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The Experiences of Feminist Academic Activists Attempting to Challenge the Rules of the Game in UK Academia

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Abstract

This PhD examines the experiences of feminist academic activists attempting to challenge the rules of the game in UK academia. It addresses the questions: 1. Are the rules of the game in UK academia gendered? 2. Who are feminist academic activists? 3. In what ways do feminist academic activists challenge the rules of the game in UK Academia? And 4. How do feminist academic activists persevere within gendered institutions? The study is underpinned theoretically by feminist activism, concepts of empowerment and Freire's theory of an alternative education, alongside feminist pedagogy. Narrative interviews were conducted with fifteen self-identified feminist academic activists and presented in a series of re-tellings and a narrative synthesis. In addition, my own narrative illustrates my own reflexive feminist academic activist positioning. Findings suggest that feminist academic activists often develop their identities during their upbringing, through education and through exposure to other feminists. They also suggest that the rules of the game can be challenged in the everyday through feminist research and teaching, speaking out, and through micro, everyday actions, including non-conforming. Furthermore, being a feminist academic activist requires both emotional and physical labour which involves developing approaches to survive within gendered institutions. The thesis contributes to theory and practice by suggesting ways in which developing a critical consciousness can lead to action; offering an innovative methodological approach; illustrating the embodiment of feminist academic activists; and challenging the rules of the game in academia.

Keywords:

Feminist, Activist, Higher education, Universities, Academic, Identity, Survival, Narrative

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Dedication

For survivors.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

Overview of the Chapter

In this PhD, I consider the experiences of feminist academic activists attempting to challenge the rules of the game in UK academia. Within this first chapter, I introduce the PhD, identifying the key aspects of the research including my approach to gender, feminism and some key statistics on gender in UK universities. In order to understand the experiences of feminist academic activists within universities it is essential to outline these statistics and define the rules of the game that academics may be attempting to challenge. In this chapter, I thus briefly define the rules of the game and outline the context of UK universities in relation to gender equality, offering statistics of male and females in senior positions and insights into the culture of universities in the UK. I then introduce the theoretical basis for the PhD research, referring to Freire and feminist pedagogy, which provides the lens through which I conduct the research. Next, I offer a brief overview of the literature review on empowerment and the way it links to the theory and research. I outline the aims of the research and the specific research questions as well as the methodology and methods, which I use to answer those questions. I then detail the ways in which I present my data and a brief overview of the findings within the discussion chapters. Finally, I consider the contribution and potential impact of the research empirically, theoretically, methodologically and in terms of university practice.

Motivation for Research and my Background

My motivation for this research is based on my experiences and values, which have developed through my upbringing and previous work. In this section, I provide a brief overview of my positionality, which I expand upon within the reflective sections in chapter 7 and the reflexive chapter 10. I have defined myself as a feminist since being a teenager; I have a feminist academic mother, who brought me up to be aware of inequalities and who has always been a role

model to me. I have experienced gender inequality growing up, being unable to play football in school and instead being taught dance and netball. I have seen and experienced violence from men to women, because of their gender and the power relations between them. All of these experiences have made me deeply passionate about changing the world for the better, to be a safer, more equal space for women. This has been reflected in my prior studies, beginning in my undergraduate degree where I focused on inequality and social mobility and then in my masters with my dissertation on "Economic or social empowerment? A critical evaluation of UN Women's approach to women's empowerment". My Masters was in international development and I became increasingly interested in gender inequality from a global perspective and developed as a feminist to think not only about women in the Global North but also in developing countries and the Global South. After graduating from my MA, I worked with a charity in Ghana, which focused on a women's group in the Northern region of Tamale. This only increased my passion for gender equality as despite the extreme inequality in Ghana I was inspired by the women we worked with and their resilience and hard work to overcome barriers they faced due to their gender. Our work was focused on education and I became increasingly passionate about the power of education to change women's lives. This led me on my return to the UK to think about going back into academia and pursuing a career in higher education. The focus of this PhD on academia is also personal for me as I have attended academic conferences since being young, travelling with my parents and sitting in on presentations and attending conference dinners. I was brought up in an academic world, coming into university with my mother as a child when she could not find childcare and sitting with administrators when she had to teach. When I returned from Ghana I knew I wanted to work within the higher education sector and I started working for a University as an administrator in the careers service. I am aware that these experiences reveal my deeply privileged background in terms of education and access to the academic world. Yet my exposure to academia and feminism from a young age and my experiences of gender inequality have always guided my work and led to me undertaking this PhD. The focus on Freire's transformative education, empowerment and feminist academic activism comes from my core belief in the power

of education and the need for the political movement of feminism to bring about change. My focus on gender is therefore strongly related to my personal values and my ontological perspective. Yet, there are many definitions and approaches to gender and I thus outline my specific definition of gender for the purpose of this PhD in the following section.

Defining Gender

Despite multiple notions of gender, the concept is usually associated with male and female binaries and the behaviours, characteristics and features which are connected with them (Alsop, Fitzsimons, & Lennon, 2002). Female behaviours are often affiliated with femininity and male behaviours with masculinity (Young, 2005). Concepts of femininity and masculinity are debated widely within the literature but the social constructionist approach that I adopt considers them as practices in society determined by culture and produced through people's actions (Connell, 2000; Schippers, 2007). Although there may be multiple masculinities and femininities the hegemonic versions contain certain features such as masculine notions of rationality, strength and competitiveness and feminine notions of passiveness, emotional and caring tendencies (Schippers, 2007). Based on these conceptions of masculine and feminine, essentialist notions of gender suggest that femininity appears to be closely related to the female body and closer to nature due to women's experiences of menstruation, pregnancy, menopause and breastfeeding. According to essentialism, women appear to have more bodily ties than men and thus femininity represents a close tie with nature and biological limits (Ortner, 1972). This relates to conceptions of women as emotional due to the hormones involved in reproductive processes and as caring due to their ability to carry babies and breastfeed them. Alternatively, men appear to be freer from nature as they have less obvious bodily ties to it in terms of reproduction and hormones (Ortner, 1972). Women's affiliation with femininity thus has connotations of the natural limits of the female body and that female behaviour stems from these limits. Essentialist notions of gender are widely critiqued by feminists and in this PhD, I reject any idea of male and female characteristics and behaviours as essential or wholly biological.

Yet, the distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine, and mind and body is deeply embedded in notions of gender and stems from Cartesian dualism. Descartes (1993) philosophised that the body and mind were absolutely distinct and aspects of the mind such as rationality, reason and intelligence were of higher value than the body. However, when essentialist conceptions of gender dominated, women were seen as having more bodily limits, due to their reproductive systems, and Cartesian dualism presented them as unable to be fully rational, transcending the limits of their body like men (Shildrick, 1997). Descartes was influential during the enlightenment period, which represented a move to science and reason, away from relying on the senses and religion alone for knowledge. This is significant in terms of gender as it represents a period where essentialist notions of gender were the norm and binaries between male and female were considered as natural differences, related to the female body as tied closely to nature. This would suggest that gender is based on natural differences between men and women and that women's natural tendencies are of lower value to men's. This is a problem for many feminists as it maintains women's lesser position within society by considering femininity as inherent and essential to women's being. The sex and gender distinction offers an alternative approach to critique biological determinism, in that sex is referred to as biological differences between men and women but gender is considered to be based on cultural definitions and norms (Butler, 1988, 2006). This returns to a dualism between sex and gender, much like the dualism between nature and culture, in order to refute biological determinist theories.

I define gender based on the sex and gender distinction, as cultural and socially constructed differences between men and women. If gender is socially constructed, then the notion of male and female as binary is defined by society and produced through social relations and culture. The idea that people are either male or female is based on bodily distinctions, yet there are those who are biologically born with neither XX chromosomes nor XY chromosomes but with an alternative combination of genes (Andersen, 1993). Similarly, people can be born with XX chromosomes but with male genitalia or with XY chromosomes and female genitalia (Andersen, 1993), suggesting that there are more than the presupposed two sexes of male and female. This implies that the

emphasis on male and female binaries is in fact a cultural one, whereby people try to fit and define a body as a particular gender based on cultural conceptions of what it means to be male or female (Butler, 1988). For those who do not fit within these cultural definitions there has often been reassignment, where doctors modify the body to fit within a male or female binary (Andersen, 1993). Gender is thus not only socially constructed but politically constructed in a way which maintains women's lesser position within cultures. Judith Butler (1988) argues that the construction of gender is a political one as it is based on oppression of women:

"I would agree, and argue that it is primarily political interests which create the social phenomena of gender itself, and that without a radical critique of gender constitution feminist theory fails to take stock of the way in which oppression structures the ontological categories through which gender is constructed" (Butler, 1988, p. 529).

According to Butler (1988) gender is not a mere idea of what it is to be male or female but is an act, which men and women perform, referring to this as the performativity of gender. People thus perform gender and gender is created and recreated through people acting it out in this way. This suggests that people use their material bodies in a way, which forms gender definitions and is formed by gender definitions. Butler (2006) argues that bodies are gendered from the moment humans come into existence and, through repetition of acts, gender becomes entrenched into society. Thus, the notion of binaries of male and female are important as they represent masculinity and femininity, which influence the way people perform gender and use their bodies. Not all people identify with gender binaries and instead may refer to themselves as non-binary. Those people are rejecting the socially constructed notions of sex and gender and the extremes of masculinity and femininity (Richards et al., 2016). Non-binary and transgender people are thus considered within the definition of gender in this PhD, as by subverting and rejecting social norms they are creating new constructions of gender as fluid. In this PhD I thus focus on gender as socially constructed through social norms and culture, whilst also acknowledging those who are moving away from the traditional socially constructed binaries of gender, who experience gender in alternative ways. When using the terms men or women in this PhD, I am referring to the socially

constructed categories of gender, which dominate society, rather than any essentialist notions of what it means to be male or female.

The Rules of the Game in UK Academia

This PhD is predicated on current evidence, which strongly suggests that women and some other minority groups fail to achieve the highest levels within UK academia (Higher Education Funding Council for England [HEFCE], 2015). There are multiple factors that might be causing this, including unconscious bias, unsupportive cultures and failures of university and government policy. The evidence for a gender gap in senior positions is persuasive: women remain a fairly constant 41% of full-time academics in the UK, but only 26% of UK professors are female (Higher Education Statistics Agency [HESA], 2017). In disciplines such as Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine, known as STEMM subjects, women academics are particularly under-represented (HESA, 2017). Women also make up 67% of part-time staff in UK Universities, which suggests that women either choose to work in flexible roles or are less able to gain full time positions (HESA, 2017). Gender inequality is thus evident in UK universities with women failing to reach senior positions and certain disciplines being dominated by men. This implies that universities are gendered institutions, whereby the numbers of women pursuing long-term academic careers remains limited compared to men and there are far fewer women at senior levels. These statistics show that a problem exists, but in this PhD I consider the reasons for the gap and the ways in which universities may be gendered within their cultural practices and processes.

In this PhD I thus focus on the rules of the game in academia, which involve socially constructed norms and structures in universities, both formal and informal (Hollingsworth, 2000; Gertler, 2010). My consideration of the rules of the game is based on my social constructionist ontology and the notion that institutions have norms, which are created through social interaction, culture and negotiation. In chapter 3 I thus review the literature on the rules of the game in UK academia in relation to gender, identifying rules relating to neoliberalism and the impact of managerialism in universities, the importance of publishing and the emphasis on research performance, the way labour is distributed in universities and networking in academic

communities. These areas are prevalent across the literature on UK universities and the rules of the game. Many authors identify university practices and norms as gendered, in that they are based on an ideal academic who is male and has no familial responsibility (Benschop & Brouns, 2003; Monroe et al., 2008; Mauthner & Edwards, 2010; Bleijenbergh, Van, & Vinkenburg, 2012; Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013; Morley, 2013). In the literature review on the rules of the game, I explore these key aspects and ways in which they are gendered. This provides insights into the key areas of academic culture in order to contextualise the research of this PhD, offering potential areas, which feminist academic activists may be trying to change to improve gender equality.

Feminist Academic Activists

I focus on feminist academic activist experiences as they can offer insights into how people are attempting to change gendered universities to be more inclusive for women, whilst working within them. Emphasising the experiences of those at different levels of academia offers an alternative perspective to centralised university interventions by revealing how individuals or groups of academics are acting to change their situation. When defining feminist academic activism, it is important to address the three separate aspects: feminist, academic and activist, and how these fit together. Despite multiple approaches to feminism, some of which are in opposition, feminism in general is based on the notion that society is patriarchal and there ought to be an emphasis on women's experiences and improving the situation for women (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). The feminist idea that the personal is political emphasises women's everyday personal experiences as part of a wider context of patriarchy and a gendered society. Feminism is inherently political and based on bringing about change for women. For the purpose of the PhD, I therefore do not focus on one type of feminism but acknowledge anyone as feminist who focuses on improving the situation of women and believes in changing patriarchal structures. Academics are those who conduct research and/or teaching within or as part of a university (Benschop & Brouns, 2003). I define feminist academics as those who combine feminist values with aspects of their academic work of teaching and research and any other activities which are conducted in universities alongside those roles. Activism and academia may seem to contradict each other as

academia emphasises theory and activism focuses on real world action (Eschle & Maiguashca, 2006). Activism itself has multiple definitions, yet all definitions of activism are based on the notion of action to bring about social change or challenge social norms, although methods of doing so may differ (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012). My definition of feminist academic activists therefore includes people who hold feminist values, teach and/or research within a university and take part in some sort of action to improve the situation for women academics. When gathering participants, I sought those who self-identified as feminist academic activists as it allowed for different approaches to feminism and activism all in a UK academic setting. This meant that people with differing perspectives of feminism and experiences of gender agreed to take part. The fifteen participants therefore included three men, including one transgender man, as they self-identified as feminist academic activists. I include a table of participant demographics, including gender, in chapter 6 on methodology and methods. Furthermore, in chapter 2, I contextualise feminist academic activism by considering changes within the feminist movement and within universities over the last 60 years. This includes considering feminism in waves and differing theories of feminism and the ways that the wider feminist movement has impacted feminism within UK universities. The following chapter thus expands on the notion of feminist academic activism, offering the context of the development of academic feminism within UK universities.

Freire

The theoretical underpinning for this research involves a combination of Paulo Freire's theory of critical pedagogy and the feminist theory of feminist pedagogy. Both of these relate to my own views on transforming education to be more egalitarian, particularly providing a space for women. In Chapter 4, I outline Freire's influence on educational pedagogy, suggesting that his theory extends across cultures, countries, disciplines and educational settings (McLaren & Hammer, 1989; McLaren & Leonard, 1993). I outline his theory of conscientization, whereby, educators raise people's consciousnesses by facilitating them to view the world critically and act to bring about change. (Freire & Horton, 1990; Freire, 1996; 2013). I then link Freire's theories to feminist pedagogy, which was hugely influenced by this notion of critically approaching the

world. Differing from Freire, feminist pedagogy focuses on bringing female voices into education, which have been marginalised. It thus emphasises women's lived experiences and the co-creation of knowledge (Eschle & Maiguashca, 2006; Cahill et al., 2010). I suggest that this could be considered as a basis for activism as it involves a critical perspective to the world, specifically around gender. Similarly, an increased criticality and awareness could motivate feminist academic activists to challenge the masculine norms present within universities and offer an alternative approach, which values women's subjectivities (Weiler, 1995). Freire and feminist pedagogy work well when combined as both theorise ways to bring about change through education in order to create a more equal world. Both highlight education as the means to transform inequalities and provide theories, which offer an alternative education, based on equality. According to these theories the cultural issues highlighted above which maintain gender inequalities would be addressed through a form of educational activism based on consciousness raising, feminist research and changing educational culture. In chapter 4, I provide an outline of these theories, suggesting a theory of an alternative education which could be made possible through feminist academic activism.

Empowerment

Feminist research and pedagogy, and Freire's process of conscientization, are often described as empowering forms of education (VanderPlaat, 1999; Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Eschle & Maiguashca, 2006). In chapter 5, I therefore review the literature on empowerment as it draws parallels with Freire's process of conscientization and his call for a move from awareness to action. In chapter 5, I outline key concepts of empowerment in the literature including psychological aspects of empowerment, relating to Freire's notion of conscientization (East, 2000; Summerson Carr, 2003). I suggest that this psychological process initiates empowerment by making people aware of inequalities and their own oppression, leading them to seek change. Agency is the second aspect of empowerment prevalent in the literature, which refers to one's ability to act and make decisions without limits from gendered social norms (Kabeer, 1999, 2005; Ibrahim & Alkire, 2007). This aspect could be the first step towards challenging inequalities and

norms, which might limit women's choices. The final aspect of empowerment identified in the literature is people acting to bring about change to reduce inequality through a form of activism. For the purpose of this PhD, I consider activism in academia in a broad sense as any action which might challenge social norms and attempt to bring about change to reduce inequalities in universities. I argue that academic activism occurs from the personal and thus is a bottom-up action brought about by individuals or groups of academics as opposed to university policy or centralised interventions (Bendl et al., 2014). This might include feminist research, critical pedagogies, pressure groups, forming networks and support groups and collaborative research but must challenge gendered norms and attempt to alter the structures, which maintain inequalities in universities (Bailyn, 2003; Eschle & Maiguashca, 2006; Martin et al., 2007 Bendl & Schmidt, 2012; Bendl et al., 2014). In chapter 5 I critique and explore these perspectives on empowerment and outline a process of feminist empowerment which applies to a university context. Chapter 5 therefore builds on Freire's theory of alternative education to suggest ways in which people may be empowered to act to bring about change in universities.

Aims of the Research/Research Questions

Having briefly defined and outlined the rules of the game in academia, the definition of feminist academic activism and the theoretical underpinnings for the research, the aim of the PhD and related research questions are as follows:

<u>Aim of the PhD:</u>

This PhD aims to ascertain the experiences of feminist academic activists attempting to challenge the rules of the game in UK academia.

<u>Overarching Research Question:</u>

What are the experiences of feminist academic activists attempting to challenge the rules of the game in UK academia?

<u>Subsidiary Questions:</u>

1. Are the rules of the game in UK academia gendered?

2. Who are feminist academic activists?
3. In what ways do feminist academic activists challenge the rules of the game in UK academia?
4. How do feminist academic activists persevere within gendered institutions?

Objectives:

- Identify feminist academic activists in UK universities
- Identify the rules of the game in UK academia
- Identify the experiences of feminist academic activists in relation to the rules of the game in UK universities
- Identify ways in which feminist academic activists challenge the rules of the game in UK universities
- Identify ways in which feminist academic activists persevere whilst working within gendered institutions

Methodology

In chapter 6, I outline the methodology and methods which I use to answer these research questions and fulfil my objectives. I address my philosophical approach to conducting research and the specific methods used to answer the research questions. I consider the notion that feminist academic activism focuses on improving the situation for women, since women more commonly experience negative effects from gendered social norms and inequalities identified in this chapter. However, it is important that university approaches to gender inequality do not just attempt to "fix the women" (Ely & Meyerson, 2000, p. 105) without addressing the underlying cultural and structural problems underpinning any inequality. Hence, I suggest that the methodology is not focused on addressing university wide interventions that aim to improve the position of women but considers the role of women themselves and how gender issues can be addressed from the bottom-upwards in universities through feminist academic activism.

In order to address the above research questions, this study is based on a qualitative methodology, relating to human experiences and how they reflect wider knowledge. The research is interpretive, focusing on the subjective realities of individuals and their interactions with the world, considering the experiences and perceptions of men and women. Qualitative methodology is based on understanding the world through people's experiences of it and the meanings they construct (Merriam, 2016). This PhD is inherently qualitative as the research questions focus on the experiences of feminist academic activists and aims to gain insights into the subjective realities of the participants. The research is also underpinned by a feminist methodology, as I focus on women's lived experiences and use cooperative methods emphasising subject to subject relations (Haynes, 2008; Cahill et al., 2010;). Feminist methodology is based on feminist notions of collaboration and thus involves subject to subject relations between researcher and participants, focusing on the co-creation of knowledge and allowing participants to be equals within the research process (Cahill et al., 2010). These approaches are further outlined and explored within chapter 6.

Methods

In chapter 6, I also outline the narrative interview method that I use. This method took the form of in-depth narrative interviews with fifteen participants. The narrative method involves focusing on the memories and experiences of participants through their telling of events in their own words (Polkinghorne, 1995). It is particularly useful when answering the research questions as it allows participants to reflect on their own experiences and create their own narratives when expressing them. Reflection on life experiences by telling a narrative offers insights into participant's processes of becoming feminist academic activists and their journey of self-identifying as such. By considering their past experiences as narratives it is possible to have a wider understanding of the present and how people's worlds change through time (Janesick, 2007). Individual personal experiences can also reveal aspects of social relations, social interaction and interaction with organisations (Haynes, 2010). As this PhD is focused on a university context the in-depth nature of narrative interviewing not only provides data about the

individual's thoughts and feelings but also with their relation to universities as organisations. Individual stories as data can result in shared themes and connections, showing ways in which individuals link together through their own experiences of feminist academic activism (Atkinson, 2012). Again, I expand on the narrative method within chapter 6, explaining the specific ways in which I conduct the interviews and analyse the responses.

Re-tellings and Synthesis of Narratives

In chapter 7 and 8, I present the narratives in two ways. Firstly, I re-tell five participants' narratives by reordering the interviews and presenting them in the narrative form. This is based on the narrative tradition of bringing together data from an individual interview and re-wording it to form a whole story (Polkinghorne, 1995). I chose to re-tell the five narratives based on the diversity of background and experiences of the participants and for their particularly compelling stories. Re-telling the narratives at length provides insights into the lived experiences of feminist academic activists in depth. I analysed the interviews based on the "listening guide" approach to narrative analysis, whereby the researcher reads the transcripts multiple times each in a different way (Doucet & Mauthner 2008, 2017). This allows for multiple perspectives on the interview, consdering stories from the micro subject and the macro of wider social and power relations. I outline this approach in depth in chapter 6 on the methodology and methods. After each narrative re-telling in chapter 7, I reflect on the interview with that particular participant, using excerpts from my research journal, which I filled in immediately after each interview. This is to offer insights into the process of the interviews and the experience of being told each narrative. It allows for reflexivity as I am honest and open about my impact on the interview process and my own assumptions during the interviews.

After the five re-tellings, I then present the ten other narratives in chapter 8, capturing their narratives in a more condensed form due to constraints of word-count, providing a synthesised overview of the ten further narratives. In the synthesis, I explore common areas participants addressed during the narrative interviews including feminist identity and background, activist

identity, and challenges faced by participants. This allows for an overview of the other 10 narratives within the scope of the PhD word limit, connecting the ten participants' stories into a collective whole. In both chapters, I use direct quotes from the interviews to maintain participant subjectivity and authenticity.

Findings

Within the discussion chapter, I outline findings in relation to the research questions. The research questions and the data from the re-tellings and synthesis prompted three main areas of discussion. The first section focuses on feminist academic activist identity and relates to research question 2. Who are feminist academic activists? In this section, I draw from the literature reviews and consider ways in which theories of conscientization and empowerment relate to feminist academics' lived experiences of their feminist development. The second area of discussion in section 2 considers the rules of the game and the ways in which feminist activists challenge them within their roles as academics. This specifically addresses the research questions 1. Are the rules of the game in UK academia gendered? And 3. What ways do feminist academic activists challenge the rules of the game in UK Academia? In this section I consider feminist research and teaching, speaking out and feminist activism within the everyday. These areas of discussion developed as a way of answering the question about how participants challenge the rules of the game, from the interviews with participants and their suggestions about how they challenged the rules of the game in their universities. The third area of discussion in section 3, considers feminist activist survival, addressing research question 4. How do feminist academic activists persevere within gendered institutions? I use a definition of feminist survival offered by Sara Ahmed in 'Living a Feminist Life', which she refers to as a "Survival Kit" (Ahmed 2017, P 235). In this section, I consider various strategies used by the participants to survive as feminist academic activists within patriarchal systems and institutions. The strategies I discuss include activism as survival, feminist support networks and connection, "self-care" and maintaining hope.

Reflection-My Narrative

Following the discussion chapter, in chapter 10 I provide a reflection in the style of auto-ethnography, reflexivity and narrative telling, through which I reflect on the PhD and research process as a whole. Within this, I consider my own narrative, including my feminist academic development and my activist intentions. I position this chapter towards the end of the PhD as it allowed me to reflect on the entire PhD process, including the discussion, and the impact the process had on my own perceptions of what it means to be a feminist academic activist. I used a reflexive auto-ethnographical approach, meaning I draw from auto-ethnographic methods such as considering my emotions and feelings and my relationship to my own organisation as well as the higher education institution (Hamilton et al., 2008). However, it is not strictly auto-ethnography as I also draw from narrative methodology, talking about my experiences in relation to the past and present, forming them into a whole (Polkinghorne, 1995). Thus, I refer to this as an auto-ethnographical approach, as I draw from certain methodological auto-ethnographical traditions such as focusing on the self, rejecting objectivity, and the cultural elements of my personal experience (Hamilton et al., 2008). The reflexive chapter is thus a combination of auto-ethnography, reflexivity and narrative approaches. This chapter contributes to the thesis by maintaining my reflexivity, as I am open and honest about my positionality and its impact on the research, acknowledging that the PhD has been conducted through and with myself as the researcher, as well as with my participants. Reflexivity can be defined as a process of critical self-reflection on the process of conducting research, whilst acknowledging the position of the researcher and their effects on the research process (Berger, 2013; Palaganas et al., 2017). I discuss my reflexive approach further within chapter 5 on the methodology and methods.

Implications/Impact

Finally, I conclude the PhD by making recommendations for activism, academia and feminist survival. I believe this thesis makes an impact in 4 areas which I outline within the conclusion chapter:

1. Theoretical - by adding to theories of empowerment, activism and feminist pedagogy in universities
2. Empirical – by providing new data on the lived experiences of feminist academic activists
3. Methodological – by applying innovative and newly integrated research methods to understand and evaluate lived experiences of feminist academic activists
4. Practice and impact – by suggesting ways in which feminist academic activists might continue to challenge gendered norms whilst working within gendered universities

The following chapters contextualise the PhD in a vast history of feminist academic activism, offer a theoretical underpinning for the research and a review of the literature on the rules of the game and empowerment. These chapters provide the basis for the research and the lens through which the research has been conducted.

