**UNDERSTANDING THE COMPLEXITY OF RURAL WOMEN'S
OPPRESSION THROUGH AN ANALYSIS OF THE COLLECTIVE
VALUES, BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF RURAL WOMEN
VOLUNTEERS**

by

Susan Kasprzak, B.A. (Hons.)

A thesis submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Geography and Environmental Studies

Carleton University
Ottawa Ontario
September 2004

©2004, Susan Kasprzak

Library and
Archives Canada

Bibliothèque et
Archives Canada

Published Heritage
Branch

Direction du
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

ISBN: 0-612-98974-7

Our file Notre référence

ISBN: 0-612-98974-7

NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

Canada

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to examine the complexity of rural women's oppression. The study was conducted with rural women who were active members of voluntary organizations within the Town of Renfrew, Ontario. Using a semi-structured interview approach, I focused on their personal values, beliefs and practices. In contrast to earlier approaches that constructed all rural women as static and oppressed on the basis that they are all subject to rural patriarchal relations, I argue that rural women are active agents in the construction and maintenance of configurations of power relations that unevenly impact on all rural women. Patriarchal relations and class formations are thus, reflective of differences that exist among women, and are dependent on human action, negotiation and struggle. I further argue, from a post-structural perspective, that because spatiality and discourse are fluid and changing, power relations are also subject to transformation.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank a number of persons for their tremendous support throughout this research process. As a result of their involvement, I achieved a level of understanding of rural women's experiences that far exceeded my own expectations.

First of all, I would like to thank my dear friends, Peg, Linda and Jennie, for their encouragement and support through many years of personal struggle.

Thank you to Chris, and my sons, Aaron and Simon, for being a very important part of my life.

I would like to extend much thanks to my advisor, Fran Klodawsky, for her endless patience and support throughout this entire project. Thank-you Fiona Mackenzie for your insights.

Finally, I wish to thank all of the women who took time from their busy lives to participate in this study. Thank you so much for inviting me into your homes and sharing personal stories and experiences with me.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	v
 Chapter One: Introduction	 1
 Chapter Two: Rural Women and Oppression - Situating the Problem	 17
 Chapter Three: Exploring Rural Women's Identities	 28
 Chapter Four: Methodology	 42
 Chapter Five: Analysis of My Investigation	 61
 Chapter Six: Conclusions	 100
 References	 114
 Appendices	
Appendix A: Research Questions	132
Appendix B: Letters of Consent and Introduction	134

List of Tables

Table	Description	Page
1.0	Population Trends – Ontario and Renfrew	20
2.0	Education – Highest Grade Level Achieved - Ontario and Renfrew	21
3.0	Reliance on Government Transfers (% of income) for Ontario and Renfrew – 1986 and 2001	22
4.0	Labor Force Participation Rate for Men and Women in Ontario and Renfrew – 1976 and 2001	23
5.0	Unemployment Rate for Men and Women in Ontario and Renfrew – 1976 and 2001	23
6.0	Average Earnings (all persons with earnings) in Ontario and Renfrew – 2001	24
7.0	Lone Parents – Ontario and Renfrew – 1976 and 2001	24
8.0	Voluntary Organizations Represented in this Research Study	58

Chapter One

Introduction

The Journal of Rural Studies (Cloke, 1997a) observed that a vast improvement in the quantity and quality of rural research within the past twenty years has helped to advance an understanding of rurality, providing greater insight into cultural influences that have contributed to the marginalization of those residing in rural communities. Rural research is now considered crucial to the process of understanding issues and solutions relating to social and economic changes that have taken their toll in rural communities across Canada. In towns such as Renfrew, Ontario, the demise of manufacturing, the widespread job loss, and the permanent closure of plants over the past twenty years have eliminated secure, well-paying jobs and replaced them with low-paying and non-unionized employment, many of which has been filled by women (Statistics Canada, 2004).

Economic and social changes in North America and Europe have redefined the meaning and structure of rural communities, transforming familial gender relations and impacting on rural women's lives (Burgh & Endevelde 1994, Whatmore et al 1994, Shortall 1994), and yet, definitions of

‘rural’ and ‘rural woman’ have changed only minimally (Little & Austin, 1996). Rurality and notions of women’s place continue to be firmly based on a definitive set of boundaries and/or concepts rooted in past images of homogeneity, tradition and self-sufficiency (Flora, et al 1992, Little 1994, 1996, 1997, Cloke et al 1994, Halfacree 1993, Murdoch & Pratt 1993, Philo 1992). Despite harsh economic realities, rural communities are portrayed as safe, happy and secure places where individuals look after one another, and women happily assume domestic roles as wives and mothers (Little, 1994).

The contradictions embodied in the terms ‘rural’ and ‘rural woman’ highlight the difficulties in defining them for there no longer exists a single point of reference against which these terms can be measured. The ‘rural’ is no longer mappable as a distinct physical or social location; each way of defining it is saturated with assumptions (Murdoch & Pratt 1997, Pratt 1996). Similarly, definitions of ‘rural women’ are problematic since for some the term implies women in agriculture, but for others it is inclusive of all women who live outside the major urban population centers (Grace & Lennie, 1998). Differences in the ways that ‘rural’ and ‘rural woman’ are conceived are reflective of the movement within rural gender studies from seeing the rural as a ‘container’ for the creation and contestation of gender

roles to understanding 'rural' as central to the construction of gender identities (Little & Panelli, 2003).

Davidoff et al (1976) were among the first to associate the 'rural' with a dominant ideology that situates the man as breadwinner and woman as wife and mother. Since then, other researchers have been instrumental in documenting the social and economic inequalities associated with this traditional dichotomy (Stebbing 1984, Dempsey 1987). The movement in rural research from a focus on "social formations to more cultural interrogations and critiques of the meanings and practices of community" (Little & Panelli, 2003: 283) has demonstrated how dominant constructions of 'rural' and 'rural women' have limited women's opportunities in the labor market. An initial emphasis of rural research on the role of farmwomen and the patriarchal relations in which their lives are positioned (Whatmore 1990, Shortall 1992, Evans & Ilbery 1996) has therefore broadened to consider rural women and the labor market in more general terms, with more of an emphasis on gender identities (Little 1991, 1997, Hughes 1997).

What is important to realize is that gender studies within rural geography continues to develop in response to economic changes that have

transformed the social and cultural structure of rural communities. These changes have prompted the need for new research that approaches rural gender studies from a much more inclusive perspective in order to provide new insights regarding the workings of rural communities and women's roles and identities within them, and to consider how "negotiations over gender, power and space are implicated in changing notions of the countryside" (Little & Panelli, 2003: 287). Recent feminist approaches to rural research have further focused on the fluidity and diversity of women's experiences (Liepins 2000, Morris & Evans 2001). Postmodern and post-structural perspectives have been applied to such studies for the purposes of understanding how gender identities are constructed, re-constructed and contested (Little & Panelli, 2003).

My approach to studying rural women represents a direct response to this need for broader notions of 'rural' and 'rural women' within a context of social and economic change. I wanted to investigate the extent to which power relations within a rural community continue to influence women's experiences and opportunities, as well as the extent to which these relations are changing. Consequently, I purposely chose not to focus a study of rural women's oppression entirely on any one particular group such as, for

example, farmwomen. Instead, I chose to draw on the wider population of women within a rural community who consider themselves rural, and to examine the diversity that exists within this category. I argue that it is this diversity of expression of identities and experiences that is an essential aspect of feminist research. A deconstruction of the meanings of 'rural' and 'rural woman' through the words and stories of the women themselves represents an effort to extend research beyond existing categorizations and representations. Postmodernism is an appropriate theoretical approach to this end, as it does not limit an understanding of women to a single category but takes into consideration the differences and differences in perception that exist among women (Butler, 1995).

As part of my focus on the extent to which rural gender and power relations are transforming and changing, I treat 'gender' and 'rurality' not as fixed, unchanging categories, but as unstable and interactive reference points constructed through social and cultural practices which give them meaning. Similarly, power must be understood as "everywhere inscribed, in and by women...in theory as well as in practice, in difference as well as in unity" (Gibson-Graham, 1994: 214). As a result, women are recognized as capable

of reinforcing existing gender roles and expectations as well as changing them.

Employing post-structuralism and the concept of language or discourse is invaluable to these efforts as they help to explain how collective identities of members of voluntary organizations are produced and/or reproduced or maintained for “language encodes, constructs and reproduces the hegemonic values and culture of a society or community, including its beliefs and ideologies” (Grace & Lennie 1998: 357, Todd & Fisher 1988). For the purposes of this research, language is understood not only in terms of how it “positions subjects in relations of empowerment and disempowerment” (Gibson-Graham 1994: 214), but more importantly, language is understood as a site of continuous negotiation and struggle over meaning. Language, like the spaces in which it occurs, is therefore regarded as fluid and changing for language not only defines traditional and patriarchal notions of women’s domestic roles and the private/public distinctions of spaces, but is also subject to the continuous threat of change. In response to this fluidity, voluntary groups must practice strict boundary maintenance in an ongoing struggle to ensure that “some voices are heard and dominate while others are silenced and suppressed” (Grace & Lennie,

1998: 357). An analysis of language as subject to change is therefore essential to understanding how subjectivities and social relations are produced and re-produced as well as transformed. I additionally draw on work in rural studies concerning the social construction of rurality and recent feminist theories concerning the fluidity and fragmented nature of rural gender identities.

My arguments clearly represent a challenge to previous studies that construct all rural women as passively subject to patriarchal gender relations. Such approaches not only contribute to rural women's further neglect and marginalization, but also fail to recognize the active agency of rural women in both maintaining class differences and patriarchal relations and contributing to the possibility of transformation of relations over time. Clearly, women's place in the rural community has traditionally been the home and family - private spaces, with voluntary activity an important extension of domestic roles and a valuable contribution to the workings of a rural area. However, while women's voluntary activities have been linked to the reinforcement of traditional gender relations and cultural constructions of rurality, other research suggests that voluntary involvement in rural areas also challenges these roles by providing women with their own identities

through a sense of membership or belonging to their communities (Teather 1996, 1997, Milroy Moore & Wismer 1994).

The active role that rural women play in both maintaining and transforming rural women's oppression was made especially clear to me when conducting the interviews as part of this research, for I soon discovered that none of the women perceived themselves as oppressed. Rural women engaged in voluntary activities expressed similar perceptions of increased status and increased levels of influence in the community and saw themselves as having taken a more active role outside their homes and families. As a result, these same women drew strong distinctions between themselves and the other women in the community. In fact, many of them considered themselves to be quite "privileged" in comparison with other rural women, based on their unpaid involvement in the community and their full-time roles and identities as wives and mothers. Differences were also expressed based on the particular voluntary organizations to which they belonged.

By looking more closely at the complexity and the fluidity of marginalization through an examination of rural women's values, beliefs and

practices, this research will attempt to explain oppression not simply as a result of patriarchal or cultural influences, but in response to the continuous reinforcement of configurations of power within the rural landscape, and the way these relations of power unevenly impact on rural women. In addition to realizing the differences between rural men and women, rural research must also consider the fact that not all rural women are alike and rural communities are not homogeneous. These are important issues because while there may have been growth in the extent of rural research, most researchers have failed to address the underlying problems that are currently confronting rural communities and their residents. Centering specifically on the diversity of experiences of rural women not only assists in uncovering important issues relating to rural oppression, but such an approach will, in turn, better inform policymakers who are charged with making responsive decisions in light of rural women's particular and distinctive needs and experiences.

In order to situate the problem, in Chapter Two of this research, I describe the economic and social changes that have happened in Renfrew over the past twenty to thirty years, and how these changes have more negatively impacted on rural women than rural men or urban residents. I

further argue that rural women are additionally disadvantaged as a result of definitions of 'rural' and 'rural women' that are based on mythical notions of homogeneity, self-sufficiency and domesticity. Most importantly, I will explain that it is the underlying structural factors relating to men's control over women and the control of one social class over another that maintain these inaccurate definitions of rurality and rural women and thereby reinforce rural women's oppression.

The aspects of time and change have only recently been incorporated into researchers' examinations of rural women. However, time and change are important considerations in research aimed at uncovering rural women's oppression since rural communities and the women who reside there are not static and unmoving. Instead, they are subject and responsive to all sorts of social, political and economic influences that, over time, have the potential of generating profound changes by altering the power that men have over women and the power of one class over another. While the patriarchal and traditional powers that maintain rural gendered relations are significant, the possibility of those relations transforming over time cannot be overlooked.

In Chapter Three, I will further explore my approach to the question of rural women and oppression by demonstrating how this research will address the problem. The first step will be to examine the attitudes and values of rural women, and these are best understood by examining the interface of individual and group behavior and the environment (Soja, 1985). The advantage of studying women as members of groups or collectives is the fact that they may be more willing to share personal values and experiences that are reflective of the particular organizations to which they belong than they would as individuals. Moreover, these stories and experiences are instrumental in examining the collective differences of women in the community since individual values, practices and beliefs that define their individual identities are also reflective of the group to which they belong.

Spatiality is considered an integral and inseparable aspect of place, and social relationships – values and beliefs produced within those spaces are integral to defining both individuals and groups (Soja, 1985). I am interested in uncovering rural women's expressions of values and beliefs in an effort to examine the power and influence that they have through their voluntary work. I intend to further reveal the extent to which rural women

use this power to create change within their community and the extent to which it is used to maintain the status quo, based on patriarchal and traditional definitions of women's place. This analysis will then be used to understand rural women's oppression, and establish how far rural women have come in their efforts to establish a "social praxis", or a reconstitution of rural spaces, directed toward the construction of new cultural roles and a redefining of rural gender relations.

A valuable contribution to this research in informing the unique experiences of rural women is the work of feminist geographer, Jo Little (1994, 1996, 1997, 1999). Initially, rural gender relations were believed to be built on mythical and idyllic notions of rurality, termed the 'rural idyll' and these notions, in turn, were deemed instrumental in defining rural women's domestic roles and identities that contributed to their oppression (Little 1994, 1996, 1997). However, Little (1999) now argues that there is far too much emphasis placed solely on the 'rural idyll' as a contributor to rural women's identities and oppression. Research must, instead, look beyond this catch phrase and more importantly, consider the influence of broader configurations of power such as the power of men over women, or patriarchy, and the power of women over other groups of women, as defined

by social class. Patriarchy is built on traditional and well-maintained notions that all women 'naturally' assume a subordinate and dependent role within relationships with their husbands, and it is believed to be far more ingrained in rural communities since idyllic notions and images of rural living are constructed on the basis of patriarchal and traditional ideology (Little, 1994). I build on Little's argument by explaining that women have an active role in producing and reproducing as well as changing these relations of power, and such efforts are reflected in their beliefs and practices. These collective values, beliefs and practices are instrumental in defining rural women's differences, and further serve to create and reinforce marginalization.

Patriarchal and class relations of power are further reflected and supported by a private/public distinction of space that, according to Duncan (1996: 127), "is deeply rooted in political philosophy, law, popular discourse and recurrent spatial structuring practices". A distinction is made between private spaces - the home and family as primarily women's places, and public spaces - the workplace as primarily a masculine place, based on the notion that "women's natures are such that they are properly subject to men and their place is in the private domestic sphere. Men properly inhabit and

rule within both spheres” (Pateman, 1987: 120). A public/private dichotomy therefore contributes to rural women’s oppression by reinforcing the same notions as those upon which the rural idyll is based, and by the fact that both are maintained by patriarchy (Duncan 1996).

As part of the examination of underlying power relations that contribute to rural women’s oppression, this research intends to employ Duncan’s (1996) and McDowell’s (1996, 1999) feminist critiques of how public and private are conceptualized for the purpose of analyzing the contradictions that such a dichotomy represents for rural women; how it assists in maintaining patriarchal gender relations as reflected in mythical notions of rurality, and the ways it “limits our conception of what constitutes the appropriate subject matter of politics” (Ackelsberg 1988: 301). I intend to emphasize that the rural idyll and private/public dichotomy have no distinct powers of their own, but are maintained by certain power relations - patriarchy and class, and that rural women are differentially situated with regards to these power relations as compared to rural men or urban residents.

