

**The Raging Grannies:
Understanding the Role of Activism in the Lives of Older Women**

by

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**AUTHOR'S DECLARATION FOR ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF A
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Abstract

Guided by feminist gerontology, this qualitative study explored the role of activism in the lives of older women. More specifically, it examined the involvement of older women in one particular group of activists, the Raging Grannies. Of particular interest was to understand the experience of how and why older women become involved in activism. This study was collaborative in nature, with in-depth active interviews as the primary method of data collection. In total 15 women participated in face-to-face interviews, with five women contributing to the study in an on-line Raging Grannies forum. Participants were located in Ontario, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. The findings demonstrated that these women, who used non-violent, creative methods of protest, challenged the traditional views of growing older. Through their activism, the Raging Grannies also created community. Although the Raging Grannies did not define their experience as leisure, they described their experience as “fun” but rewarding work. The intent of this research was to contribute to the literature on ageing and leisure while giving the opportunity for older women to share their stories. Emergent theory suggests that activism for these women represented the application or expression of shared life experiences which are unique to women. The Raging Grannies provided the space for the study participants to express their collective life experiences, particularly in the context of shared concerns around a more just, fair and sustainable society.

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Dedication

It is an honour to dedicate this thesis to my parents and sister.

Cette dissertation est ainsi en mémoire de mon parrain Clarence Caissie
et ma cousine Jocelyne Nowlan.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Age is supposed to create more serenity, calm, and detachment from the world, right? Well, I'm finding just the reverse. The older I get, the more intensely I feel about the world around me, including things I once thought too small for concern; the more connected I feel to nature, though I used to prefer human invention; the more poignancy I find not only in very old people, who always got to me, but also in children; the more likely I am to feel rage when people are rendered invisible, and also to claim my own place; the more I can risk saying "no" even if "yes" means approval; and most of all, the more able I am to use my own voice, to know what I feel and say what I think: in short, to express without also having to persuade (Steinem, 1994, p. 249).

Feminist activist Gloria Steinem made the above statement regarding her thoughts on turning 60 years old. Steinem's main argument was that she, along with other older women, become more rebellious and radical¹ with age and that older women, contrary to the stereotypes, do have a history of being involved in activism.

Many older women² who spent their earlier years in solitary work and/or nurturing husbands and children are now discovering the external world of activism, politics, and social causes because of less pressure to conform to societal expectations. Even during the first wave and second wave of feminism³

¹ "Radical", which has the same negative connotation as "ageing" does not refer here to violent, extremist, or crazy behaviour but "going to the root" (Steinem, 1994, p. 264)

² For this study "older women" are 55 years old and older

³ "First wave" of the women's movement formed during the late 1800s and lasted into the early 1920s. The most important achievements of this movement were women's right to vote and the right to be considered persons under Canadian law (Nelson & Robinson, 1999). In Canada the "second wave" of the women's movement emerged in the 1960s. The second wave of feminism was fuelled by the discrimination women faced in the workforce and in the home (Nelson & Robinson, 1999).

there are many examples of older women being involved in activism. According to Steinem (1994) the nineteenth-century wave of feminism was started by older women who had been through the experience of getting married, giving birth, and becoming the legal property of their husbands (or the experience of not getting married and being treated as spinsters which limited their freedom). Even during the second wave of feminism, many early feminist activists of the 1960s were organised by women who had experienced the Civil Rights Movement, or homemakers who had discovered that raising children and housework did not occupy all their talents. Many older women were also holding press conferences and speeches regarding social issues. During the second wave of feminism, most women in their teens and twenties had not yet experienced one or more of the major life-changing events of a woman's life: getting married and discovering that marriage is not an equal (yet it can be a violent) institution; entering the paid labour force and experiencing its limits, from the corporate "glass ceiling" to the "sticky floor" of the pink-collar ghetto; having children and finding out who takes care of them and who does not; and finally, ageing, still the most impoverishing event for many women (Steinem, 1994).

For many older women, however, ageing is not an impoverishing event. Some older women find increased lifestyle choices because they are now freed of their childbearing and childrearing duties (Biggs, 1997; Calasanti & Slevin, 2006; Wilcox, 1997). Some may find it a time for new opportunities. Some

older women reach a stage in their lives where they became more concerned with meeting their own needs and desires because of years of meeting the needs of others (Biggs, 1997; Calasanti & Slevin, 2006; Wilcox, 1997). For many older women ageing is viewed as a time of new opportunities such as beginning a new hobby, returning to school, volunteering, or even becoming involved in activism (Biggs, 1997; Calasanti & Slevin, 2006; Wilcox, 1997).

Yet, according to Steinem (1994), the academic literature, including feminist theory, fails to recognise older women involved in activism. Further, many feminist groups still judge older women by age instead of individuality, and are more concerned about attracting younger women than including the older, even though the “older years can provide role models of energised, effective and political older women” (Steinem, 1994, p. 250). This study explores one group of older women involved in activism, the group calling themselves the Raging Grannies.

Women Organizing for Social Change

According to Cross (1990), prior to the Industrial Revolution, women lacked the same public and carefree leisure opportunities afforded to men. Nevertheless, all members of the family, including women, had an economic role in the family’s business. Women often worked together sharing in conversation, exchanging information and even singing. These gatherings of women were similar to the sewing bees of the pioneer women a century later (Cross, 1990). After the Industrial Revolution, men increasingly worked outside the home while women gradually lost contact with the world of business

and became centred in the home. A woman's main role was to shape and sustain the morale of her family. Because waged work and family life ceased to be conducted within the home, women were no longer able to combine economic and family functions. As a result they had to segment their lives into periods of work before marriage and periods of housewifery⁴. Increasingly, educated and affluent wives and mothers shifted their time from waged work to domestic work and organising leisure for their family, which often involved shaping and sustaining the morale of her family (Cross, 1990).

Eventually, many of these educated women, who had more free time and leisure, were instrumental in the emergence of social movements such as the struggle for women's right to vote, settlement movements, anti-slavery, and birth control (Henderson & Allen, 1991; Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1996; James, 2001). In addition, women's involvement in social issues may have been one reason why the recreational movement was so successful in both its early and middle years (Henderson, 1992). Women were credited for beginning playgrounds, parks, public libraries, girls' clubs, and mothers' clubs (Henderson, 1992). It appears that the occurrence of these social movements came from women using their leisure time to create positive change (Henderson, 1992; Henderson et al., 1996). Further, the result of these movements not only created a better quality of life for many socio-economic groups but also provided meaningful leisure for the women involved.

⁴ With the exception of many working class women who continued to work outside the home often in poor working conditions and earning lower wages than men (Cross, 1990).

Women's organising for justice during the second wave women's movement and up to today have been credited with: providing day-care facilities; fighting for decent, affordable housing; preventing school closures; campaigns against pornography and family violence; establishing shelters for victims of violence; campaigns for women's reproductive rights; peace campaigns; and environmental protection (Callahan, 1997; Cumming, 2001; Dominelli, 1995).

Although women have a long history of activism, their efforts are undervalued, taken for granted and have received very little support from the public (Callahan, 1997; Cumming, 2001; Dominelli, 1995; Metzendorf & Cnaan, 1992; Sapiro, 2003). According to West and Blumberg (1990) the media and scholars have mainly ignored women's protests viewing social protests as mainly a male domain. Women are often associated with only feminist causes or other causes seen as an extension of their nurturing responsibilities. Further, institutional and cultural ideologies have determined what is considered "appropriate" political behaviour. Men have been socialised to be aggressive and openly political in social interactions including the protest domain. Women on the other hand have been socialised to be "apolitical" and have been ridiculed or trivialised for venturing into the masculine political sphere. It is men, within a patriarchal context, that are seen as organisers and leaders in the public sphere while women are viewed as the supporters of men. However, notwithstanding the many positive social changes women have made

through activism, being involved has allowed women to build self-esteem and empowerment (West & Blumberg, 1990).

Women, as stated by West and Blumberg (1990), initiate, pursue and support issues differently from men. There are basically four types of issues that draw women into social protest:

1. problems that directly threaten to attack their economic survival and that of their families and children. For example, issues such as obtaining food, welfare, jobs, housing and other needs – taking part in food riots and welfare protests, labour struggles, tenant rights and similar collective actions;
2. nationalist or racial/ethnic issues such as demanding liberation or equality or in counter movements demanding protection against erosion of the status quo and the threatened loss of rights;
3. humanistic/nurturing issues such as peace, environmental, public education, prison reform, mental health care, and hospices; and
4. rights of women such as protection against physical abuse, elder abuse, teenage mothers, and child brides.

In confrontation with authority, women often utilise strategies that reflect creative use of resources and tactics linked to traditional gender roles. Women have used innovative mechanisms such as theatre, culture, art, and even dance to bring attention to social injustices (West & Blumberg, 1990).

According to Callahan (1997), there are two dominant stereotypes of women's community work. One image is 'worth work', in which devoted

female volunteers work together to provide services for communities and believe home and community is their proper domain. These devoted volunteers are regarded as “feminine” therefore non-threatening to the status quo. They are seen as fulfilling their traditional maternal duties in the public realm. The second image is “radical organising”, where women rally to change unfair laws and policies, using outlandish and/or confrontational tactics. The radical organisers are perceived as being “unfeminine” and against family values, and therefore, behaving inappropriately for women.

The older activists Raging Grannies could easily fit into the image of “radical organisers” since they “decided to break the stereotype of nice but negligible grandmothers by becoming outrageous” (Acker & Brightwell, 2004, p. xi). With their extravagant attire and brazen songs the Raging Grannies often go where they are not invited and use theatrical antics and humour⁵ to challenge those in power to work for a number of social issues such as promotion of peace, objection to war toys, poverty, and so on (Acker & Brightwell, 2004; Roy, 2004). Perhaps what is unique about the Raging Grannies is that they not only challenge the stereotypes of women activists but also challenge the negative images of older women in a society that places so much value on youth.

⁵ Ray (2004) suggests women’s humour to be a source of insight and wisdom and that humour can be used to respond to inequality and injustice through compassion, rather than insult.

Purpose of Study

Guided by feminist gerontology the intent of this qualitative study was to explore the role of activism in the lives of older women. More specifically, the intent was to examine the involvement of older women in one particular group of activists, the Raging Grannies. Of particular interest was to understand how and why older women become involved. This study may help dispel the myths surrounding old age and older women, and promote the visibility and importance of older women's activism.

The Raging Grannies

During the completion of my Masters degree, I attended a conference addressing women's concerns and issues. While in attendance, a group of older women dressed in outrageous costumes and carrying banners, came marching in singing about how older women's voices were not being heard. These older women were referring to how not one topic at the conference examined the concerns of older women. As a feminist and student interested in the field, these women certainly caught my attention. Much later, while working on my doctorate, I saw these women at a protest on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. Once again, they sparked my interest; who were these older women who have the courage to dress in outrageous costumes and sing cheeky songs? Hence, my journey began with the Raging Grannies.

The Raging Grannies began in Victoria, British Columbia in 1987 and eventually spread across Canada, with some “Gaggles”⁶ in the United States, England, and Australia (Acker & Brightwell, 2004; Roy, 2004). In Canada, chapters of the Raging Grannies are located throughout Canada. The Raging Grannies are made up of mainly Caucasian, middle-class, educated older women, approximately 52 to 67 years old. They represent a variety of backgrounds such as: teachers, nurses, artists, and homemakers, who are married, widowed, or never married (Acker & Brightwell, 2004; Roy, 2004). The Grannies first formed their group in protest to the US Navy nuclear warships in the water surrounding Victoria, BC, in 1987. They eventually branched out to become active in a number of other social issues, such as the anti-war movement, poverty, environmental destruction, women’s rights, and children’s rights (Acker & Brightwell, 2004; Roy, 2004). For some of the Grannies, activism was new while others were activists all their lives (Acker & Brightwell, 2004; Roy, 2004). When the Grannies formed they developed eight goals (Acker & Brightwell, 2004, p. 4).

1. To inspire older women to be activists.
2. To deal with survival issues.
3. To get the message across with satirical songs.
4. To court the media.
5. To adopt Canadian author Margaret Laurence’s prescriptions: “As we grow older we should become not less radical but more so.”
6. To remain independent of other organisations.
7. To be a support group for each other.
8. To be rabble-rousers.

⁶ A “Gaggle” is a group or chapter of the Raging Grannies.

The Grannies use creative street theatre as their method of protest (Acker & Brightwell, 2004; Roy, 2004). They dress in colourful, outrageous clothing as a spoof of older women stereotypes. They also use a number of props such as flowers, umbrellas with holes (to represent acid rain), a laundry basket of women undergarments (to represent their “briefs”), and banners in order to draw attention to their message in a peaceful yet effective way. The Grannies are most noted for their use of humour through cheeky satirical songs in order to express their social and political views (Acker & Brightwell, 2004; Roy, 2004). They have also attended presentations, conferences, speeches, and hearings uninvited as a method of action (Acker & Brightwell, 2004; Roy, 2004). The Grannies do not wish to be known as entertainers despite their street theatre; they only wish to “make waves and make people listen” (Acker & Brightwell, 2004, p. 13).

Feminist Gerontology

As previously mentioned, a feminist gerontology perspective guided this study. Chafetz (1988, p. 5) defines feminist theory as follows:

First, gender comprises a central focus or subject matter of the theory. Feminist theory seeks ultimately to understand the gendered nature of virtually all social relations, institutions, and processes. Second, gender relations are seen as a problem. By this I mean that feminist theory seeks to understand how gender is related to social inequities, strains, and contradictions. Finally, gender relations are not viewed as either natural or immutable. Rather, the gender-related status quo is viewed as the product of sociocultural and historical forces which have been created, and are constantly re-created by humans, and therefore can potentially be changed by human agency.

In addition, as West and Blumberg (1990) claimed, a feminist theory of activism would encompass women-centred interpretations of who, when, how, and why women engage in social protest.

According to Ray (2004) there is a need for more feminist-inspired research and practice because feminists place dialogue, exchange, conversation, engagement and response at the forefront. Feminist gerontology seeks to improve the negative images of older women by challenging the negative stereotypes and emphasising women's development over the entire life course. Further, feminist gerontology provides the necessary insight to examine ageism and age relations more deeply (Calasanti, 2004; Ray, 2004).

Feminist gerontologists argue that older women suffer from both ageism and sexism and that ageing is not the problem, but rather that the problem relates to how the patriarchal society treats older adults, especially women (Calasanti, 2004; Friedan, 1993; Garner, 1999; MacQuarrie & Keddy, 1992; O'Beirne, 1999; Onyx, Leonard, & Reed, 1999; Ray, 2004; Sontag, 1997). Both older women and older men are devalued; however, women are devalued both for being old and for being female (de Beauvoir, 1970; Friedan, 1993; Sontag, 1997; Ray, 2004). In Western society, women's worth is associated with socially defined attractiveness. This socially defined attractiveness equates youth with beauty, and values youthful beauty and the ability to attract men. Therefore, women lose their social value simply by growing old (Calasanti, 2004; Garner, 1999; O'Beirne, 1999; Onyx et al., 1999; Ray, 2004; Sontag, 1997). Older women are basically categorised as invisible, powerless, and

asexual (Calasanti, 2004; de Beauvoir, 1970; Friedan, 1993; Ray, 2004; Sontag, 1997).

Men are often judged by and rewarded for what they do, and as long as they are able to be productive, age has little impact on their social value. Men with grey hair are often seen as attractive, while women with greying hair can be seen as unattractive and old (Friedan, 1993; Garner, 1999; O'Beirne, 1999; Onyx et al., 1999; Sontag, 1997). There is also an attempt by women to make certain they continue to look young through "age defying" products and cosmetic surgery. Yet, men spend very little money on such products designed to hide the signs of ageing. In addition, women enter the mature years with significantly less financial resources than men, women are often poorer than men, and since women often outlive men they encounter more health problems (Friedan, 1993; Garner, 1999; O'Beirne, 1999; Onyx et al., 1999).

Furthermore, according to Garner (1999), the negative images of older women are continuously being reinforced through the media. For example, older men are still shown as being sexual beings, while older women are seen as asexual. MacDonald (2002) states that the clothes of younger women give an illusion of power and freedom but the clothes of older women are designed to make her sexless, dowdy, and separate from the rest of society. Often young men dress fashionably like older men in suits and vests. However, one does not see many younger women mimicking older women's clothes (MacDonald, 2002).

Even the language that is used to describe older women is negative. Terms such as “old hag,” “wicked old witch,” “crone,”⁷ “little old lady,” and “old bad stepmother,” are common (Garner, 1999; MacDonald & Rich, 1991; O’Beirne, 1999; Onyx et al., 1999). Children’s books often portray stereotypical images of older women as “wicked old witches” or kind, grey-haired grandmothers baking cookies. In addition, if older women do not fit the stereotype, they are considered exceptional or eccentric (Garner, 1999; O’Beirne, 1999; Onyx et al., 1999).

One criticism of the feminist literature has been its lack of recognition of older women. The feminist literature has often focused on issues surrounding younger women and middle-aged women such as reproductive rights and childcare, whereas older women have been neglected. Regardless, feminist gerontologists believe that feminism has a vital role in contributing to the study of women and ageing (Garner, 1999; O’Beirne, 1999; Onyx et al., 1999). Feminism continues to seek social change and individual empowerment as mechanisms for enhancing the lives of women, while feminist gerontology also recognises the dual importance of social action and individual empowerment as tools to enhance the lives of older women (Garner, 1999; O’Beirne, 1999; Onyx et al., 1999).

⁷ However, according to Ray (2004) “the word *crone* derives from *crown* in matriarchal cultures. The figure of the crone represents a queenly status, a position of coming-into-one’s-own-authority. This status is acquired only through time and experience, after moving through previous phases in which one’s authority is attributed to sources outside of self” (p. 112).

Many older women, as discussed by Garner (1999), were socialised from an early age to leave the decision making to men, to keep their opinions to themselves, and to place the needs of their husband and children above their own. As many women outlive their husbands and children have grown and moved away, women are sometimes left with the overwhelming task of managing their affairs on their own. Further, women whose children were raised viewing their mothers as unable to make decisions on their own may step in and take control of their mothers' lives, contributing to a sense of lack of control and helplessness among older women. On the other hand, the older women in Garner's (1999) study also discussed having more freedom at this time of their life, having more control, and the ability to meet their own needs.

Therefore, the concept of empowerment rooted in feminist theory and practice is critical to feminist gerontology. As feminists have struggled to empower all women, it is also important to strive to empower older women through helping them in developing new roles, in identifying their abilities and strengths, and in using their knowledge. Feminist gerontology realises that older women can take care of themselves as valuable human beings who can become empowered by their own means (Garner, 1999; O'Beirne, 1999; Onyx et al., 1999). Further, feminist gerontology recognises that older women not only connect with one another through telling stories of their lives but also validate their current worth through collective problem-solving, and in using skills and strengths identified in sharing similar life stories (Garner, 1999; O'Beirne, 1999; Onyx et al., 1999). One manner in which older women can

develop new roles, empower themselves, and identify their strengths is through activism (Garner, 1999).

In summary, older women do have a history of being involved in activism. The academic literature, however, fails to recognise older women involved in activism. This study, therefore, attempted to explore the role of activism in the lives of older women involved in one activist group, the Raging Grannies. In addition, this study was guided by a feminist gerontology perspective, which recognises that one way women can empower themselves is through working together for social change.

Considerations

Before proceeding to the next chapter “Literature Review” there are a number of considerations that warrant noting:

- Older women are diverse and come from a variety of socio-economic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, sexual orientation, and many were born at different times in history, thus they may not all share the same history. Thus, one cannot claim that if given the opportunity all older women want to engage in social activism during their leisure time (Brown, 1992; Green, Hebron, & Woodward, 1990). As Friedan (1993) indicated: “people from sixty until just before death are more different from each other than at any other time of life” (p. 114).
- Leisure settings, including women-only groups, can actually reinforce gender and ageing stereotypes (Brown, 1992; Green et al., 1990).

- Feminism has been criticised for universalising all women's voices into one (Brown, 1992).

Nevertheless, as a feminist gerontologist, I believe that women-only groups, such as the Raging Grannies, have the potential of being empowering for some older women who are more educated and had been politically active. By engaging in an activity such as activism, women gain the opportunity to resist gender-imposed roles and resist the social construction of age. Women-only groups allow older women to form support networks; to create a sense of community and to create solidarity. Such groups may also allow older women to share their stories and life experiences without the fear of being ridiculed. Perhaps, since all older women are ageing (of course, not all age in the same way) there is no need to be concerned about being judged as to whether they are still valued for their ageing selves. Perhaps just allowing these women to have a collective voice in a public space, once reserved mostly for men, will give them the strength to work for positive change, if not outside themselves, then within themselves. This thesis will now proceed to Chapter Two, Literature Review.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review according to Patton (2002) assists in bringing focus to the study. However, in some cases the literature review may only take place after data collection because of the belief that reviewing the literature may bias the researcher's thinking and diminish openness to whatever may happen while in the field (Patton, 2002). Nevertheless, the literature review in this study was used to assist in providing sensitising concepts. van den Hoonaard (1997) defines a sensitizing concept as “a starting point in thinking about the class of data of which the social researcher has no definite idea and provides an initial guide to her research” (p.2). The literature review for my study was also used to provide general background information on the major research studies that have already been conducted on the topic. It also provides the readers a broad picture of what is known. Therefore, the literature relating to concepts on women's leisure, volunteering, community, and social capital will be discussed.

Women's Leisure

Leisure Gaps⁸

According to Henderson et al. (1996), “leisure is ‘free from’ obligations so the individual can be ‘free to’ choose what to do; leisure allows one to realise

⁸ From Henderson, et al., (1996).

a sense of freedom, choice, and enjoyment or pleasure whether through relaxation, contemplation, or recreation activity” (p. 20). Women seek choices in all aspects of their lives, including leisure (Henderson et al., 1996). However, there are leisure gaps in terms of time and meaning for many women. Due to gender construction, women and men often have different patterns of leisure, access to leisure, and constraints to leisure (Green et al., 1990; Henderson et al., 1996; Horna, 1994; Wearing, 1998). Women generally have less time, resources, and opportunities for leisure than men with a narrower range of options on where and with whom to spend it (Green et al., 1990; Henderson et al., 1996; Horna, 1994; Wearing, 1998).

Women’s leisure, according to Henderson et al., (1999), tends to be constrained due to gender relations and life experiences. Gender does not refer to biological sex, but to the social expectations and societal definitions associated with being male and female (Green et al., 1990; Henderson et al., 1996; Horna, 1994; Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Wearing, 1998). Being female or male may not necessarily be a constraint to leisure itself, but it is the way one’s gender is defined and experienced that is constraining. One’s leisure choices are often based on ascribed gender roles, and not biological sex. It is women’s unequal position within a patriarchal society that is constraining, which, in turn, affects women’s leisure participation (Green et al., 1990; Horna, 1994; Henderson et al., 1996; Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Wearing, 1998).

According to Jackson and Henderson (1995), a constraint to leisure is

defined “as anything that inhibits people’s ability to participate in leisure activities, to spend more time doing so, to take advantage of leisure services, or to achieve a desired level of satisfaction. By this definition leisure is assumed to be ‘good’ and constraints are seen as obstacles to obtaining what is desired” (p. 31-32). Women as well as men face constraints to leisure; however, women often face constraints that differ from those faced by men. The following will be a discussion of some of those differences.

To begin with, Shaw (1994) (also Henderson et al., 1996) has suggested that leisure itself can be constraining. Leisure can reinforce ideologies of what are appropriate male and female leisure activities (Browne, 1998; Henderson et al., 1996; Horna, 1994). For example, activities such as dance, gymnastics, and aerobics, are considered “feminine activities”, which emphasise physical attractiveness and body shape. On the other hand, activities that emphasise strength, power, and physical contact are considered “masculine activities” and reinforce stereotypical notions about masculinity.

Further, women who lack of interest in becoming involved in a particular leisure activity, such as hockey, may reflect on societal norms and values that view such activities as inappropriate or unsuitable for women. Due to the societal construction of gender roles, men are seen as strong, aggressive, powerful, swift, competitive, and superior, while women are seen as gentle, passive, and submissive (Bartram, 2001; Green et al., 1990; Henderson et al., 1996; Horna, 1994; Jackson & Henderson, 1995). This construction, according to Wearing (1998), is a form of social control which steers women and men into

stereotyped leisure activities. Thus, women are encouraged towards passive leisure activities such as reading books, watching movies, and participating in hobbies and crafts; while men are encouraged towards more active pursuits such as sports (Bartram, 2001; Shaw, 1999; Wearing 1992). Women, therefore, may limit their involvement in leisure activities if these activities do not support their traditional gender role. In regards to older women, gender and age-related perceptions of what older women should and should not do may make it difficult for older women to view certain leisure activities as gender and age appropriate for them (Anderton, Fitzgerald, & Laidler, 1995). Also, for older women, according to Henderson and colleagues (1999), there are even fewer opportunities for and greater restrictions against their involvement in sports and active leisure activities than is the case for younger generations of females because of a combination of social, historical, biological, and psychological factors that influence older women's participation in physical activities. Based on Bartram's (2001) study on women kayakers, not only did gender act as a constraint to women's participation in kayaking but age also played a role. Hence, older women not only initially felt uncomfortable participating in a sport dominated by men but also felt reluctant to participate because of feelings of being "too old."

In western societies "beauty" in women is highly valued especially youthful beauty. Women may feel they do not live up to society's expectations of the ideal image and thus may lack the self-confidence to participate in certain social settings. This lack of self-esteem might also affect the woman in

believing she does not have the necessary skills to participate. For older women, socially constructed notions about old age along with sexist attitudes are factors that contribute to the low morale and diminished self-esteem felt by many ageing women (Harold, 1992). Societal notions of the ideal image of beauty for women are also relevant for older women because not only are women valued for their socially defined physical attractiveness but also for their youthfulness (Garner, 1999; O'Beirne, 1999). Women, therefore, lose their social value simply by growing old. Men on the other hand are more likely to be evaluated and rewarded for their accomplishments. Grey-haired men are viewed as attractive, mature, and sophisticated while grey-haired women are seen as old and unattractive. Consequently, the combination of sexism and ageism (Anderton et al., 1995; Harrison, 1991) can affect an older woman's self-image which can negatively impact her participation in leisure activities (Anderton, et al., 1995).

Another example of a constraint on women's leisure is the belief that a woman is not entitled to leisure. Henderson and Bialeschki (1991) propose that a lack of entitlement to leisure is based on a number of factors such as women's sense of inferiority as the "second sex", lack of feminist consciousness, role expectations of family and paid employment, lack of social freedom, fear of success, guilt, and lack of opportunities. Women may believe that they have a right to leisure but may have feelings of guilt or selfishness if they respond to their own needs ahead of the needs of others close to them (Anderton et al., 1995; Deem, 1986; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1991). Siegenthaler and

Vaughan's (1998) study of older women in retirement communities found that some women did view recreation as a positive experience but there was some connection with feelings of guilt from those who felt that they should still be focused on domestic work, especially caring for their families. Older women also saw leisure as a reward for a life-time of paid employment and since society views domestic labour as unproductive, the older women felt that perhaps they were not entitled to their own leisure (Guilmette, 1992; Siegenthaler & Vaughan, 1998). Many of today's older women⁹ were socialised from an early age to leave decision-making to men, especially their husbands, to keep their opinions quiet, and to place the needs of husbands and children above their own (Garner, 1999). Further, women are more likely to give up time with friends in order to spend time with their partner, and to give up their own leisure for that of their partner (Green et al., 1990; Guilmette, 1992; Henderson et al., 1996; Horna, 1994; Siegenthaler & Vaughan, 1998; Wearing, 1998).

Moreover, women are more likely than men to use leisure activities in order to please others. Women, more than men, take part in activities related to pleasing others (such as visiting parents) and engage in social activities in order to please friends or partners. In addition, it is often women who put in more time and effort in ensuring that "family leisure" is a positive experience for all family members (Henderson et al., 1996). Guilmette (1992) suggests that many

⁹ I am referring to women who are 65 years old and older.

older women continue to make certain their retired husbands' leisure needs are being met. Indeed, in a study on retired older women conducted by Gibson, Ashton-Shaeffer, Green, and Corbin (2002) some of the women they interviewed did discuss how they structured their days around their husbands' needs while trying to find time for their own leisure. Older men, according to Guilmette (1992), expect to be comforted in their own homes, and this expectation may further limit their wives' time and location for leisure as well as increase their wives' sedentary activities. Due to lifelong traditional roles, older women may feel responsibility to ensure that their spouses are entertained while at home and are never left alone, which adds even more to the burden of constraint (Guilmette, 1992).

As has been noted by others (Anderton, et al., 1995; Green et al., 1990; Henderson et al., 1996), there are differences between men and women related to structural constraints. For example, it is often women who lack the time for leisure because of the "second shift" experience (Henderson et al., 1996; Hochschild with Machung, 1989). Despite more women entering the paid workforce and more men contributing to the housework and childcare, women carry most of the burden of balancing unpaid domestic labour and paid jobs which leaves little time for leisure participation (Glancy, 1991; Henderson et al., 1996; Hochschild with Machung, 1989). These stresses may make it difficult from the start for women to participate in leisure. In addition, women in their older years continue to perform the majority of household tasks, regardless of their employment status. They also carry the major responsibility for the care of

ill spouses and/or family members, they act as the managers of social interactions, including relationships with relatives, and some are still involved with childcare through assisting with grandchildren. These women often have less free time for leisure (Horna, 1994; Anderton, et al., 1995).

Another significant constraint is the lack of economic resources (Henderson et al., 1996). For example, women who remain at home with no paid income often do not have their own independent income and are often reluctant to spend the “family income” on their own leisure (Henderson et al., 1996). Further, in North American society, one of the most economically deprived groups is single parents, and women head the great majority of these families living below the poverty line (Nelson & Robinson, 1999). The main causes of what is often called the feminisation of poverty are divorce, births to unwed mothers of limited financial resources, and lower wages paid to women in the labour force (Nelson & Robinson, 1999). Older women are particularly vulnerable to falling victim to poverty (Guilmette, 1992; Nelson & Robinson, 1999). Many older women following the traditional model of not working outside the home invest in their marriage rather than in a retirement fund while assuming their husbands would always provide for them. As a consequence many older women find themselves living below the poverty line with some having to work part-time in their mature years (Guilmette, 1992; Nelson & Robinson, 1999). Consequently, a lack of money can have negative consequences on women’s leisure such as affecting transportation to and from

leisure facilities, being able to afford programs, and having time constraints from working two jobs (Henderson et al., 1996).

The fear of violence or harassment is also a major constraint to women's leisure (Henderson et al., 1996). Violence and sexual assaults against women create a fear of going out at night and participating in certain activities alone such as walking on a nature trail (Anderton, et al., 1995; Green et al., 1990; Henderson et al., 1996). This fear of violence, according to Green and colleagues (1990) is a form of social control. Traditionally, women's proper place has been in the home and men's place was in the public sphere. For over a century, women have been discouraged from entering many areas of public life (Green et al., 1990; Wearing, 1998). With regard to leisure, many venues are male-dominated, and women are either made to feel unwelcome or are only welcome on specific terms (Green et al., 1990; Wearing, 1998). Male social control of leisure space can take a number of forms ranging from silent disapproval, jokes or ridiculing behaviour, and sexual innuendoes through open hostility. For example, in Green and colleagues' (1990) study, women attending an evening at the pub could sustain avoidance, verbal abuse, and ridicule from the male patrons. In addition, due to fears of being a victim of crime combined with feelings of inadequacies of being "old" related to perceived deteriorating physical health, older women may also feel insecure venturing out alone (Green et al., 1990; Guilmette, 1992). Not only do such social controls constrain women's leisure and behaviour but also confirm their unequal status (Green et al., 1990; Wearing, 1998).

