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Aims and scope

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF WOMEN SECTION REVIEW has been established to provide a forum for discussion of issues and debates around all aspects of the psychology of women in research, teaching and professional practice. It aims to promote and support academic research and debate on issues related to the psychology of women and encourage the development of theory and practice concerning gender and other social inequalities. In particular, it also seeks to encourage contributions from individuals at all stages of their careers – including undergraduate and postgraduate students – as an appropriate forum to provide feedback on new ideas and first publications. It promotes a reviewing process where positive and constructive feedback is provided to authors.

The *Psychology of Women Section Review* aims to publish:

- theoretical and empirical papers;
- reviews of relevant research and books;
- special issues and features;
- observations, commentaries, interviews, short papers and original or non-traditional submissions in the 'Agora' section;
- correspondence.

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Editorial

Jane Callaghan

WELCOME to the 2015 edition of the *Psychology of Women Section Review*. This is our first annual edition of the *Review*. Our decision to have an annual rather than biannual *Review* was driven by our desire to enable a range of different ways of communicating with section members. In addition to the more formal articles, commentaries and reviews that you can find in the *Review*, we have introduced a website that includes opportunities for blogging, more news and magazine-like articles, and a more rapid and conversational form of writing that members can engage with. Go to https://powsbps.wordpress.com/ for information on how you could contribute.

This edition includes a range of interesting articles, commentaries, reviews and interviews. We begin with an exciting methodological article by Sandra Roper, Rose Capdevila, Lisa Lazard and Anca Roberts, who ask how Q methodology might be positioned as a feminist methodology. Roper et al. argue that Q methodology's interpretive and reflexive stance makes it open to a feminist approach, creating space for an engagement with marginality that enables the method to be used for more politicised, critical and feminist work.

The articles by Jane Callaghan, and Rose O'Driscoll and Jenny Mercer both explore discourses of motherhood and femininity. Callaghan outlines a critical literature review, exploring the production of mother blaming discourse in academic literature about the impact of domestic violence on children. O'Driscoll and Mercer present a preliminary analysis of interviews with women who choose not to have children. They highlight how women who choose not to have children are often obscured by dominant representations of childless women who did not choose to be childless. They challenge dominant ideologies and assumptions about women who choose not to have children. In a brief interview with Abigail Locke, Donna Peach explores Locke's 2014 confernce keynote, in which she considered how fatherhood in popular and academic discourse was excluded from or marginalised in dominant ideas about parenthood.

At the 2014 conference, we awarded our undergraduate prize to Jen Tidman, who presented her work on women who are doctoral students in physics. Her critical discourse analysis considers the discursive challenges for these students in positioning themselves as both women and scientists. The postgraduate prize was awarded to Cathy Ure, who explored the construction of breast cancer 'survivorship', by considering how one blogger positioned herself in relation to dominant media constructions of the phenomenon. Media representations are also addressed in an informal interview between Reni Eddo-Lodge and Amanda Perl. Eddo-Lodge was a guest speaker at the 2014 conference, and in this interview explores with Perl the importance of an intersectional analysis in understanding digital media representations of women, and in taking forward feminist politics and activism.

Sonia Soans develops further our engagement with media representations by looking at the way that media talk about gendered violence in India draws on problematic notions of 'tradition', in ways that ultimately justify violence against women and further exoticise Indian culture.

The Agora section features a reflective piece by a current undergraduate psychology student and their experience of studying in different countries. She considers the difficult tensions young women encounter in current university life: in embracing femininity while challenging

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sexism and objectification; enjoying the social aspects of university, but confronting restrictive norms and expectations of gender conformity. These themes are extended in the 'Emerging Feminists' section, which gives voice to newer feminist academics' accounts of their engagement with feminist thought and activism.

This edition of the *Review* concludes with a series of interesting reviews. Glen Jankowski provides a positive, illustrated account of the Psychology of Women Section Annual Conference (9–11 July 2014, Cumberland Lodge, Windsor), while Jenny McMahon gives a very thorough review of the Qualitative Research in Sport Exercise, and Health Conference (Loughborough University, 1–3 September 2014). Gemma Heath also provides a review of the one-day event Multiple Transformations of Qualitative Data, Qualitative Methods in Psychology Symposium (De Montfort University, Leicester, 11 April, 2014). Finally, Charlotte Dann offers a review of Holland's (2004) *Alternative Femininities: Body, Age and Identity*.

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Article

How is this feminist again? Q as a feminist methodology

Sandra Roper, Rose Capdevila, Lisa Lazard & Anca Roberts

In this paper we consider what it is that makes research feminist and relate this to Q methodology. Whilst acknowledging the multiplicity of feminist thought and approaches, we suggest that Q is an epistemologically versatile technique that can be usefully interwoven with diverse feminist concerns. We discuss four features of Q which we argue fit particularly comfortably into a broad feminist agenda: (1) the engagement with marginality; (2) the process of interpretation; (3) the role of reflexivity; and (4) accessibility for novice researchers. We conclude that Q methodology, with its interest in and sensitivity to difference in perspectives, experiences and social realities, is compatible with feminist ideals and is an appropriate tool for producing psychological knowledge which can be used in the service of feminist principles.

Introduction

WHAT CONSTITUTES a feminist methodology? What is it that makes research 'feminist'? We are, of course, not the first to ask these questions. However, in this paper we relate the questions to a methodology we have all found useful in our own research. As we hope to convey, Q methodology is an appealing technique in the panoply of methods available for a number of reasons, not least of which is its unique blend of quantitative and qualitative analytics applied to the study of subjectivity. In view of the history of some forms of quantification which have tended to produce knowledge in a way that has devalued women's experiences, it is perhaps easy to dismiss Q methodology as another 'atomising numerology' (Stenner & Stainton Rogers 2004, p.101). Indeed, as we trace a path through our own engagement with both Q methodology and feminism, one of the authors recalls precisely this sort of dismissal when first reading about Q methodology: Surely the process of quantifying experience runs the risk of 'averaging out' what may well be important to more marginalised ways of understanding the world? How can such a technique be interwoven with feminist concerns? For some of the authors, the process of working through these questions alongside our own political concerns has allowed us to explore ways in which Q can be located in the terrain of feminist methodology, offering a distinct contribution to the production of knowledge.

Whilst enthusiastic about the feminist potential of Q, we are not unaware of the possible pitfalls. Many authors have pointed out that treating specific methodologies as distinctively feminist is potentially problematic (e.g. Harding, 1989; Marecek, 1989; Peplau & Conrad, 1989; Ussher, 1999). In the context of therapy, Dankoski (2000) cautions against drawing the boundaries around feminist research too tightly. Within social work, Gringeri and colleagues (2010) encourage feminist researchers to work toward destabilising binary thinking and foregrounding intersectionality. Yet, while feminists might differ with respect to the aims and emphases of methodological inquiry, they become, according to DeVault 'bound together not by an agreement about answers but by shared commitment to questions' (1996, p.27). In a broad sense, femi-

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nist methodology is concerned with a questioning of the ways in which knowledge produced about our social world engages with the social realities of those living in contexts of inequality, particularly women.

While feminist thought may arguably be generally described as highlighting, questioning and challenging gender-related inequities, there are many challenges to a unitary definition, arising from the variety of experiences, social realities, values and goals (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). Thus, the question of a 'feminist' methodology is complicated by the array of concerns brought to bear on methodological issues by differing approaches to feminism. Reflecting the diversity in feminist thought, feminist methodologies have been the subject of queries and contestations. As Unger (1981) pointed out some time ago, methodological issues are conceptual issues. When Wilkinson (1997) describes five feminist challenges to mainstream psychology it is clear that each conceptualises methodology differently. Rutherford (2011), informed by her historical approach, has more recently claimed that whilst feminists may vary in methodological focus (e.g. around reflexivity, power dynamics, social change), methodology remains informed by epistemology. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002), in their discussion of methodology in social research, argue that any methodological decisions need to consider matters of ontology, epistemology, ethics, as well as issues around the production of knowledge and its consequences, such as accountability and power.

Broadly speaking, such decisions are grounded in understandings of methodological issues arising from feminist critique which aims to problematise and transform gender inequalities. The starting point for these discussions was grounded in the observation that rather than producing politically neutral knowledge, mainstream psychology's use of the scientific method contained gender bias. As was particularly the case in early psychological research, women's perspectives were routinely minimised, side lined or ignored. Thus, in psychology feminist questioning has, from the beginning, challenged mainstream empirical approaches to the discipline (e.g. Calkins, 1896; Hollingsworth, 1914; Unger, 1978; Weisstein, 1968). Whilst not formulated in line with feminist critique, the rationale underpinning the development of Q shares some of these broad concerns about psychology's use of scientific method and this, we suggest, is one way in which Q resonates with feminist methodological concerns. To contextualise this point, we will briefly describe Q and the background to its development.

Q Methodology

Q methodology was devised by Stephenson (1935) as a means of studying subjectivity. Its point of methodological departure from conventional approaches lies in its inversion of the statistical technique of factor analysis. Whilst, in its conventional form, factor analysis is used to detect associations between variables, Q inverts the procedure to detect associations between the patterns expressed by participants. In a standard Q study, participants are asked to sort a set of statements using a quasi-normal distribution. They do so in relation to the topic under investigation from most to least resonant with their perspective (for example, most agree to least agree). This process is called Q sorting. Factor analysis is then used to identify patterns in the Q sorts produced by the various participants. Representations of the factors identified are then produced through the weighted merging of those Q sorts which correlate highly with that factor. These exemplifying Q sorts describe a perspective or understanding on the issue under consideration. The researcher then interprets these through a thematic or discursive reading of statements and their relative positions. (For a comprehensive discussion of the mechanics of Q methodology see Brown, 1980, or Watts & Stenner, 2012.)

As mentioned earlier, Q methodology might appear at first glance to be just another 'atomising numerology' (Stenner & Stainton Rogers, 2004, p.101). However, its development represented a radical departure from the methods of mainstream quantitative psychology. As Watts and Stenner (2005) note, at the time Stephenson was concerned that the use of hypothetico-deductive measurement and testing was somewhat premature in psychology. This, he attributed to his understanding that the discipline had 'by no means achieved a sophisticated theoretical status, with ideal constructs such as physics had fashioned for itself. The situation in psychology, therefore, calls for an attitude of curiosity' (1953, p.151). This 'attitude of curiosity' is reflected in the operation of Q methodology as an exploratory method. Unlike psychometrics, the aim of Q methodology is not to test participants, measure variables or support/reject hypotheses but rather to investigate issues. As, in this sense, 'the situation in psychology' remains effectively unchanged, we would argue, 'curiosity' should retain its critical role in methodology.

To say that Q is exploratory might seem at odds with a procedure that could appear akin to traditional questionnaires or attitude scales. However, because, as implied above, Q sorting involves using a rank ordered scale, this apparent similarity is superficial. Importantly, Q does not fix the meaning of responses *a priori*. Unlike traditional rating scales which work with absolute responses to statements, Q works with relative agreement and disagreement produced through their positioning in the Q sorting procedure. It is by design subjective and statements only become meaningful with respect to their positioning in relation to all other statements. Thus it is the gestalt patterning of statements that is of central importance (Good, 2000).

As Febbraro (1995) points out, Q's departure from hypothetico-deductivism coupled with its focus on subjective life has appealed to a number of feminist scholars. This is because it represents a problematisation of the scientific method that is compatible with some existing feminist critiques. Q has been attractive to feminist empiricists because it offers a procedure for the empirical investigation of subjectivity. This feature of Q fits with the aims of objective empirical quantitative analysis but does not preclude a critique of gender bias inherent within much traditional mainstream work. Q's use of both quantitative and qualitative analytics also mean that it can be used strategically to legitimise the feminist political agenda to mainstream psychology or to trouble false dichotomies that have been used to undermine qualitative feminist work (e.g. feminine, soft, qualitative vs. hard quantitative, masculine and so on) (Lazard, 2009). In addition to this, Q's theoretical flexibility allows for its accommodation within differing feminist epistemologies such as standpoint or poststructuralist approaches. More specifically, Q's ability to tap into perspectives could allow a standpoint researcher to hear a diversity of women's voices or a social constructionist to capture multiplicity without having to specify criteria for any one 'truth'. Thus, this methodological tool has the potential to facilitate the pursuit of a diverse set of feminist aims and goals (Febbraro, 1995).

In the context of its epistemological versatility, we would like to discuss four features of Q which we would argue fit particularly comfortably into a broad feminist agenda: (1) the engagement with marginality; (2) the process of interpretation; (3) the role of reflexivity; and (4) accessibility for novice researchers. We will address these points in turn.

Resonances and affinities

Marginality

Like feminist work in psychology, Q methodology has similarly occupied a marginal position in relation to mainstream psychology. By integrating quantitative and qualitative aspects, Q methodology has a *qualiquantological* heritage (Stenner, Watts & Worrell,

2007). According to Kitzinger (1999), this feature renders Q open to marginalisation by both quantitative and qualitative researchers: the former due to the method's departure from the theoretical and methodological principles of traditional psychometric testing and, the latter due to the (inaccurate) assumption that the use of statistical procedures involves the translation of meaning into numbers. In common with qualitative approaches more generally, Q has also been rendered 'unscientific' which draws on a series of dichotomies (objective/subjective, rational/irrational, science/non-science) that often become interwoven with problematic gendered polarities (soft/feminine as opposed to hard sciences/masculine). However, its position as 'other' is not the only way in which Q comes to the issue of marginalisation. Capdevila and Lazard (2009) point to two further ways in which features of Q resonate with feminism(s) engagement with marginality.

Firstly, Q enables a multitude of voices to be heard, and so goes beyond polarised viewpoints allowing for the identification of marginal(ised) understandings. As we discussed earlier, various strands of feminist work have attempted to explore and ultimately challenge problematic patterns of marginalisation by, for example, opening up spaces to hear marginalised perspectives. Q, by design, makes all perspectives or narratives in the data set visible (Capdevila & Lazard, 2009). A common criteria for the identification of factors in a Q study requires only that a factor explain more of the study variance than that of a single sort (e.g. that it have an eigenvalue greater than one). This means that a perspective need only to be shared, and need not be dominant, to be recognised. According to Brown (2004) 'the mechanics of Q methodology make it difficult for any viewpoint to fall by the wayside unnoticed' (p.11). Indeed, participant recruitment in Q studies is often concerned with facilitating the manifestation of multiplicity by seeking out finite diversity. This can involve strategies such as targeting representatives of different stakeholder groups to the recruitment of participants with specialised knowledge of the topic, as well as of participants with no particular or direct interest. The former maximises diversity and the latter may bring about 'hearing the unexpected; exposing whether certain knowledges are uniquely 'expert', and general 'democratic' or 'emancipatory' ideals' (Stainton Rogers, 1995, p.182). According to Capdevila and Lazard (2009), this feature marks Q as distinctive to many other quantitative and qualitative approaches. For example, in quantitative methods such as surveys, marginalised perspectives or understandings tend to disappear through averaging across demographic variables. Similarly, it is possible in qualitative approaches to prioritise dominant discourses or themes. In contrast, Q has no such aims and instead treats all shared perspectives equally, allowing for the identification of both marginalised and dominant narratives.

Secondly, Q allows attention to be focused on marginality because it facilitates the examination of specific issues within a wider narrative. Groups of items can come together consistently across narratives to identify issues of concern. For instance, a study on post-pregnancy body image drew attention to constructions of stress and families in new mothers' experiences of their bodies (Jordan, Capdevila & Johnson, 2005); the quality of the relationships between patients and doctors come to the fore in an exploration of understandings of IBS (Stenner, Dancey & Watts, 2000); meanings ascribed to notions of independence and control in subjective assessments of quality of life have been similarly identified (Stenner, Cooper & Skevington, 2003).

While Q does not claim to exhaustively identify all possible accounts or perspectives available on a given topic, it has been used in feminist research to tap into the complexity as well as diversity of perspectives on many issues. For example, in her classic study on

lesbian identities, Kitzinger (1987) used Q methodology to tap into the manifold ways in which lesbian identities might be understood. This study opened up a space for those identities not often discussed in psychological work at the time (e.g. that which is neither simply 'pathological' nor irrefutably 'healthy') to be expressed.

The ability of Q to allow for the articulation of perspectives that are marginal, multiple, or in some way 'other' is reflected in a diverse body of Q methodological work that is explicitly feminist (e.g. Cross, 2013; Jordon, Capdevila & Johnson, 2005; Kitzinger, 1987; Lazard, Buchanan & Capdevila, 2002; Roper & Capdevila, 2010; Senn, 1996).

Interpretation

Feminist methods emphasise the importance of context both to the production and the interpretation of accounts, and acknowledge the collaborative character of the research process, in that both participants and researchers bring their concerns, assumptions and expectations into this context (e.g. Nicolson, 1995; Riger, 1992). In Q methodology, in sorting the items, participants establish meaning in relation to their own concerns from specific perspectives and locations. Stenner, Watts and Worrell (2007) highlight the fact that, in Q, the meaning of an item is not necessarily predefined by the researcher; indeed, one of the assumptions that Q operates on is that sorters will draw on various cultural understandings of the topic under investigation, and may themselves have different understandings of the items. According to Stenner et al. (2007), Q-sorters are 'genuinely active participants who operate on a set of items from an explicitly self-referential and semantic […] point of view' (p.216).

Q is primarily concerned with understandings, viewpoints, and perspectives, making no *a priori* suppositions about the value or salience of particular accounts. In the relationship between researchers, participants and findings of a study, 'it is the participants in the study who determine the lineaments of meaning, salience, connectedness' according to Stainton Rogers (1997/1998, p.9). This aspect, in fact, is a contributing element to Q's capacity to identify novel, unexpected or surprising understandings – because of the emphasis on the viewpoints produced by the sorters, not those of the researchers (Snelling, 1999).

This feature constitutes yet another characteristic aligning Q with feminist methodology, through the engagement with the expression of participants' worldviews (Riger, 1999). The Q sorting process itself can be self-administered so that, although interviews may be used to enhance analysis, Q methodological research can be undertaken without interviews (e.g. Roper & Capdevila, 2010) avoiding some aspects of the inevitable power dynamics that these entail (Wilkinson, 1997). Indeed, Kitzinger (1986) suggested that uses of Q might be made even more 'democratic' by extending participants' contribution and role, and encouraging them to engage not only in the sorting, but also in the construction and interpretation of items. This endeavour, as Riger (1999) points out, would be of interest to feminist researchers because it could facilitate the rebalancing of the inherent power relations between researcher and the researched: participants can exercise greater control over the research, by ensuring the prioritisation of issues of relevance to them. Following Kitzinger (1986), this approach was attempted by Billard (1999), in an action research endeavour aimed at examining the aspects facilitating or impeding staff's participation in organisational decision-making. The approach enabled participants' ideas and concerns to be reflected in the Q items. However, it was also seen as challenging with regard to analysis and interpretation of results, in terms of time and knowledge required. More recently, a collaborative approach to developing the Q sample was adopted by Capdevila et al (2009) in a Q study evaluating an offender rehabilitation programme. While here participants were not involved in

the statistical analysis of findings, they contributed to the piloting and refining of the Q items and were consulted in the factor interpretation. These activities sought to take participants' interests and concerns into account, by recognising and acknowledging them both at the design stage and in establishing the study findings.

Through the focus on participants' perspectives, rather than on the imposition of meaning by the researcher, Q can be more transparent, as well as more empowering, than some other qualitative methods. Kitzinger (1999) has argued that, in traditional discursive methods, the power of the researcher is more prominent, if less visible. In analysing textual data, the researcher decides what counts as relevant or salient in participants' accounts. In Q, however, the interpretation is directly guided by the sorters; that is, the latter have an unmediated say in what they consider salient and relevant, through the relational, contextual placement of items. Moreover, Q participants can often contribute to the process of interpretation by commenting on the individual items during sorting, in post-sorting interviews or by checking the factor interpretations. Thus, Q illustrates its commitment to feminist values of collaboration and the transformation of the relations of power between the researcher and the researched (DeVault, 1996).

Reflexivity

As previously noted, feminist research acknowledges the researcher's role in the production of knowledge – from the research questions asked, to the study design used through to the process of interpretation. Feminist critique of mainstream methods has often highlighted the lack of reflexivity in traditional psychological research and the way that this makes the researcher appear invisible. This approach leaves power (im)balances unexamined. Although this may be conceptualised and practiced in different ways (see Finlay, 2002), feminist research methods have consequently often involved a commitment to reflexivity (see Wilkinson, 1988). Wilkinson (1988) suggests three types of reflexivity. Personal reflexivity relates to the researcher's own identity. Functional reflexivity, closely linked to personal reflexivity, relates to such things as choice of topic, theory and method. Disciplinary reflexivity acknowledges the positioning of the disciplinary framework within which one is working. However it is conceptualised, a commitment to a feminist, reflexive approach will stress the importance of being aware of and acknowledging the assumptions, values, expectations and interests of the researcher – in other words, who we are and what we bring to the research endeavour, as well as the power relations in the research process (Crawford & Kimmel, 1999; Griffin & Phoenix, 1994; Holland & Ramazanoglu, 2002). Feminist standpoint research emphasises the need for critical reflexivity, for recognising the situatedness of perspective and the boundaries of knowledge claims (Griffin & Phoenix, 1994), and for making the researcher 'visible' in the research process (DeVault, 1996)

In this regard, the Q researcher may be made 'visible' and may examine their own positioning in relation to the topic investigated (as well as in relation to the participants) by representing their own perspective in a Q sort. This has been a feature of Q methodological work within the 'British Dialect' (Stainton Rogers, 1995) (e.g. Kitzinger, 1986; Roberts, 2011; Stainton Rogers & Kitzinger, 1986). This gives Q a particular advantage since the researcher can examine their own position without introspection or intersubjective reflection (although these are not precluded) and may thus avoid the potential dangers of infinite regress or of overshadowing the participant's account with their own (Finlay, 2002). In addition, unlike most qualitative work where only data extracts selected by the researcher are included, the source data (i.e. the Q items and a tabular portrayal of their positionings in each factor) are always available

to the reader of a Q methodological study (Watts & Stenner, 2005). This not only makes the researcher's interpretation more transparent but also allows an interpretation to be challenged.

Beside openness to academic challenges, facilitated by the transparency of reporting outlined above, Q findings may, as mentioned in the previous section, be opened up for discussion with the research participants. As reflexivity 'has to be both collective and contested' (Holland & Ramazanoglu, 2002, p.119), this practice enables the acknowledgement of and engagement with issues of power in the research process. Such discussions give Q researchers the opportunity to reflect critically on their frame of reference, readings and interpretations, as well as on the implications and consequences of the knowledge produced.

Accessibility

Lastly, we would argue that Q methodology is well suited for use by students and inexperienced researchers. Indeed all the authors of this paper first used Q as students, in one case for an undergraduate project. We have also, in our teaching, used Q as a bridge between hypothetico-deductive research techniques in psychology and qualitative approaches (see also, Sell & Brown, 1984).