This overview will demonstrate that not only is there a need for more extensive research centered in a rural environment, but also a need for

research that specifically addresses the needs and differences among rural women. In establishing these differences, researchers need to further define the boundaries that exist between groups of rural women by assessing the impact of social class. Class is central to establishing the acceptance or rejection of rural women within particular social spaces. An emphasis on class and the way that class is represented through certain values, activities and tastes enacted within particular spaces is invaluable for it explains how collective values are so closely connected with defining rural women's status and identity (Yodanis, 2002). However, class must also be treated as a fluid concept, and the struggles of women to maintain or change their class distinctions are a reflection of the degrees of movement and separation within the rural hierarchical system.

As part of the emphasis on oppression and the active role of rural women in establishing their roles and identities, this research will assess how rural women's sense of belonging to the community is evolving or changing. Long considered an important aspect of engaging in voluntary activities, a sense of belonging to the community provides rural women with the necessary conditions for affecting change (Staeheli, 1999), and yet, at the same time, the ideal of community tends to suppress differences and change

(Young, 1990b). Enhanced connections to a community through voluntary activity must therefore be understood from a spatial perspective in order to distinguish and measure efforts aimed at maintaining the dominant voices of women while suppressing all others, and efforts aimed at transforming power relations.

Chapter Four will describe the methodological process of this research and attempt to justify the particular approach that was taken in addressing the problem of rural women and oppression. All references to rural voluntary activity used throughout this thesis will represent a collective term for unpaid work that women engage in outside their homes and within their community with the intention of providing goods or services to a broad range of people.

In Chapter Five, I will present an analysis of the findings of my investigation in relation to my previously defined theoretical framework. Chapter six will develop conclusions and reflections on the findings of this research.

Chapter Two

Rural Women and Oppression – Situating the Problem

Over the past thirty years, Canada has been marked by widespread social and economic problems that have more particularly impacted on the lives of those residing in rural communities than those living in urban centers. Statistics highlight the growing issues of poverty and inequality in rural Canada, as represented by increased job loss and replacement of secure, unionized positions with low-paying, temporary and insecure employment. Such statistics further reveal, however, that rural women have been far more adversely affected by these changes than have rural men. Job losses have forced greater numbers of women onto social assistance or into lower paying jobs and have contributed to increased marital dissolution, leaving many of them as sole parents supporting children (Statistics Canada 1986, 2001).

In Ontario, for instance, economic changes took the form of a severe decline in manufacturing jobs in response to an emerging industrial economy in Asia at the beginning of the 1980s (Crompton & Vickers, 2000). While the cuts to manufacturing have impacted on workers all across

Ontario in both rural and urban areas, this trend has had a more negative impact on rural communities since workers in these areas relied more heavily on manufacturing as a primary source of secure and unionized jobs that paid them a living wage.

In Renfrew, Ontario, a small town with a population of less than 8,000, the decline in manufacturing in the late 1980s and early 1990s had a serious impact on the economy and people. I am aware of at least four major manufacturing plants that permanently closed during this period, putting hundreds of employees out of work. Because of the severe job loss and the harsh impact of economic restructuring in Renfrew, as well as the considerable cost of commuting to urban centers, I felt that Renfrew was an appropriate site for me to conduct research into rural women's oppression. Over the course of this chapter, I intend to explore these socio-economic changes in greater depth and describe how the impacts of such changes have more seriously affected the lives of women. Moreover, I intend to highlight the contradictions that the economic and social realities of living in a rural community such as Renfrew create in relation to the ongoing mythical representations of rurality and rural women's place.

In urban centers in Ontario, where the loss of jobs has also been felt – particularly in manufacturing – the impact has not been as harsh since there are far more options for displaced workers with respect to employment or retraining. In cities in Eastern Ontario such as Kingston or Ottawa, for instance, jobs existed in a number of areas rather than concentrated primarily in manufacturing as they are in rural communities. In both of these cities, unlike Renfrew, there are employment opportunities in administration and management, government, health and education, trades and construction, and sales and service (Statistics Canada 2001). The fact that Ontario's population continues to rise while the population in rural communities, such as Renfrew, has been gradually decreasing (see Table 1.0) is a reflection of the movement of workers into urban centers in response to increased employment opportunities. As a result of this pattern of migration, while jobs in construction have experienced a decline across the Province, such jobs in urban centers continue to grow in response to an ongoing demand for housing to support a growing population (Statistics Canada, 1971, 2001).

Table 1.0

Population Trends: Ontario and Renfrew

	1971	1976	1996	2001
Renfrew	9,176	8,617	8,125	7,945
Population Change (%)	1971 to 1976: -6%		1996 to 2001: -2.3%	
Ontario	7,703,106	8,264,465	10,753,573	11,410,050
Population Change (%)	1971 to 1976: 6.8%		1996 to 2001: 6.1%	

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data, 1971, 1976, 1996, and 2001.

The end of the 1990s marked an acceleration in job growth in Ontario as “old industries and technologies gave way to the new” (Crompton & Vickers, 2000: 12); however, these job opportunities were confined mainly to urban centers in response to the need for a highly skilled and educated workforce. Workers in rural communities such as Renfrew who wanted to adapt to this trend had to either move or travel from rural to urban areas in order to gain the needed training and education, and then either reside or make the daily commute to urban centers where those jobs were located. Obstacles which may have prevented workers in Renfrew from making these changes included the lengthy commuting distance from Renfrew into Ottawa, the much higher cost of housing in Ottawa compared with Renfrew,

and the lower education of workers in Renfrew compared with the Provincial average – over half the working population has a high school diploma or less (Statistics Canada, 1986, Table 2.0).

Table 2.0

Education - Highest Grade Level Achieved – Ontario and Renfrew

	Less than Grade 9	High School Grad	University Degree
Renfrew - 1976	22%	Not Available	4%
Ontario - 1976	17%	Not Available	7%
Renfrew - 1996	15%	58%	8%
Ontario - 1996	12%	69%	20%

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data, 1976, 1996.

For those unable to recover from the period of economic restructuring that began in the 1980s, costs have been significant. Since 1986, the reliance on government transfers such as unemployment insurance and social assistance in Renfrew has climbed dramatically to 21%. In comparison, in the Province of Ontario, reliance on government transfers over the same time-period has remained at less than 10% (Statistics Canada 1986, 2001) (See Table 3.0).

Table 3.0

Reliance on Government Transfers (% of income) for Ontario and Renfrew – 1986 and 2001

	1986	2001
Renfrew	16%	21%
Ontario	9%	10%

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data, 1986, 2001.

There are now fewer jobs in Renfrew than there were during the 1980s, reflected in part by a drop in the population and labor force. On the one hand, there was a steady growth in female participation in the work force over this period, confined largely to the service sector, marking an increase in women's labor force participation and a decline in men's wages and jobs. Most of these women work as nurses, teachers and clerks and in sales and service occupations (Williams, 2000). The male employment participation rate over this same time period decreased by almost 10%, reflected in part by a drop from 1,400 to 840 jobs in manufacturing and construction between the years 1986 and 2001, and a replacement of these jobs with low-paying work. In 1981, approximately half as many women as men were employed in the service sector. By 2001, however, there was a complete reversal, with three times as many women as men working in the service sector (See Tables 4.0 and 5.0).

Table 4.0

Labor Force Participation Rate for Men and Women in Ontario and Renfrew – 1976 and 2001

	1976	2001
Women - Renfrew	40%	52%
Women - Ontario	48%	62%
Men - Renfrew	67%	59%
Men - Ontario	77%	73%

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data, 1976, 2001.

Table 5.0

Unemployment Rate for Men and Women in Ontario and Renfrew – 1976 and 2001

	1976	2001
Women - Renfrew	15%	7%
Women - Ontario	9%	7%
Men - Renfrew	7%	7%
Men - Ontario	5%	6%

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data, 1976, 2001.

This turnaround has had serious repercussions for towns such as Renfrew since many of those jobs are unskilled, part-time and temporary, and are marked by low pay, reduced access to social benefits and training, and limited career possibilities. While Renfrew families earn less than the average earnings of families across Ontario (See Table 6.0), women are poorer than men for a number of reasons. First of all, they earn less money

than men - the average full-time employment income for women was well below the average full-time yearly income for men (Statistics Canada, 2001), and second, the fact that they earn less is heightened by situations of marital dissolution with women primarily responsible for the care of children.

Table 6.0

Average Earnings (all persons with earnings) in Ontario and Renfrew - 2001

	Men	Women
Renfrew	\$32,671	\$19,613
Ontario	\$42,719	\$26,894

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data, 2001.

Table 7.0

Lone Parents: Ontario and Renfrew

	1976	2001
Women - Renfrew	255 - 12%	330 -15%
Women - Ontario	168,450 – 8%	401,240 -13%
Men - Renfrew	45 - 2%	65 - 3%
Men - Ontario	34,000 – 2%	84,860 - 3%

Source: Statistics Canada, Census Data, 1976, 2001.

Significant changes in family composition for families in Renfrew have thus coincided with an increase in poverty and changes in Renfrew's economy. Over the past twenty to thirty years, the increase in the number of lone-parent families in Renfrew has become a more serious threat of increased poverty since these lone-parent families are almost entirely composed of women supporting children and earning far less money than men and their female counterparts in urban centers.

Despite economic and social changes, symbolic representations of rurality and women's domestic roles continue to thrive, most of which are based on pastoral images from the past that obscure current realities of poverty and deprivation. Traditionally, women [were] backgrounded, rendered invisible or mythologized in stereotypical ways (Alston 1995, James 1989, Liepins 1994, Williams 1992). The family as a distinctive feature of the social organization of the rural community, with the man as head of the household, reinforced the invisibility of women from rural life. Such representations of the rural, rooted in patriarchy and tradition, are understood by some feminists to be a continuing force in defining women's identities and experiences by constructing their primary roles as home-makers, wives and mothers despite the harsh contrast this represents to most

rural women's current experiences (Little 1994, 1997, Davidoff & Hall 2003, Rose 1993, Dempsey 1992). The rural idyll has therefore been considered "instrumental in shaping and sustaining patriarchal gender relations, and incorporates both consciously and unconsciously, strong expectations concerning aspects of household strategy and gender roles and consequently impacts on the nature of women's experience within the rural community" (Little, 1994:102).

In a rural community such as Renfrew, situated over an hour's drive from an urban center, patriarchal and traditional representations of 'rural' tend to be far more dominant and resistant to change than they would be in communities within a short commute to urban employment. Such representations and meanings create a strong contradiction to the current realities of living in Renfrew, reflected in part by the increased job insecurity and poorer living conditions. Social and economic changes have contributed to a growing divide between the poor and the middle classes, and yet idyllic notions of 'rural' life continue to thrive, obscuring the differences and the inequalities that exist there.

The advantage of identifying so strongly with an imaginary place is that it helps to ensure the support and protection of existing power relations. In turn, these power relations overshadow the fact that there are rural women with different needs and experiences, and further reinforce the notion of rural communities as unchanging that not only helps to obscure the problems that exist there, but also fails to address the underlying causes of those problems. Idyllic rural representations are therefore not only a “reflection of people’s views and beliefs about rurality, but also a force in the recreation of place and associated socio-spatial relations” (Little 1994: 102).

Chapter 3

Exploring Rural Women's Identities

Rural women's oppression is currently understood to be a complex issue, the causes of which have long been concealed behind traditional and homogeneous notions of rurality. Earlier studies of rural oppression have failed to understand the problem by not taking into account the experiences of women marginalized and suppressed by dominant constructions of 'rural' and 'rural women'. Some studies regarded all rural women as oppressed on the basis that they are all subject to patriarchal gender relations that characterize all rural communities. Others argued that cultural influences such as the 'rural idyll' have powers of their own, building expectations of 'rural' and 'rural women' that in turn, help to support and maintain the underlying patriarchal relations in rural areas. The over-simplification of these approaches is based on their failure to consider the differences that exist among rural women, and their acceptance of rural women as passive agents, subject to, if not widely accepting of, a whole host of patriarchal and cultural influences. In order to uncover the diversity of women's lived experiences maintained by uneven social relations and social stratifications (Pratt 1996), researchers must employ conceptual tools that pay strict attention to discourse, identity and positionality (Liepins, 2000).

Investigating rural oppression and the differences among rural women is best approached from the perspective of women as members of particular social spaces or groups, each reflecting particular and distinctive ideologies. While women choose to get involved in the community and engage in activities as individuals, it is their membership in particular groups or organizations and the characteristics of those groups that reaffirm collective values and identities (Phillips, 1991). These shared meanings of 'rural' and 'rural women' are communicated through discourses, and attention to such discursive constructions allows the researcher to distinguish the diversities, silences and marginalizations that occur amongst the various groupings of women within the community. Rural women's involvement in voluntary organizations thus clearly highlights women's roles as active agents in producing, reproducing and potentially transforming gender relations and identities. Moreover, involvement in voluntary groups reveals rural women's active efforts in shaping the landscape of the community by maintaining boundaries and ensuring social stratification and exclusion.

Traditionally, power and involvement in rural society was attached to participation in the economic or public sphere, while women's participation was relegated to the private sphere, affording them little influence or power

(Little, 1997). Despite the extensive socio-economic changes that rural communities have undergone in the past three decades, this delineation between private and public spaces continues to be widely accepted today in democratic and liberal theory. A private/public distinction is characterized by a “separation of the private domestic life of women from the public world of men...[with] the economically dependent wife presented as the ideal” (Pateman, 1987:132). Most feminists agree that this ideological distinction belies the realities of most women’s lives, and that it fails to acknowledge the fact that rural women are multiply located within the community in a range of positions and classes.

Understanding rural women as active rather than passive agents necessitates thinking beyond conventional definitions that define power as power over others, such as men’s power over women (Pattersen & Solbakken, 1998, (Ackelsberg 1988, Burke & Luloff, 1998). Most often, rural women gain recognition in their communities, not as isolated individuals, but as members of groups, such as voluntary organizations, as there is far greater political strength and power for women in groups (Whatmore 1994, Pattersen & Solbakken1998, Stebbing1984, Hartsock 1990, Lips 1991). The power that is exercised by these women, however, is

frequently aimed at supporting and maintaining the power of men over women, enacted through particular practices that connect women with key spaces or groups. This, in turn, ensures the power of certain groups of women over 'other' rural women, and the perception of the rural community as homogeneous. Understanding rural women as possessing power allows for the realization that they are active agents capable of reproducing traditional patterns rooted in patriarchy by suppressing the voices of the 'other', and also capable of constructing new patterns of interaction and organization (Moore Milroy & Wismer, 1994, Teather, 1994).

The power that exists for members within the spaces of voluntary organizations is expressed as an increased sense of belonging to the community, but a community whose boundaries are frequently and narrowly defined by the particular voluntary group to which the women belong. Key sites such as churches and voluntary institutions thus define and shape the 'community'. The extent to which rural women exercise their potential for influence and change is highly dictated by the organization to which they choose to belong.

Applying Duncan's (1996) critiques of the public/private dichotomy provides additional support to my argument that binary distinctions are ineffective at describing and explaining the complexity of rural women's lives as well as their active agency. Moreover, I am further arguing that such ideological distinctions as private/public are used to maintain rural women's oppression by reinforcing societal expectations of women's domestic role, and preserving traditional power relations and patriarchal relations (Duncan 1996, Alston 1997).