Another major constraint to leisure for women is the ethic-of-care. The ethic-of-care is often linked to the work of Gilligan (1982) on women's moral development. Gilligan (1982) proposed that women, in modelling their gender identity through their relationship with their mothers, are socialised to being more comfortable in relationships, taking care of others, and maintaining a web of human connections so that no one is abandoned or criticized. Men, on the other hand, are socialised to separate themselves from their mothers in order to create their gender identity based on autonomy, separation, and individuation. Traits commonly associated with men such as competition, aggression, achievement, and conflict pose a moral dilemma for women. Gilligan (1982) suggested that a woman's gender identity is based on the caring for others; therefore, women come to define themselves through developing and maintaining relationships with others. The differences that characterise feminine and masculine personalities and roles are not because of biology but because women are mainly responsible and committed to others. Gilligan (1982) also argued that masculinity which is associated with strength, superiority, domination, and rationality, is more favoured in society because it suits the requirements for modern corporate success. Femininity, as associated with supportiveness, grace, gentleness, and co-operation, is secondary because it has little market value.

According to Baldock (1998), feminist writing on mothering, housework, and informal care has suggested ideologies of compulsory heterosexuality, motherhood and altruism explain the taken-for-granted nature

of women's predominance in unwaged caring work. The belief is that all women regardless of social class are expected to perform unwaged labour. For example, if women do not mother or become men's wives or do not want to care for their elderly parents they are regarded as inadequate as women. Furthermore, to mother and care is not a matter of choice, but of coercion: all women are subjected to this (Baldock, 1998).

Moreover, it is the unpaid work women do in the home that shapes their consciousness to be different from that of men (Henderson et al., 1999; Lorber, 2001). For example, a man's work is future-oriented, geared towards making a product or profit. While a woman's work, on the other hand, is present-oriented geared to getting dinner prepared and the children dressed for school (Lorber, 2001).

Research also suggests that the ethic-of-care for women continues into the third age through the care of grandchildren, a spouse, an elderly parent, and even through volunteering (Anderton, et al., 1995; Browne, 1998; Green et al., 1990; Henderson et al., 1996; Hooyman & Kiyak, 1996; Horna, 1994; Onyx, 1999; Wearing, 1998). According to Gibson and colleagues' (2002) research on older women, a woman never truly retires. An older woman upon retirement may have given up one of her jobs (for example, the paid one) but her work at home never ends. For some older women retirement actually involves an increased amount of time spent on household responsibilities and caring for others (Anderton et al., 1995; Calasanti, 2004; Gibson et al., 2002; Guilmette, 1992).

The problem for women is not in the value of an ethic-of-care, but when society expects women to conform to the ethic-of-care or when women turn to the ethic-of-care because they cannot receive status elsewhere. In this instance, the notion of the ethic-of-care can be oppressive by keeping women in their place (Henderson & Allen, 1991; Henderson et al., 1999). Because women have been socialised to put the needs of others above their own, the ethic-of-care can restrict women's involvement in leisure. For example, women may take part in a social activity just to please their husbands or boyfriends. Within the nuclear family, women are usually in servicing roles (i.e., taking care of children, cleaning, and preparing meals), which may spill over into their recreation such as camping trips where women continue to do the cooking and cleaning. This, in turn, may leave women little time for their own relaxation (Green et al., 1990; Henderson et al., 1996).

Leisure Gains¹⁰

Although women face constraints to leisure, Henderson and colleagues (1996) assert that leisure provides a number of benefits for women: health benefits through physical activity; relational benefits such as the creation of relationships through shared leisure activities; personal benefits such as building self-esteem and personal identity; and societal benefits such as using leisure to challenge traditional gender roles.

¹⁰ From Henderson et al., 1996.

One important factor regarding leisure for women is the opportunity for fostering friendships and support (Adams, 1993; Henderson et al., 1996; Wearing, 1994). The nature of friendships may differ for women and men (Adams, 1993; Henderson et al., 1996). Women tend to be more intimate with friends, more likely to have one-to-one relationships, and receive understanding, support and security in their relationships. Men tend to have friendships in groups that are less relational and revolve around activities. Women's friendships can also revolve around shared interests (Adams, 1993; Henderson et al., 1996). These shared interests however, may take a number of forms ranging from structured sport activities to "just talking" (Henderson et al., 1996). Creating friendships, according to Adams (1993) is particularly important in the lives of older women.

The literature also suggests that leisure can be empowering for women, including older women. However, empowerment can mean different things to different people. Henderson and colleagues (1999) speak of empowerment as a "means of controlling one's life and body" (p. 14). Browne (1998) defines empowerment as "women deconstructing the stereotypical image of women defined by patriarchy and redesigning herself in her own vision" (p. 215). Browne (1998) also states that empowerment is created through connection and friendship rather than domination and conflict as sources of power. Higgins (1999) defines empowerment as a sense of control, a sense of efficacy or belief in one's personal abilities, and becoming involved when one believes that she can make a difference.

Leisure can be empowering by providing a space where women can challenge traditional ideologies of age and gender and provide an opportunity for developing new ways of thinking about one self (Gibson, et al., 2002; Henderson et al., 1996; Wearing 1998; Wearing 1995). Wearing (1995) also suggests that older women can use leisure spaces to foster relationships and support. For example, Dixey (1988) found that for older working class women bingo provided a space for sociability and support. Also, both Anderton et al., (1995) and Siegenthaler and Vaughan (1998) found, in their study on retired women, that leisure provided opportunities for being involved with others, to escape life's stresses, and challenges, and provided a sense of purpose.

Although the ethic-of-care can be a constraint to leisure, as previously discussed, being a spouse, friend, family member, and/or mother are important roles for many women and the caring role is seen as being meaningful in their lives (Freysinger & Flannery, 1992). In the study by Anderton and colleagues (1995), many older women felt that maintaining social relationships and caring for others gave them a sense of fulfilment of having done something of value. For many of these older women, being unable to care for others meant a loss of meaning in their retirement years. In addition, through a lifetime of caring for others, the participants' confidence had increased because they developed the necessary social skills to better cope with being old and being alone (Anderton et al., 1995).

One leisure activity that can be an avenue for empowerment for women is volunteering (Metzendorf & Cnaan, 1992; East, 2000; Faver, 2001; Lowndes,

2003; Sapiro, 2003; Weighill, 2001). Although some volunteer activities such as helping in hospitals can reinforce traditional nurturing roles (Metzendorf & Cnaan, 1992) other activities, such as political activism, have challenged such roles (Henderson et al., 1996; Weighill, 2001).

Volunteering

According to Stebbins (1992) volunteering can be characterised as a form of serious leisure. If leisure, according to Stebbins (1992), is to become an improvement over work as a way of finding personal fulfilment, identity enhancement, self-expression and so on, one must adopt leisure activities that provide the greatest reward. One way to reach this goal is to engage in serious leisure. Stebbins (1992) defines serious leisure as: “the systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist or volunteer activity that participants find so substantial and interesting that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a career centred on acquiring and expressing its special skills, knowledge and experience” (p. 3). There are six qualities that separate serious leisure from casual leisure: (1) the needing to persevere; (2) developing a “career” from the activity; (3) seeking to acquire knowledge, training, skill or all three; (4) gaining from benefits and rewards such as self-fulfilment, self-expression, renewed energy and interest in life, feelings of accomplishment, self-esteem, meeting people, making friends, and just receiving enjoyment; (5) the building of a strong self-identity around the activity; and (6) creating a vibrant social world (Stebbins, 1992).

According to the literature on women's unpaid work, volunteer work is an example of gender reproduction (Adair, 1997; Baldock, 1998; Black & DiNitto, 1994; East, 2000). Even the use of volunteers in shelters and crisis centres has been controversial because feminist ideology suggests that working for free (i.e., volunteering) maintains the legacy of women's oppression and furthers class distinctions between women of greater and lesser socio-economic means. In addition, volunteer organisations may also be hierarchical where women are providing the direct services while men (or women) are in managerial positions that give them the power over women (Adair, 1997; Baines, 1998; Baldock, 1998; Black & DiNitto, 1994; East, 2000; Lowndes, 2003).

Based on the 2000 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP), more than 6.5 million Canadians donated their time to volunteer work (between October 1, 1999-September 30, 2000) and out of that total, 57 percent were women.¹¹ Therefore, there is a high prevalence of women in volunteer work (Statistics Canada, 2001). Moreover, men volunteer more frequently in sports, recreation, hobbies, serve on administration positions, and are motivated by the recognition volunteer work may bring; while women volunteer mainly in social service, community, education and youth training (Henderson et al. 1996; Baldock, 1998; Lowndes, 2003). When men and

¹¹ However, men volunteered more hours on average (Statistics Canada, 2001).

women participate in similar areas of volunteer work, they often do distinctly different activities (Baldock, 1998). For example, male volunteers in social service tend to do stereotypical 'men's work', such as chauffeuring, household repairs, or gardening, whilst women's volunteer work is stereotypical 'women's work' such as typing, office cleaning, tea making, providing personal care services for the elderly or chronically ill, and counselling in crisis situations involving domestic violence, rape or child abuse (Baldock, 1998)

In addition, because volunteer work is unpaid, it is often undervalued in the same way as labour women traditionally do in the home and some paid employment such as nursing (Adair, 1997; Baldock, 1998). Baldock (1998) maintains that the sexual division of labour underlying women's involvement in volunteer work is not caused solely by relations in the family, but also by the organisation of paid work, which marginalises women into low-paid, low-level occupations. Further, women volunteers in community work become a flexible and expendable pool of free labour when the government decides it is no longer worth spending public money on social services (Adair, 1997; Baldock, 1998).

Feminist writers and other researchers suggest the real issue with volunteering is that skills gained through voluntary activity and other forms of caring activities, such as domestic responsibilities, are not valued and recognised as legitimate skills that could be transferable to the marketplace. Also, the many ways in which women give back to their community through their voluntary activities as well as caregiving, housekeeping responsibility, and informal care need to be recognised as productive activity rather than only

equating paid work with productivity (Adair, 1997; Baldock, 1998; Hooyman & Kiyak, 1996).

Nonetheless, there are researchers who suggest that volunteering can be a way of reaching one's potential, improving oneself by learning a new skill, creating community, gaining work experience, developing friendships with other like-minded people; in addition, volunteering in certain instances has a number of health benefits (Adair, 1997; Arai, 2000; Arai & Pedlar, 1997; East, 2000). Volunteering also provides an opportunity to change unfair conditions, provide help for others, and publicly advocate for marginalised groups (Adair, 1997; Arai, 1996; Arai & Pedlar, 1997; East, 2000). In the studies of both Adair (1997) and East (2000), many of the female participants indicated they wanted to feel they were making a difference in the lives of other women.

In Baldock's (1998) research on women volunteers, the participants did not see volunteerism as an extension of their other unpaid work. Although the women did see raising a family as valuable, they saw it as a private matter. In addition, the women volunteers felt that although their paid work did provide a financial contribution to their families, they were not contributing to the community at large. These women, therefore, wanted the opportunity to volunteer. Further, the women defined their volunteering as: self-actualisation, empowerment, 'helping one's community', 'being in control', 'making a real contribution', self-development, an opportunity to work in an interesting environment, an opportunity for social interaction, and a work environment that is more flexible and less stressful than paid work. Volunteer work was actually

seen as a break from the confines of the private sphere of the family that gave them a sense of freedom because volunteering was a choice not an obligation (also Green et al., 1990). Additionally, the presence of volunteers in formal organisations working alongside paid workers enabled women volunteers to compare their own activities with those of paid staff, which resulted in a sense of empowerment for the women volunteers. Finally, the women realised they were making an important contribution to the welfare of their community (Baldock, 1998).

Through volunteer work, women may find themselves participating in social action and social change that create a sense of empowerment in a way that may not be possible in any other unwaged work (Adair, 1997; Baldock, 1998; East, 2000; Faver, 2001). This opportunity to be change agents through volunteer work exists not only for volunteers in social action agencies but also for women working for traditional voluntary organisations (Adair, 1997; Baldock, 1998; East, 2000; Faver, 2001). Arai's (2000) volunteer typology included the "citizen volunteer" which involves political activism. The citizen volunteer's activism was described: "With their emphasis on suprapersonal concerns (e.g., poverty, homelessness, equity, access), citizen volunteers are more likely to challenge the existing market and class system in attempting to secure social rights for a broader group of people in the community" (Arai, 2000, p. 343). According to Arai (2000) volunteering can play an important role in the formation of social capital and the creation of community that enable

participants to act together to pursue shared objectives such as facilitating action for societal change.

Community and Social Capital

Community

The literature on “community” suggests a wide range of concepts that help define what we understand by the term (Ayers-Counts & Counts, 1992; Levy, 1989; Lowe, 2000; Pedlar, 1996; Shaffer & Anundsen 1993).

Community can refer to social or geographic settings, such as families, cities, neighbourhoods, and interest groups (Ayers-Counts & Counts, 1992; Shaffer & Anundsen, 1993). Community can also be defined as an experience, not limited to some geographical setting (Ayers-Counts & Counts, 1992; Levy, 1989; Lowe, 2000; Pedlar, 1996; Shaffer & Anundsen 1993). Social bonds of solidarity can emerge within communities and provide a network for shared meanings and values (Ayers-Counts & Counts, 1992; Brueggemann, 2001; Etzioni, 1998). Finally, communities can create social capital where people work together for a common purpose (Arai, 2000; Lowndes, 2003; Putnam, 2000).

The literature states that leisure is important in creating a sense of community among participants based on common interests (Ayers-Counts & Counts, 1992; Hutchinson & McGill, 1998; Pedlar, 1996). Leisure provides more than just an activity; it also creates important social worlds with histories, forms, and cultures (Kelly & Godbey, 1992). And leisure, according to Reid and van Dreunen (1996), can be a vehicle for community development through

activities that address social conditions. Reid and van Dreunen (1996) state that the focus of community development is “to identify and resolve problems of a social, physical, or political nature that exist in a community in such a way that these conditions are changed or improved from the perspective of the community members. The goals of community development are self-help, community capacity building, and integration” (p.49).

According to Dominelli (1995), women describe communities as human communities (for example, sisterhood) composed of social relationships and networks. Connolly’s (2002/2003) study of women who were actively involved in a neighbourhood initiative illustrated that participants used strategies that involved developing relationships and networks, mobilising community residents to action, and implementing recreation and safety programs. The research found that building relationships was a key factor to the women’s leadership approaches which resulted in community development. It was evident that women learn through specialisation and discussion with others (Connolly, 2002/2003).

Moreover, women-only groups, whether based on private friendships, kin networks, or voluntary associations, create a sense of solidarity, intense bonding, and co-operation, support which becomes important to their self-expression, self esteem and identity (Faver, 2001; Freysinger & Flannery, 1992; Green et al., 1990; Henderson, 1992; Lowndes, 2003; Mitten, 1992; Wearing, 1998). Women-only groups also offer a safe space for relaxed sociability where ascribed gender roles become irrelevant and women are actively engaged in

constructing their own social lives, rather than being reluctant participants in activities organised by others on their behalf (Green et al., 1990; Henderson, 1992; Mitten, 1992; Wearing, 1998). Green and colleagues (1990) further state that one of the few sources of resistance to constructed gender roles is the building of female solidarity.

Through leisure activities such as volunteering, women-only groups can provide the opportunity for women to exercise political action (Glancy, 1991; Green, 1998; Shaw, 2001). These opportunities are related to their shared experiences and identification as women (Glancy, 1991; Green, 1998; Shaw, 2001). Shaw (2001) asserts that leisure can actually be an avenue for political practice through which women can work for social change, resist gender ideologies and oppression, and exercise personal and/or collective power.

In ancient times, the term crone referred to a woman of age, power, and wisdom who enjoyed honour, respect and awe (Walker, 1985). Onyx, Leonard, and Reed (1999) suggest that it is time for older women to reclaim the status of crone and they suggest one way to do this is through collective behaviour. Older women connect with one another through telling stories of their lives and validate their worth through collective problem-solving, using skills and strengths identified in sharing life stories. Garner (1999) also states that one way older women can empower themselves is through working together and proudly identifying as older women, which is made all the more important in a society that views older women as invisible and isolated from each other. There is a need for an environment that supports the participation of older woman

where they have something to contribute, especially because older women have been silenced in many forums. There is a need for spaces where older women can find their own paths to empowerment (Onyx et al., 1999).

Social Capital

Putnam (2000) suggested that social capital was important in building a sense of community among its members. Putnam (2000) defined social capital as the “features of social life - networks, norms, and trust - that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (p. 34). According to Coleman (1988), social capital is referred to as those aspects of social structures that make it easier for people to achieve goals. Coleman (1988) further argued that social capital facilitated productive activity. For example, a group of people who had extensive trustworthiness (the extent to which obligations will be repaid) and trust, was able to accomplish much more than a group who did not have established trustworthiness and trust among its members. Coleman (1988) claimed that “social capital was productive, making possible the achievements of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible” (p. 98).

Newton (1997) stated trust and reciprocity were necessary for the creation of social capital. As Newton (1997) explained:

Social capital focuses on those cultural values and attitudes that predispose citizens to co-operate, trust, understand, and empathise with each other - to treat each other as fellow citizens, rather than as strangers, competitors, or potential enemies. Therefore, social capital is important because it constitutes a force that helps to bind society

together transforming individuals from self-seeking and egocentric calculators, with little social conscience or sense of mutual obligations, into members of a community with shared interests, shared assumptions about social relations, and a sense of the common good. (p. 576)

Reciprocity, according to Newton, (1997), is the assumption that good deeds will be repaid at some unknown time in the future and because reciprocity does involve some uncertainty, risk or even vulnerability, one needs to trust in others. In addition, Newton (1997) claimed there were different types of trust based on the different community structures: “thick” trust and “thin” trust. Thick trust, often found in a small face-to-face community, is necessary for mechanical solidarity or *gemeinschaft*¹² and is generated by intensive daily contact between people. Internally these types of communities develop thick forms of trust among its members but the members have very little trust in the wider society. Thick trust can be created in institutions such as small sects, churches, ghettos, and minority communities. Groups that involve intensive interactions, such as consciousness-raising groups, self-help groups, and mutual support groups, may also produce thick trust but to a more limited extent (Newton, 1997). Thin trust is associated with organic solidarity or

¹² Ferdinand Toennies was interested in contrasting primitive communities with modern societies. Societies that were characterised by a predominance of close personal bonds or kinship relations were defined as “*gemeinschaft*”. Sociologist Émile Durkheim, following Toennies’ analysis of societies, labelled primitive societies as “mechanical solidarity” where collective conscience was strong (Wallace & Wolf, 1999).

gesellschaft¹³ forms through looser forms of relationships that create weaker ties among members of the community (Newton, 1997).

According to some researchers (Arai, 2000; Burden, 2000; Hemingway, 1999), social capital can grow out of leisure activities, especially those that produce norms like autonomy, trust, and co-operation. Because leisure can serve as a means to facilitate collective action to achieve a certain goal, it has goals beyond providing participants with an opportunity to escape the pressures of everyday life (Reid & van Dreunen, 1996; Hemingway, 1999). Leisure activities can be used as an avenue for social transformation by resolving individual and community problems (Reid & van Dreunen, 1996). Through leisure activities people can join forces to work for positive change within their community or try to improve their environment and living conditions (Minkoff, 1997; Reid & van Dreunen, 1996).

Social Movements and Older Adults

Women have been active in social movements. They have been involved in gaining access to affordable housing, addressing violence, working for childcare options, and so on (Wekerle & Peake, 1996). When addressing the literature on new social movements, however, women's activism has not been taken seriously (Wekerle & Peake, 1996). According to

¹³ According to Toennies, gesellschaft referred to societies characterised by a predominance of more impersonal business-type relationships. Organic solidarity, according to Durkheim, occurred in societies with a weak collective conscience that resulted in the rise of individualism (Wallace & Wolf, 1999).

Wekerle and Peake (1996) women are often portrayed as “mothers, consumers or reformers who stop short of being ‘real’ social transformers” (p. 264).

Nonetheless, women have been successful in working collectively for social change (Wekerle & Peake, 1996).

Diana (1992) defines social movements as: “networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organisations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities” (p. 2). Bartholomew and Mayer (1992) explain that shared collective identities involve the construction of a “we” by developing common structures by which individuals can recognise themselves as part of a collective. Movements, according to Bartholomew and Mayer (1992), continually need to produce and reinforce unity and solidarity in order to overcome diversity and tension. Simon (2004) defines new social movements as “collective strategies of social change” (p. 157) and these collective strategies are adopted if individuals believe that the only way for them to change conditions is by joining forces with other like-minded people. Collective strategies can range from confrontational forms such as revolts or strikes to more modest forms such as signing a petition or attending a group meeting (Simon, 2004). A shared set of beliefs and the belief that social change is possible are necessary pre-requisite if the movement is to bring about the desired change (Simon, 2004).

According to Novak (1993) a social movement forms when a group: (1) unites around a set of issues, (2) creates an image of itself in the media as concerned and important, (3) exerts pressure on government agencies, public

policies, and people who make decisions; and (4) has expertise and can raise money or votes on behalf of the issues it represents. Contrary to social movements that centred on economic and social class, new social movements address matters such as gender, the environment, ethnicity, race, age, and sexual orientation (Wekerle & Peake, 1996). And although new social movements such as the student, environmental, and women's movements first developed outside the state structure, political parties and electoral systems are actively engaged with the state in attempting to institutionalise their agendas (Wekerle & Peake, 1996).

Boggs, Rocco, and Spangler (1995) state that the older adult's involvement in political action is neither well examined nor appreciated. Instead, much of the literature describes old age as a time of declining power (Boggs et al., 1995). Not only are older adults thought of as having less income, resilience, and assurance of vigorous health, but they also have less political influence (Boggs et al., 1995). However, not all older adults become victims of the prevailing social structure. There are those who have challenged ageist stereotypes, changed attitudes, and improved their situation through campaigning (Arber & Ginn, 1991; Novak, 1993; Boggs et al., 1995; Gifford, 1995; Hooyman & Kiyak, 1996). There are a number and variety of age-based

groups, such as CARP¹⁴, the US Gray Panthers¹⁵, and OWL¹⁶, that build memberships, conduct policy analysis, organise grass-roots support and make use of direct mail and political action (Gifford, 1990; Gifford, 1995; Hooyman & Kiyak, 1996). Generally, older adults tend to be more concerned with inflation, unemployment, old-age benefits, and taxes. Younger people, on the other hand, are more concerned with issues such as nuclear disarmament, the environment, women's rights, abortion, and gay rights (McPherson, 1998).

McPherson (1998) states there are three major hypotheses to explain the activism of older adults:

- (1) Grey Participation Hypothesis, which claims that with the increasing number of older adults there will also be an increase in political involvement by older adults at many government levels;
- (2) Grey Power Hypothesis, which suggests that due to the growing numbers and the presence of vocal role models, there will be an increased age-based consciousness of specific political beliefs, attitudes, and interests resulting in an increased political involvement and activism at all political levels; and

¹⁴ Canadian Association of Retired Persons is a non-profit advocacy group dedicated to improve the quality of life for 50 years old or over Canadians, retired or not (Novak, 1993).

¹⁵ The US Gray Panthers is a prominent advocacy group who fight to improve life for young and old but emphasise social action to solve problems faced by older people (Novak, 1993; Hooyman & Kiyak, 1996).

¹⁶ The Older Women's League (OWL) founded in 1981 brings together people concerned about issues affecting older women. OWL is also an acronym for another group -- Older Wiser Lesbians.

(3) Grey Peril Hypothesis assumes that the expanding number of politically active older adults will challenge and lobby the government for increased services for the retired population. This challenge to governmental social policies will not only affect the retired population but will at the same time have an impact on the younger generation, thereby contributing to the generational inequity debate¹⁷.

Burr, Caro, and Moorhead (2002) define productive ageing as “socially valued roles performed by older people” (p. 88). One form of productive ageing is civic participation. Productive activity is often linked with activity that has a market value but Burr and colleagues (2002) suggest that productive activity should also include nonmarket activities such as caregiving, grandparenting, and volunteering for community and religious organisations and causes. Also, productive activities should be considered as having social value not only for the individual but also for the community and the larger society. Practising “good” citizenship, in its many forms, is a social value and part of citizenship is participating in civic and political processes. Civic activism and participation take many forms, including voting, contributing money to organisations, volunteering, attending community meetings, and even holding unelected and elected office (Burr et al., 2002).

¹⁷ The media and policy makers have portrayed older adults as only being concerned about their interests and having benefited economically at the expense of younger age groups (Hooymann & Kiyak, 1996; McPherson, 1998).

Civic activism for older adults, whether through such acts as volunteering and voting, can lead to life satisfaction through the chance to give to others (Novak, 1993; Boggs, et al., 1995). Older people are a great source of wisdom, experience, and knowledge who provide valuable resources to their community (Novak, 1993). For older adults, community or volunteer work gives a sense of purpose in life and those who volunteer their services have higher life satisfaction than those who do not (Novak, 1993; Hooyman & Kiyak, 1996).

Jacobs (1993) claims that it may be difficult to organise older women because often older women consider their dilemmas trivial and regard them as personal failures or strokes of fate rather than as an outcome of ageism. Creating a sense of shared discrimination and turning that into social action requires skilled leadership which is rare in any group, but perhaps more so among older women because they have been socialised to avoid leadership roles (Jacobs, 1993). In addition, as previously discussed, because there is a greater penalty for being an older woman than an older man, women tend to experience greater internalised ageism (Jacobs, 1993). Therefore, many older women may not be interested in joining organisations centred around issues of ageing because “old’ is not a way they want to identify themselves” (Jacob, 1993, p. 195).

Yet Hooyman and Kiyak (1996) claim that there has been an increase of older women supporting one another. There appears to be an increased awareness of social problems that have united older women to work for change,

including reducing the disadvantages of their economic and social position (Arber & Ginn, 1991; Hooyman & Kiyak, 1996). Older women, however, do not participate in women's self-help groups or feminist-oriented educational activities. Instead they are more likely involved in specific seniors' advocacy groups or health-related organisations centred on a specific disease, ailment, or affliction (Harold, 1992). Harold (1992) claims that there are active, informed, educated older women involved in seniors' advocacy, and many of the concerns are specifically for older women, although they are voiced under the neutral banner of "seniors' rights". Arber and Ginn (1991) state that as successive cohorts of women, influenced by second-wave feminism and with longer education and careers behind them enter old age, they are likely to have higher expectations and demand a better deal in later life than their mothers.

Summary

The literature review provided a description of the sensitising concepts that will guide this study and that will inform the development of the research questions – most especially related to women's leisure, volunteerism, social capital, community, and civil leisure. Also included were discussions on women's (including older women) constraints to leisure; leisure as empowerment and resistance for women; volunteering as reinforcing traditional gender roles yet empowering for women through the formation of social capital and community building, and enabling women to act together for social change. Further, the notion that social movements can provide the space for the development of civil leisure was examined.

CHAPTER THREE METHODS

The following chapter addresses the research method that was used in my study. More specifically, it discusses the research design, the ethical considerations, and how I collected and analyzed data.

Research Design

This study employed an interpretive paradigm. Qualitative methods, therefore, were used to gather data in order “to understand social life by taking into account the meaning, the interpretive process of social actors, and the cultural, social, and situational contexts in which these processes occur” (Jaffe & Miller, 1994, p. 52). A paradigm is “basically a group reality. It describes a common belief about what is important in life or in the study of human behaviour” (Henderson, 1991, p. 20). The interpretive paradigm begins from the belief that a researcher can gain an understanding about persons and their lives from everyday conversations and observations (Sanker & Gubrium, 1994). In searching for meaning, the focus is on the taken-for-granted and common-sense understandings that people have about their lives (Sanker & Gubrium, 1994). In addition, interpretive researchers presume that social phenomena are understood from the participant’s own perspective and encourage the participants to speak in their own voice (Babbie, 2001; Henderson, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sankar & Gubrium, 1994). Another belief of interpretative research is that human behaviour is a product of how people

define their reality, and the researcher's role is to discover and explain this reality (Babbie, 2001; Henderson, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Sankar & Gubrium, 1994). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) in their discussion of the naturalist paradigm, there can be multiple realities or perspectives, experienced and presented by the participants in the study. These realities can be gained from a number of data collection methods (Henderson, 1991).

This study used a feminist research approach to explore the role of older women involved in the Raging Grannies. According to Ramazanoğlu with Holland (2002), "feminist methodology is distinctive to the extent that it is shaped by feminist theory, politics and ethics and grounded in women's experience" (p. 171). There is no method that is distinctly feminist (Harding, 1997; Neysmith, 1995; Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 2002; Reinharz, 1992). Instead, a variety of methods are used because "they seemingly allow space for alternative voices to be heard" (Neysmith, 1995, p. 102).

Feminist methodology is a critical analysis of what knowledge is, how knowledge is recognized, who are seen as the experts in society, how one acquires this status, and by what means certain knowledge is regarded as legitimate while others are dismissed (Neysmith, 1995; Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 2002).

According to Reinharz (1992, p. 240) there are themes of feminist research, including:

- Feminism is a perspective, not a research method.

- Feminists use a multiplicity of research methods. Sometimes feminists use single methods, sometimes in combination.
- Feminist research involves an ongoing criticism of nonfeminist scholarship.
- Feminist research is guided by feminist theory.
- Feminist research may be transdisciplinary.
- Feminist research frequently attempts to develop special relations with the people studied. Contrary to traditional research, interaction between the researcher and the participants is part of the data collection process.
- Feminist research frequently defines a special relation with the reader. The researcher addresses the reader directly and creates a connection through her, between the reader and the people studied.

Feminist researchers recognize that women's nature, needs, roles, and place in society are systems of ideas constructed in past interactions and sustained by present ongoing interaction (Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 2002). Further, for feminist researchers women's perceptions, experiences and feelings are important and worth examining as individuals whose experience is interwoven with other women (Harding, 1997; Leane, Duggan & Chambers, 2002; Neysmith, 1995; Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 2002; Reinharz, 1992). Feminist research has "attempted to make women visible" (Leane et al., 2002,

p. 35). Feminist research empowers women to think differently, to ask new questions, make new connections, and to value their own experiences (Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 2002). Further, feminist approaches to research can be identified largely by the following: (1) their theories of gender and power; (2) knowledge is grounded in women's voices and experiences, that there is a "women's way of knowing"; (3) notions of empowerment; (4) developing knowledge that contributes to the elimination of gender-based oppression; (5) and researcher accountability (Neysmith, 1995; Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 2002). According to Harding (1997) the point of creating feminist knowledge is both to understand the realities of gendered lives, and to be able to change them; even a small-scale study has the potential to transform the possibilities of people's lives.

Research Questions

Main Question

The following questions were developed in order to explore the experiences of older women involved in activism. The "grand tour question" (Creswell, 1994, p. 70) guiding this study is:

What is the role of activism in the lives of older women?