This suitability is due to the robustness of the approach where as Stainton Rogers (1995) suggests, even a less than ideal Q sort can still produce useful results (unlike a poor questionnaire). Q sorts can be undertaken by participants as a self-completion task without the direct involvement of the researcher and the notion of finite diversity inherent in Q means that participant numbers can be fairly limited. These features make Q economical and straightforward to administer making it useful even for undergraduate projects where time and resources are very limited. Moreover, with the possibility of using thematic or discursive readings of statements and their relative positions, Q is ideal as an introduction to the subjectivity of 'qualitative methods' despite its qualiquantological heritage. Just as we have already suggested relative to the inclusion of 'non-expert' participants, this suitability of Q for use by students and less experienced researchers can be seen as emancipatory. This not only resonates with the ideals of many feminists, both within and outside the academy, but has particular resonance for POWS where there is a long standing commitment to providing a supportive environment for students and practitioners (Burman, 2011). A factor which is particularly important for those less experienced in presenting their work to an audience.

(In)conclusion

In this paper we have highlighted the way in which, Q, like many feminist approaches, concerns itself with psychology's (mis?)use of the scientific method. Like much feminist critique, Q challenges mainstream empirical approaches to the discipline and, in our discussions we have identified a number of resonances and affinities between Q methodology and feminist approaches to knowledge production. Whilst Q does not explicitly theorise power, a critical component of feminist analysis, it is designed to bypass some of the more insidious aspects of issues of power in research. It does this by 'giving voice to' or 'making visible' marginalised viewpoints. In this way it offers an opportunity to address imbalance by allowing participants, rather than researchers, to determine salience and, to an extent, meaning. It achieves this by facilitating a reflexive engagement with issues of power within the research relationship and through its accessibility to novice researchers.

As discussed earlier, investigative approaches informed by feminist notions have been effective in challenging the representation of gender identities and relations in social research, and in addressing some of the power relations and ensuing implications. However, their theoretical and

political underpinnings and concern with emancipation mean that their application need not be defined by or limited to gender-related inquiries. As has been argued throughout this paper, Q methodology was designed for the exploration of subjectivity, and is characterised by an interest in and sensitivity to difference in perspectives, experiences and social realities. Such features render it compatible to feminist notions, and make it an appropriate tool for producing psychological knowledge which can be used in the service of feminist principles.

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Article

Mothers and Children? Representations of mothers in research on children's outcomes in domestic violence

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Dr Jane Callaghan presented a keynote at the Psychology of Women Section Annual Conference in July 2014. This is an extract from her presentation.

IN THIS SHORT RESEARCH REVIEW, I present a gender focused critique of the established literature on children's experiences of domestic violence (DV). The project 'Understanding Agency and Resistance Strategies' (UNARS) is a two-year research and intervention project exploring children's capacity for agency and resistance, in situations of DV and abuse. Paradoxically, children's own experiences of DV are largely absent from the academic literature that explores the impact of DV on them. Children are represented in this literature as damaged by violence that they 'witness', as impacted by abuse that they are 'exposed to', but they are not really represented as people experiencing DV and abuse, and their voices are rarely heard in academic writing in this area. To address this, the UNARS project focuses on facilitating young people's articulation of their experience of DV, and particularly how they cope creatively and live agentically.

In preparation for the UNARS project, we surveyed all published, peer-reviewed literature in press between January 2002 and January 2015. The project began in 2012, so the period 2002–2015 covers all literature published in the decade before the project began, and throughout the duration of the project. This time frame was chosen to enable us to consider current knowledges and discourses in circulation that might shape how children who live with DV are understood, and that might influence DV policy and intervention practices. Our main domain of interest was in children's well-being and capacity for resilience and resistance, and this shaped the review that we completed. Our aim in the literature review was to understand the dominant discourses of children who experience DV and abuse, exploring how children and family life are constituted in professional and academic talk. Our strategy was to do through a systematic search of peer-reviewed literature, which was then subject to both a corpus analysis (Rayson, 2008)and a targeted critical discourse analysis (Parker, 1992).

Relevant peer-reviewed literature was identified through a targeted search of the data bases 'Google scholar', 'ingenta' and 'ovid'. Search terms used were 'child*'; and 'domestic violence' OR 'domestic abuse' OR 'interpersonal violence'. We further refined our search by combining these search terms with 'mental health', 'well-being', 'resilience', 'resistance' and 'agency'. The abstracts of the articles identified in this way were then read, to ensure that the articles were specifically focused on children or young people, and were concerned with DV and abuse. From this process, 177 articles were identified for inclusion in the review. These articles were converted to text and subject to a corpus analysis (Wmatrix; Rayson, 2008), to identify patterns of talk in the articles. Wmatrix enables a quantitative

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analysis of large linguistic data sets, to explore both the frequency of certain terms and phrases, and their concurrence with other terms in the data set. Our analysis of this literature will be discussed more fully elsewhere, but for the purposes of this article, I focus simply on the relative frequency of terms in this set of articles, before using three examples to drill down and explore how and why the focus of so much of this literature is not on children, but on women.

The Wmatrix word cloud shows the relative frequency of words in the literature we reviewed. The programme compares the frequency of words in the data set with a representative sample of written English, so not just identifying the words that are said most frequently in the corpus being analysed, but giving some indication too of whether that frequency is greater than would be expected in ordinary written language. The size of the word indicates the relative frequency of its use. Clearly there are several interesting features in the cloud. For instance, the overuse of terms like 'exposure' and 'witnessing' stand out, highlighting the way that children are positioned as relatively passive in this literature. However, for the purposes of this paper, I wanted to draw your attention to one particular feature of this literature, namely the overuse of two particular terms – mothers and maternal, and the significantly less frequent use of two other terms – father, and paternal. When taking into account relative frequency 'mothers' is the fifth most frequently appearing term in the data set, and maternal is the 38th. 'Fathers', in contrast, is ranked 147th, while terms like 'paternal' or 'stepfather' do not appear on the relative frequency table at all. This is interesting, given that the literature in this area overwhelmingly reports DV where men are perpetrator and women victim. (The terms 'women' and 'women's' are ranked 24th and 168th respectively, while 'men' or 'male' do not appear at all in the relative frequency table.) It seems curious and noteworthy that a literature that is explicitly about children's experience of DV, and that frames DV as something that occurs between male adult perpetrators and female adult victims, that mothers as a category be so significantly over-represented, while men and fathers are almost absent.

Women are frequently targeted in both academic research and in professional practice, as the mediators of children's responses to DV. How well mothers are able to mother, despite their experiences of violence and victimisation, is seen as a key predictor of how well their children will cope with the experience of DV and its aftermath.

Figure 1: A word cloud showing the relative frequency of the most popular terms in the data set.

Literature on children's resilience suggests that the quality of maternal interaction is a crucial factor in predicting children's capacity to cope with and recover from DV e (Conde-Agudelo, Belizán & Lammers, 2005; Dollberg et al., 2013; Ferri et al., 2007; Levendosky et al., 2003; Martinez-Torteya et al., 2009; Renner & Boel-Studt, 2012; Whitaker, Orzol & Kahn, 2006). Literature concerned with the negative outcomes of 'exposure' to DV suggest that poor maternal mental health and maternal addiction predict child behavioural, social and emotional difficulties (Margolin, 2005; VanDeMark et al., 2005). For instance, a typical representation of this shift in focus to mothers as the main risk factors for children who have experienced DV is found in this quote from a study by (Bogat et al., 2006, p.119) who suggest that 'when infants witness severe IPV, they appear to experience an additional stressor; in this case, the distress of their mothers. …When the adult's responses are not well-regulated (this enhances) the child's responses.' The mother's capacity to cope with ordinary mothering, in the face of her own experience of violence, is framed as a key factor in children's well-being. This effectively positions the major challenge to children who have experienced DV not as the (male) violence, but rather as women's (in)ability to cope with that violence, and their consequent 'failure' to provide adequate emotional containment for their children.

To illustrate the impact of the preoccupation with mothers in DV literature on children's outcomes, I will present three empirical articles focused on children in three different age groups (babies, preschoolers, and early school age children), published in high quality and high impact family violence journals.

In a study that set out to explore whether maternal functioning mediates the relationship between DV and externalising behaviour in infants, Levendosky et al. (2006) studied women who had experienced DV in pregnancy, interviewing them once during pregnancy, then interviewing them and observing mother infant interactions 12 months post-natally. Their observations focused on maternal sensitivity, insight and responsiveness, and on infant externalising behaviour. They also measured mother-reported levels of social support. Their main findings were that maternal functioning (including parenting and mental health) mediated the relationship between DV and child externalising behaviour, and that women who had lower levels of mental health difficulty and a more sensitive and responsive parenting style had toddlers with fewer externalising behaviours. They suggested that 'women who experience DV have dysregulated affect (as measured by mental health), which seems to be related to dysregulated affect in their children (as measured by externalising behaviours). Thus, the most pernicious effects of DV may be through the dysregulation of affect expression in these families'. (Levendosky et al., 2006, p.549). The effect of DV is, therefore, understood, not so much as a consequence of the violence itself as it is the pattern of damaged *mothering* that it sets up. The group led by Levendosky is highly sympathetic to the needs of women in situations of DV and abuse, and my intention here is not in any way to undermine the value of the work that they do. However, I do think it is important to draw attention to the specific way that this kind of research sets women up as emotional labourers, responsible for their offspring's well-being, without reference to the importance of other significant relationships. In particular, the child's relationship – either real or imagined – to the abusive male perpetrator is obscured by this over-focus on mothers. He is not even present as a factor in the study, except through the mother's counting of the frequency and intensity of his violence. This is acknowledged by this research collective as an important absence in their work, and in this sense they are to be commended, however, this limitation is merely mentioned, rather than rigorously interrogated. They do

not consider the effect of focusing on the impact of victim-survivors as mothers, whilst neglecting the role of male perpetrators in children's response to DV.

A similar study by Schechter et al. (2011) explores the relationship between maternal symptoms of post-traumatic stress symptoms, their reports of interpersonal violence, and their pre-school child's levels of post-traumatic stress and externalising and internalising symptoms. Despite the title of the article 'The relationship of violent fathers, post-traumatically stressed mothers and symptomatic children in a preschool age inner-city pediatric clinic sample', neither fathers nor children were directly engaged in the study. All measures were based on maternal report, and there was one clinician scored measure of the child's trauma symptoms. Seventy-seven mothers with children 18 to 48 months were included in the study – 28 mothers with history of interpersonal violence since the child's birth, 26 mothers with a prior IPV history, but no violence since the child's birth, and 23 mothers with no history of interpersonal violence, they found that paternal violence accounted for 15 per cent of the variance in child post-traumatic symptoms, but found that the mother's post-traumatic response was a stronger predictor. They suggest that 'Paternal violence modestly but significantly predicted child externalising behaviours on the CBCL…. After controlling for the effects of maternal PTSS, father's violence became insignificant. These two independent variables together accounted for 25 per cent of the variance in child externalising behaviour' (3710–3711), and that 'beyond the direct exposure to paternal violence, we found that the severity of maternal post-traumatic stress which follows from that violence was more robustly predictive of child symptomatology' (3712). The framing of this finding is particularly interesting, as the father's relational input into children's lives is reduced simply to being a violent object, with no other consideration of his relationship to his children (whether he is physically present in children's lives or not), and no consideration of his emotional functioning or mental health and its potential impact on the children he lives with. Thus the impact of the perpetrator of the violence is judged insignificant despite the perpetrator and his interactions with his children having never been directly studied, while the sole focus of research is on the mother's report of the violence itself, and her parental functioning. This is compounded by the children's relative voicelessness in this and other DV research (Overlien, 2009), as they are also not in a position to articulate their experience of DV, and of family relationships in a manner that enables any consideration of the complexity and subtlety of relational impact across the family on children's well-being and mental health.

The third study, by Holmes (2013), is entitled 'Aggressive behaviour of children exposed to intimate partner violence: An examination of maternal mental health, maternal warmth and child maltreatment'. This study used a sample of mothers and children referred to social services for child protection concerns, where the mother had reported a history of interpersonal violence. The study used a range of quantitative measures to explore the relationships between maternal depression and anxiety, post traumatic symptoms, and reported levels of DV, and their children's (aged 3 to 8 years) externalising behaviour. Holmes found that there was a strong relationship between maternal mental health difficulties and exposure to interpersonal violence, and a strong relationship between poor maternal mental health, and maternal warmth, as well as the risk of child directed maternal abuse. They also found a relationship between low maternal warmth, maternal psychological abuse of the child, and externalising, aggressive behaviour on by the child. Holmes concludes that 'IPV is associated with mental health and parenting problems in mothers' (p.52) that results in a range of difficulties for their children. She suggests that 'Mothers who were depressed or who were

under the influence of substances tended to have more negative interactions and less positive interactions with children, be less emotionally responsive and be less sympathetic to their children.... Because of these less responsive parenting behaviours, one explanation for poor mental health being assocated with increased levels of aggression is that the child may be exhibiting aggressive behaviour as a way of eliciting the mother's attention' (527). In a fairly obvious sleight of hand, the article quickly moves from a focus on male violence and its impact on children, to a consideration of deficient and potentially abusive mothering. The male violence that produced the negative consequences for both their female partner and her children is rendered largely insignificant, as the target of concern and of intervention becomes the abused woman, whose exposure to violence has produced her as an inadequate and potentially harmful mother.

Throughout this literature, women who experience DV are represented, effectively, as 'damaged'. The violence itself is framed as damaging women's capacity to mother – they are seen as 'lacking maternal warmth' (Holmes, 2013), unable to respond to appropriately as mothers to the needs of their children (Levendosky et al., 2006), while their own experiences of DV is seen as predisposing them to engage in child maltreatment (Holmes, 2013; Knickerbocker et al., 2007; Muller, Thornback & Bedi, 2012). In their article 'Building resilience in children of mothers who have co-occurring disorders and histories of violence', Finkelstein et al. (2005, p.142) suggest that 'A significantly large number of children are exposed to maternal addiction and mental illness, as well as interpersonal violence'. Here the effect of the mother's deficient parenting is presented discursively as equivalent in its impact on children as the violence itself. The framing of the title of this paper seems particularly significant: the *mother* is represented as the problem for child development, by virtue of her 'co-occuring disorders and histories of violence'. She is rendered complicit in her children's negative emotional outcomes, by virtue of her position as a victim of violence. By representing the violence as a 'comorbidity' with mental health difficulties, this title effectively positions both the violence she experiences, and the mental health difficulty that is seen as emerging as a consequence of that violence, as *characteristic of the mother*, and these are positioned as equally damaging to child development. This seems the ultimate in victim blaming, through the pathologisation of female victims and the failure to sufficiently articulate the role of violent men in the developmental outcomes of children who experience DV.

More generally, psychological literature on child development positions mothers as primarily responsible for their children's emotional well-being (Barrett, 2006; Miller, 2005). Women are positioned as responsible for family life, their children's development and mental health (Lee et al., 2014). Psychological discourses position 'good mothers' as responsible for their children's mental health, providing supportive containment for their children's growth (Burman, 2008; Hays, 1996; O'Reilly, 2006; Pylpa, 2011). Failure to live up to the expectations of the *natural, intensive mother* (Hays, 1996; O'Reilly, 2006; Phoenix & Woollett, 1991) produced in developmental discourse implicitly problematises women as bad mothers and as unnatural parents. Dominant representations of motherhood in developmental research constructs 'good mothering' as caring, nurturing, consistent, and facilitative, and this idealised representation is contrasted with psychopathogenic mothering, described as inconsistent, neglectful, domineering, absent, self-absorbed (Lupton, 2011; Phoenix, 2006). Mothers who do not not conform to the discourse of the 'good mother' are necessarily positioned as its opposite – bad mothers, who risk their children's well-being for the sake of their own 'selfish' concerns. Traces of this construction of good versus bad motherhood are clearly in evidence in the literature on children and DV.

The representation of victimised women as 'damaged' mothers that we have outlined in the literature on DV reproduces psychology's preoccupation with the mother as emotional labourer and container for children's development in particularly troubling ways. Through its overfocus on women as the 'natural carers' for children, and as responsible for children's healthy psychological development necessarily neglects the role of others – fathers, other partners, extended family – in both promoting children's well-being, and in producing challenges for children's development. The family becomes reduced to the mother-child dyad, in a way that entirely obscures the complex social world in which children are reared. In families affected by violence, this is particularly problematic as the notion of women as responsible for child well-being means that other relational factor are hidden from view, in a manner that allows the responsibility for children's mental health difficulties in DV to be shifted away from violent perpetrators onto mothers. Mothers who experience DV are described in terms that position as failed and inadequate parents, whose own fragility and mental health difficulty results in damage to their children. In this way, victim-survivors of DV are pathologised and problematised as not only individually 'damaged' by the violence they experience, but also as inadequate and 'failing' parents. Since motherhood is typically understood as a 'natural' state for women (Burman, 2008), this representation produces victim-survivors of DV as unnatural, damaged mother, and by extension as unnatural women. Children's often complex relationships with their fathers – particularly where the father is the perpetrator of violence at home – is also obscured, in a manner that means that he is not considered in DV literature on childhood as anything other than an object and tool of violence. By failing to engage with children's voices, this literature also fails to consider any more intersubjective account of children's growing up in violent families, that might allow them to express their own contributions to their well-being. The complexity of these families is oversimplified in unhelpful ways. Mothers are reduced to (failing) emotional containers for children's development, fathers are reduced to violent object without subjectivity or relationality, and children are reduced to silent witnesses, impacted but never allowed agency or capability in our reading of them.

This paper has explored the construction of mothers in research literature on children's experiences of DV. It has noted the preoccupation in with motherhood in a literature ostensibly about the impact of DV on children, and has considered the effect of this focus in terms of the way that it further pathologises and stigmatises women as victims of DV. I shifts the focus in children's outcomes research away from the impact of violence at the hands of abusive men, to the effect apparently damaged and deficient women and mothers. This victim blaming is clearly problematic in its own right. However, it also has the effect of blocking an engagement with the complex relationships that emerge between children and their parents in situations of DV, and does not adequately engage with the subjectivity of relationality of violent men. The interactions between violent men (particularly fathers) and their children remain largely uninterrogated in this literature. In addition, the focus on mothers and on mothers' reports of their children's well-being results in a further silencing of children's voices in research about their experiences of DV. In the UNARS project, we argue for a more nuanced engagement with children as relational beings, who experience and respond to DV when it occurs in families. We consider the complexity of their responses, and of the range of relationships they experience, exploring its implications for understanding DV, and for supporting children to build resistant self-identities when they experience such violence. We argue that this requires seeing children's experiences in a fuller relational context, understanding the nuanced

and often contradictory relational worlds they build and inhabit.

To learn more about the UNARS project, please go to www.unars.co.uk.

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Article

Women who choose not to have children: A preliminary study

Rose O'Driscoll & Jenny Mercer

Women who choose not to have children have been largely overlooked in both mainstream and feminist literature, where the focus is more typically on childbirth and motherhood or reproduction and infertility. Using data obtained through semi-structured interviews with four women aged 45 and over, this paper presents the initial findings of an ongoing constructivist grounded theory study with women who have chosen not to have children.

Findings from category one suggest that participants had no desire to replicate motherhood. The reasons included their negative experiences and memories of family life. Access to education and introduction to feminist ideas helped develop a strong sense of agency. Ongoing reflection on their lives illustrated how adult relationships were prioritised over motherhood. Findings from the other three categories (briefly discussed) challenge some of the dominant ideologies and assumptions about women who choose not to have children.
Keywords: *Women; choice; childless; grounded theory.*

DESPITE MANY YEARS OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGES, the gendered expectations of women are that they will bear children. Indeed most women do have children. Nevertheless, a growing number are now electing not to have children, a choice which Letherby (1999) argues places them as the 'other' and in direct opposition to 'mother'. The sparse research literature on this topic poignantly illustrates the negative ways in which voluntary childless women are positioned (Meyers, 2001). These women are seen to have denied themselves their real purpose in life by ignoring their maternal instincts. Gillespie, (2001, p.142) states, they *'are perceived as maladjusted, selfish and immature and their choice is problematic'*. She found that there are no positive words to describe women without children. Terms used such as 'childless' or 'without children' tend to denote loss or absence. *'The problem for childless women, then, is that as 'real women' something is missing; there is a flaw in our identity and lifestyle'* (Wager, 2000, p.3).

A possible reason for these (mis)perceptions is that voluntary childlessness challenges the 'normal' trajectory marked by transitions and life events, where marriage and parenthood are seen as normative steps in adult lives (Elder, 2008; Giddens & Sutton, 2013). Rich (1977, p.261) notes that both *'historically and cross-culturally, a woman's status as a child bearer has been the test of her womanhood'*. These expectations are supported by international studies. For examples see: Veevers, 1980 (US); Cannold, 2000, (Australia); Kopper and Smith, 2001; La Mastro, 2001; Park, 2002, (US); Kohler Reissman 2000 (South India); Carmichael and Whittaker, 2007 (Australia); Hara, 2008 (Japan and Germany); Tanturri and Mencarini, 2008 (Italy); Sonia, 2009 (Upper Zambezi); Van Bavel and Kok, 2010 (Netherlands); Yang, 2012 (Korea); and van der Gest and Nahar, 2013 (Ghana and Bangladesh).

Women are expected to conform to the particular norms of the societies into which they are born (Rich, 1977; Rosaldo & Lamphere, 1974). Institutions such as the family, the education system, the church, religions and welfare states all have distinct discourses that construct women in particular ways and control aspects of their lives

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(Pateman, 1988). These discourses construct explicit roles for women, such as 'mothers', 'daughters' and 'wives' (Finch, 1989; Mason & Jensen, 1995; Oakley, 1984). These roles reinforce gendered identities within societies and strengthen the expectations that all women will become or want to be mothers.

In Britain following the Second World War it was estimated 10 per cent of women were childless (ONS, 2011). During this period, childlessness was seen as the result of absence of opportunity for marriage. Men had been away at war, times were hard, and many were reluctant to commit to marriage and children (Rowlands, 2007). Current predictions are that by 2020, 22 per cent of all women who reach the age of 45 will be childless (ONS, 2011). The major difference between the post-war period and now is that childlessness is occuring among women who are healthy, sexually active, in employment, married or cohabiting (Coleman, 1996).

UK studies confirm this trend that an increasing number of women are choosing not to have children. Kiernan's (1989) study explored childlessness among women (and men) born in 1946. Her results suggest that childless adults were making a lifestyle choice, valuing careers and leisure activities over family life. Portani and Whitworth (2009) conducted a quantitative study of childless women born between the years 1956 and 1960 in England and Wales. A distinct profile emerged of educated, white women who owned their own homes. The majority resided in London and the south-east, and were employed in professional, managerial, or technical occupations. In a UK study with childless women, Hakim (2000) identified a similar demographic profile. Her findings suggested participants prioritised their work and remained childless by choice. She defines this as 'preference theory', a feature of an individualised 21st century lifestyle.

Feminist writers continue to challenge the gendered nature of women's lives (Bradley, 2013; de Beauvoir, 1953; Millett, 1977; Mitchell, 1984; Oakley, 1984). Up to now, most feminist researchers have tended to focus their attention on issues of reproduction, motherhood, infertility, childbirth, employment, and childcare. In recent times, there has been increased interest in childlessness by choice from researchers in a number of disciplines (Gillespie, 2000, 2001; Hakim, 2000; Kiernan, 1989; Letherby, 1999, 2002; Letherby & Williams 1999; Portani & Whitworth, 2009; and Shaw, 2011). These are important contributions to a neglected area of feminist research. However, as the short citation list reveals, this is presently an understudied area.

