

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT OF SENIORS IN THE EASTERN TOWNSHIPS

Cheryl Gosselin and Caroline Viens
Bishop's University

ABSTRACT

This paper explores Anglophone seniors' participation within the community of the Estrie region of Quebec. A healthy relationship between Anglophone and Francophone communities improves access to state health and social services and relieves the social isolation of those living in rural areas. Immigrant migration to the area as well as out-migration of young Anglophones is profoundly affecting the delivery of health and social services as well as changing family, community, nation, culture and what it means to be a citizen.

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article porte sur la participation des aînés anglophones au sein de la communauté estrienne. De bonnes communications entre les communautés anglophones et francophones de la région permettent d'améliorer l'accès aux services sociaux ainsi qu'aux services de santé offerts par l'État et contribuent à rapprocher les populations rurales et les populations urbaines. L'arrivée de nouveaux immigrants dans la région et le départ des jeunes anglophones ont des effets importants sur les services sociaux et les services de santé et affectent les notions de famille, de communauté, de nation, de culture et de citoyenneté.

In the fall of 2005, the Hon. Flora MacDonald P.C., Canada's first female Foreign Affairs Minister, gave an engaging lecture to Bishop's University students on her contributions to the developing countries of the world. This assistance was comprised of training programs such as Future Generations India, Shastri Canadian-India Advisory Council, HelpAge India, and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (based in India) for which she became the first Canadian to be honoured with India's top award for distinguished

service in the field of public affairs (MacDonald, 2006:1). Flora MacDonald's determination to use the skills that she acquired during her years serving in Canadian national politics, and to apply these skills to help organize people in developing countries, provides an example of a third-age retiree returning services to the global community, one who is willing to share her experiences with groups who do not have the opportunities that Canadians, like Macdonald, have.

Documented research on retirees' contributions in their communities, whether local or global, is relatively recent. For example, according to the paper *Distinguishing Characteristics of Active Volunteers in Canada*, from the *Nonprofit Sector Knowledge Base Report* published by Statistics Canada (2000), specific traits are identified with volunteering, including early life involvement in volunteer and civic activities, participation in civic organizations, and satisfaction with life. The National Advisory Council on Aging (2003) reported:

Proportionally fewer seniors are volunteering than a few years ago, but those who do volunteer are putting in more hours. Trends in senior's volunteer participation warrant monitoring because their continued engagement contributes to the social good as well as to their personal well-being. (p. 21)

Just as Flora MacDonald is doing, members of the third age are afforded the opportunity of time, interest, and skills to exercise the option to contribute to their own local or other communities.

Our interest lies in discovering the depth of the contribution of members of the Anglophone community in the Estrie Region of Quebec. To further this goal, and in conjunction with our associates at the *Centre de recherche sur le vieillissement* at the *Université de Sherbrooke*, we proceeded with a study on how Anglophone retirees, and in particular seniors, organize to participate in their local communities. We looked at the scope of the ongoing contribution of retired Anglophone volunteers so that we could acquire a better understanding of the social, political and informal economic contributions of these community members.

This paper concentrates on three recurring themes that are prevalent in the data: concern for *environmental conservation*, the benefits of higher *education* and the *rights/access of Anglophones to health and social services*

Our research shows that in the Estrie region Anglophone seniors (third-agers) take on more responsibility for the well-being of their communities in response to the reduction of educational, environmental, and social spending by the public sector, and are increasingly

critical of the failure of institutions to perform.

The history of the Anglophone population of the Estrie region has been well documented. Ronald Rudin (1985) has explored the earlier settlers while Gary Caldwell and E. Waddell (1982) have traced the position of English speakers within the region from the status of majority to minority. Viens (1997), in an unpublished master's thesis, explores the relationships of seniors to their informal social networks. In addition, the Townshippers' Association has commissioned a number of studies exploring the demographic evolution and situation of Estrie Anglophone communities today (Flock & Warnke, 2004; Pellegrin, 2004). Little has been published on the topic from the perspective of Anglo third-agers and their community participation in the Estrie.

Flock and Warnke (2004) provide a snapshot of the Anglophone population of the Townships (Estrie) region and compare this community to the Francophones.¹ The Anglophone Estrie population is aging and the working Anglophone population is diminishing in socio-economic importance when compared to the dominant Francophone population. Here are some highlights from their report.

Eastern Townships Region—Highlights

- Anglophone community declined from 43,050 in 1996 down to 40,308 in 2001 while the Francophone community increased from 576,985 to 590,038 over the same period, thereby dropping the Anglophone proportion from 6.9% to 6.4%;
- Continued high proportion of aging (18.4% of community over 65 in 2001) which is 50% higher than the proportion of seniors within the Francophone community (12.3%)

They found Anglophone third-agers were dispersed unevenly throughout the Estrie region but represented 18.4% of the over 65 age group. (See figure 1 next page.)