Sub-questions:

As suggested by Creswell (1994), the principal research question is followed by sub-questions that allow for a more specific exploration of the study. The sub-questions are:

1. How do older women become involved in the Raging Grannies? Why do they choose this particular group? What are their motives?
2. What role does activism play in the lives of older women?
3. Is their activism a site for resistance to gender roles and ageist values?
4. Does activism impact the ageing experience for these women? Does their involvement in activism have an effect on how they perceive their old age?
5. How do the older women define their experience? Do they consider activism leisure? Work? A combination? Or something else? How do older women define leisure?

Pilot Work

I participated in the Raging Grannies' "Unconvention" in Ottawa, Ontario on Friday 28, May, 2004, in order to conduct preliminary research. My intent at this "Unconvention" was to gain general background knowledge on the Raging Grannies and to establish rapport with potential participants. Maxwell (2005) states that pilot work can assist in gaining insight into informants' subjectivities and the inner workings and meanings of a group. I introduced myself as a graduate student from the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo interested in conducting further research on women involved with the Raging Grannies. I took part solely as an observer in the roundtable discussion, the organised demonstration on Parliament Hill, and the guest lectures. However, I did take part in the demonstration on Parliament Hill as a Granny in training by request of the Grannies. No formal

research such as interviews was conducted and there was no formal recruitment of participants. I wanted to gain a better understanding of this group and to begin networking that might enable me to conduct further research with the group. I received ethics clearance from the Office of Research Ethics, University of Waterloo, to partake in this pilot work.

From participating in this pilot work, I was able to establish rapport with some of the women, and it assisted in the development of my interview guide and concepts discussed in my literature review.

Recruitment Process

The Participants

Older women were selected for this study because historically there has been gender inequality in leisure opportunity, choice, and entitlement to leisure for older women (Siegenthaler & Vaughan, 1998). Due to women's ethic-of-care and the Protestant Work Ethic¹⁸ older women have different perceptions of leisure than older men (Siegenthaler and Vaughan (1998). Therefore, there is a need to focus on how older women differ from older men in their leisure experience (Siegenthaler & Vaughan, 1998). Although it is important to examine the leisure differences between older women and older men (Siegenthaler and Vaughan (1998), such an examination is beyond the scope and intent of this study. For this study, older women involved with the Raging

¹⁸ As previously discussed in this paper, some older women see leisure as a reward for paid work and since society places more value on paid work (one's worth in society is often equated with the ability to generate money), older women who worked at unpaid domestic labour all their lives felt they were not entitled to leisure (Guilmette, 1992; Siegenthaler & Vaughan, 1996).

Grannies were chosen as participants. Each Gaggle is responsible for setting age limits¹⁹. However, there is an universal gender restriction – in order to be a Granny one must be female.

Purposeful Sampling

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit participants for this study. Purposeful sampling, according to Patton (2002), refers to selecting participants “strategically and purposefully; the specific type and number of cases selected depends on study purpose and resources” (p. 243). Purposeful sampling focuses on the use of information-rich cases; that is, those people who are likely to be most knowledgeable and informed about the phenomenon under study; the intent is not empirical generalization from a sample of a population (Babbie, 2001; Neuman, 2001; Patton, 2002). As members of the Raging Grannies, the participants in this study were certainly knowledgeable about activism and older women. Specifically the women over 55 years old who are members of the Raging Grannies were invited to participate. In total 20 women contributed to the study. Fifteen women participated in face-to-face interviews. Of the 15 women interviewed, four women were from Central Canada and 11 were from Eastern Canada Gaggles. All these Gaggles shared very similar characteristics in that they are all capital cities (with the exception of one Gaggle from Eastern Canada) and are regarded as university cities. I excluded the province of Quebec due to possible cultural differences based on language. There has been

¹⁹ During my pilot work at the Raging Grannies’ “Unconvention,” I was informed that the oldest Granny in attendance was 92 years old.

substantial information already collected by other researchers²⁰ on the Toronto, Ontario and Victoria, British Columbia Raging Grannies. In addition, data from the on-line forum, the Raging Grannies “E-vine”, was made accessible to me and on-line exchanges with five women comprised part of the data used in this dissertation.

Patton (2002) further states that there is no specific sample size stipulation in qualitative inquiry of this sort. The sample size will depend on what the researcher wants to know, the purpose of the study, what is at risk, what will be beneficial, what will have credibility, and what can be accomplished with available time and resources. However, it is suggested that the decision to terminate sampling occurs when the data being collected reaches saturation; that is, the information being collected has become repetitive and no new information is being discovered from the sample (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Henderson, 1991).

Gaining Access

Since I did meet Grannies at the “Unconvention” and openly discussed my research intent, letters inviting Grannies to participate (see Appendix A) were sent to each Gaggle. Specifically, I contacted the leader of both the Central Canada Gaggle and one Gaggle from Eastern Canada first by e-mail to ask if my letter of invitation could be sent to each member in order to encourage

²⁰ See Hill (2000), Narushima (2001), and Roy (2004)

involvement. Subsequently, a follow-up letter (See Appendix B) was sent to the leaders of each Gaggle. Some of the Gaggles did post my letter of invite to their newsletter, others made an announcement at their Gaggle meeting, and I was provided a list of members, to whom I sent letters of invitation

Snowball sampling is a nonprobability sampling method where each person interviewed may suggest additional people for interviewing (Neuman, 2001; Babbie, 2001; Patton, 2002). Accordingly, during the research process itself snowball sampling occurred; for example, some the Grannies provided contact names of other participants and one Eastern Canada Gaggle provided a contact name for another gaggle in Eastern Canada.

With respect to the data from the Grannies E-vine, I was invited by the moderator of the Grannies E-vine to join their on-line forum and post my research intent. From this, a number of Grannies became involved in a discussion on leisure, once it became known I was a student researcher from the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies. From this online forum five Grannies agreed to have their quotes on leisure used in my dissertation.

Data Collection

Interviews

For this study, the researcher was the primary tool through which the data were collected and analyzed (Guba, 1981). The primary method of data collection was in-depth active interviews. Originally I began with 20 participants volunteering to be interviewed, but two decided not to participate because of the formality of the research forms (i.e., consent forms, research

intent forms). In total 18 Grannies were interviewed; however, later in the study three Grannies withdrew from the study as they were unable to complete the reviews of the transcripts or report on my themes due to time constraints and requested I not use their interview transcripts in my research. Therefore, the analysis of the interviews is based on a total of 15 participants and the quotes from the five Grannies of the online forum. The interviews were semi-structured in nature, which involved the implementation of a number of predetermined questions and/or special topics. These questions were asked of each participant in a systematic order; however, the open-ended nature of the interview did allow participants to have the freedom to refuse to answer any of the questions asked, while I was also able to probe beyond participants' answers (Berg, 1995; Reinharz, 1992). Patton (2002) states that open-ended questions permit an interviewer to understand and capture the world as seen by the participant without predetermining their reality through prior selection of questionnaire categories. In-depth, active interviews are used to collect detailed, information-rich data that is focused on the collaboration between interviewer and participant (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). An open-ended interview explores people's views of reality and allows for the potential of theory generation (Patton, 2002; Reinharz, 1992). Open-ended interview studies frequently rely on the grounded theory perspective to analyze data, developed by sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1967). According to Reinharz (1992) open-ended interviewing also offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories using their own words rather than the words of the

researcher. This is particularly important for the study of women because for centuries women's ideas have been ignored altogether or men have spoken for women.

According to Kirch (1999), traditionally feminist researchers have been drawn to using open-ended interviews for a variety of reasons. First, they assist in establishing collaborative and non-hierarchical relations between researcher and interviewee. Second, women have the freedom to discuss in their own voice their concerns, values, and experiences more openly. Third, the opportunity may arise to form bonds with other women who share similar cultural experiences as women. Fourth, there is the potential to develop trust and rapport between researcher and interviewee due to their non-hierarchical relationship. Indeed, some feminist researchers have made suggestions to encourage equalizing the power relationship between the researcher and participant when conducting interviews, including using open-ended questions; giving the participant the right to stop the research and refuse to answer any questions; the researcher being prepared to share information about herself; and providing honest information about how the research will be used; representing the views expressed by the participants in their own voice; and finally returning transcripts and/or findings to the participants (Leane et al., 2002; MacQuarrie & Keddy, 1992).

Holstein and Gubrium (1995) state that "all interviews are interpretively active, implicating meaning-making practices on both the part of the interviewers and respondents"(p.4). This perspective views the participant as an

active producer of meaning. Contrary to traditional interview roles, the participant and the interviewer create a relationship that is reciprocal and collaborative in exploring the topic and its meanings (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; MacQuarrie & Keddy, 1992; Reinharz, 1992). The interview is an exchange of information between the interviewer and the participant; in other words, the interview is more of a conversation or dialogue.

The structure is generally that the interviewer has questions to ask but the participants are also free to ask the interviewer anything they want at any stage, and the interviewer would answer as fully as she could (Reinharz, 1992). Self-disclosure involves the interviewer sharing ideas, attitudes, and/or experiences concerning matters that may relate to the interview which initiates true dialogue and facilitates trust between participants and the interviewer (MacQuarrie & Keddy, 1992; Reinharz, 1992; Reinharz & Chase, 2002). Mutual sharing of experiences is important in cultivating reciprocal collaborative relationships (MacQuarrie & Keddy, 1992).

However, Reinharz and Chase (2002) state that it may be difficult for an interviewer to know how much and what kind of disclosure is appropriate. For example, participants may feel constrained when interviewers talk about themselves. Therefore, interviewers need to think carefully about whether, when, and how much disclosure makes sense in the context of a particular study and with specific participants. Depending on the sensitivity of the subject matter (for example, the interviewer may clearly have different viewpoints from those of the participant) it may be in the best interests of those involved that the

interviewer remain reserved, especially when gaining trust and rapport in a non-confrontational manner (Reinharz & Chase, 2002).

Jaffe and Miller (1994) suggest that during the interview process, the position of expert and subordinate be avoided. Actually, Reinharz (1992) suggests researchers refer to themselves as “learners” and “listeners” rather than “researchers”. Nonetheless, both interviewer and participant need to be seen as equal members in the interview and meaning-making process. Building relationships between interviewer and participant is important for gathering information-rich data. In addition, interviewers should be an active listener by presenting themselves as being truly interested and aware (Berg, 1995; MacQuarrie & Keddy, 1992; Reinharz, 1992;). For example, Berg (1995) recommends offering the participants appropriate non-verbal cues such as smiling if the participant shares something humorous with the interviewer. Also, the interviewer should be aware of using monosyllabic answers or a simple pause or an uncomfortable pause (Berg, 1995). Using probes such as “Can you tell me a little bit more about that?” or “What else happened?” is recommended (Berg, 1995).

Holstein and Gubrium (1995) suggest that the researcher use interview schedules as guides only. Interview guides should be flexible enough to be built up or elaborated and altered during the course of the interview, allowing the possibility of new questions being added or removed and discussion items being combined (Charmaz, 2004). The participant may even be asked what kind of questions she or he thinks should be asked (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995;

Reinharz, 1992). Yet interviews centre on specific research topics, therefore, “the active interview should not be seen as just another conversation; not just anything goes” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 56). The interviewer should try to keep the participant on track in order to obtain her/his information but also remain flexible enough to allow the direction of the interview to be determined by the interaction of the interviewer and participant (Berg, 1995; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Reinharz, 1992). The active interview may be a conversation but a guiding purpose or plan is still needed (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

An initial interview guide was prepared for this study (see Appendix C). For the study, I asked a number of key questions but maintained the flexibility to explore beyond the answers to these questions. The interview guide enabled me to guide the interview situation for each individual. Through this type of interview guide, I gave each participant the freedom to speak about their unique experience in their own words. At the same time, it allowed me the opportunity to discover new ideas about the topic (Sinnott, Harris, Block, Collesano, & Jacobson, 1983).

In the study, ten of the participants wished to review the questions prior to the interview²¹. One common complaint regarding my interview guide was

²¹ In van den Hoonaard’s (2005) study on widows she found that many of the women “rehearsed” for the interviews due to the fear of not being able to competently convey what they thought or felt. Van den Hoonaard felt that because older women’s low status and negative identity led them to question their own ability “to do the interview right” (2005, p. 404). Perhaps those Grannies who asked to view my questions prior to the interviews were also wanting to “rehearse”.

that the questions were too numerous; therefore, many of the participants were very open with which questions they preferred or did not prefer to answer. In some cases, the interviewee took the interview in a direction they thought would be most appropriate in the telling of their story. Consistent with active interviews, some of the participants preferred a conversational type of structure to the interview rather than following the interview guideline.

The interviews were conducted between April 2005-July 2005, at a place chosen by the participants at a time convenient to them (Reinharz, 1992). Interviews were mostly conducted in each woman's home usually in the kitchen or in the living room. One interview took place at a restaurant. Most of the interviews were held in the morning or early evening and lasted 60-120 minutes. Berg (1995) has suggested that the location of the interview is somewhere the participants feel most comfortable, where there is no fear of being overheard or being seen.

At the beginning of each interview the participants were thanked for taking the time to be interviewed. I also explained to each participant that the questions were only a guideline, and they could decline answering any of the questions. In addition, I informed each participant that during the interviews, they could contribute what they felt was relevant, and that I was only interested in their own experience. However, before beginning the interview, Berg (1995)

suggests spending several minutes chatting and making small talk with the participants. For example, when I arrived at the participant's home, I engaged in "small talk" asking questions about such things as photographs, books, and so on. In many cases the small talk involved the participants asking me a number of questions about who I was, where I was from, my research, why I was interested in studying older women, my area of study, who my family was.²² In addition, I did try to be as relaxed, affirmative and natural as possible to help set the participant at ease and establish a comfortable rapport (Berg, 1995). In most cases, a social context was already established prior to the interview as many of the participants had cookies or cakes out for me with the offer of tea or coffee.²³ One participant even served lunch.

The interviews were audiotaped with permission from the participants. Each tape was then transcribed verbatim, and the data organized into conceptual categories in order to be used in the analysis of the data. All the participants with the exception of one gave permission to be audiotaped. In the case of one participant who requested not to be audiotaped, notes were made of the conversation and verified by the participant once the interview was completed. I also kept notes about the interviews in my reflexive journal, including my own personal thoughts and process. In addition, a documentation sheet (see Appendix D) adapted from Flick (1998) was used as a system of organization

²² A common question from the Maritime Grannies.

²³ van den Hoonaard (2005) stated that perhaps it is also the interviewee's attempt to establish a rapport with the interviewer by creating such a social context since the interviewer is initially a stranger in their own homes.

and to collect demographic information. Some of the participants declined completing or answering the questions on the form.

As previously mentioned five women from the E-vine forum agreed to have their quotes on leisure used in the dissertation. The E-vine is a public forum (but participation requires permission from the moderator) where individuals may engage in discussions with all members of the forum. All messages are available to the members for their viewing and responding. I did not ask any questions from the interview guide on the E-vine, as my original intention was to recruit more participants, including possibly members of the E-vine, for face-to-face interviews as part of the study. This intent was not realized, but access to the E-vine data was particularly valuable to the study.

According to some researchers (James & Busher, 2006; Mann & Stewart, 2004; Seymour, 2001; Stewart & Williams, 2005; Waruszynski, 2002) there are a number of benefits for conducting online interviews. One benefit is the reduction of time loss and economic benefits. The use of paper and transcribing costs are eliminated because interviews can be easily transferred into word processing documents for subsequent data analysis, therefore eliminating the time consuming and expensive process of data transcription. The researcher rarely needs to travel to a number of locations reducing time loss and eliminating travel costs. More individuals can be reached from more geographical locations. It may be possible to reach inaccessible groups through chat rooms or forum. Benefits for the online participant include the comfort of answering questions from their own place (i.e. their home). Participants may be

less inhibited by the possible judgment from the researcher since there is no face-to-face contact. Participants may also have the convenience to take more time thinking and answering a question.

On the other hand, researchers also warn of the negative aspects of conducting online research (James & Busher, 2006; Mann & Stewart, 2004; Seymour, 2001; Stewart & Williams, 2005; Waruszynski, 2002). One main consequence is confidentiality and privacy. For certain online forums, chatrooms, and live chats, privacy may become an issue because when posting messages all members of the forums see the messages. There is also the risk of infringing on members' privacy since all members of the forum have access to membership personal information. Further, e-mails systems automatically send participants addresses along with their responses, so users are instantly visible. There is also the risk that the participants (and researcher) may not be completely truthful about certain identity characteristics such as gender, age, or even ethnic origin. There may also be a risk the researcher could not be truthful about his/her own identity (i.e. lie about being a researcher) just to gain access to a certain online group. There are also problems with gaining access as it is the moderator of forums who decide membership; therefore they act like gatekeepers. Some participants may have trouble reading and writing which could make communicating difficult. There could be difficulty in getting clarification of the meaning of a question or a question may be misunderstood. Not all groups can be reached through online methods, such as the homeless. The researcher may also not be familiar with the "lingo" of the forums.

Finally, non-verbal behaviour (such as body language and facial expressions) is lost with online interviews.

Nevertheless, many of the Grannies, who were members of the E-vine, became interested in why someone from a leisure discipline (instead of political science, education, or even sociology) would be interested in the Raging Grannies because in their viewpoint, activism was not a leisure activity. I proceeded to ask permission to use some of the quotes from the discussion on leisure that ensued. Five Grannies from the E-vine contacted me, through email, granting permission to have their quotes used in the study.

Reflexive Journal

A reflexive journal was kept in order to record notes throughout the research process to be later used to inform my analysis. Kirby and McKenna (1989) comment that “notes” are the “data” on which an important part of the analysis and interpretation of the study is based. By keeping notes, my intent was to extract data that had the potential of enriching interviews and contributing to a better understanding of the women’s experiences. According to Reinharz (1992) everything in the field should be recognized as potential data since the researcher’s meanings of the experience may not be the same as the participants. Notes included information such as the nature of the interview setting, how the participant behaved throughout the interview, my own thoughts and reflections, as well as any other cues that could be useful in informing the future process of analysis (Patton, 2002; Reinharz, 1992). Generally, the recording of each step taken in the research process, changes to the research,

observations, conversations, and the researcher's own reflections were recorded (Kirby & McKenna, 1989).

Importantly, my conceptual baggage was also reported. Conceptual baggage is a record of the researcher's thoughts, ideas, and assumptions about the research questions, the topic, and the actual research process (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). By being explicit regarding one's own thoughts and feelings, another layer of data may be disclosed for investigation (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). Hence, "the researcher becomes another subject in the research process and is left vulnerable in a way that changes the traditional power dynamics/hierarchy that has existed between researcher and participants" (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 32).

The journal also served as a tool for developing my insights and ideas surrounding my findings and to record themes I identified throughout the data-gathering process (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). Further, three types of memos suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1998) were recorded: (1) Coding memos which were the results of open and axial coding that occur during the data analysis; (2) theoretical memos which were my thoughts about concepts and theoretical ideas; and (3) operational notes which focused on the logistics such as data, times, and procedures, and a list of research participants, their names, and their pseudonyms (Kirby & McKenna, 1989).

In order to be more active in the study I asked permission to participate in some of their activities, such as a demonstration, meetings, or another "Unconvention". Reinharz (1992) states that it is important to document

women's activities since women traditionally have not been seen as playing significant roles in social settings. A feminist perspective allows the observer to see women as full members of their social, economic, and political worlds, and understanding the experiences of women from their own points of view may reverse assumptions that trivialize women's activities and thought (Reinharz, 1992). I requested that I attend further events but my request was declined. I was unable to attend further events due to the Grannies' concerns that the ethics process required I include a statement in the consent forms concerning activities outside the law I may witness and the possibility that I may be compelled to report these activities.

Data Analysis

This study used essentially grounded theory approaches as a set of strategies for analysing data (Charmaz, 2004, 2006). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998: p. 158) grounded theory, which was introduced by Glaser and Strauss (1967), is defined as "a general methodology²⁴ for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed. Theory evolves during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection" (pp. 158-159). Grounded theory is meant to generate theory, not test theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Further, it provides researchers with the analytical tools for handling masses of raw data while assisting in considering alternative meanings of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

²⁴ Strauss and Corbin (1998: p. 163) define methodology as "a way of thinking about and conceptualizing data."

Moreover, the grounded theory method employs constant comparison. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967) “the purpose of the constant comparative method of joint coding and analysis is to generate theory more systematically...by using explicit coding and analytic procedures” (p. 102). The goal of this method is to maximise credibility through comparison of data (Henderson, 1991). Glaser and Strauss (1967) proposed four stages of the constant comparative method: (1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory.

In accordance with the principles of grounded theory, constant comparison techniques were used throughout the interview analysis process in order to analyse the data. For this study bibbits²⁵ (words, phrases, statements from the interviews and journal) (Kirby & McKenna, 1989) were coded into common themes and concepts which are identified by critical statements, key events, and behaviours that occur most frequently and situations that are perceived as having great importance for the participants (Luborsky, 1994; Neuman, 2000). Some of the themes emerged from the participants’ own words, while others were constructs created by myself (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

This initial analytical phase was mainly an open-coding process where the goal was “to produce concepts that seem to fit the data” (Strauss, 1987,

²⁵ A bibbit is a “passage from a transcript, a piece of information from field notes, a section of a document or snippet of conversation recorded on a scrap of paper that can stand on its own but, when necessary, can be relocated in its original context” (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 135).

p.28). Strauss and Corbin (1998) define open coding as “the analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (p. 101). Open coding is done by scrutinising fieldnotes, interviews, or other documents very closely, for example, line by line, or even word by word, in an attempt to condense the mass of data into categories (Neuman, 2001; Strauss, 1987). Once the researcher has an organised set of initial codes or preliminary concepts, the researcher can focus more on the initial coded themes (Neuman, 2001).

According to Strauss (1987), axial coding consists of intense analysis done around one category at a time, which results in cumulative knowledge about relationships between categories and other categories and subcategories (Strauss, 1987). Analysis revolves around the “axis” of one category at a time (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In the final stage, selective coding, the researcher is constantly comparing major themes or concepts while searching for the “main theme” or

what appears to be the main concern or issue of the participants (Nueman, 2001; Strauss, 1987). Once several workable categories are developed, the researcher attempts to theoretically saturate those which seem to have explanatory power (Strauss, 1987). Theoretical saturation, according to Strauss (1987), is when “additional analysis no longer contributes to discovering anything new about a category” (p. 21). Therefore, once the data has been coded and categories have been created and linked, the development of the theory can begin (Strauss & Corbin 1998).

Immediately following each interview, notes were written about what I could recall from the interview. After conducting a few interviews (before transcribing), I began to notice patterns (and wrote about them) emerging from those fieldnotes and began to think about my analysis. I often listened to my interview tapes several times and made additional notes.

While there are computer software packages available to specifically assist with data analysis, such as NVivo and ATLAS.ti (Esterberg, 2002), I did not use any such program. The data analysis for this study was conducted by hand. That said, qualitative analysis programs can be very useful for managing and storing large amounts of data (Esterberg, 2002). Regardless, analyzing data by hand assisted me in remaining connected to the data. For this researcher, by using a computer I felt distanced from my data. Further, based on the type of learner I am, analysis done by hand is more comfortable because things are presented visually (i.e., themes written on index spread out in front of me) cards and easily manipulated (i.e., moving index cards from one pile to another).

After transcribing an interview the initial coding would begin by going through each interview coding word-by-word, line-by-line, segment-by-segment, and incident-by-incident identifying categories, patterns, and commonalities (Charmaz, 2004, 2006; Esterberg, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2004). In vivo codes were directly written in the margins. I also used multicoloured highlighters to note key phrases in combination with my marginal codes. While this was completed for each interview, I noticed recurring categories (themes) emerging in interview after interview. I made notes of themes that appeared especially interesting or relevant and of codes that kept repeating over and over (Charmaz, 2004, 2006; Esterberg, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2004). I also made note of the “negative cases”²⁶.

Index cards were used that contained a code and a relevant line or portion of the interview and I noted exactly where each piece of data was found. The cards were then sorted into piles to see what codes emerged most frequently and made comparisons between interviews (Esterberg, 2002; Kirby & Mckenna, 1989; Rubin & Rubin, 2004).

Once I began to identify recurring themes, more coding was completed. I then proceeded to go through the data line by line again but this time focusing on the key themes I identified during my initial coding (Charmaz, 2004, 2006; Esterberg, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2004). The index cards were used once again to record each quote related to the code with the interviewee and page number.

²⁶ According to Esterberg (2002) negative cases incorporate data that contradict a researcher’s interpretation.

Subcategories of categories that showed the links between them were also made. A diagram of how each Granny and Gagle was related to one another was also created.

All concepts came directly from the data. I attempted not to use any preconceived concepts by not reading too much of the literature before really becoming immersed in the data for fear of trying to fit my data into concepts, and theories that I would read from the literature (Esterberg, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2004).

Rigor and Trustworthiness

In order for research to meet the requirements of rigor and trustworthiness, the researcher must take steps to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1985). According to Henderson (1991, p. 134) credibility refers to how truthful the research findings are; transferability refers to how applicable the findings are to another setting or group; dependability refers to how the researcher can be certain that the findings are consistent and reproducible; and confirmability refers to how certain the findings are reflective of the participants and not the researcher's biases and prejudices.

The following techniques were used to assist in the rigor and trustworthiness of this research.

- To increase credibility, conclusions were described using, thick description and direct quotes from the transcribed interviews, persistent observations,

and my reflexive journal served as an audit trail (Henderson, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

- Member checks can also increase credibility (Henderson, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Neuman, 2001). Once all the data were transcribed and analysed, five Grannies from one of the Eastern Canada Gaggles were invited to participate in a focus group/presentation where preliminary findings of the research, including themes and patterns, were discussed. I presented my initial findings and themes to the women and then asked for their perceptions of the findings. The focus group/presentation lasted two hours and themes and findings were modified accordingly. Due to time constraints and financial circumstances²⁷ only the one of the Eastern Canada Gaggles attended. Nevertheless, a copy of my presentation along with the feedback from the Eastern Canada Gagle that participated in the focus group, was sent to the other Gaggles. Finally, a summary copy of my data chapter was sent to all Gaggles for a final review.²⁸
- Henderson (1991) states that transferability is concerned with how the findings of a study are applicable to other similar settings. Can the study be replicated by reading the presentation and discussion of the data? To ensure transferability, I kept detailed information possible by using thick descriptions of the research process (Henderson, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, I recorded descriptions of the interview settings, the

²⁷ I was unable to return to each Gagle for focus groups or conduct telephone conferencing due to time constraints.

participants, participant selection, places, and my own thoughts, feelings, and any biases I may have had (Patton, 2002).

- Having a description of the plan of research, being flexible with the plan, and recording any changes to the plan²⁹ will affect dependability (Henderson, 1991). As well, prolonged engagement with the study and having an “auditor” (for example, my academic advisor) review my data analysis affected dependability (Henderson, 1991). Audit trails can be used to enhance dependability by describing how I came to my conclusions (Henderson, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
- No researcher can be totally objective (Henderson, 1991); however it is still important to establish the degree to which the findings are from the participants and not from the biases, motivations, or interest of the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Henderson, 1991). Nevertheless, confirmability can also be increased through an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The purpose of the audit trail is to enable an external researcher (for example, my supervisor) to confirm the findings by tracing back to the original data. My reflexive journal (where my opinions and thoughts are recorded) as well as the interview transcripts assisted with confirmability.

²⁸ Some of the Grannies did request a copy of the entire thesis for their review; however, I had to decline their offer due to time constraints.

²⁹ Any adjustments that had to be made in the process of carrying out the research were recorded in my reflexive journal.

Ethical Considerations and Issues

Since in this type of research, the researcher is the instrument for gathering data, there is potential risk (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Henderson, 1991; Neuman, 2001). Feminist researchers, who strive for collaborative relations with participants must be aware of the number of risks involved because the very nature of such relations can take unexpected turns for both parties (Kirsch, 1999). For example, participants may not always know and may not always anticipate how they will respond to interview questions about their lives. Researchers have to understand that she/he is only a “friendly stranger” (Kirsch, 1999, p. 30) that comes to collect information and then leaves; there is a difference between “friendship and friendliness” (Kirsch, 1999, p. 30). Researchers have to also examine closely their own expectations about the kind of interaction that they hope to have with the participants.

According to Kirsch (1999) there are a number of incidents that inhibit or even exploit relations between a researcher and a participant, such as: misunderstandings, disappointments, time constraints, diverging interests, conflicting values, different commitment levels, and power differences between the researcher and participants. In addition, participants can reveal intimate details about their lives, which they may later regret sharing with the researcher. During interviews, participants may forget or repress knowledge. Participants may even decline invitations to collaborate with researchers. Perhaps the researcher learns about truths they would rather not know. Although the

researcher may feel there is a connection with the participant (a feminist interviewing women) it does not necessarily mean they share the same values or even agree with the research process. Further, although the interviewees usually consent to be interviewed and can refuse to answer any questions, they are more likely to cooperate. But, they may also be concerned about the researcher's perceptions, for example, they may ask whether they are "helping" or providing the "right" answers (van den Hoonaard, 2005). Or the researcher may feel manipulated by participants when they receive distorted, exaggerated, or untruthful information. Factors such as gender or class privilege may leave some researchers vulnerable to manipulation during the research process. Participant-researcher relations may become further complicated when researchers observe participants whose behaviour or actions they consider unfair, perhaps even harmful or dangerous to others (Kirsch, 1999).

According to Kirsch (1999), "interviews represent an artificial staged performance" where both researcher and interviewee parties are "playing culturally determined roles" (p. 31). Both parties are putting on their "best face" during an interview by appearing interested, insightful, reasonable, witty, wise or whatever qualities are deemed important on such occasions; therefore researchers and interviewees may create images of themselves that may not necessarily be the whole truth. These considerations all potentially present ethical dilemmas.

Nevertheless, the literature (Babbie, 2001; Henderson, 1991; Kirsch, 1999; Neuman, 2001; Patton, 2002; Reinharz, 1992) offers a number of suggestions when addressing ethical dilemmas, such as:

- Researchers should be completely honest regarding their intentions and the research process (including data ownership and access); establishing and keeping trust throughout the process is vital.
- Even if a participant and the researcher do not agree, the participant's views should still remain in the report.
- Researchers must decide the extent to which problematic, unethical, or illegal behaviour will be allowed; and perhaps intervene if necessary.
- Informed consent must be obtained from the participants.
- Participation in the research process must be voluntary; participants must be allowed to withdraw at any time for any reason without negative consequences.
- Researchers should inform participants of any risks involved in the research; however no physical, emotional, or economic harm should come to the participants.
- Confidentiality and anonymity of participants should be protected at all times.
- Selection of participants is impartial.
- Researchers need to be respectful, supportive, and as empathetic as possible.

Furthermore, the researcher ought to accept the fact that: not all participants will be liked; empathy for some participants may be difficult, especially if they should occupy more powerful or privileged social status; the research cannot have a positive impact on all (or even any) of the participants in the ways the researcher hoped for; participants may feel discomfort, confusion, or even emotional pain when asked to share their experiences; and eventually most of the participants are left behind once the research is completed (Kirsch 1999).

Consequently, the strictest of measures were employed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality throughout my study. All names and identifying information from the verbatim transcripts were removed. Once the interviews were transcribed and reviewed, all tapes were erased. No participant will be identified in any written reports; pseudonyms were used. A copy of the Invitation Letter (Appendix A) was given to those participants who requested more formal detailed information on the study and contact names I received through snowballing. Once they contacted me or gave me permission to contact them, I telephoned or e-mailed them to further discuss the study and to answer any questions or address any concerns they had. Once a participant agreed to participate, a meeting was arranged at a time and location convenient for them. They were asked to complete a Consent Form (see Appendix E) which asked for both their consent to participate in the study, as well as their consent to use their anonymous quotations in the dissertation and any future publications.