Given the increasing numbers of women who are choosing not to have children this is an area of research that can no longer be ignored. The voices of these women are largely silent or marginalised within feminist discourse. We need to hear more from women who have made this choice. Why have they elected for childlessness and resisted the dominant expectations to be mothers? What have been their experiences? And what are the consequences of these choices on their lives?

This paper presents the findings from the initial stages of an ongoing constructivist grounded theory study, which seeks to explore with women why they chose not to have children, how they made that choice, their experiences arising from that choice and the perceived impact on their lives.

Methodology

Design

The research was designed and analysed based on the principles of constructivist grounded theory developed by the American sociologist, Kathy Charmaz (2014). We designed a semi-structured interview schedule to guide the discussions with participants. It comprised three main areas of questioning: To start with an introductory question, which enabled participants to share their life histories, family background, childhood experiences, education, careers and relationships. This was followed by questions exploring their experiences of

marriage/relationships and their choices not to have children. The final questions explored possible impact on their lives as a result of their choices.

Sample

The inclusion criteria were women aged 45 and over, who had chosen not to have children. The age criteria was selected since childbearing years are conventionally perceived to be between the ages of 15 and 45. A requirement of the ethical approval was that women who had undergone unsuccessful In vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment and women who had chosen not to have children because of a genetic disorder were excluded.

Ethics

Ethical approval was granted from the university ethics committee. In keeping with the ethics of trust explicit in our method, we have endeavoured to apply principles of care and responsibility (Edwards & Maunthers, 2002) throughout the process. Many of the topics discussed were highly personal, so to further ensure confidentiality and protect anonymity only generic details relating to relationship status, age and employment history are revealed about the participants. The following pseudonyms were used (Kate, Elin, Maggie, and Julie) to introduce and report the women's narratives.

Participants

Four women, whose ages ranged between 47 and 52 years, took part. Three of the participants are in long-term relationships. One participant previously married is now divorced and not in a relationship. Although all had elected not to have children themselves, one self-identified as a stepmother, and another as a step grandmother. All are in full-time employment. Two participants who are acquaintances of the first author expressed an interest in the research topic and were opportunistically sampled. They offered details of two further potential participants, who agreed to be interviewed.

Interviews

Once participants agreed to be interviewed, a copy of the participant information sheet and the consent form was emailed to them. Participants chose the date, time, and location for interviews. The length of the interviews varied from 35 minutes to one hour and 17 minutes. Interviews were audio recorded and professionally transcribed. Participants were asked if they wished to have a copy of their transcripts. Two participants requested their transcripts and were sent copies.

Method of analysis

Charmaz (2010, p.130) explains that the researcher 'constructs theory' from the collected data and defines the constructivist approach as placing,

> *…priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data.*

The analysis was mainly conducted by the first author. Once each interview had been conducted, the process of memo writing began. Memo writing is a central tenet of grounded theory. As Charmaz (2014, p.163) states, *'it is the pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing of drafts'*. Memos were written following each interview and as part of an ongoing process of analysis. Initial memos reflected the first authors impressions of what participants were saying and why. These initial memos were free flowing or what Orana (1997) refers to as *'flights of fancy'*.

The transcribed data was read and line by line coding was undertaken. On second and subsequent reading and memo-ing new codes emerged. Finally, the emerging codes from this process were grouped together into coherent units, which form the basis for categorisation (Charmaz, 2010; Dunne, 2012; Rennie, Phillips & Quartaro, 1988). Further interrogation of the codes and memos helped to generate the categories (Charmaz, 2006). Throughout this process, the emerging categories were discussed regularly

with the second author. In the process of selecting codes for the data and constructing the categories, we endeavoured to give precedence to the words of the participants.

Findings

Four main categories emerged from analysis of the data. These are:

1. No desire to replicate motherhood;
2. Participants prioritised relationships over motherhood;
3. Having no children suggests you do not like children;
4. Loss and regret as normal elements of everyday life.

The purpose of this section is to explain how we arrived at category 1: No desire to replicate motherhood. To do this we will present how each of the codes (a–e) informed its construction (see Figure 1). Following this, and due to the constraints of the word count for this paper summaries of the other three categories are briefly presented.

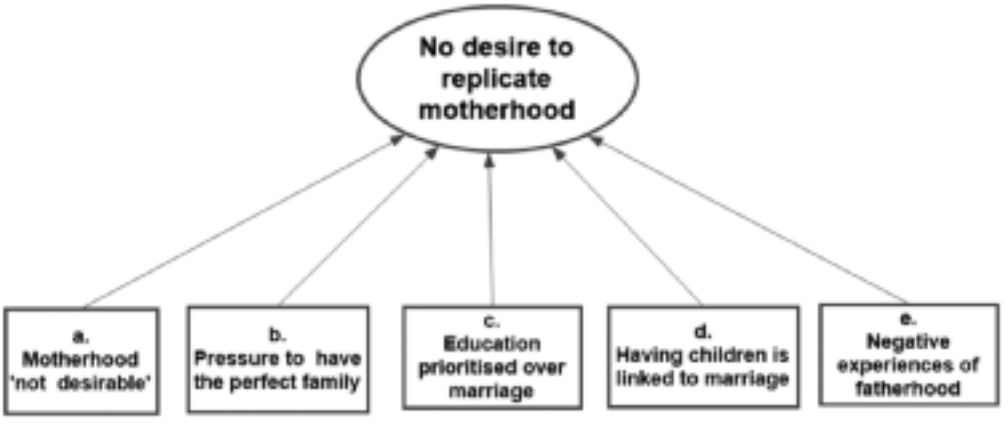
1. No desire to replicate motherhood

a. Motherhood 'not desirable'

Three of the four participants recall that motherhood was neither desired nor an enjoyable experience for their own mothers. Kate recalls that her mother, *'did not want any children, she never wanted children'*. Her mother also, *'thought her father felt the same'*. However, when they were married her husband wanted a family and as Kate tells us, *'my Dad sandbagged her* [my mother] *into it'*. *'He* [her father] *was from a working-class family and in working class families, communities, family was a given'*.

Julie recollects that, *'pregnancy, for my mother was not an enjoyable experience'*. Her mother was physically ill during each pregnancy. Julie learned from her mother *'that pregnancy and having babies was not everything she thought it would be'*. In fact, she wonders whether she was actually wanted by her mother,

Figure 1: Codes to Category 1: No desire to replicate motherhood.



> *'Her pregnancy with me and the physical illness with me precipitated one of the worst periods for her in terms of her depression… I was probably pretty unwelcome, unconsciously unwelcome'.*

Elin remembers that her mother did not have an easy time with parenting. As she recollects, *'Motherhood wasn't a bed of roses for her to raise children'.* Elin's childhood memories are ones filled with tension, with her mother constantly being a peacemaker in the home, trying to ensure family life was not disrupted. Her father had a very bad temper and she remembers family life as one where, *'her mother spent a lot of time and energy diffusing tense family situations'.* On reflection, she tells us that her mother had not set up, *'parenthood, and marriage as being an absolutely fabulous experience and one to replicate'.*

b. Pressure to have the perfect family

The pressure to produce the idealised child is evident in Maggie's memories. These messages come from her maternal grandmothers, both of whom were living with her family at this time. The family home, in Eastern Europe, was situated in an area where there was a school for children with learning disabilities. Based on what Maggie heard from her grandmother, she recalls that, *'my first thought was, oh good grief I would never have the courage to have kids in case they turned out like that'.* This message appears to be reinforced when she is regularly told by her grandmothers that, *'there is nothing worse than having a child with a learning disability'.* As a child, she was very conscious of the fact that if she were to have a child, it would need to be perfect. She recalls, *'a non-perfect child means you become an outcast in the community'.*

Julie remembers that her mother over exaggerated femininity in her daughters and she constantly sought conformity to notions of the idealised child. As she says, *'I now look at photographs and see the frills of the perfect family, beautiful children, beautifully dressed'.* Julie also recalls her mother's struggle to create this expectation. She states, *'My mother was a very disciplinarian mother trying to create the ideal family setting'.*

c. Education prioritised over marriage.

For Kate, her mother's primary wish for her was to have an education. As she recalls, *'a woman's education was something that was very important' … 'She was very keen to ensure that her daughter got a good education'.* Kate was also aware that her mother wanted her to have an alternative life. Kate stated that her mother,

> *'Did not have that option open to her. She had left school at 15, and worked as a legal secretary, remaining there until she got married. So, kind of having a husband and children weren't particularly important as far as she was concerned'.*

Likewise, Elin recalls that when she attended her 10-year class reunion (in Canada), at the age of 28, she and her classmates remarked, *'How unusual it was that Sarah* [a classmate] *had two children by now at 28'.* She goes on to say, *'The vast majority of us weren't even married'.* Elin tells us that most of her peers were more interested in careers and home ownership, than marriage and having a family since,

> *'It was definitely a pool of upwardly mobile well-educated, independent [young women] … the ideas of that socio economic group – the career is the thing, the academic or business life is the thing'.*

For Kate, her secondary school also prioritised education over marriage and having a family. As she tells us, *'none of the teachers talked about having a family or anything like that, their focus was on education'.* She remembered that her school teachers,

> *'Must have been quite feminist because there was no sense in which there were women's jobs and men's jobs. And in fact when I was 16, I went and got a job as part of a traineeship for [a company] as a trainee quarry engineer. So clearly, there was no suggestion that there were men's jobs and women's jobs'.*

In Julie's interview the school she attended also prioritised education. Julie realised early on that the best way out of what was for her a chaotic family life *'was to get an education'.* The female teachers in her secondary school, who were all single women without children, were also influential in her life.

As she recalls,

> *'Miss W, Miss E and Miss T who were all very calm, very very proper and they all wore lots of make-up, lipstick and dyed their hair interesting colours. I liked them very much and I remember thinking I'd like to be like Miss W when I'm older, who was the most glamorous of all of them and had no children'.*

d. Having children is linked to marriage

Kate recalls that the model of the 'nuclear family' was how family life was structured in the working-class community in which she was brought up. In her community, marriage and children were seen as a regular, assumed part of a woman's life. As she tells us, *'In the 1970s, settling down and having children is a given, but having children was linked to marriage'.* It would not be desirable to have a child outside a marriage. She recalls that,

> *'There was a young woman in a neighbouring school who was pregnant and she was forced to stand in front of the class and confess her terrible crime; being pregnant…. And she was made to have the baby'.*

For Kate and her peers the notion of having an unplanned pregnancy and a baby was seen, *'as the worst thing that could happen to you, your life is over… that would be completely and utterly dreadful'.* Nobody thought of getting married. Teachers were not promoting marriage or motherhood and her family were not pressurising her to marry. Kate remembers that for her and her peers the, *'focus was on pregnancy avoidance, rather than who would have babies'.* In Maggie's interview, she too recalls that children are linked to marriage. As she remembers, having children was not something that was talked about *'since I was not married'.* Having children outside of marriage was also frowned upon. As she tells us, *'if you are not married and have a child, it is worse than not having them at all'.*

e. Negative experiences of fatherhood

Three of the four participants had negative experiences of fatherhood. From Kate we hear that it was her father, not her mother who wanted children, since her mother tells her, *'that she never wanted children and… my Dad sandbagged her* [my mother] *into it'.* We hear that Elin's father has a temper, which needed to be managed. As she reminds us, *'lots of… my mother having to justify my Dad's rages'.* In Julie's interview, we hear of a father who is ill [alcoholic] and unable to parent when required,

> *'As I was growing up and from the moment I lost my Mum, I felt very conscious of the fact our family was not liked, there was no mother and my father was drinking. The family falls apart and disintegrates when Mum dies'.*

In summary, these codes informed the category, no desire to replicate motherhood. Most participants recall that marriage and having children were neither a desired nor an enjoyable experience for their mothers. They reveal that their mothers struggled to uphold and represent the idealised model of children, motherhood, and family life. The emphasis on education and a career was promoted both internally by family (mainly mothers) and externally by some teachers. Subsequently, whilst growing up education and a career were considered more important than marriage and motherhood. Participants' experiences of fatherhood are recalled as either 'demanding', or 'inept'. All participants acknowledge the impact these experiences had on their lives. Becoming a mother was not something they desired for themselves.

Having presented the codes which informed the first category, we now turn to briefly summarise the three remaining categories which emerged from our analysis.

2. Participants prioritised adult relationships over motherhood

As part of ongoing reflection on their adult lives, participants prioritised their adult relationships over their decisions to have a child. All had discussed the possibility of parenthood at some stage in their lives. Maggie shares that one of the conditions of marriage agreed with her husband was not to have children. Kate and Julie decided not to

pursue motherhood for a variety of reasons; *'it would not bring anything extra to their relationships, the timing was not right, there were other things to do'*. Early on in her marriage, Elin was interested in having a baby. Having talked about this with her husband, they both felt *'that to bring a child into their relationship would not be good financially or emotionally'*.

3. Having no children suggests you do not like children.

Three of the four participants state that some people assume because they have no children, they do not like children. They recall that once people become aware they have no children, conversations seem to come to an abrupt end. Kate and Elin feel that this sometimes denies them the opportunity to talk about children or talk with children. Kate tells us *'I quite like to find out about what people's children are doing'*. For Elin, *'I quite like talking to teenagers, really enjoy listening to how they use language'*. These three participants have a very direct role in the lives of children – Julie (niece), Kate (step children), Elin (step grandchildren).They feel these experiences are enjoyable and rewarding for both themselves and the children. Julie tells us her colleagues often remark, *'She* [her niece] *may as well be your child, the way you look after her'*.

4. Loss and regret as normal elements of everyday life

When asked, participants were willing to share their feelings on loss and regret. Maggie does not feel any sense of either loss or regret at her choice not to have children. She views her choice as a positive one. Neither Kate nor Julie had any desire to have their own children. At the same time, they acknowledge loss and regret associated with their choice. Kate shares that having a child would have been an interesting experience, but *'it was only one experience in life, there were also other as important things to do… politics, environment…'*. She acknowledges, *'that the desire to have a child could not have been that strong, otherwise I would have pursued it'*. For Julie, the sense of loss and regret is also about the experience of not being a mother, not having reared a child, seen them grow into adults. At the same time, she does not feel it as an overwhelming loss. She tells us,

> *'Yes, I think there is loss and regret but very much loss and regret felt in the same way as I feel about not doing other things in my life, normal loss, and regret as an element of everyday life'*.

Elin does express significant loss and regret. She says, *'It feels like bereavement at 48… It's probably something in me that I feel a sense of failure to take up the challenge, was weak, was some sort of reject, it's these sort of niggling monster in the bedroom kinda thing'*. When asked about her perceived sense of personal failure she responds by saying, *'because people keep reminding me that a full acceptable complete life involves raising a family'*.

Discussion

Having presented the initial findings, we will now go on to discuss how these inform our research question. In exploring why participants choose not to have children, insights from the data reveal that their choices may have been influenced by a combination of two key factors. Firstly, we found that participants had no desire to replicate motherhood, due to their negative experiences and memories of traditional family life. This finding is consistent with Salecl (2011, p.111) who argued that women's *'decision to have (or not to have) children has been influenced by how they have interpreted their own mother's desire to have them'*.

Secondly, participants had the opportunity for non-gendered education from women teachers who offered exposure to feminist ideas. These ideas may have enabled participants to develop their own sense of agency and exercise choice. This raises the question as to the possible impact of agency and feminist ideas on the choices women make and the opportunities presented for alternative lives. As Wager stated, (2000, p.10) *'every woman is a potential mother, biologically or socially, but it is not our only potential; there are many more'*.

In addressing how participants made their choices, they prioritised their adult relationships over motherhood. For all participants, the process involved in making their choices was both considered and considerate. It was considered in that this choice was part of an ongoing process of reflection on how they wanted to live their adult lives. It was considerate in that they felt to bring a child into the world and into their relationships would not have benefitted either the child or the parent(s).

Ireland (1993) categorised such women as 'transformative' in that they know they are challenging gendered expectations of women to become mothers, but they want something more than motherhood. None of them viewed their careers as being a central element in making their choices. This insight is in contrast to Hakim's 'preference theory' in which women who choose not to have children prioritised their careers over motherhood. Participants in our study saw their careers as one important element of their lives but it was not the key factor which influenced their choices.

These narratives reveal the complexity of the choice making process and raise the need for further exploration.

One of the important findings to emerge is around the negative assumptions some people make about women who do not have children. Participants revealed that people often assume that they do not like children further reinforcing this negative positioning. This may also deny children the opportunity to interact with those who have chosen alternatives to motherhood. This finding raises the question as to whether women who choose not to have children are seen as negative rather than positive role models.

Finally, another important issue to emerge was in relation to loss and regret in later life. A common assumption is that women who choose not to have children will experience significant loss and regret because of this decision (Gillespie, 2001; Letherby, 1999; Wager, 2000). However, three out of the four participants did not have this experience. The sense of loss and regret, which they experienced, was no greater than that felt as part of everyday life. Only one of the participants, Elin, expressed feelings of significant loss and regret. This experience was reinforced by the expectations of some others who saw her choice as that of a weak woman who did not take up the challenge of motherhood. This raises the question as to what extent perceived notions of loss and regret can be socially constructed within particular contexts and requires further exploration.

Conclusion

Women who choose not to have children are still perceived as somehow in deficit, and are positioned negatively within society. Their voices have been largely silent and marginalised within feminist discourse. Our research seeks to enable these women to speak for themselves about why they chose not to have children, how they made that choice and the impact on their lives.

These initial findings offer some insights into the lives of women who elect not to have children. Overall, making a choice not to have a child is a complex process. Participants' choices appear to have been made after much thought and consideration. Their choices were influenced by negative experiences and memories of traditional family life. The opportunity to pursue education introduced them to feminist ideas and alternative life choices. This may have informed a greater sense of agency and the confidence to challenge some of the oppressive gendered structures in their own lives.

The findings also suggest that women without children are often perceived as not liking children. As a result, they are often excluded from discussions with and about children. This exclusion may deny others the opportunity to engage with alternative views on motherhood, thus reinforcing gendered norms and societal expectations. Findings challenge the perception that women who choose not to have children experience loss and regret as a result of their decision.

We acknowledge that further research is required to explore our research questions in greater depth. We also urge caution in drawing any firm conclusions from what are the preliminary stages of a larger ongoing study. At present, the sample size is small. However, our study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of this neglected area of women's lives. The women's narratives discussed here both resonate with the literature to date as well as challenging some of the dominant ideologies and assumptions about women who choose not to have children.

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Interview

Constructing (and resisting) the 'good parenting' mandate

Donna Peach & Abigail Locke

Donna Peach in conversation with Dr Abigail Locke, who presented a keynote on 'Constructing (and resisting) the 'good parenting' mandate' at the POWS Annual Conference, July 2014.

We were delighted to have Abi deliver her keynote, which interrogated aspects of contemporary parenting. Firstly, Abi explored the discursive constructions of parenting, highlighting the difficulties in resisting dominant discourses of mothering and fathering. The complexity for parents was illuminated in representations of good parenting advice, present in parenting books and media reports. Abi then moved her lens onto the messages from research, undertaken by herself and others, which critically examine constructs of motherhood and, more recently, stay at home dads. A further theme explored by Abi was the use of social media platforms such as 'mumsnet' and 'netmums'. This interview further explores Abi's views of the ability of these forums to extend and constrain contemporary constructions of parenting.

Donna: *You make a point about the terminology of parenting and the imbalance of research focus predominantly on mothering. How do you think web communities like mumsnet and netmums facilitate or hinder the emergence of dads in their narratives?*

Abigail: An interesting point. Well obviously the two websites named here are focused almost wholly towards mothers. This isn't surprising though when we consider that society firmly puts the focus and responsibility of child-rearing onto mothers. When we consider research that looks at the texts available to parents, this is often framed towards the mother, with the father sitting at the periphery, and, as Jane Sunderland, and others have claimed, the father is depicted as 'part-time', 'bumbling assistant' and a 'baby entertainer'. The figures reflect this societal focus, that in the majority of families, the mother will tend to perform more of the childcaring responsibilities. What I'm interested in is why we accept the gendered assumptions of parenting and assume that women are natural 'nurturers' whilst men are perceived in other roles, most notably being the financial provider. For me, I'd like the options of 'parenting' to be open to whoever would like to perform it, regardless of their gender.

There are other websites becoming more popular, some specifically for men whilst others set up to address the neutral 'parents'. To go back to the initial question on how it facilitates or hinders the emergence of dads, I would suggest that the websites are only reflecting the common societal discourses of 'who parents' but I would also argue, and my research with fathers as primary caregivers attends to this, that the discourses that society emphasises through media, etc., that the mother is the one who is responsible for parenting is, at the very least unhelpful to fathers who have taken on this role, but also, likely to put fathers off who were considering being the primary caregiver. Whilst the number of dads who are primary caregivers is still relatively small, it has grown considerably in the last decade. The common discourses need to reflect this change.

Donna: *You talk about the need to give ourselves space away from 'the mummy wars' which are at times apparent in social media platforms like mumsnet. How do you think we can cultivate the next wave of social media resources for parents?*

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Abigail: The 'mummy wars' are to a large extent a construction, set up within a patriarchal culture, which can only lead to undermining parents (it's a kind of 'divide and rule' scenario). My personal view is that all of the social media resources open to parents are an excellent way of providing support, given that many new parents are isolated – we simply don't operate within the extended families that we used to. Unfortunately, as is the way with human nature, there will always be some who use these sites to pass judgements on others, as has always been the case elsewhere. This though is basic social psychology of in-group, out-group behaviour that happens when people feel under pressure or threatened (Tajfel, 1981). We see it in other settings too of course, particularly in these austere times. I don't think that social media encourages that. I think that it's illuminated for all to see, so instead of a whisper in a playground, it's a permanent comment on a noticeboard. In terms of cultivating social media resources for parents, I would like to see a variety that in many ways that we already have, but linking it to my previous answer, I would like dads to be more readily accepted into these forums and parenting seen in more gender neutral terms, rather than being a 'woman's domain'.

Donna: *There was lots of humour in your keynote and you were honest about the joys and the challenges that can come with being a parent. If you could influence the design of a new parenting mandate for a forum, what would you like to see included?*

Abigail: Another great question. Parenting is a tough job. That's not to play down in any way how wonderful it can be, but raising children is, at times, hard, particularly in these austere times where parents are under competing pressures of intensive 'child-centred parenting', to the massive financial pressures of raising children. As a society, we are poorly set up to consider the needs of children and those who are caring for them. Frankly, the idea of a 'big society' is in tatters when we consider that one in three children is living in poverty in the UK today. These figures are wholly unacceptable. To go back to the idea of a parenting mandate, we need to move towards an acceptance of parenting practice and truly adopt the idea of 'good enough' parenting. There are so many parenting mandates out there, as I talked about in my keynote, including how you feed your baby, how old you are when you have your baby, whether you're single, in a relationship, your sexuality, and so on. Some of these have public health arguments and official statistics attached, other don't. My point has been from the start of my research into parenting that a new parent needs to be supported. Some of this support will be through advice from others, whether friends, through social media or official/professional advice, but this advice must be given in a supportive way, working with people and considering their needs, not your ideologies. How that translates into practice remains to be seen.