Post-structuralism provides an important contribution to my research by explaining that rural communities are characterized by a number of spaces, each reflecting differences defined by their own separate language or discourse (Soja 1985). Further, these spaces are reflexively tied to social relations within those spaces and to the discourses that define them (Todd & Fisher 1988, Silberstein 1988). In researching the spaces of rural voluntary activities, it is necessary to understand that individual women's stories are reflective of the collective values, beliefs and practices of the voluntary organization to which they belong. As a result, there may be vast differences between those spaces, depending on the extent to which collective identities of the women who occupy them are informed by

patriarchal and class relations. By deconstructing the language or discourse that is spatially produced, I can begin to understand the collective values and beliefs that are constructed through the social interaction of members.

Understanding this discourse is essential to uncovering the differences and power relations within a rural community since power is articulated through discourse (Mackenzie, 1992).

Post-structuralism further informs the need to understand rural women's spaces as distinguished by gender and class. Class formation is a reflection of the differences that exist among rural women and is dependent upon human action, negotiation and struggle. This human action must, at the same time, be produced and reproduced over time "through a whole host of intersecting levels of institutions, group agents and individual life paths" (Castells, 1983: 168). As spaces and the social relations and discourse that defines them are reproduced, so too are the gender roles and classes.

While class has primarily been associated with one's economic standing and lifestyle (Harper, 1987), more recently, class has been defined by active behaviors - certain values, activities and tastes enacted within spaces through interaction with a select group of individuals (Yodanis,

2002). Delineations of class are made not only on the basis of income level, but also on the basis of women's symbolic practices and beliefs, and these become criteria for determining membership in these groups. Social class representation through unpaid involvement in the community therefore has the power to elevate one's status beyond socio-economic position.

Practices, values and beliefs of rural women communicated through discourse within the social relations of spatially defined groups have long influenced the choices and expectations of all other rural women, and have helped to support and maintain the class system as well as the image of a community defined by patriarchy and tradition. These meanings and practices further influence the material and political shape of the 'community' built around particular spaces and sites (Liepins, 2000).

Yodanis (2002), citing Warner and Lint (1941: 325) explains, "Selective association with individuals identified with a given class is important for confirming social class membership". Women's unpaid work thus represents values, activities and tastes that are not only reflective of the organization to which they belong, but are also socially defined as symbols of particular classes (Yodanis 2002, Sarah Harper 1987)). The three separate representations of social class, identified by Yodanis (2002), are

upper class, middle class and working class, and the representations of each of these classes are instrumental in explaining how rural women are arbitrarily divided into classes. The upper class, she found, “created an upper class representation...by constructing their work to reflect the values and lifestyles typified by...upper classes including an orientation toward civic mindedness and a dedication to preserving the community and assisting others” (Yodanis, 2002: 331). The middle class “reject(ed) most community work...(and) defined this work as too conservative and reinforcing of the narrow-minded and backward ideas of the small town...These women perform(ed) voluntary community work only if membership in an organization allow(ed) them to present progressive, change-oriented values” (Yodanis, 2002: 335). Grace and Lennie (1998) similarly observed that women participating in rural voluntary activities tended to represent the upper and middle classes, and their participation in the public sphere was limited to defined and accepted roles engaging in unpaid work. Members of the working class created working class representations through “their approach to and presentation of their (physical) work and low status” and “women who created a working class representation rejected other types of work such as unpaid community or political work” (Yodanis, 2002: 338).

This framework clearly establishes class as a significant contributor to determining those accepted and included within a particular voluntary organization and those excluded. Reproducing identities and social patterns based on class and maintaining these class differences necessitates the strict practice of boundaries of exclusion and inclusion. Boundaries are actively used to distinguish those representing the same class from those that do not, and to create distance from them (Lamont & Fournier, 1992). Among the more traditional organizations, boundaries are more pronounced as they must preserve an ideology that is increasingly under threat of change. Without strict boundaries, these groups would be forced to confront changes that would in turn challenge the long-established identities of members. Boundaries are therefore strictly maintained through discourse that is fundamentally different from the newer organizations. The result is “a locally situated, socially constructed, subjective class system in the community...[with] barriers between residents” (Yodanis, 2002: 339). Employing Yodanis’ (2002) framework, I shall distinguish social class representations through involvement in voluntary activities and assess the contribution that class makes to constructing rural gender relations and maintaining rural oppression.

Collective identities of women, as members of voluntary organizations, marked by subjective levels of power and class, according to Phillips (1991: 784), are “worn by individuals as part of their political and social consciousness”. For many of the long-standing members of the more traditional voluntary organizations, “their sense of self-worth and self-identity from their participation in their (voluntary) organization would have been difficult to gain in any other context for women of their generation” (Teather 1997: 231). It is therefore not unexpected that in situations where women’s political and social identities and their perception of power and class are closely bound up in their long-standing membership with a particular voluntary organization, all efforts would be made to resist change. This helps to explain why structural factors relating to patriarchy and class have persisted despite the fact these relations of power no longer reflect the socio-economic realities of rural life.

My focus on spatiality and the representational differences that exist between groups of rural women extends to notions of ‘rural’ and the ‘rural community’ that contribute to rural women’s oppression. Rather than conceiving ‘rural’ as a single geographical place, it is necessary to consider it a social construct with multiple meanings that are communicated through

discourse by the participants themselves within the spaces that they occupy. By doing so, researchers can uncover the various levels of difference and oppression that are masked by images of homogeneity and self-sufficiency. Rural places must be understood as places “that serve to enable and support the reproduction of particular uneven social relations, economic distribution and social stratifications” (Pratt, 1996: 70). Moreover, these multiple meanings must be understood as occurring within a “multiplicity of social spaces...each having its own logic, its own institutions as well as its own specific network of actors” (Mormont, 1990: 57). Each social space, in turn, is shaped by its’ historical past, society and culture which influences the way rural is perceived and understood (Allen, 2002). The emphasis on the relationship between spatiality and the social relations existing within those spaces enables the researcher to make the necessary connections between rural women’s collectively expressed behavior and the external characteristics of their environment (Buttimer 1980, Harper 1987, Relph, 1976).

Like Soja (1985), I argue that spatiality and discourse must be understood as fluid and transforming. In addition to the spatial dimension, spaces also have a temporal dimension (Soja, 1985). As a result, ‘rural’ and

‘rural women’ are subject to change over time. The aspects of time and change and the potential of patriarchal and traditional power relations losing their authority over time are what is missing from many feminist analyses of rural women, thus creating a perception of rural women’s oppression as static and unchanging. The implications of understanding spatiality as static are significant for rural women since static and idyllic representations have historically backgrounded rural women or rendered them all the same (Grace and Lennie, 1998). While it is the spatial structuring of social life that determines how social action and the relationship with patriarchy and class are constituted, without recognizing that rural spaces ebb and flow, researchers will fail to realize that rural women are also capable of transforming their spaces. It is, therefore, not enough to simply deconstruct the language produced by rural women within the spaces of rural voluntary organizations, but essential to also understand how that language is produced and reproduced and possibly transformed.

The fact that ideology is subject to change over time means that in order to maintain it, there must be a continuous reinforcement of values through ongoing interaction with others holding similar definitions of rurality (Stebbing 1984), and this is essential to preserving rural women’s

collective identities as well as the patriarchal and class relations within the rural community. In other words, “gendering of space and place both reflects and has effects back on the way in which gender is constructed and understood in the societies in which we live” (Massey, 1994: 186).

Discourse of volunteer organizations reflective of patriarchal and traditional values tends to be far more influential and dominant in a rural community where notions of rurality are similarly rooted in patriarchy and tradition (Little, 1997). This partly explains why images of ‘rural’ and ‘rural women’ are resistant to change, and also why researchers fail to explore the complexities and differences concealed by these terms.

In addition to understanding how discourse is actively maintained, it is equally important to understand that hegemony is “continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own” (Williams, 1977: 112). In addition to women who actively help to construct and maintain mythical notions of rural life based on traditional roles and expectations are those who actively choose not to support a traditional lifestyle. Moreover, there are ‘others’ who have more directly felt the effects of a declining economy and/or increased marital instability and whose lives do not correspond with traditional expectations. Discourse is therefore always

under the threat or possibility of change by the suppressed voices of these groups of women (Grace and Lennie 1998, Philo 1997), by the continuous social and economic changes that continue to shape the lives of those residing in rural communities, and by the fact that discourse is fluid and therefore always subject to change.

Some researchers (Soja 1985, Massey 1988) believe that such influences are contributing to the evolution of space and class toward broader notions of community, thus altering patterns of cultural differentiation that help determine the class structure and the shape and meaning of the rural community. This points to the prospect of a dominant discourse changing over time, altering social and physical spaces, and forming alternative discourses that help to define new roles for rural women. By being attentive to the meanings, beliefs and practices that contribute to the articulation and shape of 'rural' and women's roles within the 'rural' community, I as researcher am in a better position to extend research beyond dominant categorizations and representations, and to assess the extent to which spatial and social relations within the rural community are evolving.

Chapter 4

Methodology

A feminist approach to research differs from more mainstream academic approaches in that it questions the long-accepted research practices that are built on notions of a male-dominated society. The methodologies favored by feminist researchers “seek to articulate and conceptualize women’s experiences within social science” (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991: 89). Taking a feminist approach, this research study examines rural women’s oppression from the perspective of participants’ own words and practices. Key themes associated with feminist methodology are: positionality, subjectivity, and qualitative methods (Fonow & Cook, 1995).

Positionality

Some feminist researchers believe that one’s role as both ‘outsider’ and researcher can often influence the actual outcomes of the research. Mbilinyi (1992: 35) explains that, “one’s personal location is reflected through decisions and outcomes influenced by and arising from theoretical frameworks, ideological underpinnings, personal identity and material social location of the research”. Accepting this viewpoint, as a researcher, I

needed to be continuously aware of my role and the imbalance in power this role created in my relationship with the women being studied. This was an ongoing challenge, for in many instances, I was well known to the participants. On several levels, I considered myself an 'insider', on the basis of sharing many of the same experiences with the participants: I had long resided in the community (seventeen years), was a stay-at-home mother, and had been married to a prominent businessman, thus attaining middle-class status. Further to this, I had been an active and participating member of St. Frances Xavier Roman Catholic Church, actively involved in various charities, and a member and secretary of the Renfrew University Women's Club for several years. Although I had been divorced for ten years and was subsisting on low earnings, I had managed to maintain the status quo by continuing to reside in the matrimonial home in a prominent residential section of the Town, continuing to dress myself and children in fashionable attire (from thrift stores), and taking employment or completing my university studies that allowed me to work from my home, thus retaining the perception of full-time mother. Despite the fact that I was financially struggling and debt-ridden, I had been able to overcome the image of poverty and oppression by maintaining an illusion of middle-class status. As a result, I sensed that many of the middle and upper class members of the

community continued to regard and accept me as a member. Further reference will be made in subsequent chapters to some of the ways that rural women similarly elevate their status and ascribe to a particular class by engaging in symbolic behaviors and practices associated with that class.

While I considered myself an ‘insider’ on various levels with many of my middle and upper class participants, at the same time, this perception was strongly contradicted by the fact that I was a single mother living in poverty. Here was an interesting paradox – I was investigating rural women’s oppression, and yet I was far more oppressed, at least financially, than any of my participants. This perception of ‘insider’ relationship with the participants also varied depending on the level of familiarity that existed between us, and the participants’ attitudes toward me as researcher. For instance, some of the women may have labeled me oppressed based on the fact that I was a divorced single mother who needed to work to support her two children; others may have been more appreciative of the fact that I was independent and pursuing higher education. My positionality toward those being researched shifted as well as I quickly realized that some rural women saw themselves as being quite privileged over others, and not oppressed. It was therefore necessary to challenge my initial belief that my previous

experiences allowed me a better understanding of these particular women's values, beliefs and practices.

Rather than focusing on an insider/outsider relationship between my role as researcher and those being researched, I needed to establish 'spaces of betweenness'. In doing so, I was able to 'build a new concept of objectivity that recognized the partiality and situatedness of all knowledge' (Staeheli & Lawson, 1994: 99). In other words, I was able to overcome the unequal power relations between myself and those being researched, as well as the contradictions that my positionality as researcher created, by acknowledging the fact that those being researched had greater knowledge than I as researcher.

Maintaining this state of betweenness required, first of all, an acceptance of the fact that I did not fully understand their roles as middle-class, voluntary participants in a rural community. Secondly, I needed to ensure an ongoing and continuous assessment of my relationship with those being researched, both during and subsequent to each interview, and during the analysis stage of the research.

Post-modernists would argue that since I was not fully an 'insider', I was not in any position to interpret and draw conclusions from my research (Goetz, 1991, Haraway, 1988). I would challenge this by arguing that I do not purport to speak for all rural women nor do I attest to be making any universal claims. Instead, this research draws attention to a situated knowledge in which the words of rural women are heard and interpreted and translated, thus providing one perspective on rural women's experiences. While I am aware that this perspective may be shaped by my positionality and subjectivity as a researcher despite efforts to maintain a state of betweenness, I feel that value remains in the fact that this information may provide an alternative way of understanding the experiences of rural women, and may be used as a motivation to conduct further research in this area.

Subjectivity

Feminist methodologies include the subjective experience of research as another key theme and area of concern for researchers. This relates to issues of power relations, vulnerability and friendship in the relationship that exists between the researcher and those being researched (Cotterill, 1992). Although I felt that I shared much in common with many of the participants beyond the obvious realities that we were all women living in a rural

community, the fact remained that a power relationship did exist between the participants and myself as researcher. In such a relationship, control of the interview situation is ultimately surrendered to the researcher (Cotterill, 1992). In some cases, participants attempted to overcome this difference in power by setting strict time limits on the interview, and by taking control of the interview by engaging in long narratives about their experiences. Two of the women, in fact, had prepared written summaries prior to the interview, detailing their voluntary experiences. The women subsequently used these summaries as a guide to their discussions. In those situations, as in all of the other interviews, I elected to permit the women to direct the flow of conversation, and would introduce topics from the set of semi-structured questions where it was deemed appropriate to do so.

I attempted to reduce feelings of vulnerability and intimidation associated with the interview by introducing myself and providing the women with both a written and verbal explanation of what the research was about, the type of research I was engaging in, and why I was doing the research. I further stressed their rights as participants in the research and the fact that they had the right to refuse to answer any or all of the questions and to end the interview at any time. Despite these explanations at the beginning

of the interview, it was still a challenge for women to relax and move beyond a lengthy focus on the details of their voluntary work – dates and places – to talking about attitudes and values associated with this voluntary work. I suspect this focus on details may have been more a reflection of their lack of comfort with the interview process than a misunderstanding of the research since I did not experience this same problem with those women with whom I was more familiar and who seemed more relaxed at the interview. I believe the fact that I taped the interviews may have added to some women's initial discomfort and their heightened sense of lost control. Many of the participants spoke formally and appeared to be somewhat nervous at the beginning of the interviews. As the interviews progressed, the women became more relaxed. In hindsight, my attendance prior to the interview at a meeting of each of the voluntary organizations to which participants belonged would have increased the level of comfort and familiarity at the scheduled interviews.

In the end, I left the interviews with data that I would later analyze and interpret. This is defined by Cotterill (1992) as the final shift in power toward the researcher. Despite all of my efforts to resolve all concerns regarding positionality and subjectivity, the fact remains that “we are using

other people for our own purposes all the time” and “using the knowledge they give us for goals they would never imagine themselves” (Abu-Lughod, 1993: 36). My only defense in this regard is the fact that this research was based on an approach that recognizes knowledge as produced and not discovered. As such, I did not go into this research with the goal of discovering truths but rather with the goal of uncovering the experiences through words and stories of the rural women involved in this study. My accountability to Carleton University and the Research Ethics Committee of that University, and the option provided to participants to obtain a copy of the final research report at the expense of Xeroxing may have helped to alleviate some of that vulnerability and the perception of difference in power.