Chapter 2:

Feminist Academic Activism in Context

As I stated in the previous chapter, I define feminist academic activism in a broad sense, as a form of action or actions undertaken by an academic or academics which attempt to challenge gendered norms in the academy and/or beyond. For the purpose of this PhD, I allow participants to self-identify as feminist academic activists, offering them the opportunity to suggest what that identity specifically means to them. In this chapter, I outline the context of feminist activism in higher education, acknowledging the changes in the feminist activist movement and its relation to higher education. I then consider recent developments within feminist activism more broadly including the "Me-too" movement and the resurgence of a digital feminist activism amongst young feminists. This chapter is a relatively short overview of many years of feminist history and therefore cannot include all aspects, but those which are included are particularly relevant to the UK university context. Similarly, they represent key periods or moments in feminist academic activist history based on the literature. I use the wave metaphor for feminisms, including second, third and fourth wave feminism, to represent the dominance of different approaches to feminism at different periods of time. I acknowledge that not all feminists fit within the wave narrative and waves exist simultaneously (Evans & Chamberlain, 2015). However, the wave metaphor is a useful way of understanding the dominant approaches to the feminist movement over time, within a relatively succinct outline of feminist history. I also consider different feminist theories alongside waves of feminism including: Radical feminism, Liberal feminism, Socialist feminism, Psychoanalytical feminism, Post-structural feminism, New materialist feminism, Intersectional feminism, Post-feminism, Transnational feminism and Post-colonial feminism. Although there are additional feminisms to those, the feminisms I have listed represent significant theories which have had a particular impact on feminist theory discourse and feminist activism. I give a brief overview of each of these theories, linking them to the wave narrative. Yet, feminist theories do not necessarily fit exactly within the wave approach as some span across waves and time periods. The following chapter takes account of that, whilst linking feminist theories with feminist waves,

UK higher education and activism. I begin the context for the purpose of this PhD from the 1970s when women's studies and second wave feminism emerged, as it links closely with the beginnings of feminism within the academy in the UK (David & Clegg, 2008). Yet, it is important to note that in 1963 the *Robins Report on Higher Education* was published which called for an expansion of UK higher education, through making it available to everyone, including more women (David, 2015).

Second Wave Feminism

Although there are now relatively equal numbers of male and female undergraduates in the UK, in the 1960s less than one in ten women went to university (Sisterhood and After Research Team, 2013). There were significant feminist and women's movements before this time; however, In the 1970s, second wave feminism emerged alongside the British Women's Liberation Movement, beginning at a conference in Oxford (Calvini-Lefebvre et al., 2010). One of the four main goals of the movement was equal education and job opportunities (Sisterhood and After Research Team, 2013). During this period, women's studies courses began being advertised at universities in the UK, partly due to a rising demand relating to the feminist activist movement (Bird, 2002). Yet, there was resistance from within universities to the new women's studies courses and many of the emerging courses were championed by individual women academics and collectives of women academics who were part of the wider Women's Liberation Movement. Bird (2002) refers to this as the "academic arm" (p. 139) of the Women's Liberation Movement. The rise of women's studies was thus reliant on the feminist activism and social movements outside of academia, which were occurring due to the emergence of second wave feminism, and the Women's Liberation Movement:

"Without the movement there would not have been the students, and without the students there wouldn't have been the development in the universities, they were closely interlinked for the first 15 years." (Bird, 2002, p. 145)

This movement was not limited to the UK but as the PhD considers a UK context, I focus mainly on the historical aspects of UK feminist academic activism.

Within the Women's Liberation Movement, a main tactic was the notion of "consciousness raising" (Chandler et al,. 2007, P 356) which involved trying to raise awareness of women's inequalities through the sharing of experiences of oppression, which aimed to change the consciousness of women and their oppressors. This concept is explored in detail in chapter 4 in relation to Paolo Freire, feminist pedagogy and activism in the present day. Consciousness raising impacted the rise of women's studies and the links between education and the feminist movement as it had aims of educating people about feminist issues and women's oppression. Much of the feminist work within higher education shared the values of the Women's Liberation Movement in that it encompassed the personal as political, encouraging conversations about the way personal experiences are linked to political notions of patriarchy (David & Clegg, 2008). This meant that women's studies focused specifically on the experiences of women, as their experiences had previously been missing from academic research (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). However, there was some resistance to the rise of women's studies courses, including from members of the Women's Liberation Movement. Some in the movement were concerned that the radical nature of their activism would be removed from women's studies courses and a watered-down version would be taught (Chandler et al,. 2007). Instead, some within the movement called for less formal educational approaches to feminist activism and saw feminist academic activists as less radical than those outside of academia (Bird, 2003). Despite this women's studies persevered within UK higher education and from the 1980s became increasingly accepted as an academic discipline (Bird, 2003), often residing within sociology departments in universities (Skeggs, 2008). Feminist teaching was also becoming part of courses beyond women's studies, including sociology, politics, education and others, with the formation of new feminist pedagogies by feminist scholars across disciplines (David & Clegg, 2008). A huge amount of research and scholarship was conducted during this time and many influential texts were published including by prominent feminist authors such as Ann Oakley, Germaine Greer, Angela McRobbie, bell hooks and many

more influential feminist scholars (Skeggs, 2008). This increase in feminist and women's studies is significant, yet it is important to note that these courses and scholars still existed on the margins of UK higher education (Arnot, 1992).

Despite the increase in women's studies and feminist scholars in the 70s and early 80s, during the 1980s and the era of Thatcherism there were "ideological attacks" (Skeggs, 2008, p. 674) on sociology, particularly feminist sociology and women's studies. During this time there were economic cuts within women's studies and sociology and academics who remained working in these areas were working under the threat of their departments being closed and job losses (Skeggs, 2008). The economic climate, relating to Thatcher, began to emphasise consumerism and the beginnings of the massification of higher education, alongside quality control of academic courses (David, 2004). Increasing numbers of women were entering into education, mainly women from middle class backgrounds. Skeggs (2008) suggests that the economic situation led to the dispersal of feminist scholars who were trying to gain jobs in academia, as well as spending time engaging with other aspects of political activism such as the miner's strikes. Despite the initial cuts in sociology and women's studies, paradoxically women's studies courses began increasing again due to the opening up of the educational marketplace, which occurred during the era of Thatcher:

"Mrs Thatcher led the Conservative party to victory. The next ten years were to witness a phenomenal growth of interest in feminist educational analysis, at a time paradoxically when the 'pursuit of equality' was increasingly challenged by central government initiatives" (Arnot, 1992, p. 42)

The feminist movement was also increasingly involved in a political resistance to Thatcher in relation to the miner's strikes, with increasing numbers of women engaging with feminist resistance in this form (Aune & Holyoak, 2017). Despite this increase of women entering academia and going to university, it was mainly middle-class white women and academic feminism was also relatively white, yet to consider notions of intersectionality (David, 2004).

Women's studies courses continued increasing into the early 1990s, as additional numbers of women in higher education led to increasing demand, relating to the rise of consumerism (Adkins, 2002). Other courses were also expanding and beginning to include notions of gender in their teachings (David, 2004).

Psychoanalytical Feminism

Psychoanalytical feminism was highly influential during the second wave, developed by feminists such as Simone De Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray (Alsop et al., 2002). Psychoanalytical feminism built on the work of Freud and his conception of the Oedipus complex and the Castration complex (Donovan, 2001). These are complex concepts but are based on the idea that females form a sexualised attachment to their father and reject the mother due to their lack of penis and males form a sexualised attachment to their mother because they fear castration as they perceive her lack of penis as a form of castration (Alsop et al., 2002). These feelings are then reconciled by the boy achieving masculinity and the girl achieving femininity (Alsop et al., 2002). Jacque Lacan built on Freud's theories to suggest that men inherit the "phallic position" based on the penis as the first sign of difference and that language is based on this difference and thus inherently masculine (Alsop et al., 2002). Thus, women are lacking in the phallus and enter the cultural world without subjectivity, which they only gain through sexual desire for a man (Alsop et al., 2002). Psychoanalytical feminism critiques and builds on the theories of Freud and Lacan, critcising the "phallocentric" approach of their theories and Lacan's lack of acknowledgment of sexual difference (Alsop et al., 2002). However, Irigaray sought to rethink femininity and masculinity so that women were not only considered in relation to men as other or lacking (Donovan, 2001). Irigaray was concerned with language and the construction of female, subverting the phallic language and questioning masculine notions of meaning (Whitford, 1986). The work of psychoanalytical feminists such as Irigaray has become highly influential on feminism, particularly post-structural feminism, which I discuss later in this

chapter. It also led to increasing activism focusing on language and resitance to the discourse surrounding the notion of woman (Alsop et al., 2002).

As well as psychoanalytical feminism, the three prominent feminist theories in the Global North during the era of second wave feminism were Socialist Feminism, Radical Feminism and Liberal Feminism. Both Liberal Feminism and Socialist feminism originated earlier than the second wave but became increasingly popular during the time of the Women's Liberation Movement.

Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism originated in the first wave of feminism, post-enlightenment and through the work of liberal feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Frances Wright and Sarah Grimke (Donovan, 2001). It represented a rejection of the notion that men held higher intellectual status than women and thus women ought to have the same opportunities and freedoms as men (Donovan, 2001). Liberal Feminism was developed based on traditional liberalism and focused on gaining equality of opportunity for women (Wendell, 1987). Liberal feminists sought personal and political freedom, including freedom from violence, access to education, freedom to work and earn an income and political influence. During the second wave liberal feminists were concerned with highlighting sexism in everyday life and increasing women's access to the institutions in society (Kroløkke and Sørensen, 2006). Liberal feminism was very much based on the sex and gender distinction as mentioned in Chapter 1, considering sex differences to be biological and gender differences to be social and cultural (Acker, S. 1987). In relation to UK higher education, liberal feminists during the second wave sought to gain equal access to higher education and increase knowledge around gender, sex roles and stereotypes (Acker, S. 1987). Education was a major concern for Liberal feminists during this period and their activism was focused on gaining equality of opportunity in education for women (Enslin, 2003). Liberal feminism does not seek to change the structures of institutions and society, rather to allow women to have the opportunity to be involved in the structures of society as they are

(Donovan, 2001). Liberal feminism has been critiqued for focusing on individualism in that it seeks to provide individual freedom for women, instead of trying to challenge the structures that arguably uphold women's lesser position (Wendell, 1987). It has also been criticised for being overtly middle-class and white and ignoring issues of power, patriarchy, race and class (Acker, S. 1987).

Socialist Feminism

In contrast to Liberal feminism, Socialist feminism was developed out of Marxist ideology and thus the main focus was on class and capitalism as an oppressive system (Donovan, 2001). For Socialist feminists, the position of women is directly related to capitalist political and economic systems and women are oppressed under the system of capitalist patriarchy (Eisentein, 1979). Socialist feminism can be distinguished from Marxist feminism, despite having similar ideological origins, as Marxist feminism tends to focus more on capitalism as its central concept, whereas Socialist feminism tries to synthesise capitalism and patriarchy as "dual-systems" (Alsop et al., 2002, p. 71). Yet, Socialist feminism still has its origins in Marxist theories of class and capitalism such as the notion that culture and society are based on material economic conditions (Donovan, 2001). Unlike Liberal feminists, Socialist feminists sought to change societal structures and the system of capitalist patriarchy (Acker, S. 1987). During the second wave, socialist feminists were concerned with women's labour, both within and outside the home, including labour in family structures (Eisentein, 1979). In regard to education, Socialist feminism contributed to developments in sociology such as the notion that education can reproduce gender and class divisions and is strongly linked with the economy (Acker, S. 1987). Socialist feminists adopted the tactic of consciousness raising which, as previously mentioned, was prominent during the second wave and influenced by Paolo Freire (Donovan, 2001). Freire himself focused on class oppression and, as I highlight in Chapter 4, his work was profoundly influential on both feminist pedagogies and activism through education. Consciousness raising for Socialist feminists could highlight class and gender oppression by

raising awareness of oppression in working class women (Donovan 2001). This is based on the Marxist and Freirean notion that class position defines one's consciousness, but Socialist feminists extended this concept to gender. Socialist feminist activism influenced higher education during the second wave as it was developing new analyses of oppression and was arguably constructing an early form of the now popular concept of intersectionality through consideration of interrelating forms of oppression (Gordon 2016). Yet, Socialist feminism has been criticised, often by Radical feminists, for a lack of attention to the body and female biology (Eisentein, 1979).

Radical Feminism

Radical feminism on the other hand sought to pay attention to the female body and the ways in which men control women's bodies (Alsop et al., 2002). For example, women's bodies can be exploited and controlled by men through violence, both sexual and domestic, control over women's fertility and sexuality (Alsop et al., 2002). Radical feminism was developed in the late 1960s as a response to negative treatment that some women faced by men in the "New-left" political movement (Donovan, 2001). Like Socialist feminists, during the second wave Radical feminists sought to change social structures which upheld men's control over women (Acker, S, 1987). Furthermore, Radical feminists also used consciousness raising approaches to activism, particularly through the exploration of the personal as political (Crow, 2000). They also had strong membership in the Women's Liberation Movement (Crow, 2000). In fact, Radical feminists coined the term "sexism" to describe the relations between men and women as the exercise of structural and societal power (Echols, 1989). Unlike Socialist feminists, Radical feminists thought that patriarchy was the original historical and deepest form of oppression, predating other forms of oppression such as class oppression (Donovan, 2001). Radical feminist activism involved the fight to legalise abortion and to raise awareness of systemic violence against women (Willis, 1984). Radical feminism was possibly the most dominant feminist theory and movement during the second wave, particularly due to its associations with the

Women's Liberation Movement. Radical feminism mobilised a huge number of women to engage in feminist activism as feminist ideas "exploded into public consciousness" (Willis, 1984, p. 19). Radical feminism sought to reframe conceptions of the female body, rejecting patriarchal understandings of womanhood (Alsop et al., 2002). Radical feminism also had strong links with lesbian activism and the rejection of heteronormative ideals (Donovan, 2001). In terms of higher education, Radical feminists highlighted the male dominance of knowledge and educational decision making, highly influencing the newly formed women's studies courses in UK universities (Acker, S. 1987). Radical feminism has been criticised for ignoring differences between women, emphasising gender over differences such as class, race, and other categories (Willis, 1984). It has also been argued that Radical feminism has an issue with biological determinism due to the focus on the female body (Mackay, 2015). Current debates around Radical feminism include critiques of Radical feminists as anti-sex work and debates around Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminism (TERF) (Hines, 2019).

These three feminisms were particularly prominent during the second wave but were not restricted to this time period. They were further developed and critiqued during the emergence of third wave feminism and are still present today both within and outside of higher education.

Third Wave Feminism

Within the 2000s emerged third wave feminism in the UK, beginning slightly earlier in the US context (Aune & Holyoak, 2017). Definitions of third wave feminism are contested, yet the term encompasses a new approach to feminism developed out of new generations of women identifying as feminists (Dean, 2009). This new wave of feminism also represented an acknowledgment of the need to make feminism more inclusive, with notions of intersectionality becoming embedded in the movement (Evans, 2016). Alongside this, the massification of higher education continued, with the emergence of new universities from 1992 (David, 2004). Academic feminism was concerned with these changes, considering them to represent new opportunities for women to enter academia (David, 2004). Relating to the increase of the notion of intersectionality

some universities began shifting women's studies courses to be called gender studies. This allowed the study of gender to encompass more than just women's experiences and instead to focus on the concept of gender as a whole, in relation to other socio-cultural characteristics (Essed et al., 2009). Gender studies still encompassed feminist values but moved beyond women's studies' focus on just women's experiences, instead considering gender relations, representing gender as a complex and multi-faceted concept (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2004). This shift in language from women to gender in universities represented wider changes in the feminist movement and the rise of third wave feminism.

Alongside the emergence of third wave feminism in the UK, Blair became Prime Minister and introduced his Third Way, New Labour policies (Lunt, 2008). His mantra "education, education, education" represents Blair's brand of politics, which focused on education as a means of economic prosperity (Lunt, 2008). Blair's government continued the expansion of higher education, suggesting that all secondary school pupils should have the choice of further study at universities (Walford, 2005). Most significantly, the New Labour government introduced tuition fees in 2006, further embedding universities as competitors in the free market (Miller, 2010). This increased the marketisation of higher education and the notion of a knowledge economy (Walford, 2005). The reduction of state funding resulted in universities having to compete for student numbers, in order to gain funds through student tuition (Miller, 2010). This significantly changed the context of UK higher education, increasing managerialism, marketisation and massification. I discuss this further as well as the relationship these changes have with gender in the following chapter on the rules of the game in higher education. New Labour also presented women as post-feminist, in that they were considered to be equal to men through their choices and ability to enter the free market as independent earners (McRobbie, 2000).

These changes significantly impacted the higher education sector. They furthered Thatcher's approach to the marketisation of higher education and the introduction of neoliberal economic policies into the higher education sector (Lunt, 2008). Following this, tuition fees have

risen beyond the initial cap up to £9,250, since the introduction by the Coalition Government in 2010. This further reduced state funding for higher education, increasing the need for universities to compete for funding. The current context of higher education thus increasingly emphasises individualism, competition and neoliberal free market approaches (Anderson, 2008; Morley, 2013). Feminist academic activism has developed to address not only gender equality but also the challenges that these changes have brought about (Morley, 2013). I discuss this further in the following chapter.

Third-wave feminism was a period where many different feminist theories developed, some in response to and some in line with the increasing neoliberal free market political landscape.

Post-feminism

Post-feminism represents a critique of the political landscape and of an increasing Liberal feminist approach during the third wave which focused on individualism and equality of opportunity (Braithwaite, 2002). Post-feminism as a concept suggests that feminism has become less radical, focusing on individual women's pleasure and gain (McRobbie, 2009; Calkin, 2015). Post-feminism therefore criticises the focus on individual economic and sexual freedom, relating to neoliberal notions of individualism and the free market (Calkin, 2015). In particular this criticises Liberal feminist notions of equality of opportunity. This reduces the need for political action and instead suggests that individual women can succeed by working hard and believing in themselves (McRobbie, 2009). This is in opposition to some second wave feminist notions of a shared consciousness, collaboration, solidarity, activism and political action against the state (Thornham, 2004). However, this is a critique of one approach to third wave feminism, specifically one which actively critiques second wave feminist activism in relation to its seriousness and inaccessibility for young feminists (Braithwaite, 2002). Similarly, the notion of consciousness raising became less prevalent within feminist discourse, with some suggesting that it had failed its purpose (Aune & Holyoak, 2017). Liberal feminist ideologies were becoming more popular again during the third wave, as the political landscape became more focused on the

individual and the free market. This led to the formation of a post-feminist critique and the argument that feminism needed to return to its arguably more political roots.

Intersectional Feminism

As previously mentioned, the third wave encompassed a critique of past feminisms for failing to acknowledge race and other characteristics. During this period the concept of intersectionality became embedded within feminist debates and movements. Kimberley Crenshaw is accredited with coining the term intersectionality in 1989, yet the term became popular later during third wave feminism. Crenshaw argued that distinguishing between issues of race and gender means that experiences which fall between those two or combine them are often forgotten about (Crenshaw, 1991). From a legal standpoint, courts looked at racial discrimination and gender discrimination but did not consider them together, causing cases of racialised gender discrimination to fall through the gap. Intersectionality reduces a framing problem, framing discrimination through certain specific aspects such as gender or race, instead of framing them through the individual's intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). Crenshaw refers to three aspects of intersectionality: Structural intersectionality, including structures of racism, gender, class, sexuality, ability and other characteristics; Political intersectionality, emphasising feminism and civil rights movements not dealing with intersectionality effectively; Representational intersectionality, whereby representation in courts and the state is not enough (McCall, 2005). This was significant for feminist theory as it allowed for consideration of an individual, their experience and subjectivity, addressing issues in Radical feminism such as the denial of difference between women. Yet, there were also significant critiques of intersectionality such as a critique of the notion of an intersection based on the different roads coming together and one being in the middle of them, because it suggests that at some point people's aspects are separable (the roads are separate and they meet). Instead some feminist theorists argue that their "categories" are distinct and exist through and within each other and thus intersectionality is inaccurate (Mountian 2017). In higher education, intersectionality

became a highly important concept within sociology and gender studies, influencing a huge amount of feminist scholarship. Yet it has been criticised as a "buzzword" by some feminist theorists and considered to be depoliticised with a shifting focus to "diversity" and "inclusion" (Davis, 2008). Again, this represents the political neoliberal landscape as universities became more marketised and individualism flourished. Despite these critiques, intersectionality is a highly influential concept and has had a profound impact on feminist movements and discourse (Harris & Patton, 2019). It was the first major feminism which highlighted the importance of race to be adopted by the wider feminist movement (Harris & Patton, 2019). This does not mean to say there was a lack of feminist work on race, rather that it had not become embedded within Western, dominant feminist movements until the concept of intersectionality. It also allowed for discussion of other differences as well as race in feminism discourse, such as transgender, disability, religion, sexuality, class and other socio-characteristics within and beyond the academy (Harris & Patton, 2019).

Post-colonial Feminism

Post-colonial feminism was another feminist theory and movement that became popular during third wave feminism, again as a response to the lack of acknowledgement of race in earlier feminisms. It represented the combination of post-colonial theory with feminist theory to account for the gender oppression present in post-colonial states (Parashar, 2016). Post-colonialism itself is a complex concept, but underpinning it is an analysis of the conditions of post-colonial states (Young, 2016). It originated earlier than third wave feminism, based on resistance to colonial rule (Young, 2016). Post-colonial feminism combines issues of gender with this analysis of post-colonial states, whilst also criticising other feminisms for their universalising and potentially colonising approaches (Chambers & Watkins, 2012). In line with intersectionality, Post-colonial feminism seeks to acknowledge difference in women's experiences, particularly highlighting the experiences of women in the Global South living in post-colonial states (Parashar, 2016). Post-colonial feminism was highly influenced by Chandra

Talpade Mohanty who critiqued some feminist notions of the “Third World Woman” as a singular category or subject (Mohanty, 1988). Her analysis highlighted issues in previous feminisms around their conception of women in the Global South and their rigidity when confronted with new ideas (Mohanty, 1988). Western feminisms according to Post-colonial feminism focused on the experiences of Western women as universal, ignoring the impact of colonialism on women from the Global South and issues of racism (Chambers & Watkins, 2012). In terms of higher education, Post-colonial feminists sought to address issues around Western researchers conducting fieldwork in and on the Global South and the ways in which research could reproduce colonial power relations (Schurr and Segebart, 2012). It also highlights the colonial relations present within higher education and feminist research itself, influencing much of the current research and activism on decolonising the university (Arday and Mirza, 2018). This current important and increasingly popular notion of decolonising the university aims to highlight and dismantle institutional racism in higher education (Arday and Mirza, 2018). The decolonial activism both in and beyond universities is possible due to the post-colonial feminist movement that developed during the third wave. Post-colonialist feminism was not in opposition to intersectional feminism necessarily but represents an additional analysis or approach to critiques of earlier feminisms as lacking in terms of their considerations of race and culture.

Transnational Feminism

Relating to and building on theories of Post-colonial feminism and Intersectional feminism is the field and movement of Transnational feminism. The latter can be distinguished from the former through its additional focus on issues of globalisation and capitalism alongside race, gender, class, sexualities and culture (Grewal and Kaplan 1994). Transnational feminism draws on post-colonial feminist ideas whilst highlighting the ways in which capitalism also oppresses and exploits women across the world (Grewal and Kaplan 1994). The term Transnational also encompasses a feminism which existed across countries and cultures, linking

the local and the global, whilst resisting the universalising of women as one singular category (Desai, 2007). Transnational feminist activism includes activities which focus on feminist organising across country and cultural borders, returning to a feminism of solidarity, whilst acknowledging difference (Conway, 2017). Similar to Intersectional feminism, Transnational feminist activism focuses on moving away from identity politics, or the reduction of individuals to distinct social categories which need to be removed of significance in society to overcome oppression Crenshaw, (1991). Transnational activist activity during the third wave involved creating international feminist networks and the exchange of ideas and experiences (Disch and Hawkesworth, 2016). Again, Transnational feminism was around before the third wave but the increase in Transnational feminist activism impacted it as an increasingly popular field of scholarship during that period (Disch and Hawkesworth, 2016).

Post-Structural Feminism

Post-structural feminism is primarily concerned with difference and language. It builds on post-structural philosophy and the notion of deconstruction, particularly the deconstruction of the dualisms of the concept of male and female and sameness and difference (Williams, 1990). Although post-structural feminism was also prevalent before the third wave and was highly influenced by earlier feminist scholars which I have previously mentioned, such as Luce Irigaray, and Judith Kristeva, it became increasingly popular during this period, particularly in relation to intersectional feminism, transnational feminism and post-colonial feminism (St. Pierre, 2000). Again, third wave Post-structural feminism sought to critique second wave notions of womanhood and to deconstruct categories of identity (Mann & Huffman, 2005). Post-structuralism was also becoming increasingly popular in academic discourse during third wave feminism, influencing feminist scholarship (St. Pierre, 2000). The post-structural feminist concern with language was dominant in third wave feminist scholarship, particularly the idea that there is not a universal feminist language (Donovan, 2001). Critiques of post-structural feminism suggest that it calls for an end of group feminist activism and the notion of a shared

movement and identity against the oppression of women (Donovan, 2001). Alternatively, Post-structural feminists seek to resist group identities, suggesting they are fluid and diverse and rejecting the structural notions of power in many second wave feminisms (Mann & Huffman, 2005). Post-structural feminism was highly influential on post-colonial feminism, which centred on notions of difference and the deconstruction of the "Third World Woman" (Mohanty, 1988). The emphasis on post-structuralism during the third wave also aimed to deconstruct concepts of sex and gender, highlighting the social construction of reality, including the social construction of sex and gender (Mann & Huffman, 2005). This represented a rejection of essentialism but resulted in critiques of post-structural feminism for failing to adequately consider the importance of the body.