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Undergraduate POWS Prize Winner

'I want to make sure that I don't let physics stop me from being a woman': A critical discursive analysis of a group discussion with female doctoral physics students on issues of gender and identity construction in a male-dominated field

Jen Tidman

Jen Tidmand won the Undergraduate POWS prize 2014, and presented her paper, which is reproduced here, at the POWS Annual Conference, in July.

Previous critical psychological research examining science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) shows women within the field are expected to conform to masculine norms, but also perform normative femininities, making it difficult to achieve simultaneous identities as both scientists and women. This project used a critical discursive psychological framework to gather qualitative data from a group discussion with three women physicists in the UK. A discourse analysis examined the interpretative repertoires, subject positions and ideological dilemmas involved in negotiating their identities. As in previous research, dominant repertoires constructed a social world where it was difficult to claim identities as both women and physicists, creating dilemmas and reproducing inequalities. Initiatives are necessary to challenge the dominant discourses prevalent in both STEM and wider society. Future research should continue to examine the impact of patriarchy and heteronormativity within STEM.

Background

CONSTRUCTING a secure scientific identity is important for minorities within science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM; Gill et al., 2008), yet women experience particular difficulties in doing so. They are expected to conform to masculine norms within the male-dominated community of practice, but also perform normative femininities (Danielsson, 2012), forcing them to juggle their identities. This pressure contributes to the 'leaky pipeline' phenomenon; more women than men leave STEM over time, resulting in their under-representation in both academia and industry. This has important implications in terms of feminism, politics and social justice. In a recent report, the UK government concluded that the lack of diversity in STEM results from harmful perceptions and biases (held by men and women) and the impracticalities of combining a career with family (Science and Technology Committee, 2014). The committee acknowledge that encouraging more girls to choose STEM subjects is fruitless if women are subsequently disadvantaged in their careers, and recommend diversity and equality training for all STEM students and managers, as well as recruitment, promotion and grant panels. However, to inform any future initiatives and increase their impact, it is important to have clear insight into the current situation.

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Much psychological research on women in STEM has been from a mainstream cognitive perspective, focusing on gender differences in performance, interests and attitudes. As Danielsson (2012) notes there is a lack of critical, theoretically grounded work and in particular, 'seldom are the voices of women who have chosen to do physics heard'. Critical discursive psychology is well suited to exploring issues of gender and identity construction. According to this perspective, language creates a set of identities to be negotiated and lived within (Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003). Construction of the self is continual and fluid, achieved through discourse in everyday social interactions (Edley, 2001). Discourses are social and performative, reflecting shared cultural and historical understandings, and are produced as a form of social action in the immediate, local context (Edley & Wetherell, 2001). Discourse analysis attempts to identify the ideas available, how these are taken up or attributed as common-sense explanations (interpretative repertoires), and how they are used to construct identities (subject positions). Because discourse resources are often contradictory, ideological dilemmas arise and analysis looks at speakers' attempts to resolve these. Although people can actively construct identities they are also constrained by the discourses available to them, and thus the discursive approach sees agency and structure as inseparable (Hollway, 2012). Furthermore, the perspective emphasises power relations (Hollway, 2012) and the ways discourses may construct inequalities in everyday lives, privileging some and disadvantaging others (Lucey, 2012; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003).

Within STEM, Götschel (2013) argues that discourses about physics are linked to masculinity, disadvantaging women by leaving few spaces for 'girliness' and femininity. Competing repertoires structure and limit their subject positions (Henwood, 1998); for recognition as 'real' scientists they must be less feminine or more masculine than 'other' women, but to remain perceived as 'real' women they must conform to stereotypical femininities (Faulkner, 2011). As such, negotiating a simultaneous identity is difficult, if not impossible. Across STEM there are similar findings; for recognition, some women take up subject positions congruent with scientific masculinity (claiming to be 'one of the boys') and incongruent with normative femininity (distancing themselves from other women or feminine practices). However, this may lead to disapproval from others, as well as dilemmas when positioning STEM as gender-neutral or when expressing desires to perform femininities (Gonsalves, 2012a). Other women carve out subject positions as 'feminine scientists', arguing that stereotypically female attributes (e.g. organisation, diligence, sociability) make them good at STEM. However, this still positions them as 'other' to men.

There is little discursive research on physics and gender in adults, but that which exists shows similar patterns. Danielsson and Linder (2009), Danielsson (2012) and Gonsalves (2012b) interviewed female students at Swedish and Canadian universities, focusing on their struggles to reconcile doing physics with doing gender, and how they achieved this by 'accepting, rejecting, negotiating or modifying the subject positions available' (Gonsalves, 2012b). Forging an identity as a competent physicist required complicated negotiation and positioning either as different to 'normal' women, or as 'analytical' (i.e. feminine) rather than 'practical' (i.e. masculine) – but this created tension with discourses relating to the field's gender neutrality (Danielsson & Lundin, 2012). Interestingly, whilst the discourses within physics are usually seen as constraining women, Danielsson (2012) argues they may allow agentic resistance to non-desired 'normative' identities; 'in physics, eccentric behaviour and sandals, rather than high heels, are possible' (Danielsson & Lundin, 2012). As such, physicist women can forge new identities that challenge the masculine norms of STEM (Danielsson & Linder, 2009) and wider discourses about gender (Götschel, 2013).

Existing research has used data from one-to-one interviews situated in a fairly liberal, Western cultural context, so findings may not be universal (Götschel, 2013). This research aimed to use a qualitative critical discursive framework (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) to examine for the first time how jointly constructed discourses produce a range of identity (im)possibilities for women physicists within the UK, using the research question: what interpretative repertoires and subject positions do these women draw on, take up or resist, and what ideological dilemmas arise in negotiating their identities as women physicists?

Method

After gaining ethical approval and following ethical guidelines at all times (BPS, 2010), I recruited three cisgender female physics PhD students from a UK university. 'Janet' and 'Karrie' are UK nationals and 'Corin' is an international student. As the researcher, I also participated in jointly constructing the resulting discourse. With full informed consent, I audio-recorded a group discussion in a university seminar room. After an icebreaker activity (looking at Google image search results for 'scientist' and 'physicist'), I asked some open-ended questions that aimed to elicit description and evaluation, exploring scientific and gendered identities. I debriefed the participants and gave them contact details for my tutor, a counselling service and myself. I transferred the recording to a password-protected computer, produced a line-numbered transcript giving pseudonyms, and analysed this using a version of Potter and Wetherell's discourse analysis (Open University, 2012). I repeatedly read the transcript, looked for instances of the three key analytic concepts and grouped findings into four interlinked discursive themes, to consider: (1) what interpretative repertoires were drawn on; (2) what subject positions these offered; and (3) what ideological dilemmas arose and what how these were resolved.

Analysis

The 'ideal' physicist (DT1)

To construct the 'ideal' physicist the group drew on repertoires around the scientist stereotype, resisting this and positioning themselves as young, modern, active physicists:

> *Janet: '[…] to me, there's kind of like multiple types of physicist. There's like, lecturer old man type physicist […] then there's actual physicists which are like (.) younger professors or postgrads or people like us [who] do the physics.'*

However, they felt others positioned them using traditional discourses about science (the 'expectation that you're gonna work long hours' and the 'perception that you're not a good scientist if you don't think about science constantly'). The group attempted to exert agency by drawing on a work-life balance repertoire; 'Karrie' and 'Corin' argued it is more important to be effective than just work, and 'Janet and 'Karrie' claimed science is only a 'part of my life'. Despite this, the dominant repertoire exerted pressure, creating an ideological dilemma; both 'Janet' and 'Corin' felt guilty when not working. 'Corin' also admitted to working early, late and at weekends, but in an attempt to resolve the dilemma she positioned this as outwith her control ('because I have to').

A gender-neutral field? (DT2)

The group drew on repertoires about normative femininities and resisted these, positioning physics as a gender-neutral field. Being 'all dolled up', 'wearing make-up' in 'high heels and a skirt' is 'not expected'. Instead, 'Janet' could '[live] in jeans and a hoodie' without it mattering. Whilst this was constructed as agentic freedom from a wider, patriarchal, societal discourse about women's expected appearance, it was unclear whether they were structured by situational discourses and pressures to play down femininity. Furthermore, dilemmatically, they constructed being too unfeminine as undesirable, showing women must perform a balancing act in terms of dress:

> *Janet: '[…] you kind of have a fine line between really ugly (group laughter) and practical-'*
>
> *Corin: '[…] not going to extremes, we've seen […] elder, scientist women, who won't take any care whatsoever about it, so just wearing an old, rag t-shirt with […] sandals and socks […] which are not feminine traits at all.'*

Having positioned the male physicist stereotype as historic ('actual physicists… like us' – DT1), discussing gender-biases proved difficult and dilemmatic. Despite declaring engineering 'more male-dominated', 'Corin' noted that their physics department is only 15 per cent female. Similarly, 'Janet' and 'Karrie' positioned male-dominance as a 'myth' and 'just a perception' but, 'Janet' admitted to being one of two girls studying physics at A-level and 'Karrie' spent a year as the only woman in her research group. The participants argued that female representation depended on the subject area, noting that (stereotypically) 'more bio aspects', 'multi-subject PhDs' and 'soft matter physics' drew a higher proportion of women. 'Corin' and 'Janet' reported their office has 'only girls', but 'Janet' confessed that their supervisor 'tends to select women because he feels they are under-represented'. This potential positive discrimination was not commented on and even overt sexism remained unchallenged in favour of positioning it as historical:

> *Janet: '[…] some people are (.) potentially inclined to think […] you're not quite so good a scientist (.) because you're a woman, but I've not met any of them here- […] older scientists […] in their 60s […] like, oh well, you're a woman, you wouldn't understand (.) but again, that was mainly in undergrad.'*

Performing gender (DT3)

Although the group didn't explicitly carve out 'female scientist' identities as in previous research, when positioning themselves as 'good' physicists they did draw on stereotypically feminine characteristics, for example, being 'methodical', 'organised', 'patient', 'creative', 'emotionally involved', 'interested' and 'social'. They played down 'masculine traits' such as confidence, referring to themselves as 'below average' and becoming awkward when describing their successes. They implicitly positioned themselves as different to men, who were likely to 'brag', 'show off' and 'pretend they know what they're doing when they don't'. As such, there was some agency, in terms of positioning themselves as having the potential to be 'better' physicists than their male counterparts.

A cultural repertoire states that scientists have 'geeky' interests and activities. Perhaps because these are implicitly seen as masculine, the group resisted this positioning:

> *Corin: '[…] we have varied interests that do not necessarily conform with the stereotype of liking Star Trek.'*
>
> *Janet: 'I guess, it's like, The Big Bang Theory, because […] a lot of people see it – scientists as being like that, but I've met very few scientists that are actually-'*
>
> *Karrie: 'Actually like that-'*

The Big Bang Theory seems to dominate popular cultural ideas about scientists. The TV show focuses on the science done by the male characters and initially the only female was a 'dumb blonde'. Women scientists have now been introduced, but it is rare that an episode passes the Bechdel test. Therefore, it is unsurprising that woman physicists want to distance themselves from the ways this programme portrays science and scientists.

Nonetheless, the participants took care to distance themselves from stereotypical femininities as well ('my life does not revolve around shopping'), especially when these intersected with class-based repertoires, and at times they positioned themselves vehemently in opposition to these:

> *Karrie: 'I wouldn't expect to […] see you guys […] on your face in the gutter on a Saturday night, in a skirt that short.'*
>
> *Corin: 'We are <u>not</u> those girls.'*

However, when they did want to participate in traditionally feminine activities, they were dismayed to find others positioned them as outsiders and 'othered' them:

> *Corin: '[…] we went once to crochet class […] and then a girl […] said, oh, I didn't realise that smart women also did crochet […] as if we were not allowed to.'*

Women must choose: Career or family (DT4)

The persistent cultural repertoire that women must choose between a career and a family arose in the latter part of the discussion. Both 'Janet' and 'Corin' wanted to participate in motherhood, but this presented difficulties for them:

> *Corin: 'As a woman I feel like they give you the choice of, what would you like to be? A mother? […] Or be a researcher? […] It seems difficult to, to have both things.'*

This view may draw on the repertoire of the 'ideal' physicist; if being entirely consumed by work is compulsory for participation in the community of practice, then those also caring for children are disqualified. In addition, dominant discourses that devalue housework as 'real' work seemed to exert power and structure their choice:

> *Corin: '[…] if you get married now and have children you will just be like an overqualified housewife, but it's like, oh, I actually have a PhD in physics – while you're sweeping the floor.'*

They reported that women with children (who want to leave after work to see them) and also those with intersectional identities are less likely to be able to mingle, bond and network with colleagues:

> *Janet: '[…] a lot of our socialising revolves around the pub and a lot of the women here are Muslim or other things that mean […] they just choose not to drink. So it's kind of – they're precluded.'*

All of the above conflicts with the 'freedom' repertoire of DT2, but these ideological dilemmas were not addressed or resolved.

'Karrie' again attempted to construct physics as gender-neutral, positioning the choice between family and career as a unisex issue, but then admitted it was irrelevant to her: '[I've] never had a burning urge to get married and have kids or any of that sort of stuff.' Furthermore, the group referred only to the difficulties and sacrifices they knew senior *female* physicists had made. This precedent set by their mentors led 'Janet' to draw once again on the repertoires of DT1:

> *Janet: '[…] that's why having a work-life balance is important to me, because I want to make sure that I don't let physics stop me from being a woman.'*

Discussion and conclusion

As per previous research by Danielsson and Linder (2009), Danielsson and Lundin (2012), Danielsson (2012), Gonsalves (2012a & 2102b) and Götschel (2013), women physicists in the UK struggle with identity work. They must perform normative femininities to be positioned as 'real' women, but also distance themselves from these to be positioned as serious physicists. My participants performed complex identity management, having to actively maintain femininity and minimise masculinity, yet avoid association with non-approved female stereotypes (e.g. Danielsson & Linder, 2009). Although they exerted agency to some degree, constructing repertoires or taking up positions relating to new physicist identities (as in Danielsson & Lundin, 2012), these affordances were more possible for 'Karrie', who resisted a normative identity (e.g, Danielsson, 2012) and were not as available to 'Janet' and 'Corin' who still wanted to participate in stereotypical femininities at times. Overall, the discourses available both within physics and society as a whole were powerful. They constrained these women's subjectivities, created inequalities within their everyday lives, and privileged male physicists in terms of pursuing their careers. Furthermore, a reluctance to acknowledge these issues made it difficult for the group to discuss or challenge them.

Therefore, I agree with the Science and Technology Committee (2014) that initiatives are needed at educational, industrial and cultural levels to challenge the dominant discourses and enable more women to enter and remain in STEM. For these programmes to be truly effective and have maximum impact in terms of feminism and

social justice, my research implies that programmes should target women as well as men, and should focus on eradicating outdated perceptions and biases surrounding gender roles. It may then be possible to tackle the power relations that construct and structure inequalities and lead to female under-representation.

However, there are limitations to this research. Whilst critical discursive psychology has many advantages, it must be remembered that methods are not just tools and that they actively produce knowledge. As such, other perspectives and other qualitative methodologies could be used to investigate this area; for example, interpretative phenomenological analysis could be used to explore women's lived experiences and lifeworlds as physicists. In terms of future research, it would also be informative to work with LGBTQ individuals to further examine the impacts of patriarchy, heteronormativity and inter-sectionality on minorities within STEM.

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Postgraduate POWS Prize Winner

What is breast cancer 'survivorship'? A discursive psychological analysis of a blogger's lived experiences of the media's representation of being a breast cancer 'survivor'

Cathy Ure

Cathy Ure, supervised by Dr Sharon Coen and Dr. Jenna Condie, won the Postgraduate POWS prize 2014. Her paper is reproduced here.

Whilst images of breast cancer 'survivors' at awareness and fundraising events are commonplace, little research exists which explores the lived experiences of 'survivorship' for women post-primary treatment. Using a discursive psychological approach, this exploratory qualitative study examines how one blogger constructs her lived experiences in relation to the media's representations of breast cancer 'survivorship' and how she negotiates these representations through her blog. This purposive sample positions the mass media's representation of breast cancer 'survivorship' as having the ability to restrict or silence breast cancer survivors' lived experiences of 'survivorship' through dominant cultural scripts of how 'survivorship' should be performed.

IN THE UK, 50,000 women are diagnosed with breast cancer annually (Cancer Research UK, 2013). Some 550,000 to 570,000 people are living with or after a diagnosis of breast cancer (Maddams et al., 2009), a number which is estimated to increase threefold to 1.5 million by 2040 (Maddams et al., 2012) through earlier diagnosis, continued improvements in treatment, and an ageing population. Whilst the psychosocial benefits for women with breast cancer of using internet-based support groups are well documented (Høybye, Johansen & Tjørnhøj-Thomsen, 2005; Rogers & Chen, 2005; Seale, Zielband & Charteris-Black, 2006; van Uden-Krann et al., 2008), understanding the lived experiences of women surviving long term beyond cancer and their psychosocial needs remains under-researched. Few studies have specifically addressed how women diagnosed with breast cancer use social media (Keim-Malpass et al., 2013) in relation to living beyond cancer. There remains a gap in the literature regarding how women who have had breast cancer present their 'realities' of these experiences through blogging online.

Women's experiences of 'survivorship' are negotiated in a media rich world. Breast cancer receives considerable media attention in comparison to other cancers (Quinn et al., 2013; Sulik, 2012). Quinn et al. (2013) analysed Google Alerts, posted over a four-week period in 2011, related to breast, colon, rectal, prostrate and lung cancers. They noted that topics on breast cancer were posted more frequently (N=2002; 24.6 per cent) than for the other cancers analysed. New postings on media sites numbered 65.8 per cent with 'breast cancer-related stories appearing on a minimum of 26 different media sites' (p.26) daily. Such media atten-

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tion plays a critical role in constructing and embedding cultural discourses relating to 'survivorship', framing stories in particular ways (Clarke & Everest, 2006). For example, Grant and Hundley (2009), following a content and discourse analysis of photographs, captions and titles related to cancer printed by the Associated Press (1995–2005), noted that breast cancer 'survivors' were represented as 'healthy, active people, who took steps to ensure they won the war and celebrated their triumphs along the way' (p.10). They identified 97 per cent of the photographs relating to breast cancer as portraying 'survivorship' (p.4).

Sulik (2012) argues that breast cancer 'survivors' are constructed in the media as brave 'she-ros'. Koczwara and Ward (2014) suggest the breast cancer 'survivor' is commonly depicted as 'a positive, sanitised image' (p.342) which is more acceptable to society and thus excludes alternative experiences of 'survivorship'. Sulik (2012) argues this is particularly the case in the US where the pink ribbon has 'set the stage for strategic use of symbolism and mass media to influence public opinion and behaviour related to breast cancer' (p.47) and in so doing 'gives the impression that diagnosed women are not dying, and diverts attention away from issues related to quality of life' (p.318). This focus on positive images of breast cancer 'survivors' by the media may restrict women's agency to express alternative experiences of 'survivorship'. A gap exists in the literature examining how breast cancer blogger's experience media representation of 'survivorship' and how they negotiate these representations in their identity work.

Blogs are 'frequently updated websites where content are displayed in reverse chronological order' (Schmidt, 2007, p.1409). Blog readers are generally able to leave comments creating a communication space that is both monologue and dialogue (Efimova & de Moor, 2005). Gumbrecht (2004) describes the blog as a 'protected space' (cited in Schmidt, 2007, p.1412) for communication and self-presentation which strives to 'balance staying private and being public' (Schmidt, 2007, p.1413). This suggests blog writing may be considered as performance (Goffman, 1959). Goffman's dramaturgical model argues identity is continuously constructed during face-to-face social interactions focused on managing the impression of 'self' given to others. Clarke (2008) describes two poles of performativity within Goffman's model. At one end of the continuum, the performer is immersed in their 'own act' genuinely believing 'that the version of reality (they are) projecting is actually correct'. At the opposing pole, the performer recognises that 'the impression being fostered is but a mere act' (p.511). Using Goffman's model, Hookway (2008) argues, 'blogging might be conceptualised as a disembodied form of 'face-work' concerned with the art of self-representation, impression management and potential for self-promotion' (p.96). Gualtieri and Akhtar (2013) however, suggest that blog analysis of cancer patient blogs can offer patients, clinicians and researchers 'deep insight' (p.3) into patient experience. These blogged 'acts' can inform understanding of the psychosocial challenges of living long-term post-primary treatment.

Given the platform breast cancer awareness currently has in Western cultures and the accessibility of social media platforms, survivors are arguably more able to express the realities of their experiences of living beyond breast cancer. That said, Noelle-Neumann (1974) posits that when individuals feel their opinion differs from the perceived, and the projected, mainstream view, the less willing they will be to express it publicly for fear of isolation (Griffin, 2008). This lack of or limited expression of an alternative view is argued to reinforce the majority position, resulting in a spiraling effect or Spiral of Silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1974). Shotter and Billig (1998) position cognition as 'languaged-activity' in which 'the speaking of words is a living social process – in which each and every word expresses the 'one' [addresser] in relation to

the 'other' [addressee]' (p.15). Situating 'spirals of silence' within discourse, rather than cognition, enables a consideration of the 'fear of isolation' and perception of the 'majority view' as created through language and 'in the word, the gesture, the act' (Voloshinov, 1986, cited in Shotter & Billig, 1998, p.14) between people rather than through a cognitive assessment of the landscape. Exploring whether bloggers identify with the mainstream view of the positive 'shero' survivor is required and understanding whether embedded 'survivorship' cultural scripts, promoted by the mass media, restrict 'survivors' expression of alternative experiences in certain settings will provide new knowledge.

Method

Blog searches were conducted on Google Blog Search using the search criteria 'living with or beyond breast cancer', 'breast cancer survivor', and 'breast cancer stories'. Blogs had to be publicly available with no login or passwords required; specifically address survivorship or living beyond breast cancer; relate to the blogger's personal experiences of breast cancer with age at diagnosis and the diagnosis itself stated. The blogs needed to be regularly updated, with the most recent update posted within the last month. Contact details were required in order to request permission for use. Using a modified snowball approach, blog rolls – a list of blogs or hyperlinks to other websites or blogs curated by the blog author – were found to be the most efficient method for identifying blogs that met all criteria.

I was sensitive to entering the breast cancer community from a position of relative 'naivety', that is, as an outsider. I was conscious of my role as 'lurker' (Setoyama, Yamazaki & Namayama, 2011) and after many months reading personal blogs I perceived bloggers as individuals rather than 'research participants' perhaps even developing parasocial relationships (Giles, 2002). I felt that approaching the entirety of my identified sample with a request to access blog content was potentially insensitive and unethical. I was conscious that a request for inclusion in a study where 'lived experiences' of breast cancer were analysed raised specific ethical issues for myself as 'researcher'. Should the blog corpus be vast, I was concerned that I may not have the scope to utilise an individuals' blog in my analysis. Given the personal nature of the content I felt a responsibility to utilise blogs to which I was given access.