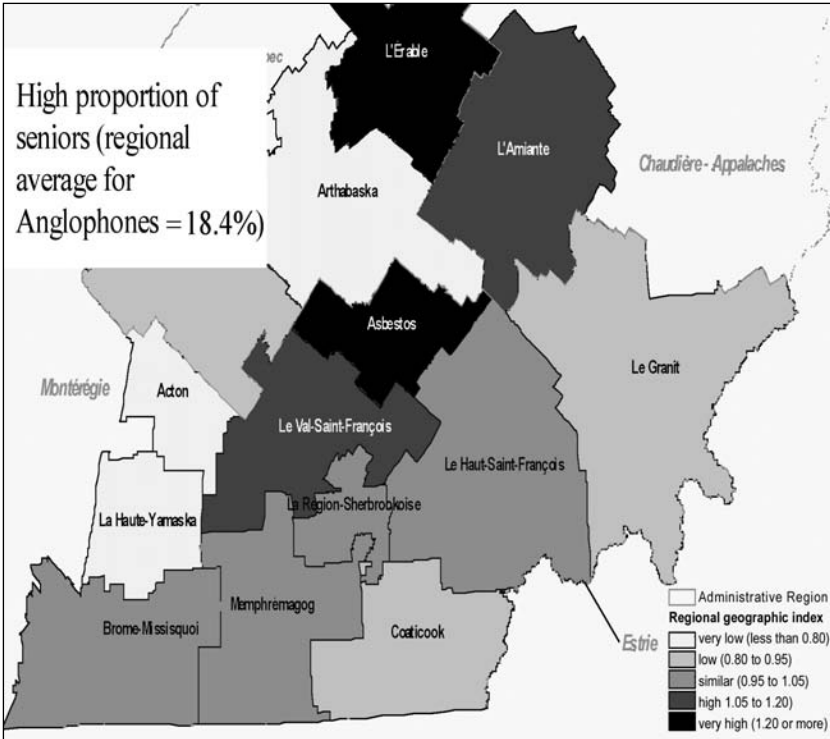


Figure 1

Flock and Warnke (2004) use the index as indicated on the left of the graph to compare educational achievement of the Anglophones minority to the Francophone majority in Quebec generally and Eastern Townships specifically according to their ages as indicated at the bottom of the graph². (See figure 2.)

Finally, the authors use the minority-majority index to reflect the amount of hours the Anglophones compared to the Francophones, both men and women, of the Eastern Townships provide to members of their community. (See figure 3.)

At this point in time it is useful to have a profile of the people interviewed, and how they were recruited. We promise to limit the discussion of statistics.

The methodology uses both qualitative and historical approaches to explore the previously stated themes. The research first generated the historical context of the evolution of the group under study. Then we focus on a selection of groups representative of the Anglophone community, such as the AQDR Memphremagog (The Association of Quebecers for the Defence of Rights for the Retired and Pre-retired) and OPALS (Older People with Active Lifestyles).

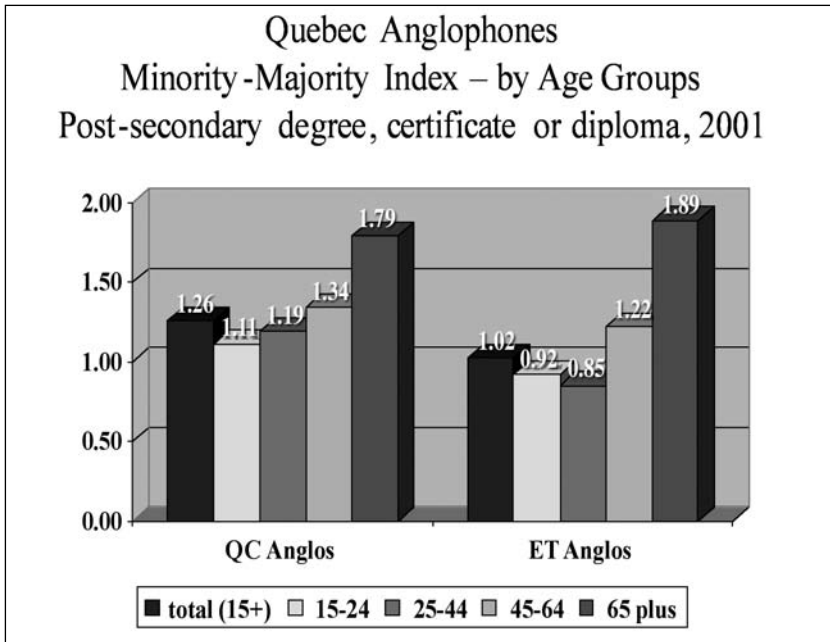


Figure 2

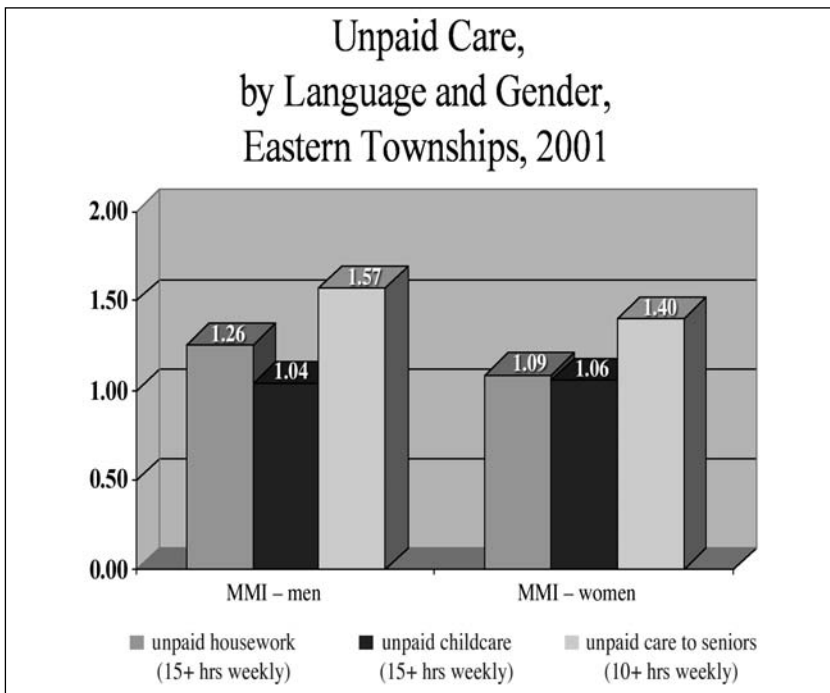


Figure 3

The more active members, such as the executives of these groups, were initially approached, and then our sample was extended to include active general members. Following this, a set of interviews was conducted among the leaders and members of community organizations within the Estrie. A research assistant conducted approximately 47 interviews, of which 42 conformed to the parameters of this paper. The attrition rate was due to an inability to transcribe the taped recording for technical reasons, a request by a participant to remove his or her responses from publication, and demographic information of subjects that was outside the parameters of the study.