During the focus group/presentation, I gave a 30-minute presentation (this was requested by the participants) and then the Grannies engaged in a discussion regarding the research. This took place in Eastern Canada while other Gaggles received copies of the presentation. I explained the purpose of the session (see Appendix F) before my presentation, and they also received a letter explaining the purpose and ethical issues surrounding the session (see Appendix G). I explained that their participation in the approximately 90-minute session was voluntary, therefore they could quit the session at any time should they wish to do so. There were no known or anticipated risks to participation in the session. They were informed that they could decline answering any questions and contributing to any discussion. Any information they provided was considered confidential and grouped with responses from other participants. No other person but the women and me was present during the session. As previously mentioned, the strictest of measures were employed to ensure anonymity and confidentiality during and after the session. Lastly, they were asked to sign an Agreement to Participate Form (see Appendix H), which was e-mailed to the participants prior to the session.

Maintenance of all data was secured in locked cabinets in my office and only accessed by me. The audiotapes were also maintained in a secure location in locked cabinets in my office. The interview transcripts were also kept in a secure location and will be destroyed once final written reports are completed. Electronic copies of the transcripts will also be kept in a secure location and

saved on a computer that will only be accessible to me. The electronic copies will be kept for approximately 5 years before they are deleted.

Feedback to the Participants

Following the interviews the participants received a Thank You Letter (see Appendix I). As previously mentioned, a transcript, a copy of the presentation session, and a summary of my data chapter were sent to the participants for their review. Since this research was collaborative in nature, I invited the participants to review their interview transcript which allowed them to clarify earlier statements, correct any inaccuracies, remove any text they did not want included, and to share more of the context of their experiences (Leane et al., 2002; Reinharz, 1992). As requested, they will also receive an executive summary of the findings in the form of a newsletter.

Potential Benefits

There were six ways that the participants benefited by participating in this study: (1) through their potential contribution in making their social issues visible; (2) through being able to reflect on and re-evaluate their experience as part of the process of being interviewed; (3) through the opportunity for the older women to discuss issues important to them that they may not have been able to do previously; (4) the potential of gaining an increased level of acceptance of their important social role; (5) reversing ageing stereotypes; (6) and the opportunity for older women to share their life stories with others and to be recognized as “experts” in those stories (Leane et al., 2002).

Further benefits of the study include: (1) contributing to the academic community and community-at-large through the publishing of the findings; (2) the opportunity to share knowledge with other colleagues by presenting findings from this study at conferences; (3) open debates on what is leisure; and (4) contributing to the debate on research ethics.

In Summary

For this study I examined the role of activism in the lives of older women. More specifically, it involved women who are members of the Raging Grannies. I attempted as much as possible to make the research process collaborative between the researcher and the participants. An interpretive paradigm along with a feminist gerontological research approach were employed in this study. In-depth, active interviews as well as a reflexive journal were used to collect data and the analysis strategies of grounded theory method were utilized. The Chapters 4, 5, and 6 will be a description of the data collected and the final chapter will provide a discussion on the data collected, limitations of the study, future research, and the conclusion.

CHAPTER FOUR
IDENTITY: OLDER ACTIVIST, PROTEST GROUP, AND LADIES
WITH SILLY HATS

Oh dear, what can the matter be
We've been attacked by the forces of gravity
Fat has appeared where we once had concavity,
Nobody said life was fair.
Well, these gray mares, we ain't what we used to be,
We've given up on respectability
Don't give a fig for acceptability,
We're far too busy to care.
These old grannies we fight for world betterment
Care about peace and about the environment
Struggle for justice despite wussy government
Fie on the old rocking chair!
WOOOO

(SONG : "Oh Dear", Tune: Oh Dear, What Can the Matter Be, Carolyn Campbell Collection Wolfville Gaggle, 2005)

Who are the Raging Grannies? The image that may come to mind is little old ladies who are angry about something. However, as the song above suggests they are a group of old women who have ideas about what is wrong with society and how to make it right. The following chapter is a discussion of how the women I interviewed defined the Raging Grannies and how they believed others viewed this group to which they belong. In addition, this chapter begins with a discussion of who exactly these Grannies are. Please note, that all direct quotes from the participants will be in italics.

A Raging Granny: Self-Defined

During the face-to-face interviews, I asked the participants to tell me about themselves. The Grannies provided a variety of stories which indicated how they define themselves, and in so doing, revealed that they shared similar social identities and values. The women viewed themselves as activists and feminists who feel that the current conditions of society are intolerable and there is a need to promote social change. The following is a description of the 15 individual women I interviewed. However, the following descriptions do not include the five women from the online forum. Due to privacy policies of the forum, they are excluded from this discussion.

Granny A is a semi-retired university professor who is heterosexual, Caucasian, English speaking, university educated, and middle class-upper class. Granny A is married with children and is a grandmother. Because she was busy raising children, Granny A became involved in activism later in life:

I had not been an activist till very late in life because I was bringing up my children and we moved a lot and there wasn't a great deal of time for that kind of thing (Granny A, 1: 12-15).

Always aware of injustices, Granny A defined herself as a feminist:

I am a feminist and I realize that there still are inequalities that must be addressed. Granny A, 15: 328-329)

She belongs to the Unitarian Fellowship³⁰ and her major area of interest is history of minorities:

³⁰ The Canadian Unitarian Fellowship promotes social responsibility in a number of areas including democracy, peace, economic justice, gender and sexual diversity, racial and Native equity (Canadian Unitarian Council: http://www.cuc.ca/social_responsibility/index.htm).

I am particularly interested in the history of minorities and what is their role in society, how do they get a fair deal when you have a democracy that depends on a majority vote (Granny A, 9: 193-195).

Granny B is a retired military nurse who is also Caucasian, English speaking, college educated, and middle class. She is not married nor does she have any children. Granny B defines herself as an activist and was always involved in social issues and her main areas of interest include: water conservation, women's issues, and the environment. She stated, "I'm a radical thinker... I always liked to speak out and I was always a champion of the underdog" (Granny B,1: 17-19). Further, Granny B enjoys the theatre and singing and described herself as a feminist; she spoke about the many female activists in her family.

Granny C is a grandmother in her 90s who is one of the original Grannies. She is Caucasian, heterosexual, English speaking, university educated, and middle-upper class with a passion for music and singing. Granny C is a retired school teacher and a member of the Unitarian Fellowship. She was widowed for five years and has since remarried. While Granny C was not involved in activism before joining the Raging Grannies because she was occupied with raising her children, she was nevertheless aware of social injustices and believed in speaking up if something is wrong (Granny C, 16: 346-347).

Granny D is 53 years old, heterosexual, Caucasian, English speaking, university educated, and middle-upper class. She is currently employed as a university professor and defines herself as an educator:

I would describe myself as an educator, my passion is for teaching and I teach in social work and I have certainly committed to social work as an area of practice for all kinds of reasons but the passionate part of it for me is the education (Granny D, 1: 11-15).

Granny D is living common-law and has no children. In addition, she defines herself as an activist, and was involved in activism and community work prior to joining the Raging Grannies after completing her PhD, including participating in the women's movement and fair-trade issues. She also defines herself as a feminist:

I am a feminist and I have been since I was about 25...yes, I would describe myself as a feminist...it didn't come when I was a lot younger like some are more active in their teens and that sort of stuff but certainly women's issues and gender analysis and that sort of thing has always been fairly significant to me (Granny D, 1: 7-11).

During the interview, Granny D also discussed her passion for music (Granny D, 3: 57), humour, and interest in play.

Granny E is 58 years old and is also heterosexual, Caucasian, English speaking, college educated, and middle-upper class. She is currently employed as an Administrative Assistant and is divorced with no children. She states that she enjoys singing and public speaking. Granny E did not become an activist until joining the Raging Grannies; however was involved in community work such as the volunteering at the local homeless shelter and soup kitchen and assisting new immigrants. Granny E is a member of the women's peace

organization, the Voice of Women³¹ (VOW), and the Unitarian Fellowship. She also described herself as an activist and feminist:

I'm an activist and feminist...have been a feminist since the 60s...read all those feminist writers...my parents were even shocked over my feminist views (Granny E, 1: 51-55).

Further, she defined herself as a wise older woman:

I became a crone at 55 years old when I entered my third stage of life... and I am a hard worker and have a good attitude (Granny E, 1: 3-4).

Granny F is a retired professor and nurse who also defined herself as a writer and a poet. She is heterosexual, Caucasian, English speaking, university educated, and middle-upper class. Granny F is married with no children and is a member of VOW and the Unitarian Fellowship. Further, she defines herself as a feminist and an activist but only became an activist later in life:

I can't say I had a political bone in my body until I was in my mid 30's...I was living and nursing in Montreal, my marriage broke up and the feminism was out there and so either it's your fault your marriage break up or there is something else going on. It was most definitely something else going on...I started to listen and I started a women's group (Granny F, 1: 813).

Granny F was one of the founding Grannies for her Gaggle

Granny G described herself as an artist and a feminist. She is Caucasian, English speaking, university educated, and middle-upper class. Granny G is married with children and is a member of VOW. Although she has been involved in activism for many years, mainly in terms of peace-keeping and

³¹ The Voice of Women emerged from Second Wave Feminism and was established mainly by married women and mothers who shared some of the ideas of maternal feminism. Their main concern was peace but gradually the group broadened its focus to include environmental and feminist issues (Wilson, 1996).

social justice, she did not define herself as an activist but rather used the term “citizen” because she considered the term “activist” as a dismissive and somewhat demeaning term (Granny G, 3: 40-41).

Granny H is 64 years old, lesbian, Caucasian, English speaking, college educated, and is middle class. She is a retired military nurse. Granny H was once married with children and is now a grandmother. Granny H defined herself as an activist who was involved in activism and community work before joining the Raging Grannies. She defined herself as a feminist: I am a feminist... fighting for women’s rights, equality definitely (Granny H, 8: 28). When discussing her involvement in activism, Granny H described herself as a fighter: I will be a fighter until I go under and I am not planning on that for a while (Granny H, 8: 34-35). Finally, Granny H revealed that she enjoys singing and writes poetry.

Granny I is a widow and a retired university librarian. She is heterosexual, Caucasian, English speaking, university educated, and middle-upper class. Granny I has children and grandchildren, and belongs to the Unitarian Fellowship and the VOW. She defines herself as a feminist and an activist with a special interest in the peace movement even before joining the Raging Grannies. Granny I also enjoys singing and music.

Granny J is 66 years old retired university professor, and is divorced with children. Granny J is heterosexual, Caucasian, English speaking, university educated, and is middle-upper class. She is also a member of VOW,

is a feminist, and was an activist before the Raging Grannies, with an involvement in peace groups.

Granny K is a retired school teacher who is heterosexual, Caucasian, English speaking, university educated, and is middle-upper class. Granny K is a widow and has children. She defines herself as an activist and a feminist, as she states: Of course, I'm a feminist. It's not a bad word you know (Granny K, 3: 14). Granny K was involved in activism prior to joining the Raging Grannies and is a member of VOW.

Granny L is an 82 years old retired professor. She is heterosexual, Caucasian, English speaking, university educated, and is middle-upper class. Granny L is married with children and is a grandmother. In addition, she enjoys street theatre and singing. She defines herself as an activist and was involved in activism before becoming involved with the Raging Grannies, especially in peace and racism. She defined "activist" as "an activist is a person who acts on what she believes in and can act in all sorts of ways" (Granny L, 16: 52-54). When describing her activism she also remarked: "I'm independent, self-confident, open-minded...I've been a shit disturber all my life" (Granny L, 1: 15). She was not, however, comfortable with defining herself as a feminist:

I really don't know what feminist is anymore...it's not a word I use. I know that my thinking is increasingly inclusive so I think I don't want things for woman and not for men, I want things for people who need them. We all have needs whether you are black, white, gay or etc. I guess I'm more concerned with dealing with the needs if there was say just a glass ceiling, I want that to go, but I also want the pigmented ceiling to go. So I want to fight against ceilings and I want to fight against intrusive questions, are you married, are you gay, etc, things that are no bodies business, like how old are you. I wouldn't say that I am a feminist but I wouldn't say that I wasn't. It just isn't a relative thing for me right now (Granny L, 17: 81-91).

Granny M is a retired professor who is heterosexual, Caucasian, English speaking, university educated, and is middle-upper class. Granny M is married with children and is a grandmother. She defines herself as an activist and a feminist. Granny M was involved in activism prior to joining the Raging Grannies and is a member of VOW.

Granny N is a 63 years old businesswoman who is divorced with children. Granny N is also heterosexual, Caucasian, English speaking, college educated, and middle class. Granny N is also a member of the Unitarian Fellowship. Along with defining herself as an activist she also stated: I'm outrageous, very blunt, and outspoken. Granny N became involved in activism before joining the Raging Grannies, especially in issues of peace and poverty; but she came into activism later in life. Granny N, was also uncomfortable with being described as a feminist:

No, because I didn't grow up under oppression so I guess I am not a feminist in that sense, I guess I practice that lifestyle but I am quite uncomfortable with the word. I don't care if a woman is a firefighter as long as she is big and strong enough. Does that make you a feminist I don't know? (Granny N, 10: 210-230).

Granny O is retired from homecare³². She is also heterosexual, Caucasian, English speaking, college educated, and is middle class. Granny O indicated that she had little time for activism before retirement because she was busy raising a family, but she had always been concerned with social causes such as animal rights and peace issues. She indicated that her interest in the peace movement was through her membership with the Quakers. Granny O continues to volunteer in other organizations and defines herself as a feminist.

The Raging Grannies: Group Defined

According to other researchers, the Raging Grannies as a social movement was created by older activists (Hill, 2000; Narushima, 2004; Roy, 2004). Narushima defined them as “an older women’s liberation movement” (2004: 30). According to my own observations and the interviews I conducted, the Raging Grannies are a unique social world with their own cultural elements which include activities, events (or “gigs” as they are referred to), symbols (see Appendix J for examples), and biannual conventions (or “Unconventions” as the Grannies call them). They have developed their own terms that sets them apart from other social groups. Some examples include the terms “Gaggle” and “raging” In addition, the Grannies are linked with others nationally through the Internet, their newsletter, “The Grapevine”, annual regional meetings, and their “Unconvention”. Although, each Gaggle may act independently choosing the social issues they would like to address, the Raging Grannies share similar

³² Granny O did not provide her age.

norms, values, and beliefs, including anti-war, anti-military toys, anti-poverty, pro-gay rights, women's health, and the environment.

During the interview process I asked each Granny to define or describe the Raging Grannies. Most of the Grannies defined the Raging Grannies as a protest group, as Granny H stated,

We are a protest group made up of older women who are interested in social issues and social causes and we perform wherever we are asked to perform (Granny J, 4: 84-87).
Granny C also remarked, we are going to point out what is wrong with what is going on and that is what it's all about...we are all activist (12, 21-23).

Likewise, Granny G commented,

I would say that they were a protest group who took issues of a social concern to the streets or to protests. They [the Raging Grannies] are not extremely radical. Not any anarchists in the Raging Grannies (Granny G, 10: 12-16).

Granny A stated well the values the Raging Grannies shared:

It is a group of older ladies who care passionately about society, want to see injustices corrected wherever possible and are quite willing to make their point out in public and we don't care if we look ridiculous but we would like you to listen and would like to get out there and be part of life so that people will listen (Granny A, 25: 557-561).

Granny D not only defined the Raging Grannies as an activist group but also made reference to the use of humour as a tool of protest used by the Grannies:

A group of activist women, strong activist women who like to laugh their way to justice. There is an overriding commitment to justice but yet there is a recognition of laughter and humour. A very loose collection of very diverse women, um, who share a commitment to justice and a commitment to play but are really an eclectic mix of personalities. As I said committed to public education and justice issues but doing it in a way that grabs people's attention and is a little different (Granny D, 4: 75-80).

One common characteristic of the Raging Grannies is that to be a member of the group you have to be female and “old” or at least be grandmother age (Granny L, 3: 65). Some Gaggles do place age restrictions - for example to be a member of one particular Gagle you must be at least 55 years old. The rationale for this was that being older brings life experience that younger women do not yet have. However, one does not need to be a grandmother in order to join the Raging Grannies. Regardless, Granny J mentioned more than once that having the “spirit” of the Grannies was more important than age and being a grandmother. When asked who the Raging Grannies are, she stated:

I think perhaps older women and they don't have to be old and they don't have to be a granny and there isn't an age limit as long as you feel the spirit of the Grannies and I would say women who have experienced life and decided that there is some activism needed and that there is a gap perhaps of something being done and women who have a social conscience and they don't care so much anymore about how we look. They don't care about constraints, conventions or even maybe looking silly or you know, people not paying attention. They are ready to be out there (Granny L, 6: 122-132).

Although some Gaggles are asked to “perform” at events it was made clear to me that they were not entertainers. Granny J states:

We are a protest group made up of older women who are interested in social issues and social causes and we perform wherever we are asked to perform **but** we shouldn't be classified as entertainment (Granny J, 4: 84-87).

Granny L also made a similar statement:

The Raging Grannies are definitely an activist group. We take great pains that we are not an entertainment. We would not ask us to come and sing at your conventions. We are definitely an activist group. We all use the word raging - it means we are angry about

something, angry enough to do something about something (Granny L, 9: 83-86).

Granny I also stressed that the Grannies were not entertainers:

We shouldn't be classified as entertainment and there have been times when we have been asked to do things that isn't about any issue and we have not felt good about it, so we came to the conclusion, this was in the early day, that we discovered this really wasn't the best idea for us (Granny I, 11: 245-247).

As previously mentioned, other researchers who conducted studies on the Raging Grannies defined the Grannies as feminists (Hill, 2000; Narushima, 2004; Roy, 2004). During the interviews, many of the Grannies would also define the Raging Grannies as feminists: I am sure society would say we are feminists and I don't know why we wouldn't say it too (Granny G, 3: 70). Granny E also made reference to the Grannies as being a group of feminists. She stated, RG are opinionated activists, in-your-face feminists (3: 96-97). Similarly, Granny D stated Strong women who want to fight for equity or justice...isn't that what feminism is? (11: 121-122).

As previously stated in the literature review, the Raging Grannies do not have one political stance but work on a variety of social issues.

Although most Gaggles would argue that peace is an important issue, some Grannies did mention that some Gaggles regard some issues to be more important than others. For example, Granny L stated:

We are interested in so many [social issues] such as poverty, environment, war and peace. Interestingly enough racism has never come up as a major issue. There's housing, health - take a pin and stick into anything and it's there (Granny L, 15: 322-334)

On the other hand, racism or Native rights issues as well as gay rights, the environment, poverty, union rights, and women's rights were major issues for one of the Gaggles. Little, however, was discussed about social issues pertaining to the elderly except by Granny H who went into great length discussing the importance of elder abuse. Granny H was very much involved in helping the public become aware of this issue. She was so passionate about this issue that because of the lack of interest from the Grannies she is willing to leave the Grannies to promote her cause:

Ah, I am so strong on this elder abuse issue that if they [the Raging Grannies] don't start listening to what I am trying to get across then I am going to leave and go my own direction (Granny H, 11: 320-324).

One criticism in particular that Granny H had of the Raging Grannies was their lack of interest in ageism and other social problems faced by the older population. She made this comment:

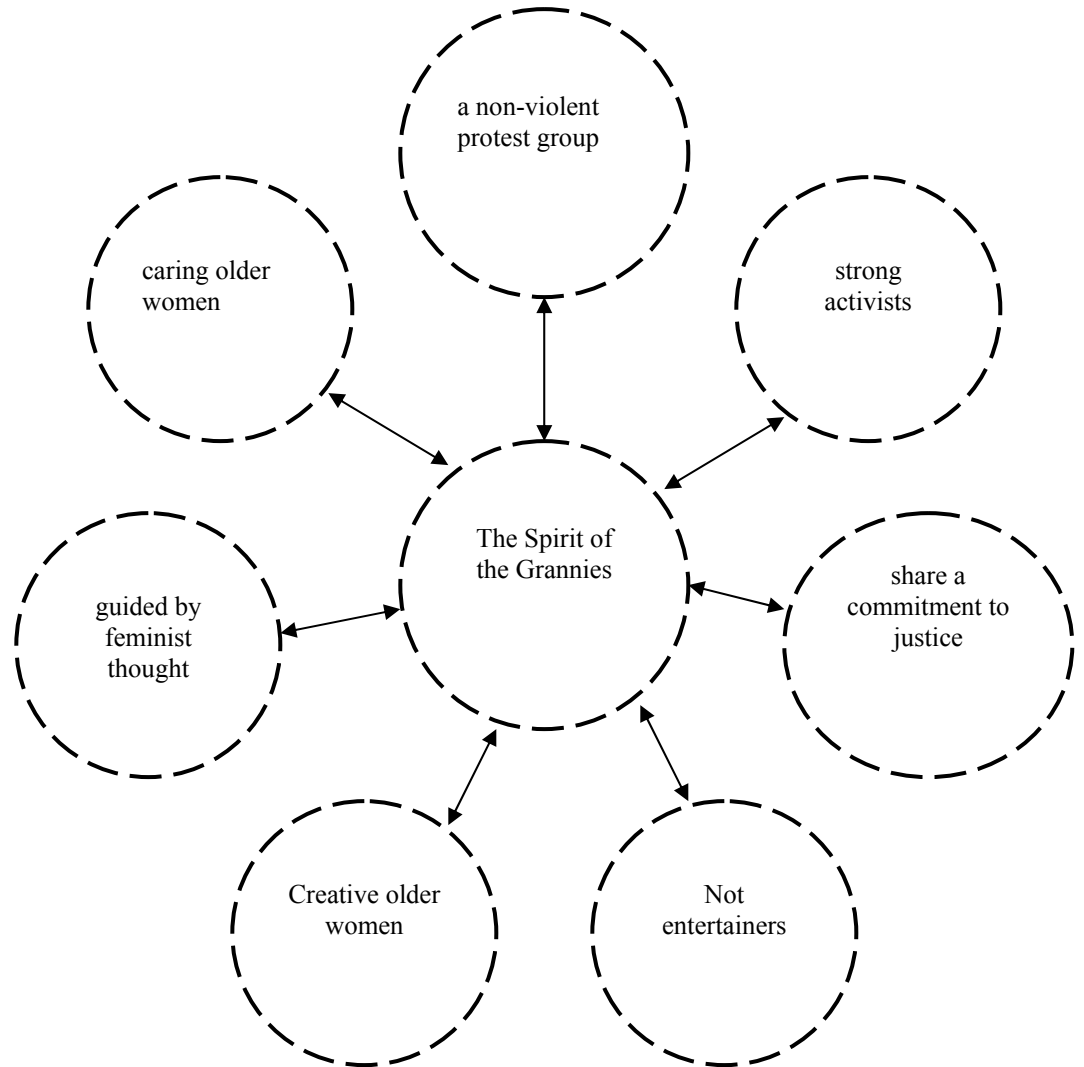
I am reaching out to the Raging Grannies personally from myself about our own health needs when we get older and trying to get them on that bandwagon. We are going to lose ourselves if we don't support our own community of older adults. Only the children are being promoted [by the Grannies] and they [the Grannies] are neglecting the people who brought them [the children] into the world in the first place (Granny H, 3: 94-96).

Interestingly, Granny H felt that one reason the Grannies did not comprehensively delve into ageism is because her generation was socialized not to speak up for themselves, but for "others."

The following figure (Figure 1: The Spirit of the Grannies) is a summary of how the participants, who took part in the interviews, defined the Raging

Grannies. The terms within the circles are the exact words used by the participants to define the Raging Grannies.

Figure 1: The Spirit of the Grannies



How Others View the Raging Grannies

During the interviews, when I asked the Grannies how they thought others viewed what they were doing many of the women began discussing how their families, especially their spouses, accepted their involvement in the Raging Grannies. Granny N went into detail on how her son approved heartily, fully heartily (15: 334). Granny A, however, mentioned that one reason her friends accept her involvement in the Raging Grannies - though do not participate themselves - was because they are like-minded people. She made the following statement regarding her family:

I will just say it is amusing my children and they don't mind a bit. They are the sort of "Oh mom's off again" you know, (laughter) and the grandchildren think it's priceless that I put on a funny hat and go and sing for a day, but to this point there has been no embarrassment no, "Oh Grammie don't do it" maybe when they are adolescents they'll change, maybe (laughter) (Granny A, 2: 33-37).

Granny D's family is also accepting:

I don't think anybody thinks it's particularly out of character or surprised by it and I think they see that I am having fun and they are happy with that. (Granny D, 18: 384-385).

When discussing how their husbands viewed their involvement in the Raging Grannies, there appeared to be a reversal of traditional gender roles in that husbands fully supported their wives' activism. Granny J remarked that some husbands attend the demonstrations but

They very much stayed in the background but they were also very supportive and you could see by their faces that they were also very proud in the activities of the lives that their wives were involved in (Granny J, 18: 316-317).

Some husbands assist with preparing food, provide transportation, and even help with making banners, costumes, and so on. Although husbands may not be permitted to join, some of the Grannies mentioned that their husbands remain outgoing, very supportive, and are not likely to be embarrassed by their wives doing something like this (Granny N, 9: 188). Likewise, Granny L stated:

My husband happens to be an extremely open-minded man. We don't necessarily share the same ideas. He isn't an activist like me. I say, "okay I'm going on a demonstration and I've left supper in the fridge" and he'll say, "okay dear I'll see you when you get back." People have said to me, Doesn't your husband mind? I can't imagine my husband minding, and we've been married for 55 years. I can't imagine being married to a man who would mind (Granny L, 5: 102-113).

Granny A also explained just how supportive her husband was by stating that:

He is perfectly happy for me to go off and be a Raging Granny. If I had gotten arrested I am sure he would come and bail me out, he wouldn't take it too seriously...he wouldn't disown me (Granny A, 18: 408-410)

Besides discussions on how family viewed their involvement, the Grannies also discussed how they thought the general public viewed them. Granny H thought that perhaps some people only viewed the Grannies as ladies with silly hats on (6: 257). Granny A thought that perhaps some people were uncomfortable with the image of the Raging Grannies. To illustrate her point, she described one occasion where her Gaggle sang at the local farmer's market:

At the farmer's market oh we had a lovely description from a small boy there. We were singing not actually in the market but outside and a small boy said, "Who are these people mummy?" and mummy obviously didn't know about the Raging Grannies and she said, "Oh I think that they are just ladies who like to wear funny hats dear" and walked on. Now she was clearly embarrassed by us. She didn't want to know what we were doing, she didn't like our image, she didn't like us making fun of being old, and she was clearly uncomfortable with us. She didn't stop to say, "so what are you about anyway?" even after her child's question. (Granny A, 26: 580-589).

Granny G also spoke of a demonstration where some individuals were uncomfortable with the Raging Grannies and thought their image was silly:

Oh some people are pissed off but most people think we are sort of endearing. I mean some people think it's a silly thing to do. I remember we were singing about the Gay Pride Week which the mayor wouldn't proclaim and we were protesting. I think that did something, mostly for the gay community that we joined in their protest. It's a shame that he was known across town as the mayor who wouldn't proclaim Gay Pride Week. Anyway when we had sung he said to us, "why aren't you at home looking after your grandchildren?" So I think that there are people who think of the grannies in that way but we don't meet them that often. But mostly I don't think people see us as a threat but just something a little bit, well you know, but somewhere between bag ladies and buskers, not really a threat (Granny G, 9: 178-192).

Interestingly, despite the fact that Granny G did not think the Grannies were seen as a threat to the general public, she did mention that perhaps the government saw the Grannies as a threat (see Appendix K of a humorous cartoon on the Grannies as a "threat"), and that it would not be surprising if the they were on government lists, as she explained:

I'm sure that they [the Raging Grannies] are on the CSIS list along with the Quakers, Voice of Women, Unitarian Fellowship Social Outreach Committees...all these wicked people (laughter). But they are all there, you can phone and get the list or e-mail to see if the Grannies are a threat - well in as much as those other groups are threats (Granny G, 19: 437-446).

Granny I also discussed how she thought the public viewed the Raging Grannies and discussed how they receive support from those groups who invite the Grannies to demonstrations, but the passers-by appear uncertain how to respond:

I think we are tolerated by the public when we are seen outdoors and people just happen to wander by us rallying...the people that rally they know that we are on their side and they come to support us but around this fringe of supporters we notice this casual passer-by and it's interesting to watch their faces and get just a few boos. (Granny I, 9: 197-201)

Granny J described an incident where the Grannies "crashed" an event to which they were not invited. The audience cheered the Grannies, but the organizers of the event were far from pleased. This demonstrates that this method of protest (crashing events) has been successful for these women. Getting their point across to the public is considered more important to the Grannies than how some people may perceive them. Granny J explains:

We crashed an all political candidates' meeting and we had written a song, a wonderful song, not trashing, but satirizing each of the candidates and I think that there were actually five, there was the Green Party, besides the Tories, and Liberals and NDP. The event was sponsored by students and they were very serious about it, these political science students. At first, we debated on whether to notify them but we decided no, this is a show up event. So we were all dressed with hats and walked in and up on the stage and the audience just went wild and clapped. The boys and men, young men, were really unhappy and they tried to hustle us off the stage and to stop us from singing or by standing in front of us saying, "no you can't do this." It was really quite funny. We completely ignored them and we sang four songs, and the audience just clapped and stomped and it was a great incentive to hang in there. Finally, they had to let us go. We were only there for about five or six minutes in front of the big group and that was an impromptu thing that I think, was quite worthwhile. It wasn't earth shattering but our message essentially was out there (Granny J, 17: 369-387).

On the other hand, many of the Grannies spoke about how the public was supportive of the Grannies, especially at events or demonstrations being conducted by another protest group. Granny L discussed how the public was supportive but also mentioned that perhaps people in positions of authorities distrusted them:

They [the public] love us except for people like the RCMP, they are all sure we are terrorist in disguise. I wrote a letter to the Prime Minister saying "I am not a secret terrorist. I am an old woman who objects to those things you are doing." Most people either like us or don't (Granny L, 26: 96-99).

Tools of Protest

Although some Grannies may engage in civil disobedience – and some have even been arrested - they do not subscribe to violence. Instead, they use satirical songs with political phrases as their main tool of protest. Granny A states:

I've always enjoyed using words to try to make an effect and one of the things I like about being a Raging Granny is that you can suggest solutions in the words you are using (Granny A, 3: 61-65).

The Raging Grannies are not the first group to use song as a protest method. Folk music of the 1960s was also used to make statement against the Vietnam War. Regardless, the use of satirical lyricism has proven to be a useful mechanism for the Grannies.

Besides satirical songs (see Appendix L for examples of songs by the Raging Grannies), another main tool of protest the Grannies use is costume. The Raging Grannies are also not the first group to use costume in this manner. The Guerrilla Girls, a younger feminist protest group, also use costume as well as humour (especially satire) as their method of protest.