The ethical parameters for collecting information in online public spaces are ambiguous and contested (AoIR, 2012). There is no consensus among social scientists regarding what is private and what is public online (Hookway, 2008). British Psychological Society (BPS) guidelines indicate written consent for the use of quoted publicly available data is required (BPS, 2009). I adapted the approach used by Sharf (1999) by asking bloggers for permission to use extracts from their blog in the final write up at the outset. The awarding Institution granted ethical approval for this study.

A discursive psychological approach was developed to identify the discursive resources employed by bloggers to portray the media's representations of breast cancer 'survivors'. Burr (1995) describes a discourse as a 'set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories and statements' which together 'produce a particular version of events' (p.32). Discourse analysis was utilised in order to explore the 'performative qualities' of breast cancer bloggers' postings, that is to examine what they 'are doing with their talk or writing' (p.31).

Bloggers were initially contacted by email with accompanying study information and consent form making explicit their right to withdraw (BPS, 2009). In total, 10 bloggers were approached. One blogger responded positively; one refused consent as they were personally engaged in 'survivorship' research. Another declined to become involved unless 'I could find a way to cure cancer'. Five did not respond. Two bloggers responded positively one month later and

unfortunately after the analysis was well underway.

The blog corpus for this study is, therefore, extracted from one US blog – Nancy's Point (Nancy's Point, 2013). Nancy, as blog author, requested 'proper credit' for inclusion of her blogged texts. The contributions of her blog commentators were also analysed as part of a larger study. However, given that the use of blog comments remains an area of ambiguity within current internet research guidelines, this analysis is not contained within this paper.

Between February 2011 and November 2013, Nancy tagged 51 individual blogs with the term 'survivorship'. From these 51 blogs, those blogs tagged with 'survivorship' were included in the final sample as were blogs tagged with 'blogging', 'cancer language', 'writing', 'attitude', and 'coping' as these all related to my initial research questions. This gave rise to a final sample of 13 blog posts that had on average 33 comments in response to each blog post. Previous qualitative studies using blogs as data sources have utilised 16 (Keim-Malpass et al., 2013), 14 (Song et al., 2012) and 35 (Chou et al., 2011) blogs respectively. Potter and Wetherell (1987) argue that from a discursive perspective '10 interviews might provide as much valid information as several hundred responses to a structured opinion poll' and that the success of a discursive study is not 'in the least dependent on sample size' (p.161). A blog corpus of 13 blogs is, therefore, appropriate for this study.

In line with my research questions, following the transcription of each blog I looked for patterns (Wetherell, 1998) in the 'talk' regarding breast cancer bloggers' representations of cancer and survivorship, constructions of identity post cancer diagnosis and the value of blogging. Blogs were read to consider whether they were 'performing, positioning, defending or justifying' (Willig, 2001, p.94) specific positions. I looked for interpretative repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) defined as a 'register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterise and evaluate actions and events' (p.138). I also looked for ideological dilemmas (Billig et al., 1998) defined as opposing opinions (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2004) and subject positions (Davies & Harré, 1990). Examples of action, construction and variability (Condie, 2013; Potter & Wetherell, 1987) within the blog texts were analysed. During this process, a dynamic movement between fine grained coded text in an Excel spreadsheet and the blog text in a Word document was utilised to ensure the raw text remained 'situated within its wider context' (Condie, 2013, p.102). A further level of analysis was conducted during the writing up process, where moving between analysed extracts enabled further refinement of my analysis in relation to action, construction and variability within and between the selected texts.

Analysis and discussion

The media representation of breast cancer 'survivorship' was an interpretative repertoire that emerged from the analysis. Here I explore how Nancy represents the media's representation of 'survivorship' and how she negotiates this representation in relation to her own identity. The inferences I have developed have resulted from the discursive analysis techniques used. These were shared with Nancy post-analysis and some may differ from Nancy's intended meaning. Here, Nancy positions her ambiguity to being called a 'survivor' as an outcome of the visual depiction of breast cancer 'survivors' by the media.

1. *Another reason I don't like the survivor label very much is because*
2. *when I look at the posters and pictures of women symbolising*
3. *survivorship, they often are depicted to look something like this.*
4. *The women look beautiful, too beautiful. They don't look real.*

Figure 1 is the 'Inspired to Fight' print advertisement used to promote the 2010 Dallas Race for the Cure event (Gayle Sulik, 2010). Nancy's inclusion of this visual image and

Figure 1: Inspired to Fight (Source: Gayle Sulik, 2010).

the sharing of her perspective are performative. They give prominence to how the media positions breast cancer 'survivorship' and how she experiences that representation. Nancy demonstrates her agency by distancing and differentiating herself from media depictions of breast cancer survivors by stating *'they don't look real'* (line 4). Discursively, she does not reject the 'survivor label', as she minimises her action of *'don't like'* with *'very much'* (line 1), which arguably indicates an ambivalent relationship to the label 'survivor'.

Nancy's use of *'pictures of women'* (line 2) and *'the women look'* (line 4) focuses attention on breast cancer 'survivors' as women. The category *'women'* (line 2) rather than 'breast cancer survivors' orientates blog readers to consider that the images are not of 'real' survivors. Using *'symbolising'* (line 2), the implication is made that these 'women' falsely represent breast cancer survivors. Additionally, Nancy is able to perform specific actions with her construction of these women as *'beautiful, too beautiful'* (line 4). Using *'too'* (line 4) – an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) takes the evaluative dimension of being beautiful to its extreme limits (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2004) enabling Nancy to justify her criticism of the media's representation. *'Too beautiful'* also operates as a disclaimer (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2004), which protects Nancy from constructing a potentially contentious discourse relating to survivorship and body image, that is, that beauty and 'survivorship' cannot go hand in hand.

In utilising this visual representation of breast cancer 'survivors' Nancy asks her blog audience to consider the media's use of visual images depicting positive, empowered, beautiful women to construct and embed cultural scripts of 'how to do' breast cancer 'survivorship'. Through blogging her own experiences she gains agency through producing a version of events that challenges how the media embeds cultural scripts relating to 'how to do survivorship'.

A different blog post demonstrates Nancy's uneasiness when shown a newspaper article representing breast cancer as a 'gift'.

1 *During a recent visit to a friend's home,*
2 *I was shown a newspaper*
2 *article featuring a woman who had 'come*
3 *through' her cancer*
3 *journey and was calling her whole ordeal a*
4 *gift. Regrettably,*
4 *I copped out a bit and simply smiled, nodded,*
5 *read the article and*
5 *said something like, oh how nice for her.*
6 *I have since decided I will not be so quiet next*
7 *time this topic comes*
7 *up, and undoubtedly there will be a next time*
8 *because calling cancer*
8 *a gift is something that is said or alluded to*
9 *more often than you*
9 *might imagine.*
10 *Calling cancer a gift makes a nice feature story*
11 *for a magazine or a*
11 *newspaper article, but it's not reality –*
at least it's not mine.

Here, Nancy *'copped out'* (line 4) from sharing her alternative experiences of the *'gift'* (line 3) of breast cancer without an explanation as to why. Being presented with an article to read in a *'friend's home'* (line 1) indicates power relations in play both in terms of the appropriate social scripts to follow in these circumstances and through the expression of 'how to do survivorship' as represented in and by the newspaper article. Nancy's claim that she 'copped out' and that she would *'not be so quiet next time'* (line 6) positions Nancy as having remained silent in relation to the 'cancer is a gift' script in this setting. Nancy also positions discordance between her lived experiences and that of the 'survivorship' scripts articulated in the newspaper when she claims *'but it's not reality – at least it's not mine'* (line 11). Nancy utilises her blog to demonstrate a disparity between media representation and her own experiences; to offer an alternative perspective and to position her own 'reality' as more 'real' than that of 'cancer as a gift'.

From a social constructionist perspective, Nancy's 'silence' can be considered as performance (Goffman, 1959). This approach would argue she dons a 'mask' and accepts the social norm – the positioning of cancer as a gift – possibly to avoid the embarrassment (Goffman,1959) of expressing an alternative experience and to retain a harmonious friendship in this specific social setting. The dissatisfaction that Nancy expresses in not resisting the 'cancer is a gift' discourse suggests her agency to position her own experiences was restricted in some way. Noelle-Neumann's 'Spiral of Silence' (1974) offers a potential explanation for limited agency in this setting. Here, Nancy portrays a conflict between her alternative experience of 'survivorship' and a dominant cultural script that 'cancer is a gift', represented by the media through the use of another survivor's first-hand account and taken up by Nancy's friend. The expression of her alternative opinion was, therefore, potentially restricted by the mainstream or majority view proffered by the 'other' cancer survivor; by the media through the publication of the article and by the implied acceptance of this perspective by her friend. Situating 'spirals of silence' within dialogue rather than cognition enables consideration of how pre-existing discourses about breast cancer 'survivorship' used by the mass media can restrict the agency of some women to express alternative experiences. When someone with the perceived majority view takes up pre-existing discourses such as 'cancer is a gift' and demonstrates acceptance of this discourse through words, acts and gestures then this may restrict the agency of some women by changing their 'performance' and silencing their alternative portrayals of 'survivorship' in everyday conversations.

In this specific social setting, Nancy's agency to express her alternative experiences appears to have been restricted. Blogging enables Nancy to review her 'performance' (lines 3 to 5); to gain agency by creating a future version of events – 'I will not be so quiet next time' (line 6); and to position an alternative discourse – 'cancer is

not a gift'. A broader study of how those living long-term beyond breast cancer experience media representations of 'survivorship' remains absent. Furthermore, exploring whether the expression and sharing of 'survivorship' opinions through blogs negates 'survivors' sometimes silenced voices; whether online voices can change prevailing cultural 'survivorship' discourses or whether blogging in this area can be a vehicle for social change also needs to be understood.

The writing and reading of blogs enables like-minded people (Papacharrisi, 2004) to gain agency; build social capital (Chung & Kim, 2007; Steinfield, Ellison & Lampe, 2008) and share their 'minority' or otherwise views. Potentially, a reinforcing 'spiral' (Slater, 2007) may exist whereby Nancy and her blog contributors negotiate their identities around an alternative set of 'survivorship' values to those promoted by the mass media and celebrated by mainstream society. If this is the case, then based on individual perceptions of how pre-existing discourses of breast cancer 'survivorship' are being taken up by mainstream society, bloggers can determine their 'openness or closure to outside influence, as well as feelings of personal alienation or connection and the degree of willingness to engage in political processes' (Slater, 2007, p.297) in relation to 'survivorship'. Identifying whether breast cancer bloggers' blogs operate as an echo chamber – an enclosed system of like-minded people – would also be useful. Research suggests bloggers and blog readers gravitate towards views they already believe (Gilbert, Bergstrom & Karahalios, 2009; Stroud, 2008). Critically, this may unintentionally silence some breast cancer 'survivors' from expressing alternative experiences to those that are dominant within specific online breast cancer communities. Further examinations of the inter-relationship between the media's representations of breast cancer 'survivorship', mainstream understandings of the experiences of living long term beyond breast cancer and the lived experiences of 'survivorship' is needed. This is critical to gaining understandings of how breast cancer survivors' voices are heard and the potential impact 'being heard' has on the psychosocial health of those living long term beyond breast cancer.

Conclusion

Media representations position breast cancer survivors as 'sheros' – positive, empowered, brave women who have 'won' the war on cancer. This study used a discursive approach to explore how one American blogger negotiates her identity in light of these media representations. Critically, the predominance of the 'she-ro' image and culturally embedded 'survivorship' scripts such as 'cancer is a gift' may serve to restrict women from expressing alternative experiences of 'survivorship' in specific settings due to dominant scripts of 'how to do survivorship'. This exploratory study indicates that some breast cancer survivors blog in order to: gain agency; position alternative experiences; challenge prevailing media representations and to negotiate their own identities as women who are living beyond breast cancer. In order to explore the potential for social media interventions to support the psychosocial growth of women living beyond breast cancer in the UK, it is vital to develop insight into how existing discourses relating to survivorship or living beyond cancer impact on women. It would be beneficial for further research to explore current UK media representations of breast cancer 'survivorship' post-treatment; mainstream views of the dominant discourses currently employed in relation to living beyond breast cancer and the role social media can play in supporting on-going psychosocial needs.

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Interview

Doing feminism

Amanda Perl

Reni Eddo-Lodge is a freelance writer for a range of publications including openDemocracy, The Independent, The Guardian, the New Humanist and the Voice. She is also a regular contributor to Women's Hour and was in the 2014 'Most Powerful Women' list. Reni has also been named one of the '30 under 30' in Digital Media, by The Guardian. Reni plays a key role in national feminist debate and was invited to the POWS 2014 Annual Conference to talk on the theme of 'Doing feminism'. She is known in digital media for her strong position on intersectional feminism, and it was this theme that she engaged in her address to the conference. Here, she is interviewed about her invited address, by Amanda Perl.

Commentary

AT THE 2014 POWS Annual Conference Reni explored one of our main conference themes, considering women's representation in the media at the intersection of gender, class and race. In terms of 'doing feminism', Reni proposes that feminism itself should always be subject to feminist scrutiny, as it is only by criticising a movement that it can improve. Reni's work is concerned with the politics of feminism, with a particular focus on the 'exclusivity of feminism'. She suggests that the politics of solidarity in feminist activism can result in feminists not dissenting, so that they are effectively positioned as assenting through silence, rather than being critical of each other and of ourselves when criticism might be needed.

Reni suggests that feminism should be a contextual and located ideology and political critique, rather than a monolithic movement. Drawing on an intersectional account, Reni points out that feminisms must be able to engage the way that gendered subjectivities and gendered oppression intersects with other positionings like race, class, (dis)abilities, and other indices of structural privilege. She insists on the need for an honest, undefensive conversation about this, in order to 'do' feminism better.

The interview

Amanda: *Just to draw on some of the key themes from your keynote at the conference. The main theme of Intersectionality was brilliantly illustrated by you in terms of women and their representation in the media. Could you tell me a bit more about how you decided to use the example of the model, Josie Cunningham, who had a 'boob job' funded by the NHS.*

Reni: Her case is a good example, not just of straight up mysogyny but also of the operation of gender, race and class in the media. So it looked to me like it was a very classic mysogynistic case. This is where essentially there is this strand of mysogyny that lowers women so that they are reduced to sex, so it is the man who finds you sexually attractive but also thinks you're the scum of the earth. When that Josie Cunningham story was all over the press my basic thought was that this was an attractive topless young woman and everyone was encouraged to call her all the names under the sun. To my mind that was a very clear case of mysogyny there.

Amanda: *An interesting dynamic there to pick up on in terms of, on the one hand, the woman needing to be portrayed as attractive in order to fulfil ideals of femininity, and, on the other, being hated for wanting to be attractive in a particular way.*

Reni: Not only that, as a story in the press, criticism can be levelled not just at its misogyny, but also at its anti-poverty bigotry. It was an attack on the welfare state using this

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exceptional example to 'prove' why the welfare state is wrong and we shouldn't have it. That's why I focused on that.

Amanda: *This idea of the welfare state I think you also illustrated how that showed that women's progress is really being attacked when we think about the coercion that Josie was subject to, the pressure for her to be in the papers.*

Reni: Considering they used a quite exceptional case to stoke outrage against the welfare state without really acknowledging the realities of many people who are relying on the welfare state. Remember that child benefit came into existence because it was feminists who argued that women should be paid for their domestic labour. But I think that in a job crisis many more people are relying on the welfare state for other reasons, we have to realise why it is in existence in the first place. Josie Cunningham was given as an exceptional example of why women are very flippant and will go for money that the state gives them, as a way of undermining claims to welfare that might be seen as more 'legitimate'.

Amanda: *You also drew on the media treatment of Tulisa and what the deeper association was there, there was something about institutionalised racism as Tulisa was seen as not only poor and sexualised, but also as black by association with N-Dubs and her rapper boyfriend, Dappy.*

Reni: Class and race are really inextricable and I think the situation was obvious as they were very classist attacks and the racism was highlighted by who Tulisa was seen as associated with race because of her relationship with black men.

Amanda: *Women who move into the public eye, in the way Tulisa has… Their classed subjectivity remains significant in media constructions, regardless of their current wealth. They are still positioned as working-class women. So women of a certain class, it doesn't matter how much money they have, or if they become the idealised pop star. They are still described as if there were intrinsically something dysfunctional about them, by virtue of their class location.*

Reni: I think yes that it is most women in the public eye who don't try and assimilate. So a good example of someone who hasn't been on the receiving end of bad publicity is Cheryl Cole. Don't know whether she chose to, or whether it is due to her agents pushing her or what not, she chose to assimilate, it started from *Popstars* and *X Factor* and she started as the Cheryl we all remember, she had corn rows in her hair and a thick accent and all of that has been dropped and she appears to assimilate. Certainly there have been this year anyway some big attacks against working-class women in the media. I don't think its anything new. When I was very small John Major was attacking single mothers in politics, painting single mothers as reckless and irresponsible. I don't have the stats in front of me I can't tell you that a lot of single mothers are working-class, but there is certainly an intersection there.

Amanda: *So its the intersection between class and gender and race that we see played out in representations in the media. So Cheryl Cole is seen as assimilated as she meets homogenised public images of 'good femininity' and, therefore, expectations of appearance and behaviour?*

Reni: Yes. I think her public image now is more like Emma Watson than Tulisa. So nobody is going to launch a class-based attack on someone like Emma Watson. She is the sort of women we see in *Tatler* magazine or on the front of the *Evening Standard*, the acceptable women. She's positioned very differently from Josie Cunningham or Tulisa.

Amanda: *So it is interesting that Emma Watson is positioned as the acceptable face of feminism. So staying with the idea of the intersection with class, race and gender, Emma is seen as a heroine for promoting the 'he4she' idea, as a palatable version of feminism. How do you think it works that someone like Emma Watson is represented as the kind of woman who can give feminism credibility?*

Reni: Well for a start she is not on her way up, so she doesn't have to worry about essentially having her career stalled. I watched her speech and it was really quite sanitised. I know that there was quite a lot of backlash and abuse after she gave that speech and I thought to myself if sexists are offended by that… well, it was quite sanitied, it was

geared to placating a very mainstream audience. It was also a speech aimed at men. They can't be any more placating than that! So I think, good on her for taking her message really, really high and using her platform for that, like Angelina Jolie. It feels to me like a sanitised version of feminism. It's nice that she's got critical thinking in there. It was a nice entry level speech I suppose, but I would like to speak to her about feminism maybe in about 10 years time! It amazes me that people were outraged at the fact that she gave a speech considering it was so inoffensive, placating, and aimed at including men.

Amanda: *I hear and share your frustration at the representation of women in the media. So how would you with all your experience in thinking about, writing about and getting the message out there regarding women's representation changed in the media, what would you like to see?*

Reni: I think there are structural levels. I'm ok that Emma's speech is entry level. I think that everyone has been there at some point. You need something to pull you along. We need speeches like that to pull people in, to get them thinking. I think it is very good that Beyoncé managed to get a definition of feminism on her album out to teenage girls. I don't really care about whether or not she dances in her pants. That's a nice entry level feminism, that gets people started on a journey. And Emma Watson is doing the same thing and hopefully taking men on a bit of a journey too.

In terms of women's representation in the media, first the media needs to change. The vast majority of the top media positions are held by men. I'm very lucky I came into journalism at a time when I worked with mostly female editors, but the industry is still very dominated by men. Also, the industry is still 96 per cent white. I think it's somewhat hypocritical of journalism to point the finger about policies in government institutions as predominantly white and male, etc., without being honest about what's going on in its own back yard. So as long as you have a 96 per cent white media workforce then you will have xenophobic articles about immigration. The same thing goes for male dominated media as well. In order to represent all people who get short shrift, as long as you continue to lock out those people things won't change. You need those people in the media writing the stories about themselves, writing from their perspective. And as long as the media continues to lock out those people, whether it be through nepotism or unpaid internships so that the working-class cannot access those jobs, they will continue to do people a disservice.

Amanda: *So when you were thinking about having the career you have, did you ever think it would be tough for you, because of that dynamic in the media?*

Reni: I'm really quite lucky that I'm a freelancer and I can engage with those I want to engage with and not with those I don't want to engage with. I do think that if I'd had to go into an office as a reporter, then I would be subject to their culture. And other workplaces I've worked in, people don't like it when you talk about race and racism, people don't like it when you start to point out gender disparity here and sexism there. Being freelance allows me to talk a lot more freely about these issues. It wasn't anything I ever thought to myself, I'm never sure if I can do this. But then it's been a different route for me. For example, I have never worked in a newsroom before.

Amanda: *You ended your keynote by saying that there is a need to challenge existing structures, even within feminism. What do you think we can do to enable changes in the 'institution' of feminism?*

Reni: To me my understanding of feminism is a movement to end the oppression of women and promote the liberation of women. So you've got to start with women whose liberation is most restricted, it's as simple as that. If the world worked that way, we would be living in a it would be a better world to be honest. And working with women whose liberation is most restricted does not mean CEOs of massive companies. It means cleaners, working women whose social mobility has been most restricted by

their doing a lot of unpaid or underpaid and undervalued domestic labour. That doesn't mean professional newspaper columnists like me. I have to realise how lucky and privileged I am.

It means taking into account gender and class, race and gender, disability and sexuality, women who are transgender. To me it seems disingenuous if we have a feminism where people who are not affected by multiple intersections are essentially positioning themselves as leaders of something because they are closer to power. It really is as simple as that. And working with or in solidarity is a case of listening.

I used to have a job that it took me two hours to get to. I used to cycle halfway there and then get the train halfway there. It took me six months of doing this, carrying wheels on public transport, before I realised that I was experiencing what it was that people with mobility issues experience on a daily basis. I thought to myself this is a perfect example of my able bodied privilege. I had never considered this until I was slightly party to it, and also hadn't fully realised how the world is set up in its structures to disadvantage those people who are not able bodied.

Amanda: *Could you talk a little more about privilege and feminist intersectional critique?*

Reni: I think a feminist CEO who cares about women's issues would not be paying their cleaners a low wage, they would be sorting them out with a living wage so they can afford to feed their families. They wouldn't be telling us how to achieve equality at home and in the workplace. They would be looking at the people closest to them and they would be taking into account their whole humanity. My own workload is becoming really heavy at the moment and I keep getting behind on things and I would love to hire an assistant but I wouldn't hire somebody on a low wage. It's not real liberation for me, if I take on somebody and exploit them.

Amanda: *In your talk, you also spoke about the media representation of the ideal worker?*

Reni: In our working lives we are always pushed to think about the ideal worker, and to become like the ideal worker. So in the media representations, and also played out in the workplace, we're expected to aspire to be all the things that the middle upper-class straight white guy can do. So, for example, the ideal worker doesn't need flexible working as the ideal worker sits at his desk from 9 to 5 and puts in more time when he needs to and doesn't complain.

If we had a work structure that started essentially from the bottom up that thought about the needs of people whose lives are restricted due to various structural oppressions, then I think that life would be better for everyone. So in a roundabout way, equality is still the answer to a better future for all of us.