As I commenced the analysis stage of the research, it became increasingly obvious that there were two distinct sets of identities amongst the participants. One was constructed on the basis of the women’s generational roots in the community. These women, or ‘insiders’, represented themselves as wives and mothers, first and foremost, and were community minded, and were well integrated into the community. The second set of identities was based on the fact that these women had moved

into the community from elsewhere. They represented themselves as more educated, more in-tune with and appreciative of the natural environment, and more progressive in terms of the types of community involvement in which they engaged. At the same time, 'insider' women relegated 'outsiders' to 'other' status by representing them as less involved and integrated into the community, and far more focused on their own personal needs over the needs of the community. The de-centeredness of women's collective identities became exceedingly clear as a result of my deconstruction of the term 'rural women'. It revealed the fact that there were various alternative subjectivities for women that emerged through language within the spaces of voluntary organizations and groups. Moreover, these alternative subjectivities have the potential of subvert[ing] the power of existing discourses, and contribut[ing] to their destabilization" (Gibson-Graham, 1994: 220). It was this discovery of the possibility of new subjectivities beyond those encapsulated within the term, 'rural women' which gave rise to my considering the possibility of rural gender relations transforming over time.

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative methodology was used exclusively throughout this research project. I approached the research from this perspective as I felt this methodology would enable women to articulate the many contradictions and ambiguities that characterized their lives and would allow me to gain a deeper understanding of their individual experiences. More importantly, however, was the need to choose a methodology that allowed me to understand, through situated knowledge, the connections between gender and space. Research focusing on gender can be challenging since gender is not a concrete category. Instead, gender must be recognized as both fluid and changing – continually needing to be defined and redefined – and fractured by differences. Mbilinyi (1992: 45) explains that “women are differentiated...divided by class, race/ethnicity, nationality, gender identity, marital status, age, individual psychology [and] each woman has multiple identities, over time and at any one time, often conflicting with each other”. I, as researcher, needed to be open to such differences and the variety of experiences that the category ‘gender’ presented rather than be limited by a single category. I further needed to be able to move beyond the limitations of socially defined gender roles to a multiplicity of subjectivities and gendered identities, influenced by the power relations of patriarchy and

class. Moreover, these multiple gender identities needed to be understood as operating within and constructed and reconstructed by a variety of geographical spaces and shifting locations. In other words, rurality needed to be understood, not as a location in which women are subject to a set of social relations, but rather a place in which a multiplicity of spaces are represented by social relations that change and evolve over time. This research was therefore not dealing with facts or truths, but subjectivities and perspectives, requiring a methodological approach that was open to the existence of multiple identities, and which sought to distinguish differences rather than establish any universal claims. A qualitative inquiry aimed at uncovering the construction and contestations of gendered relations and identities was therefore an appropriate methodological approach to this research.

Relying on an in-depth ethnographic methodology, I explored the participants' own insights and stories relating to their involvement in voluntary organizations in an effort to understand the importance of 'spatial parameters and place-bound relationships' to these women's lives (Katz & Monk, 1993). The women in this study were not concerned with links between voluntary activity and access to power through class and gender,

but rather reflected on the importance they attached to the ideal of living and engaging in voluntary work in their rural community. Their stories reflected a strong commitment to the workings of their rural community and the high importance they attached to bonds of friendship and support gained through their involvement in voluntary groups. Themes were revealed in their depictions of 'rural' and the 'rural woman', and expressed through words and stories in relation to their involvements in voluntary organizations. I subsequently made links during the analysis stage of this research between their stories and issues of power and class.

Focusing on women as members of voluntary groups enabled participants to speak far more openly and candidly about their own values and beliefs and practices, as these same values and beliefs were also reflective of the organization to which they belonged. Participants were encouraged to express themselves fully in response to a set of semi-structured questions, and to reply in as great detail as needed. Questions were built on the contention that the identities of rural women are closely connected to their roles as mothers and wives and members of the rural community, and that voluntary work was reflective of these roles. This research therefore argues that voluntary work helps to construct and support

a particular view of rurality that has implications for gender and power relations within the community.

Attention was paid to both differences and similarities in the participants' experiences, values and beliefs. While consistency was maintained throughout all of the interviews by asking the same set of questions, additional questions were posed in order to clarify or pursue leads introduced by former participants. Links between rural women's involvement in voluntary organizations and the oppression of women in a rural area were subsequently made during the theoretical and analytical stages of this research.

In order to ensure anonymity, interview responses were letter coded in lieu of using names. Participants were referred to throughout the research document by pseudonyms. Audio recordings of the interviews were erased at the request of participants upon completion of the interview and transcription. In one instance, the recording was returned to the respondent upon request.

Selection of participants for the in-depth interviews

This research study was conducted in or within a fifteen-kilometer radius of the Town of Renfrew, Ontario. Over an hour's drive by car from Canada's Capital, the Town of Renfrew currently has a population of approximately 7,900 residents. Founded in the early 1800s, the Town of Renfrew's heritage and traditions have been built on the lumbering and agricultural industries upon which the Town was founded. Today, however, agriculture, forestry and other resource-based industries account for less than five percent of jobs in the Renfrew area.

This area was selected as a research site on the basis that many of the residents recognize the Town as a rural community. The fact that I had been a resident of Renfrew for approximately seventeen years, and a recognizable and known member of the community made Renfrew a good choice as a research site in terms of gaining acceptance from participants.

A personal friendship network was initially used to locate women willing to engage in my research. Copies of my letter of introduction were distributed at regular meetings of the Trinity St. Andrew's United Church Women's League and the Renfrew Women's Institute, and those women

expressing an interest in participating in my research were asked to contact me directly. In addition, I explained my research and need for participants to the coordinator of the Seniors Home Support Network and the President of the Renfrew University Women's Club and these two women subsequently distributed my letters of introduction to members of their groups.

Women were selected as participants on the basis of their wide involvement in unpaid voluntary activity as well as their residence in or within a fifteen-kilometer radius of Renfrew. Eleven individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with women aged fifty to seventy-five years (approximately). All but one of the participants claimed family income exceeding \$60,000 per year. All of the participants, except for one woman who worked part-time, were either retired from their full-time employment or had worked only sporadically in paid jobs over the course of their marriage. All but one of the women had dependents that, in most cases, were grown and had moved out of the home. All of the participants, except for one (who was divorced), were married. Three of the eleven women interviewed considered themselves "housewives", having minimal work histories; one woman had worked subsequent to her divorce and prior to her

second marriage, explaining that her “education...helped [her] through and got [her] through that stage (divorce)”.

All of the participants were currently active doing voluntary activity in the community at the time of the interviews. The organizations to which they belonged included both traditional groups such as the Church-based Women’s Leagues and Women’s Institutes, and newer organizations aimed more specifically at improving the quality of life of those living in the community (See Chart 1). Many of the participants had long been involved in other voluntary organizations over the years, and were also currently involved in a number of other unorganized activities which most of them defined as “helping out”. Unorganized activities included canvassing for various charities, assisting neighbors and friends in need, and assisting their spouses in their voluntary commitments.

Table 8.0

Voluntary Organizations Represented in This Research Study

Traditional Voluntary Organizations	Newer Voluntary Organizations
Trinity St. Andrew's United Church	Renfrew Senior's Home Support
St. Frances Xavier Roman Catholic Church	University Women's Club of Renfrew
Burnstown Women's Institute	Renfrew Victoria Hospital
Northcote Women's Institute	Calabogie Business Association
Horton Twp. Women's Institute	Renfrew Golf Club
	Renfrew Victims in Crisis Assistance and Referral Services (VICARS)
	Sunshine Coach Services
	Renfrew Food Bank

Five of the women interviewed had grown up and/or resided in or around the Town of Renfrew for most of their lives; the remaining six women had resided in urban centers just prior to moving to Renfrew within the past two to three years. Interestingly, those women considered native to the community all belonged to the more traditional and conservative organizations such as the Women's Institute and the various Church Women's Leagues. However, these same women were often involved in

other more progressive groups as well. The newcomers, on the other hand, tended not to belong to the traditional organizations, but were involved solely in newer, more action-oriented organizations.

The empirical information on which this thesis draws was collected from eleven in-depth interviews using a set of semi-structured questions. Respondents were asked to provide open-ended answers to questions that were designed to elicit responses regarding the extent and nature of their voluntary activities, and how this related to the values and identities of rural women, and the shifting relationship of voluntary work and rural gender relations. The interviews, which were conducted in the respondents' homes at their request, lasted approximately one hour. Interviews were tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed by the researcher.

While I was able to engage eleven women in my research project using this networking approach, recruiting rural women to volunteer was not a simple process, and required my continuous efforts over a period of several months. Despite being a known resident in the community, I was aware of the fact that many rural women are very private and would therefore be uncomfortable sharing details of their lives with me. Many women who

volunteered also tended to be extremely busy, and were therefore unable to offer additional time for an interview. For those who agreed to participate, setting up a convenient time upon which to meet meant scheduling appointments weeks in advance. Given the short timelines of this research project, it would have been difficult if not impossible to interview a larger number of women. Thus, the conclusions drawn do not represent any definitive insight based on the small number of women interviewed, and the fact that participants were derived entirely from in or within one particular rural community. Moreover, men were not interviewed as part of this research primarily because when this study was initiated, the focus was not necessarily aimed at gender relations but was far more centered on women's experiences within a rural context.

Further limitations to this study exist based on the fact that all of the participants fall within a particular and narrow age range of between fifty and seventy-five years of age.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF MY INVESTIGATION

Researchers have frequently ascribed the inequalities and disadvantages that rural women experience to configurations of power and discourse based on historical patterns of patriarchy in rural communities. Their oppression has been attributed to the fact that gendered stereotypes of rural women based on traditional and idyllic notions of women's place in the rural community have become formalized within discourses and reinforced through patriarchal relations, and in turn, strongly influence all rural women's experiences and identities.

The difficulty that I have with a theoretical approach that focuses solely on the power of patriarchy in maintaining oppression is the fact that rural women are universally portrayed as static beings and subject to patriarchy, rather than understood as the active agents that they are. Such fixed referents of women place them in "fixed, normalized, immobilized, and paralyzed positions of subordination" (Butler, 1995: 16). This research argues that the perception of rural communities as dominated by patriarchy and the perception of rural men having power over rural women exists partly because there are certain groups of rural women who actively choose to

maintain this dominant perception. Rural women's membership in voluntary organizations for instance, is not an example of how rural women are subject to patriarchy, but instead, the way in which these rural women actively and influentially choose to represent their roles as wives and mothers in support of patriarchy. A much stronger explanation for rural women's oppression and the ongoing strength of patriarchy in rural communities is based on class differences that are actively maintained by both men and women, and are instrumental in defining rural women's roles as well as defining the spatial structure of the community.

Liberal assumptions about the dichotomy between public and private spaces similarly treat rural women as universal subjects by portraying them as both subordinate and dependent. The origins of these ideas are clearly rooted in the belief that "men and women...each naturally [have] a separate but complementary and equally valuable social place" (Pateman, 1987:126). Women's lives, in reality, are not divided on the basis of private and public spaces; however, the patriarchal beliefs and practices upon which this dualism is based assumes all rural women's experiences to be the same. A private/public distinction of spaces therefore negatively influences rural women's lives on the basis that it assumes a natural subordination and

passivity of all rural women. Liberalism's emphasis on 'rural women' as both universal and subordinate further results in social policy that assumes the separation of private and public existence. This research examines rural women as active agents, involved in voluntary organizations within the Town of Renfrew. Despite the fact that all of these women represented a particular age category (fifty to seventy-five years of age) and a particular income group (over \$60,000 per year), this research provides an important insight into the power that women as members of voluntary groups have in maintaining as well as transforming rural spaces and gender relations.

Post-structuralism explains the construction of identity as occurring within the spaces of social relations, and further emphasizes the role of diversity and change. Because rural spaces and the social relations within those spaces are not static and subject to change, rural women must actively and continuously produce and reproduce discourse that reinforces their collective values and beliefs. Differences are constructed on the basis of beliefs and practices whereby some groups of rural women perceive that they are more privileged than other groups of rural women. This is the central notion upon which this examination of rural women's oppression is based – while some rural women may be actively trying to resist and/or

overcome the effects of oppression, others are active participants in maintaining both class differences and patriarchal gender relations. I argue that it is these group differences, based on a hierarchical structuring of social classes through symbolic and representational behaviors, as well as the active role of rural women in maintaining these differences, that represent major forces in reinforcing rural women's inequalities. Differences among rural women further explain some groups of rural women's active challenge of inequalities despite resistance from patriarchal and class power relations to maintain the status quo. Understanding rural women as active agents, and addressing the differences that exist between them, are key to uncovering oppression and undermining it.

As both researcher and rural woman residing within the same community as my participants, I was able to identify with many of their same values, attitudes and beliefs. Over the course of this research process, I gradually uncovered layers of personal awareness relating to the powers and influences that had long sustained my middle-class status and my role and identity as a full-time wife and mother. More importantly, however, was the fact that in the process of analyzing these influences, I was able to

understand and come to terms with, the active role I had played in my own subordination and oppression.

Raised in a traditional family on a farm in Eastern Ontario, I was brought up to believe that women's ideal role was as wife and mother. Moreover, I was taught that the countryside was the idyllic place to fulfill these roles. As my research participants recounted their idyllic notions of living in a rural community, I recalled the claim that my mother once made; that our family should be grateful for the fact that we lived on a farm because everyone in 'the City' wanted a similar lifestyle, but were forced to live where they were because of ties to employment. This idea was so ingrained that when I moved to Toronto many years later, I was shocked to learn that there were people living in the City who actually chose and wanted to be there.

While I completed an undergraduate university degree, and subsequently attained a secure-paying job in Toronto, I was continuously drawn to the notion of living and raising children in a rural community. After marriage, my influence, based on long-held idyllic notions of rural life, was therefore instrumental in convincing my spouse to move to a rural

community. Values associated with rural living were based on images and beliefs handed down from my adolescence: that it would be a better place to raise children; that it would be a less stressful and healthier lifestyle, and that it would be a more fulfilling and happy place for all of us to live. The fact that Renfrew was economically depressed with few opportunities for women was not an issue for me since my intention was to assume the full-time role of wife and mother. For many years, I lived a traditional and idyllic lifestyle, supported by my spouse, and felt privileged to be able to do so. All of my friends were full-time wives and mothers who led the same lifestyle, and all of us were known in the community as either our husband's wife or our children's mother.

The fact that I had been able to successfully fulfill my role and identity based on idyllic images and expectations insulated me from any awareness that life was not ideal. It wasn't until my marriage ended thirteen years later that I was forced to come to terms with the harsh realities and limitations of being a single, unemployed and poor mother in a town such as Renfrew. I struggled for some time afterwards to hold on to the same idyllic lifestyle that was no longer a part of my reality by engaging in symbolic behaviors that maintained the illusion of middle-class status. Returning to

university helped me to break away from the false beliefs and values of my rural roots, but it wasn't until I commenced this particular research that I was able to see the active role that I had played in my own oppression – the expectations I had of fulfilling my mother's domestic role, the lack of personal emphasis on my own financial future and career, the desire to live in a small town despite the personal limitations it posed, and the tenacious struggle to hold on to the same role and identity long after the circumstances of my life had dramatically changed. Over these past eleven years, I had firmly believed that my poverty and oppression were something outside of myself; something that I had been subject to and had little control over.

In some ways, I feel that I have now achieved a higher level of realization and insight, and yet I can strongly identify with many of the same attitudes and practices that participants expressed to me. Had I remained married, or re-married, and maintained the same identity and level of status within the community, I would never have achieved this level of insight regarding my oppression, nor felt that I needed to.