New-Materialist feminism

As suggested, an issue with social constructionist arguments is that they move focus away from the materiality of the body by suggesting that sex is also socially constructed. By doing so, social constructionist theories suggest that culture is more important than biology when considering the body. Social constructionist approaches to sex and gender have been particularly prevalent in feminist theory, beyond just post-structural feminism, so much so that there have been accusations that feminist theory has not given adequate attention to the material body (Ahmed 2008). New materialism critiques social constructionism for neglecting to consider the importance of matter and the material body in relation to sex and gender. New-materialist feminists argue that matter cannot be undermined by the emphasis on culture in conceptions of sex and gender. If matter is ignored, then the links between sex and nature and the importance of the natural body to gender will be reduced. Davis (2009) suggests that what new materialism is critiquing is the dualism of mind and body, or matter and culture. Instead, new materialists seek to consider matter and culture as intertwined aspects thus combining nature and culture in conceptions of sex and gender. New materialism thus does not reject social constructionist claims, rather argues that matter and the body should be considered as interacting

and alongside culture and gender. This rejects the Cartesian dualism discussed in the introductory chapter, as well as the sex/gender and nature/nurture divide. Instead it is possible to view sex and gender by considering humans as embodied subjects who exist because of nature and act in ways which are produced by and reproduce culture. If people are embodied subjects then they act in a bodily way towards the world, which is influenced by both nature and culture (Merleau-Ponty, 2002). The differences in the way that male and females use their bodies such as females being less likely to take up space than males shows the way that culture and social aspects affect the way that people experience their natural bodies (Young 2005). Without considering natural aspects and cultural aspects together, the Cartesian dualism of mind and body, nature and nurture and sex and gender does not adequately acknowledge the way that people actually experience their lived bodies and reduces sex and gender to either biological determinism or social constructionism. Feminist Phenomenology and notions of embodiment present in New-material feminism provide an analysis of male and female experiences based on intertwining nature and culture and mind and body.

This represents the extent of the debates in feminist theory and the feminism movement during third wave feminism, the rejection of a second wave solidarity and shared consciousness and the desire to open feminism up to new generations of women and women from different backgrounds and cultures. Yet, post-feminism represents a critique to third wave feminist concepts, particularly notions of individualism and the reduction of feminism to female sexual freedom and economic freedom.

Fourth Wave Feminism

Fourth wave feminism developed out of the increasing debates within the feminist movement and arguably as a response to post-feminist critiques of third wave feminism (Rivers, 2017). The fourth wave is contested in feminist discourse, as some claim that feminism is not in fact in a fourth wave, as the rise of the internet and online activism is not enough to suggest the emergence of a new wave of feminism (Munro, 2013). Fourth wave feminism is generally

considered as a form of feminism which uses digital methods to resist and challenge patriarchy (Munro, 2013). For this reason, I do not highlight individual feminisms in this section, as fourth wave feminism can be considered an amalgamation of previous feminisms and movements. Instead, I discuss the use of digital technologies and approaches to activism within the current feminist movement.

Fourth Wave Digital Feminism

Relating to the current context of feminist activism in higher education, a major development within feminist activism was the "Me-Too" campaign, which mainly existed online through social media. This represents the activism of a fourth wave feminism, which mainly involves digital approaches to feminist activism (Gill, 2016). Despite the hashtag "#metoo" beginning to trend worldwide in October 2017, the movement was actually started by African American Feminist Tarana Burke in 2006 (Mendes et al., 2018). The "Me-too" movement gained national attention following its use on Twitter by Alyssa Milano in relation to sexual assault allegations against Harvey Weinstein (Mendes et al., 2018). "Me-too" has been criticised for being overly white and only successful due to the high profile, privileged nature of the perpetrators and the victims (Pellegrini, 2018). Despite this, the movement has arguably brought issues of sexual assault and harassment to the attention of the masses, suggesting that despite the laws against these behaviours their acceptability has been embedded within workplace and societal cultures (Mendes et al., 2018). Due to the scale of the numbers of women using the hashtag and its use across the world, "Me-too" also raised awareness of sexual violence against women as a widespread societal problem. This represents the priorities of fourth wave feminism, specifically challenging rape culture and violence against women and returning to notions of oppression, difference and patriarchy (Munro, 2013).

As well as the "Me-too" hashtag, other hashtags have been used as forms of feminist activism on Twitter including: "#WhyIStayed", #EverydaySexism", "#YesAllWomen" and "#BeenRapedNeverReported" (Clark, 2016; Mendes et al., 2018). The rise in the use of Twitter

hashtags as feminist activism represents a fourth wave digital feminism, as feminists increasingly turn to digital technologies to mobilise and resist (Mendes et al., 2018). Feminism is accessible to the majority of people through digital methods and it is possible to build global feminist networks and movements through social media. This moves beyond post-feminist individualism as feminists from across the globe can make connections and collaborate with each other (Munro, 2013). Feminist academics are also using digital technologies for activist purposes including through blogs and through their personal Twitter accounts (Jackson, 2016). They too are able to make connections with feminist academic activists across the world and share their scholarship through digital technologies. "Me-too" also returns to the second-wave notion of the personal as political, as people share their personal stories of sexual assault and rape, connecting these to wider political problems of patriarchy and rape culture (Mendes et al., 2018). Yet, there has also been an increasing online backlash against feminism, particularly in the era of Trump, his critique of feminists and his embodiment of white masculinity (Gökarıksel & Smith, 2017; Pellegrini, 2018). Despite this backlash, feminists are still using digital technologies to mobilise, including using Twitter and Facebook to organise women's marches across the world after the election of Trump (Gökarıksel & Smith, 2017). Feminists are persisting in using digital technologies to engage with activism, making feminism more visible and raising awareness of feminist issues (Gill, 2016). This context is relevant for feminist academic activism as it shows the ways that people may be engaging with activism through digital technologies and social media. Within an increasing neoliberal landscape both in and beyond higher education, social media and other technologies may be a means of engaging with feminist issues and voicing feminist concerns when there may be limited spaces to do so.

In this chapter, I outline the history of feminist academic activism in relation to changes in feminist movements, feminist theory and the higher education sector. I suggest that today's context encompasses a fourth wave feminism, which involves the use of new and innovative approaches to activism including digital technologies. Similarly, a fourth wave feminism returns to notions of the personal as political and feminism as a collaborative movement, building on

feminist movements of previous waves such as intersectional feminism, post-feminism, transnational feminism, post-colonial feminism and socialist and radical feminisms. Through the exploration of feminism in waves and movements, it is possible to understand the fluctuating nature of the feminist movement and the notion that there is not one single approach to feminism. Those who identify as feminist academic activists may or may not subscribe to a particular wave or feminist ideology, yet they only exist as feminists due to the work of feminists of the past from all waves and movements. Similarly, they are working within a specific neoliberal context of UK higher education, based on the political and economic changes over the past decades. Detailing these changes, in this chapter I provide the context for research on the rules of the game in higher education and feminist academic activism. In the following chapter, I expand on the current context, detailing the specific rules of the game within UK higher education and their relationship to gender.

Chapter 3:

Literature Review: Rules of the Game in UK Academia

In the previous chapter, I outlined the changes in feminist academic activism in higher education, suggesting that the current context of higher education is based on neoliberal economic policies. I expand on this current context in this chapter, reviewing the literature on the rules of the game in higher education. I focus on the rules of the game as the term is often used to describe socially constructed norms and structures within institutions and different spheres of life (Gertler, 2010). This includes formal rules and laws as well as more subtle norms, behaviours, attitudes and beliefs, which shape human activity and interaction (Hollingsworth, 2000). A game is something that is played in order to achieve an aim or reward or get to an end point. Academia could thus be considered a game, with researchers as players, formal and informal rules and rewards such as promotion, research grants and successful publications (Bakker et al., 2012). Despite this the rules of the game are not necessarily fixed, according to the literature they can and have changed through negotiation, social interaction and cultural shifts (Jones, 2009). This does not mean to say they are easily changed as many of the rules are deeply embedded within the game and thus difficult to identify (Hollingsworth, 2000). In this chapter, I consider the rules of the game in academia, using the literature to identify both the formal rules and the more subtle embedded rules and norms, which shape the academic game. I identify themes such as the wider neoliberal socio-economic context and the way in which this impacts the rules of the game in UK universities, the specific practices and procedures which are important for career success within academia, including publishing and impactful research, and the way that labour is distributed within universities. Throughout I consider gender and the way that the rules of the game may impact gendered relations within the university or may themselves be gendered. In this chapter I provide a further understanding of the context which feminist academic activists are attempting to challenge. I suggest that the notion of an ideal academic is embedded within the culture, practices and procedures of UK universities. Finally, I argue that this causes the production and

reproduction of gendered rules of the game and that notions of success can cause barriers to women.

Bagilhole and Goode (2001) suggest that universities are institutions, which have their own set of rules, and norms and people choose how far they wish to play by those rules to become successful in academia. According to this perspective, academic success is partly dependent on playing by the rules, which are embedded within the academic system. Benschop and Brouns (2003) refer to this as "academic organising" (p 194), which involves university processes and the construction of norms within universities. Academia, like many organisations and structures, is based on hierarchical organising, whereby people can move up the hierarchy as they complete certain career goals and gain achievements, which are valued by the university (Bagilhole and Goode, 2001). Hierarchical organisations depend on inequality, as it is a system whereby some exist in lower positions and some in higher positions and work is distributed accordingly (Yoder, 2018). Work is organised within universities around people's positions within the hierarchy, as is the amount people are paid, and the level of power people hold within the institution (Acker, 2006). The hierarchy in academia has continuously expanded, now involving more subsets between lecturer and professor including lecturer, senior lecturer, reader and assistant professor, as well as increasing numbers of management positions (Bain & Cummings 2000). There is also a hierarchy between those who hold full-time permanent contracts and those on part-time or fixed term contracts (Bain & Cummings 2000). Universities are organised around these hierarchies and "academic organising" is therefore non-egalitarian, involving unequal power relations entrenched in the university system. As well as the hierarchical system present in universities, there is a distinction between different schools, faculties, departments and disciplines which have their own hierarchies within them (Bagilhole and Goode, 2001). Considering the way that academia is organised can provide insights into the way that universities work and the hierarchical processes. It provides a basis to consider the more subtle rules and norms, which might be less visible within universities.

As well as the formal, transparent academic structures, further rules exist which are informal and embedded within the culture of academia. These rules may have developed through social interaction and relations, reflecting the social dynamics within wider society (Morley, 2013). They may be reflected within specific policies or entrenched rules (Jones, 2009) but are not necessarily formalised in those forms and instead can be enacted through less formal practices and procedures within universities. Mosedale (2005) suggests that society and its institutions are underpinned by norms, which affect people's choices and the way they behave. Furthermore, universities have their own norms, which reflect wider socio-political ideologies and make up the structures of universities, impacting the sort of behaviours and attitudes which are valued in academia (Mosedale, 2005). These norms can be subtle and unconsciously affect the way people behave and their perceptions of work and the university environment (Yoder, 2018). Norms within universities can also be underpinned by inequalities of race, class, gender, age and other attributes but are often harder to see, as people can internalise them as normal or given (Mosedale, 2005). The rules of the game in academia are thus based on the way academia is organised in hierarchies and disciplines as well as more subtle norms and rules, which reflect the ideology and norms within wider society. These aspects affect the way power is shared within universities, and the power relations present within university interactions (Yoder, 2018). Hierarchies and unequal power relations are thus inherent within the university game, as they are embedded in the way universities have been designed and they can then affect the rules people play in order to have a successful academic career.

The way academia is organised relates to wider social rules and political economic ideology, making academia socially constructed as part of a wider context (Cannizzo, 2018). The previous chapter highlighted the ways that the political and economic context has influenced feminist academic activism, which I now expand upon. According to Morley (2013), universities share the wider global ideology of neoliberalism and managerialism and value behaviours, attitudes and actions, which conform to this ideology. The literature suggests that there is a general trend towards managerialism in universities, not only in the UK but also across the world (White

et al., 2011). Managerialism emphasises a free market, private sector approach within universities, involving competition, lack of state funding, performance measurement and a focus on efficiency (Anderson, 2008; Morley, 2013). It implies an increase of management in universities and a change in the way that universities are managed. Managerialism is based on neoliberal ideology, which dominates global, and UK economics and focuses on free market transactions, individualism and a lack of state intervention (Harvey, 2007). Managers in this context are encouraged to treat universities like businesses, competing in the free market of higher education. Ball (2012) argues that managerialism causes universities to overvalue work which has an impact on performance results for universities and other work which may have wider reach in terms of developing knowledge may be overlooked. This is not necessarily true in all universities all of the time but it outlines a trend towards emphasising performance and productivity and the potential for this to result in the commodification of research (Jacob, 2009; Bridges, 2018). For example, in the UK the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) are ways of measuring research and teaching outputs and allocating funding for universities based on the results (Boaden & Cilliers 2001). The REF and TEF, as well as the Coalition Government's changes to tuition fee caps and the move to charging students £8,000-£9,000 a year to attend university, could represent the growing commodification of knowledge, in line with neoliberal ideology and the wider context of globalisation (Jabbar et al., 2017). The wider political and economic context thus impacts the rules of the game in academia, linking them to increased competition and pressure in terms of performativity and outcomes. According to literature on academic norms, competition in universities leads to individualism, whereby many academics focus on their own career needs and success over others, as competition requires them to do so and individualist behaviour is valued and rewarded (Mauthner & Edwards, 2010; Cannizzo, 2018). Individualism, performativity and competition are often associated with masculine traits and norms as they represent strength and traditional notions of rational scientific enquiry (Morley 2013). This can disadvantage those who do not embody masculine traits, particularly women who are not always socialised to have masculine attributes. Bleijenbergh (2012) reiterates this notion

and argues that academic organising is based on the notion of an ideal academic, which she describes as totally committed to work, competitive, individualistic, masculine and male. According to this notion, the ideal academic can play the rules of the game easily as the game was designed for them. This may be a micro example of "autochthony" (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013, p 637), whereby those that were there first (in universities white middle class men) create the rules of the game around themselves in order to maintain their position of power, whilst anyone else entering the game is the "other" and must play by the rules set by the original group (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013). This is not to say that all men working with academia actively maintain the rules to oppress women, rather that a system has been organised for men and by men which can limit the ways in which others can play the game to be successful (Yoder, 2018). Based on this literature, neoliberal norms of competition, managerialism and individualism present in universities are gendered and may advantage those who more closely resemble the original ideal academic. Based on this literature, the neoliberal approach can commodify knowledge and emphasises performance and productivity, which affects university culture as well as specific practices and procedures within universities. Neoliberal norms within universities are linked to hegemonic masculinities, which are formed by wider socio-economic contexts of neoliberalism.

One major event in UK higher education was the 2018 strikes over changes to pensions within the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS). The USS reported a deficit and proposed to change the defined benefit scheme, which the University and College Union (UCU) argued would make the average lecturer £10,000 a year worse off (Bergfeld, 2018). Arguably, the strikes were also a reaction to changes in higher education, which have altered working conditions for academics, such as increased workload and performance measurement (Bergfeld, 2018). The strikes therefore represented a resistance to wider changes in higher education: "The strike was also an effort to oppose the conjunctural demand that public education be transformed into a private good" (Denmead, 2019, p. 8). The strikes are thus an example of the effects of the neoliberal culture and resistance to the commodification of knowledge.

If hegemonic masculinity and neoliberal norms are features of academic organising, then more everyday university practices and procedures will be affected by them. Essential and everyday practices and procedures I have identified from the literature include effective researching, publishing, gaining funding and presenting at conferences (O.Grada et al., 2015). There is also an emphasis on networking and having support from colleagues and the university, as well as having the confidence to put oneself forward for promotion (Monroe et al., 2008; Mauthner & Edwards, 2010). These aspects represent "successful" academic practices and procedures or the rules of academic careers. However, not all academics will choose to follow these exactly and may actively reject certain approaches to working in academia (Morley, 2005). Despite this there is a general consensus that publishing is vital to academic life with the phrase "publish or perish" (Wilkinson, 2015, p. 99) being used to describe the importance of publishing to an academic career, as publishing research is one way that academics build a reputation for their work. The number of publications an academic has and the quality of the journals they have published in are indicators of their performance as researchers, making publishing essential to academics who wish to move up the academic hierarchy (Boaden & Cilliers, 2001). Publishing is therefore a highly important aspect of the academic game, a rule which most if not all academics have to conform to in order to progress. However, publishing requires certain skills and behaviours as well as a huge amount of time which can be difficult for certain people, particularly those with commitments outside of work (Weisshaar, 2017). Firstly, in relation to managerialism, publishing is highly competitive and some academics may be more able to compete than others. Academics have different levels of funding and resources for research, which advantages some academics over others (Fyfe et al., 2017). Townsend (2012) suggests academic publishing is not a level "playing field" (p. 423) and some people are disadvantaged by the competitive culture around publishing. Researchers are expected to publish and find time to research alongside their other work responsibilities of teaching, administration, attending and presenting at conferences, networking, supervision of students and other academic work (Fyfe et al., 2017). This requires long hours, often with academics having to work evening and weekends to have time to fulfil all

their responsibilities (Acker & Armenti, 2004). Research suggests that women are still predominantly responsible for caring responsibilities of children or older relatives and those with familial responsibilities may find they have less time to devote to research or have to work twice as hard to publish (Monroe et al., 2008). Women are also more likely to be in temporary or part-time positions in UK universities and may have less time available to focus on their research and publish than those in full-time permanent positions (Benschop & Brouns, 2003). The practice of publishing in academia is an essential aspect of the rules of the game, regardless of discipline and country context, according to many authors writing about academic organising (Boaden & Cilliers, 2001; Wilkinson, 2015; Herndon, 2016; Kampourakis, 2016; Weisshaar, 2017; Moosa, 2018). However, it may also be a gendered practice as it does not take into account familial commitments outside of work, which are predominantly carried out by women or those in non-full-time permanent positions. This relates to the concept of the ideal academic as they are able to spend time writing for publication within or outside of their working hours (Bleijenbergh et al., 2012). Time can be taken by other responsibilities, both in work, including administrative duties and teaching, and outside of work, including domestic duties and caring roles. Women tend to take on more of the academic "housework" (Heijstra et al, 2017, p 764) and the housework within their personal and familial lives (Monroe et al., 2008). This means that they may be less able to play the publishing aspect of the academic game or have to work harder to do so due to their additional commitments. Similarly, not all journals were created equally and often higher-ranking journals value more traditionally scientific approaches to knowledge, such as quantitative research (Herndon 2016). This also relates to hegemonic masculinity as it is associated with masculine notions of rationality and objectivity free from emotion, and there are fewer women working within STEMM disciplines (Bleijenbergh et al., 2012).

Relating to the notion of "academic housework" (Heijstra et al., 2017, p 764) is the way that labour is distributed within universities. This depends on people's contracts, job roles and experience as academics, as well as more subtle ways that labour is distributed within informal roles, which people may take on in order to play the academic game. There are administrative,

managerial, research and teaching duties within universities and academic roles may involve a combination of some or all of these duties (Mauthner & Edwards, 2010). Despite the importance of all of these aspects for the running of universities, some roles seem to be valued higher than others and labour distributed in unequal ways (Heijstra et al., 2017). The emphasis on publishing and research performance can result in teaching tasks being perceived as secondary or less important than research. Monroe et al (2008) argue that teaching has fewer rewards than research and thus academics seeking to move up the hierarchy are less incentivised to take on teaching roles. The same applies to administrative tasks, as these are not usually considered as part of the promotion process in universities (Monroe et al., 2008). Although some universities do have teaching career pathways, which include a promotion structure, there is still a very subtle underlying culture in universities which undervalues teaching in relation to research (Van Lankveld et al., 2017; Angervall & Beach, 2018). There are a higher number of women in teaching and administrative roles in UK universities than men, which suggests a gendered division of labour and the undervaluing of work more predominantly carried out by women academics (Barrett & Barrett, 2011). Gender norms and stereotypes within society may contribute to the way that labour is divided in universities, particularly the idea that women have more caring, supportive characteristics and thus may be more suited to less competitive teaching roles (Alsop et al., 2002; Monroe et al., 2008). Women may choose to take on teaching roles because they enjoy teaching, which is not necessarily a negative aspect of the rules of the game, yet the issue is the undervaluing of teaching and the expectations of women to undertake more teaching when they may not desire to. Bleijenbergh et al (2012) interviewed Deans in a Dutch university about the differences between male and female academics and many of the Deans responses suggested that women were better at teaching as they have good attributes for these roles such as being more "balanced" (p 12). This causes a more essentialist conception of gender, reproducing gendered norms and rules, which limit women simply because of their biology. The academic game is based on moving up the academic hierarchy, yet if teaching and administrative work is not valued as much as research, those in teaching roles may be less able to successfully play the academic game. Similarly, due to

essentialist conceptions of women's characteristics they may be expected to take on more of the "housework" (Heijstra et al., 2017, p 764) and teaching roles, which further reproduces gendered rules within the academic game. The distribution of labour in universities is therefore subtly gendered and the structures underpinning people's roles may cause women a disadvantage in playing the academic game.

As well as the distribution of labour for academics, there is also the issue of the distribution of labour within university leadership and management. Leadership and management are essential aspects of the academic game, they are embedded in university structures to maintain successful running of universities (Johnson, 2017). Those who reach leadership roles generally have to move up the academic hierarchy to gain their leadership position (Bain & Cummings 2000). Leadership can represent success and strength on the part of the individual, as they have had to compete with others to achieve their role (Morley, 2013). Despite this not everyone aspires to take on leadership roles as they involve management work and may take up time that some academics would rather be spending on research (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001). Successful leadership in universities requires those in leadership positions to embody certain traits and characteristics, which are perceived as effective (Morley, 2013). There are thus certain rules and subtle norms which leaders are expected to follow to in order to play the academic game. According to the literature, leaders are expected to have confidence, assertiveness, an ability to make tough decisions, a strong research background and the ability to act under high pressure (Bagilhole, 1993; Due Billing & Alvesson, 2000; Bagilhole & Goode, 2001; Morley, 2013). These are subtle norms and not all universities will value these traits equally, yet leadership has connotations of strength and power as it requires management of subordinate employees (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001). This is a further example of masculine traits being valued as the norm in the highest positions in academia, whereas stereotypical feminine leadership which involves building relationships, supporting colleagues, cooperation and creativity is undervalued (Due Billing & Alvesson, 2000). As shown in the introduction chapter, there is a gender gap in relation to numbers of men and women in leadership positions in UK universities. The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is known

as the “leaky pipeline” (Resmini, 2016, p 3533) as women are entering academia but the numbers of women in senior positions falls. The subtle nature of the expectations of university leaders could be a significant contributing factor to this phenomenon. Those who do not embody the characteristics of the ideal academic, which are essential to players of the academic game, may find themselves disadvantaged.

Another key rule associated with the ideal academic is the importance of networks and support from colleagues to build an academic reputation (Bain & Cummings, 2000; Bagilhole & Goode, 2001; Benschop & Brouns, 2003; Bilmoria, Joy, & Liang, 2008; Labrie et al., 2015). Self-promotion and networking can allow academics access to influential people in their discipline and help individuals to build a positive academic reputation amongst their peers (Benschop & Brouns, 2003). Support from others can be important as academic work can be quite isolating and competitive and constructive critique of work allows people to progress their ideas (Bilmoria et al., 2008). Labrie et al (2015) identify multiple ways academics build networks including attending conferences, presenting work in front of others, collaborating on research, formal seminar series, informal departmental seminar series, special interest groups, society events, forming relationships with colleagues within the university department and most recently social media networks. Building an academic community is generally accepted as an important aspect of an academic career, particularly when applying for promotion as people’s reputation will be taken into account and their peers may be on the hiring committee (Benschop & Brouns, 2003). Networking is not necessarily an easy task, particularly for those new to academia attempting to enter already established communities and networks. In fact, networks may be exclusive and difficult for people to access if they are not perceived as similar or belonging within particular groups. Bain and Cummings (2000) use the phrase “old-boy networks” (p 499) to describe the culture of networking in academia as gendered and exclusive of women academics. If women are considered as “other” to the original ideal academic they may also be treated as “other” in regard to entering academic communities and networks. This is not necessarily because male colleagues are intentionally excluding women, rather that masculine norms make it more difficult for women

to fit within established networks and communities. Bagilhole and Goode (2001) argue that networks are extremely important to progression in an academic career and even individuals who are successful publishers are required to share their work with others and build a positive reputation. Similarly, academic networks can build connections in relation to publishing, whereby those who meet and network in person may be more inclined to cite each other in journal articles (Fyfe et al., 2017). This is a really important point as networking is linked to other aspects of the academic game, including publishing, suggesting that the rules of the game are intertwined. It may be that when people miss out on one aspect of the game, other areas become harder to play as well. The gendered nature of networks and academic communities thus may cause barriers to women in playing the academic game in general.

Relating to this is promotion as in order to move up the academic hierarchy academics must be promoted either internally in their institution or externally to another institution (Yoder, 2018). Promotion is one measure of success within the academic game as it can be accompanied by an increase in salary, a more prestigious title, more responsibility and more control over decision-making (Sutherland, 2017). Each university outlines their promotion processes within their university policy as an attempt to ensure a fair promotion process, free of bias and discrimination. Despite this the make-up of promotion committees, the promotion criteria and the motivations and confidence of the people applying for promotion are all significant factors in the academic game and cannot always be controlled by policy (Patricia & Delys, 2000). Bailyn (2003) argues that universities tend to present themselves as neutral and objective in the promotion process, despite the fact that men dominate leadership positions in universities. The number of men in leadership positions can often mean that promotion committees are more likely to be dominated by men, thus promotion decision making is often made by male academics (Acker, 1992). This causes a risk of unconscious bias taking place in promotion processes as again women may be viewed as “other” and their work might be valued less than male employees. Morley (2013) argues that misrecognition can occur, whereby essentialist assumptions are made about people’s characteristics and potential based on their gender. Both male and female academics on

hiring committees may be unconsciously affected by gender stereotypes when making decisions about interviewees and promotion. UK universities have unconscious bias training for those on hiring committees, but this may not be enough to change deeply embedded and subtle perceptions, which occur from social norms within wider society (Yoder, 2018). Similarly, if women's work is undervalued due to an emphasis on teaching and less hard scientific methods, they may be disadvantaged by the way universities measure quality work in general (Benschop & Brouns, 2003). Promotion processes may also be influenced by the figure of the ideal academic, particularly when those on promotion committees more closely resemble this figure. This may further contribute to the "leaky pipeline" (Resmini, 2016, p 3533) phenomenon, if women are failing to move up the academic hiearchy due to deeply embedded bias in the promotion process.

