

Rurality, Gender, and Leisure: Experiences of Young Rural Women in a Nova Scotia Community

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ABSTRACT

This paper, using discourse analysis and thematic coding, explores the ideas, perceptions, and attitudes of rural women on community and leisure in the context of gendered practices and performance. Three focus group transcripts were analyzed using MAXqda² software. Transcripts, coded into 11 different codes by members of the research team, were examined for code intersections. Intersections were present the greatest number of times for Community and Activities (25), Gender and Activities (22), and Community and Gender (12). Two themes emerge from this analysis: Rural Community and Leisure, and Leisure: Shaped by Gender and Rurality. Leisure, it can be argued, is a contested domain in which gendered practices and perceptions still play a pivotal role in a rural community.

INTRODUCTION

According to Linda Trenberth (2005), “leisure can contribute to physical, social, emotional and cognitive health through prevention, coping and transcendence” (p. 1-2). Henderson *et al* (1996) conclude that “research on women of color, or women with diverse life experiences and life situations” (p. 233) is still relatively rare with regard to leisure experiences, and a similar gap in understanding exists for rural women’s leisure as it relates to their health needs (Janzen, 1998). The following paper attempts to address this gap through analysis of some of the issues women in rural areas of Nova Scotia face in trying to effect a healthy balance in their daily lives as women, workers, mothers, partners/wives, and family and community members.

Drawing from Michel Foucault’s work on discourse (1982) and Judith Butler’s concept of gender as performance (Butler, 1999), we argue that leisure is a discursive practice; that as such, it is performative, and that rurality sets into motion specific relations, performances, and productions of what is acceptable according to gender, age, and class. Through the lens of discourse analysis, we explore the ideas, opinions and attitudes of women in a small rural community, examining in particular their ideas of community, their opinions on leisure practices and activities, and their access and opportunity attitudes. We look at how both a sense of community and gendered realities configure these women’s lives as rurally-situated women, contextualizing our research by discussing and expanding upon previous works that explore the interactions of gender and leisure Henderson *et al* (1996), rurality within Atlantic Canada (Samson, 1994); and women’s meanings for leisure as a gendered practice and as a part of women’s life course (Averill, 2003; V. J. Freysinger, 1995; Freysinger & J, 1990; Hareven, Adams, & Clark University, 1982; Hareven, 1993; Shogan, 2002).

In April, 2006, focus groups were organized and conducted in a rural community in Nova Scotia that we shall call Hampshire¹. The focus groups were organized as part of a community-based participatory research (CBPR)-model project, for the initiative Women's Health in Rural Communities (WHIRC). Funded by a Canadian Institutes of Health Research NET (New Emerging Teams) grant, WHIRC is a partnership involving the Nova Scotia Agricultural College (NSAC), Dalhousie University, the IWK Health Centre, and several communities in rural Nova Scotia. WHIRC is studying the health of young rural women and the issues that surround healthy living in rural settings. Projects are organized under four discrete themes; this project's research was conducted as part of Study 4, under Theme 3, Resilience and Change in Rural Communities. This article is the second of four planned reports on the project. In this paper, the research team has made use of the software MAXqda to analyze the focus group transcripts. We examine, in one rural community how gender divisions are a part of everyday life for women, and the ways in which these divisions have important ramifications for these women's access to and participation in leisure activities.

Depending on the definition of 'rural' being used, 60% to 75% of the population of Nova Scotia lives in a rural community². Thus, the study of leisure, as traversed by rurality is not only relevant but essential in order to understand how broader social changes are affecting women in terms of access to the personal development, emotional fulfillment, and health benefits afforded women through leisure.