Rural women's involvement in voluntary activities provides an excellent focus for understanding rural women's oppression, for research

reveals that voluntary activities are not only a way of contributing to and supporting the idyllic and patriarchal lifestyle, but is also an important way of representing social class and defining gender and class differences. The active efforts of rural women in maintaining their domestic roles and identities, and establishing their values and beliefs as dominant through involvement in voluntary organizations thus contributes to the marginalization and silencing of other groups of women.

However, rural women, as active agents, are also challenging oppression, and contributing to new meanings of 'rural' and 'rural women'. Women are continuously negotiating their individual values, beliefs, and practices with those of the collective spaces to which they belong, and this contributes to tensions between the need to affirm cultural identities and the desire to affect change. These new meanings are either incorporated into the dominant culture in order to maintain the status quo, or contribute in some way to cultural conflict and change. Following my own experiences as a 'rural woman', this analysis of oppression considers women's active agency and the fluidity of their continuous struggles with identities and change.

All of the participants expressed the fact that their spouse was approving of their voluntary commitments, and while these women were encouraged by such approval, their involvement was in fact, helping to reinforce patriarchal notions of women's roles. Little (1997: 206) explains that "the support given by men to women's voluntary work reinforces traditional gender roles and relations [in that] the work itself places women within the domestic sphere of not only the home and community, but the public face of this work...gives it additional value in terms of the maintenance of traditional rural society. In other words, spousal approval for their wives' involvement in voluntary organizations not only helps to maintain patriarchal gender relations, but also reinforces their wives' domestic roles that help the men to further their own careers. For example, Colleen remarked on the importance of a wife's support for her husband's career: "Having a spouse who is supportive for a married person is number one. I know one of the people running for Reeve, and his wife made it very clear to everyone around that he'd make a wonderful Reeve, and she knew she had to say that because it doesn't work otherwise." This argument is further supported by the remarks of Mona who claimed her husband would not permit her to engage in paid employment throughout their marriage, and yet at the same time, was entirely supportive of her involvement in almost

forty hours per week of unpaid work through volunteering. Part of the explanation for her husband's level of support was her insistence that she was able to balance obligations to her children and family as well as to her extended family despite her years of voluntary work: "When the kids were small, it was mostly children's activities: I ran the marching band, I was 4H Leader and Brownie Leader, and then I volunteered at the school at least two days a week... I always scheduled time for the family."

In order to understand the complexity of oppression, it must be understood as an all-encompassing term that includes the interrelated concepts of exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence (Young, 1990). Those women who adhere to a traditional and patriarchal lifestyle are particularly vulnerable to all or any of these forms of oppression by the fact that they actively choose to depend physically, emotionally and/or financially on a man. For instance, exploitation of women involves the transfer of women's labor to purposefully benefit men. Women's oppression, in such cases, is rooted in the fact that some men's status and freedom are made possible through the efforts of women providing unpaid labor and nurturing. Powerlessness stems from the lack of participation in decision-making that affects the

conditions of their lives. Through this dependency on others – either on male partners, or on the state for social assistance, or low-wage providers – women as a social group, experience oppression through marginalization.

Oppression as a result of group-directed violence, such as the violence of men against women, is built into institutions and social practices – cultural images and the reproduction of relations of dominance that occur in everyday life (Young, 1990). Rural discourse that is built on notions of tradition and patriarchy further promotes such violence for it establishes the power of men over women, or the power of one class over another, as the norm. Such oppression not only influences rural women's roles, but also has the potential of adversely affecting the quality of their lives.

Cultural imperialism involves the universalizing of a dominant group's experience and its establishment as the norm (Young, 1990). The fact that this state of dominance over others is allowed to flourish represents a further form of oppression. The more influential groups within a community are given the power to establish their values, beliefs and practices as the ideal to which all others are expected to aspire.

Consequently, those unable to attain these cultural norms become the “other” in relation to the dominant group.

Voluntary activities are an important way of establishing cultural imperialism by materially constituting and constructing the class relations of a rural community and establishing a divide amongst the groups of women in the community (Soja, 1989). All of the participants agreed that availability of time as a result of not working in paid jobs, as well as the financial support and security they received from their spouses and/or personal pensions, were essential to involvement in voluntary activities in the community. This was well described in Nina’s comment: “I can afford to do all of these things...When you’re a volunteer, you can’t have in your mind that you’re worried about paying your mortgage or paying the grocery bills or whatever. That must be awfully hard on people. Volunteers I expect are going to come from the population that are financially okay.” Joyce made a similar distinction by stating, “You have to feel healthy spiritually, mentally and physically and financially to give a part of yourself, so I don’t think there would be many people who are on welfare that possibly would be giving much volunteer time because they’re in the state where they feel volunteers are helping them with food banks and other things.”

Classes are not, however, delineated on the basis of income alone, but are more importantly defined by symbolic representations based on certain beliefs, values and practices that have the power to elevate one's status within the community (Yodanis, 2000). Such representations as dependency on one's spouse and full-time roles as wife and mother become criteria not only for membership within a particular group, but also for distinguishing members of one voluntary group from another. Voluntary organizations are thus comprised of women sharing similar sets of collective values, beliefs and practices, which in turn are used to inform relations of power between them and the other groups of women within the community. The result is a hierarchical, spatially defined system of classes (Walker, 1985).

In this particular research study, most of the participants had engaged in unpaid work for the greater part of their marriages, and considered themselves privileged to have been able to do so. They also considered themselves privileged in comparison with other women in the community. Hughes (1997: 129) concurs that, "although rural women were expected to stay at home, it was the more affluent women who actually did". Using Yodanis' (2002) distinctions of class representations, I argue that membership in rural voluntary organizations is an important way of

symbolically defining and distinguishing social class, and that rural women identify with particular social classes through membership in these groups.

Yodanis (2002: 331) found that aspiring to upper class was best represented by membership in traditional voluntary organizations, and this required “an orientation toward civic mindedness and a dedication to preserving the community and assisting others”. She found, as I did, that rural women’s representations of upper class required an adherence to patriarchal and traditional ideals that defined rural women’s ideal role as wife and mother. This point is best supported by Sonia, a member of a traditional organization, and who had worked full-time throughout her career, but also strived to portray herself as a devoted wife and mother: “In those days, when you worked, you still thought you had to do everything the same as a mother at home because there weren’t as many women working, and you didn’t want them to think that just because you were working, you couldn’t do it too...I guess that I had to prove that I was as good a mother and as good a housekeeper.” Identifying with a particular social class, and actively striving through symbolic representations to represent oneself as a member of that class, supports my argument that rural women are not passive, but actively involved in establishing a hierarchical system of

classes, and striving to maintain these same class distinctions in the face of continuous change.

Involvement in the church holds additional representational value for defining and reinforcing membership in the upper class. Women involved in the traditional voluntary groups were also deeply involved in their church, and this in turn was characterized as a “natural focus” for community involvement. Little (1997: 207) remarked that the church “holds a very important place in the rural ideology [and]... it is especially valued in many rural communities for its role in evoking and sustaining the notion of community”. Interestingly, the notion of the church’s central role in defining community is a strong contradiction to the fact that churchwomen’s groups are dominated almost entirely by women with generational roots in the community, and that these groups maintain strict boundaries defining ‘them’ and ‘us’. Sonia’s following remarks reflect this narrowly defined, closely-knit sense of community represented by strong connections between members of a traditional organization and the distinction made between those who attended church and those who did not: “I started into our unit at the church [women’s league] when I was eighteen, and we have a lot of the same old ones. It’s a real good group; very much together and they bring

problems and everything. And everybody knows about everybody. We're all very good friends". Mona adds, "I've been a member for almost forty years...and from that, I met an awful lot of really good friends. Well, you can imagine if you're together at least once a month for forty years; it's just a family." Anita's comment further demonstrates the depth of generational involvement in the church and community: "Those who moved from this community into town still remain members of the Women's Institute, and some still come out to church from town, so we still have that contact. That's because of family [connections]. My father and my grandfather, my mother and my grandmother, they've attended this church...there's a strong feeling of family here." Unlike the newcomers who had engaged in higher education and/or careers prior to moving to the community, women who were long-term members of the more traditional voluntary organizations – the Church Women's League and the Women's Institute – maintained identities based on traditional roles and expectations throughout their entire lives. Thus, their history of involvement in the church and other traditional groups, combined with their full-time roles as wives and mothers, and their generational ties with the community, symbolically defined upper class status in the community as well as provided the means for distinguishing themselves from all other women.

Values and practices of members of the newer voluntary organizations, according to Yodanis (2000), were representative of middle class – “perform[ing] voluntary community work only if membership in an organization allows them to present progressive, change-oriented values” (Yodanis, 2000: 335). Similar to Marshall (2001), I discovered that those women who had moved into the community from other centers tended to belong to the newer voluntary groups, and engaged in voluntary work as a representation of their middle class status – contributing, belonging and making changes within the community.

However, despite the fact that ‘outsiders’ tended to join the newer voluntary organizations and ‘insiders’ belonged to the more traditional voluntary organizations, the distinction in terms of values and beliefs between these two groups was far less distinct or “progressive” than Yodanis (2001) suggested. Whether as members of traditional or progressive organizations, all of the participants actively helped to construct traditional and patriarchal gender roles and relations and contributed to mythical notions of rurality based on their perception of being privileged to do so. Although both types of voluntary groups provided members with a greater sense of power outside the home and family, this power was being

channeled instead towards the reinforcement of patriarchy by defining their unpaid work as an extension of women's domestic duties and their full-time roles as wives and mothers as the ideal – standards by which all other women in the community were measured and judged (Little & Austin, 1996). These themes were best expressed by Joyce in this comment: “[My husband] felt confident he could earn a living for us, and what we gained from me being at home helped the other three in the family have a stable home and food and all their needs provided for. I thought at times that I would have developed differently maybe [by working outside the home]. But only in terms of money...through volunteering I have friends, I have associates...and I have all my needs looked after by my – I don't want to call him my sugar-daddy, but my [husband] who cares for me by bringing home the bacon.” Nina added, “I had gone into teaching, and in thirty odd years, I think I have twelve years to my name, but that was my choice. I'm not good at juggling; I don't do it well, and the kids always came first, and there always seemed to be something at home that kind of told me to just drop back from teaching and to stay with them”. Rural voluntary organizations clearly define and reinforce strict gendered roles and behavior through their discourse – expectations that are unattainable for most rural women. The fact that members of voluntary groups attain greater visibility

as volunteers than they would as wives and mothers in the private sphere makes these expectations of women far more powerful and influential.

The following three profiles are composites of the participants – two of them ‘insiders’ and one, representing ‘outsiders’ who have moved into the community from urban centers. These summaries not only describe in more detail the differences between the women, but also capture the same sets of shared beliefs and values based on traditional notions of women’s role and place.

Sophie

Sophie was born and raised in a farming community not far from the Town of Renfrew. Throughout her formative years, she was actively involved in the church, and as she got older, gradually took on group leadership roles. After high school, Sophie married a local man and continued her involvement in the church by becoming a member of the churchwomen’s league to which she still belongs. Her mother similarly belonged to traditional voluntary groups such as the churchwomen’s league as well as the Women’s Institute.

Sophie's work history is limited to a few years in various clerical or retail positions. Once she began having children, she very quickly assumed the full-time role of wife and mother. Her husband is a professional, and has invested expansive amounts of time furthering his career over the course of their marriage. Sophie's full-time acceptance and responsibility for the care of the children and home have been instrumental in allowing him to do so. Sophie has further supported her husband over their marriage by "helping out" with his voluntary commitments wherever needed, thus assisting in advancing his community profile.

Despite the fact that Sophie's children are now adults, she continues to maintain her domestic role and identity based on a notion that she is privileged to be able to do so. All of her efforts have been geared toward looking after the home, supporting the needs of her grown children and their families, and caring for her aging parents. Involvement in the community is centered mainly on the church and church-based groups with the main focus of these groups being "worship and fellowship"; however, she insisted these commitments are secondary to the needs of her family.

Sophie expressed deep concern for the current lack of involvement of women in the community, and contrasted this with her own privilege of having the financial support of her husband that enabled her to contribute to the community in an unpaid capacity. She further commented on the fact that there are fewer and fewer women who have the time and money to provide for the growing needs of the community.

Rose

Both Rose and her husband grew up in major cities in Canada, attended university and worked there, and subsequently moved to Renfrew when their children were young. Their intentions in moving to a rural area were based on a desire to give up their professional lives and assume a more traditional lifestyle in quiet and natural surroundings, with Rose assuming the full-time role as wife and mother.

Once the children were school age, Rose began volunteering at their school. While she and her husband were members of the local church, she purposely chose involvement in the school over the church since she felt it was more hands-on and action oriented work. She further stated that

involvement in the churchwomen's league was not relevant to her experiences as a rural woman.

Rose remarked that the volunteers at her children's school were a closely-knit group and became for her the community in which she actively chose to engage and interact. After the children graduated, Rose continued her voluntary activities, focusing involvement on services aimed at improving the lives of members of the community. She delighted in the fact that she was able to stay at home and contribute to the community in unpaid work, and felt that this privilege was based solely on her husband's professional status and income.

Rose made strong distinctions between her own experiences in a traditional role and the experiences of other women in the community. These distinctions were, in turn, expressed as concerns for the way that the community has evolved and changed. She noted that greater numbers of families were "having to work" and were "caught up in their own lives", and were therefore unable to engage in voluntary activities. As a result, she felt there wasn't the same sense of community.

Mira

Mira and her husband grew up in Renfrew, and after graduating from high school, they both attended universities in nearby cities. The decision to return to their hometown was based on a desire to provide a ‘better quality of life for their children’.

Shortly after returning to Renfrew, Mira joined the churchwomen’s league and has been a long-term member to date. She identified the main purposes of this group as “simply to promote women in the church and to look after each other”, and expressed the importance of her friendship with other members of the group. She also explained that the people with whom she socialized were women who volunteered. Volunteering therefore represented, for Mira, an important source of support and friendship that created for her a sense of integration into the community.

Despite her husband’s perception of the enormous time commitment required of her involvement in church activities and committees, Mira assured me that these involvements did not conflict with the time needed for her family or time to help her husband. She further remarked that when she was working full-time and had young children, she did not take on many

voluntary commitments. Once she was retired and her children had finished school, she was able to increase her involvement by taking on more responsibilities associated with the church.

Like other women in the community who engage in voluntary activities, Mira expressed concern for the dwindling membership of her churchwomen's group and the church, in general. She blamed the waning interest in community involvement on the fact that greater numbers of women are working and any free time that they might have is bound up in their own personal needs and interests and the needs of their families. Those who do volunteer, according to Mira, tend to be elderly and retired, and thus, have more time available.

Involvement in voluntary organizations as a means of class distinction may seem like quite a contradiction to the importance of maintaining and having a sense of belonging to the community. However, as the above profiles clearly suggest, the importance of belonging to the community was identified as one of the main motivators for becoming involved. This sense of belonging ranged from being an expectation of women with generational ties to being an opportunity for newcomers to gain influence and make

connections with like-minded women. Lydia, a long-term resident of the community, explained: “I think it’s the expectation in the country that you are community minded. You’re part of the rural group, and you do your share to help people.” However, the community to which participants continually made reference was based on their own idyllic experiences and perceptions of living in a rural community, and not reflective of the experiences of all of the women in Renfrew. For instance, comments from all of the participants portrayed the community as idyllic, close-knit, spiritual, and moral, based on an adherence to traditional values. Such idyllic notions of rural living are incongruent to the realities of living in an economically depressed community such as Renfrew, and yet these same images based on the experiences, values and practices of select and “privileged” groups are presented as representative of the community as a whole.