Amanda: *Reni thank you so much for sharing your thoughts on the media representation of women and how this plays out in terms of crossing the intersections of gender, class, race and sexuality in order to achieve equality for all women.*

Reni Eddo-Lodge was in conversation with **Amanda Perl**. Amanda is a psychotherapist and a BPS POWS Committee Member.
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Article

Cutting her nose to spite his face: Violence against women in India and the collusion of power

Sonia Soans

In the last few years crime against women in India has increased dramatically. What stands out about these crimes is how the perpetrators of these crimes use violence to disable a woman; through, for example, acid attacks, 'honour crime' and public stripping. The perpetrators often claim to do this in order to preserve their notion of 'Indian culture'. These notions are tied within understandings of women's roles as submissive, chaste, modest and 'traditional'. Women's bodies are the primary site for this violence as disfiguring the female body sends out a cautionary message to other women not to transgress boundaries that have been laid out by those who feel they must preserve this culture.

These understandings of 'Indian culture' are often invented and are tied to nationalism which poses a threat to 'Westernised Indians' particularly women. Cases such as the Delhi Gang Rape case or the attack on pubs in Mangalore which led to the 'pink chuddi campaign' have caught the eye of the media, however, one sees them being justified by the perpetrators on the grounds of protecting 'Indian culture'. When these crimes are presented in the Western media they are often collude with the perpetrators of these crimes by using these notions of 'tradition'. Western ideas of India and how Eastern values must be preserved from Western civilisation often undermine the victim's ordeal.

Keywords: *Gendered violence; honour crime; India; nationalism.*

THE WIDOWED demoness Surpanakha spent her time between Lanka and the forests of Southern India, visiting her forest-dwelling relatives Asuras, from time to time. According to the Valmiki Ramayana, during one such visit she met the young Prince of Ayodhya, Ram, who was in exile with his brother Laxman and wife Sita. Surpanakha was immediately smitten by his youthful good looks. Ram, however, spurned her advances, telling her that he was devoted to his wife, Sita, and that he would never take another wife. Ram then slyly suggested that she approach his younger brother, Laxman, with her proposition. Laxman reacted in a similar manner, deriding Surpanakha and telling her that she was not what he desired in a wife. Realising eventually that the brothers were making fun of her, the humiliated and jealous Surpanakha attacked Sita to abduct her but this attempt was thwarted by Laxman, who cut off her nose, ears, and breasts, and made her look hideous and sent her back to Lanka (Magley, no date; Rao, 2004).

The image of the seductive Surpanakha being taught a lesson by a virtuous Laxman is embedded in the Indian subconscious. Every year at the Ramlila[1] staged during the Hindu festival of Dusshera this scene is played out as a comedy. It is a cautionary tale to all women who express sexual desire towards men and transgress gender boundaries. Surpanakha's character stands in stark contrast to Sita who is a dutiful woman who is venerated for her subservience. Surpanakha embodies the

[1] Ramlila, translates as 'Rama's play', it is a performance of the Ramayan epic in the form of scenes that include song, narration, recital and dialogue. It is performed across northern India during the festival of Dussehra, held each year around the months of October or November.

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typical 'evil' woman in Indian mythology; she is bold and sexually free which is seen as both comic and vampish (Erndl, 1991). Her punishment for sexual transgression is public humiliation and visible scars. Though this story of Surpanakha by itself is not a justification of violence, nor universally applicable in all Indian contexts, the theme that runs through this is a powerful one. Stephen (2013) argues that popular mythologies have an influence in the way violence against women is perpetrated. She also debunks the idea that India is a land of spirituality. Citing gendered violence in religious texts and incidents around the country she asserts that aspects of misogyny is deeply entrenched in Indian society.

Desire in a woman and in a man is positioned differently; a woman's desire is to be punished and is made to look comical. It also brings in the idea of women as sexual temptress who misleads men. 'Good Indian women' are almost always depicted as desireless and chaste, whereas foreign women are allowed to express sexual desire, but are eventually punished for their sexual excess in the face of an Indian man who is above such corruption. Sexless, chaste women occupy a certain space in the Indian subconscious; they pose no threat to patriarchal authority. Kakar (2004) examines the socialisation of Indian woman which demands chastity and also docility, desire is almost always repressed or sublimated into the desire to have children. Puri (1999) analyses women's sexuality in Post-Independence India and the socially acceptable expression which it takes on in terms of balancing tradition, modernity and Westernisation. Her analysis looks at how modesty and chastity are social values women (Indian women in particular) are expected to conform to, their desires channelled into heterosexual marriage and given respectability. Given these notions of ideal womanhood, violence against women is often justified on the basis that women were somehow signalling to be attacked; an idea often used to justify violence against women around the world. For example, a woman's choice of dress, state of inebriation or confidence are used to defend the perpetrator's actions. This idea is not exclusive to India, these ideas run deep and often a lack of social conformity is used as an excuse to justify violence.

Indian women and violence

India has been described as the fourth most dangerous place in the world for women to live (Afghanistan was ranked first on the list followed by Congo and Pakistan) (Trustlaw, 2011). Female foeticide, infanticide and human trafficking were cited as the major crimes against women in India. Violence against women in India makes the female body the site of violence by disfiguring and disabling. Some of these crimes include, publicly stripping women, publically raping/molesting them and throwing acid at them. In recent years India has seen a rise in acid attacks, even the threat of an acid attack is used as a way to get women to conform (Nelson, 2012; Thakur, 2008). Acid attacks have been described as a premeditated crime with an intention to kill or maim (Thakur, 2008). Most acid attacks involve a perpetrator using strong acids[2], which cause permanent and irreversible damage to the body. Apart from disfiguring the body physically and causing damage to major organs acid attacks cause psychological harm. Furlong (2012) describes the nature of acid attacks 'attackers often target the head and face in order to maim, disfigure and blind. Acid violence rarely kills but causes severe physical, psychological and social scarring, and victims are often left with no legal recourse, limited access to medical or psychological assistance, and without the means to support themselves' (internet). Some of the reasons cited for this crime are jealousy and the feeling of rejection.

[2] Acids used in these attacks are sulphuric, nitric, or hydrochloric acid which are classified as strong acids used in industrial process. Some of the damage caused by acid attacks include, dissolving of bones, organ damage, burning the skin and even death.

While acid attacks are physical, crimes such as publically stripping women or raping them also attack the body psychologically. These crimes are public spectacles and humiliate the victim. Female bodies become associated with shame and crime; the alleged transgression becomes tied to their bodies, which become public spectacles. Pain (1991) examines the role of violence and its different manifestation with regard to gender. Women, she concludes, are more fearful of sexual violence and crime that affects the body.

No, it is not our history

It would be easy and in some cases even justifiable to ascribe these crimes against women to a longstanding patriarchal system. However, these crimes are embedded in modernity. Tracing acid attacks to the tale of Surpanakha might seem logical and even culturally justifiable, however, it does not account for variations and contradictions in history and society. The language of 'tradition' and 'history' is used by the perpetrators to justify the existence of these crimes, by affirming these narrative further serves as a justification of their crime.

John (2013) analyses gendered crime in a historical context. Her analysis focuses on rape but it can also be applied to other gendered crime whose origin and perpetuation lie in their historical context:

> 'Clearly, rape can present itself as an omnipresent practice throughout the process of continuous social change only if we work with ahistorical notions of gender differences and presume an unchanging human sexuality. There is, unfortunately, a strong tendency towards constituting gender segregation as a system/division that is *independent* of prevailing historical socio-economic conditions. Consequently, it is believed that the gender-based social division leading to a subdued female sexuality and aggressive male sexuality was uncharacteristic of primitive human societies in which such social relations of domination were more or less absent.' (John, 2013, blog)

As with most crime directed against women, such violence serves to make a spectacle of the victim and her crime (real or imagined). Women then have to carry the scars of these attacks forever. Acid attacks don't just scar the body physically but also cause deep emotional trauma and prevent women from resuming their lives as they did prior to the attacks. Shirin Juwaley[3], an acid attack survivor and activist, often explores issues relating to physical disfigurement and the way 'physical anomalies' are treated in India. She often writes about the exclusion she faces from institutions and people (some of whom are women) who either stare, or make derogatory comments about her appearance (Juwaley, 2011). Female bodies in these cases are not only sites of violence but also provide a public spectacle of what transgressing social norms entails. Foucault (1977) talks about the 'spectacle' of execution in which this violence serves a role in society to either shame or draw pity to the victim. Disfigured and disgraced female bodies provide a similar spectacle, which is possibly why the violence takes on a brutal form with long lasting effects. Like the mythical Surpanakha these women become the object of public ridicule, fascination, shame or pity. The spectacle of their disfigured, dishonoured bodies is often a permanent reminder to those they come in contact with.

Disability in the Indian context

Ghai (2002) often tries to explain the Indian attitude towards disability using examples from Hindu mythology, which are not always universal or generalisable given the diversity of religious traditions in India. While some aspects of these myths are known the finer points are often lost on the religiously

[3] Shirin Juwaley is the founder of Palash Foundation (India) an organisation that attempts to socially and economically re-integrate people with physical disfigurement.

diverse population. It is the underlying themes (and not the characters) of these stories and their emotional impact can be considered universal which endure within culture. Some of the characters she mentions in her writing are familiar to Hindu readers for whom those stories might be a part of their early socialisation. Dominant discourses in Indian academia often refer back to Hindu texts (Addlakha, 2008; Ghai, 2002) excluding communities to whom those texts are alien. Her paper titled 'How Indian Mythology Portrays Disability' (2002) conflates the idea that Indian equals Hindu. The saffronisation of India particularly academia, attributes what it perceives as Western as Judeo-Christian. While there might be a need to develop a Psychology that is relevant to India, the turn to Bhraminical Hinduism is excluding and echo's the ideas of right-wing nationalists that India is for Hindus. However Ghai does argue that the meanings ascribed to disability in India are constantly changing and the same mythology can be read differently.

Ghai (2002) contends that disabled women are excluded from feminist spaces which were meant to represent women. Similarly they are silent on issues of intersections of class, caste and rural-urban divides, which are vital in understanding the nature and treatment of disability in India. This exclusion alienates disabled women from spaces which formed as a result of marginalisation, thereby making disability invisible and different from the feminist struggle. Though both struggles are similar, Ghai argues that the asexualisation of disabled women makes them seem different from their able-bodied counterparts:

> A great deal of thoughtful work by Indian feminists analyses the impact of the evaluative male gaze. However, the essential difference between being sexual objects and objects of the 'stare' has not been understood. If the male gaze makes normal women feel like passive objects, the stare turns the disabled object into a grotesque sight. Disabled women contend not only with how men look at women but also with how an entire society stares at disabled people, stripping them of any semblance of resistance. Neither Indian feminism nor the Indian disability movement acknowledges that disabled women are doubly pinned by the dominant male gaze coupled with the gaze of the culture that constructs them as objects to be stared at. (Ghai, 2002, p.55)

These stares confirm how disability is viewed as being asexual and bodies of women with disability as objects of contempt. Given the way gender is viewed in the Indian context, being a woman can be thought of as a constituting disability in the Indian context. Ghai's work examines the way women with disabilities are positioned as inferior as they are women and also have a disability.

Anzaldúa (1987) notes how when it comes to enforcing patriarchal values on women, it is often women who act as agents of these ideas. In this case the difference is disability. Victim's bodies embody shame whilst the perpetrators are virtually invisible in this shaming process. The current emphasis on biological explanations of disability attempts to remove stigma associated with disability, however, they fail to recognise the social aspects that shape how disability is viewed and treated.

The link between disability and its association with shame are well known. Each society has its own take on disability and it's being perceived as an indicator of personality flaws or as a means of social exclusion. Disabled people in India are mistreated and stigmatised, their condition poorly understood or used to justify cruelty. Bodies that have been disfigured deliberately are stigmatised similarly but also have an additional stigma attached to them with regard to the circumstances, which caused them to get disfigured. Violent attacks that subsequently cause disability share the same stigma as bodies that have a disability from birth.

Bodies that have been scarred and publicly humiliated are visible reminders of

the victims transgression. Female victims of violence have to contend with conjecture about their own role in provoking crime against them. Public stripping and parading is another crime directed against women, primarily women of lower castes. Public acts of gang rape or molestation are also common. These crimes are directed at a larger community but enacted out on the female body. The feudal nature of these crimes marks them out. Women victims have to often live with the shame of the act on their body and of their community.

Revive our past

Postcolonial theorists (Nandy, Kakar) often look at how colonisation had an effect on the formation of identity in independent India; despite not giving into notions of nationalism they inadvertently sell their own brand of nationalism by dividing what they catergorise as the 'West' or 'modern'. Indian culture then is understood as corrupted by colonial rule, a corruption of these ideas is often held by right-wing nationalists who believe they can bring India back to it's former glory. Bonnett (2012) critiques the arguments of Ashis Nandy (a political psychologist who writes from a postcolonial perspective). He argues that Nandy provides necessary myths of the 'West' or 'modern'. When these ideas trickle down from academic discourse they take on the form of essentialising 'Indian culture' and restoring its past. McClintock (1995) points out how most male theorists have failed to make a vital connection between nationalism and gender. For instance, most crimes perpetrated against women in India are justified as trying to help protect women. Pramod Muthalik[4] (leader of a right-wing Hindu group Ram Sene) (2009) commented on an attack carried out by his group against women in a pub by condemning the violence but condoning the ideology behind the attack as 'saving our mothers and daughters' (Pramod Muthalik apologises for Mangalore pub attack, 2009)

In recent years, these ideas of 'outsiders' (migrants from different parts of India as well as those in minority groups) have come back in the form of violent right wing Hindu nationalism. An attack in a pub in Mangalore (2009) demonstrates how the idea of going to a pub is considered alien and even destructive for women, Pravin Valke a spokesperson of the group (Ram Sene) told the media:

> 'These girls come from all over India, drink, smoke, and walk around in the night spoiling the traditional girls of Mangalore. Why should girls go to pubs? Are they going to serve their future husbands alcohol? Should they not be learning to make chapattis [Indian bread]? Bars and pubs should be for men only. We wanted to ensure that all women in Mangalore are home by 7.00 p.m.'

Ideas of outsiders violating of tradition appeal to a deep sense of nationalism. The outsiders in most cases can be Indians from different regions. The antagonism between the north and south and their collective antagonism to the north-east runs deep. What is surprising about these statements made by these men to the media is the way they seem to normalise and justify these attacks. Their language of protecting women contradictory to their actions, they use words such as 'save' and 'tradition' and then attack/maim the very people they are believe they are protecting .

Attacks on women by right-wing Hindu groups are often carried out in order to protect women from the perils of Western values (pub going, drinking, smoking,

[4] On 24 January 2009 a group of men from the right-wing Hindu group Ram Sene entered a pub in Mangalore (a town in southern India) and attacked a group of university students mostly female. They justified this attack by saying they did this to protect women from the dangers of alcohol and also unwanted male attention they would get by wearing Western clothes and dancing. They claimed to be saving women from the dangers of Westernisation and the loss of morality that comes with adopting Western lifestyles. Responding to this incident nationwide protests ensued one of the campaigns included sending Pramod Muthalik pink knickers on Valentine's Day (pink chuddi campaign).

dancing, wearing Western clothes), which are thought of as a corrupting force which make an individual lose out on their 'Indian' values and identity. An attack of a similar nature in north-east India[5] reopened the debates around gender and Westernisation but with scant attention to the class dynamics in these incidents.

Over the last 20 years India has seen an emerging right wing force which is predominantly Hindu, Hancock (1995) documents some of these ideological changes and how they have reached parts of India which were once thought of as free from Hindu nationalism. The focus of this new nationalism is almost always on women and how this process affects them and the impact it will have on a wider society (McClintock, 1995). Women are often thought of as preservers and reproducers of their culture and therefore their behaviour comes under greater scrutiny (Yuval–Davis, 1998). Drinking/drug use is one such activity that challenges the role of the feminine and, therefore, Indian identity. While a psychoactive substance is not masculine or feminine or grounded in national identity, certain substances are socially constructed and under as either as 'male' or 'female'. Male and female areas are clearly demarcated, with women violating these unwritten norms subject to violence. The use of illegal substances is a legal transgression, however vigilantes use this as an opportunity to send a message out about their ideology.

Behaviour that is considered sexually deviant (drinking, wearing Western clothing, going out to pubs, etc.) is treated as a crime against the well-being of the community. Fears of losing out on an unborn generation combined with a notion of nationhood play on the way Westernised women are positioned as a threat to the well-being of the Indian state (Mountian, 2004). However, as these are not crimes against the nation, groups who perceive this as a crime act by inflicting violence upon the victim.

Nandy (1992) examines the mythic entity of the Indian state that has been built up by nationalists who seek to revive 'Indian culture' and bring the nation (a Hindu state) back to its former glory. Assumptions that Hinduism is the dominant and original religion of India which has been 'hijacked' by Muslims and Christians, plays into idea of a persecuted nation which needs to fight for the restoration of this lost identity. Vandevelde (2011) examines the language and dilemmas around the issue of conversion and reconversion and the threat posed to national identity. The idea of this Indian identity being based on being Hindu plays into the fear that religious conversion leads to a loss of national identity. The idea that the nation can return to a previous state of being all Hindu is met with resistance from urban Indians and non-Hindus or even less orthodox Hindus who are fast imbibing the lifestyle of their global counterparts and have internalised many aspects of a global culture. Clashes between class, gender and caste are played out in the way women of privilege are treated. Events that unfolded on 16 December 2012 in Delhi[6] are an example of how the intersection between class, gender and caste play out in the way violence is inflicted on women's bodies.

[5] On the night of 9 July 2012 a woman (aged 17) was coming out of a pub in Guwahati (a city in north-east India) when she was molested by a gang of men. This incident was caught on camera by a journalist who filmed the entire incident while the perpetrators watched and smiled at the camera. The incident lasted for about 45 minutes and almost no bystanders stopped to help. Questions about ethics in media and also the role of bystanders were raised.

[6] On the night of 16 December 2012 a woman (aged 23) physiotherapy intern with her male friend caught a bus to return home at night after watching a movie. During the course of the journey the woman was brutally gang raped by the bus driver and his friends, beaten and violated with a metal rod and thrown by the side of the road, which led to her death on 28 December 2012 (due to injuries). Her male friend who tried to help her was beaten and thrown by the side of the road. This horrific event sparked protests around the nation and also led to the Indian Government changing legislation around rape and other sexual crimes.

The Delhi gang rape case as it has come to be known, has captured the attention of the media and activists worldwide. This attention has sparked off debates around race, crime, gender and region (the north being characterised by gendered violence). In the wake of this news, vulgarity in the Indian media was discussed. While each of these issues (gender, violence, class) can be discussed on their own, the experience of this attack comprises of multiple identities being lived by the individual. As stated by Lorde (1984) 'there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not live single-issue lives'. It is not sufficient enough to understand gendered violence in simplistic terms without the context of multiple identities. Crenshaw (1991) examines the how marginalised groups often ignore intra group marginalisation. In this case gender, class and ideas of what constitutes as Westernisation have to be examined together. As noted earlier, notions of the female body and the ties it has to the nation can explain the prevalence of such incidents.

The female body as a site of 'corrective violence'

Attacks on women are carried out with a view to correct them of their Western ways. The idea presents itself as a favour to women at the same time as serving as a warning. Boundaries of class and caste discontent are played out by violating women's bodies, which are both a public example and unspoken social norm. Public displays of disfigured and shamed female bodies are reminders of these mores, the spectacle of disfigurement is a public punishment for the group and for all those who might want to transgress social boundaries. As discussed earlier Foucault (1977) analyses how the body became the source of public spectacle in public executions, similarly violence against the female body sends a dual message of public reminders and of female submission. Violence directed at the female body subdues resistance and subversion of patriarchy. Brownmiller (1993) examines the role of violence, and how rape in particular reaffirms the power patriarchy has over women:

> 'Women's bodies are often read as repositories of community honour but shame can also be experienced individually by women who may have experienced sexual violence. So dishonouring a woman can lead to a symbolic dishonouring of the community and can sometimes lead to an increased threat of honour-based violence, including murder'. (Burnell, 2012, online article)

The transgression by itself does not matter so much as the idea of transgression; women who enter 'supposedly male territory' or challenge male power are brought back into submission. Disfigured, violated, naked female bodies are held up as a symbol of correction, almost as if the violence to the female body cleanses society of its ills. As a battle between class, caste and religion plays out on the violated body of the transgressor, in this case a female, this becomes symbolic of a group that has been defeated. Women are being upheld as being transmitters of their culture are also most vulnerable.

When Westernisation affects women it becomes particularly dangerous. Western women are perceived negatively, Westernised Indian women are then thought of as vulnerable to the 'vices' ascribed to their Western counterparts. Western/white women are seen as objects of lust and women whose bodies are available for violence and sex trade. Discourse around these crimes has revolved around examining the race and religious identities of the perpetrators on the one hand to ignoring it on the other. One cannot ignore that these crimes do position Western women as 'sexually available', an idea that is then transferred to Indian women who are Westernised. Both India and Pakistan share similar cultural values and some crimes against women are based in common regional cultures rather than religion. Honour-based crime is deeply embedded in the northern region of the

subcontinent. This is a region that is strongly patriarchal and women have a limited role in public life and are expected to conform to rigid social norms:

> Now, coming to 'Western' culture – the first thing that pops into the mind of an average Pakistani on hearing the words, 'Western values,' is the image of a scantily-clad blonde chugging down beer in a sleazy bar. (Talat, 2011)

Though two nations at present, both India and Pakistan have had similar kinds of crime perpetrated on women, thereby debunking the notion that the crimes are based in religion alone. While religion may not be a factor these two countries share a common culture in certain regions.

This stereotypical image of a sexualised Western woman affirms the idea of women being sexually easy and also in need of correction. Western women are perceived in terms of their sexuality under a male gaze, and this idea then finds its way into the way Indian women are viewed when they emulate their Western counterparts. Indian women behaving like Western women breaks the norms of what is acceptable in terms of faith and also national identity. A paternalistic notion runs through the idea of what is imagined to be the West and the corrupting power it has over women both Western and native, as the same argument is almost never used against men. The idea that women are vulnerable and in need of protection by a more rational patriarchy positions women in a subordinate state.

A question of honour

The term 'honour' or 'tradition' is often used to describe these crimes against women of Asian origin. However, it is a deeply misleading term and conveys the message that somehow these crimes are justifiable or sanctioned by the culture in question. By definition 'honour' describes something of high morality or something worthy of respect, when used in conjunction with 'crime' the term takes on a new meaning, acting as a euphemism. The crime is viewed from the perpetrator's perspective, to whom the crime might be justified as an act of honour.

The term 'honour crimes' is a misnomer as there is nothing honourable in the act. However, it has come to encompass a variety of violence against women, such as murder, assault and detention, most of which involve preventing a person from exercising their choice in marriage or relationships. Such crimes are often committed by the family or by members of the community which perceives that there has been a 'threat to honour' (a perceived sense of honour), thereby giving the crime a social sanction. In this context, there is a publicly articulated 'justification' that is attributed to a social order claiming to require the preservation of the concept of 'honour' vested only in male (family and/or conjugal) control over women (Ramaseshan, 2011).