METHOD

For all phases in the study, ethical review was sought and obtained through the Research Ethics Board at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College. The study uses historical research, focus group interviews and a CBPR-model of community input. The CBPR model is defined by Penzhorn (2002) as a collaborative research approach whereby the community affected by the issue being studied is included in the research process. In using this approach, the PI for the project contacted members of the community in which she had previous connections. Two members were designated 'community coordinators', and as one of their key tasks, they organized, recruitment for, and hosted the focus group interviews. The community coordinators were paid \$10 per hour in recognition of their time and expertise. At the coordinators' suggestion, the term 'focus group interviews' was not used and they were instead called 'kitchen meetings' and held in one of the coordinator's homes to allow for a more comfortable setting.

Recruitment for the focus groups resulted in a total of 17 participants: nine in Focus Group 1, and four in each of Focus Groups 2 and 3. The focus groups were conducted on three separate nights within a one-week period and an attempt was made to include women representing various 'life situations' in each Focus Group. The life situations included:

- women with no children
- women with children
- women who work outside the home
- women who work solely at home
- women still living at home with parents, etc.
- women with and without life partners

The three focus groups began with refreshments, brief socializing, completion of any outstanding consent forms, and introductions. This was followed by going over with each group the questions in the interview guide related to community, health, and leisure. The guide was constructed through consultation with the two community coordinators. The PI of the project facilitated each focus group with assistance from the two community coordinators and research assistant. The focus groups were audio recorded and later transcribed into three separate Word documents and formatted as txt files to be analyzed through MAXqda 2.

The three transcripts were read independently by three members of the WHIRC research team, then discussed and coded into 11 different codes: (1) Community, (2) Health, (3) Activities, (4) Gender, (5) Stage of life, (6) Place, (7) The Self, (8) Self Description, (9) The Others, (10) Defining Hampshire, (11) Defined by Hampshire.

Codes 7 – 11 are highly subjective terms that the research team separated out in order to clarify the perceptions that this community had with regard to its self-identity, as well as perceptions of other communities more generally. “The Self” is defined here as participants’ expressed perception of themselves when *not* in comparison to others. Self Description is defined here as how participants described their community. “The Others” is defined in this context as how participants perceived other communities in comparison to their own community. “Defining Hampshire” refers to how participants articulated their perceptions of how *others* view their community; finally, “Defined by Hampshire” is how this community articulated the ways in which they, as a community, view other nearby communities. Those codes most germane to this preliminary analysis are “Community”, “Health”, “Gender”, and “Activities”.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

An analysis was done to determine where certain codes intersected with one another. Intersection is defined as the area of text coded with more than one code and where text identified by different codes overlaps. By activating certain codes, the intersecting areas of various codes were retrieved. This technique was used in our analysis in a variety of ways. Using different combinations of codes, we found a variety of intersection areas.

There were no intersections between Community, Health, and Gender, and only one for Gender, Health, and Activities.

There were 25 intersections for Community and Activities, 22 intersections for Gender and Activities, and 12 intersections for Community and Gender.

There were no other intersections greater than 10; all others were 10 and under. Based on these results we suggest that leisure activities in this rural community are gendered experiences, and rooted in the historically-constituted structures of community. These findings have been organized into two groupings, Rural Community and Leisure, and Leisure: Shaped by Gender and Rurality.

Rural Community and Leisure

In terms of how community and leisure intersect in the lives of women in this rural community, leisure appears to be linked to activities that are, in turn, related to community building. Like many rural communities throughout parts of North America, community building activities are currently under siege due to the smallness of community populations. Corresponding stresses and strains have been placed on a small and aging population to provide leisure activities/social events for the community. Still, community building activities appear still to be a significant part of how the women within this community identify with their community.

Community identity, too, is a serious matter. The women assembled at the focus groups were aware, for example, of how people who are *not* from this community perceive *their* community. This may be due to the community's history as a working-class, industrial centre (with the requisite large number of bars and brothels during its 19th century heyday), or it may have to do with the community's continuing and persistent rural 'character,' or rurality. Further study is needed in this regard. In response to these perceived attitudes, however, the participants described themselves as a community of "unique individuals." In some sense, this finding echoes Averill's on the intersection of health and rurality in New Mexico, in that the women involved in our study acknowledged, in similar fashion, that there is a difference between those who have longstanding ties to the community and those who are newcomers. Even more importantly, however, as Averill (2003) points out, internal social dynamics must be taken into consideration when studying rural communities, for there is an amazing diversity found in rural settings in North America today.