The questions for the interview were based on a review of the literature about senior involvement in volunteer organizations. The one to two hour, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted from May to October, 2005, and were tape-recorded in the participants' homes. The participants were informed that the interviews were being conducted according to the guidelines of the Bishop's Research Ethics Board. The research assistant then encoded the subjects into classifications of sex, age, residency, volunteer hours, and activities and, transcribed the interviews. The subjects mentioned in this publication granted the researchers permission to discuss the material from the interviews.

The retirees consisted of 18 males and 24 females between 55 and 95 years of age. The subjects were distributed according to their age groups as follows:

- 11.9% between the ages of 55–64 years,
- 54.8% between the ages of 65–74 years,
- 26.2% between the ages of 75–80 years, and
- 7% over 80 years old.

The educational attainment of the group varied from high school (secondary) experience to completed university degrees. Eight males and one female did not provide a response to the education question, which may suggest that courses were started but not completed in their adolescence and early adulthood. We hypothesized that the interruption of their studies was directly related to economic and life pressures. This was confirmed within the taped conversations of the interviewees. The distribution of this variable is as follows:

| | Male | Female |
|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| High School | 1 | 4 |
| College | 0 | 6 |
| University | 9 | 13 |
| N/A | 8 | 1 |
| Total | 18 | 24 |

The subjects belonged to a diverse selection of organizations representing a variety of interests. In addition to AQDR Memphremagog (The Association of Quebeckers for the Defence of Rights for the Retired and Pre-retired) and OPALS (Older People with Active Lifestyles), other groups included Scouts of Canada, University Women's Club, Canadian Cancer Association, Lennoxville and District Community Aid Foundation, Uplands Cultural and Heritage Centre, Lennoxville Historical Museum Society, *Association forestière des Cantons-de-l'Est* (Eastern Township Forestry Association), Stanstead Historical Society, forestry advisory committee of the Regional county municipality (RCM) of Coaticook, Canadian Club, the Canadian Executive Services Over Seas, Ducks Unlimited, Golden Agers, and the group JEVI whose name is derived from the French phrase "je vie", appropriate for a suicide prevention organization.

Analysis

The findings from the interviews confirm our hypothesis; given the demographics specific to the Estrie region and the lifelong involvement in community and/or volunteerism, third age Anglos maintain networks that provide for the well-being of their constituents. They do so because they are embedded in kin, friend and community supports and because services in rural communities are insufficient (Dobbs, Swindle et. al., 2004). Not only is this in response to the reduction in social spending by the public sector, but also the state's emphasis on the reliance of individuals to find solutions to social problems.

Among the diversity of respondents and variety of organizations, we noticed three areas of concern: protection of local forests and lakes, education as a right and benefit for women and access to health and social services for English-speaking third-agers. Together, these concerns and activities associated with them represent part of the informal economy of the Estrie region. According to Reimer (2006), the informal economy refers to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services not usually counted as economic activities by the government. Included in the informal economy is the unpaid work of volunteers whose activities provide a 'safety net' in times of economic instability, help build 'social cohesion' for those involved and maintain networks and partnerships of trust and inclusion commonly known as social capital (Reimer 2006).

Another important observation is the global consciousness of some of the participants and how they used this vision to guide their work on local issues. Our interests lie in discovering if the theme of the con-

ference and the concept 'glocal' is useful in examining some of our findings. 'Glocal' and 'glocalization' are terms attributed to the British sociologist Roland Robertson (1992). For him, the most interesting aspect of our global, post-modern era is the way in which a global consciousness, aided by the use of electronic communications such as the internet, has evolved among people around the world. Robertson theorized that a person's sense of the local as place includes the global because the place one calls home is influenced by global processes and is no longer insulated from world events (1992).

The following section discusses our initial findings based on three areas of concern where the 'glocal' is evident: the environment and conservation of local forests, education as a right and benefit for women, and access to health and social services for Anglophones, especially third-agers.

1. Environmental Conservation

Climate change, global warming and environmental protection are critical issues on the minds of many Canadians today. Recent polls suggest that a significant majority of them want the government to act now to stop and reverse the effects of greenhouse gas emissions on the environment. In the Estrie region two areas of environmental concern are forest management and water conservation. The first two subjects are very much involved with environmental issues in the local area. The first interviewee was born elsewhere and settled in the Townships after retirement. He transposes the global experiences he gained while working, particularly in the area of sustainable development, to the region and uses them to focus on the degradation of hardwood forests in the Townships. Now in his retirement, he is also the owner of a hardwood lot and so is able to combine his past-time with his volunteer work in the community. He considers his volunteering a duty, a way to contribute to the place he now calls home.

Subject #1

***Retired From?*³**

[My] last position was founder of—CEO of a consultancy firm in international project finance. And before that I was the head of a—CEO of an international institute for sustainable development... VP for ten years, in finance, in the largest consulting firm in Canada,...at the Crown Investment Corporation, which is a financial holding company in Saskatchewan, ...at Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA),... on the Royal Commission Inquiry in International Development of the World Bank, ... an assistant to a Minister of the

Canadian Cabinet,... a producer in CBC radio,...[a] member of staff of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism.

Why do you volunteer your time at community organizations?

Because my principal interest is the forest and most of them have something to do with forests... I'm on the board, I have been for two years, of the Eastern Townships Forestry Association. I'm on the forestry committee of the *Union québécoise pour la conservation de la nature* which is in Quebec City. I represent the forestry association at the Saint François River Valley Watershed Committee and now the forestry advisory committee of the RCM of Coaticook.... And I'm a member of the board of the Eastern Townships Forestry Association, [the] focus of my work there has been trying to nudge them into more [conservation] work on the hardwood forests of the Eastern Townships.