Defining community in this way is highly dependent on the exclusion of women whose lives and experiences do not fit with those of the dominant groups or classes. A homogeneous definition of community thus contributes to rural women’s inequalities and divisiveness by masking the oppression of those women who are positioned outside the dominant cultural context

(Young, 1989). This argument is supported by comments from participants that reflect their perception of Renfrew as an idyllic place. Newcomers, for example, explained their motivations for moving to the community as a need to “get away from it all”, a need to “embrace a more traditional lifestyle”, and wanting a “safer, more natural way of life”, and believed Renfrew offered all of this despite its struggling economy. The following comment by Colleen supports this theme: “You get that caring atmosphere in the small town because you know so many more, and it’s easier to get to know one another. I think you can go into your apartment in the city and close the door and disappear; whereas out here, there’s a different attitude.” Donna also stated: “Rural communities work so differently...it’s more of a naturally evolved support network in some ways which was always there with farming and agriculture.” She further added, “Everyone waves as they’re driving by. You don’t even know who they are, and if you’re standing somewhere, you just talk to someone, so I think it’s the expectation in the country that you are community minded. You’re part of the rural group, and you do your share to help people.”

Maintaining these narrow and restrictive notions of community in the face of obvious social and economic change necessitates the practice of strict

boundaries that exclude others who represent threats to the groups' collective ideologies. Boundaries were expressed by participants in the contrasts they made between their experiences of a close-knit community and what they felt was a loss of community that other women experienced whose lifestyles and experiences were distinctly different from theirs. The basis for these contrasts represents a need to maintain class divisions by distinguishing those who share the same values, practices and beliefs from those who do not. The practice of boundaries is therefore an important means and active measure of maintaining and reproducing spatial practices and discourses in order to preserve a 'community' that no longer reflects the current realities of the wider rural population. Tanya, who recently moved to the community, expressed her difficulties in joining a traditional voluntary group: "In order to get into the groups that [the churches] have, you have to be a member of some church. I didn't want to be in those groups because they're tight-knit groups, and there's always someone organizing something and they've done it for years, and you have to push your way in, and I didn't want to do that." Lydia further captured the extent to which boundaries were widely enforced by the traditional organization to which she belonged: "We're so set in our ways. Somebody new comes in and says, 'what would you think of doing this, or we could try this idea', and we're all going, 'I

don't think so; that's not going to work'. And oh, we're terrible; we're really bad...they have a hard time breaking into our unit. I know that is the truth. I'm being very honest. People have a hard time breaking in. We've had a new member here in the past five years, and a new member ten years ago, but I think we're really set in our ways." These comments clearly reflect the fact that new members are actively discouraged from joining voluntary groups on the basis that they may challenge their existing structure and ideology.

While comments express the idea that traditional voluntary groups practice stricter boundaries, all of the participants regardless of which group, distinguished themselves as more privileged and separate from others. Boundaries of all rural voluntary organizations therefore ensure a distinction between those who represent themselves as "privileged" by conforming to traditional expectations of women's role, and those who do not. However, maintaining boundaries is a ceaseless negotiation and struggle since class is a contested representation and not a static categorization. Members of voluntary organizations must therefore, actively ensure the status quo in order to maintain class distinctions in the midst of continuous change. They do so, not solely by maintaining collective beliefs and practices, but also by

masking the experiences of women who do not adhere to the dominant patriarchal and traditional norms. The following comment from Nina describes her level of privilege in relation to other women: "I think mothers who get up in the morning and dress kids and take them to a baby-sitter or day-care really need to be admired because I didn't have to do that. Joyce adds, "Anybody who goes to a paid job, ohhh, you have to get up in the morning, have your shower, get breakfast, get organized, and if you're responsible for the home, you still have to come home and do work. The mother is usually the one that runs the home, so if they have to run the home, do the laundry, the baking, the shopping, and interact one on one with the children, and then they go out for their paid work, and then they have their own down time from both of these jobs." The implication of such comments is that paid work challenges and interferes with women's natural role as wife and mother, and further represents a deterrent to contributing to, and maintaining, a shared sense of community.

For these women, 'community' is a place best supported by those who adhere to traditional roles and values. The outcome for women who are not full-time wives and mothers is that they are regarded as the silent 'others'

whose experiences are over-shadowed by members of the dominant classes, and therefore not accepted as active members of the community.

All of the participants acknowledged the fact that changes were happening within their community, and yet instead of attributing this to a changed economy and a redefining of gender relations, such changes were often interpreted as a loss of spiritual and moral values, with women losing interest, and becoming less involved, in both the church and the community. The overall perception was that the sense of community and the strong connectedness that had once existed between members of the community was slowly eroding. This was best illustrated by Brenda's comment:

"There's not the interwovenness of people in the community anymore...when there's a need, they will [help], but it's not an ongoing thing. A lot of people get into their cars and go out of the community to work...I think that maybe the connection [to the community] is lost... We haven't evolved as a society yet to remember how we have to function as an interwoven group to support each other." Many expressed concern that current changes regarding women's roles and responsibilities were negatively impacting on their families and the community; the underlying fear, of course, was that changes were impacting on their own identities and

class distinctions. Frida explained, “There were people volunteering more [in the past] because there wasn’t such a need to go out to work to get money. Society has become more complicated and complex in what we want and expect, but there’s not the volunteer base there anymore.” Most of the participants expressed that because women were choosing or needing to work, and because their lives had become “busier and more stressful”, this in turn created stress and change both within the family and the community. Lydia’s comments express these concerns: “A lot of women were still at home, and so we were able to commit to a [voluntary] group like this...But now, how many women can we think of that have the time to do that because they’re working and their husband’s working, and the kids are involved in umpteen different activities and sports and you name it. They’re run off their feet. They come home and every night of the week it’s laundry, housework, get the lunches ready for the kids, get the homework done. Like who’s got the time.” She further stated, “If [women] do have time, then they’re probably out for a walk or go to the gym – doing something for themselves.” Anita related such changes in the community to the influence of newcomers: “The new people who’ve moved into this community, I found, have not got involved... I’ve never met them, and I don’t know where they go to church or if they go to church. I don’t know where they

work. It's just a place to live." She contrasted this with her own experience and greater sense of belonging to the community through membership with the church: "I had that connection with the church...[and] attending the church gave us the connection to the community." Despite the continuous efforts of these groups aimed at preserving values and identities built on patriarchy, fewer women are being drawn to what they may perceive as an ideology that's no longer relevant to their lives, and as the older members of the group die, there are fewer women to replace them.

Women who adhere to narrowly defined and idyllic notions of family and community with the man as head of the family and the woman maintaining a domestic role are instrumental in shaping patriarchal gender relations. Idyllic images of rural living based on a patriarchal norm were captured in Joyce's comments who claimed that she was "living [her] mother's life": "I bake bread and look after the home and interact with people in the community, and don't have an income." Such influences are believed to be in the best interests of the family, and become the standard by which all other rural women are judged. Actively maintaining idyllic notions of community and stereotyped roles for men and women further help

to support liberal notions of rural communities as places defined by patriarchy and tradition.

However, gender is understood to be both “unstable and changing” (Whatmore, 1994: 4), and despite all of these efforts to maintain the status quo, rural spaces are continuously subject to change. A recent example of the power of change is the fact that traditional groups are losing strength through fewer members and fewer women joining, and their ideologies are failing to reflect the realities of increasing numbers of rural women. In Renfrew, several of the units of the Women’s Institute and the Church Women’s Leagues are on the verge of disbanding for lack of members, and yet, such ideologies not only continue to exist, but continue to influence and inform gendered roles and relations within rural communities. Part of the explanation for some rural women’s reluctance to adapt to change is reflected in the fact that “their networks of connections have been circumscribed by patriarchal norms” and “there is a particular challenge in adapting to rapid change” (Marshall, 2001, p. 395). Despite obvious signals that change is occurring, there is a continued “reluctance of members [of traditional organizations] to acknowledge the processes of change...and adjust their mission and modes of operating to reflect them” (Whatmore

1994: 41). In organizations such as the Women's Institute and the Church Women's Leagues, with ties at both the national and international levels, to remain relevant to the needs of the changing society, goals and policies must always be subject to review (Teather, 1992). Traditional organizations frequently choose not to remain relevant to the changing society, for to do so would require drastic restructuring and rethinking of their values and identities as rural women, and would challenge their acceptance and membership within the voluntary organizations as well as the upper and middle classes of the community (Cohen 1985, Marshall, 2001).

A refusal to adjust to social change was best described by Mona, one of the participants of a traditional voluntary organization: "[Our organization] had a couple of surveys from the Province that were seven pages long, and [the members] revolted. They just did not want to answer those surveys. And those surveys were, you know, what are we doing right, what are we doing wrong, what would you like to do; but to answer that was more than they wanted to do." In the process of reinforcing rural women's domestic roles and denying the process of change, not only are these women reinforcing patriarchal gender relations, but they are also contributing to a

growing ideological division between those women reproducing old patterns and those having to adjust their lives in response to social change.

Efforts aimed at encouraging change in a rural community may therefore be slowed by the need for rural women to maintain the status quo in efforts to preserve their existing traditional roles and identities that define their place within the social and class structure of the community. Secondly, change may be hindered by the fact that some rural women are actively seeking to fulfill traditional roles. For example, in situations of marital dissolution, some women may instinctively choose to re-establish a traditional relationship with another partner, thus maintaining the status quo. Those women, in particular, whose lives have long been informed or influenced by traditional and patriarchal expectations, have the most to lose in terms of status, income, and identity, and the greater challenges to overcome in situations of change. Efforts to maintain the status quo are aimed at ensuring the power of men over women, and maintaining the notion that such an arrangement is the ideal and the norm. Hierarchical and patriarchal systems are therefore resistant to change by women most protected by them and who actively support and maintain them.

McDowell (1999) points out, on the other hand, that postmodernism is challenging the boundaries of geographical spaces, and through a range of processes –an increasingly global capitalism, the migration of workers and their families to urban centers, and new social movements in response to changed relations – old boundaries are being transgressed and disrupted and replaced by new divisions. Despite efforts to preserve the status quo, rural women are simultaneously influenced and challenged by long-held beliefs that establish women's ideal role as wife and mother. For instance, while there was a strong perception amongst all of the participants that changes were happening in the community, such as an increase in the number of women working and in the number of women assuming roles as single parents, these changes were expressed as a growing loss of interest in helping one another and contributing to the community.

Concurrent with changes in the roles and activities of women were indications that men's roles in the community were changing as well. Participants who were members of the women's church leagues remarked that men were now being forced to help the women at functions that in the past would have been accomplished by women alone. This was related to the fact that there are fewer women belonging to the church women's

leagues than there were in the past, and also because the women members are aging and unable to handle the heavy lifting that's required of some of the jobs. Lydia, for example, commented, "More and more now, [men] are involved in certain things [in the church]...[It] was always mainly United Church Women who were doing all the work...but it's not that way now at all... We need the men terribly because of the age of most of the women in the church. They're elderly now, and we need the men desperately. We try to get them to come and help us on a lot of different occasions, like when we have a church supper...because there's a lot of heavy hard work in it...they use such big pots...it's heavy work, so we have a lot of men helping out."

Transformations in rural gender relations can also occur in response to the changing economy such as a loss or change in employment, marital discord and violence, and/or marital dissolution that force women to abandon their full-time traditional roles. Such changes have the potential of increasing the awareness of inequities that exist between men and women.

While women are continuing to engage in voluntary activities, growing numbers of them are less focused on maintaining patriarchal relations and simply wanting to 'help out'. Nina explained, "volunteer work

now is more honestly volunteer work and not something that will chock up a notch on the community social ladder like it used to be. I really think it used to be a one upmanship, and now people don't care. If they're going to volunteer, they're volunteering for the right reasons". Other women are actively choosing not to join voluntary groups. As Brenda explained, "women have a better sense of themselves; they don't need to join a group. The self-esteem that women are gaining now [through working] precludes their desire to belong." The suggestion from these comments is that while some rural women are drawn to participate in voluntary activities, they are doing so less as a reflection of their own status and identities. This trend of fewer women joining voluntary organizations has forced many existing groups to adjust. One group, for example, wanted to attract new members, and decided to change their direction by "put[ing] a little more energy into new programs". The membership of particular groups that in the past was strictly defined as men or women, have similarly had to adapt, and are now allowing for mixed membership. Lydia explained that the service club to which her husband belonged "used to be only men. It's only in recent years that women have come in, and I think it used to be by invitation; however, now if someone wanted to join, they would gladly accept them. Like everything else, [the problem is] declining membership." The outcome of

all of these transformations, whether conscious or unconscious, represents a gradual movement toward redefining rural gender relations and a far more inclusive notion of community that exposes the diversity of needs and experiences amongst the women residing there.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

In a climate of social and economic change, it seems incongruent that definitions of 'rural' are firmly based on past images of homogeneity, tradition and self-sufficiency, and 'rural women' continue to be defined by their traditional roles as wives and mothers. Although recent studies have highlighted the fact that there no longer exists a single point against which these terms can be measured, the findings from this research clearly suggest that idyllic notions and images of 'rural' and 'rural women' persist, and this is partly because women actively choose to construct and maintain them. Through such efforts, rural women help to reinforce rural power relations that unevenly and negatively impact on all rural women.

Involvement in voluntary organizations is an integral way of expressing definitions of 'rural' and 'rural women'. All of the women in this study participated in voluntary organizations as an expression and representation of their beliefs, practices and values associated with their roles as wives and mothers. In doing so, these women created a division – socially, ideologically and physically – between themselves and 'other' women in the

community. The fact that these women are influential in the community, and are actively maintaining the status quo based on the powers of patriarchy and class, explains more fully the dominance of inaccurate perceptions of rurality and 'rural women'.

Participants established differences amongst the women in the community in terms of class, length of residency, economic activity, and involvement in the churches. Distinctions made between themselves and 'others' represented a strong contradiction to their frequently expressed ideals of a homogeneous community and the importance of contributing to one 'community'. Despite claims of an interwovenness of community, the awareness of heterogeneity within the community and knowledge of varying levels of "privilege" were well expressed within the women's narratives. Church and/or community groups were identified as key sites where women could construct and express their particular understandings of community and women's ideal roles, and 'community', in most cases, took the form of the particular spaces or groups that the women occupied and in which they interacted. These accounts highlight the fact that the rural community must not be regarded as a single place, but a place comprised of a multitude of

spaces, each defined by the construction of boundaries and the creation of 'otherness'.

Rural spaces, however, are fluid and continuously subject to change. Therefore, in order to preserve the status quo, women must actively produce and reproduce spatial practices and discourses in order to preserve their identities that are rooted in tradition and patriarchy. The active role that women assume in the construction of gendered roles and relations through voluntary activities, constructing and maintaining expectations of women built on standards that few can attain, reinforces my argument that rural women are not subject to patriarchy, but actively choose to maintain it. Structural factors reflecting the power of patriarchy and the power of the elite are clearly evidenced through rural women's involvement in traditional voluntary organizations. These groups further help to sustain the notion that women's subordination is the ideal and the norm, thus contributing to the ongoing oppression of all rural women.

Voluntary activities are an important way of actively representing women's differences in terms of social class. Membership in particular voluntary organizations helps to define upper and middle class status and

further creates a divide between the women in the community based on whether or not they volunteer, and the particular groups to which they belong. One of the key representations of upper and middle class was found to be an adherence to traditional and patriarchal notions of women's place. Voluntary involvement, as a demonstration of upper and middle class membership, represented an extension of rural women's domestic roles. The sustainability of this discourse is explained by the fact that while spaces are inseparable from the social relationships within those spaces, spaces are also geographically defined and maintained through acts of exclusion. Representations of status through involvement in both the traditional and newer voluntary groups are characterized by strict collective values, beliefs and symbolic practices, protected by distinct boundaries by which the upper and middle class rural women actively maintain their place in the hierarchical positioning of rural women (Cloke and Little, 1997).