At first glance, one may argue that the Raging Grannies, with their hats, shawls, long skirts, and aprons are reinforcing traditional stereotypes of older women (see Appendix M for humorous cartoon). The women I interviewed, however, did not feel they were reinforcing stereotypes, and that dressing in this manner is actually effective in both getting their message out, as well as forcing the public to confront old age. Granny F made the following comment when asked if their image reinforces traditional stereotypes:

I don't think anyone has a stereotype of a granny looking like a Raging Granny. No, you deconstruct the stereotype when you do that. I don't think anyone sees us as grandmothers, or the grandmotherly type. Reinforcing the stereotype is not what we are doing, it's not what we look like. I find there isn't a lot out there for older women like me and older women are invisible in this culture and to put on weird costumes and sing as a older woman is quite strange and disruptive. We get looks because we are old, we are putting age out there. (Granny F, 6: 173-181)

Similarly, Granny I felt their image was not reinforcing a stereotype:

Oh, I don't think so. No, in fact it's almost breaking the stereotype. I mean are these older women sitting on the shelf? I don't think so. I think that is part of the reason why it's fun, we are changing the idea of what an older women should be (Granny I, 13: 282-285).

Granny D shared similar sentiments:

Of grannies? No I don't think so because I think, if anything they shatter it because you might see that. But I think the hats are so outrageous that it's not what a real granny would wear somewhere and I think as soon as you start hearing the songs and see we are getting off of our fannies I think if anything, it flips around the stereotype of older women. Not every older woman is sitting in a rocker with a shawl (Granny D, 9: 192-199)

Granny N also did not feel the Grannies were reinforcing stereotypes because older women of today have moved away from the traditional image:

No. I mean it's not a stereotype because most older women are not timid because I think it's the crone, the old crone and the fact that you can do it in society and get away with it. It's just a clown outfit. It's been so long since older women have dressed that way you know. Women in their seventies and eighties are now wearing track suits and you know, half of them never wear a skirt, I suppose maybe once a year. It's an old leftover (Granny N, 13: 284-290).

Granny G's statement echoed the same sentiment:

Um, no because it's a stereotype of the past. If you wanted to be stereotypical now, you would wear stretch pants and sneakers and a little necklace. I don't know, I am trying to think of people in old age homes. I don't think we dress like grannies on old Christmas cards or something except a clown's version of it who wears a shawl. Who wears a shawl today? Kids wear shawls now, teenagers and young women. I don't think it's a stereotype (Granny G, 9: 196-202).

Many of the Grannies remarked that they were deliberately making fun of the stereotype of traditional older women in order to draw attention to their message. Granny N stated:

It's a good way to get attention because if you go out dressed like that you get more attention than just walking on the street with just a placard. Looking silly pays off (Granny N, 13: 296-298).

Granny C made the following comment about drawing attention to themselves in this manner:

Oh yes let me say, there is some ham in all of us. We don't care, we want to get the message out when we are protesting. We are certainly more visible when we dress up, aren't we? So all that is a good thing (Granny C, 14: 313-317).

Likewise, Granny A said:

We want to draw attention to ourselves. We deliberately mock being old and we are quite happy to do this. I think we are picking on that image and saying yes, we are here, we exist and we wish to make a powerful statement. But we probably do upset some women who perhaps dress in the more conventional fashion with the hats and suits and things, we are mocking. There could also be powerful ladies whose opinions you respect and it could be that we are upsetting them, I don't know. But I think it's quite possible. But why do we do it? Simply for that reason, people notice us, because we wish to make a point and it makes it harder for other people to make fun of us because we have already done it (Granny A, 26: 585-596).

Costumes, like other group uniforms, can help create a sense of solidarity among the women thus providing the courage to protest as a group (see Appendix N of photos of the Grannies' costumes). Moreover, similar to actresses on a stage, dressing in costumes offers the Grannies a new persona to "hide" behind making it more comfortable to express themselves. As Granny A explained:

I am trying to think of how else we could make the point. I mean we could wear our PhD gowns because they are just as easy to mock as the Raging Granny outfit. All that medieval flamboyance it's ridiculous, right? And it makes a gesture of solidarity and there is also a certain bit of anonymity in dressing up don't you think? I wonder if that is part of it? I mean soldiers wear uniforms right? Is having a uniform an expression of solidarity and also I am here as part of a group? Now, would I do it if I were going by myself? I am not sure that I would actually. I think that it provides some courage and solidarity of going together as a group. I would be perfectly happy without wearing the Raging Granny outfit. That wouldn't bother me a bit. If I were going for me, I would probably go without it, now that is interesting, I was sure that I would still go but I wouldn't go as a Raging Granny, not if it were just me. Perhaps I am only willing to make a fool of myself if there are people knowing I am doing it on purpose. I think it may be as simple as that you know (Granny A, 12: 269-277).

Granny D also felt that dressing in costumes provided some level of confidence:

When I put that damn hat on, I don't give a hoot about what people think. So there is a kind of protection and I have heard actors say that before, that there is something about assuming this persona. But it's not acting in the same way because it so part of who I am, it's not a role that is not me. I am not really a shy person but I couldn't do it without the dress. If I put on my hat on I am fine. I am still not sure I could do it individually (Granny D, 12: 257-264)

Summary

The majority of the Grannies I interviewed were Caucasian, English speaking, heterosexual, well educated, retired, feminists, and middle-upper class. Many had a prior interest in music, wrote poetry, or had an interest in theatre, therefore enabling them to use their creativity within the group.

Although, the word “Grannies” is used for the group name, not all of the women I interviewed were grandmothers and although some Gaggles did have age restrictions, others did not. Granny D stated that it’s attitude not age and one’s commitment to public education and justice issues (9: 177). On the other hand, Granny H felt that it was important to have only older women as members of the Grannies because “older women have more wisdom than younger women (9: 353). Although some of the Grannies made reference to their social class (which will be discussed later in the thesis) it was clear, before even beginning the interview, that these women were from the middle-upper class and well-educated. Because of their social class they have many advantages such as the time, status within their town, economic, education, and support that is needed to be involved in activism, as Granny J stated: The Raging Grannies is a privilege activity because they are middle-class, well educated, and they usually work on their own turf. But we are tolerated because of our class (Granny J, 17: 390).

They do not, therefore, have the social class roots typical of the labour protests of early social movements. Moreover, the Raging Grannies defined themselves as older activists who are involved in a collective effort to promote

social change; their age and life experience being crucial launching points which are necessary for the group's success. One thing is for certain, the Grannies are not simply entertainers. As with other social groups, the Raging Grannies are made up of women with similar norms, values, and expectations who gather to accomplish certain goals.

The Grannies spoke about friends and family in a mostly positive way, but as some Grannies mentioned, their families did not consider their behaviour within the group to be out of character. Many Grannies were grateful to have received the support of their spouses, and one Granny even mentioned that she would be unable to continue without her husband's support. Some members of the public may view the Grannies with skepticism, but any group who promotes social change will certainly arouse some level of opposition.

The Grannies use non-violent tools of protest. Their costumes, cheeky songs, and street theatre are all effective in drawing people's attention to their "rage". Their costumes can also provide opportunity to alter the image of traditional older women by making fun of the stereotype. Granny K stated that it's all tongue in cheek but effective in getting the message out (2: 10). The Raging Grannies is also a vehicle for allowing the women to express their creative side. Costumes, which allow the Grannies to express their creative side, are also effective in hiding their aging bodies while still allowing them to address issues concerning older women – as older women. We will now move on to the discussion of the process of involvement in the Raging Grannies.

CHAPTER FIVE
PROCESS OF INVOLVEMENT: BEGINNINGS, EXPERIENCES, AND
SINGING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

Protest, Protest,
That's what Grannies do
When things are wrong, we write a song,
And send it out to you

Justice, fairness
Equality for all

Now don't you hope there'll come a time
When people hear the call.

(SONG : "Protest, Protest", Tune: Swimming, Swimming, In the Swimming Hole, Carolyn Campbell Collection, Wolfville Gaggle, 2005)

Stereotypical images and assumptions about older women can include the sweet grandmother baking cookies for her grandchildren - older women as weak, quiet, non-political, pleasing, family-oriented, or playing lawn bowling or tennis - certainly not being arrested for civil disobedience at a demonstration (which has happened to some Grannies). So what motivates older women to join a protest group such as the Raging Grannies? To begin with, the Grannies are not your stereotypical older women as described above and as the chapter will examine, some of these women were always activists and joined the Raging Grannies as one way of expressing their strong dissatisfaction with injustices. The chapter will also examine how these older women do make a difference through their involvement in the Raging Grannies.

Involvement in Activism: Beginnings

During the interviews, I asked the Grannies to describe how they became involved with the Raging Grannies, and many of the women would begin their stories with how they initially became involved in activism. As mentioned in the previous chapter several of the Grannies were involved in feminist issues that influenced their activism prior to joining the Raging Grannies. For example, Granny F was influenced by the feminist movement following the break-up of her marriage and eventually organized women's groups, as she explained:

I started to listen [to feminism] and I started a women's group, one of the earlier ones in Montreal and we met probably for three years about social issues and that is how I became exposed to injustices. I moved to {name of city} in 1975 and there were little pockets of feminism but nothing, no women's centre, no women's newspaper, no women's study program so I started a group here and I went to the University here. I graduated from [name of university] then went on to [name of university] and in that time both universities had a gender studies program and people were becoming more political around the issues of women. Later I joined the Voices of Women, probably the oldest and longest surviving women's group in Canada (Granny F, 1: 15-27).

Granny H is another example of being involved in women's issues prior to joining the Raging Grannies and becoming particularly aware of gender inequalities when she was employed in the workforce, as she explained:

In the workforce when the men get a raise, we don't and I had a fellow employee he was bumped up another level and I had to stay put. We did the same thing, but he was bumped up because he had a family to support and they were a very demanding family but fairness is fairness and this is the glass ceiling everyone was talking about. They would just redo his classification. So inspiration kicks in (Granny H, 4: 151-158).

Further, Granny H went on to explain the injustices she saw while working in nursing homes also led to activism in ageist issues, especially elder abuse.

Many of the Grannies also discussed always being aware of societal injustices, even in childhood. Although Granny D was involved in feminist issues, she had been aware of social injustices as a child:

My mom used to tell me that I would make her hair curl....I think there has always been something about a sense of fairness and justice and something in a very bizarre sort of way about privilege and how privilege can be misuse. So I think there was always this sort of fairness and justice and I think I have always been kind of fiery in my passions whatever they happen to be (Granny D, 5: 105-108).

Granny E also made reference to this sense of awareness of injustices, even as a child:

I was always aware of injustices even as a child. I was always aware that things were not right. I was even aware of the inequalities between the genders. I was always a rebel inside (Granny E, 1: 34-42).

Granny N was introduced to activism through her son, who was involved in university politics, but was also conscious of injustices, as she states: I just liked the idea of social justice and I am very offended by injustice (Granny N, 2: 36-37).

As mentioned in the previous chapter, some of the Grannies became involved in activism later because they were occupied with family life when younger but they were still sensitive to inequalities. Granny A went into detail explaining how she was too occupied with raising children to become involved in activism but she also had this sense of awareness of injustices, as she explains:

I had not been an activist until very late in life because I was bringing up kids and [my husband] was doing field work at the time so I was bringing up kids by myself and I think that is another thing that made me more aware that I need to do something. Due to the nature of his job, he could be off for six months at a time, so I was bringing up the children right and I had to face the issues. When they say why does that man want money on the street and that sort of thing so I think that is part of it. I became more independent through having to spend quite a lot of time on my own. Oh but there was no way of being an activist. I just got crosser and crosser about the white people's treatment of Aboriginals and the subordination of woman but there was no voice for me (Granny A, 1: 12-24).

Granny A, however, found her activist voice when she started to teach in university and credits her involvement with students and being part of a university community for her involvement in activism:

But when I went back to university, I was, ahh it was (19)52 when I got my PhD (laughter). And I began to teach and I was concerned that students weren't necessarily aware of what the problems were and that a noise needed to be made. I met some who were a real pleasure to work with. And that is one of the things that has motivated me, seeing the problems and wanting to do something about them and meeting some exciting people both at the student level and at the university community level who wanted to do something about it so that is what brought me into the activist role. I think it was returning to life outside of the family after the children had grown up (Granny A, 19: 427-440).

Granny J also spoke of also being too occupied with raising children to become involved in activism yet she was involved in a woman's group. In addition, she credits feminist Betty Freidan for motivating her involvement in activism, she explains her story:

When I married in [name of county] and had four little children I wasn't much of an activist except for on my own behalf but we did meet as a women's group. I remember early on in the early 60s I remember reading Betty Freidan's "The Feminine Mystique" sort of not too long after she wrote it in the late sixties and thinking, "Oh I love you, you are writing about my life trying to be the wife, the mother, the educator" you know on and on, the worker and, mother and wife the only roles...I really identified with the feminist movement in a way. I feel like I have been an activist in one way or another all my life but not always on the front lines (Granny J, 3: 66-75).

Many of the Grannies were also involved in other organizations that may have helped shape their values before their membership in the Raging Grannies. Many of the women were members of the feminist organization, Voice of Women (VOW); some participated in community activities such as homeless shelters; and others were members of organizations that were anti-war such as the Unitarian Fellowship and the Quakers. Each Granny, therefore, brought her own social issues and values into the group and perhaps used the Raging Grannies as another vehicle to advance their social causes.

Becoming Involved in the Raging Grannies

Once the Grannies shared their stories of how they became involved in activism, they then proceeded to tell me how they first became involved with the Raging Grannies. For some of the women it was through their involvement in a feminist organization. For example, Granny G heard about the Raging

Grannies through her involvement with the Voice of Women (VOW) where she met some Grannies at a Voice of Women (VOW) meeting:

I am a long-time member of Voice of Women, so that is probably how I came into the Grannies was from the Voice of Women. The Grannies were an offshoot of it. I remember I met some at a Voice for Women meeting in 1990 (Granny G, 1: 17-19).

Granny J shared a similar experience as Granny G:

Well I knew a number of women through the Canadian Voice of Women that were thinking about it and I just thought it would be fun and I knew the friendships would be fun and I have always admired. I have seen the Grannies at lots of events and I have always admired their pizzazz and you know. It just seems time, a good time (Granny J, 4: 81-85).

Granny D also knew of the Raging Grannies through feminism but actually joining the group was a gift to herself for completing her PhD:

Oh, golly, it seems like I have always known about them. You can't really be a feminist in Canada I don't think and not know about the Raging Grannies so it would have been through the women's movement in some way. Joining the Raging Grannies was actually my graduation present to myself. (Granny D, 3: 47-50).

Granny H was introduced to the Raging Grannies at a women's conference and decided that this was the group she would be interested in joining:

Well, when I was working with the government here in [name of city] and they came out to one of our conferences, the Women's Caucus and I said yes when I get older, this is what I want to do, so this was the thing that I did when I retired. (Granny H, 2: 44-47).

Granny H further stated that the satirical songs and costumes were what caught her attention because of her interest in music and theatre.

Granny N was also introduced to the Raging Grannies through an organization that expressed similar values as the Grannies:

Through the Unitarian congregation that I joined. I am not a member but I hang around because I like the people. We rented a bus and went to [name of city] in 2001 in April - the NAFTA free trade thing and that is where we met. We were made honorary Raging Grannies for the weekend so that we could dress up and you get much further that way. So anyway we were sort of invited to join after that (Granny N, 1: 17-28).

Some Grannies were introduced to the Raging Grannies through a friend but once again one of the appeals of the group was the singing and/or street theatre, for example:

Well, I was with Granny L and we had known about the Raging Grannies and we are very keen on singing. Granny L and I have been friends for ages and ages (Granny I, 1: 17-21).

Likewise, Granny G, who defined herself as an artist, not only became involved with the Grannies because of the activism but also the creativity of the Grannies, as she remarked : I suppose my interest is more from an art point of view with the Grannies (Granny G, 19: 421-422). Granny A, who is a professor and enjoys teaching, had similar thoughts:

And because they use words and they use gestures, the kind of things that somebody who really likes teaching comes naturally to me, that I enjoy. So I think that was partially it and plus that there were things that wanted saying right and this was the best place for me to say them (25: 558-561).

Experience of Being Involved

Once the Grannies told their stories about how they became involved in the Raging Grannies, I asked them to describe what it was like being involved with the Raging Grannies. Although there is a serious side to their activism,

there is also a lighter but significant side to being involved with the Raging Grannies. Many of the Grannies at this point also showed me the hats and costumes they had made, songs they had written, and even the many press pictures that they collected. It was obvious many of the women received great enjoyment being involved because they often used terms such as “fun”, “enjoyable”, “it’s great” while showing me their creations, as Granny C stated while showing me her collection: we protest and we write our own songs, of course that is the fun of it (Granny C, 11: 233-234). Similarly, Granny L stated: Doing something, doing something that is fun - .being out there and raising hell and just being out there - it’s fun (Granny L, 25: 57-58).

Granny I, who also referred to the Grannies as being fun also discussed the other benefits of being involved:

There is something about putting on the hat and shawl and apron and seeing the expectant faces in the audience and when you start to sing, the energy is quite amazing. The best fun is when we are rehearsing and Granny F presents us with a new song and she is so good with changing words. If people think that it doesn’t stand the right way or even if it’s off topic a bit and it could be a little more precise she is great about letting us edit and it can get very funny, it can get hilarious and I come back from these rehearsals thinking this is just the best group ever. I mean I belong to a lot of other groups too but I really cherish the good times I have with Grannies and every now and then we get together for a potluck as a chance to get together and have a good feed and that is great fun too. It also keeps me young, keeps me active. There certainly are benefits aside from doing our little protests (7: 146-157).

Other Grannies discussed the importance of being involved with the Raging Grannies, as Granny E stated: my involvement in the RG is very important and is a basic like taking a shower (2: 61-63). Further, not only was it

fun being involved, Granny A also indicated that being involved was important to her sense of self and it gave her a voice:

It's fun shaking people! Fairly enjoyable, perhaps it shouldn't be so enjoyable, although it's fun (20: 454). It's an important part of who I am, who I was and who I want to be. So I would say that it is I think that it is very important for me. I don't think I ever had a voice until I came here. I feel a freedom with the Raging Grannies to do anything that is me and that is marvellous, right? (13: 294-301).

Many of the Grannies spoke about their feelings of what it was like being involved with a group of women and how that involvement impacted them.

Although this will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter the following are examples of what it is like being involved with women:

Activism is more fun with women (Granny J, 16: 360). It's interesting and lively and motivating and I think there is a really nice feeling of comradeship between us. The comradeship and the idea of the local action is very satisfying. It inspires me. They are so strong and they have such power and will to continue which energizes me (Granny J, 12: 264-269).

Granny D also shared similar sentiments with Granny J:

It's fun but I would say it's pretty significant for me to say yeah. I would say it's important and it's probably growing in importance. And maybe because it's the all women's space other than some friend. It is the only all- women's activist place that I have and it's starting to rekindle stuff that is important for me. The feeling of belonging to something bigger than oneself. It's rewarding, it's energizing, it's affirming (Granny D, 17: 357-366).

Finally, Granny G also expressed how important being involved with a group of women in activism is:

Well, I like their social criticism I suppose of society and I like doing things with women and being in a women's group, a feminist woman's group which the Grannies is (4: 69-71).

Later she noted:

The Grannies is an opportunity to be my weird self. I can't talk about what I found in the universe in many places. Not that I couldn't do it but nobody would hear it. The Grannies give you a chance to be seen - there are other places as well. I mean just as the commons for the Grannies is disappearing, the commons for ideas is disappearing (19: 422-426).

Interestingly, Granny N, who was still employed, was one of the few Grannies who did refer to her involvement with the Grannies as a hobby and how she described her involvement with the Grannies was similar to how a few leisure academics would describe the characteristics of some leisure activity:

It's not expensive. It's a good time. I find it quite interesting and the people are great and you get an evening, like an evening's entertainment at no cost. It's a club without any fees which is nice, you know it's good exercise you know you are marching. It's really, really improved my life and it's very energizing because you have things that you can be mad about that are legitimate instead of just passively waiting until you die. It is a lot of fun (Granny N, 14: 305-320).

Making a Difference

For various reasons many social movements are unsuccessful in accomplishing their goals but many, as with the Raging Grannies, do make some difference in the lives of others and even in their own lives.

Yet some Grannies did discuss a difference between a gig (being invited to sing at an organized event) and a public demonstration. At a gig some of the Grannies felt they were already singing to those who supported them and thus perhaps little difference was being made. As Granny F stated:

We are usually singing to the converted most of the time. I think this year I want to get to do some more street singing, mostly demonstrating. We want to go to the mall and talk with consumers, there we won't be popular. You're not supposed to be popular when your protesting you're not supposed to be (4: 110-113).

Some Grannies during the interviews questioned the benefits of playing at gigs since the audience was already supportive of their beliefs:

We are always deciding whether to do it more spontaneously or do it by request. The people that often request us are already the converted (Granny J, 5: 95-97).

Granny A also shared similar sentiments as Granny F and Granny J:

Ahh, we spend a lot of time singing to the converted, which we are not comfortable about. We went down to the multi-cultural festival and alright so we sang some antiwar songs, we weren't just singing against racial injustices; we sang for them, everybody in that market was singing along, obviously they agreed with us entirely so we made no difference (6: 134-138).

Granny A, however, felt that although the Grannies were already preaching to the converted at gigs, they were still making an important difference in that they became a support network for those who shared similar beliefs:

We make a difference to the extent that the younger ones are delighted to see there are old people who are thinking about these things and some of who agree with them, I think it strengthens their belief that there are things worth fighting for (Granny A, 7: 141-144).

Nonetheless, the Grannies do believe they are making a difference by educating and bringing social issues to light. As Granny F stated: if you're not raising awareness then what are you doing here? (8: 223-224). Likewise, Granny E felt the Grannies were making a difference especially when people approached her to remark the Grannies made them more aware of the issues:

I do think the Raging Grannies make a difference because people come up to me and mention that they know me from the Raging Grannies and that the Raging Grannies have made them think in a different way (Granny E, 2: 74-76).

Granny A had her doubts that they were making a difference with politicians but it was still important to educate people on social issues:

I think it makes a bit of a difference in the fact that it makes other people aware of what is going on but I doubt it has very much of a difference on the politicians. It makes a difference in the awareness that other people have of issues and it gives you the courage to keep on trying to make a point. There are only limited results you can get from demonstrating unless it gets to the point of Tiananmen Square which was a gesture to the world, right? Do we make a difference with the politicians? Possibly not (Granny A, 7: 151-166).

Although the differences may not be immediately apparent, it is still worth the battle, as Granny D states, and there is always the hope that some activism will be beneficial. As Granny D explains with respect to protesting the building of a new Wal-Mart:

I hope it's more than that, um, did we make a difference to women who went to Wal-Mart? I don't know and I mean, I didn't hear it but apparently when the employees came out, one woman said "look at least lady I've got a job." Now I think it's really unfortunate that you fall into the language of the dominant discourse of either you have a low paying job that exploits you and exploits people all over the world or you have no job, those are the options I think that are really problematic but um I don't know. I don't know if any of our work makes a difference and of course it does, we have Henry Morgentaler getting an honorary degree today. But you know the work we did with Granny C, the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League, so you know that made a difference, but if you asked me before when I was involved in all those damn letter writing campaigns, appearing on stupid local TV stations with Right-to-life people bringing out little rubber baby fetus, you know, if you had asked me then if it was making a difference, I am not sure what I would have said. But you know we have legalized abortion now and we have to fight to keep it but we got it, um, so yeah that made a difference, so yeah, I think it's that kind of longer view that makes

me hope we are making a difference. There is hope. I remember another person saying to me once, “it’s like, what choice do you have?” We’ve gotta do it in some way, I mean that is one of the things that was the hardest for me about the six or seven- year hiatus when I was doing my dissertation was that it felt like I wasn’t making any contribution, you know, and I feel like this is a different type of contribution than what I have made before, but we can’t keep quiet. Yeah and so it is a hope and it’s also a sense of I don’t know if it will make a difference but one has to try, one has to do something (Granny D, 19: 398-442).

The Grannies also believed that although the results of their activism were not immediate it was still better to take action than to remain silent. As Granny N explained:

I don’t think that we are accomplishing anything, frankly but we are, what is it Anglican or something “Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable” and that is what we do, we afflict the comfortable and that I enjoy. They are pulling us down, the environment is a disaster and the government is going to do nothing, but at least we are letting them know that we know instead of remaining quiet. Instead of sitting at home feeling bad about it. I am down there saying I know what they are doing and that feels good. I think that it does make a difference. But sometimes I guess, activism does pay off, and often it’s better to do something than to be defeated. If you don’t say anything then you are accepting defeat automatically. Yeah and it’s resistance, it’s what is important I think. You may not be able to do much about it but the resistance keeps your spirits up. If you are not resisting you are a doormat, you are just accepting the finality of it. It doesn’t have to accomplish its goals to be effective for the person, I think it’s effective for a person to be an activist just for the sense of personal power you get and it’s a difference between a teenager at home who is meek and mild and docile to their parents and another one who snaps back at them. One has kept their dignity and one has just succumbed to obedience, and I think that is when the anger turns inward and eats you up inside. So yeah being there is more important than accomplishing nothing (Granny N, 18-19:379-412).

Granny G also felt it was more important to stand up and be counted than to remain silent:

I suppose so [making a difference] yeah I think so. I certainly marched as a teenager in the ban the bomb marches. If you have an opinion on an issue that you feel is important, you should be counted somehow so you have to be visible to be counted. Well, you have a choice of remaining silent and feeling furious or you can be noisy and furious. I mean in a sense any political presence in a society must surely contribute something. You are contributing more than if you were silent but do you mean are we going to change the world? I challenge you, I don't think Mr. Martin is going to do that (Granny G, 11: 165-250).

Some Grannies did remark that being involved in the Raging Grannies was making a difference in their own lives. As Granny D stated: they are making a difference in the lives of women involved...um, and if that's all it was, that would be enough for me (19: 396-397). Granny C made a similar statement but also spoke about the importance of being heard:

Personal gratification and at least they are seeing what we are doing. "Get involved" is what we are saying. Get involved, actions speak louder than words. It is venting. It has its rewards and it is personal satisfaction that we have done something (Granny C, 7: 263-265).

Granny I also spoke about the personal satisfaction she had for making a contribution and also spoke of the importance of having her voice heard:

Well, we are certainly making a difference for us. It's very satisfying. Sometimes it can get rather frustrating when you go in and see things that can't be changed and you think well there is nothing I can do about it but you can go out and join the Grannies and it's certainly helpful for us because otherwise you would be sitting by yourself and fret about it. It relieves the pent-up frustration and I don't think it hurts at all to let the government know that we are watching them and keeping track of what they are and are not doing. We are not living in a perfect world and I guess there will always be ways to improve in terms of social issues, social justice. So what motivates us is a desire to see improvements. Oh yes, it makes more sense than being home alone and sitting back

and saying there is nothing that I can do. I don't think that is a healthy way to deal with issues, giving up (Granny I, 6: 122-144).

Most importantly, many of the Grannies felt that they were speaking (because of their social class position, perhaps) for those who were much less fortunate than themselves, as Granny O stated:

We try to speak for the downtrodden. We are outraged that their voice has been taken and that is where our hearts lie mainly. We sing for the next generation (Granny O, 21: 466-467).

In Summary

As we have seen in this chapter, many of the Raging Grannies were involved in activism or had a sense of awareness of injustices. Many of these women would have been exposed to as well as involved in many of the social movements occurring during their generation such as the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the Feminist Movement of the 60s and 70s, the labour movements, the Gay Right Movements, the Vietnam demonstrations, and university student protests. Grounded in these movements, these women brought their ideological messages, their tactics, skills and insights directly into the activism of the Raging Grannies.

Many of the Grannies joined the Grannies through other organizations, which shared similar beliefs. These women joined the Raging Grannies because it reflected their beliefs and their strong desire to right wrongs and overcome injustices by using the Raging Grannies as a vehicle to do so. Joining the Raging Grannies also gave these women life satisfaction, an opportunity to give back to their community, a voice to express their concerns, and a strong

ideological commitment to the movement. Joining the Grannies also helped them connect with like-minded people.

The Raging Grannies also believed they were making some difference, and that their collective effort could ultimately lead to change, whether it involved changing people's minds through education or encouraging others to work for change. For these women it was important to make a noise, to stand up for what they believed, and to help those who were less fortunate.

The next chapter will be a discussion of how the Raging Grannies has created an older women's community, along with a discussion on whether or not these women view their involvement in this community of activists as leisure.

CHAPTER SIX
COMMUNITY OF GRANNIES: OLDER WOMEN’S COLLECTIVE, NO
GRANDPAS ALLOWED, STRENGTH IN NUMBERS,
AND LEISURE COMMUNITY

We’re just a gaggle of grannies
Urging you off your fannies
We’re telling you boys
We’re sick of your noise
HEAR OUR VOICE

With all the money we’re spending
Food banks still never ending
We’re going for broke
This isn’t a joke
KEEP YOUR WORD

Although it’s not a tradition
It’s time for men to share
Let’s put some women in power
We’ll make a difference there
SO we may be a gaggle of grannies
But we’ve gotten off our fannies
And we’re telling you now
We’re angry and how
HEAR OUR VOICE

(SONG : “Gaggle: Hear our Voice”, Tune: Ain’t Got A Barrel of Money,
Carolyn Campbell Collection, Wolfville Gaggle, 2005.)

The term “community” can mean different things to different people—it may include families, cities, neighbourhoods, interest groups, and experience. Allowing for the different ways one can perceive community, researchers state there are a number of characteristics of community that are experienced by members, such as feelings of solidarity, shared meanings and values, creating identity, and working together for a common goal (Ayers-Counts & Counts,

1992; Brueggemann, 2001; Etzioni, 1998; Putnam,2000). One could argue, therefore, that the Raging Grannies do create a sense of community. The following chapter will examine the Raging Grannies as an older women's community, including the advantages of being a member of this community, and why men are excluded. Further, it will explore if the Raging Grannies define their experience as leisure.

Older Women's Collective

During the interviews, what immediately came to my attention was that it was evident the Grannies had a sense of connection as they always used the word "we" as subject when they spoke about their experiences. Interestingly, the only exception was Granny N, who often used the word "they" when speaking of the Grannies but she also referred to herself as a "part-time Granny" (6: 138). Another indication of this sense of community among the Grannies which I observed (during my pilot study at the "Unconvention" and during interviews) was the mutual respect among the women. The Grannies respect one another and agree to disagree, as Granny B (2: 57) stated. If a Granny does not agree on a particular demonstration, she simply does not participate, without consequences to her membership. Further, there was little hierarchal structure, instead there was collective decision-making and inclusive process, even during the writing of songs. As Granny J explained:

I have been in many, many groups in my life, and this group seems to be very high up on the consensus building... they are very good with consensus building... we will fight and we will disagree and in a very short time one side will give up and say "okay we will do it this way" (Granny J, 176-280).

Granny A shared similar sentiments:

We don't all agree on everything not by a long way (laughter)... there's mutual respect and because this is a splendid bunch of women, even when we profoundly disagree (laughter)... Oh sometimes we simply say "I am not going to demonstrate" (Granny A, 4: 87-92).

Both Granny J and Granny F made similar statements that if one Granny should disagree strongly, she is not forced to participate: you can say, I am not going to turn up because I don't agree with that or it's not my issue or it's wrong...

(Granny F, 19: 435-437). There is still a level of respect even if disagreement arises, as Granny E stated:

The Raging Grannies always respect each other's views even if they may disagree. We all have different focuses but we are all activists (1: 16-18).