In this chapter I consider the literature on the rules of the game in higher education and suggest that the rules of the game in academia are impacted by the way that academia itself was organised for an ideal male academic. I also argue, based on the literature, that the rules are influenced by socio-political norms in wider society such as neoliberal economics and the various demands placed on universities to compete in the wider educational market. According to the literature, these rules are entrenched within university processes and practices such as teaching, publishing, networking and promotion. These all contribute to the wider university game, requiring academics to be players and follow, or fail to follow these rules. The rules represent that which is required for a successful academic career in terms of progressing up the academic hierarchy. However, the literature suggests that rules are gendered in ways, which may disadvantage women, even those who play by them exactly. From the literature, I identify masculine norms present in the rules of the game which may lead to potential barriers to women academics and perceptions of them as "other" to the male ideal. The dominant neoliberal climate which has led to an emphasis on research performance and the commodification of knowledge further increases competition and individualism, leading to an unequal and masculine university environment (Anderson, 2008). Despite this, not all academics may choose to play by the rules and alternatively may attempt to change them in ways, which support women academics. If the

rules are socially constructed through culture and social interaction as I suggest in this chapter, then they may be possible to change in ways, which improve gender equality in UK universities. Doing so would involve some form of challenge to the white, male ideal academic figure and the processes and practices outlined in this chapter, which the ideal academic figure is present within.

Chapter 4:

Freire and Feminist Pedagogy

Introduction

Paolo Freire was an influential educator and philosopher arguing for critical reflection in education and the reform of education for people to overcome oppression. His most influential work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1996) has had huge influence across the world, relating to issues of social justice, education, international development and political economics (Glass, 2001). Paulo Freire offers an alternative approach to education from the status quo, providing a theory of the ways people working in education might approach their work to create a more equal society. He was one of the most influential authors in relation to the notion of a critical consciousness or consciousness raising as a means to end oppression (Mayo, 2010). His theory links to the rules of the game in UK academia as it provides the basis for challenging gendered norms through a form of educational activism. Similarly, as I suggested in Chapter 2, consciousness raising has played a pivotal role in feminist activism historically and has recently re-entered conversations in current feminist academic literature (Collins, 2000; David & Clegg, 2008; Anderson & Grace, 2015; Ardovini, 2015; Olcott, 2017; Whittier, 2017; Fisher, 2018). In this chapter, I outline and critique Freire's theories in order to form a theoretical underpinning for the research. I refer to several of Freire's works but particularly draw from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1996) and *Education for Critical Consciousness* (Freire, 2013) due to their particular relevance to the research questions and their wide influence on educational discourse. In this chapter, I firstly examine Freire's theory of human nature, considering the way that humans can shape their world and have the potential to bring about changes for equality. Secondly, I outline Freire's approach to oppression and the way that critically reflecting on the world could result in the process of conscientization, to overcome oppression and challenge social norms. Thirdly, I consider Freire's notion of dialogue in relation to conscientization as a means of improving people's position in society. Fourthly, I look at Freire's theory of education applying the former themes to this concept and relating them to modern day education. Finally, I consider

feminist research and pedagogy alongside Freire's theories, linking the theoretical approach with the research questions of this PhD. This chapter provides the theoretical basis for feminist academic activism, suggesting an alternative approach to education, which emphasises equality, critical thinking, and the ending of oppression.

Paulo Freire's Life and Influence

Paulo Freire was an extremely influential Brazilian educator and educational theorist who is often referred to as a key producer of critical pedagogy (Mayo, 2010). However, his work was not only theoretical as a key aspect of his philosophy was turning theory into action. He emphasised a form of praxis, which focused on educational institutions such as universities and state programs, whilst also involving social movements and political activists (Freire & Horton, 1990). He set up literacy programmes based on his theory of education and these have influenced further literacy programmes across the world. His theory is particularly influential in academic literature, entering into disciplines such as sociology, politics, economics, theology and social work (McLaren & Leonard, 1993). Freire's work led to his exile from Brazil during the 1964 military coup, as his literacy programme was deemed too radical and a threat to Brazil's politics (Mayo, 2010). Much of his work was written during this exile, was thus inherently radical and political in its nature, and based on changing unequal power relations and ending oppression (McLaren, 1999). His theory of a critical consciousness has been adopted and further developed by activist groups, including feminist activists, as an approach to bringing about transformative change (Collins, 2000; Ardovini, 2015; Whittier, 2017). Yet, the engagement with Freire in feminist theory is largely a critique and there are many feminists who have accused Freire of sexism in his work due to a lack of inclusion of women's experiences (Mayo, 2010). Despite this, the hugely influential black feminist theorist bell hooks refers to Freire in many of her works as an important theorist in the development of feminist pedagogy and an influence on her personal politics as a black feminist (hooks, 1994). hooks argues that although there is sexism within Freire's work, there is still much value in it for feminism and his ideas are extremely useful when engaged with critically:

"Deeply committed to feminist pedagogy, I find that, much like weaving a tapestry, I have taken threads of Paulo's work and woven it into that version of feminist pedagogy I believe my work as writer and teacher embodies" (hooks, 1994, p. 52).

hooks' notion that Freire's work can be used as threads for a wider feminist politics of change and education is a useful way of understanding the influence of Freire's work on feminist theory and activism. Like hooks, many feminists acknowledge Freire's influence, whilst also developing his work to form their own approach to feminist activism (Collins, 2000). This is also the approach to Freire that I take in this PhD, using his theory as a basis to enhance notions of feminist academic activism and educational transformation. Freire was also open to dialogue with feminists and listened to feminist criticism of his work. His later writings reflect his willingness to take on feminist ideas as he includes a wider consideration of women's oppression (hooks, 1994; Mayo, 2010). Thus, even the work that rejects Freire is important as it is developed out of Freire's ideas as well as his omissions. This chapter focuses on Freire in combination with feminist pedagogy and research, as even those who disagree with Freire cannot deny his influence in these areas. As Alberto Torres suggested: "we can stay with Freire or against Freire, but not without Freire" (1982, p. 94). In this chapter, I engage critically with Freire's arguments to develop a theory of an alternative education within academia, which will form the theoretical framework for this PhD.

Human Nature

Freire was particularly concerned with human nature and his conceptualisation of it underpins his following theories of education and activism (Gottlieb & La Belle, 1990). It is therefore essential to begin by considering Freire's theory of human nature in order to understand the basis of his educational approach. Freire begins *Education for Critical Consciousness* (Freire, 2013) by offering an explanation of why humans are absolutely distinct from animals. He suggests that human beings are conscious of time, are aware of the past, present and future and maintain a "historicity" (Freire, 2013, p. 3) that is their temporality. In contrast, animals are only aware of their present position and have no notion of time. This is an important aspect of Freire's theory of

human nature, as if humans are aware of their position within time, history and culture, their actions are consequential, as they have an effect on the history of humanity. Human beings' historicity allows them to change and shape their world through culture and language; thus reality itself is formed by human beings (Freire, 2013). Freire describes human beings as "not only in the world but with the world" (2013, p. 3) implying that humans act intentionally towards the world, shaping it through history and culture, whilst also being shaped by the culture and history which is made (Glass, 2001). Similarly, according to Freire, human beings constantly critically view their world, as a subject examining an object, whilst also trying to transcend their everyday reality and become free from the limitations of temporality (Harris, 2011). Humans consider the world objectively, but are also trying to go beyond the limitations that the objective world places on them by creating and shaping reality:

"Humans, however, because they are aware of themselves and thus of the world-because they are *conscious beings* exist in a dialectical relationship between the determination of limits and their own freedom. As they separate themselves from their own activity, as they objectify, as they locate the seat of their decisions in themselves and in their relations with the world and others, people overcome the situations, which limit them: the 'limit situations'." (Freire, 1996, p. 80)

This is similar to social constructionist notions of reality; in that Freire suggests that reality is socially relative and not absolute (Berger & Luckmann 1991). Yet, within Freire's theory of human nature he fails to acknowledge that the way in which the world has been constructed is based on power relations, including gendered power relations, resulting in the social construction of gender as outlined in chapter 1 (Butler, 1988). Despite this, his conception of human nature provides the basis for a theory of oppression, specifically class oppression, which suggests that the oppressed can shape their world to end their own oppression. This chapter applies this concept to gender and the ways in which feminists may use education to shape their worlds. Thus, Freire's theory that reality is constructed and that humans are able to alter their reality relates to feminist academic activism, despite his omission of gender.

According to Freire, humans are limited by their natural needs, which are similar to animals such as the need to eat and sleep. However, they transcend these needs or limitations by consciously considering them objectively, questioning why they must eat, what is best to eat and other conscious questions (Harris, 2011). This raises the nature versus nurture debate and suggests that Freire acknowledges a natural world but that humans are impacted much more by nurture and are able to change their world despite its materiality. The feminist notion that sex differences are equivalent to nature and gender differences are cultural or nurtured (Alsop et al., 2002) fits within Freire's theory as he does not deny the materiality of the human body but seems to be suggesting that human consciousness allows humans to shape their world, creating norms and social relations which people live by. If gender is considered as distinct from biological or evolutionary difference, and instead as a social construct, then male and female behaviours or characteristics are shaped by human beings through culture and social relations (Butler, 1988). Freire's distinction between the natural evolutionary aspects of the natural world and the human impact on the world is similar to the feminist sex and gender divide. Freire's conception of human nature forms the basis for his theories of oppression, activism, and education, particularly the notion that humans can shape their world, forming history and culture. According to this, reality is not predetermined but formed by humans themselves, allowing humans to overcome certain natural limitations. Finally, Freire emphasises humans as conscious beings, able to objectively view their world and critically approach it, distinguishing humans from animals. These aspects of human nature mean that humans are able to transform their world, building into Freire's transformation of education and conscientization as a means to overcome oppression. Freire's call for reforming education and his conceptualisation of critical pedagogy is based on people's humanity, his theory of human nature is thus a positive one, full of hope for human beings and their ability to use activism to change their world for the better (Mayo, 2010).

Conscientization

Following from Freire's theory of human nature, he argues that power relations alter the way humans shape the world, with some people having more influence than others. As previously

mentioned, he does not refer to gender, rather his focus is on class power relations. His theory is applicable to gender as he suggests that there are those who dominate and those who are oppressed, altering the way that people perceive reality as the dominant perspective becomes the norm (Freire, 1996; 2013). Freire considers dehumanisation as a key aspect of oppression, arguing that both the oppressors and the oppressed are dehumanised:

"Dehumanisation, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also (though in a different way) those who have stolen it, is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human" (Freire, 1996, p. 26).

To be dehumanised is to be considered as a thing, as an object without subjective thoughts or feelings. In contrast humanisation for Freire is the task of becoming more human, that is returning to the previously outlined human nature of shaping the world and viewing it objectively or critically. However, people who are oppressed do not necessarily always seek their humanity back as they may not be aware that their situation is oppressive. Freire suggests that oppressed people naturally struggle to regain their humanity but they also internalise the reality of their oppressors, behaving in ways, which have been prescribed to them:

"Once a situation of violence and oppression has been established, it engenders an entire way of life and behaviour for those caught up in it-oppressors and oppressed alike" (Freire, 1996, p. 27).

Freire's argument that oppression becomes normalised in everyday life has similarities with feminist notions that women can internalise gendered social norms and thus may not be aware of the unequal power relations that effect their position in society. Returning to the notions of masculinity and femininity, which are deeply entrenched within society, gender can be internalised, and as Butler (1988) argues, performed by men and women unconsciously. Gender norms and roles thus become normalised and according to feminist theory relate to oppression of women, as gender norms are produced and reproduced in ways that maintain patriarchy (Alsop et al., 2002; Butler, 2006; Salih, 2007). Despite Freire's particular emphasis on class oppression, his

theory of oppression is relevant within contexts of racial oppression, gendered oppression, and other forms of oppression. Oppression not only embeds the oppressed within the norms of society but the oppressors, and both may not be aware of the dehumanisation, which is taking place, and both are dehumanised. If humanisation is the ability for people to shape their world and an awareness of historicity, then both the oppressed and oppressors are lacking it if they have internalised societies norms as given.

The existence of oppression in society is central to Freire's pedagogy, which is a form of activism to end oppression and transform the world. The first aspect of this Freire refers to as "conscientização" (1996, p. 30) translated to conscientization or critical consciousness from Portuguese. He suggests that oppressed people must see their oppression as an injustice in order to have the desire to transform their situation. People will begin to see their position as an injustice, Freire argues, when they critically view reality and reflect on their position in it: "the oppressed must confront reality critically, simultaneously objectify and acting on that reality" (Freire, 1996, p. 34). This process begins with the oppressed, who change the way they perceive reality, by critically considering it. However, it is not only an internal conscious process but also alters the way individual's act towards the world. For Freire true reflection inevitably leads to action which has the power to transform the world, as opposed to what he calls "armchair revolution" (Freire, 1996, p. 66). This is where people consider something in theory, but do not act to change anything in practice. By critically reflecting on reality people are able to move away from fatalistic approaches to their reality, whereby they see their position as given and instead view themselves as able to change reality. Instead of being passive, they become active beings, returning to the human nature, which allows humans to shape their own world. His theory is thus deeply rooted in action, which is inherent in activism. However, it is potentially naïve to suggest that the oppressed will be able to see their position in a critical way, given how embedded social norms can be within people's consciousnesses (Kabeer 1999). Freire's theory is arguably idealistic and utopian. Yet, Freire responds to this criticism, suggesting that the process of conscientization can occur through his very practical outline of the act of dialogue.

Dialogue

Dialogue is a means of bringing about conscientization and ending oppression according to Freire (Freire, 1996; 2013). Freire argues that dialogue is a form of open and loving communication, whereby people critically think about problems and consider them together. Anti-dialogue on the other hand is hierarchical, in that someone is considered more knowledgeable or qualified than another when speaking on an issue. Alternatively, dialogue is a subject to subject relationship, instead of a subject to object relationship, where one person bestows their knowledge on another. There is an equal approach to finding truth and gaining knowledge which Freire refers to as a "horizontal relationship between persons" (Freire, 2013, p. 42). This is not to reject an individual's personal experiences and history, these can be included in dialogue, but must be considered from a loving, sharing perspective whilst individual's question and reflect on their own beliefs and experiences with others:

> "…it is true that people need to use their historical location as the place to begin to reflect upon the object of knowledge and to create meaning, the problem is that they often neglect to question their own self or others. My locality necessarily conditions me to ask certain questions about an object. However, even within the limits of my position, and under historical and cultural influences, my job as a learner is to connect it to the rest of the world" (Leistyna, 2004, p. 21).

Self-reflection and questioning are thus a key aspect of dialogue, without which people will be unable to find new knowledge about the world. When considering an object of enquiry people must also be reflexive and respectful of others' backgrounds. Dialogue is based on finding truth and expanding knowledge through consideration of the world (Freire, 1996, p. 69). If dialogue takes place, conscientization will occur through questioning current approaches to knowledge and objectively viewing the world. This equal and loving approach might seem difficult to establish if people are offended by others' views, do not wish to listen to them, or consider others as ignorant. However, Freire's argument is based on a strong belief in humanity as he argues that dialogue requires: "an intense faith in humankind" (1996, p. 71) which he believes is possible. Similarly,

Freire's philosophy of human nature suggests that people inherently wish to transcend the limitations of the world by acting to shape it and thus it is natural for people to want to act. Despite Freire's positive vision for humanity, he does not consider the potential competitiveness and jealousy that may exist amongst the oppressed. If the oppressed are deeply embedded within a system, such as the current political context of capitalism, they may feel they have to compete with each other to achieve the status of their oppressors (Harvey, 2007). Despite this, Freire does acknowledge that this process takes time but argues that dialogue is a constant process and has no end point, as knowledge can always be built upon and the world is always changing due to human impact on it (Freire, 2013). Dialogue is not merely a new approach to communication between humans it is a way of radically changing the world, so that the oppressed can shape reality and are no longer embedded in a dominant groups' version of reality (Glass, 2001). Through dialogue and the development of a critical consciousness, the oppressed become more fully human as Freire's conception of human nature dictates. In this sense, Freire's theory is radical and based on the transformation of the world by and for oppressed people. The notion of dialogue forms the basis for Freire's pedagogy, whereby he argues for the transformation of education to facilitate dialogue and criticality, in order to end oppression.

Education

Paulo Freire is highly critical of current education systems, which are based on hierarchal teacher-student relationships as well as the hierarchical relationships between colleagues. He argues that education is based on extension, whereby teachers extend their knowledge onto students and each other as though they are passive objects or things and not subjects which can transform their world (Freire, 2013). Teaching and teacher relationships based on extension only offer others the teacher's view of reality, undermining the student or colleague's existence. This form of teaching and communication cannot address issues embedded in culture and social structures, as it does not allow others to question and reflect on themselves and on the world. Freire suggests that there is no absolute knowledge and that knowledge is constantly being

recreated, rather than being a static object, so offering one type of knowledge as absolute hinders education:

"Human beings constantly create and re-create their knowledge, in that they are inconclusive, historical beings engaged in a permanent act of discovery. All new knowledge is generated from knowledge which has become old, which in its turn had been generated from previous knowledge" (Freire, 2013, p. 105).

Freire's epistemology acknowledges that there are various discourses, which connect and compete, but emphasises people's lived experiences and their ability to learn by questioning and reflecting on them (McLaren, 1999). He argues for a liberating education, which acknowledges the experiences and ideas of others, reforming educational relationships to become a subject to subject interaction. He argues that conscientization occurs through communication and dialogue in education, which involves students and teachers jointly problematising the world and reality. This allows both student and teachers to challenge their preconceived ideas and thus "challenges them to think rather than memorize" (Freire, 2013, p. 43). For Freire this approach is transformative and will result in action as people will start to see problems that exist within the world and seek to respond to change those problems. A critique of this is the idea of resistance to change from people who prefer the way the world is. However, Freire's argument is based on conscientization, which allows people to question themselves and the culture they are embedded in and consider their behaviour objectively and problematically. If this is successful through dialogue, then there would be no resistance to change as people would consider themselves as active agents, capable of shaping their world for the better. Although Freire was working within a South American context, his theory of education is applicable to the western world as it is possible to change all education systems to focus on critical pedagogy if there are people committed to change (McLaren, 1999). Freire has argued that his educational theory cannot just be universally applied to all contexts but that it can be considered as a basis for forming critical pedagogy, which considers specific contexts and situations (Weiler, 1991). Applying Freire's theory to a university

context as an alternative form of education must take into account the specific features of higher education and feminist education. This will be explored in the next section of this chapter.

Feminist Pedagogy

Freire's theory can be applied not only to teacher and student relationships but also to colleague relationships and relationships with participants within higher education research. Feminist pedagogy draws many parallels with Freire's critical approach to education, which depends on subject to subject exchanges in teaching and research. Feminist pedagogy is a form of education that is based on community, participation, critical thinking, consciousness raising and praxis (Shrewsbury, 1993). A key aspect of feminist pedagogy is that it involves valuing people's personal experiences in teaching and learning and emphasises respecting others' views and experiences, whilst thinking reflexively and critically about one's own experiences. This returns to the feminist notion that the personal is political and is a means of giving a voice to those who have been previously marginalised and forming new knowledge based on those voices (Weiler, 1995). In line with Freire, feminist pedagogy values education, which is participatory, with teachers treating students as subjects, rather than objects (Shrewsbury, 1993). Although feminist pedagogy is a vast field in itself, focusing on Freire offers context to the founding of consciousness raising education and radical forms of educating (Gottlieb & La Belle, 1990). Both feminist pedagogy and Freire's critical pedagogy are forms of activism, which focus on changing inequalities. They both offer an alternative education that focuses on critical consciousness, oppression and transformation (Stake, 2006). Feminist pedagogy should inform practice and is not merely a philosophy; instead, as Freire suggested, critical pedagogy is a praxis. Weiler (1995) reviews several key texts on critical pedagogy including *The Feminist Classroom* by Frances Maher and Mary Kay Thompson Tetreault (1994) whereby the authors interview feminist teachers and observe feminist classrooms. The authors found that in practice it is difficult to approach education in this way due the environment of universities and the resistance, which comes with challenging teaching and learning norms (Weiler, 1995). Despite this, even the attempt to practice feminist pedagogy is a challenge to norms in universities as it can challenge "universal claims to

truth" (Weiler, 1991, p. 450). By focusing on individual women's experiences, those who have been previously denied a voice can influence knowledge and women are not all placed together as one singular category:

"formerly silenced groups challenge dominant approaches to learning and to definitions of knowledge" (Weiler, 1991, p. 450).

By emphasising individual experiences, feminist pedagogy builds on Freire's notions of conscientization and dialogue, showing the transformative power of including oppressed people's experiences in education. This not only applies to teaching but to university education in general, including research. Research that emphasises people's experiences and uses methods which are based on subject to subject exchange fit within Freire's critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy. It can also apply to relationships between colleagues, whereby at conferences, meetings, and workshops academics can encourage dialogue, treating each other as equals and removing hierarchical assumptions. Similarly, feminist consciousness raising can be aimed at everyone, including those outside of the university setting and senior management. It is an approach to activism, which focuses on facilitating a critical consciousness in others, by making them aware of oppression through the sharing of experiences and dialogue (Ardovini, 2015).

Feminist Pedagogy and Freire as an Alternative Education in UK Universities

Universities, specifically western universities have undergone a great deal of change in recent years both politically and economically, as I have suggested in the previous chapters. In chapter 3 on the rules of the game I referred to the prevalence of new managerialism which values particular practices based on competition and individualism, and involves hierarchical structures (Mauthner & Edwards, 2010). This seems to oppose both feminist values of collaboration and challenging unequal power relations, as well as Freire's equal, participatory approach to education. Despite this, in this section I outline how both feminist approaches to education and critical pedagogical approaches might combine to form an alternative approach to education in a university context. One approach to feminist activism in UK universities may involve the practice

of feminist research and teaching which are based on two core features, a feminist epistemology and a feminist methodology (Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Haynes, 2008; Bendl & Schmidt, 2012). Feminist epistemology emphasises women's voices and lived experiences as key contributors to knowledge (Eschle & Maiguashca, 2006). Feminist methodology focuses on the co-creation of knowledge, through methods that allow participants and researchers to be equals in the research process (Cahill et al., 2010). Both of these draw on aspects of feminist pedagogy such as subject to subject exchange in methodologies and valuing women's individual experiences in epistemology. Freire's approach is also relevant as the methods used by feminist researchers are often a form of dialogue, through the co-creation of knowledge. Feminist teaching produces new ideas about the world and its gender relations through critically considering gender within society, which relates to conscientization as theorised by Freire.

Feminist research and teaching is generally on the margins of university education, although there are many people involved in it, but more masculine discourses tend to dominate (Meyerson & Scully, 1995; Meyerson, 1998; Knights & Kerfoot, 2004; Mauthner & Edwards, 2010; Määttä & Dahlborg Lyckhage, 2011). This relates to Freire's approach to oppression, in that a group is dominating and creating the norm whilst the oppressed in general modify their behaviour and actions to fit that group. Despite this, there are those who are aware of gender issues and seek to teach, challenge and change gendered norms in universities through feminist research and teaching. Feminist research is a broad term, encompassing different types of feminism and reaching across disciplines. However, feminist research can be defined through its epistemological approach, which involves putting marginalised women's voices at the forefront of research. Feminist research is thus not one approach to feminism but rather research that values women's experiences (Haynes, 2008). Feminist research cannot be reduced to one specific definition of knowledge but encompasses a wide range of approaches. Feminist research is therefore research, which has the core value that women's experiences can provide new knowledge and insights. Feminist epistemology is also political as it maintains the feminist notion of personal is political, as women's lived experiences are placed in a political context of a patriarchal society (Campbell

& Wasco, 2000) and this contributes to wider knowledge about women's experiences of oppression. This is strongly related to conscientization as feminist research offers insights into marginalised perspectives and reflects on them whilst considering the broader political and historical context. Similarly, by giving women's experiences a platform, feminist researchers are humanising women by making space for women's subjectivities in academic research, rather than referring to women as things or objects (Weiler, 1991). Freire's epistemological perspective also emphasises people's lived experiences as part of his liberating education (McLaren, 1999). Not only does this raise the consciousness of the researchers but also the research participants and anyone that engages with the research once it is published. Similarly, presenting this research at conferences could facilitate dialogue about feminist issues amongst academics. Feminist epistemology thus relates to Freire's notions of conscientization and oppression, revealing how university education can embody aspects of Freire's critical pedagogy and feminist activism. Feminist epistemological approaches are feminist pedagogy in practice as they give marginalised women a voice through the sharing of their experiences. These experiences can contribute much to knowledge by challenging the status quo and traditional taken for granted knowledge within universities. Letherby (2003) refers to the dominant forms of knowledge within universities and suggests that objectivity and positivism are often valued more than feminist research, she refers to this dominant approach to knowledge as the "malestream" (p. 63) as it emphasises masculine characteristics. Feminist research on the other hand actively challenges the "malestream" rules of the game to bring forth new knowledge that involves women's experiences. It therefore represents a combination of Freire's initial theories of conscientization and feminist pedagogy to create an alternative approach to education, which challenges the embedded rules within higher education.

Much like feminist epistemology, there is not a singular feminist method that is used by all feminist researchers. Instead, there is feminist methodology, which places value on subject to subject exchanges and the co-creation of knowledge. This can include methods such as interviews, ethnography, oral histories, narrative interviewing, action research and more, as well as new methods created by feminists (Reinharz, 1992; Haynes, 2008). Feminist methodologies allow

women to share their stories and experiences without a hierarchal relationship between researcher and participants. This is similar to a form of dialogue outlined by Freire, as it is a mutual process of expanding knowledge and finding truth between the researcher and the participant. Similarly, feminist research can be considered as a form of activism as it challenges university norms and is an attempt to bring about transformative change in universities and society (Eschle & Maiguashca, 2006; Bendl & Schmidt, 2012; Bendl et al., 2014). Feminist researchers are thus seeking to change structures in universities, which have been created "by men and for men" (Maycock & Radulescu, 2010, p. 8). Feminist methodology ought to reflect this and be used to challenge the gendered norms within universities. For example, an article written by several feminist authors in collaboration mentions the notion of "armchair feminism" (Symposium Team, 2000, p. 549) which refers to academics who write and theorise about feminism without turning it into action. The authors used a pedagogy based on feminism and Freire to conduct action research to improve gender equality. Using action research and collaborative methods allowed the authors to learn from action and although they did not achieve everything they hoped to, they found that the experiment developed their ideas for future action research and taught them new ways to challenge norms in organisations. This is one example of feminist methodology guiding research as it emphasises bringing about change and turning theory into practice. It was also collaborative and thus there was no hierarchal structure between researchers and participants, they all contributed to the experiment. An alternative approach to education, which encompasses a critical pedagogy and action, could encourage more research that aims to make real transformative changes.

