship with her family.

L-O-V-E

While ranked the “3rd worst place to live” in Canada (King 2016) due to the region’s child poverty rates, economic struggles, and decaying infrastructure (King 2016), families and individuals remain in, and increasingly return to, Cape Breton as a place of belonging, family, and identity, despite precarity. The families that I interacted with were all two income households and those with children seemed to really be able to support and care for the children financially. Cape Breton Regional Municipality Mayor Cecil Clarke has stated that his municipality’s low ranking looks only at stats and not the “human data.” “It doesn’t take in the sense of community pride, volunteerism, community loyalty and support for one another” (King 2016). The residents of Glace Bay share a collective social memory and shared past (Mah 2009:15; Stewart 1996:50), a powerful affective tool that affords those left in deindustrial spaces an ability to eke out a life in industrial capitalism’s residue, finding latent potential and remembered possibilities (Stewart 1996:48). There is a love for *home* that encourages its cultivation and habitation even though the conditions for flourishing are lacking. My participants

have developed strategies of making a home in an economically depressed community, and while most seem content enough with their lot in life, they are worried for what the future brings for their children and the community.

I previously mentioned the Proud People/Strong Future sign that one encounters upon entering Glace Bay, but less noticeable is a series of signs spread across 4 telephone poles. The signs are faded wooden panels, hand painted white with black lettering. The final sign in the succession is almost completely peeled of paint, exposing the bare wood grains so you can just barely make out the 'E' that once stood so proud following its brothers and sisters L-O-V.

To me this sign indexes much of what Glace Bay was, is, or can be. People moving home to be with their families, their friends, and their memories. Husbands traveling home for 10 days after being away for 3 weeks to be with their friends and family sacrificing a semblance of stability in order to provide a future for their children and their community. Wives working and raising children while their husbands are away, staying in the community to be close to their families and to raise their children in a community that they know and love, despite its shortfalls. The love for friends, family, and community that is ever present in minds as the salt that is in their blood.

Conclusion

The Cape Breton Regional Municipality has been struggling with deindustrialization since the area's coal mines and steel plant closed in the late 1990s and early 2000s, resulting in precarious employment and lifeways. During my MA fieldwork with Glace Bay returning labour migrants and their families we discussed how they navigate issues of precarity and austerity in a region dependent upon remittances and circular migration and how these life projects that are tied to resource extraction work to sustain community and family bonds to the region.

I spent my time hanging out and chatting with women and men about their personal experiences and problems that are tied to circular migration and precarity and their concerns about the present and future of their community and the relationships that exist within it. This thesis has attempted to understand the nuances and implications which coincide with individual life projects and are entangled in deindustrialization, migration, and resource extraction industries; the concerns, worries, and pride that accompanies sustaining community and family through this kind of labour scenario.

I began this piece in chapter 1 first by providing a brief glimpse into my fieldnotes and then by outlining my topic, an exploration into the lived experiences of circular migrants and their families who call the economically depressed community of Glace Bay, Nova Scotia home and how they negotiate aspects of precarity while seeking to sustain the community and raise their family within a region struggling with neoliberal projects of deep austerity due to deindustrialization and the consequent ruination. In doing so, I sketched a brief history of Cape Breton's industrial past and the community's ties and connections to industry before exemplifying, through concepts of social death and precarity, the impacts that deindustrialization

has had on the region since NAFTA came into being. I attempted to explain the deep reliance that Glace Bay and its neighboring communities have on outside money, mainly from remittances, a reliance that has developed in the years after industrialization. I have also attempted to understand the tactics that workers and their families engage with to mediate their living situations. I also detailed the scope of my methodology and attempted to situate my own understandings of ethnography, reflecting on how my results are potentially due to my own experiences and positionality regarding Cape Breton, Glace Bay, and my participants. Wherever possible I have tried to use actual quotes from my participants to drive this ethnography forward, toward something that they would recognize as resembling their experiences.