The focus groups revealed that drinking and partying are closely interwoven in this community. In fact, in this community, the two terms mean the same thing, and drinking/partying comprises an essential part of leisure time. The constant mention of drinking as a main social activity led one participant to draw attention to it in the following way: "Then you have that health issue about drinking... Well it's a leisure activity." This may be an indication that other health-related issues, which may form a part of everyday activities, may help solidify community ties but in the process also put individuals at risk for health problems connected to these activities.

Focus group participants expressed the fact that they would prefer to have more options for leisure. Yet, the young women expressed feelings of relaxation and belonging tied to their living spaces and to the natural world through their partying/drinking leisure activity, an activity that takes place primarily in the warmer months and in settings within nature (as opposed to the bar scene of urban centers). Partying is largely seasonal (summer is its time), as during the winter months most members of the community prioritize heating and other related costs of running the household over socializing.

"People can't afford to in the winter because they're heating their homes... a lot of them are on unemployment and can't afford to do too much."

"There's nothing else out here to do."

“Okay, we’re not going to go to the pool, there’s no pool out here unless someone has a pool.”

“And if we all went there, we’d be sitting there drinking.”

Q: Anything else that anybody possibly could think that anybody in Hampshire does? What goes on at the hall?

Participant 1: A lot of people smoking.

Participant 2: Nothing.

Participant 3: There’s a card game, every Monday night.

Participant 4: Years ago, darts.

Participant 5: They have card parties every Monday night down at the hall.

Stage of life is another important issue to consider when talking about leisure in the rural community context. A life course approach can illuminate the gendered and rural realities of women in the community. This has been the case historically, as well as today (Hareven et al., 1982; Hareven, 1993). In Hampshire, those who do not have kids of the age for playing organized sports are too busy working at home and working outside the home to get involved in organizing such activities. As a result of the declining population and fewer young families, the focus group participants noted a decline in the level of activities available over the past fifteen years. The women recalled different types of activities organized by volunteers historically. They expressed differing views, by age, on the matter of trying to organize collective leisure activities, such as baseball/softball leagues, which, over most of the late 19th to mid-20th century, were important leisure and social activities in this community and elsewhere in Nova Scotia and Canada more generally (Howell, 1995; Matheson, 1989).

Participant 1: Like, people are willing, but there’s just nobody there to...

Participant 2: I’ll tell you what it is, girls, it’s you guys are the ones that should be organizing it.

Participant 3: We’re still expecting you guys to organize it, we’re lazy.

Participant 2: We work and we have to go home and do housework and look after kids.

There are certain freedoms and satisfactions attached to rural living, as well as costs and disadvantages related to lack of facilities and the like (Beesley & MacIntosh, 1994; Beesley, 1994; Beesley, MacIntosh, & Walker, 1995; Thomlinson, McDonagh, Crooks, & Lees, 2004). Women’s access to fulfilling leisure activities—activities that they choose—may be beyond their economic and social reach, in that they, as members of a rural ‘society,’ are affected differently by ruling apparatuses than are men. Ruling apparatuses, as stated long ago by Foucault (1978), and more recently by Judith Butler (1999), inscribe in the body different meanings; for women, especially those who may not have as first choice the kinds of leisure readily available to them within their community (and which are types of leisure done with men, as well) these differences may be reflected in articulations of preferences that are never acted upon.

When pressed to describe how leisure is different for men in Hampshire as opposed to Hampshire women, one participant replied, “Oh how’s it different, well my man wants to go hunt and fish and I want to go to dinner and a movie.”

