



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Project: “Restorying Ageing: Older Women and Life Writing”

You have been asked to take part in a study led by Dr Michaela Schrage-Früh from the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures at the National University of Ireland, Galway. The study explores how older women are depicted in cultural representations, compared with their personal experiences of growing older. The aim is to explore the diverse nature of women’s experiences.

Before you decide if you would like to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This Participant Information Sheet will tell you about the purpose, risks and benefits of this study. If you agree to take part, we will ask you to sign a Consent Form.

If there is anything that you are not clear about, we will be happy to provide further information. Please take as much time as you need to read this information sheet. You should only agree to participate in this study if you understand what is being asked of you, and have had enough time to think about your decision.

What is the research project about?

Dominant cultural representations of ageing often contain stereotypes, which can influence social beliefs about what it means to grow older. Stereotypes of ageing affect men and women in different ways. In this study, we focus on representations of women. For example, the messages in advertisements sometimes place women under pressure to maintain a youthful appearance as they grow older. We will discuss a range of literary and cultural representations. The central aim of this study is to explore the diversity of older women’s experiences and perspectives. The study is centered on the idea that it is important to bring older women’s voices and views to the broader cultural arena so that it will be more complex, informed, and diverse, as part of having a positive impact on issues of social inclusion.

Why have I been invited?

You have been invited to participate in the study because you are a woman living in Ireland aged 50 or over and we are interested in your views on how older women are represented in culture and society.

What does taking part in the study involve?

If you agree to take part in this research, we will arrange and ask you to participate in two focus groups involving 8-10 participants composed of women aged 50 or over. The focus groups will be conducted online via Zoom. They will be facilitated by researchers. We will ask for your permission to audio record the focus groups.

There will be two focus groups (one per month for two months). Both focus groups will last for approximately two hours. In the focus groups, you will be shown representations of older women from a range of literary and cultural sources in different media forms (for example, fiction, poetry,

advertising images, art). The researchers will read/describe the sources shown. You will be asked to discuss the representations and how they compare with your own experiences of growing older. The researchers will provide conversational prompts, such as what are your views about growing older, and how do you feel about sample literary and cultural representations, in the context of your own life experience. In addition to the two focus groups, you will be invited to keep a diary of your thoughts about some of the issues discussed, over the course of the focus groups (approximately two months) (this is optional, and you may choose not to keep a diary).

What are the possible benefits of taking part in the study?

This study will not bring you any direct benefits, except the opportunity to share your story. Your participation, however, will contribute to a better understanding of the cultural representation of older women, the views of older women in Ireland on this.

Participants of the focus groups will be prioritized if they wish to attend a free creative life writing workshop.

What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?

There are no obvious risks associated with this research study. But, if any part of the study concerns or upsets you, please let the researcher know and we will stop straight away.

Do I have to take part in the study?

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. This project should not cause you any physical or emotional discomfort. If you choose not to take part, it will not affect your current or future relations with the research team. There is no penalty or loss of benefits for not participating. You can let us know at any time if you would like to withdraw without giving the reason. You may also refuse to answer any questions during our conversations. If you withdraw from the study, any information you have already given will be destroyed, at your request.

What will happen with the results of this study?

The data from the focus groups/diaries may be used in conference papers and publications including academic articles, books, journals, policy documents and briefs, as well as in popular media such as newspapers, magazines, and so on. If we decide to use anything you have told us in research publications, your name and personal details will not be mentioned. We will only indicate that you are a woman aged 50 or over, living in Ireland.

How will my information be protected?

All information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared with anyone else. The information that is collected during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential in a way that protects your identity (however it should be noted that by participating in a focus group discussion complete anonymity cannot be protected). There is one exception. If the researchers feel there are reasonable grounds for concern or feel you are at significant risk of abuse, information will be passed on to the relevant authorities. Audio recordings will be typed up for analysis. We will keep the original recordings securely for five years after the project is finished, after which they will be destroyed.

Who can I contact to ask questions?

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you can contact the principal researcher Dr Michaela Schrage-Früh on 091 493602 or by email at michaela.schrage-frueh@nuigalway.ie.

If you do not feel comfortable contacting a researcher, and want to speak to the Head of the School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, please contact Dr Tina Pusse at tina-karen.pusse@nuigalway.ie.

If you have any concerns about the study and wish to contact someone who is independent and in confidence, you may contact the Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice President for Research, NUI Galway at ethics@nuigalway.ie (091-495312).

The Data Protection Officer can be contacted at dataprotection@nuigalway.ie.

Contact details of “Restorying Ageing” project Principal Investigator at NUI Galway:

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You will be given a copy of this form for your records.