Similar to Yodanis (2000), I found involvement in the more traditional voluntary organizations to be a symbolic representation of upper class membership closely defined by their long-term representations as full-time wives and mothers, their involvement in the church, and their generational ties to the community. Generational roots in the community, in

particular, was one of the main criteria for membership in the more traditional groups such as churchwomen's leagues and the Women's Institutes. Those who had moved into the community from other centers, or 'outsiders', tended to join the newer voluntary organizations aimed more specifically at improving the quality of people's lives in the community. Members of both types of groups gained additional opportunities for influence in the community through widespread involvement on various other boards and committees. Thus, the level of influence these women attained placed them in key roles for ensuring that their dominant voices were heard and all other voices suppressed.

Some researchers have suggested that members of the newer organizations are becoming increasingly involved in the community in more progressive, change-oriented ways, and as a result, this was impacting on the extent to which rural women in the more traditional voluntary organizations were able to maintain the status quo. However, I found that despite differences between these groups in terms of their collective ideologies and the social classes to which they aspired, both groups of rural women, to some extent, reflected values and practices that firmly supported women's primary role as wife and mother. Rural women who were involved in the

newer voluntary groups had joined for many of the same reasons as members of the traditional organizations – as a representation of their domestic roles, and a means of symbolically defining their upper or middle class status. The extent to which these women will affect change within the community and contribute to changed gender relations is therefore limited by the fact that their identities are closely informed by the powers of patriarchy and class. As newcomers, many of the women claimed they were purposefully drawn to living in this community on the basis of idyllic images and notions of rural life and a desire to establish a more traditional lifestyle. Voluntary involvement thus represented for these women an extension of their traditional roles and a way of identifying and establishing themselves as members of the middle class.

In fact, all of the participants perceived themselves as far more privileged than other women in the community based on their full-time roles as wives and mothers, and this set them apart from ‘other’ women in the community. Financially protected and socially recognized through their voluntary work, these women felt they had greater advantages and status over others (Little, 1997) despite the fact that many of the voluntary organizations to which they belonged – particularly the more traditional

groups – reinforced traditional gender roles and expectations of women's place in the family and community. Involvement in voluntary organizations therefore represented an important source of identity and affirmation of social class outside the home and family while supporting their domestic roles (Little 1997). Gaining a higher profile within the community through membership in a rural voluntary organization has placed these women in key roles for reinforcing rural women's idyllic domestic roles, which in turn, has set the standard for all other women in the community. While the very nature of their dependency on their spouses may be oppressive, as long as these women believe they are privileged, they will actively continue to maintain the status quo in order to ensure this level of privilege, and feel they have nothing to gain by changing it.

Participants attributed the dwindling memberships of voluntary organizations – particularly the traditional groups – to the fact that greater numbers of women are assuming paid employment outside their homes. Some interpreted the reduced number of women joining these voluntary groups as a loss in spiritual and moral values as well as a threat to the strength of the community. The essence of these concerns was a contention that the changing roles of women were affecting the very fabric of families

and the community. Appeals to the notion of community through volunteering and the desire for a weaving together of members of the community are replete with idyllic notions of rural places as patriarchal, traditional and homogeneous. Such images represent a force in maintaining existing patriarchal gender relations, and are instrumental in defining the community as a whole, obscuring the inequalities that exist there. Rural women's involvement in voluntary organizations as a representation of social class serves as a way of distinguishing those rural women who are privileged from those who are not, and further provides opportunities for defining those who are part of the community and those who are separated from it. It would appear, therefore, that concerns expressed by participants regarding a lost sense of community are actually a mask for underlying fears that changes will have a negative impact on their own personal identities, roles and position in the class hierarchy.

Instead of attempting to resolve oppression through the unity and equality of all groups, communities and researchers, alike, must embrace difference. Attempting to resolve rural women's oppression through the perceived unity and equality of all groups reflects a lack of insight into the underlying structure of the community and the needs of the women who

reside there. Moreover, whenever efforts are aimed at creating a totality or unity, such as a common community identity, they generate a hierarchical structure that depends on “determining some attribute of particulars as accidental, lying outside the domain of the ideal” (Young 1995: 235). In other words, homogeneity depends on the exclusion of those who do not “fit” with the ideal. From the results of this study, it is understood that there are groups of rural women who want to protect their community against change despite the fact that their ideologies are no longer reflective of the needs of most of the women residing there. The ideal of community, frequently mentioned by all of the participants, is accomplished through spatially distancing of themselves from other women. The end result is a denial of both the inner workings of the rural society and failure to understand the diversity of needs of those who reside there.

This finding alerts us to the fact that ‘rural women’ must not be conceived as a single category, but understood instead as spatially and socially constructed. Similarly, ‘rural’ must be given no one center from which it might be captured and assessed, but rather understood from the perspective of rural women’s own social, moral and cultural values within the various rural spaces that they occupy. Place and identity are thus closely

bound together, and while rural communities may no longer be mappable as distinct locations, they may be defined by the variety of representations and discourses that give them meaning. For example, participants in this study drew sharp distinctions between urban settings and the community of Renfrew as an idyllic and traditional rural place. However, it is important to understand that 'rural' is not a static term, but defined instead, by a multitude of differences in perception and meanings that are communicated through discourse and are continuously subject to change.

Defining 'rural' in terms of a diversity of fluid meanings and representations is essential in the interest of revealing the hidden contradictions and problems that exist there, and recognizing the movement that exists within those meanings. Historically, the type of work that rural women performed was highly prescribed by the relationship between public and private spaces. Today, rural women as members of voluntary organizations continue to support this dichotomy by maintaining their domestic roles as the ideal and marginalizing all other women's experiences. However, the potential for changing rural gender relations clearly does exist since discourses that are produced as part of social relations within the spaces of voluntary organizations are fluid and subject to change unless they

are continuously reinforced and reproduced. Traditional voluntary organizations as well as the newer voluntary groups provide members with an opportunity and a potential for changing rural power relations and influencing change through the construction of separate identities and a social network within the public sphere that is “significant for confidence raising” (Morgan, 1996: 218). While this potential for change has been limited by the fact that many of the voluntary organizations have long been aimed at reproducing ideology rooted in tradition and patriarchy, the fact that this ideology is losing relevancy to greater numbers of rural women suggests that change is imminent.

Changed gender relations and spaces are further hastened by an economy marked by intense social and economic change. In Renfrew, over the past twenty or thirty years, changes have taken the form of a growing ideological and economic divide between the lower and middle classes, and a redefining of women’s place. With a sharp decrease in the number of jobs paying a living wage accompanied by a growth in the service sector, growing numbers of women have assumed low-paying and temporary employment, many of them as sole-support parents. Efforts to maintain narrow and restrictive, and idyllic notions of ‘rural’ and ‘rural women’ in the

face of growing contradictions marked by disadvantage and need are becoming increasingly challenging. This is reflected in the fact that fewer rural women are assuming roles as volunteers, and as a result, traditional and patriarchal discourses of these groups are gradually losing power and influence.

I believe, as does Young (1990a: 167), that changed relations within a rural community will emanate, not from a common sense of belonging to the community, but from the fact that there are differences among rural women that are both unstable and always subject to change. She claims that it is the “social movements of the oppressed [that] are in a position to inquire how the dominant institutions must be changed so that they will no longer reproduce the patterns of privilege and oppression”. In a climate of intense social and economic changes, increasing numbers of rural women will be forced to confront the realities of rural life, and this will further impact on those women actively working to maintain the myths. Social and economic changes are thus challenging and altering long-held traditional notions of ‘rural’ and ‘rural women’ to the point where new meanings may eventually transform these existing notions.

In my own experience, awareness of the inequalities that existed within the community came only as a result of stepping outside my idyllic rural lifestyle and assuming the role of sole-support parent. The rural myths, in which I had actively participated and reproduced, represented a strong contrast to the realities of being a mother and being poor in a rural community. However, coming to terms with these myths forced me to confront the site of my own oppression and to consider ways of changing it. With increasing numbers of women in similar situations, the possibility exists for greater awareness of the realities of living in a rural community and the potential of challenging dominant discourse and offering alternative ideologies that contribute to changed gender relations. This suggests that now more than ever before, researchers have an opportunity of examining the social diversity and power relations that are not only currently shaping, but also transforming rural communities.

The aim of this study was to provide a contribution to research on the active role that rural women assume in the construction of patriarchal and class relations within a context of social and economic change, and to relate such efforts to rural women's oppression. While this was accomplished to some extent, further research that maintains a post-structural focus on

diversity from the perspective of the women themselves is clearly needed in order to develop broader understandings of the problem. This research has further identified the need for better representation by ensuring a larger number of participants from a much wider age range, by gaining the rural male perspective, and by being more inclusive of class. Women participating in this study represented primarily the upper and middle class segments of the community, and while social class was discussed to some extent in relation to the construction of social relations and spaces, further research would need to explore class from a much wider segment of the population with representation from all classes.

References

- Abu-Lughod, Lila (1993). *Writing Women's Worlds*. The University of California Press.
- Allen, Kerrie-Elizabeth (2002). The social spaces of rural women. *Rural Society*, v. 12, no. 1, 27-44.
- Alston, Margaret (1995). *Women on the Land: The Hidden Heart of Rural Australia*. University of NSW Press, Sydney.
- Anderson, Margaret & Collins, Patricia Hill (1993). *Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology*, Belmont C.A.: Wadsworth.
- Baldock, Cora V. (1983). Volunteer Work as Work: Some Theoretical Considerations. *Women, Social Welfare and the State in Australia*, Cora V. Baldock and Betting Cross, (eds.). North Sydney, Australia: George Allen & Unwin Limited.
- Bourke, Lisa & Luloff, A.E. (1997). Women and leadership in rural areas. *Women and Politics*, v. 17, no. 4, pp. 1-23.
- Bourke, Lisa & Luloff, A.E. (1998). What influence does she have in this town? The perceived influence of women in rural Pennsylvanian communities. *Journal of the Community Development Society*, v. 29, no. 2, 237-245.

Brandth, B. and Haugen, M.S. (1997). "Rural Women, Feminism and Politics of Identity". *Sociologia Ruralis*, v. 37, no. 3, 325-344.

Buckingham, Susan Hatfield, (2000). *Gender and Environment*, N.Y.: Routledge.

Buroway, Michael, Blum, Joseph A., Sheba, George, Gille, Zsuzsa, Gowan, Teresa, Haney, Lynne, Klawiter, Maren, Lopez, Steven H., Riain, Sean O., (2000). *Global Ethnography – Forces, Connections and Imaginations in a Postmodern World*, London: University of California Press.

Butler, Judith (1995). Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of Postmodernism. *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*, Linda Nicholson, (ed.), London: Routledge.

Buttimer, A. (1980). Home, Reach, and the Sense of Place. *The Human Experience of Space and Place*, A. Buttimer and D. Seamon (eds.), London: Croom Helm.

Cloke, Paul (1997a). Country backwater to virtual village? Rural studies and the 'cultural turn'. *Journal of Rural Studies*, v. 13, no. 4, 367-375.

Cloke, Paul and Little, Jo, (1997b). Marginality and rural others. *Contested Countryside Cultures: Otherness, Marginalisation and Rurality*, Paul Cloke and Jo Little, (eds.), London: Routledge.

Cloke, P. & Milbourne, P. (1992). Deprivation and lifestyles in rural Wales II: rurality and the cultural Dimension. *Journal of Rural Studies*, v. 8, no. 4, 359-371.

Coakes, Sheridan J. and Bishop, Brian J., (1998). Where do I fit in? Factors influencing women's participation in rural communities. *Community, Work & Family*, v. 1, no. 3, 249-271.

Cohen, Anthony P. (1985). *The Symbolic Constructions of Community*. London: Tavistock.

Cohen, Anthony P. (1987). *Whalsay: Symbol, Segment and Boundary in a Shetland Island Community*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Cotterill, Pamela (1992). Interviewing Women: Issues of friendship, vulnerability and power. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 15(5/6), 593-606.

Davidoff, Leonore, L'Esperance, Joan and Newby, Howard (1976). Landscape with figures: home and community in English society. *The Rights and Wrongs of Women*, J. Mitchell and A. Oakley (eds.), London: Penguin.

Dempsey, K. (1992). *A man's town: inequality between women and men in rural Australia*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Dodgshon, Robert A., (1998). *Society in Time and Space: A Geographical Perspective on Change*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Duncan, Nancy (1996). "Renegotiating Gender and Sexuality in Public and Private Spaces", *Bodyspace: Destabilizing Geographies of Gender and Sexuality*, Nancy Duncan, (ed.). New York: Routledge.

Cooke-Reynolds, Melissa and Zukewich, Nancy, (2004). The Feminization of Work. *Canadian Social Trends*, Spring 2004, 1-6.

Crompton, Susan and Vickers, Michael (2000). One Hundred Years of Labor Force. *Canadian Social Trends*, Statistics Canada, Summer 2000, 2-13.

Crosby, F.J. and Lubin, E.P. (1990). Extending the Moral Community: Logical and Psychological Dilemmas. *Journal of Social Issues*, v. 46, 163-172.

Dodgshon, Robert A. (1998). *Society in Time and Space: A Geographical Perspective on Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Davidoff, Leonore, L'Esperance, Joan, and Newby, Howard (1976). *Landscape with figures: home and community in English society. The Rights and Wrongs of Women*, J. Mitchell and A. Oakley, (eds.), London: Penguin.

Dempsey, Ken (1987). Economic inequality between men and women in an Australian rural community. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, v. 23, 358-374.

Dunn, Robert G. (1998). *Identity Crisis: A Social Critique of Postmodernity*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Edwards, Jeannette (1998). The need for a 'bit of history' – place and past in English identity. *Locality and Belonging*. Nadia Lowell, (ed.), N.Y.: Routledge.

Elshtain, J. (1995). *Democracy on Trial*. N.Y.: Basic Books.

Etzioni, A. (1993). *The Spirit of Community: The Reinvention of American Society*. N.Y.: Touchstone.

Evans, N. & Ilbery, B. (1996). Exploring the influence of farm-based pluriactivity on gender relations in capitalist agriculture. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 36, 74-92

Fitchen, Janet M. (1991). *Endangered Spaces, Enduring Places; Change, Identity and Survival in Rural America*. Oxford: Westview Press.

Flora, Cornelia Butler, Flora, Jan L., Spears, Jacqueline D., Swanson, & Louis E., (1992). *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change*. Colorado: Westview Press.

Fonow, M.M. & J.A. Cook (1995). *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research*, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Fraser, Nancy (1991). What's critical about critical theory? The case of Habermas and gender. *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory*, Mary Lyndon Shanley and Carole Pateman, (eds.). Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Gerson, Kathleen (1987). How Women Choose Between Employment and Family: A Developmental Perspective. *Families and Work*, Naomi Gerstel and Harriet Engel Gross, (eds.). Philadelphia: Triple U. Press.

Gibson-Graham, J.K. (1994). 'Stuffed If I Know!' - Reflections on post-modern feminist social research. *Gender, Place and Culture*, v. 1, no. 2, 205-224.

Grace, Margaret & Lennie, June (1998). Constructing and Reconstructing Rural Women in Australia: The Politics of Change, Diversity and Identity. *Sociologia Ruralis*, v. 38, no. 3, 351-370.

Gregory, Derek and Urry, John (1985). *Social Structures and Spatial Structures*. London: MacMillan Publishers.

Gusfield, Joseph R. (1975). *Community – A Critical Response*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott Ltd.

Halfacree, Keith H., (1993). Locality and Social Representation: Space, Discourse and Alternative Definitions of the Rural. *Journal of Rural Studies*, v. 9, no. 1, 25-37.

Halfacree, Keith H., (1996). Out of Place in the Country: Travelers and the Rural Idyll. *Antipode*, v. 28, no. 1, 42-72.

Hartsock, Nancy (1990). Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women. *Feminism/Postmodernism*, Linda Nicholson, (ed.). N.Y. & London: Routledge.