Feminist research is reflexive, in that the researcher must reflect on their own socio-cultural position and the way that this effects the research process. Reflexivity is not only a feminist activity in research but is particularly relevant to feminist researchers as they co-create knowledge (Letherby, 2003). Personal experience and subjectivity are key aspects of feminist research as it challenges the traditional scientific approach to knowledge of objectivity and rationality (Haynes, 2008). It is particularly important in feminist research therefore for researchers to be aware of their own subjectivity and situate themselves within the research in

order to represent their participants faithfully. This emphasises that feminist research is one "representation of reality" (Letherby, 2003, p. 76) and not a universal truth. This relates to Freire's account of human nature as it is based on human beings constructing their realities and truth and these truths becoming embedded in people's consciousness. If this is the case then the self-awareness involved in reflexivity is necessary for researchers to understand the impact of socio-cultural norms and personal experiences on their own research (Finlay, 2002). Within feminist research, it is thus essential for the researcher to understand their impact in the co-creation of knowledge, in order to avoid making claims to truth as though truth is universal and objective. Freire's notion of critically questioning one's own experiences and assumptions as part of conscientization is similar to reflexivity in research.

Freire's theories of dialogue and conscientization, as well as feminist pedagogy, offer an alternative education which highlights the need for action and criticality. These theories apply to this PhD as they provide a framework of raising awareness of gender inequalities by facilitating critical consciousness in others and encouraging the co-construction of knowledge. Any action to bring about change in universities could be considered a form of conscientization as it could bring women's experiences and gender inequalities into the consciousness of university colleagues and leadership teams (Curnow, 2013). Thus, actions which attempt to challenge the rules of the game through conscientization and dialogue may not bring about wider change immediately but can create further dialogue about women's experiences in UK academia, potentially bringing these to the attention of others working in universities. Similarly, actions based on these theories could humanise women in academia by bringing women's subjectivities and experiences to the forefront of universities (Gottlieb & La Belle, 1990). Those who are engaging in a critical education for action will be trying to balance a successful career within the system whilst also trying to change it. Freire strongly believed that education systems could be transformed, not by rejecting them but by working with them (Glass, 2001).

Freire's influence on education and feminist and critical pedagogies is undeniable and the combination of these theories provides an alternative theory of education, which emphasises dialogue, consciousness raising, and action. Freire's theory of human nature is vital to his work on education as it encompasses a faith in human beings to change their world for the better. His work is full of hope and passion, envisioning an alternative world formed through education and action. His emphasis on human consciousness and the power it has, not only to make the world a better place but to end oppression, offers insights into why he focuses on education. Freire and feminist pedagogical theorists align in their desire to end oppression and bring forth a more equal world. Both consider education as important in ending oppression and improving equality. Through engaging with other people and sharing experiences in a loving and respectful way, people could develop each other's consciousnesses and create new truths. This is a form of dialogue which encourages subject to subject learning and focuses on treating everyone as conscious human beings who are able to impact and know their world. This will ultimately lead to action, according to Freire, as those who are oppressed will seek to change the world and end their own oppression. Feminist research is one way this theory could be enacted to form an alternative education, particularly if it is used to facilitate dialogue amongst academics. It could challenge traditional approaches to knowledge and taken for granted truths, introducing a more critical perspective. Similarly, any action, which challenges the rules of the game or gendered norms within the university, could be a form of conscientization if it attempts to raise the consciousness of others. By applying Freire's critical pedagogy alongside feminist pedagogies, I present a theory of an alternative education, which could be used to challenge the rules of the game and bring about transformative change.

Chapter 5:

Empowerment

Introduction

In this chapter, I review the literature on the notion of empowerment. Within the literature on Freire and feminist pedagogy, several authors use the term empowerment in relation to developing a critical consciousness and consciousness raising (hooks, 1994; Sardenberg, 2008; Darder et al., 2009; McCusker, 2017; Fisher, 2018). Empowerment is often referred to as the outcome of feminist pedagogy or dialogue, with women becoming aware of their oppression and acting to change it. The term is also often used in relation to transformative change within society, particularly to improve lives for women and girls (Charmes & Wieringa, 2003; Hill, 2003; Kabeer, 2005; Mosedale, 2005; Desai, 2010). I am focusing on empowerment due to its connection to consciousness raising and feminist pedagogy as well as the impact of the term in relation to bringing about change for gender equality:

"The concept of empowerment has a long history in social change work. Feminist consciousness-raising and collective action informed early applications in international development in the 1970s. Women's empowerment came to be articulated in the 1980s and 1990s as a radical approach concerned with transforming power relations in favour of women's rights and greater equality between women and men" (Cornwall, 2016, p. 343)

Similarly, feminist academic activists are working within university institutions and trying to change them from within. If these institutions are gendered, as chapter 3 on the rules of the game suggests, then feminist academic activists are having to work within systems which do not necessarily align with their values. The concept of empowerment can provide insights into ways that academics are able to resist gendered norms in their universities, and how the process of doing so occurs. Despite this, empowerment is an extremely widely used phrase, used across advertising, by large corporations, by universities, by international development organisations such as the

United Nations, within politics and other areas of society. It has been widely debated across disciplines for many decades, with disciplines such as social work, health, psychology, international development, feminist theory, business and politics considering the concept (Calvès 2009). In this literature review, I explore feminist, organisational and international development literature, reviewing it to form a definition of empowerment in line with the PhD. The reason I have chosen these literatures is, as previously stated, literature on empowerment is vast and these three are particularly relevant to this PhD and its research questions. Similarly, within these disciplines empowerment has been debated over decades, thus I use a mix of older and newer references which developed the current conceptualisations of empowerment in those disciplines. Feminist literature is relevant as I am focusing on feminist activism, organisational literature as I am researching universities, which are organisations, and international development literature as it overlaps with feminist literature and a major focus for international development is improving gender equality. International development literature also focuses on the notion of consciousness raising within developing countries to empower women to change their own lives (Cornwall, 2016). In this literature review, I consider the three areas of literature, forming a framework of empowerment, which may relate to the experiences of feminist academic activists attempting to challenge the rules of the game.

Organisational literature has been using the term empowerment since the 1950s, but it became a popular concept during the 1990s when the term "employee empowerment" was formed (Honold, 1997, p. 202). Literature within the organisational discipline fits in the context of empowerment in universities as it offers insight into the ways empowerment has been conceptualised within organisations. Universities are higher education organisations and due to recent reforms have become more like other organisations, competing for resources and measuring performance, as suggested in chapter 3 (Whitley & Gläser, 2014). Considering empowerment from an organisational perspective thus reflects the way empowerment might be conceptualised in a university organisation. Organisational literature addresses debates around empowerment as an internal process, how far it is influenced by specific contexts and environments, the importance

of employee decision making, and employee influence and participation. The term is also used in international development literature, which considers the concept from the perspective of improving the lives of individuals in developing countries, particularly women (Desai, 2010). Although international development literature does not directly relate to a university context, it refers to empowerment from a specifically gendered perspective, drawing on feminist literature and emphasising the importance of change from the bottom upwards (Calvès 2009). International development literature also has connections with Freire and critical education as consciousness raising through education has been an approach used by international development scholars working with women in developing countries (Cornwall, 2016). Finally, feminist literature focuses on the political issue of power relations and the reasons why women and men are unequal due to the patriarchal nature of society (Deveaux, 1994; Desai, 2010). Within feminist literature, there is an emphasis on power, which for feminists is considered as a core feature of empowerment (Sardenberg, 2008). This can offer political insights into the reasons why women and men may be unequal in universities, whilst showing how empowerment might address unequal power relations and gender inequalities. The three literatures complement each other as organisational literature relates to universities as organisations, international development literature can provide insights into improving gender equality for women and feminist literature explains why empowerment is a political concept and necessary to reduce unequal power relations. All three literatures have different approaches but despite these differences, themes emerge which are present across all three disciplines and are addressed in this literature review. The themes relate to empowerment as a form of activism and a way of acting to bring about change, which applies to feminist academic activism in UK universities. A prominent theme in all three disciplines is a psychological element of empowerment, with the emphasis on changing people's perceptions of their position in society or work. This is considered in the first section of the literature review, focusing on the impact of people's environment and the connections to critical consciousness development. A second theme is the issue of empowerment as a top-down or bottom-up process and whether it is possible to empower others. The third theme addresses the concept of power as a feature of empowerment

and whether empowerment still encompasses political notions of power to improve gender equality. The fourth theme is the concept of agency and people's ability to make decisions or choices and have control over their life goals. This section considers the influence of social norms on choice and the impact of resources or opportunities on people's ability to carry out their choices. The final theme is the notion of empowerment in promoting actors of change and how this relates to feminist academic activism in universities. The literature review concludes by identifying any gaps in the literature and synthesising the three literatures on empowerment.

Psychological or Internal Process

Within organisational, international development and feminist literatures on empowerment emerges a theme of a psychological or internal process. Organisational literature emphasises changing an employee's perceptions in order to improve organisational performance and effectiveness (Logan & Ganster, 2007). Within this literature there are debates about the role of the organisation in changing their employee's perceptions and the impact of the organisational environment or culture. International development literature considers people's perceptions of their available choices as an important aspect of empowerment, referring to the impact of social norms and the environment on people's perceptions of their choices (Desai, 2010). Similarly, feminist literature suggests that social norms impact people's perceptions and argues for a critical process, much like conscientization as discussed in the previous chapter, which raises individual's awareness of gendered social norms and patriarchy (Summerson Carr, 2003). All three literatures emphasise an internal process as an important aspect of empowerment, particularly in relation to people's perceptions of their own position and increasing their awareness.

Organisational literature refers to psychological empowerment in regards to employees in the workplace. The literature on empowerment in organisations is highly influenced by Spreitzer (1996) and his four features of psychological empowerment: "meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact" (p. 484). Spreitzer developed these features from Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) study of empowerment and employee motivation, in order to consider people's

relationship to their work organisation. These four features have been highly influential in organisational literature on empowerment and many authors refer to them when considering the concept (Siegall & Gardner, 2000; Maynard et al., 2012; Rahman et al., 2014). For example, Maynard et al (2012) describe meaning as one's values being shared with an organisation, competence as one's belief in one's ability, self-determination as one's choice or level of control and impact as the belief that one's work is influential or important. All four features emphasise the importance of an individual's perception of their situation within an organisation, whilst the psychological or internal process involves improving one's perception of these four areas (Maynard et al., 2012). Psychological empowerment is thus a cognitive process, where people perceive themselves as having the ability to succeed and influence their work. Similarly, Rahman et al (2014) use Spreitzer's (1996) four features of empowerment to outline the ways psychological empowerment impacts innovative work amongst academic researchers. The authors surveyed lecturers across five Malaysian Universities and found that if individuals embodied all four features, they were more likely to show signs of innovative work behaviour. They offer insights into empowerment in an academic context, though their study lacks a contextual analysis of the universities and the specific impact of the university environment. The authors' focus on the academic's perceptions lacks a consideration of contextual factors and the effects of institutional culture on one's perceptions. Their approach to empowerment assumes that there needs to be no organisational change; rather people's perceptions need to change to fit with the organisation. This implies that there is a cognitive change, one changes from perceiving oneself as lacking "meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact" (Spreitzer, 1996, p. 484) to perceiving oneself as possessing all four features. This is reflected in Spreitzer's (1996) work as he suggests that objective reality is not important, instead an individual's subjective perception of reality is the key to empowerment. Despite some authors' lack of focus on context, many authors do recognise the importance of environmental and cultural aspects. For example, Siegall and Gardner (2000) refer to environmental and cultural aspects which affect one's psychological empowerment including; the level of communication from senior levels and management, the

organisation's values, the work environment, and social relations between employees of all levels. This implies that the psychological aspect of empowerment is not entirely cognitive and is affected by the organisation's environment. Siegall and Gardner's (2000) argument suggests that organisations ought to accommodate employees by focusing on providing them with all four aspects of empowerment, removing the responsibility of empowering staff from individual employees to the organisation itself. Considering culture and environment can offer a deeper understanding of people's perceptions by providing insight into the ways perception can be influenced by external factors. This suggests that universities have a responsibility to create an environment that allows for the empowerment of their employees, to improve perceptions of universities in general. The organisational literature on psychological empowerment recognises the importance of an individual's perceptions and their internal feelings towards their work, whilst also providing insights into the impact of environment and organisational culture.

Within the second area of literature from the discipline of international development, empowerment is also conceptualised as an internal process which can help reduce gender inequality and improve the lives of marginalised people (Desai, 2010). Corresponding to Spreitzer (1996), Cornwall and Edwards (2010) emphasise individual perceptions as important to the process of empowerment. They consider perception in relation to one's choices, arguing that if people perceive they have multiple available choices they are more likely to be empowered. However, the authors suggest that choice can be influenced and restricted by social norms and culture and thus external factors affect the internal process of empowerment. This expands on the notion in some organisational literature that culture and environment can affect a person's perceptions and thus reduce their ability to become empowered. Social norms form the basis of society's structures and can have an impact on people's perceptions of the world around them (Bicchieri, 2005). For example, Ibrahim and Alkire (2007) argue that social norms and cultural barriers can be internalised, and this can restrict one's perceptions of one's available choices, ultimately reducing empowerment. They suggest that studies of empowerment ought to be context specific in order to have a more in depth understanding of the effects of norms on people's

perceptions. However, the authors do not explain in detail how social norms impact empowerment and why the internalisation of social norms changes people's perceptions. On the other hand, Mosedale (2005) offers an explanation of the impact of internalising social norms on empowerment, suggesting that societies, culture and institutions are underpinned by social norms which are based on gender, class, ethnicity, age, religion and other attributes. She argues that these affect gender power relations, which have an impact on the sorts of life choices society values. Social norms become part of people's inner consciousness because they are so integral to the way society is constructed. According to this definition, people's perceptions of their available choices may be affected by what society deems acceptable or unacceptable. This is similar to Freire's conceptualisation of oppression and the impact of internalising social norms on oppressed people's consciousnesses. This explanation of social norms provides insights into the importance of society's norms and structures on people's internal empowerment by suggesting that people's perceived choices may be limited. It also relates to the notion that university culture has its own set of gendered norms and rules and these are impacted by wider societal norms, as outlined in chapter 3 on the rules of the game. According to international development literature, these norms will affect academics' perceived choices and academics may internalise the gendered norms present in their universities.

Both international development and feminist literature consider the internal process of empowerment to be affected by internalisation of gendered social norms. Feminist literature perceives society and institutions as patriarchal and thus unequal for men and women (Deveaux, 1994). Similarly, international development literature refers to empowerment as a means of improving equality for women. Kabeer (1999) suggests that gender inequality is produced and reproduced through social norms and practices. She also argues that social norms are gendered and often have implications for women, internalising themselves as lesser to men (Kabeer, 1999). Much of the feminist literature on an internalisation of social norms is influenced by Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1996), particularly the notion of conscientization as outlined in the previous chapter. Freire (1996) argues that the oppressed internalise the consciousness of their

oppressors and thus are immersed in their reality, which is given to them by an oppressor. In relation to feminism, this definition applies to women internalising social norms and behaving in a way that conforms to them. As the previous chapter outlined, Freire argues that it is possible to change people's consciousness through a critical education of those who are oppressed and the process of dialogue. This is one way for women potentially to become aware of their relationship to gendered norms, a cognitive process where people start to think critically about their world. Kabeer (2005) refers to a critical consciousness in relation to women and their perceived choices suggesting it can lead to women questioning whether their social position impacts the choices they are making. By being critical in their decision making, women can make decisions with an awareness of the impact of social norms and may perceive wider choices because of this awareness. Similarly, Summerson Carr (2003) considers empowerment from a feminist perspective and suggests that an internal process of becoming aware of socio-political factors and norms is an important aspect to empowerment. She describes conscientization as inner reflection of one's position in society and their environment. The development of one's internal consciousness is the first stage of the empowerment process for Summerson Carr (2003) and can lead to the perception that one has the power to change one's situation. By beginning the empowerment process with an internal awareness of social norms and boundaries, it may be possible for women to bring about change and challenge norms, which limit their choices. This perspective is also considered by East (2000) who refers to feminist perspectives on empowerment, arguing that there ought to be a changing of consciousness, whereby women become aware of their oppression through sexism and patriarchal structures. This emphasises the importance of consciousness raising for women in particular, as without an awareness of gendered or patriarchal structures women's perceptions of their choices and position in society will cause them to remain disempowered. By becoming aware of social norms through a critical perspective, women undergo an internal change, which may initiate the process of empowerment and provide incentive for women to bring about change. This highlights the links between the literature on empowerment and feminist literature on pedagogies and Freire. By considering the process of

empowerment in depth, I am expanding on the previous chapter by offering a further approach to the process of conscientization and the ways it is connected to activism.

All three literatures emphasise an internal process to empowerment, whereby people's perceptions of their position change. The organisational literature is useful as it puts the process in an organisational and work context, which relates to a university organisation. It also emphasises the importance of organisational environment and suggests that the organisation must play a role in providing an empowering environment for their employees. However, international development and feminist perspectives on empowerment offer an understanding of the effects of wider social norms and culture on one's internal perceptions. International development literature suggests that it is imperative that an analysis of empowerment includes an awareness of the potential internalisation of gendered social norms that limit women's choices. Feminist literature offers an explanation of the internal awareness of social norms and political factors which can start the process of empowerment. Therefore, improving an individual's perception through the four features identified by Spreitzer (1996) may not be enough to empower individuals if there are more subtle cultural and social norms effecting one's choices and perceptions. Instead feminist and international development literature offer a deeper understanding of the initial process of empowerment suggesting it can occur through organisational change, broadening of people's perceived choices and a critical awareness of the internalisation of gendered social norms. These psychological components taken from organisational, international development and feminist literatures on empowerment represent the beginning of a process of empowerment. I discuss the continuation of this process in the following sections.

Top-Down vs. Bottom up

The previous section outlines the features of psychological empowerment, referring to an internal process whereby one's consciousness becomes more critical and one's environment is suitable to one's needs. A question remains as to how the psychological process is formed in practice, within organisations or society. The literature on internal empowerment tends to have

two approaches to empowering others, top-down empowerment and bottom-up empowerment. Top-down empowerment refers to empowerment initiatives, which begin from the top of an organisation or state and aim to empower people at the grass roots or lower levels of an organisation (Argyris, 1998). Bottom-up initiatives begin from the grass roots and aim for individuals to empower themselves (Argyris, 1998).

Within organisational literature, there is a theory of empowering leadership which suggests that those in leadership positions in organisations can empower their employees by delegating to them, giving them more responsibility and autonomy (Honold, 1997; Maynard, 2006; Logan & Ganster, 2007; Maynard et al., 2012; Cheong et al., 2016). This is very much a top-down approach, whereby leaders bestow their employees with empowerment. Cheong et al (2016) suggest that empowering leadership can lead to higher levels of self-efficacy amongst employees, which in turn will lead to more efficiency and higher work performance. There is an assumption within the empowering leadership approach that it is possible for people to empower others. However, this might be affected by an individual's personal emotions, internalised norms and attitudes to towards their leaders. Employees may feel that their leader does not understand their issues within the workplace, or under confident when taking on more responsibility. Top-down approaches do not necessarily take into account the feelings and subjectivities of the individual employees they are trying to empower. Employees may not feel committed to empowerment initiatives and internally remain the same. Argyris (1998) distinguishes between internal commitment and external commitment, suggesting that external commitment is commitment to work because one feels they have to do it and internal commitment is commitment to something because one internally believes in it. He argues that top-down approaches to empowerment such as empowering leadership might result in external commitment but not internal commitment. Without an internal aspect of empowerment, the process of self-belief and a development of a critical consciousness cannot occur and thus leadership empowerment might not actually result in empowered employees. Similarly, an internal aspect of empowerment means that there cannot be a successful initiative where people attempt to empower others, as the motivation has to come

from those who seek to be empowered (Metcalfe, 1995; Kabeer, 2005). Empowering leadership approaches also assume that leaders will want to empower their employees, whereas some may feel that this might threaten their position as leader as empowerment may alter power relations within organisations (Argyris, 1998). Feminist and international development literatures offer a more nuanced approach to empowerment, considering top-down and bottom-up approaches alongside power relations that might exist within organisations and society.

Power and the Buzzword Critique

Power is a widely debated complex concept, considered within feminist writings, encompassing multiple meanings and heavily influenced by Foucault (Deveaux, 1994). However, this review will focus on power in terms of power relations and solely in relation to empowerment, as the wider concept is too large to be fully explored here. Power is central to feminist perspectives on empowerment, as empowerment is considered as a way of exercising power to change society's power relations (Pereira, 2008). Empowerment as a feminist concept from the 1980s emphasised transforming power relations so that women can change gender norms, which may maintain their position as unequal to men (Sardenberg, 2008). This definition encompasses power as it suggests that people can only become empowered if they have been disempowered or lacking in power in the first place. According to this, being disempowered seems to emphasise an inability to bring about change or challenge power relations. Political action is thus essential for women to be empowered and empowerment itself involves a process of transformative change through activism. One of the most influential books on feminism, empowerment and power is Patricia Hill Collins' *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (2000). She argues that power can be considered in terms of oppression whereby some groups have more power and they oppress those with less power. Similarly, Collins refers to power as constantly shifting and argues that it is intersectional, in that at some points someone's race may be the focus of their oppression and at other times their gender, or both together. This approach is very much political, as it suggests that men actively oppress women to maintain power. However, as highlighted in the previous chapter, oppression can be unconscious and not all individual men

are responsible for women's lesser status or inequality. Despite this, Collins (2000) offers insights into the way power can be held by groups in society and can shift depending on specific context and scenarios. In relation to empowerment, she argues that small acts by women can alter unequal power relations through "micro-changes" (Collins, 2000, p. 78) and this is a form of empowerment, activism and resistance. She argues that individual acts of agency can help to bring about change, whilst increasing knowledge can build a group resistance, which can also change power relations. This relates to Freire as he suggested that a critical consciousness would ultimately lead to action, as those who are oppressed would feel inclined to act to change their situation. The feminist concept of power as oppression and as shifting is useful when considering the political aspect of empowerment and the ways that women can alter power relations at an individual and group level. Transforming society by changing unequal power relations is thus vital to the feminist notion of empowerment. This suggests that empowerment is very much a bottom-upwards concept and it is not possible to empower others, rather people have to believe in their power to change their situation. This implies that feminist academic activists will have a strong internal belief that change is possible and may have undergone a process of critical consciousness, which has led them to try to bring about change.

Despite this positive, transformative approach to empowerment, many authors argue that it has lost this definition and has become a buzzword in mainstream media, development and society, losing its original feminist meaning (Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Cornwall et al., 2008; Pereira, 2008; Sardenberg, 2008; Calvès 2009; McRobbie, 2009; Lewin, 2010; Calkin, 2015). McRobbie (2009) refers to "post-feminism" in relation to empowerment arguing that a radical, transformative form of feminism has been replaced by ideas around role-models and women's sexual freedom, which has less of an impact on changing structural inequalities that maintain women's unequal position in society. McRobbie (2009) refers to the concept of empowerment, arguing that it has been mainstreamed in order to convince women they have freedom without bringing about any political change. This suggests that empowerment is currently used in a way that maintains the status quo, but in order for it to have transformative impact there ought to be

wider, systematic and political change to improve the situation of women. Some authors suggest that empowerment has also been appropriated by organisations and international development institutions to support a neoliberal agenda. Cornwall et al (2008) argue that empowerment has become individualistic, in that there is an emphasis on an individual improving their own situation, removing the responsibility of reducing gender inequality from the state or institutions. This fits within neoliberal ideology of individualism and a lack of state intervention, which suggests that empowerment, is maintaining current socio-political norms which affect gender relations. Cornwall et al (2008) refer to this as a depoliticised approach to empowerment, whereby women have to change to fit within society, instead of society changing to support women. Despite the negative impact of mainstreaming the concept of empowerment, authors still suggest that empowerment can be a feminist concept again. By reclaiming the term and resisting mainstreamed definitions it is possible to re-establish a meaning of empowerment, which encompasses changing power relations and bringing about transformative change to improve gender equality (Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Cornwall et al., 2008; Pereira, 2008; Calvès 2009). This is possible according to feminist authors by defining empowerment based on feminist principles and focusing on the importance of bringing about change through activism. Feminist academic activists may be more closely aligned with original feminist notions of empowerment, particularly if they are acting from their own values, or from the bottom-upwards to bring about change for gender equality.

Agency, Decision Making and Resources

Following on from the internal or psychological aspects of empowerment and the concept of power, a third theme of agency emerges across the three disciplines, which involves decision making and control of, or access to, resources. International development literature refers to the concept of agency as people's ability to achieve their goals and act on their choices (Sen 1985; Kabeer 2005). Similarly, organisational literature emphasises employee decision making as a feature of empowerment, referring to employee participation and providing employees with resources and opportunities (Kanter, 1986, 1993; Ford, et al., 1995). Feminist literature refers to the unequal distribution of resources due to patriarchy within society and organisations (Calkin,

2015). All three literatures recognise people's ability to make decisions and the impact of resources and opportunities on individuals' agency and empowerment.

Agency is considered in international development literature as a key feature of empowerment, influenced by Sen (1985) who suggests that agency is one's ability to achieve one's goals or aims. Agency is empowering as it is based on human action, whereby people can focus on the achievements which they prioritise and act in their own way to achieve them. Despite this, Sen (1985) argues that exercising agency does not necessarily improve people's well-being, even if they are achieving their personal goals. People can choose to do something which causes them stress or anxiety and while they are exercising agency according to Sen's definition, they are not improving their well-being (Alkire, 2008). This suggests that people are free to pursue their goals, even if those goals are potentially harmful, emphasising people's personal desires. The concept of empowerment is often considered to be a means of improving the lives of individuals (Desai, 2010), yet this definition of agency appears to potentially contradict that. However, Alkire (2008) suggests that agency is still empowering because people's ability to focus on their own personal goals allows them to have the potential to improve their lives. This represents the subjectivity of people's goals and desires, and suggests that empowerment is based on that which is important to the individual. This relates to Freire's notion that developing a critical consciousness will cause people to want to act to change their world, thus their goals and desires will reflect the ending of oppression. Yet, Drydyk (2013) argues that this definition of agency causes it to be too subjective, as people may prioritise a goal, which reduces their ability to achieve their other goals, making it unclear whether that specific goal increases their agency. Despite this, people achieving their personal goals suggests that individuals are able to focus on goals, which are important to them. Relating to universities, this could mean that women achieving their career goals is a form of agency and can be considered as an individual being empowered.