Ramaseshan (2011) goes on to examine the use of the word honour, which is absent in Indian law except when used to defend a crime against a woman. 'Honour' or 'tradition' when used in conjunction with a crime has the propensity of justifying the actions of the perpetrators of those crimes. Using affirming terms as an adjective to describe this kind of crime also perpetuates the idea of a feudal India where crime is a long-standing feature of society. Orwell (1946) in his essay 'Politics and the English language' warns against using euphemisms for the fear that they might detract from the horror of the events they are trying to normalise. The term honour crime conflates two opposing ideas to hide an act of violence and subvert the horror of the act. Words such as 'tradition' and 'culture' are attempts to evade moral responsibility and make crime in non-Western nations seem normal and justifiable, almost as if the crime is a part of the social system of that particular culture. Gill (2009) argues that the notion of honour 'acts as a smoke screen', a nod to an extrinsic value system that masks the fact that judgments about honour are made according to internally defined gendered criteria. There is also

a danger of colluding with the perpetrators by letting them believe they are in fact protectors of 'tradition'. Victims of these crimes tend to be ignored or treated as objects whose narrative is lost in the 'othering' of crime. Davis (1998) examines the use of words such as 'culture' and the way in which they are used to justify racism and xenophobia. Media reporting of these crimes often focuses on the cultural and racial aspects of the crime, thereby making violence against women seem exotic and alien to the society in which they are committed. Wade (2009) explores a similar idea of how female genital mutilation is reported in Western media. By focusing on culture and the exotic aspect of crime, the victim and the crime gets less attention in comparison with the perpetrator whose actions are articulated in terms of race and culture. Bringing culture into the narrative of crime almost serves as a justification by giving it the appearance of being socially sanctioned or intrinsic to a particular society.

Examining crime without tying it to notions of culture, yet understanding that some crime is based in cultural struggles, is challenging. Perpetrators of these crimes claim that they are fighting to preserve what they think is their version of 'Indian culture'; to brand their idea of culture as a universal Indian culture would justify their actions. On the other hand, to think of these crimes as exclusive to one culture produces a notion that crime against women in Western countries is not as horrific or brutal; as 'modern' women as opposed to 'traditional' women are not susceptible to such crime (Wade, 2009). This dichotomy between modern/traditional women and the crimes perpetrated against one group polarises and creates two groups who face similar kinds of violence but in different contexts. While 'honour crime' is indeed based within a few south Asian nations it would be wrong to assume that it is naturally a part of the community and a part of the social system. Honour crime is not justified by the constitution of India but it is justified on the social level by the perpetrators and enablers of these crimes. These crimes are also region specific. Universalising these crimes onto the entire community has the effect of blaming the community; however, denying that these crimes are community specific takes away the significance of these crimes. Afzal[7] (2012) speaks about not tolerating these crimes in the UK by justifying them on the basis of multiculturalism. Focusing on the injustice of profiling the perpetrators detracts from the crimes and almost colludes with the perpetrators.

Growing nationalism and rapid social change have brought changes in the way gender relations are understood. These crimes against women have their origins in modern India; they are tied to social, economic and political changes taking place in the nation. While certain crimes are seen predominantly in India or diasporan communities, they are not strictly the cultural or national norm or socially sanctioned. Homogenising Asian culture serves to breed negative stereotypes and make gendered violence in Asian countries or diasporan communities look exotic. Wade (2009) looks at the portrayal of female genital mutilation in Western media and the discourse it generates. Exoticising crime portrays a community in a negative light and absolves the crime on the basis of it being a cultural norm. To deny that honour-based crimes do not occur in Asian culture is to deny a subculture that is trying to assert its dominance and norms. It also denies the growing polarities in the Indian identity and the rise of nationalism, which is working it's way through gendered violence. Nandy (1983, 1992) argues that nationalism in India is a modern invention, the violence that this nationalism brings on is modern and not based in antiquity.

Sen (2000), a doctor treating women victims of acid attacks said, 'Twenty years

[7] Crown prosecution Manchester appointed in 2012.

ago, we never saw this sort of thing. Now I'm totally inundated, I have so many girls who come to me for treatment that, emotionally, I've just got to get attached'. The creation of honour-based crime lies in modernity and not in historical tradition, to treat it as a special category of crime exclusive to a culture, race or religion polarises communities and women groups who are distinguished by the degrees of horror rather than a common agenda (Wade, 2009). To argue that honour-based violence has been a long-standing feature of Indian society and grounded in history would be an anachronism, these crimes against women are a recent development and are a response to changing gender roles and social mobility. Perpetrators often see themselves as protectors of Indian culture and often refer back to a past that is almost in its entirety an invention (Hobsbawm, 1999; Nandy, 1997, 1998).

Sleeping with the enemy

When Western nations report crime in non-Western nations as 'cultural' or 'traditional' they often end up colluding with the perpetrators whose claims of committing crime to protect their culture are affirmed. Positioning some crime as Western or Eastern creates a false dichotomy and plays into the idea that some crime is worse than others or that crime committed in Western countries is of a milder nature. Terms such as 'honour' and 'culture' when used to describe these crimes in the UK create difference between diasporan (but citizens of the UK) communities and white British communities. They perpetuate the idea of foreignness of the crime when it occurs in the UK and condemn it to a long-standing culture in when committed in countries such as India.

The petrified East

While speaking for the 'East' often notions of a homogenous unchanged culture are invoked Ideas that Eastern cultures should be resistant to change and must remain unchanged often patronise and infantalise the East. Social change in non-white cultures is seen as loss or a shift from one's history and tradition (Mohan, 2011; Nandy, 1983). Colonialism is often seen as a break in the trajectory of India's development as a nation. In many ways this might be true, however, what is lost in this narrative that India was not paralysed but continued to develop its own culture and subcultures within colonialism. Colonialism shaped India as we now know it. Reflecting on the past pre-colonisation often leads up to the rise in nationalistic sentiment and also for a longing of the culture that would have changed over time colonial occupation notwithstanding. Nandy often explores the way nationalists misread and exploit history to fit into their own agenda but are based in ideas that could only have existed within a colonial system. Often these views find their way into Western thought and how it has come to understand Indian society.

Adhering to the tenets of 'Traditional culture' is seen as the only way for non-Western society to function. While looking out to non-Western society, Western culture is mistakenly seen as a default state of existence whereas culture is attributed to differences in the society it looks at. Volpp (2001) looks at the way feminism is positioned with regard to multiculturalism, culture is understood as a force that is harmful to non Western women. The two positions are seen as mutually exclusive, with culture seen as something non-Western women have to give up in order to be liberated. Words such as tradition take on a subversive meaning, while sounding like they try and understand the nuances of a culture actually homogenise a culture and give a false sense to it's own past contributing to the rise of nationalism.

Often the position of the person studying the culture in question is left unchallenged. Western views of what constitutes 'traditional culture' is looking for differences in another culture and romanticising what it fails to understand. When discussed? In Britain, crime in the Asian community presents itself as exotic tied to a community's honour. Crime against women takes on a mythology

of it's own. Honour crimes are given a history to a feudal past, which is used as an explanation of the crime. While on the surface this idea might sound reasonably valid, it fails to highlight the differences in caste class, religion, and the fear of Westernisation that contribute to these crimes. Explaining these crimes as based within a certain culture contribute to understandings that this culture is barbaric as compared to 'liberal Western society.'

The romance of the orient

Notions of traditional cultures and its difference from Western culture play on the ideas that India is not only just different but also not at par with Western values. Common phrases such as 'Eastern mysticism' and 'Indian values' not only provide a generalised and biased idea of India but also homogenise India culture (Hutnyk, 2000). Women's changing social roles then prove to be incongruent to this stereotypical idea of the Indian woman who does not conform to social roles expected of her. Chatterjee (1989) looks at the role of Indian women as defined by both colonial powers and by nationalists and how both these powers had to give Indian women a defining identity. Indian women are often caught in the act of being defined and spoken for as a homogenous group with no individuality. Contradictions to these ideas evoke a sense of loss of control over women. Economic freedom implies a loss of traditional male role of being the breadwinner. While the harmless act of a changing one's dressing style is a personal matter and of style, it can be interpreted as violating the status quo.

Conclusion

Gendered violence in India is grounded in the discourse of nationalism, which is played out by inflicting violence on the female body in a public manner. Incidents of acid attacks, public stripping and other acts of public sexual violence are on the rise. The women victims of these acts of violence are disabled for life, with their life choices reduced due to the violence inflicted on them and also from the stigma of their supposed transgression.

While situated within Indian culture, these crimes do not constitute 'Indian culture' rather they are within the community but are not representative of what Indian identity stands for. It cannot be denied that these crimes have their origins in Indian culture and are a reaction to what is perceived as a loss of that culture. However, ascribing these crimes as part of a cultural norm and describing it in terms of 'honour' acts to justify the crime and also make crime in non-Western nations seem exotic. Notions of 'tradition' and 'culture' are modern inventions often used by right wing groups to bring about social change as demanded by them. A consequence of such discourses reifies ideas that non-Western nations are more violent and also justify violence, which is seen as a cultural norm. Gendered crime in India must be understood from the victim's perspective and not from the perpetrators who justify their actions. Discourse that surrounds these crimes must be unpicked. The language of perpetrators must not obscure the ordeal of the victims. Women who have been victims of violence must not have to bear the blame of gender insubordination or be blamed for the perpetrators own sense of indignity. Analysing the perpetrators justification of the crime often obscures the victims ordeal and shaming them for exerting their right to choose certain lifestyles.

As the fourth most dangerous nation for women cases of horrific public acts of violence against women are on the rise in India. A few incidents in recent years have caught the attention of the media (national and international) and galvanised the nation into action, however the nature of such violence needs to be thought of in the context of history, social change, class struggle and the place women hold in Indian society.

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Agora

Swimming against the tide or a fish out of water? A reflection on gender, sexism and student life

Laura Mitchell

The Agora section features a reflective piece by a current undergraduate psychology student and their experience of studying in different countries. She considers the difficult tensions young women encounter in current university life: in embracing femininity while challenging sexism and objectification; enjoying the social aspects of university, but confronting restrictive norms and expectations of gender conformity.

How does it happen that… smart women have nothing to talk about, other than boyfriends?
Miranda Hobbs, *Sex and the City* (1998–2004).

Short shorts and false 'lashes

SHORTLY following my entry into higher education it became apparent that the general culture promoted a particular kind of student life: to sleep all day and party all night. I quickly learnt that university night-life was supposed to be of the upmost importance. Entire days were to be dedicated to preparation for the night ahead, with careful consideration of what to wear later, decisions regarding heels or flats, and phone calls to ensure no one would turn up in the same outfit. I hasten to add, I am in no way opposed to individuals glamming themselves up, in fact my favourite part of a night out is often getting ready with my friends – but it is problematic when such a culture becomes the 'norm' and is viewed as almost compulsory. In addition, a report on sexism by the National Union of Students (NUS) concludes that club promoters and themed events held in student bars are key perpetuators for the seemingly increasing pressure on students to engage in sexual activity (NUS, 2013), and the subsequent shaming of women when they do participate (e.g. Ellen, 2014). As such, many female students objectify themselves (what Gill, 2008, refers to as sexual subjectification), to ensure that they are asked to go home with their male of choice for the night (note the inherent heterosexism of the culture also prevalent). When I can be persuaded to go clubbing, I am considered an anomaly because I enjoy going out wearing a coat and jeans in the middle of November. It would seem shorts are getting shorter and false 'lashes are getting longer, but the options available to young women regarding their social life are getting narrower.

I'm not sexist, I'm just a lad

Such behaviour begs the questions: *Why* do female students objectify themselves? Unfortunately, it would appear that UK student life has been ingrained by a sexist, misogynistic 'lad' culture. For those who are unfamiliar with the term, a 'lad' can be defined as someone who loves creating banter at the expense of others, women in particular, in order to get a laugh from their fellow lads (NUS, 2013). De Gregorio Godeo (2006) highlights how this form of 'laddism' is almost an exaggeration of masculinity, with sexism and homophobia as central compo-

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nents. To encourage 'lad' behaviour, there are a number of websites and pages on social networking sites designed specifically to enable male students to share their banter, upload photos of semi-naked woman and boast about their latest sexual conquests. One website in particular was forced to temporarily shut down due to posts and jokes encouraging rape behaviour, for example: 'If the girl you've taken for a drink won't spread for your head, think about this mathematical statistic, 85 per cent of rape cases go unreported. That seems to be fairly good odds' (www.uniladmag.com, n.d.)

Despite my disgust at such 'jokes', I can't help but acknowledge my frustration at fellow female students' compliance and acceptance of the sexist attitudes that are rapidly dominating student university lives. It has ashamedly become acceptable for a man to grope a women in a nightclub. I find it challenging to name an occasion whereby I have enjoyed a night out free of being touched, harassed or mocked by men. However, for some students, a night out is considered unsuccessful if their backside remains untouched and their breasts un-ogled. For whatever reasons, the lives of many young female students seem to revolve around men.

Going Dutch

Following my second year of university, I bid farewell to Blighty and moved to Groningen, the Netherlands, to study an Erasmus year abroad. My first impression of the city was both fantastic and surreal. I arrived at my houseboat and was greeted by two of my boat mates. They rode around Groningen with me perched on the back of one of their bikes, giving me a guided tour of the city. Sat amongst a crowd of Dutch people at a local festival, I observed the locals openly smoking marijuana together, a mere stone's throw away from the nearest koffee shop. All the stereotypes I had heard about the Netherlands appeared to be true; I really was living in the land of the liberals. As my time abroad progressed, I found it refreshing to be surrounded by a culture of people who appeared to have such a relaxed and accepting attitude towards life. I must stress at this point that I am fully aware such bold statements cannot be generalised across the entire country. Rather, I am sharing my personal experience of living in Groningen, specifically.

I soon came to realise that there was a marked difference between being a female student in the Netherlands and being a female student in Britain. The 'lad' culture simply did not seem to exist in Groningen. In contrast to spending evenings in a nightclub looking for their latest fling, many students cycle to bars and pubs together to enjoy an evening of good food, great company and flowing drinks. To state that Dutch students never go out seeking a sexual partner would be myopic at best. However, 'one night stands' did not appear to be the prerogative of the night. I cannot express in words just how delighted I was to see young women attending social events free of make-up and high-heels. For the first time in my student life, I felt no pressure to maintain my appearance to conform to a socially acceptable standard. I was no longer mocked for my function-over-fashion choice of outfits and I fast became friends with males who were more interested in my sense of humour than my relationship status. It felt truly empowering going out for the evening without being harassed. In fact, throughout my entire year abroad I was the target of just one sexist remark (from a tourist). As a feminist, I decided to meet with my female Dutch friends to discuss whether my perception of gender equality in Groningen really was too good to be true.

Dutch women don't get depressed

Fortunately, my Dutch friends were more than happy for me to grill them about their personal experience of growing up as a woman in Groningen. I found it interesting that when I asked if they had ever felt unequal to their male counterparts, all three young women (from somewhat differing

social backgrounds) responded that they had not. I proceeded to show them some extracts from the aforementioned 'lad' websites and social networking pages which evoked a strong reaction from one individual in particular, who claimed: 'if a man ever dared to say that to a Dutch woman, he would be absolutely annihilated. I can't believe any woman would allow a man to get away with saying things like that'. Furthermore, all three young women did state that whilst there is some expectation for women to take care of their appearance in the Netherlands, it is incomparable to the high standards of beauty that feature within the UK media. As our conversation drew to a close, I asked each of my friends whether they had anything to add regarding gender equality in the Netherlands. I was both shocked and amazed to learn that not only is the wage gap narrowing between genders, Dutch women aged between 25 to 30 now earn more per hour than men (Chkalova & Drankier, 2014). In addition, I was advised to read the book *Dutch Women Don't Get Depressed*, in which author Ellen de Bruin argues that Dutch women are amongst the happiest demographic in the world thanks to their 'personal freedom'. I was relieved to discover that the beliefs I had formed over the past year regarding Dutch gender equality were in line with the perceptions of local students.

A journey of a thousand miles began with a single step

It would be naïve to suggest that the Netherlands is the model of a socially equal, liberal Western country. Having studied at the University of Groningen for a year, I have learnt that a number of Dutch communities and politicians, particularly in the south of the country, have been featured within the media due to their reluctance to accept the country's growing number of immigrants (France-Presse, 2014). However, to quote Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu, 'a journey of a thousand miles began with a single step'; the Dutch are certainly on the route to change. My personal experience of living in the Netherlands emphasised just how far the UK has to progress on a social and legislative scale in order to reach gender equality. Moreover, it is imperative for individuals to acknowledge the rapidly growing, sexist 'lad' culture, which is damaging the university experience for so many UK female students. It is not acceptable to make jokes about rape. It is not acceptable to touch a woman without her permission, regardless of the social situation. Most importantly, it is not acceptable for young women to be raised thinking such behaviour is the 'norm'. We should be encouraged and inspired by our Dutch counterparts to challenge the new wave of misogyny which is tainting our UK universities.

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The University of Groningen.

Agora

Emerging Feminists

Helen Owton

TO CONTINUE THE THEME from the last edition, we asked 'Emerging Feminists' to voice (in their own words) what feminism means to them, why they are feminists and how this interrelates with their research. We feel that the voices of student feminists are important to include, not only to reassure us that there are still feminists emerging, but to find out why feminism is important to them and to find out more about the new and exciting areas of interest feminist students are researching. We hope that you enjoy sitting back and breezing through this relatively new fresh section in the *Psychology of Women Section Review* and value any thoughts and feedback you might have on it. If you would like to be included in the next edition then do please get in touch:
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Kylie Baldwin
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Why are you a feminist?
I think I have probably been a feminist since I was about 8 years old when I was first told I wasn't allowed to play football with the boys. I believe it was my mothers reaction and the subsequent revision of the league rules that made me aware that I could and should challenge patriarchal dominance whenever it presented itself in my life. I don't really believe there is any other alternative than to be a feminist.

What does feminism mean to you?
It means the recognition of potential equality not just for both sexes but for all people regardless of their race, sexuality or disability status. It also means the opportunity to work together to raise awareness of the structural and social biases that still constrain women and girls autonomy and choices which simultaneously hold them accountable for their own disempowerment.

What is your research area?
My research is currently examining women's experiences of assisted reproductive technology specifically focusing on egg freezing for social reasons. This has involved look at issues such as 'delayed' motherhood, the management of social and medical risks and the existence and effect of power relationships in heterosexual couplings.

What approaches do you use to explore your research?
I primarily use qualitative methods such as interviewing to prioritise the voice of the women in my research. I find that this approach centres the female participants as experts in the telling of their own stories.

Devina Lister
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Why are you a feminist?
Feminism just makes sense to me. It is a way of being. A sense of identity, if I was to try and put *why I am a feminist* into words. Something clicked when I happened across

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more feminist theory and learned of the various campaigns going on around the world when I started my PhD. From there it's pretty become a major part of my life and probably will be for a long time to come!

What does feminism mean to you?

I have probably covered this by being a feminist means so much to me (as my loved ones would no doubt also be able to tell you given how much I talk about feminist type issues).

In terms of *why* feminism means so much to me, I think my experienced growing up as a mixed-race girl from a small white, farming town in the Midlands had something to do with understanding what being treated as the Other means. I did not go to an overly racist school but there was an undercurrent of prejudice, in the form of hidden racism and fairly overt sexism, that I couldn't pick my finger until much later.

What is your research area?

I have got broad interests but would say my area currently is women's everyday lives, chronic illness and qualitative methods. I am particularly interested in innovative research methods, such as the role of social media and new technologies in creating new ways of storytelling. My PhD is called 'The Women's Stories of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) Project' and is entails exploring narratives women with IBS have to tell about their lives and personal relationships through completing diaries or taking part in interviews. I am also really interested in critical psychology and gender.

What approaches do you use to explore your research?

For the PhD project I will be adopting a feminist-narrative approach to analysing the diary and interview data. As this is a two-phase project I will be using the diary data to 'triangulate' and inform the line of questioning during interviews. I also have experience of other qual methods such as phenomenology and thematic analysis after exploring how men and women with another bowel condition make sense of their everyday lives as part of my Master's dissertation (as yet unpublished!)

What advice would you give to other 'young' feminists?

My advice to 'young feminists', which I suppose as someone in their 30s I am also, would be to get involved in the feminist community. Most places in England have a local group for the county, such as the North West Feminists Group that I help co-run with activist Angela Towers by looking after the Twitter account. If you enjoy writing, or even just feel strongly about an issue that you would like to share your thoughts on then blog for feminist groups' websites. Everyone I have met (so far) in the various feminist groups is friendly, warm and encouraging of anyone kind enough to volunteer their time or support a good cause. Twitter's brilliant for keeping up-to-date with feminist campaigns and there are closed Facebook groups too for a safe space for sharing your thoughts about feminist issues and news.

Periklis Papaloukas
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Why are you a feminist?

I recognise the inequalities women face in all spheres of life and specifically women with intersected identities. Even though the mainstream narrative tends to argue we live in the age of equal gender rights, I tend to disagree; there is still the need for change. Feminism as an ideological umbrella term which has women and equal gender rights at its centre it is a sociopolitical theoretical approach which I find it can help a lot towards the goal of an equal society. As a person and a researcher who is interested in inequalities, anti-discrimination, and human/civil rights I can only be a feminist in the same way I can only be anti-racist, anti-heterosexist, or anti-ableist.

What does feminism mean to you?

Feminism is not just an abstract term which encompasses similar female empowerement ideologies but it is a way of life. As I have already mentioned, the idea of equality is central to my personal life perspective. Also, as a researcher I am highly interested in discrimination, (social) minorities and I find feminist theory as a an important theoretical tool in understanding gender inequalities.

What is your research area?

Generally, I am interested in the psychosocial implications of health and specifically in the impacts of long-term conditions on individuals but I have also an interest in minority related issues (inequality, discrimination and stereotypes). I am currently investigating the psychosocial experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) individuals living with the long-term condition of multiple sclerosis.

What approaches do you use to explore your research?

I am taking a qualitative approach. I am using critical health psychology as a theo-retical background and phenomenological psychology as my theoretical methodological backbone.

What advice would you give to other 'young' feminists?

I don't know if I am the right person to give advice to other feminists but I can only argue for the need of more people embracing feminist ideas, both women and men.

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Psychology of Women Section ANNUAL CONFERENCE 8-10 July 2015

Cumberland Lodge, Windsor

Themes:

Gender & Politics
Feminist Activism
Violence Against Women
Women & Science

Keynote Speakers:

- **Professor Rebecca Lawthom**
  Manchester Metropolitan University, UK
- **Polly Neate**
  Chief Executive of Women's Aid, UK
- **Associate Professor Ingrid Palmary**
  University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

The POWs annual three-day conference covers a wide range of issues including: gender, mental health, women's health, feminist theory, masculinities, sexualities, qualitative methodologies, disability, ethnicity and racism. Contributions include papers, symposia, posters and workshops.

This is an excellent opportunity for feminist researchers, teachers and practitioners in and around psychology to meet and exchange ideas, as well as for students to present their work for the first time in a supportive and friendly environment.

For registration and further information: please see our website: **www.bps.org.uk/pows2015**
Alternatively you can e-mail: **powsconference@bps.org.uk** or telephone 0116 252 9555.

Conference Review

Psychology of Women Section's Annual Conference

Glen Jankowski

Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Park, 9–11 July 2014.