What kind of volunteer work do these organizations do?

Well, the work would be basically research and marketing; trying to persuade the board that the organization should be spending more time studying and publicizing the condition of the hardwood forests in the Eastern Townships, which is very much degraded.

Why did you join these organizations?

...it became clear to people I was interested in forestry, and so I was approached based on their knowing that I was interested.

Do these organizations serve an important role?

In my life, yeah! I spend, you know, a large part, I mean half of my time—apart from family stuff most—the greater part of my time is spent in the forest. So it's just a prolongation, an extension of my interest in the forest when I get into these various activities.

Subject #1 is part of the informal economy of the Estrie region. He applies the knowledge and global skills he acquired during his working life. He contributes to the informal economy through his unpaid labor of generating sustainable forests, his volunteerism and the support for social inclusion he helps build by informing the public about the state of the region's forests (Reimer, 2006). His skills, labor and network of people that are associated with him are all important contributors to the social capital of the informal economy he belongs to (Desjardins, Halseth et al., 2002).

The next subject, like the first, is not region-bound. His thinking, experiences and activities go beyond the local to a global focus on the environment. He is concerned with protecting the environment for the immediate community and future generations to enjoy. He is even political about his leisure time/retirement activities, lobbying the government to maintain the natural beauty of Orford Park (a local, natural tourist attraction).

Subject #2

Are there organizations that you volunteer for regularly?

Yes, I'm on the board of directors for the Saint Francis Valley Naturalist Club. This is a very worthwhile organization because we're involved with nature and the protection of nature and we discuss issues that involve the protection of nature, and if there's some major problems we bring these up at the meeting....we have a naturalist [who] goes around to all schools in the Eastern Townships and discusses nature issues with [students]...Another activity is the Audubon Christmas Bird Count... I'm also a member of the hiking club—it's in the Mount Megantic area. This is the border hiking trail between the United States and Canada. They have a hiking trail that starts in the Melbourne/Richmond area. It's about 150 km long and goes right down to the Vermont Border. I've done the whole length of that trail. I'm also a member a Quebec group for hiking. So I have three individual organizations all dealing with hiking that I am a member. I'm working on a project right now to do as much of the Trans-Canada Trail in the province of Quebec that I can. It is a very worthwhile project that I want to encourage. It's a great way to encourage the Trail to go right across the whole of Canada from Newfoundland to British Columbia, and including the Northwest Territories also.

Good health is an important issue for this subject as it allows him to participate in the leisure activity he does. More than this, he expresses an overall satisfaction for life which is a decisive criterion for volunteerism among seniors (Dobbs, Swindle et al., 2004). The sense of well-being, pride in being healthy and mobility all translate into the desire to preserve the environment for use by future generations.

Do you ever lobby the government?

Oh absolutely, about Orford Park, for example. They wanted to put condominiums in, another golf course and all that, in the park. But we don't agree with that. And our—Saint Francis Valley doesn't agree with it. And as an individual I don't agree. I've written letters and Saint Francis Valley has written letters to the government to say that "Leave the park alone." So I said: "Let's not destroy the park now, let's not take it away from us, don't stop it here. When we cross that line into the next generation of our children, and our grandchildren, and our children's children, and on down the line," I said, "we've got to keep that park forever as it is now."

While the first subject in this section is concerned with environmental conservation, the second views the landscape as a place shared by all for leisure and recreation. Both spend a significant amount of their time in educating and informing the public about environmen-

tal issues. Each is part of the informal economy through the goods they produce; preservation of the forest and recreational landscapes and the services they deliver: unpaid labor, access to information and community volunteerism. The relationships they establish, the partnerships created and the supports generated by their informal exchanges point to the social capital that is vital for the informal economy to thrive in the region (Reimer 2006). Finally, both subjects express a ‘glocal’ vision as they bring their global experiences to the local area, people and landscapes, in order to improve the environment and work for the common good.

2. Education

The main concern of the next four subjects is education. Gender plays an important role in determining the types of organizations the interviewees belong to and their concerns. This may stem from women having stronger social linkages and longer roles in social assistance than men (Dobbs, Swindle et al., 2004). All the subjects belong to the local University Women’s Club and are retired public school teachers. As third-agers, they continue their lifelong commitment to the profession into their senior years. Each expresses a global vision of the power of education to ameliorate people’s lives.

The first subject in this section uses the philosophy of Paulo Freire, the great Brazilian social thinker, to speak about empowering third-age women. Freire’s message about liberating oppressed people through their own learning process is applied to women and memory. Learning about roots and retrieving memory become sources of power for the group of women with whom she works.

Subject #3

I am with the University Women’s Club, ... I used to be very political but I’m not now. I’m very interested in women—at my age group, third age. I’m interested in them sitting down and leaving their memories for their children, writing their memoirs. And I currently have a group writing their own remembrances of their mother and father and grandparents, and I am interested in them being authentic.

Why did you join these organizations?

I love being with people. I’m at heart a teacher. And I became very, very disenchanted with the system and I think the women I’ve met in this group are women who feel they are failures because they didn’t go on to further education, or finish school. Of course, they have a richness of life and they are self-educated and this kind of thing and social justice. I don’t know if you have heard of Paulo Freire. He wrote *The*

Pedagogy of the Oppressed. And his philosophy is that you have to be tireless in liberating people until every last person is liberated on this earth. And the most important thing is to, as you live, as people become educated—and he thinks that you do it through education, I do too—and as people become liberated, they should not become oppressive. There has to be a different way of becoming free than to become part of the ... paternal situation which is based on dominance, aggression, [and] competitiveness, which most human beings, male and female, don't fit into.

Are there events or activities that you feel should be offered?