Community itself is a gendered space, one that in Hampshire benefits the men. The men of this community have succeeded in creating the bases for bonding, but in the process the community tends to favor male spaces and behaviors. It has created an imbalance in the social fabric, preventing women access to the same spaces as men, as well as to other spaces of their own:

Participant 1: Like going for a coffee, or a big party.

Participant 2: The guys do.

Participant 3: They guys do everyday.

Participant 4: They go to ‘Sam’s’ every morning [for coffee]

Through this discussion of social leisure time, the participants appear openly eager to acknowledge a gender divide that is implicit within the community, but one that at the same time they are part of, through a negative agency of acceptance and reproduction of determined roles:

Q: What about drinking and partying and that kind of thing?

Participant 1: They do more.

Participant 2: Now let’s get that straight...

Participant 3: I went out twice without “Fred” and he was yelling at me, “Well it’s my turn to go out.” I said, excuse me, think about the last two years when you went out and I stayed at home.

Q: There is a gender divide in terms of ...

Participant 4: Boy what is this going to start, we’re all going to get together and say “We’re going out.”

Drawing from Freysinger’s (1995) research, it seems that, for those who see leisure as a possibility for self-expression, leisure is the space and opportunity to explore facets of personality or to engage individual preferences or enjoyments that are sublimated under other roles, such as mother, worker, etc. As the above excerpt suggests, however, partying with one’s women’s friends too often is viewed as a type of transgression against the customary order of things. For these participants the dimension of bonding and sharing with their male partners appears to be constructed as the ideal type of leisure activity.

Q: So, the distance is one thing, the fact that there are no pubs here, or entertainment venues.

Participant 1: There is nothing here.

Participant 2: There is nothing to go to or do...[participants list natural sites within community, and a nearby town’s legion hall, where they go to drink occasionally]

Participant 1: When we get there, you have to have a designated driver for transportation.

Participant 3: It's the same thing, no matter what the women do; they still have to go through the babysitters.

Leisure: Shaped by Gender and Rurality

The final comment, above, taken from the text of one of the focus groups—"It's the same thing, no matter what the women do; they still have to go through the babysitters"— suggests how access to leisure is shaped by both gender and rurality.

Both the contributors to and editor of *Contested Countryside: Rural Workers and Modern Society in Atlantic Canada, 1800-1950* (Samson, 1994), challenge the notion of Atlantic Canada as being, historically, a homogeneous, idyllic, rural community. Nonetheless, this stereotype, a stereotype in which class, gender and ideology are invisible, has been widely promoted, even into the present. The writers of what is often termed the "new rural history" (Swierenga, July 1982) have argued that class and gender as well as other factors have intersected in the construction of rurality. Too, historically, rurality has been at the heart of capitalist industrial development in this region, as well as others (most notably, Appalachia, as the work of Ronald Lewis and others have shown). People in rural areas have experienced rural industrial and non-industrial development in different ways in Atlantic Canada (Maynard, 1994; Samson, 1994), but these historical dimensions are worth considering in even contemporary research, for as we will see below, our research shows the ways in which the intersections of rurality and gender, as historically constructed, are salient still in some rural Nova Scotian communities.

In this research, rurally-situated, community-situated activities mentioned by the participants were related to alcohol consumption (drinking/partying), and included, as did the most popular leisure activities of walking, 4-wheeling, and snowmobiling, class, rural and gender components in terms of access and participation. While the activities are not associated directly in this community to one gender in particular—although walking and gardening surfaced more frequently as activities enjoyed by women, while hunting, fishing and the like were associated solely with men--access to activities appeared restricted by gender, because of women's childcare responsibilities or by their own exclusionary nature. (Fishing and hunting, in historical terms, are associated with male-only activity.) What is expected of men and of women is fairly rigidly defined in terms of gender. Private life, in fact, configures and is a constitutive part of what is possible in terms of leisure in this rural community context.