THE Psychology of Women Section's (POWS) Annual Conference was held in the beautiful retreat of Cumberland Lodge, Windsor, where the two-and-a-half day conference brought together feminist researchers from across Europe, Canada, Brazil, Pakistan, Turkey, and New Zealand. Dr Katherine Johnson (University of Brighton) opened the conference with a powerful presentation; discussing how queer theory intersected with feminism and critical health and how gender performativity ignored the materiality of living as trans. Next up were three parallel sessions on: (1) Deconstructing disability; (2) Doing feminist research; and (3) Feminism and morality. I went to the second one and listened to Jenny Fisher (Manchester Metropolitan University) and Octavia Calder-Dawe (University of Auckland) both discuss the researcher's place in developing high-quality, critical and meaningful research.

Then Jen Tidman (University of Sheffield) presented her POWS undergraduate prize-winning research on women in STEM careers. Jen delivered her presentation with style highlighting the presence of the leaky pipeline for women in these careers and the precarious gender performativity they often had to enact. The POWS postgraduate prize-winning researcher also made an appearance; Cathy Ure (University of Salford) who poignantly deconstructed the 'Shero' narrative surrounding women's breast cancer.

The second day started off with three more parallel sessions: (1) Feminism in the workplace; (2) Construction of sexual subjectivities; and (3) Negotiation food and feminist identities. The first session opened with Katy Schnitzler's (Kingston University) presentation on how sexism operates through verbal spaces in the workplace. Bridgette Rickett (Leeds Metropolitan University) then explored her and colleagues' research on women business leaders in the United Arab Emirates, before Alison Bareham (University of Huddersfield) poignantly described how staff made sense of the unremitting and painful closures of the women's hostel services they ran. Collectively these presentations demonstrated how sexism is still alive and well in the workplace arena whether it was through women having less verbal opportunities, the precarity of being a woman at 'the top' or through the closure of the very few services so essential to many women.

Next Dr Abigail Locke (University of Huddersfield) refreshed the conference with her keynote deconstructing the good parenting mandate which, she aptly demonstrated, was really about good mothers being white, middle-class, able bodied, in a heterosexual relationship and not too young or old.

Three more parallel sessions followed on: (1) Technologies of the body; (2) Constraints and potential of feminine subjectivities; and (3) Feminism and humour. Four presenters in the third session each demonstrated the use of humour in sexism though popular internet memes (Jessica Drakett, Leeds Metropolitan University), through *The Big Fat Quiz of the Year*

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(Thomas Evans, Coventry University) and within the legal profession (Rachel Densham, University of East London). The session speakers also showed the positive uses of humour whether through subverting sexist stereotypes or by allowing fire fighters to process their emotional experiences in a way that was socially acceptable (Lauren Ward, Northampton University). Workshops followed including ones on publishing, on self-care, personal development in academia and craftivism (see Figure 1). The latter workshop involved delegates re-crafting Barbie and Ken dolls in order to convey something about their research (see Figure 1).

Finally before dinner, Reni Eddo-Lodge gave her 'call-to-arms' keynote on feminism and intersectionality. Using the examples of media coverage surrounding Josie Long and Tulisa, Reni asked the conference: 'Who is feminism defending and not defending?' Reni challenged the conference to consider how class, race and other oppressions can be unrealised in feminist analyses. 'Take the campaign money', Reni brilliantly argued, 'for getting women into more CEO positions and give it to the women on minimum wage.'

The final day of the conference saw three more parallel sessions on: (1) Women and violence; (2) Embodied ontologies of womanhood; and (3) Art and media perceptions of womanhood. This second session included analyses of the construction of women in accounts of adoption (Donna Peach, University of Huddersfield) in accounts of men's body image (myself) ending with Helen Owton's visceral, brilliant, presentation of her autoethnographic research on female boxing. Finally, Dr Jane Callaghan (University of Northampton) closed the conference with her powerful research on children's experience of domestic violence. Here, Jane discussed the limiting portrayal of children who experience domestic violence; as damaged, as contagious, as beyond repair.In her research she explored the agency and resistance that many children showed in such traumatic circumstances.

Figure 1: Paula Singleton's Barbie craftivism workshop.

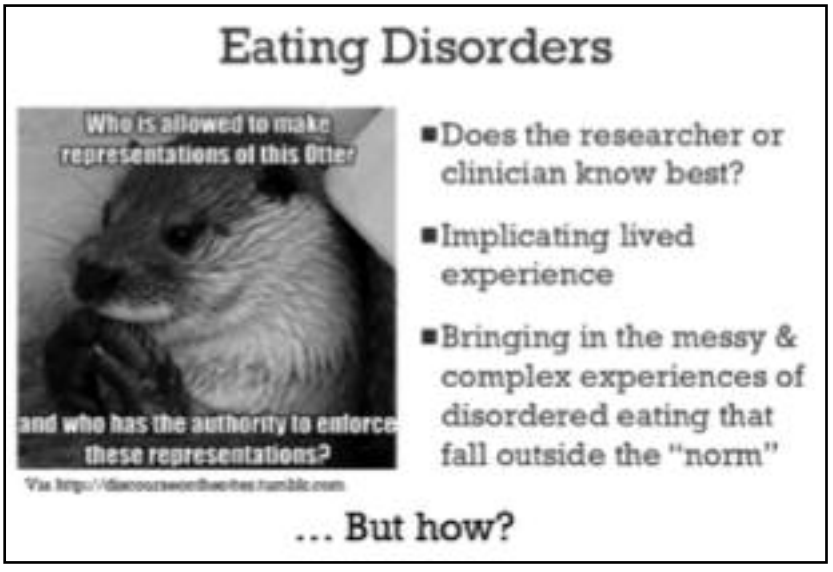
Figure 2: Not to forget the poster presenters including Charlotte Dann's excellent research on media representations of tattooed women.

I had a wonderful time at POWS and so here are four reasons I recommend going to the POWS conference next year.

1. **The research expertise:** POWS doesn't just showcase feminist research it also showcases methods. For example, Octavia Calder-Dawe (University of Auckland) impressed the conference with her workshops with young university men and women that helped participants challenge sexism. Other examples included Andrea LaMarre's (University of Guelph) critical analysis of her own privilege in being a researcher and how digital storytelling can be a method that puts the power back in her participant's hands (see Figure 2) as well as the workshop on the innovative research method: Imaginative Variation.

2. **Collegial support:** The POWS prizes', the 'how to publish' and self-care workshops and the lovely delegates together created a very supportive atmosphere. Appropriately, there isn't any one-upmanship at POWS but constructive critique, respect-

Figure 3: Slide from Andrea LaMarre's presentation showing the privilege of being a researcher.



ful debate and shared enthusiasm. If you're new, go along.

3. **Exquisite venue:** It's gorgeous, good value for money and although has royal ties (the Queen is patron), is set up for 'the discussion of ethical, spiritual and topical issues in contemporary society'. At times it felt more like a retreat then a conference.

4. **Because it's feminist:** Despite its name, the conference is not about some essentialising notion that women think differently to men, but on how sexism - and increasingly other oppressions – can be challenged through research. These oppressions exist and are not only the remit of researchers who take a 'feminist' or 'critical' stance.

In summary, the POWS conference was fantastic. I think any researcher interested in social justice or improving well-being should go; sexism is everywhere and cannot be ignored, even within academia. The POWS conference provides a supportive, inspiring and inclusive platform to begin to do this.

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Conference Review

International Qualitative Research in Sport Exercise, and Health Conference

Jenny McMahon

Loughborough University, 1-3 September 2014.

LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY held the fourth International Qualitative Research conference from 1–3 September 2014. The conference was chaired by Dr Brett Smith and co-chaired by Toni Williams and was promoted as providing 'cutting edge empirical inquiry, advancements in qualitative methods, and debates about methodology, theory, representation, criteria, ethics, and practice.' I was particularly drawn to this conference because qualitative researchers from social scientific areas of sport and exercise were invited to share and critically discuss their experiences of conducting qualitative inquiry. As well as this, high calibre workshops were provided by conference organisers for a small cost to delegates including: Professor Kerry McGannon (discourse analysis); Dr Andrea Bundon (digital methods); Professor Michael Atkinson (Reassembling ethnography); Professor Andrew Sparkes (narrative analysis in action); and Dr Brett Smith (getting published). Originally, I thought that these workshops were catered for postgraduate students and early career researchers, however, they were well attended by academics at varying stages of their careers from professors to the newly-enrolled postgraduate student. The keynote line up at the conference was equally as impressive with Professor Mark Anderson, Professor Michael Atkinson, Dr Jayne Caudwell and Professor Brendan Gough presenting which invariably provided something for everybody.

There were 170 people attending the conference with notable international attendance. I happened to be one of the international attendees, making the 27-hour flight from Australia so I was keen to see if the conference would be all that it offered. The conference venue was the James France Building at Loughborough University. This venue, in my opinion, was well thought out as it provided attendees with the ease to move from one presentation to another in less than a minute. All conference happenings occurred in one building – under one roof. There was a common area where attendees were provided with lunch as well as morning and afternoon teas which proved to be a wonderful space for getting to know each other; socialising and discussing future collaborations.

While I was interested in the various keynotes, workshops and presentations on offer, I will focus this review specifically on the 'Gendered bodies' symposium and the keynote provided by Dr Jayne Caudwell. The 'Gendered bodies' symposium was chaired by Dr Jayne Caudwell and was opened by Lorena Lozana from Leeds Metropolitan University who discussed her work as a Spanish ex-athlete engaging with a group of 'big' British men who were all attending weight management programmes. Lorena discussed the inherent challenges of gender relations occurring in a researcher-researched relationship and the importance of building trust and rapport to not only gain

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trust of the researched but to obtain rich data through engaging conversations. Lorena highlighted the importance of understanding more about gender relationships occurring in the researched and research relationships as well as a reflexive awareness to how 'big' men come to engage in health discussion as essential to improving the design and implementation of health interventions.

Christine Coupland from Loughborough University presented her research which looked into the dynamics of professional rugby league players. Using Bourdieu as a theoretical framework, Coupland revealed how rugby league players from a UK-based rugby league team did not consider careers beyond playing. Her research revealed how the masculine environment in which the rugby league players were immersed brought sufficient enough reward in itself which did not enable them to question, the material and political circumstances of their lives beyond rugby league. The findings of her research are imperative to understanding more about how athletes, in this case, UK rugby league players might come to be better supported during and post-career.

Ying Chiang from the Chihlee Institute of Technology highlighted the importance of understanding contextual, gendered and historical underpinnings of sports in East Asian societies. Using an assemblage of data such as speeches conducted by the then president Chiang Kai-shek, extracts from TV programmes, government publications, newspaper articles, etc., Chiang conducted a critical discourse analysis to understand how women and sport have been positioned in Taiwanese society across time and in particular how women were marginalised in sport. Her findings are imperative to understanding how women in sport across cultures might come to be positioned historically, contextually and as a result of gender.

Chris Donnachie, Kate Hunt and Sally Wyke's presentation from the University of Glasgow focussed on men's reactions to feedback on their body weight, BMI and other health indicators. This presentation was particularly insightful as a large majority of previous research has been focused on how knowing one's body weight and BMI can prompt behaviour change. Their research revealed how a majority of the men who were being measured showed anxiety and apprehension about being measured mainly because they anticipated that their results would show that they were overweight. Some of the men revealed their shock and disgust on receiving feedback while some took prompts for action such as increasing physical activity before even taking part in the programme. For these men, receiving information was cause for change. Their research revealed the inherent challenges faced by men in such testing.

I myself concluded the symposium by presenting research which centred on exploring the cultural positioning of female adolescent swimmers' bodies. Numerous narrative accounts provided by adolescent female swimmers revealed how they were subjected to specific gendered body practices in the name of sporting performance. In particular, the swimmers' were expected to transform their developing female adolescent bodies to more of a boy like shape and were punished with extra training if their bodies failed to conform to such expectations. Coaches and team managers proliferated to the female adolescent swimmers and parents that having breasts, a bum and menstruating were seen as detrimental to competitive performance. Coaches and team managers also expected the adolescent female athletes to lift as heavy as their male counterparts in the gym, swim as fast as them but weigh less than them on the scales. These findings highlight contradictions in the coaches' gendered practices. Disciplinary power was evident across all the swimmers' stories and was found to be exercised when the adolescent female swimmer bodies failed to meet cultural expectations.

The keynote of Dr Jayne Caudwell was entitled *'The personal is political': Turning to feminist and feminist-queer methodologies to*

inform qualitative inquiry and it did not disappoint. In her presentation, Dr Caudwell looked both backwards and forwards to present a view of feminist, and feminist-queer methodologies to show the possibilities they offer qualitative research in sport and exercise. She discussed debates surrounding epistemology and methodology, recalling her immersion – during Phd study – in feminism in the late 1990s. Through a re-visiting of epistemological and methodological constituents such as reason, scientific method, enlightenment, progress, truth, reality and objectivity, she highlighted the politics of research, research methodologies and research findings. She re-visited – the predominantly Western – Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s and how 'the personal is political' gained feminist currency as a call to help end gendered oppression. Linking the everyday lives of women with societal structures of domination provided the context for new ways of knowing. Women's sharing of testimonies, stories, narratives, poetry and prose underpinned processes of consciousness-raising, which became a form of political activism. She examined the value of the personal, especially in relation to research with 'others' (women, girls, LGBTQI). This shift in focus is accompanied by a turn to more contemporary methodological interventions by feminist-queer theorists. Dr Caudwell also made some reference to research methods and how she collected research material. She left us pondering how far we can stretch research methods and methodologies in our quest to connect, effectively, the personal with the broader structures of the political and the socio-cultural?

The conference did not disappoint and delivered in all that it said that it was going to. I highly recommend attending the next conference scheduled for 2016 in Chichester.

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Event Review

QMiP event: Multiple Transformations of Qualitative Data

Gemma Heath

De Montfort University, Leicester, 11 April 2014

THIS QMiP event brought researchers together to deliberate the potential strengths, limitations and challenges of integrating and transforming diverse forms of qualitative data into multiple and creative representations. The symposium began with a warm welcome from QMiP Committee Representative Dr Nollaig Frost, who set the scene by sharing her interest and enthusiasm for the use of pluralist qualitative approaches in psychology. She then introduced the first presenter, Dr Brett Smith, Reader in Qualitative Health Research at Loughborough University.

With his enigmatically titled presentation 'Integrated and dendritic crystallisation', Dr Smith gave a lively and stimulating keynote, juxtaposing 'traditional' realist representations of qualitative research, with more creative analytic practices (CAP) such as poetry, stories, films and song. In his rationale for presenting multiple transformations of qualitative data, Smith highlighted a need to create research that engages its audience, retains its complexity and overcomes the epistemological challenges of crossing methodological boundaries, while simultaneously demonstrating quality and impact.

Arguing for the use of more than one form of representation to illuminate different ways of knowing, Smith questioned how it is that we can present qualitative research findings in a way that, in Todres and Galvin's (2008) terms, connects with people in a 'heartfelt way, awakening not just a logical understanding [of a phenomenon], but a sense of it as it lives' (p.570). Transforming findings into more creative genres could, according to Smith, offer one approach to generating the kinds of emotionally evocative representations which have the potential to not only engage audiences, but also to demonstrate impact through stimulating personal and social change. Turning to how we might negotiate the 'boundaries' between traditional 'realist tales' and CAP, Smith drew on Ellingson's (2009) work on crystallisation, in which she uses a crystal as a metaphor to describe her framework for combining multiple forms of data analysis and genres of representation within a single (integrated) or multiple (dendritic) texts.

Co-production of knowledge was the topic of the second presentation, provided by Dr Julie Fish (De Montfort University), this time on LGBT cancer inequalities. Presenting her experiences of working with different groups (e.g. health professionals, patients and the public) to explore what it means to live with, and beyond cancer, Dr Fish described an approach to creating new knowledge in collaboration with service-users and providers. Using multi-disciplinary steering group meetings to debate and refine her interpretations, Dr Fish argued that patient and public involvement (PPI) in health research adds credibility to the findings, as well as a means of engaging with people outside of the academic community. Nevertheless, effective PPI was thought to present challenges in terms of working with patients (particularly those with life-limiting

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conditions), obtaining adequate funding, establishing advisory groups, recruiting diverse members and evaluating impact.

Next, Dr Jane Callaghan (University of Northampton) presented her team's work on using interviews, photo-elicitation methods and drawings (alongside policy analysis, evidence-synthesis and focus groups with health professionals), to explore situations of domestic abuse from the perspectives of children and young people. Reporting that mothers were frequently positioned within professional discourse as responsible for their children's coping, Dr Callaghan highlighted the implications this holds for how children position themselves within familial structures and their capacity to construct self-identity and build resilience. In presenting their empirical work, several limitations of 'voice' research with children were discussed, including that self-disclosure in interview situations can be 'risky' for young people, often resulting in sanitised narratives or reproductions of rehearsed accounts. Creative methods such as drawing and photography were argued to provide an alternative mode for children to express their views and experiences, facilitating articulation of complex self-accounts.

For Dr Rusi Jaspal (De Montfort University), pluralist qualitative approaches also provided a means of researching sensitive topics. This time for exploring how individuals manage their potentially conflicting identities of being Muslim and being gay. Drawing on Identity Process Theory which posits that identity construction is guided by culturally specific principles of self-esteem, self-efficacy, belonging and psychological coherence, the presenter explained that when salient principles are jeopardised, identity can be perceived as threatened, triggering individuals to engage in coping strategies which minimise threat and restore coherence (e.g. by prioritising one identity over another or compartmentalising those identities which do not fit together). However, as Dr Jaspal indicated, such coping strategies could have negative social and psychological consequences. Describing six qualitative studies, each with a psychological focus on how individuals perceive and cognitively manage their identities, but using a range of data collection and analysis methods (e.g. interviews and diaries; thematic analysis; IPA; Grounded Theory), Dr Jaspal proposed that taking a pluralist qualitative approach had enabled the research to go beyond a superficial level to thoroughly contextualised understandings of the sexuality-religion interface.

The second keynote was provided by Dr Kitrina Douglas (Leeds Met University) and Dr Helen Owton (De Montfort University) on using poetry, song and other forms of CAP to understand and represent qualitative data. This presentation was first contextualised, by suggesting that knowledge comes in different forms and that we, as embodied researchers, have a number of alternative means available to us for both creating and communicating multiple forms of knowing. After examining the value of CAP in terms of connecting with our research participants, data and audience, and re-connecting with ourselves as researchers (which can be lost in the process of immersing oneself in the experiences of others), Dr Owton presented a personal, reflexive account of 'Being an academic', through poetic representation. Dr Douglas followed with her findings from 'Across the Tamar', an ethnographic study of the physical activity experiences and perceptions of older women living in Cornwall. Originating from interviews with women on the role and meaning of physical activity in their lives, these findings were presented first as a story, and then as a song. After hearing about the strengths of representing data in alternative forms, it was fantastic to be given the opportunity to experience research findings being brought to life through creative practices. Actively demonstrating the ability of this approach to engage its audience on an experiential level, delegates were clearly captivated by the research as it 'lived', rather than passively observing it on a page or screen.

The day was drawn to a close by Dr Iain Williamson (De Montfort University) who added to the presentations by critiquing our 'over-reliance' on one-off individual interviews in qualitative psychology, suggesting that other forms of data collection (e.g. audio-diaries or blogging), might allow us to collect more 'real-time' data in response to events or experiences as they occur. Dr Williamson concluded with a much deserved thank you on behalf of all delegates to QMiP for supporting and promoting the event, to the presenters for their time and contributions, and to Dr Helen Owton for convening what I experienced as a truly inspiring day, which stimulated lively discussions about integrating multiple transformations and representations of qualitative data.

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Book Review

Alternative Femininities: Body, Age and Identity
Samantha Holland
Berg Publishers, 2004.
Paperback: 256 pages.
ISBN: 978-1-85973-808-5

Reviewed by Charlotte Dann

It has been 10 years since *Alternative Femininities* was published; the first book written by Samantha Holland, which was shortly followed up by *Pole Dancing, Empowerment and Embodiment* (2010). These books centre on femininity and the embodiment of feminine ideals in relation to cultural gender norms. There has been a substantial amount of important research conducted in the area of femininity and embodiment (Butler, 1990; McRobbie, 2009; Wolf, 1991), but the unique selling point of *Alternative Femininities* is that it considers aspects of femininity which fall outside of Western sociocultural norms, utilising detailed interviews with a variety of alternative women to inform the analysis.

The first part of the book sets the contextual scene for how this book has been informed, and by who, noting the silence on the experiences of adult women in a subcultural space, with the majority of focus in subculture and fashion theory being centred on the young, or more explicitly, those who are yet to find their true identity and move away from the alternative. Though it is often seen as trivial in nature, Holland explores the importance of clothing in the formation of identity in women, and how clothing is pertinent within the expression of alternative feminine discourses. She acknowledges the conflict between conformity and resistance that has plagued women with regards to embodying femininity, and proceeds to explore this throughout.

There are five empirical chapters within the book that are split into the overarching themes from the interviews that Holland conducted. These consist of negotiating 'fluffy femininities', 'how to be a fairy princess', 'categories of unconventional', 'more like torture than love', and 'defying the crone'. These chapters contain within them sentiments that still resonate today, despite the increase in tattoos and an alternative feminine culture (Conway, 2013). This goes to show that issues such as age, body image and clothing affect all women to some extent, regardless of whether they are trying to avoid mainstream culture or not. This highlights how deeply embedded these issues are within our society, and Holland attempts to deconstruct the complex web that makes up alternative femininities within Western culture.

The empirical chapters hone in on the underlying need for agency, and resistance of mainstream culture in the lives of these women. The tattoos and the body modifica-

tions that they have provide them with a sense of control in a world that is not always able to be controlled, and also lets them 'be themselves' even in scenarios whereby they are required to hide parts of themselves, for example, with an employment setting. On the other side, body modifications also provide the women with an experience that is special and unique to them. Touched upon, though not explored fully with regards to this is the notion of authenticity with regards to tattoos; the women who have been interviewed feel that they are more authentic perhaps that those who get a tattoo on a whim, without fully considering the symbolism behind the choice, and the enjoyment of the experience. Again, this argument could not be more relevant in the society of today, due to the increase in tattoos being something of a fashion trend; a fad that will soon pass, but angering those who have tattoos with more of a meaning behind them.

What is of personal interest, is the lack of research following up on significant findings expressed with the empirical chapters. Holland points out how tattoos can be used by women as a way of reclaiming their bodies, and a manner in which they are able to take control and find permanence for their identities. Though these notions are informed by the works of DeMello (2000) and Mifflin (2001), no one has explored this further with regards to body modification into our present society. Even within the decade since the book was published, the consumer culture that our society is embroiled with has increased exponentially, with the access to tattoos and an increase in alternative ways of embodying gender being ever present on the internet.

Overall, *Alternative Femininities* provides a fascinating look into a subcultural world that had not, and has still not been fully explored with regards to women. Throughout the empirical chapters, you get the feeling that there is more to be explored, and further analysis beckons from this work. Though there may be different forms of what society would now consider as 'alternative', and the role models for an alternative lifestyle may have changed, the message and the arguments surrounding this book still resonate, and need exploring. Holland provided an insight into a way of embodying and resisting femininity that still encapsulates main gender issues such as age and appearance. Though there is a feeling that there would have been more rich data to analyse within the book, it provides a quality look at the use of interviews and the way in which data can be pulled apart and analysed. This book provides a great starting point for researchers who wish to consider femininity and subculture to do so, following the use of quality reference material and interesting empirical chapter themes.

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