The Grannies also spoke about the importance of a social network when working for a common purpose, as Granny I explained:

Oh for me it's being with like-minded people. It's supportive to know that you are not alone crying in the wilderness. I really think that is a really strong factor, an emotional satisfaction that you are meeting with like-minded people (Granny I, 8: 184-187).

Granny N also spoke about the importance of mutual aid:

You need a group. It's useful to have a group and they can accomplish a lot. It's almost like a football game without the football... people are cheerful and laughing and everyone is in it together. You don't know the people beside you - total strangers and you chat away because you are on the same cause. It's like being a fan on the football team. You are all watching it and you are all friends for the moment (Granny N, 9: 203-208).

Many of the Grannies I interviewed also spoke about the importance of having friendships within the group. Friendships also provide encouragement

and a support network. In addition, some Grannies felt that having a social network among older women was particularly important, as Granny A explains:

So having friends to demonstrate with and just having friends who are like-minded people is exciting, is affirming, and it makes you stronger in what you believe in and if it's a cause you haven't heard about, there is someone in the Grannies who will tell you. I think they are a marvellous bunch of women so I think that helps and there's the need for support that all old women should have. There are more widows than widowers right? Older women need their support networks. Older women need to know that there is somebody who will stand by you. Our husbands tend to die before we do and to know that you have a group of women who know you and will stand by you literally until intensive care, palliative care, and will be there for each other is important (Granny A, 6: 79-105).

Granny B also believed in the importance of friendship among older women:

The friendships that form are like a support system for older women - if someone leaves the Grannies, they are always welcome back. The Raging Grannies is a way for older women to band together to fight for a common good (Granny B, 2: 53-54).

Granny N spoke about giving advice to older women who would be interested in joining the Raging Grannies and she said that finding a friend to protest with you would provide encouragement and the incentive to continue, as she explains:

It [activism] is something out of the routine of life and you feel you are at least speaking up for yourself and others. It is very energizing but you need a buddy, you've gotta have a buddy because if you go on a march. It's like getting on a bus with strangers. You are going to the same place but maybe they won't talk to you and you won't have fun that way but you have gotta have someone you can talk into going with you and then you will meet others so you need to get a buddy. Do it on the buddy system (25: 548-555).

Some of the Grannies carried their friendships outside the group and will get together in a social manner. Granny E who spoke about having gatherings

such as potlucks with other Grannies stated that the Grannies are wonderful friends (2: 79) because of the belief that they would support her outside the group. Granny F also remarked, We have a couple of potlucks a year... friendships are a good thing, and we like each other and respect each other (8: 215-217). Interestingly later in the conversation Granny F spoke to me about the academic terms used to describe “friendship” such as “community”, “sisterhood”, and even how the term “family” is used, as she explains:

I don't like the metaphors used, I really don't. I think friendship is a really good term. I feel that I'm friends with all of them [the Grannies]. They're more than acquaintances but I don't like the family analogy. It's quite different. Families don't always work very well, friends you choose (46: 226-29).

Although some Grannies were friends with each other, others were friendly and believed having a support network was important in achieving one's goals. They kept a certain distance from other Grannies in their private lives. Narushima's (2004) research on the Grannies also observed that the socialization among the group was friendly but was also restrained. Forming friendships, however, is not the original goal of the Raging Grannies but banding together with like-minded people in order to achieve a common purpose is what is important for these women.

Granny D discussed how she was not looking to form friendships through the Raging Grannies but does value the camaraderie:

I wouldn't say I was looking to form friendships. I know a few people have come in with close friendships intact. I know that for two of our members that come are good friends. They travel together, they do all kinds of things together. No, I would say that the majority of the women I would not seek out to form intimate friendships with. It becomes a situation where the whole is the sum of its parts. That's the essence of being a Grannie Gaggle but no, I wouldn't say at this point there are close friendships but there is a unity about the group, but yeah, this is part of what I find is really interesting about it, this gel of commitment - a sense of belonging (Granny D, 24: 497-506).

Although the women in Granny L's Gaggle do socialize outside the group, interestingly, she does not feel part of a community. What was important for Granny L was coming together for a cause but not for forming friendships, as she explains:

We have our meetings and they are fine. We don't necessarily have personal relationships with each other. I know maybe because Granny C and I are older we're on the phone every day seeing how each other is but nobody else does. There are some Grannies who occasionally go out for a beer with each other but we do have some social things like they gave me an 80th birthday celebration. We had a get-together, and they took me out to lunch. It was great. When Granny C got married, this is her second marriage, we took her and her new husband to lunch. Many of us will get together for someone's 60th birthday but I don't feel part of a community. I don't feel that way with these Grannies. We don't have a sense of a group (25: 44-53).

No Grandpas Allowed

Although spouses are supportive of their partners' involvement in activism, men are not entitled to become members of the Raging Grannies, and the Grannies prefer to have a women-only group. As Granny H remarked:

Men are always saying to us “I would love to be a Raging Grandpa.” Well why don’t you? But they are not the organizers like the women are, and they will have to wait until the crows wear corsets as far as I am concerned before I am going to give them any help, so they can organize themselves (Granny H, 5: 152-157).

Many of the Grannies thought if men joined, the dynamics would change and men would want to dominate and take over (Granny O, 2: 99) and there are certainly gender differences in organizing, as Granny I explained:

Men discuss in a different way and they interact by taking authority. They don’t have nearly as much empathy for people in the community as women do - they are just used to taking charge (Granny I, 10: 225-228).

Granny B went into detail, as soon as the interview began, as to why the Raging Grannies should remain a women-only group, and that it was only “natural” for women to be organizers.

Women are the ones who should be involved in activism because of their nurturing side. Women have always been doing this kind of work just look at the volunteering in churches and hospitals. So if you want something done ask a woman. Women get things done because as a group we communicate and delegate instead of fighting. A group of women are more powerful than a group of men because they are better at understanding both sides of an issue. If men were involved with the Raging Grannies, they would just take over and would try to dominant the group. Women also have fun together. We can laugh together and laugh at ourselves while men take themselves way too seriously (Granny B, 1: 6-12).

Granny D also went into detail as to why men should not join the Raging Grannies and spoke about the gender differences in organizing:

So let’s just talk about women’s space when men are in it. I think it changes both internally and externally. I mean internally because women as a whole are different when men are around. Traditionally it’s women’s job to reflect men and reflect them back at twice the normal size, and I think no matter how feminist we are, no matter how many consciousness raising groups we went to, no matter how

much we are aware of the process, no matter how much we struggle, we still have internalized that. And we find ourselves doing it and if we do, we find ourselves resisting doing it, which still then changes your behaviour. So I think it's that internal peace and I think then it's the external peace. Men have internalized the opposite of that in the same way. Men have internalized that they somehow have the right to be reflected and they demand that in women's presence and it's not that any of us or any of them are horrible human beings, it's just that we are such a gendered society that it just happens (Granny D, 15: 319-336).

During the interview process, Granny L spoke about how her generation of women grew up with certain values regarding traditional gender roles. It was the men who were to be the leaders and women the followers, only caring for their families. When asked if having men join the Raging Grannies would make a difference, she responded:

Given what I said about women in my generation, can you imagine men in my generation, your father, your uncle, being in a group where he isn't making the decisions and not guiding people? (Granny L, 23: 508-511).

Other Grannies spoke of the freedom of expressing themselves among women that would not be possible if men joined. As Granny A explained:

I think you are speaking to an older feminist here who is used to the idea that in most groups men like to do all the talking. Can you just imagine anyone trying to stop the Raging Grannie's talk? So much of my experience has been with women's groups that for me it is much easier to work with women's groups. I feel comfortable saying things that I don't think I would feel comfortable saying with men but I feel a freedom with the Raging Grannies to say anything that is me and that is marvellous (Granny A, 28: 519-537).

In addition, many of the women spoke of a shared understanding that did not need explanation because they were all women that would not occur if men joined:

One thing that is nice that we are all older we can say I'm tired I just don't have the energy to do it and everyone would understand. Some realities of being older and women that we all appreciate (Granny M, 24: 520-522).

Strength in Numbers

Besides having a social support, collective action, and camaraderie, another area where the Grannies gain their strength is the common social background they share. The Grannies are a privileged group of women who have many advantages to form a social movement. The majority are Caucasian, well-educated, heterosexual, leisured, and middle-class. It takes more than desire and a conviction to begin a social movement; one also needs money, political influence, access to media, and volunteers to call upon. The Grannies would certainly be in the social position to acquire those resources.³³

Many of the Grannies did not deny their privileged status, as Granny F, who is also a retired professor, states:

Certainly being white and middle-class is a big help when protesting. We are not untouchable but we are standoffish. We can maybe get away with more if we wanted but we are respectable in the community especially in this community where it is academic centered (Granny F, 5: 129-132).

Granny G also makes reference to the advantages of social position, especially when the Grannies are protesting in a community where they are well known:

³³ In spite of this, I am certainly not undermining the work of the Raging Grannies nor the early feminists. The achievements of liberal feminism have been very considerable: the vote, access to education and the professions, equality before the law, and some economic equality with men.

I think by and large, the Raging Grannies is a privileged activity. Mostly the Raging Grannies aren't in danger because they are working in cultures and on their own home turf, where their middle-class status and age prevents them from being treated as anything more than a nuisance (Granny G, 3: 46-50).

During the interview, while describing who the Raging Grannies are, Granny L brought up the issue of social position:

We also tend to be middle class, very well educated you know, so we are able to do this. I often feel sorry that we don't have more poor women, less educated working-class women. I guess there are a number of good reasons why they don't join. I don't have to keep working or the Grannies will be looking at retiring and having their pensions and so we don't worry about money. I don't have to worry about like say babysitting my grandchildren so that my daughter can go to her job at Wal-Mart. There's the fact that until recently, it's middle-class people who have been the protestors, it's only fairly recently that working-class people say we have a right (Granny L, 12: 61-70).

Not only did Granny A refer to the advantages of one's social position but also how one's level of education can give you the confidence needed for activism. As Granny A explained:

Having an education sure helps because I think it gives you a level of confidence but I wouldn't generalize entirely about that because I know some marvellous women who've got a grade six but having an education allows one to speak clearly and be a confident and forceful woman. It's a bit like the problem with the feminist movement, it was so dominated by educated women of the traditional English-speaking Canadian caste (Granny A, 12: 217-224).

Many of the Grannies also spoke that being in a university and government community gave them an advantage by being surrounded by like-minded individuals in a political atmosphere. Moreover, all the Grannies I

interviewed lived in a university city, and all the Gaggles in my study were from a capital city with the exception of one town. As Granny E explained:

I am sure there are [advantages] especially in a town like this where they know everybody...there was a police convention in town and the police were around, and I was able to say "Oh Constable X, nice to see you, how is the baby?" (laughter) (Granny E, 6: 123-127).

Granny A also discussed how being from a university and government town has advantages by providing her the motivation to continue in activism because of the support from others like her:

The [name of city] atmosphere has reassured my convictions. [Name of city] has certainly helped me to express myself at the activist level and supports me. It's a comparatively small community, and we all know each other, well it's an exaggeration but you get to know an awful lot of people. I think it has something to do with the universities. Having two universities at the end of your road can only lighten life up a little bit, and the fact that the city is also a seat of government so you can get to the people you want to...it's the right kind of community (Granny A, 3: 438-55).

Granny J also spoke about how being from a university and government town has fuelled her activism because

There is a lot of activism in this little town. This may be associated partially with the university, the government, the Council for Canadians and the NDP. There is quite a hotbed of activism in the town (Granny J, 4: 88-90).

Due to the many advantages discussed above, most of the Grannies did not feel marginalized as older women, in fact, they felt age had its advantages. As Granny L stated:

I keep hearing that but I don't feel it, but so many women say it, especially older women, and I don't think it's true...it's not something that I feel applies to me. I think some of that goes back to our generation of women who are accustomed to being the support (Granny L, 14: 302-305).

Some women did recognize that their social position allowed them to look at age more positively. For example, Granny A felt fortunate to be in a position to allow her to have better health and education. She also claimed there were great advantages in being older and provided this example:

When I go travelling, no one bothers to rob me, "she's an old lady, she won't have money" (laughter). No, no, I don't feel marginalized, I think it's marvellous, being retired and I now have the time to write the letters and all the rest of it (Granny A, 16: 365-367).

Age also gives a group of older women more of an advantage when demonstrating. When describing the advantages of being older, Granny M even remarked that older women as a group are more powerful (Granny M, 2: 60).

What makes these older women more powerful? Some of the Grannies indicated they can get away with more during a protest compared to a younger person, as Granny A remarked:

And it is unlikely that ahh, people would get violent with older women so perhaps in a way we are cheating, you know, having the advantages of protest without the disadvantages (Granny A, 6: 119-121).

Granny F made a similar statement when discussing the advantages of being part of a group of older women:

We are old so why would someone want to gather up a bunch of old women and put them in jail? So I guess in a way it is safer the way we are doing it now than when we were young (Granny F, 5: 127-128).

Granny I also described the advantages of being in a group of older women such as the Raging Grannies:

The beauty of being with the Grannies is that there is safety in numbers. You can be more effective in a group of women than one woman writing letters to the editor or writing petitions. It's being like the next step from the individual is action in a group, and it's something about being older and wearing funny hats that diffuses hostility for the most part. The people you are singing to may not always like the message you are singing but they sort of forgive you because you are old and you look so funny with your hat, it's gestures crossed with humour where there may be hostile actions otherwise (Granny I, 5: 103-111).

Many of the Grannies also spoke about how there is more freedom as an older woman because they no longer have to follow the same societal expectations placed on women. They no longer have the past obligations of family, work, body image, and so on.

There is a certain freedom in being in a group of older women doing things. A lot of the baggage of being younger is gone, so that you don't feel restricted. Older women as a group are more powerful so that is sort of fun (Granny B, 5: 108-111).

Likewise, Granny D, when speaking of the advantages of being with a group of older women, also stated that age is having more freedom to do what one pleases, and being less self-conscious, as she explained:

I think that is one of the things that we forgot when we were younger is that “oh, I am doing this for somebody else I am doing this for the cause.” You know, wait a minute, we are part of that cause too, and it’s important that we look after ourselves as well. So I think that maybe that is a function of age in that somehow we have permission to look after ourselves and to do the things that we wish, and to see the activism in what we do as self nurturing as well. This is where the age factor comes in, where we have worked so hard on so many things that it’s time to have a little bit of fun also. There is also an internal getting away with it. There’s an internal freedom that somehow what people think of you doesn’t matter quite as much anymore (Granny D, 21: 447-458).

Granny L also made an important statement regarding the exceptionality of a group consisting of older women:

The very fact that a group of women in itself is a revolutionary thing because women as groups haven’t done things like individual women who were tremendous like Marion Parent who was the union leader or Emma Goldman. I mean these are extraordinary women but they were individual people but for a group of older women to get together and say “**here we are**” is exceptional (Granny L, 11: 247-251).

Leisure Community

As previously mentioned participation in leisure and recreational settings may provide opportunities for the building of community. Further, some researchers would argue that activism is volunteer work and hence leisure, unless the participants feel coerced (i.e. guilt) and obligated to engage in activism, that they would otherwise not do, in which case the activism cannot be considered leisure (Stebbins, 2002, 2000).

Since many of the Grannies were academics or well educated, I engaged the Raging Grannies in a discussion on the concept of activism as serious leisure. What was made clear to me by many of the Grannies was that they

would not define their setting or their experience as leisure. Interestingly, during the interviews it came to my attention that some of the Grannies were aware of the academic literature and disagreed with it. Granny M, however, did remark that she understood academics would define activism as leisure but she does not consider what she does with the Grannies as leisure but work.

As we engaged in discussion regarding leisure, Granny F remarked that she disagreed with some of the academic literature on leisure. As Granny F explained:

Activism can be a chore, it can be work, it's not play...the getting together is play but the reworking of the songs is a lot of work...that theory [she had previously discussed the concept of serious leisure] is for people who don't actually get paid for the work they do. What would you say about women working at home? Whose idea was it, a man's or a woman's? What volunteering does he do? In any volunteer organizing there is a lot of work that goes into those groups. It's not paid work that's the only difference. You don't get paid for it. Sometimes you get guilt tripped into joining, sometimes you want to serve, you want to do something where you can contribute but it doesn't mean that you're going to enjoy every minute of it because it's still work. When you talk to someone in the work force, I don't know if you'll be doing that or not, but that would be a whole different answer. I don't think you could categorize that clearly. I don't like that category, I don't like those divisions anyway because they're too rigid and they don't take the grey areas into account, but that's the nature of language (Granny F, 8: 229-241).

Granny G shared similar views as Granny F and was familiar with the academic literature on leisure. As she explained:

Well, I don't think so activism is leisure but I heard some of that stuff he [she is referring to an academic researcher in the area of leisure] wrote. One could debate about the Raging Grannies being just a form of entertainment too. He also included all political actions including belonging to political parties and I think that is a total distortion of why one lives in the world. I think the distortion is

probably in his definition of work because for me work should just not be an expansion of play. In other words the use of human energy, creativity, imagination and so on to benefit one's society. I think that all those theorists don't see outside of capitalism and try to justify capitalism by these stupid models (laughter) (Granny G, 15: 325-334).

Granny D, who was a professor, remarked that she was not impartial to academics using the term leisure when describing the Raging Grannies because of the elements of play in what the Grannies do. She felt adult play was important for the well-being of people. Nevertheless, personally she would not define leisure politically. As she explained:

I wouldn't be adverse to that academic argument but personally I don't think that I would define it that way. If somebody said to me what do you do for relaxation and rest, well I would more likely say I canoe, I garden but yeah in a very broad definition of leisure I guess but I don't define leisure politically and I would define activism and the grannies politically. So that would be the dividing line for me. But I can certainly see where it can be a pretty blurry dividing line. I wouldn't be insulted by it, no, as some people were saying defining it as leisure is de-politicalizing it. I would say that is community work, community involvement, you know, a bit of activism but I am playing as well. I play with the Grannies, not all the time but a lot and it's okay to play. Yeah, it's not clear cut. (Granny D 22: 466-494).

When discussing the concept of leisure many of the Grannies distinguished between work and leisure and viewed their activism as work, albeit unpaid. As Granny B stated:

What the Raging Grannies do is not leisure because getting women together for a vigil is a lot of work! (1: 334).

Granny A shared similar sentiments: No, I wouldn't call that leisure at all. It's work which I enjoy very much (27, 623-524).

Granny K felt activism was more serious than leisure, that it was more like an occupation:

It is not leisure because we have a job to do and there's not much free time when working. I'm doing more than just filling in time (Granny K, 3: 14-20).

Granny L also referred to the Raging Grannies' activism as unpaid work and thought leisure was more of a recreational activity than activism, as she explains:

Is it leisure? Oh no, no, no. I guess leisure is free time when you can do whatever you want to do. It is time that has no structure to it...like, I might go snow skiing or I might read or I might clean my trunks, you know. The Raging Grannies is work for which I don't get paid (Granny L, 28: 627-631).

Granny J also saw leisure more of a recreational activity and noncommittal yet could understand how others could view the Grannies' activities as leisure. As Granny J explains:

I could see them defining it that way, yes, in the getting together and you know, getting dressed up. But I don't know whether we are very recreational as we aren't dancing but I could see people describing us that way but I don't see it as leisure, I see it more as a commitment, a commitment to put out the message that the Grannies produce action. I would see it more as activism of a different nature and I think it's important work even though the Grannies can be joked at when they have fun (Granny J, 20: 456-461).

In addition, Granny J referred to another older women's group (they also wear hats and costumes) that was a social group not an activist group and thought they were more like a leisure group than the Grannies because they were not activists or political. Granny H was concerned that if the Raging Grannies were defined as leisure, they would be regarded as entertainers:

But we are not entertainers. We have something important to say and we are going to say it so it's not a leisure activity. No, there is nothing leisurely about it because we have something to say (Granny H, 10: 321-326).

The following is an on-line conversation I had with Raging Grannies on their public forum, The Raging Grannies E-vine, in June 2005. While I am an honorary member of this public forum, permission from the forum's moderator was still required to enter discussions. While collecting data, I contacted the forum asking permission to engage in a discussion regarding leisure and activism for my thesis. The following is an excerpt of the discussion that ensued when I brought up the issue of using leisure time to bring about social change. Many of the answers were similar to those given during the interviews. Some of the Grannies felt slighted that I even made the suggestion, while others were more accepting.

Granny P had a distinct perspective in that she separated activism from what she would consider to comprise leisure within her life:

Well now Linda, I always thought the Raging Grannies should be researched for a PhD in political studies. Surely we don't do what we do for recreation and leisure?

Granny Q (who was an American Granny) also referred to past literature on leisure she read when she stated:

My, my, my. Look at the language they suggest we use to talk about meaningful things in our lives. "Leisure" "Commodity." "Social capital." By George, they've invaded our brains and want us to think about whatever we do in economic terms, damn their eyes! These days folks don't even wince when they are referred to as "consumers." Have you gone out yet and bought George Lakoff's "Don't Think of an Elephant; Know Your Values and Frame the

Debate"? Yes, even you Canadians up there in the frozen north. If not, snap to! Hey, Linda girl, use your ol' noggin and help get academia back on the right track.

Granny R, was more concerned with the use of academic language:

My response has to do with metaphor... the patterns of interactions to which we refer to get across our meanings. For instance, "level playing field," a term much in use, is a sports' metaphor. To use it implies (among other things) a competition in which there are agreed-upon rules that apply to all participants. That implication is just there, in the choice of that metaphor; there is not necessarily a conscious intention to make an explicit connection to sports.

We use metaphors a lot in ordinary speech, without being aware of the frameworks they evoke in our minds, but those unacknowledged frameworks have influence on our thinking. A lot of metaphors in common use derive from sports, mechanics or combat. I once said that my life would have been worthwhile at its end if I had helped move the public dialogue into using organic metaphors. I still feel that way. It would encourage systems thinking, an understanding of growth and decay as natural. We could think of fertile soil, of complex balances, of the wonders of what we have not created and can only hope to understand, etc.

Instead we are left thinking about our human lives and accomplishments in a framework of monetary exchange (i.e., terms like social capital). Which is a complex system but essentially linear. There is also an implicit framework about how we establish our concepts of "worth" that is essentially limiting.

Granny R was more comfortable with the word "time" when referring to the Raging Grannies:

Maybe we should leave out the word "leisure" and just say our "time". Time is life, and so very precious, and all sorts of voices are clamouring at us-telling us how we should use it, (I'm resisting the commonly used word: "spend"). If we can be sucked into shopping to keep up with the Joneses, being too house proud or clothes conscious, or baking or money raising for every cause under the sun, then we won't have time to ask the uncomfortable questions and change the world. It's our time and our talents, whatever they might be, to use as we see fit.

Granny S (who also sent me a private e-mail) was very interested in the research on leisure and activism and responded:

Maybe the difficulty lies in our understanding of the word leisure. It too often seems to connote frivolous time-filling . But if we rethink the word as indicating time that we can choose to spend as we will, then leisure time can certainly be, and is, used as a tool for social change. I'm not involved in academic research and often get lost in what seems the nit picking of meanings. Couldn't we just say that Grannies, Code Pink, and other Action groups use our "leisure" time, however we define "leisure" to bring about change?

Finally, Granny T who expressed her interest in the research on leisure and activism (via a personal e-mail) affirmed:

Several of the grannies seemed to think that the word "leisure" simply refers to a frivolous filling of time, and don't like it being applied to what we Raging Grannies are all about. Fortunately Granny S. pointed out that leisure is " time that we can choose to spend as we will" and thus "leisure time can certainly be, and is, used as a tool for social change." I quite agree that we Grannies feel a responsibility to use our "leisure" to try to bring about beneficial social change, not for ourselves but for all of humankind. You asked how we Grannies define what we do – it varies with the Granny. Some see it as a commitment, for others it's a calling, for still others it's a way of life. For me it's an expression of who and what I am. And finally in response to Granny P's concerns. I understand that Leisure Studies is a relatively recent academic discipline, and I've been told that there has been some thoughtful feminist research done in that area. I much prefer having the Grannies studied by a student in your discipline than say by students of the well- known political scientist Tom Flanigan, who is chief advisor to the Conservative leader Stephen Harper!!!

In Summary

These Grannies, with their own practices, values, and meanings allowed for the emergence of a community, which played an important role in the lives of these older women. In addition, the opportunity for establishing social bonds with like-minded people emerged. Activism provides a setting, which offers

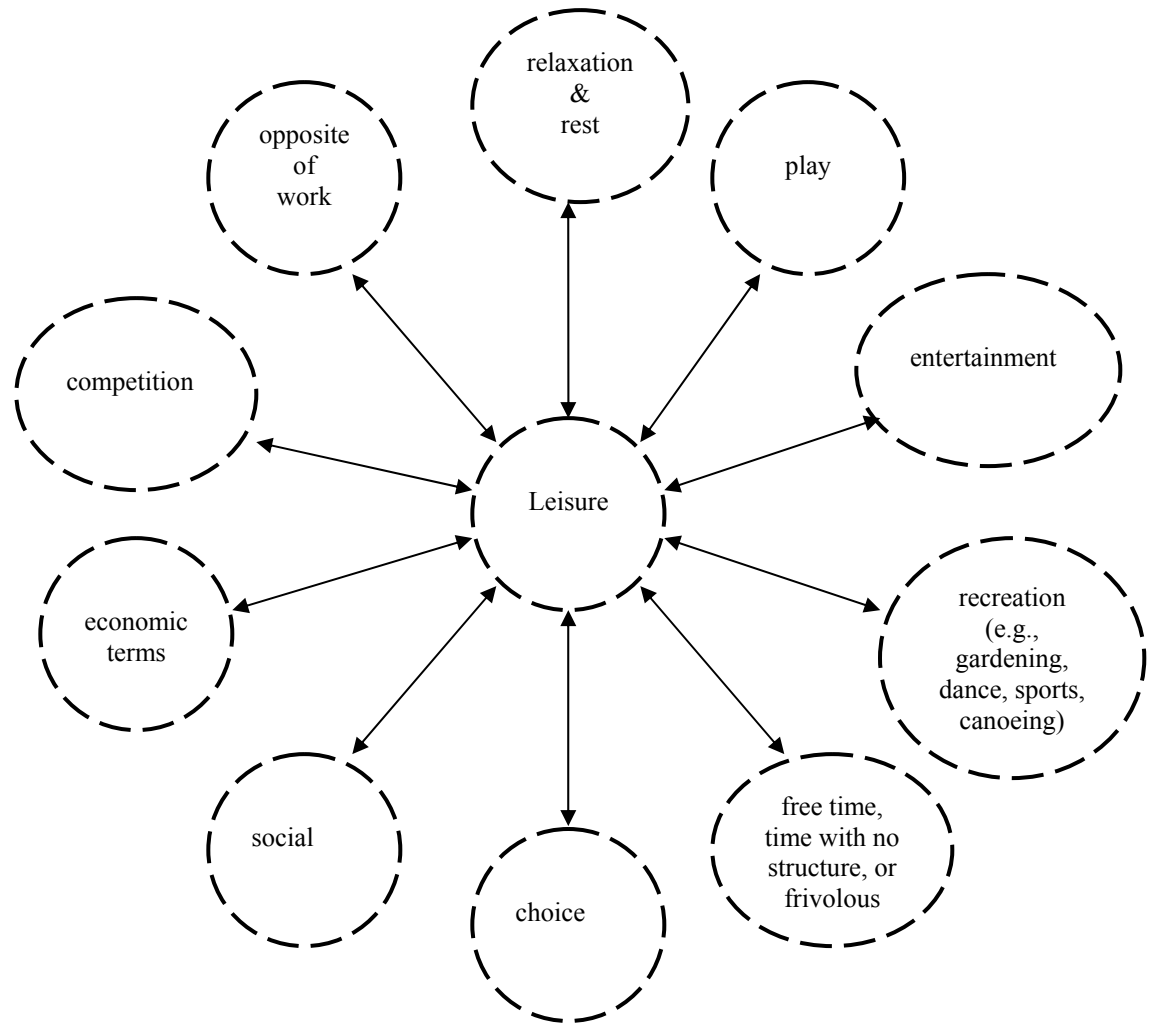
social support, mutuality, and reciprocity. In addition, this type of community provides an opportunity for older women to contribute to the greater society. The Raging Grannies promotes autonomy and self-determination as well as improvements in the quality of life for these women.

The Raging Grannies emphasised egalitarian participation by all members as well as consensus decision making, which they felt would change if men were allowed to join. There was a belief that men would dominate the group which would minimize the freedom they already had for expressing themselves. The Grannies also remarked that women have fun together and could share laughs among themselves. For these women, coming from traditional gender backgrounds, having a place they can call their own was very important to them.

Although the Grannies use terms such as “fun”, “play”, and sing, use humour, and dress in costumes, many would not define the Raging Grannies’ activism as leisure. They would define leisure in terms of nonwork, the frivolous filling of time, relaxation and rest, and a recreational activity such as gardening, canoeing, and dancing.

The following figure (Figure 2) is a summary of the main terms the Raging Grannies used to define leisure.

Figure 2: How the Raging Grannies Define Leisure



On the other hand, they viewed the Raging Grannies as unpaid work, political, a commitment, volunteering, or a way of life. Although it is true many researchers (Mair, 2002/2003; Reid, 1995; Rojek, 2001; Stebbins, 2002) would state that leisure, especially serious leisure, can also have similar characteristics, most of the women felt their activity was more serious than leisure. Also, how

the Grannies perceived leisure also demonstrates how leisure research assumes what establishes leisure.

The following figure (Figure 3) is a summary of how the Raging Grannies defined their activism.

Figure 3: How the Raging Grannies Define their Activism



Although the Grannies never referred to themselves as older liberal feminists, they shared many of the similar characteristics as the Second Wave Liberal Feminists of the 1960s and early 1970s. They are Caucasian, well-educated, heterosexual, leisured, middle-class women whose primary interest is legal, political, economic, and social reform. Not only did their social position give them an advantage to the social movement, but also having a sense of community, being from a community that would already be supportive of their views, having support from their family and spouses (as discussed in Chapter One), and most importantly, their age. These women saw their age allowing them more freedom and the opportunity to now express themselves and the freedom to break away from traditional gender roles of their youth. Therefore, the Raging Grannies gave them the opportunity to resist and even challenge traditional views of older women. Even if there is strength in numbers and many are singing to the converted, they are still reclaiming space that would have once been denied to them. These Grannies are engaged in a process of empowering themselves individually and collectively. Furthermore, the Grannies' expressions of oneself also seem to suggest that life's experiences are brought into play in their activism and collectively that are able to express their concerns and work on social change as part of a social movement which focuses on social injustices, environmental concerns and more equitable and a fair society.

The next chapter will be the discussion of relevant theoretical perspectives and research.

CHAPTER SEVEN DISCUSSION AND FINAL THOUGHTS

As discussed in the literature review, throughout history women have been involved in social change whether through volunteerism or social activism in social movements. Although there have been many older women involved in social change such as Flo Kennedy, Muriel Duckworth, Maggie Khun, Elinor Roosevelt, Bella Abzug, Irma LeVasseur, Edith Archibald, and Sylca Gelber. Older women have often been overlooked in social movement research as well as in feminist theory. Also discussed in the literature review were examples of leisure constraints some older women experience as well as the benefits older women can experience from their leisure. The reader was also introduced to the feminist gerontology perspective which criticizes feminist theory for not recognizing older women, how both age and gender are social constructions, and how the concept of empowerment is rooted in feminist gerontology. As a researcher, I was interested in how the women I interviewed constructed meanings and actions and was interested in their definitions, assumptions, and meanings. As a feminist gerontologist, I hoped this research was a collaborative effort, that attempts to understand their experience through their stories of how and why they became involved in the Raging Grannies. This chapter will be a discussion of the findings that emerged from the participants' stories. This chapter will also conclude with the limitations of my research and suggestions for future research.