Family roles are also closely tied to leisure activities. Women in this community occupied remarkably 'traditional' roles as caregivers, mothers and wives/partners, and in the context of these roles did not mention deep differences in the type of activities they (would like to) enjoy as part of their leisure time. Still, their access can be seen as restricted because of the roles they perform. There is a greater gender divide in terms of social activity and access to leisure opportunities than one might expect when analyzing in detail the stories these participants shared. That is the case with the Hunter's Breakfast, an annual community event (a series of breakfasts held each weekend during hunting season). As one participant noted, some in the community would consider the Hunters Breakfasts as an opportunity for leisure of a social

nature, for socializing, in other words. “But those aren’t considered leisure activities for me because I’m usually working them.”

In another of the focus groups, Hunters Breakfasts were mentioned again:

Participant 1: Well there’s the Hunters Breakfast, but the people who are doing the cooking for that are women.

Participant 2: And they’re not necessarily having free time.

In the same line of argument elaborated by Trenberth (2005) and Freysinger (1995) free time for most of the participants was synonymous with leisure, as a “free and unobligated time” (p. 2) (Trenberth, 2005). It is, in other words, a time where the demands of everyday life activities (household, work) are temporally suspended. Here, the gender dimension is seen in all its workings as for women the administration or even the possibility of being able to enjoy free time is pre-determined by their gender. There has been contestation; not all women have always accepted the pre-established arrangement. One participant observed, “Dad had this wagon on the back of the snowmobile and Mom drove the snowmobile just as much as Dad did. But my Mom was pretty assertive.”

Women are in charge of household administration, and there is nothing tangible keeping women away from exercising their rights to leisure. There is, instead, a complex apparatus of social demands and traditions that operate at the household and community levels, affecting women’s choices and agency.

Q: Okay, so now, think of all those leisure activities that we’ve just listed, I can go back if you need to look at the list. Are these different from Hampshire women versus Hampshire men?

Participant 1: No, they’re not different.

Participant 2: Except for the gardening and the Tupperware® parties.

Participant 3: They [men] have no household chores, whatsoever.”

There are other occasions in which prohibitions for women are not abstract or subtle; rather, they are specific, material and spoken:

Participant 1: Well most of the men let you go, it’s not that they won’t let you, it’s that you can’t go, because you don’t have a babysitter.

(In response to the comment above, one of the other focus group members offered a challenge rhetorically expressed to the [absent] men -)

Participant 2: You’re the father, you babysit.

Participant 3: No sir, it doesn’t work that way.

Participant 4: And it’s my responsibility and I don’t want to leave them every week, I don’t want to do that.

Participant 5: You don’t though, right? He has them right now.

Participant 6: Usually at least one night on the weekend, I'm over here playing Scrabble while "John's" drunk at the legion, and I get the phone call at 3 in the morning, "Will you come get me?"

"Participant 1: I think the men are more the fishing, hunting, trapping..."

Q: Now walking, who's out there walking?

Participant 2: More women.

Participant 3: You never see a guy going walking, he's usually on his 4-wheeler.

Gendered divisions are crosscutting and can also be found in private space:

Q: Who said they dominate the TV watching? What does that mean, they pick who watches what?

Participant 1: If they are up there watching TV, it ain't gonna be changed.

Participant 2: The choice is usually theirs.

These differences start to appear when the questions are addressed in a more specific manner. For instance, during most of the conversation most participants agreed that the activities mentioned did not differ greatly based on gender; however, when the interviewer addressed the following question the responses were clear cut.

Q: Let's go to the men's side for a second, what do the men do?

Participant 1: Drink

Participant 2: Drink and Drink

Participant 3: Drink some more.

Participant 4: Sleep for an hour and eat and then go drink.

Participant 1: TV

Participant 2: Dominate the TV, they don't just watch it, they dominate it.

Participant 3: Some of them hunt.

Participant 4: They never catch nothing.