Harper, Sarah (1987). A Humanistic Approach to the Study of Rural Populations. *Journal of Rural Studies*, v. 3, no. 4, 309-319.

Higginbotham, Elizabeth and Romero, Mary (1997). *Women and Work: Exploring Race, Ethnicity and Class*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Hughes, Annie (1997). Rurality and Cultures of Womanhood: Domestic Identities and Moral Order in Village Life. *Contested Countryside Cultures: Otherness, Marginalisation and Rurality*, Paul Cloke and Jo Little, (eds.). London: Routledge.

James, K. (ed) (1989). *Women in rural Australia* St Lucia: University of Queensland Press.

Jayaratne, T.E., Stewart, A. (1991). "Quantitative and qualitative methods in the Social Sciences", *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research*, M.M. Fonow & J.A. Cook, (eds.), Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Katz, Cindi and Monk, Janice (1993). Making Connections: Space, Place and the Life Course. *Full Circles – Geographies of Women over the Life Course*, Cindi Katz and Janice Monk, (eds.). London: Routledge.

Kennis, D. (1990). *Community & the Politics of Place*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Liepins, Ruth (1994). ‘ "We can do it": Change for the invisible farmer’. Paper presented at the Australian Women’s Studies Association Annual Conference, Women and the Politics of Change, Australian Women’s Research Centre, Deakin University, 4-6 December

Liepins, Ruth (2000). Exploring rurality through ‘community’: discourses, practices and spaces shaping Australian and New Zealand rural ‘communities’. *Journal of Rural Studies*, v. 16, 325-341.

Little, Jo (1991). Women and the rural labor market: a policy evaluation. *People in the Countryside: studies of social change in rural Britain*, Tony Champion and Charles Watkins, (eds.). London: Paul Chapman.

Little, Jo (1994). Gender Relations and the Rural Labor Process. *Gender & Rurality: Critical Perspectives on Rural Change*. London: David Fulton Publishers.

Little, Jo & Austin, Patricia (1996). Women and the Rural Idyll. *Journal of Rural Studies*, v. 12, no. 2, 101-111.

Little, Jo (1997). Constructions of Rural Women's Voluntary Work. *Gender, Place and Culture*, v. 4, no. 2, 197-209.

Little, Jo (1999). Otherness, Representation and the Cultural Construction of Rurality. *Progress in Human Geography*, v. 23, no. 3, 437-442.

Little, Jo and Panelli, Ruth (2003). Gender Research in Rural Geography. *Gender, Place and Culture*, v. 10, no. 3, 281-289.

Mackenzie, F. (1992). The worse it got the more we laughed: a discourse of resistance among farmers of Eastern Ontario. *Society and Space*, v. 10, 691-713.

Marshall, Joan (1999a). Insularity, Migration and Modernity on Grand Manan. *Small Worlds, Global Lives: Islands and Migration*, Russell King & John Connell, (eds.). London: Printer.

Marshall, Joan (1999b). Insiders and Outsiders: The Role of Insularity, Migration and Modernity on Grand Manan, New Brunswick. *Small Worlds, Global Lives: Islands and Migration*, Russell King and John Connell, (eds.). N.Y.: Pinter Publishers.

Marshall, Joan (2001). Connectivity and Restructuring: Identity and Gender Relations in a Fishing Community. *Gender, Place and Culture*, v. 8, 391-401.

Massey, Doreen (1994). *Space, Place & Gender*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.

Mbilinyi, Marjorie (1992). Research Methodologies in Gender Issues. *Gender in Southern Africa: Conceptual and Theoretical Issues*, Ruth Meena (ed.). Harare, Zimbabwe: SAPE Books, 31-70.

McDowell, Linda (1999). *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press.

McEwan, Shonagh (2002). Crossing Boundaries: Gendered Spaces and Bodies in Golf. *Subjectivities, Knowledges, and Feminist Geographies: The Subjects and Ethics of Social Research*, Liz Bondi, Hannah Avis, Ruth Bankey, Amanda Bingley, Joyce Davidson, Rosalenn Duffy, Victoria Ingrid Einagel, Anja-Maaike Green, Lynda Johnston, Susan Lilley, Carina Listerborn, Shonagh McEwan, Mona Marshy, Niamh O'Connor, Gillian Rose, Bella Vivat, and Nichola Wood, N.Y.: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Milroy, Beth Moore & Wismer, Susan (1994). Communities, Work and Public/Private Sphere Models. *Gender, Place and Culture*, v. 1, no. 1, 71-89.

Morgan, Maggie (1996). Jam Making, Cuthbert Rabbit and Cakes: Redefining Domestic Labor in the Women's Institute, 1915 – 1960. *Rural History*, v. 7, no. 2, 108-132.

Morris, Carol & Evans, Nick (2001). Cheesemakers are always women: gendered representations of farm life in the agricultural press. *Gender, Place and Culture*, v. 8, 375-390.

Mosca, Gaetano (1964). *The Varying Structure of the Ruling Class, in Social Change: Sources, Patterns and Consequences*, 2nd edition, Amitai Etzioni and Eva Etzioni-Halevy, (eds.). N.Y.: Basic Books, Publishers Inc.

Murdoch, J. and Pratt, A.C. (1997). From the Power of Topography to the Topography of Power. *Contested Countryside Cultures: Otherness, Marginalisation and Rurality*, P. Cloke and J. Little, (eds.). London: Routledge,

Nicholson, Linda J. (1990). *Feminism/Postmodernism*. N.Y. & London: Routledge.

Pateman, C. (1987). Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy. *Feminism and Equality*. A. Phillips (ed.), London: Routledge.

Pettersen, Liv Loril and Solbakken, Hilde (1998). Empowerment as a Strategy for Change for Farm Women in Western Industrialized Countries. *Sociologia Ruralis*, v. 38, no. 3, 318-330.

Phillips, Anne (1991). *Engendering Democracy*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Philo, Chris, (1997). Of Other Rurals. *Contested Countryside Cultures: Otherness, Marginalisation and Rurality*, Paul Cloke and Jo Little, (eds.). London: Routledge.

Pratt, Andy C. (1996). Discourses of Rurality: Loose Talk or Social Struggle. *Journal of Rural Studies*. v. 12, no. 1, 69-78.

Reed, Paul B. and Selbee, L. Kevin, (2001). Volunteering and giving: a regional perspective. *Canadian Social Trends*, Winter 2001, 16-19.

Relph, Edward (1976). *Place and placelessness*. London: Pion.

Rose, Gillian (1993). Looking at Landscape: The Uneasy Pleasures of Power, in *Feminism and Geography: the Limits of Geographical Knowledge*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 86-112.

Rowlands, J. (1995). Empowerment Examined. *Development in Practice*, v. 5, no. 2, 101-106.

Rothenberg, Paula (1995). *Race, class and gender in the U.S.: An Integrated Study*. N.Y.: St. Marten's

Sagoff, M. (1988) *The Economy of the Earth: Philosophy, Law and the Environment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sandel, M. (1996). America's Search for a New Public Philosophy. *Atlantic Monthly (March)*, 57-74.

Sawicki, Jana, (1991). Foucault & Feminism: Toward a Politics of Difference. *Feminist Interpretations and Political Theory*, Mary Lyndon Shanley and Carole Pateman, (eds.). Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Shortall, Sue (1984). Power analysis and farm wives: an empirical study of the power relations affecting women on Irish farms, in *Sociologia Ruralis*, v. 32, 431-451.

Shortall, S. (1994) Farm women's groups: Feminist or farming or community groups or new social movements. *Sociology*, v. 28, no. 1, 431-451.

Silbertstein, Sandra (1988). Ideology as Process: Gender, Ideology in Courtship Narratives. *Gender and Discourse: The Power of Talk*, Alexandra Dundas Todd and Sue Fisher, (eds.). New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Smith, Dorothy E., (1997). Women's Inequality and the Family. *Families and Work*, Naomi Gerstel and Harriet Engel Gross, (eds.). Philadelphia: Triple U. Press.

Soja, Edward (1985). *The Spatiality of Social Life: Towards a Transformative Retheorization. Social Structures and Spatial Structures*, Derek Gregory and John Urry, (eds.). London: MacMillan Publishers.

Soja, Edward (1989). "Reassertions: Towards a Spatialized Ontology". *Postmodern Geographies*, London: Verso, 118-137.

Staeheli, Lynn A. (1997). *Citizenship and the Search for Community. State Devolution in America: Implications for a Diverse Society*, Lynn Staeheli, Janet E. Kodra, and Colin Flint, (eds.). California: Sage Publishers, 1997.

Statistics Canada, 1971, *Census of Canada: Profiles: Census Tracts*, Ottawa: Supply and Services.

Statistics Canada, 1976, *Census of Canada: Profiles: Census Tracts*, Ottawa: Supply and Services.

Statistics Canada, 1981, *Census of Canada: Profiles: Census Tracts*, Ottawa: Supply and Services.

Statistics Canada, 1986 *Census of Canada: profiles of census divisions and census subdivisions*, Ottawa, Ontario: Statistics Canada, Available:

Statistics Canada, 1991, *Census of Canada: Profiles: Census Tracts*, Ottawa: Supply and Services.

Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Canada: profiles of census divisions and census subdivisions, Ottawa, Ontario: Statistics Canada, Available:

Statistics Canada, 2001 Census of Canada: profiles of census divisions and census subdivisions, Ottawa, Ontario: Statistics Canada, Available:

Stebbing, Sue (1984). Women's roles and rural society. *Rurality: economy and society in rural regions*, Tony Bradley & Philip Lowe, (eds.). Norwich: Geo Books.

Teather, Elizabeth K. (1992). Remote Rural Women's Ideologies, Spaces and Networks: Country Women's Associations of New South Wales, 1922 – 1992. *ANZJS*, v. 28, no. 3, 369-390.

Teather, E. (1994), Contesting Rurality: countrywomen's social and political networks. *Gender and Rurality*, S. Whatmore, T. Marsden and P. Lowe, (eds.). London: David Fulton.

Teather, E. (1995), Farm Women in Canada, New Zealand and Australia Redefine their Rurality. *Zemedelska Ekonomika*, v. 41, no. 10-11.

Teather, E. (1996), Rural women's Self-concepts and Aspirations as Members of Selected Voluntary Organizations in New Zealand, Australia and Canada. *New Zealand Geographer*, v. 52, no. 2, 35-45.

Teather, E. (1997), Voluntary Organizations as Agents in the Becoming of Place. *The Canadian Geographer*, v. 41, no. 3, 226-234.

Todd, Alexandra Dundas and Fisher, Sue, (1988), *Gender and Discourse: The Power of Talk*. New Jersey: Ablex Pub. Corp.

Todd, Alexandra Dundas and Fisher, Sue (1988). Theories of Gender, Theories of Discourse. *Gender and Discourse: The Power of Talk*, Alexandra Dundas Todd & Sue Fisher, (eds.). New Jersey: Ablex Pub. Corp.

Tyler, T.R. and Lind, E.A., (1990). Intrinsic versus Community-based Justice Models: When does group membership matter. *Journal of Social Issues*, no. 46, 83-94

Valentine, Gill (1997). A Safe Place to Grow Up? Parenting, Perceptions of Children's Safety and the Rural Idyll. *Journal of Rural Studies*, v. 13, no. 2, 137-148.

Walmsley, D.J., and Lewis, G.J. (1993). *People and Environment – Behavioral Approaches in Human Geography*, 2nd edition. N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Wells, Barbara (2002). Women's Voices: Explaining Poverty and Plenty in a Rural Community. *Rural Sociology*, v. 67, no. 2, 234-254.

Warner, W.L. and P. S. Lunt, (1941). *The Social Life of a Modern Community*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.

Whatmore, Sarah (1990). *Farming Women: gender, work and family enterprise*. London: MacMillan.

Whatmore, Sarah, Marsden, Terry and Lowe, Philip, (1994). *Gender and Rurality: Critical Perspectives on Rural Change*. London: David Fulton Publishers.

Williams, J. (1992). 'The invisible farmer - a report on Australian farm women'. Canberra: Commonwealth Department of Primary Industries and Energy.

Williams, Cara (2000). Income and Expenditures, Canadian Social Trends, *Statistics Canada*, Winter 2000, 8-11.

Yodanis, Carrie L. (2002). Producing Social Class Representations: Women's Work in a Rural Town. *Gender and Society*, v. 16, no. 3, 323-344.

Young, Iris Marion (1989). Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship. *Ethics* 99, January 1989, 250-274.

Young, Iris Marion (1990a). *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Young, Iris Marion (1990b). The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference. *Feminism/Postmodernism*, Linda Nicholson, (ed.). N.Y. & London: Routledge.

- B. Questions regarding the participants' voluntary involvement in the community

- Please discuss your motivations or intentions for doing volunteer work.
- Please describe your involvement in voluntary work in terms of what it does for you and what you feel it does for your community.
- How does your voluntary work fit with your other commitments? Do you feel it limits you or has limited you in any way from taking on other things, such as paid work?
- Please describe your spouse's role and attitude with respect to your voluntary work.
- Do you feel the need and availability of volunteers in the community has changed over time? Please describe.
- Do you feel the type of work in the community requiring volunteers has changed over time?
- How are volunteers recruited?
- Who volunteers? From your perspective, please describe the average woman who volunteers in the community.
- Do you feel there is any difference between volunteering in a community such as Renfrew and volunteering in an urban setting?
- Please describe your perception of life in Renfrew and the quality of living in a rural community.
- How would you distinguish life in Renfrew from life in an urban community? How would you distinguish life in Renfrew from life in another rural community?

Appendix B

Letters of Consent and Introduction

CARLETON UNIVERSITY,
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

LETTER OF CONSENT

I, _____, agree to participate in the study being conducted by Susan Kasprzak of Carleton University, Department of Geography. I am aware that this study will examine my attitudes, values, experiences and opinions as a woman living and doing voluntary work in Renfrew, Ontario.

I understand that participation in this study will involve:

- One interview of approximately one hour at a mutually agreed upon time and location
- Voluntary participation from which I may withdraw at any time
- Only Susan Kasprzak having access to the results of the interview
- Using the information from this interview in a research paper which will be circulated, deposited on file in the Resource Center at Carleton University and may be published
- Protection of my confidentiality through elimination of my name and identifying details from the report
- My access to the final report either through my own copy provided by the researcher for the cost of photocopying or through access at the Resource Centre, Bottom Floor, St. Patrick's Building, Carleton University

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

CARLETON UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Date:

Dear _____:

I am a graduate student from the Geography Department at Carleton University and am presently engaged in a research project for the purposes of fulfilling the requirements for my Master's degree.

As a rural woman, I am interested in the attitudes, values, experiences and opinions of those women in the community of Renfrew who are actively involved in voluntary activities. The aim of this study is to explore women's voluntary work experiences in the community from a cultural perspective.

Participation in this study involves an interview of approximately one hour, to be arranged at a mutually agreed upon time and location. I will be audio taping the interview, and while I will be using your words and thoughts in my report, I will ensure that any identifying features will be removed to ensure your anonymity and confidentiality. Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary, and you have the right to withdrawal from the study or to decline from answering any questions, and to have your data withdrawn without any reprisal. The tape from the interview will either be erased or returned to you, depending on your preference. While in my possession, the data will be stored in a securely locked filing cabinet in my home office. I will ask you to also sign a letter of consent, which will further outline your rights in this study.

This study has received ethics approval from the ethics department at Carleton University. Should you have any questions or concerns about your involvement in this study, you may contact the ethics committee chair, Leslie MacDonald-Hicks at (613) 520-2600.

As a woman, I am aware that our lives can be busy, hectic and exhausting. I greatly appreciate our taking the time to consider taking part in this study. If you would like further information, please contact me at (613) 432-5171.

Thank-you for your consideration and time.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Kasprzak