Discussion

Examining Ageing Through Gender Lenses

According to Marshall (2000) “gender” is one of those convoluted terms that has been defined differently by the general public, academics, and even feminists. “Gender” has become a term describing anything related to sexual differences. A simple definition of gender provided by Marshall is: “a marker of the social and cultural elaboration of sexual difference (2000: p. 8). Gender, is a social construction; therefore it shapes one’s identities as well as other’s expectations and perceptions of us (Marshall, 2000). Marshall (2000) also mentions the importance of class, ethnicity and sexual orientations as markers in defining who we are and how we are judged by others; however, Marshall (2000) does not mention age.

Some scholars have been critical of feminist theory and feminist sociologists for excluding age in the study of gender. Calasanti and Slevin (2001) state it is important to examine ageing through gender lenses. Gender lenses allow researchers to see the sources of oppression and the sources of resistance and empowerment in old age. Gender lenses allows one to understand diverse experiences of old age and how the ageist attitudes can also be transformed (Calasanti & Slevin, 2001).

Gender lenses, derived from feminist theories, enable us to examine how older women and older men “do gender” - gender is socially constructed and not biologically driven” (Arber et al., 2003; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Crawford,

2003; Wilson, 2002). The social construction of gender can be defined as a “cognitive and symbolic construct that helps individuals develop a sense of self, a sense of identity that is constructed in the process of interacting with others within a given community (Arber et al., 2003; p. 4).” Not only is gender socially constructed but as well men and women experience “old age” differently (Arber et al., 2003; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Silver, 2003). However, those who examine age through gender lenses also argue that all older women, despite their social class, ethnicity, and sexual orientation are at risk of experiencing ageism because they are old (Arber et al., 2003; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Silver, 2003). For example, an older women from a middle-upper class status may feel pressured to conform to our youth-oriented society and, in order to be accepted, resort to plastic surgery. But some feminist gerontologists also stress that ethnicity, and sexual orientation cannot be overlooked when examining oppression among older women (Arber et al., 2003; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Silver, 2003).

As with gender, age serves in important ways to distinguish acceptable behaviour for different groups, for example, a 70-year old grandmother sky-diving for the first time in her life, may not appear to act her appropriate age or gender. Gender and age as social constructions also help explain the social relations between men and women which vary with ethnicity, class, health status, sexual orientation, and culture (Arber et al., 2003; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Silver, 2003). Both men and women can continue to conform to societal expectations of appropriate gender roles into old age, for example, being the

good grandmother baking cookies for grandchildren and not protesting in the streets.

Nevertheless, as mentioned above, gender lenses can help us understand not only how older women (and men) become marginalized but also how older women can resist traditional gender roles. Some older women may conform to societal expectations but others challenge these prescribed gender roles. Gender is not a one-time identity that is acquired through socialization and remains unchanged through one's life course (Arber et al., 2003; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Crawford, 2003; Ingrisch, 2002; Morell, 2003; Silver, 2003).

Consequently, many women (and men) in their Third Age have the opportunity to resist traditional gender roles because they no longer have the social expectations of their youth, for example, the focus of finding a wife/husband, getting married, having children, and establishing a career (Arber et al., 2003; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Crawford, 2003; Ingrisch, 2002; Morell, 2003; Silver, 2003). Older women have greater opportunities for developing identities other than wife, mother, or paid worker and taking on new roles and activities that they may not have had time for when younger. Older women may now have the opportunities to continue learning and growing in later life through their continuing abilities and expanding interests (Arber et al., 2003; Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Crawford, 2003; Ginn & Arber, 2002; Ingrisch, 2002; Morell, 2003; Silver, 2003).

When I asked the Grannies I interviewed to tell me about themselves and their lives, they would first describe themselves as “an activist”, “a

feminist”, “a rebel-rouser,” “a retired professor”, or “an educator” before mentioning they were married or had grandchildren; the women, therefore, did not define themselves immediately with traditional gender roles. I did not realize until much later in the interview that some women were married or had grandchildren. The Grannies would actually stress their abilities and interests, for example, their involvement in activism, their love for music or street theatre, and their interest in social justice. What also interested me was how many of the husbands were supportive and were willing to assist their wives yet remain in the background. Some of the Grannies mentioned their husbands took on some of the domestic labour in order to free up their time to engage with the Raging Grannies. Some husbands provided transportation, assisted with the making of the banners, and costumes. As mentioned in the previous chapter there appears to be a role reversal where the men are taking on more nontraditional roles. Do these older men feel less pressure to conform to traditional male roles? Are they challenging stereotypical masculine roles?

Wilson (2002) discussed how older men and women are seen as “old” before they are characterized in any other way and how other attributes and characteristics take second place to age. Being “old” becomes an older person’s main social identity which Wilson (2002) attributes to society’s ageist attitudes towards older adults. Nevertheless, Wilson (2002) also argues that there is a positive side to ageism. Older adults have the opportunity to turn these negatives to their benefit. For example, Wilson states: when you reach a certain age, if they don’t like what you say, they think you’re a bit batty

anyway, so you get away with it” (2002: p. 9). According to Calasanti and Slevin, (2001) many older women are reclaiming “old” by using the term in a positive way. People including researchers are guilty of referring to the word “old” in a negative light, especially when the research conducted on older adults is often focused on the illness and other negative aspects of ageing. Some researchers argue that “old” is only negative if one defines it that way. By using the term “old age” in positive ways we are saying that there is nothing wrong with being old.

Based on my background in the sociology of ageing, I assumed being older would be a topic the Grannies would be interested in speaking about, however, I was mistaken. I was told on a number of occasions when I would ask about being an older woman, that being “old” was not an issue. One’s attitude, and spirit was what mattered; they were not marginalized just because they were older women, as Granny M stated:

I don’t feel marginalized as an old woman because I am not going to let people push me around. It’s all in how you stand, present yourself, and I present myself with confidence³⁴ (2: 27-38).

I also observed they would use the term “old” to refer to themselves but not in a negative manner (see quote above as an example). Some of the Grannies even spoke about the advantages of being old, for example, the police being reluctant to arrest the Grannies. As Granny K stated: The police won’t hurt the Grannies because we are old ladies with silly hats on (3: 76-79). Many

³⁴ Granny A, on the other hand remarked, that having a higher education and a higher social position may provide a level of self-confidence to be involved in activism.

of the Grannies I interviewed also used the term “crone” which may conjure images of an ugly old witch or as a wise woman. Granny O, Granny I, and Granny F made reference to stories of cultures that were once matriarchal where older women were seen as women with wisdom due to life experience. Granny O even remarked that there were strong matriarchal forces within the Raging Grannies (2: 49-51). Feminist scholars Onyx, et al., (1999) argue that it is time older women reclaim the right to such status of crone.

The body is a critical marker of age, with it being the point of reference in identifying older adults (Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Morell, 2003; Twigg, 2004). By observing the body we draw conclusions about people’s age. Our most immediate sense that somebody is young or old usually comes from encounters with their appearance and, therefore, we refer to our aging body in negative terms (Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Morell, 2003; Twigg, 2004). We see it in terms of ailments and illnesses, lack of energy, appearance, etc (Calasanti & Slevin, 2001; Morell, 2003; Twigg, 2004). We also blame all these physical changes solely on age but some physical changes are a result of incidents from our youth, for example, sagging skin and wrinkled skin could result from sun damage from sun bathing when one was younger.

As previously mentioned, when I first saw the image of the Raging Granny, I wondered if their persona was not reinforcing stereotypical images of older women. Also, were these women hiding their ageing bodies through this persona? Could they, as a group of older women, be heard without wearing costumes? Many of the Grannies did admit that they could not protest without

wearing their costumes but it was not because they were old, but the costumes gave them more self-confidence to be out in public, and the costumes were almost used as a shield of protection. According to Biggs (1997), the use of persona is a coping strategy for maintaining an acceptable identity, that “the personae is simply a device through which an active agent looks out at and negotiates with the world, to protest and to deceive (1997: p. 559).” The Raging Grannies are certainly not attempting to present a more youthful public image. On the contrary, they are putting age out there (Granny F, 6: 181). More importantly, they are making fun of the stereotypes with their costumes – it is all tongue in cheek, as Granny K (2: 32) stated. The costumes are used to grab attention in order to get their message out. It is part of the Grannies’ symbolic tools of protest, and it is something they are enjoying and is a way of expressing their creative side.

The Raging Grannies remind me of a group of older women, The Hen Co-op, who write about challenging the traditional views of growing old; and who also write poetry. The Hen Co-op (1993), like the Raging Grannies, came from a generation when they were socialized to put their own needs aside in order to attend to others. Some had demanding jobs both outside and inside their homes which left them little time for self-nurturing. However, they have reached a period in their lives when their work obligations are reduced. Now they have found the time to connect with other older women and reinvent themselves. They have decided to grow old disgracefully. According to The Hens Co-op:

We use “growing old disgracefully” as a challenge to the image of “growing old gracefully”, which implies that we are to be silent, invisible, compliant and selflessly available for the needs of others. In other words, to age gracefully is to continue to be the passive, obedient, unobtrusively good girls we were socialized to be. Well, we’re not prepared to do that; we’re going to make up for lost time (1993: p. 106).

“Taking Possession of Space”³⁵

Feminist geographers have argued that there is a relationship between people and places where there is a differential use, control, power, and domination, of spaces, places, and landscape for social, economic and environmental purposes (Koskela, 1997; Massey 1994; Mowl & Towners, 1995; Skeggs, 1999; Wearing, 1998). Massey (1994) states:

from the symbolic meaning of spaces/places and the clearly gendered messages which they transmit, to straightforward exclusion by violence, spaces and places are not only themselves gendered but, in their being so, they both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is constructed and understood (p. 179).

Furthermore, according to Massey (1994) since space and place are symbolic, and constructed through cultural ideas and social relations, it is difficult to define what space and place is. What is clear, however, is that within space and place power relations are constructed and can be used as a means of control and reinforcement of gender roles (Aitchison, 1999; Koskela,

³⁵ Koskela, 1997, p. 307.

1997; Massey, 1994; Mowl & Towners, 1995; Skeggs, 1999; Wearing, 1998).

An understanding of power relations of space and place is also important in understanding why certain places can and cannot be used by women (Aitchison, 1999; Koskela, 1997; Massey, 1994; Mowl & Towners, 1995; Skeggs, 1999; Wearing, 1998). Constraints in women's use of public spaces include: limited resources (e.g., money, mobility); negative emotions (e.g., stress, fear); burdensome responsibilities (e.g., housework, child care); and oppressive social norms and conditions (e.g., restrictive gender norms, insensitive planning and design) (Day, 2000).

Traditionally, women's proper place has been in the home and men's place was in the public sphere. For over a century, women have been discouraged from entering many areas of public life (Day, 2000; Green et al., 1990; Wearing, 1998). The home is another place where power relations can be constructed between women and men (Browne, 1998; Day, 2000; Green et al., 1990; Henderson et al., 1999; Horna, 1994; Massey, 1994; Shaw, 1999; Wearing, 1998). The phrase "a woman's place is in the home" is grounded in the sexual division of labour, which assigns women to the domestic sphere, where women are often more confined than men to domestic obligations and family commitments (Browne, 1998; Green et al., 1990; Henderson et al., 1999; Horna, 1994; Massey, 1994; Shaw, 1999; Wearing, 1998). Massey (1994) claims that the attempt to confine women to the private sphere was both a spatial control and a societal control on identity. The identity

of “woman” and of the “home place” is intimately tied up with each other: “home is where the heart is and where the woman is also” (Massey, 1994, p. 180).

Due to the “ethic-of-care,” women often neglect their own personal needs in order to provide for the needs of others. Although the ethic-of-care may be a source of women’s constraints in public spaces, it may also allow possibilities for women’s use of public spaces (Day, 2000). Women’s public space frequently involves giving or receiving care or reinforcing relationships with friends and family (Day, 2000). In their use of public space, women provide care for themselves such as exercise, creation, retreat, and education. Women’s use of public space generates opportunities to give and receive care in public spaces. Many women’s involvement in social movements may be understood as extensions of caring to encompass the community, the natural environment, and the world. An ethic-of-care creates possibilities for enhancing a sense of community through women’s public space activities. Caring for public spaces and the people in them also empowers women by developing their skills and giving them a voice (Day, 2000).

One method of resisting and redefining gender roles is by reclaiming public space (Aitchison, 1999; Day, 2001; Koskela, 1997; Massey, 1994; Mowl & Towners, 1995; Skeggs, 1999; Wearing, 1998). Wearing (1998) speaks to leisure, space and resistance, an analysis that could apply to the Raging Grannies. Wearing states:

physical and symbolic leisure place or space can provide a means

for reconstituting the self and rewriting the script of identity. Leisure is a personal space for resistance to domination, a space where there is room for self to expand beyond what it is told it should be. A leisure space, physically or symbolically, can be where 'I' can resist and move beyond the societal input, which constructs the 'me' of the self (p. 146).

Wearing (1998) further states that leisure spaces provide women the opportunity of "rewriting the script of what it is to be a woman" (p. 147), beyond the societal definitions of "woman". Leisure spaces, whether they are physical or symbolic, can allow women to explore their own desires and perform acts which allow them to be "women" on their own terms. Reclaiming space will allow women to fill their space with whatever persons, objects, activities, or thoughts they choose (Aitchison, 1999; Day, 2001; Koskela, 1997; Massey, 1994; Mowl & Towners, 1995; Skeggs, 1999; Wearing, 1998). Wearing (1998) suggests women create their own spaces for spirituality, literature, support groups, story-telling, controlling financial and workplace stress, imaginative spaces, and spaces for mental and physical pleasure, all on their own terms.

Some feminist writers have argued that women have a history of using public spaces for social activism where women have relied on noninstitutionalized or unconventional strategies to confront these power structures (Boulding, 2000; Kuumba, 1991). As I observed while conducting my pilot study, the Raging Grannies are certainly reclaiming public space. During the pilot study, the Grannies marched on the Parliament Buildings chanting, singing, and holding banners against a number of government

policies. On the grounds of the Parliament Buildings, the Grannies also put on a skit where they openly mocked President Bush and former Prime Minister Martin. The Grannies are also known for crashing political events (once considered the domain of white middle-class men). The Grannies are not only reclaiming public space as older women but they are refusing to be relegated to their rocking chairs: as Granny J stated: we are not going to be relegated to wearing shawls and sitting in rocking chairs, in fact, we are going to get out there and take action (24: 448-449). The Raging Grannies are reclaiming public space by expressing their anger and political concerns in spaces once dominated by men.

Interestingly, Kuumba does state that social movements are also sites of “gender consciousness” (1991: p. 20) which is related to “doing gender” which is the “process through which gender meanings, roles, relations, and identities are continually being constructed and revised” (1991: p. 20). Social movements have the potential to reproduce as well as transform traditional gender roles because they are also sites for reinforcing gender roles (for example, only men being in leadership roles) or going against gendered divisions of labour and social roles (Kuumba, 1991). For example, with the Raging Grannies, male spouses were the ones in the background preparing meals and providing transportation while the women were out on the “front lines.”

Distinctive characteristics of women’s community

Another space where women can challenge the social construction of age and gender is in a women’s community. It is difficult to define the term

“community” because it means different things to different people. Community can refer to a social or geographic setting, it can be viewed as an experience, or the emergence of social bonds characterized by emotional cohesion.

Communities can also create social capital where people work together for a common purpose. Despite the difficulty in defining the term community, I wanted to understand how the Raging Grannies would define their community. First there are feelings of solidarity, for example, through using pronouns such as “we”, and “us” when talking about the Raging Grannies. As explored in the following section on women’s tools of protest, the use of protest songs, written collectively and speaking as a collective, reinforced community among members. The Grannies would define their community as having no hierarchical structure where there is collective decision making in accordance with reciprocity and mutual respect. Their community involves social support where their values and beliefs are being reinforced with like-minded people who are working together for a common goal.

Some of the feminist literature states that it is important that women do create all-women environments that are free from masculine values. Woman centred culture is often focused on responsibility, connection, community, negotiation, nurturance versus male culture which is focused on self-interest, combat, and hierarchy. The Grannies I interviewed noted that if men were allowed to join, they would attempt to dominate the group and allow the women little freedom to speak their minds. The Grannies also mentioned that women had more empathy because of their nurturing side. Boulding (2000) states that

women do have a greater understanding of social issues because they have often directly been affected by them, such as violence, child poverty, or unemployment. Most importantly, what caught my attention when the Grannies were describing their community were the stereotypical characteristics associated with feminine and masculine traits. On the other hand, one must also remember that the Grannies are inevitably influenced by the values and beliefs from their generation regarding gender roles (Rose, 2001). Some of the Grannies discussed how in their generation roles between men and women were much more defined than they are today. For example, Granny L and Granny H discussed how in their generation women were much more tied to the home and family, and men more tied to the workforce. Granny H also remarked that women of her generation were socialized to be more passive and quiet. Also, I recall the interview with Granny B who went into great detail about how women have been always involved in caring work because of their “nurturing side”, emphasizing stereotypical feminist traits. Some feminists would argue that there are differences between men and women, and that women should seek out personal strength and pride for having unique feminine qualities; hence women should seek all-women environments that are free from masculine values (Chafetz, 1998; Nelson & Robinson, 1999; Shaw & Lee, 2001).

In addition, some feminists would also argue that women are the nurturers and that women’s “bond to the natural order” makes them uniquely qualified to resolve threats such as war, environmental disasters, poverty, and

violence because men are more naturally drawn to more aggressive approaches than are women (Chafetz, 1998; Nelson & Robinson, 1999; Shaw & Lee, 2001).

Women's Tools of Protest

Women have a history of using non-violent creative methods of protest including song, dance, poetry, humour, play, and symbolic imagery (Boulding, 2000; Kuumba, 1991). As discussed earlier in this paper, the Raging Grannies use street theatre, cheeky songs, humour, play (defined by Granny D), and symbolic imagery as their main methods of protest. Kuumba (1991) described some women using the only tools that were available to them such as the banging on pots and pans or waving objects that may be symbolic such as mothers using kitchen tools. The Grannies will also use props symbolic of who they are such as umbrellas, spoons, pots and pans, mops, and even their own flag which is the Canadian flag except for a picture of a "Raging Granny" replacing the maple leaf. Kuumba (1991) observed the names that women pick for their groups are often symbolic and project a relevant image to which the public can relate. For example, using the term "mother" in the names of some groups may project a certain image to the public that could very well be used to the group's advantage. The term "Raging Granny" was carefully chosen by the women I interviewed. The women who first began the group were angry that the politicians and the public were not listening to older women and blamed the ageist attitudes of society. "Granny" portrays an image of the "sweet old lady" yet rage (which represents their anger towards the injustices) contradicts the stereotype of the "sweet little old lady".

Street theatre can be an effective medium to engage in social change (Gray, 2001; Moser, 2003; Park-Fuller, 2003). The role of street theatre in political protest is an avenue for marginalized women, including older women, to express their views on the public stage which is still the domain of men (Moser, 2003). Street theatre is a nonviolent means of creative protest that catches people's attention and where not only does the audience enjoy the performance but is also being educated. Street theatre is also enjoyable for the "actors" involved. Furthermore, acting, dressing in costumes, and wearing masks creates a shield from what is being said, redirecting responsibility away from the "actor" onto the persona (Dufour, 2002; Gray, 2001; Moser, 2003; Park-Fuller, 2003); therefore "a character in a play does the speaking thus allowing women to say the unsayable" (Moser, 2003: p. 185).

In addition, coming together to work on skits can help reinforce the group's own goal and reinforce the group's identity (Dufour, 2002; Gray, 2001; Fuoss, 1997; Moser, 2003; Park-Fuller, 2003). Street theatre is also designed to empower by giving women's personal stories centre stage, to give them opportunities for assent or argument, and to build a feeling of community among the group members where persons can agree or disagree (Berger, 2000; Fuoss, 1997; Moser, 2003; Park-Fuller, 2003).

Another important strategy for the Raging Grannies is their songs. Most of the Grannies I interviewed had a passion for music, and being with the Grannies was one way of expressing this interest. They took great pride in their music and this was often shown in the songs their Gaggle wrote. In some cases,

a Granny would actually sing a couple of songs to me so I could understand the full effect of their music. The Raging Grannies write their own words to songs but borrow the melody from other songs. According to some researchers, by transforming the lyrics of other well-known songs, a group can use them to express its own message (Berger, 2000; Denisoff , 1983; Knupp, 1981; Lieberman, 1989; Street, 2003). Songs put to familiar tunes are actually an effective strategy because they can be sung en masse without instrumentation or with a simple piano or guitar accompaniment (Berger, 2000; Denisoff, 1983; Knupp, 1981; Lieberman, 1989; Street, 2003). In addition, borrowed melodies from other songs catch the attention of the listener because of their familiarity and this enables the listener to adapt quickly to the lyric changes and participate in the group singing (Berger, 2000; Denisoff , 1983; Knupp, 1981; Lieberman, 1989; Street, 2003).

Many of the Grannies develop their own song books and I was fortunate enough to receive from Granny D a copy of the song book from the Wolfville Gaggle. Granny D and I, while examining the book, spoke about the lyrics of the song and how they are kept simple in order to draw people's attention and so other Gaggles may borrow the songs and change the lyrics for their own purpose. Denisoff (1983) and other researchers have stated that keeping protest songs simple and repetitive allows the singers to add or change them spontaneously and keeps the attention of the audience (Berger, 2000; Knupp, 1981; Lieberman, 1989; Street, 2003). Also, keeping the lyrics of the songs simple yet satirical not only adds humour but also encourages the audience to

become physically and emotionally involved in the song thereby influencing the audience attitudes (Berger, 2000; Denisoff, 1983; Knupp, 1981; Lieberman, 1989; Street, 2003).

When speaking with the Grannies regarding their music, not only did they mention that it allowed them to express their creative side but they felt it was an effective means of educating the public. Researchers have stated that one of the main goals of protest music is to educate, persuade, or influence the audience the group is singing to (Berger, 2000; Denisoff, 1983; Knupp, 1981; Lieberman, 1989; Street, 2003). According to Denisoff the main goal of protest music is to help raise consciousness while doing a lot more, as Denisoff states:

Songs are based on the belief that, by eradicating the “false consciousness” of the public, social change will take place and we can right the wrongs of the world creating a sense of “hope” and “community” that are necessary in effective community organization (1983: p. 73).

As I mentioned previously the Grannies write their own lyrics but oftentimes it is very a collaborative affair. Some of the Grannies spoke of their great enjoyment in writing songs together. In some cases, although only one or two Grannies are the actual lyric writers, they may seek input from the other Grannies. Gaggles share music with other Gaggles, and some Grannies from one Gaggle will assist another Gaggle in writing their lyrics. Songwriting among the Grannies is very much a team effort (Granny O, 2: 18).

Researchers have claimed that pronouns such as “we” and “us” suggest group solidarity as well as group cohesion (Berger, 2000; Denisoff, 1983; Knupp, 1981; Lieberman, 1989; Street, 2003). Coming together to write songs,

and singing the songs together, is essential to create a group identity and a sense of community in order for the group to accomplish its goals (Berger, 2000; Denisoff, 1983; Knupp, 1981; Lieberman, 1989; Street, 2003). Street (2003) stressed that protest music was not only important in getting a message out but one of its main functions was to create community among the members of the group:

Music is a form of communication which allows groups to establish shared meanings and interests. By expressing common experiences, music helps create and solidify a fund of shared memories and a sense of “who we are” (p. 125).

Protest music not only has the potential of creating community among the group but also can create feelings of solidarity between the group and the audience (Berger, 2000; Denisoff, 1983; Knupp, 1981; Lieberman, 1989; Street, 2003). Protest groups can use songs to create this “we” view of reality with its audience by offering the audience collective statements of discontent; in other words, this “we are all in the same boat” feeling with the audience, and through joint actions, “we” can come up with a solution (Berger, 2000; Denisoff, 1983; Knupp, 1981; Lieberman, 1989; Street, 2003).

Street (2003) claimed that protest music could also be a means of resistance and empowerment for the group. Similarly to street theatre, music can be used to have the message heard by the masses and challenge those in positions of power without appearing threatening. Furthermore, protest songs may reach more people while reinforcing the group’s message more effectively than speeches because a speech may only be heard once, while songs are

learned and repeated indefinitely. The songs, therefore, can perpetually promote and reinforce the messages of the group.

According to Knupp (1981) protest songs, however, do not usually offer solutions to the perceived problem. Instead, they are mainly used to criticize, educate, and evoke some sort of emotion from the audience, as a vehicle to have the group's voice heard and to hopefully gain sympathy from its listeners.

In brief, according to Denisoff (1983) protest music has six main functions:

1. the song attempts to produce support and sympathy for its cause;
2. the song reinforces the value structure of the group;
3. the song creates and promotes community among the group's members as well as the audience;
4. the song is an attempt to recruit new members or supporters;
5. the song is the public message of the group and is used to criticize and invoke action; and
6. the song, in some emotional manner, points to some problem or discontent in society.

Although protest music has many benefits, Knupp (1981) cautions that protest music can also be a propaganda tool to actually promote injustices and hate and use the creation of community as a cover. Knupp (1981) makes references to past examples, including the rise of Hitler.

Another effective tactic used by the Raging Grannies is humour through their intentionally outrageous costumes, props, and their satirical songs. Even

during the interviews the Grannies would “joke” about certain questions and mimic certain issues we would discuss. I also wrote in my reflexive journal about some of the laughter the Grannies and I would share during the interviews.³⁶ Some researchers, however, do say that humour and laughter can be used as “icebreakers” to help create a safer space to share personal thoughts and insights and to remove any awkwardness that may occur; therefore contributing to “getting to know” one another (Barreca, 1991; Crawford, 2003; Gillooly, 1991; Gouin, 2004; Robinson & Smith-Lovin, 2001).

The Raging Grannies I interviewed repeatedly used humour and laughter to challenge power and express their desire to see change. Other women’s groups, according to some feminist scholars, use humour especially during actions related to the women’s movement (Barreca, 1991; Crawford, 2003; Gillooly, 1991; Gouin, 2003; Kuumba, 2001; Robinson & Smith-Lovin, 2001). Traditionally, according to Crawford (2003), feminists evolved a distinctive humour that was a powerful tool of political activism, for example, “if men menstruated, sanitary supplies would be federally funded and free,” and “a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle” (Crawford, 2003, p.1426). Further, Crawford (2003) stated that the feminists were not really making fun of men but their value systems.

Some researchers claim that one of the roles of humour is to build community (Barreca, 1991; Crawford, 2003; Gillooly, 1991; Gouin, 2003;

³⁶ The transcriber also remarked that it appeared in some of the interviews that the Grannies and I were enjoying lots of laughs.

Robinson & Smith-Lovin, 2001). Women sharing humour and laughter can create solidarity with a shared sense of reality. As with protest music, using humour can also define group identities. The use of humour and laughter can also assist with creating and affirming the group's own meanings (Barreca, 1991; Crawford, 2003; Gillooly, 1991; Gouin, 2003; Robinson & Smith-Lovin, 2001). Developing a sense of identity and solidarity, according to Crawford (2003), is the first step towards political and social change.

Humour can be a way of challenging those in positions of power, expressing opposition, and proposing change. Humour that involves mimicing those in power, whether politicians, religious leaders, or the rich and famous, vents feelings, questions the justice of the hierarchy, and temporarily reverses the power. Humour and laughter can function as a socially acceptable release for anxiety, especially if the protest group is conveying a message that some may find controversial (Barreca, 1991; Crawford, 2003; Gillooly, 1991; Gouin, 2003; Robinson & Smith-Lovin, 2001). Making light of a situation may help ease any uncomfortable situations while getting one's message across.

Feminist research argues that humour can also be used to reinforce stereotypical masculine and feminine traits by determining what type of humour is and is not appropriate for the different genders (Barreca, 1991; Crawford, 2003; Gillooly, 1991; Gouin, 2003; Robinson & Smith-Lovin, 2001). For example, it is not socially acceptable for women to make jokes about sex because women are not supposed to know and repeat such things (Robinson & Smith-Lovin, 2001). Yet according to Robinson and Smith (2001), women who

use supposedly inappropriate humour are actually deconstructing traditional gender roles. Although the literature I read regarding women and humour did not address older women, I think the Raging Grannies are also resisting traditional gender roles for older women through their use of humour, especially since some of the lyrics in their songs may be regarded by the general public as inappropriate for “little old ladies”. Granny E made a statement to this observation:

We grab attention because people can't believe the audacity of older women doing this and their blatant disregard for everything other people think that is normal – their crazy hats, in-your-face mocking lyrics...we sound so defiant...we go against the grain (3: 44-47).

Barreca (1991) and Gouin (2003), however, do caution that although humour can be a form of resistance and build a sense of community, it can also be used to demean, degrade and oppress, all in the guise of “having a good time”. Humour such as joking, according to Gouin (2003) and Barreca (1991) can be used as a socially acceptable form of aggression because people enjoy humour that targets members of groups with whom they do not empathize or may even hate. Humour can actually be used to reinforce not only gender stereotypes (i.e., sexist jokes) but ethnic (i.e., racist jokes) and sexual orientation stereotypes all in the name of “just having fun” (Barreca, 1991; Gouin, 2003). Interestingly, Gouin (2003) remarked that people in positions of higher status also get away with joking more, even at the expense of another group and feel more secure about it just because of their social position – would the Raging Grannies share similar sentiments because of their social position?

Is it Leisure?

During the interviews with the Raging Grannies, we discussed the concept of leisure. Because many of the women were well educated I introduced Mair's article (2002/2003) notions of civil leisure and Stebbin's (1992) concept of serious leisure. Contrary to the literature, many of the Raging Grannies did not view their experience as leisure. Actually, some were highly critical that academics' view of reality should apply to everyone.

Scholar Roberts (1999) makes a similar statement: "when we develop theories about leisure, we believe that we are making statements about a real world out there, we are gravely mistaken" (p. 145). Roberts (1999) further states that researchers' definitions of reality are not the only correct interpretations of events. We must also consider the research participants' definitions and meanings (Roberts, 1999). In any case, is participation in a social movement leisure?

According to Stebbins (2002) participation in a social movement is leisure if it is freely chosen and not pressured by outside forces to participate. Some individuals may join social movements for leisure reasons while others feel obligated to be there. Yet, there are those who join because they are driven to defend a social cause and participate because of a strong sense of obligation (Stebbin, 2002). Social activism driven by emotions such as fear, hate, revenge, and so on are contradictory to the definitions of leisure (Stebbin, 2002). Likewise, if participation in activism is caused by being pressured by others, then it can not be defined as leisure. Participation in social movements should

incite feelings of happiness, and sense of accomplishment to be considered a leisure experience (Stebbin, 2002). Stebbins (2000) would also define activism as volunteerism (see also the discussion in the Literature Review of this thesis), if one has freely chosen to volunteer for a social cause and not participating because they feel pressured to do so.