Participant 5: That's because they're drinking.

It is relatively easy to identify a strong connection between what are considered normative gender behaviors. Women, if performing the same activities with men, are not participating with the same intensity as the men. Would women invest the same amount of time or intensity in this set of activities if they had more democratic access to these and also other sets of activities? Would they choose other leisure activities instead? Is it really that women are trapped in daily homemaking activities, or is it that the leisure activities they perceive as accessible (and acceptable by community norms) are not necessarily what they would choose, if given the opportunity to explore alternatives?

Participant 1: I have to schedule at least a day in advance so I can get the babysitter, the time and everything else, while he can just pick up and go... which they usually do while I'm at home.

Participant 2: Well if you can't find a babysitter, it's "I'll see you later."

Participant 1: Exactly, if you can't get a babysitter, 'whatever.'

Participant 2: Maybe you can come next time."

The participants in the three different focus groups were heterogeneous in terms of age and occupations. The differences in stage of life among the participants appears to have some influence over their time and options to participate in leisure activities. Thomlinson *et al* (2004) found as well in their research that several participants came to the conclusion that health is age related, that "it means different things at different times in your life" (p. 261). But there is an additional dimension as well. Leisure for the women in these groups is associated with youth, spare time, minimal domestic responsibilities and, most importantly, freedom. It is perhaps this quality –freedom-- that men, through gendered articulations, perform most effectively, thus giving them the power to participate more freely in leisure—more freely, at least, as viewed by the women of their community. The men are, in effect, postponing their process of growing up, in this rural community:

Participant 1: The grown up boys go coasting alone.

Participant 2: You should see them, they start at the very top of that hill and then they try to race, you'd knock each other off the sled to see who was going to make it to the bottom first.

Participant 3: the grown up boys that aren't really grown up.

Q: Okay, grown up boys that aren't really grown up, now what age would you say?

Participant: They're in their late 20's.

Participant 4: 19-45. [*This last comment, giving this specific age range, is also a humorous allusion to the age range focused on in this study of young rural women, that is, the group represented by the focus group participants.*]

Leisure tends to be identified with a breaking away from everyday life routine of family and work responsibilities, an arena in which the individual can exert some control (Freysinger, 1995). Some activities are performed and understood as other-oriented, while others are self oriented (Freysinger, 1995). It is the former, the 'other-oriented' dimension which relates to bonding and thus to community building; in other words, affiliation. Hence, "leisure as affiliation refers to interacting and sharing oneself with others" (p. 72). Leisure as affiliation allows us to see how, through the performance of leisure-like activities, that sense of belonging to a family, friends group, or a community group is developed. In Freysinger's (1995) research, it was the development and maintenance of family ties, friendships, and community that subjects identified as priorities. For Freysinger "women's leisure was shaped by their relationships with others in a way that men's was not" (p. 76); our findings differ from Freysinger's, in that in Hampshire sense of community is strongly linked to the opportunities that each gender has to social space and thus the construction of links among its members. Men are literally and figuratively free to

exercise a right to leisure connected to youthful freedom from adult responsibilities. In this case, in these participants' estimation/perception/minds, the men of this community remain boys: the men have achieved (or insisted upon) a sort of eternal status that in order to be differentiated needs another adjective: hence, the term "grown up boys." However, the adjective "grown up" is a descriptive one, and can be used or not according to the circumstances and the speaker. They are --and note how the construction follows--grown-up boys. The qualifying adjective 'grown-up' can be omitted, but it is the noun 'boys' which must remain because the noun is the center of articulation. Boyhood, thus, for men in this community, creates certain sets of attributes where particular possibilities emerge. As explained by Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1982), discourse as practice does not represent, nor does it describe the point of convergence between reality and language, only the set of rules that make its emergence possible. It is this discursive position that allows men to participate in leisure in a different way than can the women of this community.