Chapter 2 examined the lived experiences of those who travel for work and those who stay behind to live and work in the community. I provided insight from circular migrants as well as their domestic partners and I have attempted to detail the emotional work and physical labour that each engage with daily while they try and maneuver this living situation and engage in their individual life projects. I have also attempted to portray the reasons why individuals and their families chose to keep roots in Glace Bay and Cape Breton instead of permanently moving to where work is.

In chapter 3 I explored how individuals and their families keep in touch while men are away at work. I examine both the technical aspects, that is how they use apps, mobile devices, and internet communication technologies to sustain familial ties, but also the challenges that they face when doing so. I have called attention to the circumstances that individuals must contend with, the physical infrastructures of internet communication technologies, but also the temporal logics of space, time, geography, and routine. I have also discussed how internet

communications ease the burden of physical and emotional distance it also creates a longing to reach out and physically touch our communication partners. For my participants, ICTs are a good technology to keep up to date with family and community events, and they are grateful for the ease of use that current technologies offer, but they are poor substitute for the intimacy afforded through face to face conversations, hugs, kisses, and even high fives.

Chapter 4 addresses the future of Glace Bay and surrounding communities as they are tied to resource extraction industries and reliant on the global markets for the demand of these products. While my participants are proud of their families, communities, work, and lives, they are worried about what is going to be left in Glace Bay for their children when they grow up. I have discussed the hopes of largescale local industrial developments, which seem to be in doubt due to Nova Scotia's attempt to push toward renewable resources and develop a tourism industry that is based on the natural beauty of its rugged coastlines. Without the anchors of industry, my participants face the fears and the realities that their children will have to leave the community in order to lead a good life with a stable future.

Precarity can be defined as life without the promise of stability which can viewed as both a socio-economic condition and an ontological experience that is increasingly global, yet also shaped by the local histories and experiences of global capitalism (Tsing 2015; Millar 2014). Conditions of precarity arise through processes of deindustrialization that unravel the built bases of systems and yet they also incorporate aspects of old networks and infrastructures which take their place (Star 1999). While deindustrialization has implications on the health and wealth of social, cultural, psychological, and economic realities, these may be not entirely or inherently negative (Stoler 2008). We cannot ignore the power of a collective social memory and the shared past (Mah 2012:15; Stewart 1996:50) of those left behind to eke out a life in industrial ruins, as

they find latent potential and remembered possibilities (Stewart 1996:50). Ethnography allows us to engage with human data on a household and community level to understand how individuals cope, create, and perform community, discourses that often do not make it to the national conversation. Indeed, despite precarity, families and individuals remain in, and increasingly return to, Cape Breton and Glace Bay as a place of belonging, family, and identity.

As more and more Canadians face precarious work-life situations, and as Neoliberal global trade policies continue to move Canada towards post-industrial models, it is crucial to understand how people know, cope with, and transform their own communities when faced with deindustrialization. Reading deindustrialization as lived processes allows researchers to engage with the entanglements of historical and affective developments of capitalism and ruin and the succeeding revitalization of communities. This allows for practical understandings of post-industrial life and offers perspective on the lives of Canadians who feel left behind by federal government and neoliberal programs but are determined to see their communities survive.

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Appendix 1:

Interview questions included, but due to the conversational style of our interviews, were not limited to, the following:

Group 1

- Can you tell me about your family?
- How long were you together?
- How many children? What are their ages?
- Where do you work?
- How long have you been working there?
- How did you find work there?
- Is this your first time working away from home?
- Can you explain the process of going there and coming back?
- How often do you work and travel home?
- How much money do you spend on travel between Cape Breton and the work site?
- How much of the household income comes from money sent home?
- How much money do you spend on telecommunications per month (cell phone/internet/telephone etc.)
- How much time do you spend online/texting/other telecommunications?
- What is it like to be away from your family?
- What does it feel like to be home on your time off?
- What does home mean to you?
- What does family mean to you?
- Why don't you move to a community where you could have steady employment?
- Did your parents also have to find work outside of the community? What was it like to have them gone? How did you communicate?
- When you are away from home how do you communicate?
- What devices do you use?
- What platforms (Facebook/twitter/email/facebook time/skype/etc) do you use?
- Can you explain how you use mobile technologies?
- How often do you send messages back and forth?
- Is there a specific time of day that you use communication technologies?
- Do you use different platforms for different reasons or to talk to different people? Do you use different platforms to talk to the same people? Why?
- Does being able to communicate in real time over long distances alleviate feelings of loneliness?
- Do mobile technologies make you feel connected to your family/community/significant other?
- Do you feel like you are doing double duty, doing emotional work as you do your physical work?
- Where do you use mobile technology most often?
- Does the physical location that you use technology change the content of the messages sent back and forth?