The emphasis on achieving individual goals relates back to the issue of choice as people can only reach their goals if they are able to make choices that have appropriate results. Making

decisions is thus a vital component to agency due to the impact decisions can have on wider goals. Decision making is referred to in organisational literature as a feature of empowerment, in that it can allow individuals to contribute to changes and developments in an organisation. Ford et al (1995) refer to one's ability to make decisions in an organisational context, arguing that by being involved in decision making people are able to influence change in organisations. This relates to agency as it outlines an active role by individuals to change their situation. However, Ford et al (1995) do not consider that an individual's decisions may be influenced by the organisation's norms and culture, which would limit change. Alternatively, Ibrahim and Alkire (2007) argue that certain structures can result in social and political obstacles to agency by limiting people's choices to those that are culturally or socially acceptable. This relates to the internalisation of social norms and suggests that an organisation's norms may impact the way people choose to act. Again, this is relevant within universities in connection with the rules of the game and the gendered social norms present within academia, as outlined in chapter 3 on the rules of the game. Kabeer (2005) is particularly influential in international development literature on agency and empowerment, offering insights into the factors that affect people's choices. She defines agency as one's ability to make choices without external influence from social norms and institutional pressures, arguing that if one's goals and choices are limited by social norms one is unable to exercise agency and is disempowered. Organisations have their own set of norms and cultures, which determine the practices, policies and procedures within them (J. Acker, 2006). It is imperative that social norms are considered not only in relation to people's perceptions, but also in relation to their actions. Kabeer (2005) links the psychological influence of social norms and the effect on people's perceptions with people's agency, showing how internal factors feed into people's actions. This suggests that people cannot exercise agency without the psychological aspect of empowerment, an internal awareness of social norms and one's position in relation to them. When considering people's choices as tools for change, it is therefore necessary to understand the impact of social norms on people's actions. This suggests that one must go through the process of conscientization before they are able to exercise agency to bring about change. The definition offered by Ford et al

(1995) also encompasses an assumption that all choices in organisations, which are influential in some way, are automatically empowering. Alternatively, Hill (2003) argues that exercising agency through decision making is not necessarily empowering in all circumstances. Hill (2003) suggests that people can influence an organisation through institutional practices and democracy, for example voting on a particular decision, but this is not enough for one to become empowered. Decisions made through democratic procedures within an organisation may have less of an impact on people's wider lives and their empowerment. Kabeer (1999) expands on this issue, suggesting which sorts of choices contribute to empowerment, arguing that only more consequential, significant life choices can be considered as empowering. This is useful as it removes the assumption that any decision, including day to day smaller decisions are empowering and suggests that an organisation must allow people to make bigger decisions for them to be empowered employees. Contributing to decision making through democratic and organised procedures in universities is therefore not necessarily empowering because it does not have enough of an impact on an individual's life and people may only be choosing to focus on certain goals because their university expects it of them. This suggests that decision making can be empowering but only if individuals make decisions of their own accord, because the outcome of the decision is personally important to them.

Within both organisational and international development literature, authors present the view that in order for people to make choices to achieve their goals they need to have the right resources and opportunities. Kanter (1986, 1993) is extremely influential in the development of organisational literature on empowerment due to her ideas around resources, information and opportunities. With the right information, resources and opportunities, Kanter (1986, 1993) argues that individuals are more likely to achieve their work goals, becoming empowered and making the organisation more effective. The implication of this is that people can only have agency if there are external factors, which allow them to make decisions and reach their goals, specifically resources, opportunities and information. Without resources and opportunities in an organisation, people's agency may be limited, as their decisions will only be based on the resources and

opportunities available to them. This is also the case outside of an organisational context; Jejeebhoy et al (2010) argue that resources are "enablers" (p. 57) and include people's access to healthcare, education, employment and opportunities. Although this refers to people in developing countries, the definition of resources as enabling people to have agency is useful in a developed context. For example, people in the UK working in academia will have these basic life sustaining resources but they still require opportunities such as promotion and resources such as access to funding for research. Jejeebhoy et al (2010) offer a notion of resources as "enablers" (p. 57), suggesting that making decisions and reaching one's goals is not solely an individual's responsibility, it is also the role of society or organisations to provide people with the right resources in order for them to exercise agency. Calkin (2015) argues that often the concept of agency focuses too much on individual responsibility, which contradicts feminist political ideas of unequal, gendered social relations. A feminist perspective on agency suggests that it is the responsibility of organisations and institutions to provide opportunities and resources in an ungendered way, so that women can have agency and be empowered.

Agency can be considered as the next stage of the empowerment process, moving on from an internal or psychological process, involving making significant choices to achieve one's aims and having the right resources or opportunities to do so. Within organisations agency can be exercised through people's career goals and the choices they make about their career. However, it can also move beyond an organisation and relate to external norms that influence an organisations culture and an individual's perceptions. Making choices can be empowering, providing that people set their own goals based on their personal priorities. Democratic processes are not necessarily an example of individual agency as they are usually compulsory. This shows the importance of an individual choosing to pursue the goals, which they personally value. It is only possible for an individual to do so if they have resources and opportunities, which would enable them to reach their goals. Despite inequality in academia as highlighted in the rules of the game chapter, in general those working within academia are in a privileged position in regard to resources. They are able to use their position to conduct research that they value, have access to journals, reading

materials and online resources to continue to increase their knowledge and the knowledge of others. This increased access to educational resources may mean that academics have more potential to be critical, experience conscientization and to facilitate it in others. Yet, they may not all have agency as the resources within academia are distributed in relation to gender, as the rules of the game chapter suggests. Similarly, the goals of some academics may just be to climb the academic hierarchy, which may limit their desire to be critical and conduct research that could be less highly valued.

Actors of Change or Activism in the University Context

Agency allows one to act, in order to achieve one's goals and make decisions, with an awareness of social norms and external factors. Moving beyond this, many authors suggest that to be empowered people must become actors of change, using their agency to challenge social norms and transform institutions (Cornwall & Brock, 2005; McRobbie, 2009; Chopra & Muller, 2016). The literature emphasises the importance of challenging structures and systems within organisations to bring about gender equality. For example, Acker (2006) argues that organisations produce and reproduce inequalities through their structural processes and practices, as chapter 3 on the rules of the game suggested about universities. This suggests that in order to bring about change through empowerment, individuals must challenge the processes and practices of their organisation. Being an actor of change or activist follows on from a psychological awareness of gendered structures and social norms by improving one's ability to challenge structures that maintain inequalities. As suggested in the previous chapter, Freire's concept of critical consciousness and feminist pedagogy are directly linked to action and encompass a process whereby people use their increased awareness to bring about positive changes. This section considers ways individuals can be actors of change and thus become empowered, referring to a university context. It thus provides potential ways that a critical consciousness can be used to bring about change and turned into action.

One approach to bringing about change is presented by Chopra and Muller (2016) who argue that empowered individuals ought to challenge societies' gender roles by participating in political decision making. The authors argue that having women in positions of influence and political power, such as in government will improve gender equality, as often women focus on the needs of other women. Similarly, they suggest that having women in leadership positions will provide role models to other women, which encourages them to pursue traditionally male roles. Although, Chopra and Muller (2016) are referring to state governments, their points apply to a university context, as universities have their own leaders and managers in place. In a university setting, this would mean more women in senior positions and management positions in academia, suggesting that empowerment is synonymous with leadership. One problem with their argument is that it assumes that having women in leadership will automatically improve the situation of women who are not in positions of power. Metcalfe (1995) argues that there is a risk that only women who embody masculine leadership characteristics such as independence, control and competitiveness will achieve leadership positions. She suggests that these characteristics are not necessarily valued in women in the same way as men and this can lead to the reproduction of the gendered distribution of labour and gender norms. Although women in leadership positions can use their agency to be actors of change, empowerment applies to all women, not just women leaders and thus women in non-senior positions ought to be able to bring about change too. Encouraging women to enter leadership positions may seem positive but empowerment could have wider impact if it meant that women could come together to challenge political structures which maintain women's lesser position. There is still a major problem in universities of a lack of women in senior positions (Acker, 1992), instead of trying to add more women into top levels it may be more empowering for women to challenge university structures which limit women's ability to reach those positions.

Another means of bringing about change through empowerment is through a collaborative effort by women to challenge patriarchal structures in organisations and society. Bagilhole and Goode (2001) argue that women academics can bring about change by supporting and promoting

each other in universities. Although the authors do not refer to empowerment specifically in academia they offer insights into ways women might change gendered structures in a university context. They suggest that individualism in academia results in disadvantages to women academics and reduces women's ability to change the system. Similarly, Pratt (2010) refers to feminist collaboration between researchers in academia, arguing that through collaborative research, women are able to support each other and have a wider cross-disciplinary impact, through working together and supporting one another in academia, women can challenge the culture of individualism, by being different they are challenging commonplace practices and procedures in universities. However, women can also work against each other and may be unsupportive due to competition within universities (Mavin, 2008). Despite this, Rowland (1995) argues that through collaboration people can have a wider impact in changing power structures and improving equality. The emphasis on collaboration implies that structural change can happen in organisations by women working together to challenge the norm. Within organisational literature on empowerment, there is little mention of structural change, although Honold (1997) refers to changing an organisation's culture to be more participatory and supportive of employees. Participation implies a cooperative effort between members of an organisation, similar to collaboration. However, participation still refers to democratic approaches in an organisation, which are part of its structural processes and procedures. Empowerment through agency ought to allow people to challenge social norms and bring about change, however democratic organisational participation only results in minor change, not structural change and is thus not empowering. Collaboration on the other hand, is an act that the individual chooses to commit to, rather than it being enforced, and can provide support networks, whilst representing different ways of working than the individualist status quo in universities (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001). Collaboration is also a form of activism as it is an act by feminist academics to bring about change for feminist academics and thus fits under this PhD's definition of activism.

Other forms of activism are referred to in relation to empowerment in a university context within the literature. For example, although activism and academia may be considered as

opposites, as activism relates to action and academia to knowledge, Eschle and Maiguashca (2006) argue that through conceptualising feminist ideas and the experiences of women, academic research is a form of activism. They refer to the notion of critical scholarship, which is defined as feminist research, raising awareness of power relations and challenging structures that may be oppressive to women. The authors do not refer to empowerment specifically but their research is particularly useful as it highlights the ways academics can challenge inequalities through their research, which fits with the idea that empowered individuals should bring about change. This is in line with feminist pedagogy and shows how a critical consciousness can be used by academics to improve knowledge of women's experiences. Similarly, Bendl et al (2014) consider feminist activism in an Austrian university, looking at the ways activism has shifted since universities have incorporated equality into their central agenda and become more managerial. The authors found that activism previously took the form of women's collaborative groups, which influenced structural change in the university through negotiation and pressure. However, as managerialism became the norm in universities gender equality issues became centralised and feminist activism changed from collaboration to individual acts of feminist activism in people's teaching and research. Bendl et al's (2014) research reiterates the presence of a managerial shift in universities and ways in which employees can still bring about change through smaller, individual acts of activism within that context. Their work suggests that through incorporating feminist ideas into teaching and research individual academics can influence knowledge, which can help to address issues around gender equality, highlighting ways it still exists, and contributing to solutions. This represents the links between empowerment and feminist pedagogy, offering ways in which feminist pedagogy can be carried out in practice.

Martin et al (2007) consider activism and the ways individuals can bring about change, arguing that activism exists through networks and interaction with others. They argue that women can bring about change through activism in their day to day smaller actions, if those actions bring about new networks and alter power relations in a small way. These literatures provide insights into the ways small acts from individual academics are empowering as they can bring about

change. One example of this is within Bailyn's (2003) research, which outlines the actions of a female academic in science who wrote a letter to a female colleague in a more senior position about gender disadvantages that she was experiencing. The women then came together to pressure the dean of their faculty, resulting in the implementation of a committee to collect data on academic's salaries in relation to their gender. The findings resulted in changes to the practices of the university, which were designed to make salaries equal for the same positions and work, regardless of gender. Bailyn's (2003) example shows how a seemingly small act can bring about wider change and improve gender equality. This is empowering because the female academic used her agency and internal awareness of subtle gender differences in academia to bring about change. The example shows the impact feminist academics can have through small actions and research, by influencing and pressuring those higher up in the university. Within this example the process of internal awareness or critical awareness, is followed by the decision to change the situation and finally by an act of activism. This follows the process of internal empowerment, agency and then acting to bring about change as presented in this chapter.

As well as an internal awareness of gendered structures many researchers refer to raising awareness of gendered issues as a form of activism and means of bringing about change. O.Grada et al (2015) argue that in order for transformative change to occur in universities there has to be an overarching awareness within the university of gendered norms and structures within academia. This represents a process of facilitating a critical consciousness in others as a form of activism. It implies that all levels of academia, including management, should be aware of the effects gendered norms can have on university practices and procedures and that this awareness will allow everyone to act with a critical awareness of deeply rooted gendered structures (O.Grada et al., 2015). According to this it is possible to raise awareness of gender inequality by sharing people's real experiences of inequality, similar to the notion of consciousness raising within feminist pedagogy. O.Grada et al (2015) assume that raising awareness of gendered structures and norms will automatically have a positive response; however there may actually be a negative reaction to the idea of change in universities. On the other hand, Bilmoria et al (2008) suggest that some of the

barriers to gender equality are so invisible and subtle due to their entrenchment in practices and procedures that there will be a negative reaction or resistance to change from some people. Despite this, they refer to the ADVANCE programme in the US which focused on transforming universities to improve gender equality. One aspect of the programme involved educating male colleagues about issues of gender equality and gendered norms. Despite some negative response from the male colleagues, there was generally a positive reaction and the programme contributed to wider institutional changes such as new policies on gender equality, new structures to support people with families and new initiatives such as mentoring (Bilmoria et al, 2008). Making people aware of gendered injustices may not be enough to facilitate critical consciousness but doing so in a way that promotes dialogue about issues could help to do so. It is important to consider the impact of change and the risk of negative responses, however even with some negativity change can occur through educating, discussing and raising awareness of gender norms in universities, which can maintain inequality.

This section presents empowerment as a process, which ultimately leads to activism, providing the potential for people to bring about change to improve gender equality. Although increasing the numbers of women in positions of leadership or power is positive, it is not necessarily enough to bring about transformative change. However, through activism which involves collaboration, feminist research, individual challenges to gendered norms and raising awareness, individuals and groups of women may be able to change practices and procedures which are underpinned by gendered norms. These are potential outcomes of people experiencing a critical consciousness and using it to become activists. Collaboration can allow women to challenge the masculine and neoliberal notion of individualism whilst creating supportive networks and increasing pressure on universities. Feminist research and teaching, as well as individual small acts can challenge social norms and offer insights into women's experiences of gender inequality in academia. Finally raising awareness of gendered norms and structures, which maintain inequality, can influence all members of the university to act with a critical awareness of gender issues and may result in structural change. These actions represent ways in which those

who have undergone the internal process of empowerment or the process of developing a critical consciousness might turn it into action within a university context. This approach to empowerment presents it as a form of activism in line with Freire and feminist pedagogical approaches. It also shows ways that feminist academic activists could act to try to bring about change, whilst working within gendered institutions.

In this literature review, I have considered the process of empowerment from the perspectives of organisational, international development and feminist literatures. I outlined three aspects of empowerment: first as an internal or psychological process, second as agency and third as activism. The psychological process of empowerment is a form of Freire's conscientization and can initiate the process of empowerment, potentially leading to people's agency and their ability to become activists and bring about change. According to the organisational literature, it involves an organisational environment, which provides shared values, encourages people to believe in their ability, motivates employees, gives employees some control and influence and acknowledges the importance of employees' work. International development and feminist literatures suggest that as well as this individuals ought to become aware of social norms and cultural factors through conscientization, which might limit their perceptions of their available choices in order to initiate agency and change. All three literatures refer to agency or decision making as an important aspect of empowerment, as it allows people to act to achieve goals that they value. This is empowering as it can provide people with more control over their work and their lives. However, the literature suggests that agency is not possible without resources and opportunities from society and organisations, and it is thus the role of both to provide people with the resources and opportunities to achieve their goals. Feminist literature emphasises that resources and opportunities provided may be based on gendered norms, which can limit women's empowerment and thus limit their agency. This suggests that to promote equality, resources must be equally distributed, regardless of gender. Finally, empowerment in this sense is activism as it can provide a means to change social norms, structures and practices that may limit women's choices. By using empowerment and critical consciousness to engage in action such as collaboration, feminist research, small or

micro actions and raising awareness of gendered norms, empowerment becomes a means of bringing about change through action. All three aspects of empowerment, psychological and internal, agency, and action for change, are therefore inter-related in an ongoing process whereby each aspect contributes to the others. The literature on empowerment can provide insights into the process feminist academic activists might be experiencing and the sorts of actions they might be carrying out to bring about change. Critiquing this literature and providing a framework of empowerment as action thus offers a theory of activism within higher education and how it might be shaped by and recreate the transformative alternative education that Freire envisioned.

Chapter 6:

Methodology and Methods

Methodology and Method

My research addresses the overarching question: What are the experiences of feminist academic activists attempting to challenge the rules of the game in UK academia?

And the following subsidiary questions:

1. Are the rules of the game in UK academia gendered?
2. Who are feminist academic activists?
3. In what ways do feminist academic activists challenge the rules of the game in UK Academia?
4. How do feminist academic activists persevere within gendered institutions?

My research is underpinned by a qualitative, feminist methodology, and I use a narrative interview method, and a narrative analysis involving the re-telling and a synthesis of narratives. In this chapter, I outline the methodology, referring to qualitative and feminist approaches, as previously mentioned in chapter 4 relating to feminist pedagogy. Then, I outline my commitment to reflexivity throughout the research process, through keeping a research diary and using this to reflect on individual interviews and narratives, as well as including a separate reflexivity chapter, drawing on narrative, auto-ethnography, and reflexive traditions. I also outline my process of recruiting participants, the ethical considerations, and the narrative interview method. Finally, I discuss the analysis process of re-telling and the synthesis, drawing on methods of narrative data analysis.

Qualitative methodology relates to human experiences and how they reflect wider knowledge (Alasuutari et al., 2008). The research in this PhD is interpretive, and I focus on the subjective realities of individuals and their interactions with the world, considering the experiences and perceptions of feminist academic activists (Haynes, 2008). Qualitative research is based on understanding the world through people's experiences of it and the meanings they

construct (Merriam, 2016). It requires the researcher to interpret their participant's version of reality, as opposed to attempting to uncover an objective external reality (Hennink, 2010). This PhD is inherently qualitative as the research question focuses on the experiences of feminist academic activists and thus aims to gain insights into the subjective realities of the participants. As well as being underpinned by qualitative and interpretive methodologies, I also draw on feminist methodology. As I mentioned in chapter 4 on Freire and feminist pedagogy, feminist methodology emphasises women's experiences, acknowledging that these are diverse, as women are not one singular category, but have subjective experiences, which can contribute to knowledge (Weiler, 1991; Haynes 2008; Bendl & Schmidt, 2012). Feminist methodology is based on feminist notions of collaboration and thus involves subject to subject relations between researcher and participants, focusing on the co-creation of knowledge and allowing participants to be equals within the research process (Cahill et al., 2010). Additionally, feminist methodology requires reflexivity throughout. Reflexivity is particularly important in feminist research, as it requires the researcher to challenge and reflect on their assumptions about social characteristics including gender, in order to consider ways in which they may affect the research process (Lafrance & Wiggington, 2019). As feminist research is underpinned by notions of equality and aims to reduce power relations in the research process, reflexivity is vital to the co-construction of knowledge, allowing for the consideration of the role of the researcher in the process of construction (Lafrance & Wiggington, 2019). I outline the ways in which I maintained reflexivity in the following section. Relating to reflexivity, the PhD is based on my perceived reality, whereby society is patriarchal and women's position is unequal to men. This also guides the epistemological approach, which emphasises the experiences of women and feminists as they can contribute to knowledge of gender relations in universities. Both of these are key aspects of the feminist methodological approach (Haynes, 2008). Thus, although there are multiple approaches to feminism, methodology that focuses on people's experiences of gender in society may be feminist even if researchers' interpretations of those experiences vary (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002; Fraser & MacDougall, 2017). As I consider feminist academic activists' experiences of gendered social relationships and

power relations within UK universities the research is appropriately underpinned by a feminist methodology. Similarly, I conduct the research with the utmost respect for the participant's subjectivities and experiences, as feminist methodology emphasises that there ought to be equal, non-hierarchical power relations between the participant and the researcher (Reinharz, 1992; Fraser & MacDougall, 2017).

In line with feminist methodology, I used a narrative method for the interviews with participants. As a form of in-depth interview, narrative interviewing can provide insights into an individual's personal history through their own narrative (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). The research questions are based on the experiences of feminist academic activists and thus allowed participants to provide their own narrative about their experiences. A narrative method emphasises the participant's individual memory of their own experiences as it is in the form of open dialogue as opposed to specific questions. This provides in depth and rich data, as the participants reflect on their experiences over their lifetime, not just at a specific point in time (Thompson, 2000; Yow, 2015). Reflection on life experiences offers insights into participants' processes of becoming feminist academic activists and their journey of self-identifying as such. By looking at the past, it is possible to have a wider understanding of the present and how people's worlds change through time (Janesick, 2007). Individual personal experiences can also reveal aspects of social relations, social interaction, and interaction with organisations (Haynes, 2010). As I consider participants' experiences in a university context, the in-depth nature of narrative interviews not only provides data about individuals' thoughts and feelings but also their relation to universities as organisations. Individual stories as data can result in shared themes and connections, showing ways in which individuals link together through their own experiences (Atkinson, 2012). This is the case with the narrative interviews of feminist academic activists and develops the areas of discussion within the latter part of the PhD. It is the connections between people's lives shown through narratives, which can provide rich data and insights into universities as organisations, and the way people navigate themselves within them (Ewick & Silbey, 1995; Haynes 2010). The narrative method based on feminist methodology produces rich in-depth data by emphasising participants'

experiences across their lives and allows participants to produce their own narratives, telling stories in their own words.

Within the narrative method and underpinned by feminist methodology, the participant is a co-producer of knowledge, as they are equally important in deciding the direction of the interview through their own narrative (Kim, 2016). My narrative interviews therefore focus on subject to subject relations, reducing the power dynamic between myself and participants (Atkinson, 2012). A narrative method is particularly relevant in feminist research as it focuses on the voice of women, who may be underrepresented (Bornat & Diamond, 2007). Feminist academics are often regarded as being on the margins of universities as they are trying to change the mainstream from within, by not conforming to it (Meyerson, 1998). Conducting narrative interviews with them potentially provides them with a voice and opportunity to share their perspective. The narrative method therefore fits within the feminist and qualitative methodologies as outlined above. The following sections indicate the reflexive process, the recruitment process, the specific narrative interview process, ethical considerations, and narrative data analysis.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an approach to research, which requires researchers to reflect on their own position and view of reality and the impact this may have on the research (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Palaganas et al., 2017). Reflexivity can be defined as a process of critical self-reflection on the process of conducting research, whilst acknowledging the position of the researcher and their effects on the research process (Berger, 2013; Palaganas et al., 2017). Researchers all have their own personal subjectivities, involving political standpoints, and values, which may impact their research. Reflexivity can reduce the risk of these dominating the research, whilst acknowledging the researcher's subjectivity and involvement in the research process (Berger, 2013). Reflexivity is particularly important in feminist research as feminist approaches require the researcher to be constantly aware of the ways in which gendered norms may impact the construction of knowledge, in order to offer an authentic representation of the participants (Fraser & MacDougall 2017). To

maintain this awareness and its impact on the research process I sustained reflexivity throughout the PhD by critically reflecting on my position or my "self" as part of the research process, as opposed to an attempt to approach my research objectively. During the interviews, I kept a research journal about my experiences and perceptions of the interviews with participants, which I wrote in immediately after conducting each interview. I use this journal during my reflections that I present after each narrative re-telling. These reflections focus on my experience of being told the narratives, my thoughts and feelings on the day of the interview, my reflections immediately after the interview, and my reflections upon re-reading the interview. They provide insights into the process of the telling in the interviews, my development as the interviews accumulated, and the impact of my subjectivity on the interviews.