I don't know how to put this, and it's something I would like to see happen. And it's happening in other more Anglophone communities. There's lots offered for courses and for work for me because I have gone beyond secondary school and I have the assertiveness to go and get them if I want them. But there are a lot of women who quit school because they had to help their family, who became secretaries who never reached their full potential, and I think there is a tremendous need for genuine place where they can go and learn and experiment with learning because there is nothing wrong with the older brain. There is a little bit of memory loss, but you know it's the same thing—if you don't use it you are going to lose it.

Three issues are important to this subject: lifelong learning, keeping memory alive and the brain functioning as well as education to ameliorate the lives of women. Her unpaid work helps to maintain not only community ties but generational continuity. The subject uses her past teaching career to improve the quality of life for English-speaking senior women. The informal exchanges she supports through her volunteerism represent social capital which is vital for the informal economy she operates in.

The next subject combines her passion for education with her political commitments to the advancement of women's rights. In our opinion, her vision is clearly 'glocal' as she switches back and forth from local to global on a range of issues: women's educational opportunities; the environment and recycling; the well-being of seniors; and the rights of English-speakers to access health and social services on demand.

Subject #4

Why did you join these organizations?

...as a way of giving something to the community. University Women was something different, it was a group of professional women with degrees, professional women and I think that appealed to me. This year, for example, we gave out scholarships to young women amount-

ing to six or seven thousand dollars. So we have been receiving more money as bequests monthly, and so that is something that I am proud of and happy to promote—helping women to go and upgrade their education. The women in Eastern Townships Women on the March [ETWOM] was because the University Women suggest we get involved [in education] and I sort of kept on because, well, I think there might be things that we can do to help fight violence and poverty. The naturalist club I joined just out of curiosity, because I wanted to learn more and I'd heard so much about them over the years. ...and *tai chi* because I was curious again.

Her satisfaction with life goes beyond just good health. Her own healthy outlook on life helps her to perceive a lack in education which her volunteerism strives to overcome. Her past profession and ability allow her to support senior women to stay active longer and in function in their communities.

Would you consider yourself political?

I've become more political. I never thought I would be a political person, but that is what ETWOM is all about. It is trying to get the government to do things, and bring attention to the government, so and I think University Women's Club has become more political too.

In what capacity are you a member?

Well, in the University Women's group I pretty well did everything except treasurer and secretary over the years, and my last function was as president. But I've checked my link to Canadian Federation which is called CFUW [Canadian Federation of University Women]; I am the CFUW liaison on our executive. And also we are involved right now in preparing to host a group of women from Holland who belong to a similar organization there, and they came here once before for a very brief visit. As far as ETWOM goes, I've just been a participant. Naturalist club, I'm just a member.

Were there events or activities that you feel should have been offered but that were not?

I don't know, nobody seems to be in the know. If you are kept in the dark then you can't act because you don't know. It's only somebody [who] really goes to the council meetings and asks questions and looks at all the material that you can really know. I don't know that I can say that there are other activities that we should be involved in. We should all be very careful about what we do to the environment, and our use of water and all that sort of thing, but I think that is being legislated for us anyway. I'm very—I think probably as far as the environment goes, that's one of my personal goals. I've been recycling for forty years, ever since I moved here. I've been recycling, and then all of a sudden it is the thing to do. But I was recycling garden waste and

kitchen waste all of these years, so I feel that I have been doing my bit. And I don't use pesticides and herbicides and that sort of thing. There are so many things that it is hard to choose and so in University Women we sort of focus on promoting education.

This subject is political about many aspects of life in the Townships and could be considered 'ahead of her time' in many of her concerns. Her 'glocal' vision has been a continual part of her life. She did not just become interested in women's education, *tai chi*, recycling and protecting the environment once she retired. These activities point to the many and varied social networks this subject has established for herself. These networks have been built up over her life and are based on trust and mutual respect. This subject's contributions to the informal economy, expressed through her social capital, are vast given the many activities and exchanges she belongs to (Reimer 2006).

The next interviewee expresses her 'glocal' thinking on the benefits of education through her local work in selecting young Township women for scholarships to further their academic studies. She combines this local goal with her concerns for women's education in developing countries.

Subject #5

For the other organizations can you talk briefly about what you do with them?

The Canadian Club. We support the schools at Christmas time with extra money for hot lunches or for Christmas baskets for needy families. The University Women's Club. Our focus is a great deal on equal rights for women, women in developing countries, and education in general. There is a branch of the University Women's here, which is called the Scholarship Foundation. We presented a brief to Parliament on applying the existing law regarding the treatment of refugees that they had no recourse as far as—although the law is there saying they have the right to appeal their position, this was never really put into force. And it was one person saying "Okay and you're in, you're out." So that took an incredible amount of time and energy and work. And we do recommendations to [the] head office which in turn goes on to Parliament supporting other people's proposals, but that one was ours and ours alone. That was last year. So we support a school in Thailand.

The social capital of this subject, like the next, is 'glocal' in its scope. It consists of local and global relationships and exchanges based on the mutual desire to improve the lives of women through education and support them in their households. The social capital of both subjects maintains bridges between the informal economy of the Townships and those in other countries.

The last subject in this section wants to be part of a dynamic group of women who accomplish goals rather than just sit around talking about them. Like the previous subjects, her concerns include local issues such as encouraging young women to get a good education, and trying to relieve the feeling of isolation of many Anglophone women living in a French province and remoter parts of the Townships. The more global forces in her 'glocal' repertoire include women's burden of home and salaried work, and how women can be better role models for one another.

Subject #6

Why did you join these organizations?