According to Rojek (2001) leisure can be political, noting that there is a relationship between leisure and citizenship rights. Leisure can be much more than just a commodity but can also be an important asset to social capital (Rojek, 2001). Mair (2002/2003) defines civil leisure³⁷ as “leisure based in resistance concerned with creating public discursive space. This notion is important because it emphasizes the extent to which leisure might be re-constituted as a public, collective realm where discussions about society can take place” (p. 213). Civil leisure, according to Mair (2002/2003) also “embodies a multitude of opinions and perspectives” (p. 232). Activism can be seen as a leisure form, for example, people using their non-work time to become involved in political protests (Mair 2002/2003). Although it was questionable whether or not protests and demonstrations could be considered leisure, Mair’s (2002/2003) participants did feel there was a leisure component when the events were socially based, creative, and enjoyable. In addition, the participants in Mair’s (2002/2003) study identified some of the characteristics associated with serious leisure such as perseverance, significant personal investment, social

³⁷ It is the hope that my research on the Raging Grannies will further add to the concept of civil leisure.

interaction, a feeling of belonging, and a strong identification with the activity. Consequently, leisure may be an avenue for social change through participation in social movements. Other leisure scholars such as Arai and Pedlar (1997), Hemingway (1999), Glover (2003), Reid (1995) and Sharpe (2005) would also suggest leisure can be a tool for social change.

What is evident is that leisure, like the terms “community” and “friendship”, is difficult to define (Horna, 1994; Kelly, 1996; Russell, 2002). Based on history and culture, leisure has different meanings for different people (Rojek, 1995). In our Western capitalist society leisure is seen as separate from work (which is how many of the Grannies viewed it) or a reward after work (Rojek, 1995). Leisure is often portrayed as a satisfying experience in positive terms such as satisfaction, fun, excitement, awe, and a sense of belonging (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). The definition of leisure can be solely subjective, defined as a state of mind or an attitude (Russell, 2002). Kelly (1996) defines leisure as “an activity chosen primarily for the experience itself (p. 31). Nevertheless, many of the Grannies did not choose activism for their leisure. Some of the Grannies viewed leisure as frivolous and non-work, which is often a typical image of leisure (Reid, 1995). One Granny remarked (via e-mail) that perhaps leisure academics need to make the literature more available to the layperson to change the stereotype of leisure. Furthermore, the concerns that the Grannies expressed around viewing their activism as leisure suggests something important to leisure researchers and scholars namely, we need to ensure we “hear” the views of those participants whose beliefs and experiences

point them to something other than segmentation of aspects of everyday life and social scientists' need to classify and label behaviours.

Putting aside the participants' beliefs on leisure, I would have to argue that activism is civil leisure. Similarly to Mair's (2002/2003) study, there was a leisure component to the Grannie's activism and had very similar characteristics to serious leisure. Also, the Grannies did describe their experience in terms such as "fun", "enjoyable", "great", and "energizing". Referring to Stebbin's (2002) work, I would further argue that activism is a form of volunteering, hence leisure. It is true the Grannies feel obligated to leave a better world for the younger generation yet what they do is an agreeable obligation (Stebbin, 2002). The Raging Grannies are certainly not coerced by an obligation to be involved in activism. It is by choice the Grannies engage in activism. Further, there were some Grannies who did see the leisure aspects of their activism. Granny N, who also defined herself as a part-time Granny and employed, commented:

I would call it leisure because it's optional. It's an activity that has a lot of free time, because it's certainly not work in an oppressive way. It's an activity that has a lot of free time, because it's certainly not work in an oppressive way. It's very energizing and it's a cheap hobby because I don't make a lot of money in my job. And the thing is that you can go when you want [to meetings, demonstration, etc.]. I had a good time going to the meeting last night with these people, I hate going knowing that I have to go as I would rather sit at home and read but once I am there, I find it quite interesting and the people are great and you get an evening out. It's like an evening's entertainment at no cost. It's a club without any fees which is nice and it's good exercise you know because you are marching. But yeah, it's not my identity, it's a club that I go to and it's fun so yes, I would think it was leisure if leisure is the opposite of work and I would call it leisure if it's optional and yes, the

Grannies are optional (Granny N, 14: 302-313).

Granny M also viewed the Raging Grannies as leisure because it was a choice: I suppose you could say it was leisure because you take it on because you want to (18: 381-387). Granny I shared a similar belief that leisure as well as the Raging Grannies include choice: oh gosh, I guess because so many of us are retired that all our time is leisure time but you know, we do choose to do it, so yes, it's leisure (85: 157-158).

Perhaps the Grannies' challenge of the notion of leisure is not a symptom of ageism because of the stereotype that older adults do meaningless and passive activities and the Raging Grannies would certainly not want to associate themselves with that image. Perhaps these women also view leisure as more personal selfish act; therefore they would not see their activism as leisure. Further, since the Grannies challenge convention to begin with, perhaps it should not be surprising that they would also challenge the academic concept of leisure.

Reflections on the Findings

The findings from this study point to the conclusion that the role of activism is the expression of shared life experiences and shared values. Further, the Raging Grannies provide the space for older women to express their collective life experiences, particularly in the context of working toward a more just, fair, and sustainable society. Within this community of women their actions are stronger by virtue of the social capital that they have, individually and

collectively available to them, which they use in bringing about social change.

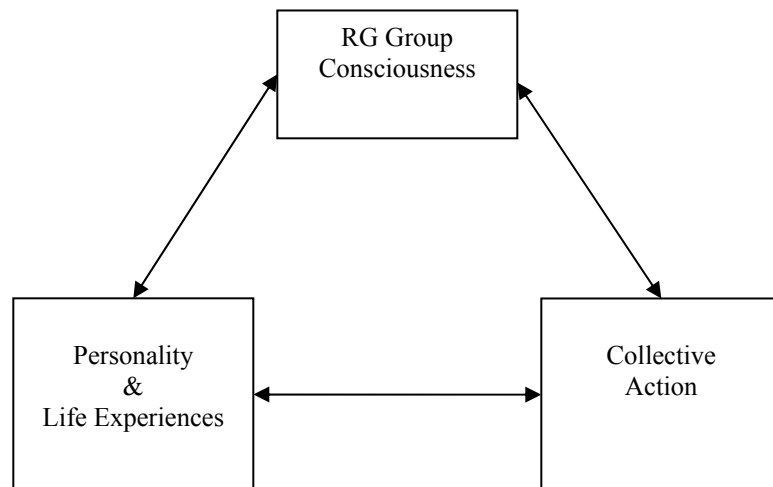
According to the literature, an activist's social identity, common interests and common life experiences, including education, occupation, background of residence, friendship networks, contradictions in one's socialization, and witnessing of oppression, can influence the participation in collective action (Burn, Aboud, & Moyles, 2000; Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004; McDonald, 2002; Searle-Chatterjee, 1999; Williamson, 1998). Further, involvement in collective action provides a space where an activist's life experiences and social identity are validated (Burn, Aboud, & Moyles, 2000; Liss, Crawford, & Popp, 2004; McDonald, 2002; Searle-Chatterjee, 1999; Williamson, 1998).

Duncan (1999) conducted a survey with mid-life and younger women activists who shared similar backgrounds and concluded that common personalities and life experiences (such as education, political salience, and life experience with oppression) contributed to a group consciousness and that group consciousness in turn motivates collective action. Also, Duncan (1999) suggested that group consciousness can give meaning to one's life experiences. It is also possible that group consciousness and collective action can affect life experiences, that collective action can contribute to the development of group consciousness, and similarly collective action can affect personality and life experiences through group consciousness (as suggested in Figure 4).

Surveys conducted by Simon, Stürmer, Loewy, Weber, Freytag, Habig, Kampmeier, and Spahlinger (1998) on older adult activists and gay rights activists concluded that common life experiences contributed to identifying with

a movement which in turn invoked a willingness to participate in collective action. Polleta and Jasper (2001) also concluded that activists who share similar life experiences make solidarity behaviour a reasonable expectation. As well, collective action reinforces an individual's sense of self, values, attitudes, and previous life experiences (Polleta & Jasper, 2001; Ritzer, 2000; Wallace & Wolf, 1999).

Figure 4: Duncan's Model of Group Consciousness and Collective Action



Researchers who have conducted surveys on mid-life feminist activists found that veterans of the women's movement brought their feminist experiences and values with them when they joined other social movement organizations (such as the peace movement). Further, their previous ideas, tactics, and style of protest from one movement often spill over to affect other social movements (Liss et al., 2004; Meyer & Whittier, 1994). Narushima (2004) found in her study of the Raging Grannies that the women's activism

was a symbolic extension of their roles as responsible and caring grandmothers and that the Raging Grannies provided a space for the women to express themselves in creative ways.

McDonald (2002) indicated that there are new social movements (which he refers to as affinity groups) that are made up of five to 15 people who share similar bonds, and are based on a form of connection and a shared action objective. These groups reflect the convergence of the people who act through them, versus “organized expressions” of a group, class or community and involvement draws on “skill sharing” brought by each member. In addition, it is the action that expresses the member as opposed to the function that each member performs. The member affirms her/himself and acts through the group. The basis of these action groups is friend-like relationships where reciprocal relationships based on respect and trust are created.

According to some of the gerontological literature, many older adults regard old age as an opportunity for continued human development, for older adults bring knowledge of accumulated experiences in the mature years (Andrews, 1999; Auger & Tedford-Little, 2002; Friedan, 1993; Karp, 2000; Kaufman, 1986). For many older adults, old age was the culminating chapter of a lifetime’s work. Perhaps one’s political philosophy becomes modified but one’s basic belief remains the same (Andrews, 1999; Auger & Tedford-Little, 2002; Friedan, 1993; Karp, 2000; Kaufman, 1986). Therefore, attitudes and behaviours based on a sense of civic duty that began early in life will often

continue in the older years because one has developed the necessary skills for working towards social change (Burr et al., 2002).

Moreover, according to some researchers, now that the women's movement is maturing so are the younger feminist activists who bring their common life experiences with them into their mature years (Bigg, 2004; Liss et al., 2004; Polleta & Jasper, 2001; Reinharz, 1997; Steinem, 1983). Older activists can bring their acquired skills and knowledge into old age to continue working for social change. In addition, older women can use the past as source material from which to also challenge stereotypical views of older women (Bigg, 2004; Greer, 1991). With their accumulated knowledge through life experiences, older women now have the tools to form collective action as well as collectively act to empower themselves through the creation of spaces where there is the building of relationships based upon feelings of trust, reciprocity, and commonality which are developed through continued interaction and a sense of belonging, acceptance, affirmation, and mutual aid (Browne, 1998; Cox & Parson, 1996; Narushima, 2004; MacRae, 1990). Thus, the Raging Grannies provided the space and environment where these older women had the opportunity to collectively continue to work for social justice.

Furthermore, the role of activism in the lives of the Raging Grannies is to assist in challenging ageism by transforming the traditional image of older women as weak, passive, and dependent, into an image of strong, political, and independent old women. To repeat an earlier statement from Granny A:

We deliberately mock being old and we are quite happy to do this. I think we are picking on that image and saying yes, we are here, we exist and we wish to make a powerful statement (Granny A, 26: 585).

Activism also provided these women a tool of empowerment by taking control through the selection of their own symbols, situations, and people and challenging the status quo. The role of activism is also giving the Raging Grannies the opportunity to come together as a community to educate and make a better world (Granny K, 2: 41). Further, activism gives these women freedom away from the expectations of their youth, as Granny B stated: There is a freedom being with other older women. There's a freedom away from younger expectations (Granny B, 2: 58).

The role of activism also provides the Raging Grannies an opportunity to continue expressing their creative side, as many of them were involved in the theatre, in singing, and poetry, before joining the Raging Grannies. As Granny L stated when I asked why she became interested in the Raging Grannies:

Remember I told you that I started in the street theatre and was it. I loved the acting and nothing was happening in [name of city]. There was a march and a demonstration and when I heard there was this group of women, that were doing this and how they were doing it and there were terrific songs. I thought there is your street theatre again (Granny L, 11:41-47).

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of my study is the loss of potential data. Originally, 20 Grannies volunteered to be interviewed but five of the women

eventually withdrew from the study for a variety of reasons including being uncomfortable with the “formality” of the research procedures, being unable to finish reviewing transcripts and themes within the requested deadline, and one Granny changed the time of the interview three times and finally, I was unable to conduct the interview due to time constraints. My intent, when I began this research, was to engage in participant observation; however, I was denied permission to attend events and meetings due to the “formality” of the project. Engaging in participant observation would have certainly added further to my data.

Another area where data was lost was during the review of the interview transcripts by the participants. Some of the Grannies removed quotes I assumed were very important, reworded quotes, depersonalized some of the interview, and others shortened the interview transcription a great deal; a similar event transpired when their reviews of the themes were returned. If time had permitted, I would have returned to the field and asked the Grannies why they made the changes. One final area of data loss during the focus group/presentation was that the Grannies did not want the sessions audio-taped. However, I did forward to the Grannies who attended the presentation the notes I had taken after the presentation for their review.

As stated in the Methods Chapter of this thesis, the intent of a qualitative study is not to generalize findings to other cases but to gain an in-depth understanding of a particular case. All the same, I question whether my study meets transferability. The Raging Grannies only represented one group of

older adults; other considerations such as, ethnicity, working-class, and non-English speaking groups were not included in this research. In addition, all the women I interviewed, with the exception of four, were from Maritime Gaggles. Attempts were made to contact other Gaggles from Ontario in order to have a more equal representation, but I had no volunteers except for the women who were members of one Central Canada Gaggle. Perhaps the reasoning was that at the same time I was conducting my interviews, two other graduate students were also interviewing Grannies from Ontario.

During some of the interviews, I became aware of how some Grannies steered their answers to more of a discussion on who the Raging Grannies were than their own personal meanings of the experience of being involved with the Raging Grannies. Some did state they were uncomfortable speaking about themselves and would rather speak about the Grannies. Some of the Grannies were very frank about not answering some questions and expressed how they felt about some of the questions asked. I feared there may not have been any consistency when analyzing the data. During some of the interviews, I also felt I was under scrutiny when some Grannies asked many questions regarding ethic policies surrounding my research which concerned me as I wanted to establish rapport with these women.

A final limitation was the perspective guiding my research, feminist gerontology. It has been debated in feminist literature that feminist research should only be directed towards reversing women's oppression (Kelly, Burton, & Regan, 1994). It is difficult to actually state in this thesis that the Raging

Grannies are an oppressed group. Some of the research does indicate that many older women involved in activism are women of privilege (Jacobs, 1993). The literature also states that many older women, regardless of social privilege, still face some sort of ageism and sexism (Jacobs, 1993). There is also criticism of feminist research: since feminism is so diverse, there is no consensus on what does or does not constitute feminist methodology; feminism is exclusionary; feminism requires some concept of a community of women, yet the assumption is that all women share political interests in common; and feminism implies empowerment but it raises the issue about who should be making that decision and how these decisions are made (Ramazanoğlu with Holland, 2002).

Suggestions for Future Research

The following suggestions are not only from the lessons I have learned but also from the women I interviewed.

- From reading the feminist literature on humour very little has been written on older women. A study on the role of humour in the lives of older women would make a contribution to the literature.
- Some theorists have argued that feminist gerontology concentrates too exclusively on women and not enough on older men (Calasanti, 2004). Perhaps a future research area would be to explore the role of older men in political or social organizations such as The Knights of Columbus, The Lions, and The Elks. This research would not only contribute to the field of gerontology but to the literature on social movements as well. In addition, it was obvious the spouses of the Grannies played an

important support role but it was from the perspective of the Grannies themselves. What role do the spouses play from their perspective?

- It was suggested by some of the Grannies that perhaps a comparison study on a younger feminist group similar to the Raging Grannies and an older feminist group would contribute to the literature.
- According to Day (2000) there has much research on women's public experiences but little research has been conducted on older women's public space.
- Areas that have been lacking in research include other populations of older activists such as Aboriginal women, women of colour, French-speaking women, and low-income women. Actually, some of the Grannies I interviewed questioned why the Grannies only attract white, middle-class, well educated women. Granny A and I did discuss some of the reasons why the Raging Grannies only attract a certain class of women. During our conversation we mentioned that perhaps those from the working-class do not have the time or finances to take part in activism. Further, for some older women living on very low income, joining a group of middle-upper class activists would certainly not be a priority in their lives. For non-Caucasians perhaps they would feel uncomfortable or not accepted in a group dominated by white Anglo women.
- Conducting a narrative analysis on the Raging Grannies would also be interesting as the Grannies tell their stories through music.

In Conclusion

The Raging Grannies provides a space for a group of older women who are activists to challenge the conventional views of growing old and of being an old woman. It allows older women who have been activists to create community and an opportunity to express who they want to be without having to conform to society's expectations. The Raging Grannies also provides a forum for older women who have been activists to use creativity as a vehicle to fight injustices while having fun.

I hope this study will contribute to feminist gerontology, leisure studies, and to the literature on social movements. This study may also help to dispel the myths of aging, especially those surrounding older women who are activists. Furthermore, through this study my intention was to benefit the Grannies by giving them the opportunity to share their stories.

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Appendix A: Invitation Letter

University of Waterloo letterhead

Date

Dear Raging Grannies:

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my doctoral degree in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo, under the supervision of Professor Alison Pedlar. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

Many older women who spent their earlier years in solitary work and/or nurturing roles are now discovering the external world of activism, politics, and social causes. Yet, the academic literature as well as the public fails to recognise older women involved in activism. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore the role of activism in the lives of older women. More specifically, my interest is the experiences of women involved with the Raging Grannies. Of particular interest is to understand how and why older women become involved in activism and what role it fills in the lives of older women.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 90 minutes in length, to take place in a mutually agreed upon location. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, you will be invited to review a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish.

Upon completion of the analysis of the interview data you will be invited to attend a telephone conference session with other Grannies who participates in the study to provide feedback on the findings and the research process. The telephone conference will occur approximately in August 2005 and be approximately 90 minutes in length. I wish this research to be a collaboration; however, you may decline the invitation to participate in the research process. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, unless you

choose otherwise. With your permission anonymous quotations (unless you choose otherwise) may be also be used.

Sometimes a certain photograph clearly shows a particular feature or detail that would be helpful in teaching or when presenting the study results at a scientific presentation or in a publication. Therefore, I with your permission I wish to take photos of Grannies during invited demonstrations with the understanding that you will not be identified by name. Before any demonstration I will discuss with each Chapter, if they have any objections with me taking photographs and if photographs are taken I will obtain the consent of the each Granny in the pictures to use the photos in my research.

Data collected during this study will be retained for one year in a locked office. Any paper copies and tapes will be kept for two years and electronic copies will kept indefinitely. Only my advisor, co-advisors, and myself will have access. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you are interested in participating in this study please contact me at 519-888-4567, ext. 3894 or by email at lcaissi@ahsmaail.uwaterloo.ca. If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information, please contact me at the above number or email. You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Alison Pedlar at (519) 888-4567 ext. 3758 or email apedlar@healthy.uwaterloo.ca.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics, University of Waterloo. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes of the Office of Research Ethics at (519) 888-4567, ext. 6005.

I hope that the results of my study will be of benefit to you, other older women, and other individuals involved in activism, as well as to the broader research community.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Yours sincerely,

Linda T. Caissie, Student Researcher

Appendix B: Letter sent to the Contact Person for the Raging Granny Chapters

University of Waterloo Logo

Date

Dear [name of contact person for Raging Granny Chapter]:

Further to our recent telephone/email exchange, this letter is to request permission to mail letters outlining my research study to your chapter members. I am conducting a study on women who are involved with the Raging Grannies, as part of my doctoral degree in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo under the supervision of Professor Alison Pedlar. Therefore, I am seeking volunteers willing to participate in my study. Please find enclosed a copy of the letter for your review. If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information, do not hesitate to contact me at 519-888-4567, ext. 3894 or by email at ltcaissi@ahsmail.uwaterloo.ca. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics, University of Waterloo.

I hope that the results of my study will be of benefit to you, older women, and other individuals involved in activism, as well as to the broader research community.

I thank you in advance for your assistance and look forward to speaking with you again soon.

Yours sincerely,

Linda T. Caissie,

Student Researcher

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Introductions:

To begin with, thank you for taking the time to be interviewed. The interview will take about an hour and a half. I would also like to ask for your written consent to be interviewed. This is part of the University of Waterloo's ethics procedure and requires the signing of this form. The form is basically confirming your permission to be part of this research, such as this interview today, and at a later point in the study I may invite you to attend a telephone conference session with other Grannies for further clarification and collaboration on the findings I collect.

With your permission I wish to tape record the interviews to be certain I have your own words rather than my paraphrasing of your words. I will be taking down some notes in case there are technical problems. The only people who will have access to the tapes and your transcribed data will be me, my advisor, and my two co-advisors. Although I will be using quotes in my thesis, your identity will be kept confidential unless you specifically request otherwise.

The following interview questions are only a guideline. You may decline answering any of the questions. During the interview, feel free to contribute what you feel is relevant. I am only interested in your experience. You may also stop participating in the study or interview at any time without explanation.

Sample Questions³⁸

I have a number of topics I wish to explore but mainly I am interested in your experience/story with the Raging Grannies and what it means to you as an older woman to be involved in activism.

Would you like to begin the interview now? Is it okay if I turn the tape recorder on now?

1. Could you please tell me a bit about yourself?
 - How would you describe yourself (your interests, personality, characteristics, preferences, and roles)?

³⁸ These questions will be used only as a guideline. Questions may change during the interview based on new information that may emerge or due to unique individual experience.

- How would you describe yourself compared to most other older women your age?
2. Tell me about the Raging Grannies.
 - Would you equate the work of the Raging Grannies with activism? Why or why not?
 3. How did you become involved in the Raging Grannies?
 - Why were you interested in this group?
 - Does the Gaggle you are involved in have a dominant social issue that they work on?
 - How long have you been a Granny?
 - Do you consider yourself to be an activist? Why or why not?
 - Do you see yourself as a feminist?
 - How important is your involvement in the Raging Grannies?
 4. Can you tell me what it is like to be involved in activism with other older women?
 - What is your relationship with the other Grannies?
 - How important are the friendships with other women?
 - Do you have a feeling of being part of a community? Explain.
 5. How would describe your involvement in activism?
 - What are the positive aspects of being involved?
 - If there are any negative aspects could you describe those for me?
 - Did you learn new skills or information to be able to do what you do? Tell me about it.
 6. As an older woman what does being involved in activism mean to you?
 - Have your social values changed since being involved in the Raging Grannies? If so how? Why?
 - How does your activism fit in to the rest of your life?
 - Does it contribute to the rest of your life, how?
 7. What do your family and friends think about your involvement in the Raging Grannies/activism?
 - How do you think the general public views older women involved in activism? Why?
 - Do you think the Raging Grannies reinforce ageing stereotypes of older women the public may have? Why or why not?
 8. What is the role of leisure in your life?
 - How would you define leisure?
 - In what type of leisure activities are you involved?

- As an older woman is leisure important in your life? Why? Why not?
 - Do you feel you have enough leisure or too much?
9. Would you define your involvement in the Raging Grannies or in activism as leisure? As volunteerism? Why or why not?
 10. Looking back on your life what stands out most for you?
 11. Would there be anything you would change?
 12. What is your vision for the future?
-
13. Is there any advice you could give to other older women involved in social issues or activism?
 - Is there any advice you could give to the younger generation of women interested in activism?
 14. What other thoughts or comments you would like to share?

Appendix D: Documentation Sheet

Information about the interview and interviewer

Identifier for the interviewee:

Date of the interview:

Place of the interview:

Duration of the interview:

Marital status of participant:

Approximate age:

Employment status:

Profession:

Highest level of formal education:

Wish to review transcribed interview:

Wish to be contacted regarding the telephone conference session:

Additional Notes regarding interview:

Appendix E: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Linda Caissie of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be tape recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher. I am also aware that I may withdraw consent for the use of photographs at any time without penalty.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at (519) 888-4567 ext. 6005.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

YES NO

I agree to have my interview tape recorded.

YES NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

YES NO

By my own choosing the researcher may use my real name in the study.

YES NO

Participant Name: _____ (Please print)

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Focus Group/Presentation Session: Verbal Statement

To begin with, thank you for taking the time to be part of this session. This session will be a discussion of the research findings in order to obtain your feedback on those findings. This session will take about an hour and a half. With your permission I wish to tape record the session to be certain I have your own words rather than my paraphrasing of your words. I will be taking down some notes in case there are technical problems. The only people who will have access to the tapes and your transcribed data will be me, my advisor, and my two co-advisors. Although I will be using quotes in my thesis, your identity will be kept confidential unless you specifically request otherwise.

Remember that your participation is voluntary. You may decline answering any of the questions. During the session, feel free to contribute what you feel is relevant. I am only interested in your experience. You may also stop participating in the study or this session at any time without explanation. All information you provide will be considered confidential and grouped with responses from other participants. You will not be identified by name, unless otherwise stated, in the report that I produce for this session. The information collected from this session will be kept for a period of one year in secure location.

Given the group format of this session I ask you to keep in confidence information that identifies or could potentially identify a participant and/or her comments.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo.

Are there any questions or concerns?

May we begin?

Appendix G: Focus Group/Presentation Session

Date

Title of Final Project:

Organizer: Linda Caissie, University of Waterloo, Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies (519) 884-4567 ext. 3894

The Focus Group/Presentation session focuses on discussion of the research findings in order to obtain participant feedback on those findings and will be facilitated by Linda Caissie, student researcher.

Participation in this session is voluntary and will take approximate 90 minutes in length for input and discussion of the issues associated with women who are members of the Raging Grannies. There are no known or anticipated risks to your participation in this session. You may decline answering any questions you feel you do not wish to answer and may decline contributing to the session in other ways if you so wish. All information you provide will be considered confidential and grouped with responses from other participants. Your name will not be identified with the input you give to this session. Further, you will not be identified by name in the report that the facilitator produces for this session. The information collected from this session will be kept for a period of one year in secure location.

Given the group format of this session we will ask you to keep in confidence information that identifies or could potentially identify a participant and/or her comments. If you have any questions about participation in this session, please feel free to discuss these with the researcher, or later, by contacting Professor Alison Pedlar at (519) 888-4567, ext. 3758.

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. However, the final decision about participation is yours. Should you have comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes in the Office of Research Ethics at (519) 888-4567, ext. 6005.

Thank you for your assistance with this project. In appreciation of your time given to this research process I will send an executive summary of this research in the format of a newsletter.

Yours sincerely,

Linda Caissie, Student Researcher

Appendix H: Agreement to Participate in the Focus Group/Presentation Session

Agreement to Participate

I have read the information presented in the information letter about the focus group session that will be facilitated by Linda Caissie, student researcher. I have had the opportunity to ask the researcher any questions related to this session, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted. I am aware that I may withdraw from the session without penalty at any time by advising the researcher of this decision.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. I understand that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at (519) 888-4567 ext. 6005.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this session and to keep in confidence information that could identify specific participants and/or the information they provided.

Print Name

Signature

Date

Appendix I: Thank you letter

University of Waterloo Letterhead

Date

Dear [name of participant],

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study. As a reminder, the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of older women involved with the Raging Grannies. The data collected during interviews and focus groups will contribute to a better understanding of women's activism.

Please remember that any data pertaining to yourself as an individual participant will be kept confidential, unless you choose to have your name used. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this study, I plan on sharing this information with the research community through seminars, conferences, presentations, and journal articles. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at either the phone number or email address listed at the bottom of the page. If you would like a summary of the results, please let me know now by providing me with your email address. When the study is completed, I will send it to you. The approximate date of completion will be August 2006.

As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes in the Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, ext., 6005.

Yours Sincerely,

Linda Caissie,
Student Researcher
University of Waterloo
Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies
519-888-4567 Ext. 3894
ltcaissi@ahsmail.uwaterloo.ca

Appendix J: Raging Grannies Symbols



Granny Mascot

Source: Roy, 2004: p.1



The RG Canadian Flag

Source: Acker & Brightwell, 2004: p. 186



Umbrella with holes symbolizing acid rain

Source: Roy, 2004: p. 7

Appendix K: The Raging Grannies a Threat?

Cartoon reads: “I tell you. Blanche...it’s a whole different world since people found out the Raging Grannies were on the ‘APEC Threat List’...”



Caption Reads: “Cartoon by Graham Harrop pokes fun at the RCMP of being suspicious of the Raging Grannies as anti Canadian” (Roy, 2004: p. 153).

Appendix L: Examples of Granny Songs

Farewell to Recreation

Tune: Farewell to Nova Scotia

Farewell to recreation
Farewell to sports
Farewell to able bodies all
For we'll all grow fat
And our minds will all grow weak
And our future will-be-oh-so bleak
It's sad to leave the baseball fields
It's sad to leave our hockey rings
But we can't afford to pay the fee
That H-R-M requires of me
Exercise is important
For healthy minds to grow
Exercise is healthy, don't you know
For without it we will surely grow ill
And the government will have a bigger health bill.

(**Source:** Halifax Raging Grannies, Recreation Nova Scotia, 2nd Annual Conference,
Halifax, NS, October 30, 1999)

Recreation

Tune: Chorus of Muriel goes
Country, Heartbreaks by the Number

We need playgrounds in large numbers, and hiking trails galore
Pools and courts, of every sort...and big gym-na-si-ums
So we can sing and play and dance, and have a lot of fun
It's part of life, a special spice, called rec-re-action

Now, health and recreation...they go hand in hand
When the cutbacks come, we don't run, we have to take a stand
Tell all the politicians...how to create wealth
Spend money on recreation, an investment in our health.

(**Source:** Halifax Raging Grannies, Recreation Nova Scotia, 2nd Annual Conference,
Halifax, NS, October 30, 1999)

Missiles Keep Falling on our Heads

Tune: Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head

Missiles keep falling on our heads
Left-over garbage from the US Star Wars
Bush says it's self defence...but
We want a neighbour who won't pose as a saviour.

One thing we know, it that,
A hard hat won't protect you
If they really want to deck you.

Missiles keep falling on our heads
We'll all be fine if we just duck and cover
That's what the US says...but
Who will defend us when it gets too horrendous.
Thank you the most. We don't want to be toast.

(Source: Winnifred Loucks Collection, Ottawa Gaggle)

Rebel Grannies Rap

(wearing back-to-front caps)

We're rebel Raging Grannies and we're really, really cool
We don't give a damn for any icky-picky rule.
We might be over eighty, we might be in our teens.
We bet you can't tell when we're wearing our jeans.
May be we've no grand-kids, maybe we've got ten.
We might be square or gay. We might even be men.

We don't do aprons and we don't do bonnets.
We think lace went out along with sonnets.
We wear what we like and we like what we wear.
We might have curlers or spikes in our hair.
If you're into flowers, we think that's fine
But don't expect us to toe your line.

We won't bust our heads defining our mission
Or trying to get a unified position.
We want to get a unified position.
We want to make waves, we want to kick ass.
And nobody's telling us to keep off the grass.
To be a raging Granny is an attitude.
If you've got it, flaunt it. You're our kind of dude.
(Source: Winnifred Loucks Collection, Ottawa Gaggle)

Appendix M: Not a Stereotypical Granny



Source: Acker & Brightwell, 2004: p. xv

Appendix N: Grannies in Action



Source: Hadrill, J. (2005, Spring). Coming of age. *Nature Canada*, 22-23.



Source: Thoughtful democracy. (2004, June 25). The Advertiser [Wolfville, NS], p. 2.
Courtesy: Margot Bishop, Wolfville Gaggle.