I have also included a reflexive chapter of my own narrative and PhD research journey towards the end of the PhD, chapter 10. This chapter occurs after the narrative re-tellings, reflections, synthesis and discussion chapters. I chose to position it towards the end of the PhD as it allowed me to reflect on the entire PhD process, including the discussions, and the impact it has had on my own perceptions of what it means to be a feminist academic activist. I use a reflexive auto-ethnographical approach, drawing on the definition of auto-ethnography by Reed-Danahay:

"a form of self-narrative that places the self within a social context. It is both a method and a text . . . [and] can be done by either an anthropologist who is doing "home" or "native" ethnography or by a non-anthropologist/ethnographer. It can also be done by an autobiographer who places the story of his or her life within a story of the social context in which it occurs." (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 9)

Using this definition, I write my own "self-narrative" (Reed-Danahay, 1997, p. 9), considering similar areas that the research participants addressed, including my own feminist academic activist identity, my positionality, my experience of conducting the PhD in relation to my identity and the development of my identity during the PhD process. I also address personal academic issues I experienced during the data collection and analysis. This is slightly analytically different to

traditional forms of auto-ethnographical research as it is included within research focusing on the experiences of others and addresses the experience of "doing research" (Delamont, 2009, p. 57) for the purpose of considering the interrelationship between myself and my position as researcher the University of Hull. Auto-ethnography often describes work that is solely focused on the self, whereas I consider the self in relation to the PhD and my participants' experiences (Anderson, 2006). This represents a combination of auto-ethnographical and reflective narrative approaches, telling my own story and using both the emotional and personal, whilst considering myself in relation to my organisation and the institution of higher education (Hamilton et al., 2008). As this is not a purely auto-ethnographical PhD, I use the term auto-ethnographical approach to describe the reflexive chapter, as I draw from certain methodological auto-ethnographical traditions such as focusing on the self, rejecting objectivity, and the cultural elements of my personal experience (Hamilton et al., 2008). I also draw from narrative methodology as I relate my experiences in relation to the past and present, forming them into a whole (Polkinghorne, 1995). Finally, I use reflective approaches, considering my relationship to the research and my participants (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). Personal reflection is also a feminist approach, relating the personal to the political and considering personal feminist development alongside research (David, 2004; Fraser & MacDougall, 2017). The purpose of the reflexive section is to highlight ways in which I have impacted the research and the research has impacted me, in order to show how knowledge has been co-constructed throughout the PhD process. Using auto-ethnographical approaches by referring to my personal life and emotions offers an in-depth narrative, maintaining my subjectivity, as I have maintained that of my participants. Using narrative approaches allows me to form a whole story of my experiences, including experiences before the PhD process that are linked to the decisions I have made and my prior assumptions before the PhD. Using the reflective approach allows me to consider ways in which the research has been impacted by my positionality and ways in which my positionality has been affected by the research. This combination offers an in-depth reflexive chapter, providing further insights into the research process and my own development as a feminist academic activist. Both the reflective sections after the re-tellings and

the longer reflexive chapter enable me to maintain reflexivity by constantly reflecting on my positionality and relationship to the research. They offer insights into my specific experience of the interviews and my wider experience of the PhD research as a whole. Both contribute to the thesis by maintaining my reflexivity, as I am open and honest about my positionality and its impact on the research, acknowledging that the PhD has been conducted through and with myself as the researcher and my participants. This offers further insights into the research process, maintaining transparency about how the findings have been produced. By acknowledging and reflecting on my own assumptions and positionality it is possible to move beyond them, making explicit the ways in which knowledge has been co-constructed (Lazard & McAvoy, 2017).

Recruitment of participants

I conducted narrative interviews with participants who self-identified as feminist academic activists. Self-identification is important as it allowed participants with varying approaches to feminism to be involved and avoided the issue of myself as the researcher narrowing the definition of feminism to suit my own perspective, providing a range of experiences and perspectives (Reinharz, 1992). To recruit for the PhD I arranged an open call for participants on Twitter, specifically tweeting: "I am looking for feminist academic activists of any gender working in UK Universities to take part in my PhD research. See images below for more info. If you are interested please email f.reedy@2016.hull.ac.uk. RTs would be appreciated. #phdforum #phdchat" (Reedy, 2019). Alongside this, I attached my participant information sheet in three images below the tweet. Thirty-six other Twitter accounts retweeted the tweet, allowing their followers to see it and engage with it. Around half of the final fifteen participants contacted me based on seeing this tweet. Twitter is increasingly being used by researchers to recruit participants as a form of snowball sampling, as it can reach a wider audience than other traditional forms of snowball sampling for recruitment (O'Connor et al., 2013). It can also be used as a means of reaching those who may be difficult to reach in other circumstances due to vulnerabilities, or risks of participation (Ellard-Gray et al., 2015). Feminist academic activists could be considered vulnerable as I was asking them to discuss details about their place of employment, which could present risks to their careers

or professional reputation. As well as Twitter, I also used email to contact mailing lists and specific academics I was aware of whom I thought may self-identify as feminist academic activists. The emails were sent to mailing lists of feminist academic associations, academics I met at conferences and exchanged details with and academics whose work I encountered through my engagement with feminist literature. I gained the mailing lists of associations by emailing the head of the association and asking for permission to use their mailing lists. For individual academics, I used professional email addresses, finding these to be available to the public on their university employer websites and by searching their names. The emails included the participant information sheet, offering potential participants extensive information about their role in the research and ethics. Email is a useful approach to recruitment, particularly for studies that research a specific category of participants, in this case feminist academic activists (Kristensen & Ravn, 2015). From the tweet and the emails sent, fifteen people agreed to take part. I included everyone who expressed an interest and self-identified as feminist academic activist. Table 1 illustrates the demographics of the participants which included twelve women, three men, one of whom is transgender. All participants were white except one mixed race and one black participant. However, as previously discussed they were not at all intended to be generalisable and volunteered because they self-identified as feminist academic activists. Further reflections on the impact of participant demographics occur in the reflections after the five re-tellings in chapter 7 and in the overarching reflexive chapter 10. All participants received a participant information sheet and gave informed written consent. Those who came forward and identified themselves as feminists were all concerned with women's experiences and position in society, as this is essential to all definitions of feminism (Fraser & MacDougall, 2017). I chose to stop recruitment at fifteen participants as I was aiming to conduct in depth interviews at length and this number fitted within the timescale of the PhD.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Name of Participant	**Gender**	**Race**	**Type of Institution**	**Position**
Jill	Female	White	Russell Group	Reader
Mary	Female	White	Post-92	Research Fellow
Megan	Female	White	Previously post-92	Previously Senior Lecturer
Phillip	Male	White	Russell Group	Teaching Fellow
James	Transgender Male	White	Pre-92	Lecturer
Ruby	Female	White	Post-92	Lecturer
Sara	Female	Black	Pre-92	Professor
Hannah	Female	White	Pre-92	Lecturer
Katie	Female	White	Pre-92	Senior Lecturer
Paula	Female	White	Russell Group	Academic Fellow
Rachel	Female	White	Russell Group	Professor
Asha	Female	White	Russell Group	Associate Professor
Jada	Female	White	Post-92	Associate Professor
Isaac	Male	Mixed Race	Post-92	Lecturer
Tess	Female	White	Post-92	Professor

Narrative Interview Process

The interview process was formed based on narrative interview techniques within the literature (Polkinghorne, 1995; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Miller & Salkin, 2002; Ollerenshaw & Creswell 2002; Clandinin, 2006; Anderson & Kirkpatrick 2016; Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Kim, 2016). This section outlines the process of conducting the interviews, including the location of

interviews, the initiation of narratives and questions, and the use of prompts. I conducted the interviews at a place of the participants' choosing. Some were conducted within the participant's home, others in their workplace and others within public places such as cafes. Interview location can impact the interactions between researcher and participant, particularly in relation to whether an environment feels secure for both (Gagnon, Jacob & McCabe, 2015). Sense of security or comfort can affect how open participants are to talk about difficult or emotional experiences (Gagnon, Jacob & McCabe, 2015). I thus arranged for participants to choose where the interviews took place in order to promote their comfort and sense of security when conducting the interviews. I address the ways in which the specific spaces impacted the research process within the reflections in chapter 7. At the start of the interviews, I suggested that I wanted to make the space feel safe for both researcher and participant, offering an imaginary pause button for use by either of us if we felt uncomfortable or needed a break. This helped to maintain the co-constructive approach within the interviews, as it meant that participants could feel in control of the process, taking a break if necessary (Harvey, 2013). I continued to explain that I had some initial open questions for participants on why they self-identified as feminists, why they identified as activists, and what actions they had taken within universities to challenge the rules of the game. I sent four initial open questions to participants, developed from the PhD research questions and objectives, a week prior to the interviews to allow them time to reflect on their answers. These four questions were: 1. You responded to an invitation looking for feminist academic activists, what does that mean to you?; 2. How would you define the "rules of the game" in UK academia?; 3. How have you attempted to change these rules?; 4. How have these attempts impacted yourself, your colleagues, and the university? By sending these questions in advance of the interviews, participants had already begun to form responses, which led to them having a clear starting point as they began telling their personal narratives. This is in line with narrative interview techniques as they often involve only a small number of questions to initiate a narrative and allow participants to take control of their own stories (Anderson & Kirkpatrick 2016). These open questions allowed the participants to begin reflecting on their experiences and open up their narratives. The interviews

required me to have prompts, to explore further certain aspects of the participant responses and encourage them to elaborate. I formed potential prompts based on the initial questions and prompting techniques such as the use of what, where, how, and why to elicit further information (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). I also considered potential topic areas in narratives which related to the research questions and aims of the PhD, including: feminist identity, activist identity, academic identity, the combination of these, feminist and activist values alongside an academic career, universities as gendered, the rules of the game in universities, impact of activism on the self, impact of activism on others/the institution and impact of activism on academic career. I then formed prompts that related to these areas. Again, these were based on the objectives and research questions of the PhD and were not expected to be the only topics participants talked about. This represents "congruency" (Castillo-Montoya, 2016, p. 12), whereby the interviews were shaped to meet the aims and research questions of the PhD study, whilst allowing participants to develop narratives about experiences, which were significant to them. However, as the focus was on the narrative of the participant some prompts surfaced as I listened to the participants based on what they were saying (Gluck & Patai, 2013). This required me to listen carefully and think on the spot about how I might elicit further information. It was important for me to be flexible and open so that I could think on my feet and provide prompts, as I worked with the participant to guide the interview, without pushing my own agenda (Kim, 2008). I aimed to give participants an active role in the research process and put the emphasis on their construction of their narrative in a form, which felt natural to their identity. Interviews lasted within the range of one to two hours. I did not want to limit the interviews with rigid time limits, potentially cutting off in the middle of narratives. Thus, the interviews ended in a more natural way when the dialogue stopped for a longer period of time and the four initial questions had been answered within the narrative. This further allowed participants to control the interview process, as interviews ended when they naturally ended their narratives: "The important thing is to not interrupt the narrative discourse but to wait until the storytelling comes to a natural ending" (Corbin & Morse 2003, p. 352). As this was becoming clear, I suggested that we appeared to be reaching a natural end and asked the

participant if they wanted to add anything else or if they had any additional thoughts or questions. Often participants added some final thoughts relating to their narrative, which was included as part of the analysis. Initially I suggested to participants that I may need to follow-up with a second interview. However, the open and lengthy approach of the first interview meant that I had vast and insightful data after only one interview with each participant. The combination of the participants choosing the location of the interview, the outline of a safety measure through the use of the imaginary pause, the initial four questions being seen in advance, prepared prompts, surfaced prompts, and a natural ending, lead to in-depth, personal narratives which were co-constructed with participants.

Ethical Considerations

The empirical research and narrative method presented ethical considerations to protect the participants and myself as the researcher. These considerations included issues of anonymity, consent, distress and time. Personal accounts can raise the issue of anonymity as their in-depth nature means that the detailed accounts might make participants, other people within the institutions, or their family members who have not consented to take part themselves, identifiable. This required discretion and ethical sensitivity on my part to respect privacy and anonymity where appropriate. For example, I used pseudonyms throughout the PhD and did not use institutional names or disciplines in order to protect participant's identities. Similarly, all raw data was stored on a University of Hull password protected computer and was only viewed by myself and my supervisors. Narrative research methods can require further consideration of anonymity as participants often reveal personal and potentially identifiable information about themselves as part of their narratives (Ní Laoire, 2007). The research questions also ask participants to reveal information about ways in which they have challenged and resisted the institutions they are working within. As this could potentially affect participant careers and may even cause participants to come under threat due to the political nature of feminist academic activism, anonymity becomes even more important to protect research participants (Le Roux, 2015).

However, in feminist research it is also relevant to reveal personal information about participants to accurately represent participants' voices and subjectivities and allow the reader to connect with participants and understand their relationships to structures, places and other people (Nespoor, 2000). This requires balancing on the part of the researcher, to protect anonymity whilst providing accurate information about participants which are relevant to their experience (Saunders, Kitzinger, J., & Kitzinger, C. 2015). I considered this balance carefully when conducting the interviews with participants and throughout the analysis and write up process of the PhD. As previously mentioned, as a feminist researcher I aimed to maintain participants' subjectivities and allow them to co-construct the interviews, revealing information that they felt comfortable with. Based on this, I decided to have open and honest discussions with participants at the start of the interviews about anonymity and the information that I would be disclosing within the PhD and articles that may be published from it. During these discussions I asked participants what information they would be comfortable with being shared and participants agreed that they were comfortable with their gender, race, type of institution and academic position being revealed. Some expressed specific concerns with identifiability and I asked if there was anything I could do to make them more comfortable. One participant specifically asked that I did not reveal their specific discipline or university, which I agreed to. They were also made aware that everything they said, which was recorded as part of the interview, may be used as data within the PhD and would be interpreted by myself as the researcher. Furthermore, I stated that they were not compelled to share anything they did not want to and by keeping my questions open and using the narrative interviewing approach they were able to make the decision about what they shared and choose not to share anything that they did not feel comfortable with. This allowed for a negotiation of anonymity with participants to reach a mutual agreement (Watts, 2006) about what information would be shared in the PhD and how I would present their narratives. This ensured that participants felt they were protected, whilst allowing for some of their information to be shared which represented their position, background and narratives accurately. In regard to consent, the research participants were all adults in higher education universities who were able to consent for

themselves. I issued consent forms to all participants after they had viewed the participant information sheet and had the opportunity to ask any questions. All consent forms were voluntarily signed prior to the interviews and stored in a locked cabinet at the University of Hull. Some of the participants included sensitive or personal aspects within their narratives such as discrimination and sexual harassment. These were all historical experiences and not ones that were still occurring at the time of the interviews, yet some participants still displayed distress upon recalling and sharing these experiences. To manage this, I was particularly sensitive and open to allow my participants to feel comfortable being vulnerable with me. Some strategies I used included the aforementioned imaginary pause button and allowing the participants to choose the location of the interview. Furthermore, I asked no direct questions about sensitive or upsetting topics, allowing participants to talk about difficult events only if they voluntarily decided to. I also had a plan in place whereby if any participants became particularly distressed about more recent issues I would consult my supervisors on how best to manage them. This did not occur but having this plan in place allowed me to feel secure in being able to manage these situations. The imaginary pause button also protected myself from distress by giving me the opportunity to step away from the interview and recover. This button was not used by myself or any of my participants, but its mere existence helped to promote a safe and secure environment. Finally, I was aware that I was asking already busy academics to give up their time to participate in my research. I managed this by allowing participants to choose timings, which were most convenient for them so they could fit the interviews around their work and life commitments. All of these considerations were discussed within my application to the University of Hull for ethical approval. Following this, I gained ethical approval from the University of Hull, which allowed me to maintain their code of ethics throughout the research process.

Data Analysis

Once several interviews were conducted, I listened back to the recordings of each and began transcribing. Analysis began during the transcription process as I began to pick up on commonalities across the interviews once I had read and transcribed several. I made a note of any

areas of commonalities within a separate document. As my participants told in-depth stories, I aimed to consider their narratives as a whole, maintaining their story, rather than using a tool to break down areas of the narratives into themes or codes. I thus used a narrative re-telling approach, whereby I re-tell five participant's narratives. I considered ways in which I could present the narratives, initially hoping to re-tell all fifteen of my participants' stories. Re-telling in narrative analysis is the process of re-ordering an interview and presenting it in a narrative form. This is based on the narrative tradition of bringing together data from an individual interview and re-wording it to form a whole story: "The narrative mode of thought is about 'the configuration of the data into a coherent whole' while sustaining the metaphoric richness of a story" (Kim, 2016). I began this process with my first interview by re-reading the transcription and listening to the recording several times. I then attempted to re-tell the story which resulted in a very matter-of-fact piece of writing, which failed to encompass the subjectivity of the participant. Following several discussions with my supervisors and reading several authors' approaches to narrative analysis I began to approach the narratives based on the "listening guide" approach to narrative analysis, whereby the researcher reads the transcripts multiple times each in a different way (Doucet & Mauthner 2008, 2017). This involves a first reflexive reading, in which the researcher reads the transcript and jots their own thoughts, questions, and comments alongside the narrative. A second reading focuses on the narrative subject and their perceptions of themselves and their world. This reading emphasises the identity of the participant. A third reading considers social relations alongside the subject including organisations or institutions, personal relationships, and relationships to other subjects within the narrative. The final reading involves more structured power relations such as gender norms which may shape the narratives (Doucet & Mauthner 2008, 2017). Each reading offers new information about the narrative, considering stories from the micro subject and the macro of wider social and power relations. I conducted several readings of the first transcript using this approach. After the final reading I knew the stories and the participant's presention of the self in depth. I was then able to re-tell the stories based on the knowledge I had gained, providing a more enhanced re-telling relating to the participants subjectivity and identity.

I re-wrote the first re-telling using partly my own words but also using quotes in order to include the voice of the participant. I aimed to maintain the humanity of each participant through the use of quotes and by referring to their emotions and feelings which they expressed during the interviews (Clandinin, 2006). The story as told was the main focus of the re-telling, aiming to provide the reader with the insights I had gained through re-reading the story in different ways. However, there has to be an element of re-ordering and smoothing in order for a story to make sense:

"Often when individuals tell a story, this sequence may be missing or not logically developed, and by restorying, the researcher provides a causal link among ideas" (Miller & Salkin, 2002, P, 140).

I therefore wrote the re-telling in a way, which linked key events and moments in the participant's story, to enhance understanding of their experiences as they happened. I included the latter three aspects of my re-readings within the re-telling including participant perceptions of the self and their identity, the social relations within the narrative, and the wider structural power relations, which shaped the narratives. I then included my reflexive re-reading within a reflective section after the re-telling as I outlined in the reflexive section earlier in this chapter. I chose to include the reflection separately as I did not want to detract from the participant's story and individual subjectivity within the re-telling itself.

After conducting this process with the first participant's narrative, I found that I had a draft of a long, in-depth re-telling. However, the length of the re-telling was too long for the PhD if I continued this process with all fifteen participants. Yet, this length was required to tell the whole participant's story in depth. I thus decided to re-tell five narratives separately in depth and present the further ten narratives together in a more succinct synthesis chapter. This was in order to present each narrative within the scope and word limit of the PhD. I paused my analysis until I finished each interview and conducted the "listening guide" re-reading analysis on each transcript. This allowed me to make an informed decision about which five stories should be told in depth. The

five which I selected offered a range of experiences, as the participants are from different career stages and backgrounds. They are also particularly compelling stories, which generated particularly insightful reflections within my journal and upon the re-readings. By re-storying five narratives, I provide insights into the lived experiences of feminist academic activists in depth. Despite the particularly compelling stories of the five narratives, all the interviews offered insightful, subjective experiences of feminist academic activism. I thus aimed to present the further ten narratives within the PhD, in order to acknowledge their contribution to the findings and discussion. I did so by writing a synthesis that re-tells the ten narratives in a more succinct way, connecting the ten participants' stories into a collective whole, which could be further discussed in the latter discussion chapter of the PhD. All the participants' narratives are therefore told, with some having more detail included than others due to restrictions of word-count. I chose the five narratives for in depth re-tellings due to their diversity of experience and their particularly compelling stories, whilst presenting the further ten narratives in a synthesis.

The findings are presented in two sections, firstly the five narrative re-tellings then the further ten narratives in the synthesis chapter. This was done partly due to word count restrictions as previously mentioned but also to highlight some participant experiences in isolation and others in relation to each other. This maintained participant subjectivities and individual narratives whilst outlining commonalities and differences across participant narratives. It thus offers a multi-faceted approach to the findings. The individual narratives were significant on their own as compelling stories but could also be compared and contrasted by presenting some alongside each other to reveal patterns and connections across individual stories. This offers 5 re-told narratives as in-depth stories and ten narratives which are grouped in categories of commonalities across the narratives.

I re-tell the five participants' stories from the interviews by using the "listening guide" approach as previously outlined. Using this approach, I re-tell five participants' stories in depth in chapter 7, each of which includes a reflective section to maintain reflexivity and include the details

from the reflexive re-readings. Although I emphasise the told in these re-tellings, I include small snippets of the telling, including the expression and tone of the participant. I offer these in relation to the told, to provide insights into the feelings and emotions of the participant in connection to what they have told. This further highlights the depth of feeling within the told, rather than focusing on the process of the telling in isolation. It also enhances the stories, making them more compelling and further humanising the participants (Polkinghorne, 1995). As well as including these snippets, after each re-telling I offer a reflective section, using reflexivity and my own research diaries. I look at the process of interviewing and the impact of the telling on the research process, as well as drawing from the first re-reading of the interview. The reflective sections are positioned after each re-telling as I do not wish to detract from the participant's experiences by involving my own in the telling of their stories. The stories are valuable in themselves and to involve the interview process in them from the start would undermine the participant's narrative and the experiences they shared. Yet, by providing a reflective section at the end of each story I show the way my own perspective developed as the interviews progressed.

To write the synthesis I considered broad areas of interest, which recur across the interviews, developed from the re-readings of the narratives. In order to offer a synthesised overview of the further ten participants' narratives I focus on areas that tended to come up in the longer re-tellings with the other five participants and which I noticed occurring in each of the interviews with the other ten participants as I conducted the re-readings. These areas include feminist identity and background, activist identity and challenges faced by participants. Each of the ten participants is included and the use of quotes maintains their subjectivity and authenticity throughout the chapter. Each participant is represented by a different coloured font, with the key at the start of the synthesis. The different colours symbolise their different voices and their individual subjectivities and experiences. Despite commonalities in experiences, the colours show that each participant is a human subject with their own individual background, perspective and story. Using colours to represent individual participants also indicates an overview of each

participant's narrative, maintaining their personal narratives whilst considering ten narratives together.

Re-telling the stories is the first stage in the data analysis. Each story being told allows for each individual to be seen as a whole and un-fractured. After the five re-tellings and the reflections, I provide a synthesis chapter, offering an overview of the ten other participants' narratives. Moving beyond this, during the discussion chapters I explore themes and threads that exist across the data to delve more deeply into any common patterns, to answer the research questions. Re-telling each story provides the basis for this further discussion and analysis: "The life story the investigator constructs is thematically compelling, despite its third person voice and clinical tone" (Riessman, 2008, p. 72). The analysis and presentation of data in this PhD therefore happens in several stages, first the re-telling of the five participants' narratives, second the reflective accounts involving my research diaries and third the synthesis chapter which offers an overview of the further ten participants' narratives. This provides an in-depth analysis, which examines the data from multiple angles, maintaining the individual subjectivities of the participants, acknowledging the impact of the research process and considering commonalities, or differences that contribute to the areas of discussion in the later chapters. This chapter is the first and second stage in the analysis providing "narrative for further analysis" (Mishler, 1995, p. 95) within the following discussion chapters.

I chose to conduct narrative interviews for this PhD as they provide in depth responses to the research questions. The narrative interviews align with the feminist methodology as they give feminist academic activists a voice, focusing on women's subjectivities and the reduction of unequal power relations between researcher and participants. Through the co-production of knowledge and the emphasis on the experiences of feminist academic activists over their lifetime the narrative interviews offer insights into the connections between feminist academic activists and their relationships to universities as organisations. In the following chapters 7 and 8, I re-tell five narratives, provide reflections on the interviews, and offer a synthesis of the further ten

narratives. I then go on to a discussion of the results in relation to the research questions in chapter 9. Following this, I re-tell my own narrative in chapter 10, doing so after the discussion in order to reflect on the entire PhD journey within the narrative. Finally, I conclude the PhD offering ways in which the findings contribute to theory, knowledge and practice and answer the research questions.

Chapter 7

Re-telling

Re-telling Jill

When I met Jill in her university office, she welcomed me in an open and friendly way, telling me she was excited about my research. She was confident, smiling and seemingly looking forward to our interview. We sat down in her office with tea and coffee and she began her narrative by telling me about her current position in academia and her upbringing. Jill is currently a university manager and professor at a Russell Group University. She comes from the United States and still has a strong American accent, immediately recognisable when meeting her. She grew up in a small town in the US, which she thought was quite isolated and closed off, as she had never thought about feminism or come into contact with feminists before. Her first experiences of feminism began when she went to university in the US, to a liberal arts college and found that her education opened her eyes to feminism and critical thinking:

I was not a feminist or anything. I mean, I've written about this actually, kind of an autobiographical thing about how I grew up in a small town in America, and it just was like never on my radar. Until I got to University and was like oh feminist film criticism that sounds like an interesting module and I picked a couple of those kinds of things. And then just started reading feminist literature and like just totally changed me like fundamentally, it was just so…

Although Jill tantalisingly stopped here, her story goes on to show her passion for feminism and education, despite her own development as a feminist happening almost accidentally within her university education. She smiled when talking about her university experience, showing her positive attitude to her memories and a sense of gratefulness for having such an impactful experience.

Jill's university experience led to her wanting to stay in higher education as a career. She feels passionate about the power of education and thinks it is a great privilege but also a responsibility to be able to offer students a similar transformational experience that she received:

I'm just really committed to ensuring that there are people who come to university who you know, whose lives are similarly transformed. It's a huge like responsibility, but it's also a privilege that you can do that.

Jill continued to project a feeling of gratitude into the room when talking about her position, leaning forward, laughing and smiling, even whilst acknowledging the huge responsibility she felt as a teacher and supervisor. Jill joined the Russell Group University where she currently works in the early 90s. She began as an administrator but then saw that the university was offering an MA programme in Gender. She was interested in gender issues due to her past experiences as an undergraduate and the connection she felt with her reading around gender and feminism. She decided to enrol in the MA part-time alongside her administrative job. Jill really enjoyed the MA, continuing to find her experience transformational, and decided to pursue a PhD. Her passion for gender and education continued into her PhD and the questions she was asking developed into her project on the history of women's studies:

I did my Masters and well it was called Gender, Gender and Society. I didn't really know why we were kind of there. There were a lot of kind of grumpy women in the program and I was like what, what has attracted you to this, why are we sitting in this room on a Tuesday evening, kind of like getting grumpy with each other? It was really odd and that's what kind of motivated me to do the thing on women's studies. Because I was like what is this all about actually?

Jill pulled a mocking face when talking about grumpy women, suggesting that she did not connect with their approach to gender and feminism but was interested in different perspectives. Due to this interest, Jill's PhD involved interviewing people who were part of women's studies course in universities across the UK. Jill loved conducting her own research and found the interviews for her PhD extremely rewarding. However, she was shocked at some of her interview

responses, particularly from those trying to set up women's studies programmes in their universities, as often they were dismissed or seen as having little contribution to the universities:

You know, it was terrible initially and talking to the women who had set up women's studies courses. I mean, it was kind of shocking the kind of comments they got back like you know men just being completely dismissive of it.