Well, I joined Canadian Club many, many years ago. I can't begin to think of it. Way back—and then I dropped out when my kids were growing up and I was taking courses and so on. At that time I was—you know, it was interesting but it was not a priority in my life and then, as my kids became more independent, then I wanted to go back because it was an interesting group of people to be with. They were very aware of what was going on in the locality as well as in the bigger picture. ... I joined University Women's group because they are a very dynamic group, mostly well educated—in more ways than one. I mean, not everybody there has a university degree, some of them have nursing degrees and so on and so forth, but a very forward-thinking group of people, a fairly wide—but not wide enough—age group because very young women are very busy so that it tends to be more on the older side. But women who are not afraid to get their hands dirty in projects, sorts of things that are not always popular.

In your opinion is there an immediate need in the Anglophone community for these groups?

I think the role that we [University Women's Club] play in promoting education—particularly among those people who might have dropped out early in their education experience, had families when they were young, and are now coming back. I see this as a very positive thing for these young people. That they see some of us as a role model maybe a little bit, and what we can do, and by giving them some financial support as well as the moral support that goes on—I think we really help these young people. Needless to say, we try to encourage people to come back to their community, but understanding completely if they choose not to. You know, to bring back their expertise once they have got it all put together. I think the groups themselves are focus groups for the Anglophones who are scattered; for example, in both these groups we have people from Richmond, Eastman, the border, Cookshire, Bury, Sawyerville—it takes in a wide area. And it does form a focus for women to get together and pool their resources as well as talk about things that...[need] to be attended to.

All four subjects in this section contribute to the informal economy through their social capital which includes a variety of social, professional, kin, linguistic networks, as well as a number of local and global exchanges. Their volunteer work is sustained by gender, life long commitments to social assistance and a global vision of education. Their work underscores the importance of the informal economy as a safety net, a safeguard during times of hardship, and a supporter of social innovation and inclusion (Reimer 2006).

3. Anglophone third-agers' rights and access to health and social services

The last six subjects are committed to English-speaking rights in the areas of health care and social services in their communities. According to Klimp (2006) these areas are of crucial concern for English-speaking people living in the Townships. The high proportion of unilingual seniors, on fixed incomes and lack of institutional supports particularly in the areas of mental health and social support put this age group at greater risk for limited access to health care (Klimp, 2006; 16). The first interviewee in this section, being able to communicate in both languages, thinks of herself as a bridge between the two linguistic groups. She believes that her volunteer work is making the lives of Anglophone third-agers better. She understands the political struggles of Quebeckers as well as the cultural differences. She is also part of the informal economy that takes place among seniors who do volunteer work; they don't wait for the market to provide services or goods, and have long ago lost faith in the state to deliver on its promises, so they get things done themselves in the most economical way possible. This subject participates in the informal economy by driving seniors to and from appointments.

Subject #7

Why did you join these organizations?

Well, because of the need after Bill 101 came into effect and all the ramifications of Bill 101—especially considering the health and social services. I felt the need to get involved and, being bilingual, I thought I could be of some help...Because if you are going to try to get implicated with this sort of thing you almost have to be bilingual.

Are there other events or activities that you think should be offered?

There is a lax here. There is an improvement at the hospital level, where staff are taking courses in English, but there are still some problems. Problems even with residents, the doctors—they just don't have enough

English, some of them, to really communicate health problems and diagnosis so that people will understand. And I find—of course I am not in this but I am hearing and I think it's worth repeating—that there probably is not enough help for handicapped children. You know, the physically and mentally handicapped, in English, for speech therapy.

In your opinion is there an immediate need for these services [transportation] in the English community?

Oh absolutely, and I'm trying to recruit more to go to Fleurimont because we really need to have—right now there is some void filled by Francophones who are bilingual, volunteers who are bilingual. But that's not quite the same in that there is culture involved. You know—and I have found that people who know that I am an Anglophone, I can speak it—I am an Allophone actually myself, but I speak English. It's obvious somebody will open much more with me and my colleagues than with a Francophone that comes along. So often it's such a small community, these people know everybody I know, or they've heard of me, because you know I was in nursing for some years and I taught. They say “Oh, yes” and so that opens up conversation when you see a familiar face. So there is a need there. There is a need in every department that relates to health and social services, great need.

According to a rural transportation feasibility study conducted by Townshippers Association and *Groupe recherche focus* (2006; 44) Estrie seniors experience difficulties with access to public transportation because of their high demand for health services and diminished physical capacities. Clearly, among this group of informal economy participants, dissatisfaction with local services among chronic and deteriorating health place a heavy burden on their capacity to provide goods and services.

Does participating in these organizations lead to your personal well-being?

You know, it's probably selfish in a way, but it's a good feeling. It's a good feeling.

Is there some volunteering like driving that is fun to be with other volunteers?

Yes because we meet for dinner, for suppers, and we talk on the phone, and so there is a little bit of socializing amongst the volunteers.

This next subject, unlike the others, seems to be slowing down as he approaches retirement. As he indicates, he has lost some of his passion for travel and is more selective in his volunteer work. But he stills applies his global experiences to the local place he has called home for most of his life. He is recognized as the ambassador of Lennoxville for his commitments to overseas populations.

Subject #8

What types of volunteer work do you do?

CESOS. Which is Canadian Executive Services Over Seas that I have been doing volunteer work with overseas and in Canada, Kanasitake, Kanawake, mostly overseas—but we have a local branch here and I have been on the executive for seven or eight years. You are talking local, then I am on the CSU. They call me...I'm the ambassador for Lennoxville. It looks good on my resumé. But that's another local activity, that's about all I do locally. That's local—I don't do very much locally now. But I do things more overseas.

What sorts of things do you do overseas?

I have been working at it all my life. We first went in sixty-nine for three years, but that was being paid by CIDA [Canadian International Development Agency]. We [he and his wife] were both working there in Ghana, West Africa....

This is retirement work?

This is retirement but it is volunteer. I am looking forward to retirement because I want to do—I want to have these experiences that I have had before. I want to meet different people, go different places, and contribute something. But I'll be getting so much and I know I will be. But it's hard work. I think to some extent I think I have had about it. If I count them all, I think about eight or nine postings in the last ten years. I don't have the same fire in my belly that I had in 1995 and I am in my seventies now.