- Does the physical location that you use technology change the platform that you use?
- Are most of your co-workers from (wherever the host community is) or are they from here?

Group 2

- Where does your partner work?
- How did they find work there?
- Can you explain the process of your partner going there and coming back?
- How often are they home/gone?
- How much of the household income comes from money sent home?
- How much money do you spend on telecommunications per month (cell phone/internet/telephone etc.)
- How much time do you spend online/texting/other telecommunications?
- What is it like to have your significant other away for work?
- Did your parents also have to find work outside of the community? What was it like to have them gone? How did you communicate?
- Have you ever considered moving to a community where there is better access to steady employment?
- When your significant other is away from home how do you communicate?
- What devices do you use?
- What platforms (facebook/twitter/email/face time/skype/etc) do you use?
- Can you explain how you use mobile technologies?

Group 3

- Do you use mobile technology to communicate with co-workers when you are not at work?

- How often do you send messages back and forth?
- Is there a specific time of day that you use your communication technologies?
- Do you use different platforms for different reasons or to talk to different people? Do you use different platforms to talk to the same people? Why?
- Does being able to communicate in real time over long distances alleviate feelings of loneliness?
- Do mobile technologies make you feel more connected to your significant other?
- Do you feel like you are doing double duty, doing emotional work as you do your physical work?
- Where do you use mobile technology most often?
- Does the physical location that you use technology change the content of the messages sent back and forth?
- Does the physical location that you use technology change the platform that you use?
- Do you use mobile technology to communicate with other family members, friends, or coworkers?

- Do you currently work?
- Where do you work?
- How long have you been working there?
- How did you find work there?
- How has going away for work (circular migration) changed over the years?
- Can you explain the process of going there and coming back? Has this changed over the years?
- How often do you work and travel home? Has this changed over the years?
- How much money do you spend on travel between Cape Breton and the work site? Has this changed over the years?
- How much of the household income comes from money sent home? Has this changed over the years?
- How has communicating with loved ones back home changed over the years?
- How much money do you spend on telecommunications per month (cell phone/internet/telephone etc.) Has this changed over the years?
- How much time do you spend online/texting/other telecommunications?
- What is it like to be away from your family? Does it feel different now that you can use instant messaging?
- You have been doing this for X amount of years, why haven't you simply moved to a community where you could have steady employment?
- What sort of work did your parents do? Were they able to stay in the community?
- When you are away from home how do you communicate?
- What devices do you use?
- What platforms (Facebook/twitter/email/face time/skype/etc) do you use?
- Can you explain how you use mobile technologies?
- How often do you send messages to your spouse/family members?
- Is there a specific time of day that you use communication technologies?
- Do you use different platforms for different reasons or to talk to different people? Do you use different platforms to talk to the same people? Why?
- Does being able to communicate in real time over long distances alleviate feelings of loneliness? Do you feel that this has changed over the years?
- Do mobile technologies make you feel more connected to your family/community/significant other than before mobile technology was available?
- Now that you use mobile technology that allows for instant communication with individuals, do you feel like you are doing double duty, doing emotional work as you do your physical work?
- Where do you use mobile technology most often?
- Does the physical location that you use technology change the content of the messages sent back and forth?
- Does the physical location that you use technology change the platform that you use?
- Are most of your co-workers from (wherever the host community is) or are they from here?

- Do you use mobile technology to communicate with co-workers when you are not at work?