Debra Shogan (2002), in a Foucauldian analysis of leisure constraints as both enablers and limiters for engagement in activities, discusses the benefits as well as the negative effects of certain socially produced constraints to the engagement of women in leisure activities. Foucault shows, says Shogan, that power "produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse" (p. 28). She then adds, "Social constraint as power is productive and, therefore, never wholly limiting" (p. 28). Hence, for Shogan, it is not a matter of eliminating constraints as conventionally understood by researchers, but rather a matter of articulating what could enable full participation of marginalized groups. The women in the focus groups of our study have not experienced a lessening of their leisure spaces because of characteristics related to the leisure activities available to them. Women reported being able to enjoy and perform the same leisure activities as their masculine counterparts and so they did. In that sense, there is not a clear-cut division between feminine and masculine spaces. This community has not generated leisure spaces that are more desirable for one or the other gender. Instead, it has generated social dynamics that have ensured that certain social constrictions are kept in place, in order to ensure an economy of enjoyment that more readily cedes benefits to men than to women. Unlike Freysinger's findings, through the eyes of our participants, leisure is for men highly related to the opportunities to interact with others. Women are excluded from that process of active bonding at the family and community levels. It is men who have the opportunity to develop those links that would guarantee them a dynamic role in community building. Therefore, leisure is indeed shaped for men by their relationship with others, in a way that is restricted for women in this community—even though women, as revealed in the Hunters Breakfast activity, are providing essential labour to the efforts of community building and maintaining community ties.

Shogan's (2002) analysis is comprehensive with respect to the matter of constrictions. Yet, leisure is not an externality, absent from the production of discourse. For Foucault, whom she uses as a point of departure for her analysis, any object of discourse is produced within a discursive space that does not provide objects to the speaker. Indeed, what discursive practices do is produce objects as it speaks (Foucault 1982). Bearing this point in mind, in terms of our own research findings, it is clear that it was not easy for our focus group interviewees to locate their position as *subjects* of leisure. Leisure as a topic of conversation may not be a predominant theme for discussion in working class settings like the rural post-industrial community that is

Hampshire, or in other rural communities with diminishing populations, employment, and services. Nonetheless, the sharing of common and communal experiences—of enjoyment, exclusion and desire, all of which resulted in leisure activities emerging in this setting as an object of debate—suggests that, despite ongoing exclusionary practices, leisure is still an important, if not critical dimension, one that warrants further exploration in order to better understand rural women's experiences of daily life.

CONCLUSION

The social expectations attending women in everyday life mean that they are subject to different performative roles as shown in the case of the performative character of gender roles noted by Judith Butler (1999). Men and women are socially constructed identities, subjects and subjected to a series of processes, both public and private, which foster conformity to particular sets of rules (written and un-written) that give the shape or appearance of normality to otherwise contingent features. The appearance of 'normality' or whatever defines normality corresponds to the social expectations of specific times and places and cultures. As shown by Henderson *et al* (1996), socially-constructed demands based on perceived and accepted gender differences, and material circumstances that impose differential access to leisure activities due to time, cost and other factors—including the circumstances of rurality for women-- shape women's options in terms of incorporating leisure into their lives. In other words, as shown by Michel Foucault (1982), the socially and historically established "norms" of gender interact with material circumstances to produce a discourse on gender that in this specific context excludes women. Women in the focus groups had difficulties articulating their ongoing exclusion from leisure activities. This of course has consequences for both men and women's daily lives, and as such those impacts may vary and be experienced in different degrees by both sexes. Rurally-situated women in specific may face challenges related to the ways in which leisure access, participation, and activities occur in the context of their communities, and challenges connected to the manner in which leisure is constrained and reproduced by both gender and rurality.

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Notes:

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¹ The fictitious name of Hampshire is used in all reports to protect the identity of the community and its residents. This is a common practice used in community based research.

² Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre, Dalhousie University and Coastal Communities Network (2003). *Painting the Landscape of Rural Nova Scotia*.