Meaning what exactly?

I don't have the same—it is not as urgent to me. I really desperately wanted to get work overseas when I was retired. That is why I was retiring and I have no promises that I will get it, but I know that if I don't go looking I won't get it.

So it's almost like this work when you retired you weren't taking a break in anyway, it was almost part of your career, as if it was a career decision?

I might be coming closer to retirement now. Ten years later, I think I've gotten myself, I don't have the fire that I really “God, I hope I get something, what will I do if I don't get something?” The other thing, my health isn't as strong as it was.

The subject has strong social capital invested in longstanding, global relationships. He is not interested in maintaining ties to the local informal economy as he slows down his commitments because of health issues but he is still interested in keeping his global connections for personal prestige.

A personal tragedy leads this next subject to spend his free time

volunteering for the Association of Quebeckers for the Defense of Rights for the Retired and Pre-retired (AQDR) which is an advocacy group for the rights of seniors in Quebec. His global concerns with social justice lead him to lobby for the rights of Anglophone seniors in the Townships.

Subject #9

Why did you join these organizations?

French Canadians and English Canadians speaking Canadian and other people, coloured people and oriental or whatever, and I felt it was a good thing because we have a place where everybody's welcome. And the AQDR, at the beginning that was the spirit that launched the whole affair here and it is still like that today.

So your interest was in bringing people together? Forming a community?

...Quebec should be a place where people work together and they understand what [constitutes a] beautiful [community]. Well, first of all they start off with two beautiful languages, which is, you know, one of the real sources of knowledge of humanity and we all have that here, so let's use it and let's share it. And that was the reason why, and also because at that point I was very lonely. I was alone, somebody in my life died and, you know, I felt that I had nothing to do and no reason to go on, so you invent reasons. The person that I lost died in 1990 and after that nothing was ever the same. Before that we used to travel and go all over the place together. You know? So that's what happened.

Can you see any special need for Anglophones in this area? You seem like you are a person that is, that knows Anglophones and Francophones quite well. Are there any special challenges for Anglophones in this area?

Yes, we need to develop some kind of communication system to make them realize that once in a while something which would seem unfair to them will happen. But it is through ignorance; it is not that there is no goodwill from people. It is just some people are "anti" all sorts of things. They are anti-gay, they are anti-coloured people, anti-American—you know you cannot stop that, there will always be that, but we have to make sure that they have not much to say about it.

What do you mean?

I mean that the law is such that everybody has the right of the person. Everybody has to be treated the same way.

Gender is a factor in the non-connection to his community. Only after a personal tragedy does he turn to local support for services. He then

channels his personal hardship into the political realization that Anglos need help in protecting their minority status.

The next subject is well aware of the plight of seniors. He feels a sense of responsibility to them, helping with everything from giving free financial advice to working against the lack of government recognition of third-agers' rights.

Subject #10

Do you recommend to people before they take any actions to go and talk to you?

You know, if you only have twenty-two, twenty-three thousand dollars income and you are spending twenty-six, you are going in the hole. So you are going to have to go to the bank, see the manager, discard four or five credit cards, get a loan where you make one payment, and in a couple of years you will clean up your mess and then you are all right. Credit is too easy for people. It's too accessible. People with low incomes get five thousand dollar credit limits from a credit card company, which is ridiculous. If they are not careful, they can get in over their head very fast. And probably one of the worst things it is for seniors is to understand that they are living on fixed income, you know, and you have to work with certain guidelines. It is not like when you work on a job and you say "Well I am going to get two or three hundred dollars over time during the year and I can clear off this or clear off that." You have to stick with what you have because you don't have it anymore.

So you help people who come to AQDR looking for help?

That is right. We are not there [to] represent them. We are there to assist them; in other words, if you need a lawyer, you will have to pay for your lawyer. We don't have funds that are set up for that. Or if you needed medical assistance, well, we would refer you to a certain doctor.

In your opinion is there an immediate need in the Anglophone community for organizations like yours?

Yes...As you get older and you get involved in these things, you realize that the whole movement to support either language, or Anglophones as a whole, is a very small core. Probably runs between the ten and fourteen percent [people who volunteer]...if it is that high. The rest of them sit back and let the world go by.

Do you believe that the government should be increasing support?

Oh yes, I do, for the simple reason that there is a lot of things that the government could support. To do it through volunteer organizations at a very low premium to them—and they should be aware of a lot of this is wasted. I don't think a lot of it is pointed in the right direction. The government does not give a shit. As long as the money is there, they are going to take it.

His global vision about good money management is used to understand the particular plight of local seniors on a fixed income. His experiences working in finance translate into social capital that becomes part of his contributions to the informal economy. This subject sees senior volunteer work as part of the local informal economy and himself as belonging to a long tradition of Anglo 'do-it-yourselfers'. He personally has lost confidence in the government to provide public services so he considers himself part of a network of volunteer organizations that provide the work themselves.

The last two subjects are concerned with what will happen to the volunteer community when the seniors who are currently part of it are no longer able to carry out their responsibilities. Who will take over? Both appear confident in the Anglophone community and in the competency of the retiring baby boomers to take over and provide social cohesion. But both are also aware of the problems, such as a declining English-speaking population; the need for businesses to attract new, younger Anglophone families; the burden of women in the home; and the changing family patterns that make volunteering in community groups a challenge.

Subject #11

In your opinion is there an immediate need for these organizations?

I think they serve a very vital purpose in helping Anglos find a place in the community and feel a sense of community. I think politically, when separatism has been more of a threat in Quebec, they have been very necessary to give Anglos a place. In the overall picture, I think what I have seen in my twenty years is less anxiety about the place of Anglos here, notwithstanding the fact that the Anglo population is declining, which is a huge concern. I see more and more of a good entente between the remaining English here and the French. Overall, quite a respectful attitude, and for me it is very enriching to share in Quebec culture.

Are you optimistic at this point for the Anglophone community?

I am, and part of this optimism is reflected in the fact that the several studies recently have highlighted Sherbrooke and/or Lennoxville as a great place to live, one of the most sought-after places in Canada. Partly, that is because we offer colleges and two universities, and real estate is not as high in some places. We have got wonderful recreation and in fact I know of different working professionals who have come here, Anglo professionals who just love it. They think they have got it made. And the CHUS [*Centre hospitalier universitaire de Sherbrooke*] is expanding and ETFS [Eastern Townships Financial Ser-

vices] is expanding, and with that come jobs that will bring people. I think things are turning around.

Do you believe that seniors' organizations serve an important role in your life?

The three organizations that I am currently very active in are not specifically geared to seniors, but the reality is that most volunteers and most of the board members are women who are people who are aging. And two out of three of those organizations are geared towards women. And we are really struggling to adapt our organizations to appeal more to young women, because with the Anglo population declining and so much of our membership aging, we don't have the energy to constantly recycle ourselves, so this is a concern.

Do you consider yourself to be a community activist?

To some extent—that if I saw a gap in services that I thought was a big disservice and a big gap, I would go to bat to try and reinstate it. For instance, we have got a wonderful group that does gear itself towards seniors called OPALS, and when the government cut back funding for that group, I was really proud of some of the women in the group who went to bat to get that back in place, and I have been a big supporter of the group.

The last subject sees volunteering in his retirement years as a normal part of this stage of life. He does not expect younger people, especially those with families, to help seniors. Perhaps volunteering is a way to stay active and healthy, to put life-long experiences earned to good use and for seniors to support their communities through the knowledge they have acquired in other places. But, coming from a tradition of self-sufficiency, he is fearful of losing third-agers' investment in their social capital. With it the informal economy will suffer and participants will no longer be able to use it a safety net. The skills and knowledge acquired in the informal economy by this older generation will also not be transferable to the next set of volunteers.

Subject #12

What types of activities or events do you participate in?

Well, it is not long after joining the Curling Club that if you show the least bit of interest, and you are a retired guy with time on your hands, and you are a younger retiree, then people start asking you to do other things. And it is the same at the Curling Club, and it is the same at the church, it is the same at Community Aid and so on. And I will do the same, like when the rest of the baby-boomers retire (which I am the leading edge, 1945, and I am an early retiree). I know that after me there is a whole lot coming; in fact, I tell people that if you find my

views a little different, well, get ready, cause there is a whole lot of us coming. Anyway, but that is what happens no matter what you join.

Why did you join these organizations?

The quality of life here has a lot to do with the fact that there is a lot of volunteerism going on here, and a lot of organizations, and there is a lot of things to do. I got involved in them because that is the attraction of living here. That is what makes life the quality it is and so I want to help out. It is a give and take kind of situation. So I specifically thought before I moved here “I am going to get involved in these things.” Before I retired I said: “When I retire, that is what I am going to do.” You kind of plan it ahead of time.

You feel the volunteer community in the area is thriving?

Oh yeah, and it will get better. It will. It is because there is a group, there is a demographic that is about to retire, and they are not going to be retiring at seventy and seventy-five. And there is people who will be wanting to do things. So if they get involved then the organizations will need more work. The more people there are in the organizations, the more work it takes to keep it going, but then they generate the work themselves. It complements each other. . . . When people have time they get more involved because it is hard today. You know all these organizations that I belong to—the curling, church, and Masons and everybody—they are all saying...that we need is the thirty-five to fifty year olds. The thirty to fifty year olds are involved in bringing up families and two jobs; they are both, husband and wife, are working and so on. So it is hard to ask them to be involved in other things. . . . volunteering their time. They have got to spend all of their extra time with their family and their kids. Kids are going off to daycare and kids are spending from seven-thirty in the morning till five o'clock in the afternoon in school. You can't ask a guy to do that with his kids and then come home to ask his wife to make supper and be out to a Masonic meeting at seven-thirty. You know it is hard. People do it, but it is difficult. So to become part of a committee, a church for instance, and for Community Aid, there is nothing that can be done there—and you have to be retired to work there because all the stuff is done during the daytime. All retired people keep that place going.

In conclusion, each subject exhibits a ‘glocal’ perspective in some fashion. Gender differences determine the types of networks, exchanges and organizations each subject belongs to, and the issues they take on. Each subject contributes to the informal economy through his/her social capital. This social capital is enriched with a global vision which is translated to their local communities. The experiences and knowledge they have acquired in their working years, sometimes from far away places, are brought to the local

Townships area during retirement. The prior skills, knowledge and the subjects' sense of responsibility to seniors, and to their communities in general, function as social capital and are an important aspect of the informal economy. The subjects help each other in the local area as well as people in global places. While they tend to the needs of their immediate members and participate in daily local events, like making sure seniors get to appointments on time, the subjects are also concerned with wider global matters, including the rights of seniors, the environment, and world issues of power, oppression and liberation. Most importantly, seniors who volunteer today feel it is necessary to maintain contacts with younger community members so there will be continuity in their social capital from one generation to the next and the continuation of the local informal economy.

NOTES

- 1 Floch & Warnke (2004) minority-majority index (MMI) “compares the value for the minority community with that of the majority community using First Official Language Spoken (FOLS) as referred to responses to the Census of Canada questions on knowledge of official languages, mother tongue and home language”.
- 2 Graphs are reproduced as viewed from the Floch & Warnke (2004) document *Eastern Townships Anglophone Communities Demographic Evolution, 1996–2001*
- 3 Questions in bold italic represent the interviewer speaking.

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