She found herself understanding people's grumpiness more and realising why people were angry and discontented. She was able to reflect on this through her relationship with her PhD supervisor who was a prominent feminist academic. Jill found her extremely supportive and describes her as *an eminent feminist sociologist and she was hugely influential, like massively*. Jill once again expressed how grateful she was for her connection with her supervisor and suggested that she was very influential in her own development as a feminist.

Jill worked elsewhere after her PhD but after a couple of years came back to the same university as an academic. She thinks this is a privilege as she can now support others in the same way she was supported by academics at the university. She looked around the room when talking about returning to the university, once again smiling. The university space was clearly significant to her as it represented her development as an academic and the opportunities she has received to progress. Her academic work focuses on prestige and gender, so she is very aware of the negative aspects of the academic system. Yet, she enjoys writing about these issues as she has personally experienced gender inequality in academia and appreciates being able to find evidence for it as a widespread problem:

It's been very cathartic because I've experienced all of this in one way or another and to actually make sense of it and then get evidence for it and publish it.

Being able to write and research issues she really cares about is really important to Jill and she feels privileged to be able to do so. She has been in her current management role since September 2017 and no longer teaches but focuses her time on research/PhD student supervision as well as management. PhD supervision is important to Jill as she is committed to supporting

young women starting out in academia in any way she can, particularly due to her own relationship with her supervisor and the impact this had on her personal and academic development. Jill did not intend to be in a management role but decided that it was better to shape the institution from within, and a management role would increase her ability to be involved in the important conversations. Jill thinks that there is a lot of negativity about management in higher education due to people's dislike of the managerialism and neoliberalism that is perceived by her colleagues as *corporatisation of higher education*. She sympathises with that perspective but thinks it's important to keep trying to make changes by having discussions with management, not by fighting them:

So, but I'm not going to just like you know I'm not going to succumb to this kind of like, Oh, it's all you know universities used to be great places to work and now they're not. Well, let's make them better. And I'm not going to do it by standing outside of the principal's office and throwing stones at it. I'm gonna work my way in to those conversations and have them there.

Jill sighed as she talked about the attitude towards management in education, revealing frustration towards that perspective. She is aware of issues with university management but thinks that not everyone who enters management positions is part of the problem. In fact, now that she is entering leadership positions Jill sees her authenticity as the most important aspect of her identity to maintain. Being authentic allows Jill to feel she is maintaining her feminist values whilst working with and for gendered institutions. For Jill, feminist academic activism means finding ways to work together from within and that is why she continues to pursue roles in senior spaces.

Jill's feminist academic activism started when she was involved in the executive committee of the *Women's Studies Network* which is now the *Feminist and Women's Studies Association*. She thinks the association has changed a lot, for her it used to be about the women's movement and had more of a focus on activism than scholarship. She preferred this, as it was possible to have more personal real-life conversations, not just conversations about the theoretical.

Jill really valued women-only spaces, which existed at the start of her career, giving her opportunities to have discussions that really challenged her:

And part of it too was a commitment to feminist practices as much as possible and women only spaces, which is not really the thing that you can talk about much today, but in universities when I ended up in spaces that were women only because of self-selection, we could have really powerful conversations that were really challenging and sometimes very difficult. I ended up crying, you know way more than once.

Jill talked about crying and having difficult conversations with a positive tone, acknowledging the importance of emotion and facing challenges to her feminist activist development. Jill has been a feminist academic activist as long as she has been an academic; she is an activist by applying her feminist principles in *everything* she does in her academic job. For Jill, this means acting with an awareness at all times of gender inequality within her institution and universities in general. Jill strongly believes in the power of education and dialogue about gender and feminism to bring about change in universities. She is often setting up initiatives to promote conversations such as seminar series and conferences.

Jill's commitment to feminism in everything she does is also clear within her research and the impact it has had. Some of Jill's research on gender and prestige on another university was used as evidence in a court case where a female employee of the university had been denied promotion repeatedly. The research went on to be used in several other cases against the university after being requested by the barrister involved. Jill was even requested to come into court and be an expert witness. She found this really hard and stood in court and noted that all of the university's representation were men in smart suits, and all of those accusing them of denying promotion based on gender were women:

It was one of the craziest things I've ever done. It was really like the front line of battles on this. Because we were like at a table like a bit longer than this, all of us women on this side; the woman who was taking up the case, the legal team, the union rep were all women, the expert

witness, and then men in suits on the university's line, who were just like this: (stern face). You know what I mean, it was just awful. And I couldn't wait to kind of like destroy the case that they were making against this woman because it was just, it was awful.

Jill repeatedly used the term it was awful and often trailed off whilst telling me about this experience. It appeared to be a difficult memory to recall and talk about as she often broke eye contact and struggled for words. Her research played a huge role in supporting the women in these cases and she is proud of the impact this research had. Yet, the experience was difficult for her and she thinks it is disappointing that it had to get to such extreme lengths for the women to be promoted.

Jill's feminist academic activism also led to her supporting young female PhD students in a sexual harassment claim against a male colleague at her university. This was deeply personal for her as the same male academic had sexually harassed her when she was an early career academic:

I think we were a bit reluctant when I was kind of involved in all that because he sexually harassed me. And so this story is, this is kind of like yeah, so this story is, he was kind of like my first boss post PhD. And so we were having project meetings and all this kind of stuff because I was working on a research project of his and he started doing things like if we were going to a meeting in a cab or somewhere, wherever, he put his hand on my knee and says we have to go out to lunch, you know like, I want to take you, and he'd engineer so that we would be somewhere together and then he's like trying to like reach over and touch my hand.

Jill's hesitation when she started this story suggested that she was unsure how much to tell and found it an uncomfortable memory to talk about. Jill wasn't sure what to do when she experienced this sexual harassment but felt she had to speak out about what was happening so went to the woman who had been her PhD supervisor, as she felt she could speak to her openly as she was a feminist and had been very supportive during Jill's PhD:

So, I went to my supervisor, she wasn't my supervisor anymore, but she was one of these feminist academics who had been involved in women's movement stuff. And she said to me, like

she's like, I'm not surprised he kind of has a reputation. To be honest, you have everything to lose and they're going to protect him. And I know this is hard to hear but you don't really have much that you can do about this. And I was like oh my god I brought it on myself. I should have just been more clear at the beginning and like I didn't really have people to talk to about it apart from my supervisor and she was great, but it was really hard to hear that.

Jill spoke quickly here, looking down and avoiding eye contact. Jill's supervisor supported her and reassured her it was not her fault, advising her to write a letter to the male academic telling him to stop. Jill did this, trying to keep her emotion out of it so that he would take the letter seriously. He responded by apologising and he completely stopped his inappropriate behaviour with Jill. She thought that this was enough at the time and despite feeling unsure she continued working with him.

Later in her career, she was co-supervising with the male academic and several students came forward and told her he was sexually harassing them:

I had decided to leave the university and go to another job and word got out that I was leaving, and one afternoon I got a phone call from my PhD student, who was hiding in the loo at the University on the phone sobbing saying "don't leave me with that awful man" and I burst into tears I was like, I cannot believe it. I just like, and I knew it was true obviously, but I just couldn't, it was just so awful and that's why I supported them and tried really, really hard to make things better for them.

When recalling this incident, Jill's voice became high pitched and emotional, she used a lot of wide gestures as if trying to convince me of how hard she worked to support her students. Jill recommended they write a letter, just as she did when he had sexually harassed her, but to the head of the university. The university's response was to find other supervisors for the students who came forward that the male academic was supervising. Jill was so angry at this response and talked to the university on the women's behalf, to which the university said that the male academic would only supervise men and women over 30 in the future. Jill laughed in an exasperated way,

wide eyed, with her eyebrows raised when she told me this, suggesting she was outraged by it. The women who had been sexually harassed did not want to go to court or do any official complaint, as it was too hard for them to talk about. Jill wanted to respect their wishes and she could understand their reluctance as Jill had felt the same when she was sexually harassed. Eventually the male academic sent the women an apology and the whole thing was forgotten about by the university. Finally, once his publications had been entered into the university's REF they asked him to leave quietly. Jill is angry at the way this was handled and that the University was more concerned about the REF than the safety of their female students. She did everything she could to try and protect others from him:

Um but I you know like I've done things like when he was listed as a keynote speaker at a new researcher's conference I asked the organiser if I could talk to her about it. And so she was very good about it. So, I said, look he has a history of "allegedly" harassing young female newcomers to the field and that's not a very good environment and she was like, yeah, no we're not gonna, yeah he's not coming.

Other colleagues found the experience so hard they left the university as more and more women came forward with stories of sexual harassment and abuse by the same man. Whilst reflecting on this Jill shook her head and looked upset, telling me that she thought it was a shame that it led to some of her colleagues leaving. The process changed the way Jill sees the supervisor and PhD student relationship and makes her think much more about the power balance that is involved and the way this can be affected by gender. These experiences only increased Jill's passion for feminism and made her even more inclined to support young female students.

Jill still believes that by working within higher education it is possible to change it. She thinks there has been progress in gender equality in universities, particularly in the sense that early career researchers and students are more aware of gender issues. However, Jill has attended conferences where the emphasis has been on how fantastic it is that men are involved in gender equality:

And one of the young women in the room, when we were having the discussion sessions said I think it's so great that some men have come to hear this talk, and I think we should give them a little round of applause. And I thought no don't.

Jill laughed when she told me this, rolling her eyes in disagreement. She thinks it is great that men are attending these events and listening but that the conversations change when men are in the room, often women do not speak first or about the same issues.

Jill thinks there is still a lot of work to do for gender equality in universities despite the improvements. Instead of trying to fix the women, Jill believes academia should fix the promotion system and the culture of universities to value collective work and the non-prestigious work that is done:

Because every single time a member of staff becomes that superstar who's getting the esteem, is gaining more of it and using it to leverage himself out and into the wider world and everybody back in the home department is getting work done that needs to be done there. And that's not the prestigious work that's like I said, looking after the first year undergraduates. But it has to be done. So, it's saying to heads of departments is this fair in your department?

She thinks one way to change this is to raise awareness of these issues by speaking out to colleagues and at conferences. At a conference where Jill spoke, one male attendee stood up and admitted that he had been giving female colleagues too much of the non-prestigious work without even realising. Afterwards he came up to Jill and said it had been a light bulb moment for him. Jill smiled at this and suggested that these sorts of instances make all the challenges she has encountered worth it and even if she changes minds one person at a time she sees it as progress.

Despite some positive experiences where Jill thinks her feminist activism made an impact, she experienced a *retreat* in feminist academic activism, with much of the narrative being around what has been lost, which came from the changes occurring in higher education around performance measurement and consumerism. This frustrated Jill as she thinks that despite some failures there is still so much that could be done. Instead of focusing on loss, she thinks feminist

academics should be finding new ways to challenge gender inequality within the academy, which she believes younger early career academic feminists are doing:

And so I guess people have found other ways, it's like, alright, well, I have to be REFable so I will do that. But I'll set up a blog on everyday sexism or whatever, like she's not an academic but you know what I mean. Like the feminist philosophers, they have a really good blog. And they're calling out loads of stuff all the time. So, you find the spaces and you find a different way of kind of expressing you know what's going on.

The activity of younger academic feminist activists makes Jill believe that the situation is more hopeful now in relation to the future of feminist academic activism in universities.

Jill is now entering a senior management position at a different Russell Group University and she is excited about the future and her ability to influence discussions at the top level. During the interview, even when she was recalling difficult, emotional experiences she had an air of excitement and hope, talking with confidence and smiling and laughing throughout. She believes that her success in entering leadership positions proves that you can be authentic and maintain feminist values whilst having a successful academic career. She has been able to climb the academic hierarchy despite the challenges she has faced. She plans to use her position to promote and support other women through mentoring and sponsorship, as well as to raise questions about promotion and university culture. She is determined to maintain her commitment to gender equality through education and will keep fighting for change in her new university. At the end of the interview, Jill showed me round her building, revealing a sense of pride and connection to the university spaces she exists within. We said goodbye and I began reflecting on the interview experience.

Reflecting on Jill

Jill was the first person I interviewed for the PhD and so I was very nervous when I arrived to conduct the interview. I really wanted the interview to be a positive experience, not only for my personal comfort, but also in terms of academia. I had spent a year reading about the gendered

nature of academia, with much of the conversation around neoliberal changes and the potentially negative effects on women in the academy (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001; Currie et al., 2000; J. Acker, 2006). As an aspiring academic, I wanted to believe that people still enjoyed working in academia and felt they had the power to bring about change. Coming from a feminist perspective, I also expected to feel some form of solidarity when meeting another feminist academic, potentially a shared experience or perspective. I had read about feminist working and the importance of feminist networks and collaboration in an ever increasing neoliberal, individualist academic environment (Bagilhole & Goode, 2001) and I hoped to find this for myself. I was personally experiencing the solitary nature of academic work and may have yearned to move beyond the individualism in academia by finding people with shared values and perspectives. This was what I hoped for in that first interview with Jill, a sense of my own belonging. Jill's narrative met my expectations in this regard and I wrote in my journal that: "it is possible to succeed and stick to feminist values". Jill's hopefulness about making change from within mirrored my own hopefulness that she would express that belief. Similarly, part of me was seeking role models through this research, I wanted to know how it was possible to be a feminist and maintain those values whilst being successful in an academic career. I am seeking an academic career and am also a feminist, so the research was somewhat self-indulgent. I was hoping to see from others that it is possible to be a feminist, activist and academic. In many ways, this meant that I was vulnerable, I could easily be disappointed and risked losing a desire for an academic career if the interviews were negative. Despite the risk, the interview felt hopeful and I felt inspired by Jill throughout, writing in my journal: "I felt how I wanted to feel, inspired and hopeful about change in academia" and "Jill's ability to keep fighting for gender equality in academia despite such difficult, emotional set-backs makes me feel like it is possible for me, she is very inspiring". Jill's passionate narrative deeply inspired me and allowed my confidence to build as I continued to conduct interviews with other feminist academic activists. Similarly, during the re-reading process I found I had a large number of comments and thoughts on the reflective re-reading of Jill's

interview, several of which were comments in agreement with her perspective, which contributed to my decision to include her as one of the five in depth re-tellings.

Jill is an experienced academic and I am a PhD student and thus the power dynamic shifted from usual interviews, as I felt like the inexperienced one and thought that she was the expert. In other interviews, the interviewer has to be aware that they might have power over their participant due to their privileged position as researcher (Finlay, 2002) but this was not the case in the interview with Jill. This meant that I was particularly open to Jill co-constructing meaning in the interview, letting her lead the way in her own narrative. The intimacy of narrative interviews and my subject-to-subject approach meant that there was openness and vulnerability on both sides. Despite this, due to our shared profession there was a level of mutual understanding which allowed us both to feel comfortable and led Jill to say "I mean you know this, I don't have to give you examples", as well as other acknowledgements of my awareness of the higher education sector, due to my experience working within it. Researching the sector that I am working within means I have first-hand knowledge, which is useful as during the interview we were able to talk about complex ideas in depth as I already had an understanding of the context of Jill's experience. However, it meant that Jill may have been inclined to assume that I already knew enough about an issue, and therefore not to delve into it in her own narrative. Despite this, the mutual understanding of academia and the shared experience of working in a university meant that it was easy to build rapport and to allow Jill to construct her own narrative without much interruption or prompting from myself. My sympathy towards her situation due to my own experience of it and a shared feminist perspective may have allowed her to feel more open to talk about difficult issues such as sexual harassment (Berger, 2013). At certain points, she became visibly emotional and I wanted to reach out and support her, telling her it was not her fault and she did everything she could for her students. I refrained from doing this, but listened intently showing compassion through small phrases such as "I'm sorry" and "that sounds really hard", whilst continuing to allow her to construct the narrative. Despite my position as "insider" (Berger, 2013, p. 219) and the rapport that this allowed us to build, during the interview I remained aware of the way this

could affect the research process and tried to intervene as little as possible in Jill’s narrative. This maintained my methodological and epistemological perspective that despite any shared experience an individual’s narrative is their own subjective experience and is therefore different to mine or any others’ and has value on an individual basis.

The interview with Jill was the first time I thought about my own work as an example of feminist academic activism. She mentioned my work as a positive example and her own happiness at seeing my search for participants, with the focus on feminism in academia. Before that point I had considered myself a feminist but felt that PhD students were not yet academics and that I was not quite active enough to be an activist. Jill treated me as an equal, referring to me as an academic multiple times and often saying she was really excited about my work. In my research journal, I wrote: “Is my work a piece of feminist academic activism? It attempts to raise awareness and to give women a voice”. I leave the question unanswered, but it is clear that my experience with Jill makes me question my own identity, just as I question my participants’ identities, and their development as feminist academic activists. I found myself thinking: “I want to be like Jill when I am an academic”, showing that I still did not see myself as a feminist academic activist, but as someone with the potential to become one. This becoming continues throughout the research process in the following interviews. The experience with Jill was the perfect first interview to build my confidence and triggered questions about my own identity, setting the course for the interviews, which I conducted after Jill.

Re-telling Mary

I met Mary in a busy café on her university campus, she greeted me warmly and we found some seats in a quiet area. She began by telling me about her current role as a Senior Research Fellow and an Athena Swan[1] Project Lead at a Post-92 University. She does not do much teaching in her role; in fact, she avoids it when she can because she feels that there is so much pressure on staff and students to perform to unreasonably high standards. She also often gets asked to teach feminist courses and although she is a feminist she feels that people make assumptions about what she should teach and categorise her based on that aspect of her identity: *people like to put people in pots don't they?* She sees teaching as valuable but for those reasons prefers the research side of academia. Mary began enthusiastically and appeared to have a lot to say, after the initial introductions she talked about her journey into academia.

Mary became an academic almost accidentally as she was working in higher education in other roles but then ended up doing some practical research as a non-academic for the university. She enjoyed the research a lot and decided to do a PhD:

So at that point, I left my role and I started doing the PhD. The PhD had come up. I didn't, I never really intended to do a PhD or to become an academic and I assumed at that point because I was 47 at that point, I assumed you know that wasn't gonna happen. It wasn't at the forefront, it wasn't a priority but it came up. And so I took the opportunity and then I've ended up being an academic.

Mary talked about her academic career journey in a nonchalant way, suggesting that she only started the PhD because it happened to be available at that moment and that she was not actively pursuing an academic career. Despite this, Mary's interest was in issues of equality and she decided to include this in her PhD, which was on issues of participation.

[1] Athena Swan is a charter awarded by Advance HE which aims to advance the careers of women in higher education in the UK (Advance HE 2019).

Mary chose to meet me in the relaxed café and was wearing a casual t-shirt and jeans, telling me that she is not corporately minded: *I'm not a corporate bird*, and so she loves the way that in academia she can be quite informal, wearing relaxing clothing and managing her own time. Writing is Mary's real passion and something she dedicates a lot of her time to. When she started looking for jobs post-PhD she knew she wanted to focus on writing and research but was worried about finding a stable position due to her age:

It was the first job I applied for and they offered it to me. And because of my age and I had a mortgage to pay and you know, I was quite worried about the end of my PhD. Because I was gonna be 50 years old, I was gonna be a brand new post-doc, um who is gonna employ me? I had concerns about ageism and unemployment. And I had this thing about not really wanting to teach undergraduates. I did not want to jump on to the, if you like, the kind of academic ladder, right from the beginning, you know it was gonna be very difficult to be a sort of research assistant to someone 20 years younger than me.

Mary seemed very sure of herself and confident and this was reflected in her decisions not to teach undergraduates or start her career as a research assistant, despite the limitations this may have had on her. She entered her current role towards the end of her PhD and felt really lucky to find a role that let her manage her own work and involved no teaching. Mary is passionate about addressing inequality and trying to improve organisations by making them more inclusive places for all. Athena Swan appealed to Mary due to the focus on gender and equality. When Mary started her current job, she was still in the last few months of her PhD. She found that really hard but managed to find space and time to work, such as when commuting on trains. Once the PhD was finished, she began to really enjoy the Athena Swan role, particularly the research:

And I'd just put in for some funding and hadn't got it so I just thought, I'll just do stuff in the university within my capacity as the Athena Swan project manager. So that's when I think it kind of started moving on to those areas. And it's a really rich area and it's actually relatively

under-researched critically. So it's quite a rich scene now. And while we were waiting for the Athena Swan result I was able to do data collection and stuff for that particular project.

When Mary started telling me about her Athena Swan role her eyes lit up and she began talking more enthusiastically. She explained that the role allowed her to maintain her values as a feminist activist, whilst maintaining a career in academia. Mary's interest in gender and inequality developed from her upbringing. She thinks she has always been a feminist, partly because she never felt that her identity matched the stereotypical feminine norms that women around her were displaying. Her mother in particular was a very traditional woman, doing the cooking and cleaning and other domestic roles:

But at home she was an absolutely traditional woman, so she made several rods for her own back. She cooked every meal, she washed all the clothes, my dad didn't do anything. So that was a sort of mixed message. But then as I became a teenager I started to feel that was very unfair, ridiculous actually.

Mary showed signs of frustration when reflecting on her parents and their roles within the home and also looked sad as she described the amount of domestic work that was expected of her mother by her father. At conversations at the dinner table with her family, Mary would challenge her parent's perceptions and found that this was a *discomfort* to them, which she now relates to as an adult when she raises challenges in her academic role. Mary's friends were also traditionally *girly* and Mary always felt different from them when she was growing up:

Aside from that is probably my sort of gender identity in that I always felt different from my friends. I had lots of friends but I always felt different. I never thought I would get married, have children. I just didn't see myself in that way. And that wasn't problematic as such, it was just a sort of a feeling I had that I didn't really talk about.

Mary recalled feeling different to her friends in a very matter of fact way, without a sense of sadness, instead expressing that it was just her reality. When Mary left home and went to university, she sought a space in which she could *fit* in and became involved in women's

movements. Yet, she felt she did not quite *fit* with the women there either. Mary realised that she was struggling with her sexuality and did not feel welcome in all feminist circles due to some homophobia and transphobia that she felt was present and feels is still present today:

I am a feminist, I think I've always been a feminist, you know since I was about 2. On the other hand there's certain kinds of feminisms that I find challenging and difficult, so I talk about feminisms rather than feminism.

Mary made it very clear that she does not agree with all approaches to feminism, wanting to distance herself from feminisms that she perceives as homophobic and transphobic. She identifies as a feminist but thinks that she found her *fit* when she started thinking about the intersections between feminism and sexuality:

Yeah I suppose the place where I have found a fit for me, for where I stand, where I come from is through my sexuality, my sexual orientation, my relationships with women.

Mary particularly emphasised the phrase *my relationships with women,* suggesting that her sexuality is an extremely important part of her identity. Mary's approach to feminism is intersectional at its core because of her experiences and her sexual identity; she is deeply committed not only to gender equality but also to LGBTQ equality, as well as other intersectional equalities such as race and class.

Despite Mary's feminist values and interest in equality, she started her Athena Swan role knowing very little about it but was committed to *learning on the job*. Her main focus at first was the Athena Swan submission for her institution and she felt the best way to approach it was to build positive relationships and networks with her peers in her university:

but there's an awful lot as well that was about engagement, building networks, building relationships. So, that in the end I could ring up someone and go I really need a favour by Monday, I've got to have this and some poor data analyst person would do it. You know because I was always nice to them and I was always grateful toward them and I think that's really important.

And I was, I was more interested in building up those relationships than I was with you know sweet talking the senior management.

Mary scowled as she referred to senior management, as if it was somewhat distasteful to *sweet talk* them, suggesting she disagreed with that approach. Mary's passion for equality is present in the relationships she chose to build, focussing on connecting with people at the bottom of the academic hierarchy, as well as those higher up. She sees everyone's role as equally valuable. She is also dedicated to involving a diverse group in Athena Swan, including men and professional services staff. When involving senior staff members she found it was really useful to have a female senior academic supporting her and giving her help in entering senior spaces:

She has that kind of um links and greater influence shall we say with senior management. It's not that I, I'm afraid or worried or intimidated by sitting down with the Vice Chancellor but I think they think I should be. So as a research fellow it was only expected that I would go so far but when I joined we had a Vice Chancellor he then left and we got an interim Vice Chancellor and I emailed him, we met up, you know. And we were just having conversations but that could happen because the old order had broken apart. It's sort of re-establishing itself a bit now but I'm a senior research fellow now plus I've got the award behind me. And I think therefore I can go into spaces where perhaps I'm not expected to be. But I have also had this woman championing me and Athena Swan.

Again, Mary referred to senior management as a very separate entity and as a whole, positioning herself as "other". In contrast to her view of senior management, Mary considers her Athena Swan role to be feminist academic activism, in that she uses the role as a platform for researching gender issues and intersectional issues, in an attempt to have more radical change than she believes Athena Swan traditionally focuses on:

So what I started to do was to turn my research, kind of push my research towards the Athena Swan scenario. So like I've said the critical approach to Athena Swan, but also issues around gender as opposed to female disadvantage, particularly into intersectional identities. So,

what I've tried to do, I mean Athena Swan is Athena Swan and they do want you to think about intersectionality and that sort of stuff. But I don't think, I don't think they do it enough, radically enough and so I guess what I'm doing in my research is trying to look at those things.

As part of her research within the Athena Swan role, she challenges Athena Swan and asks critical questions of it, in an attempt to improve it in the future. She believes her work has an impact as she is attempting to *do something quite different* in terms of the way she approaches Athena Swan and that in itself challenges the way things are traditionally done in her university.

Much like in her family dinner table setting, Mary's feminist academic activism involves raising questions, which can make people uncomfortable in academic meetings:

So I would go to a meeting and they go, oh we've got this fantastic new scheme and I'd go well what about adults? What about part time students? What about vocational learners? It was always that what about and I'm exactly the same now. So, how's that going to impact part time women?

As she told me this Mary was smiling and laughing, implying that she enjoyed asking difficult questions and provoking thoughts in others. She thinks it is really important to ask challenging questions, even if it makes people uncomfortable, because otherwise things will not change. She does not mind raising issues in meetings as she approaches them by *speaking to everyone as though they're kind of human beings*, rather than being concerned by hierarchies or shouting to get her point across.

Mary also considers herself as an activist in her work outside of academia, including as a cartoonist and a poet:

I'm also, as well as poetry which at the moment is not part of my work but will be hopefully, erm I'm a cartoonist. And so I've started using cartoons, graphic essays and stuff to explore some of these issues as well.

Again, Mary was smiling and began speaking passionately about her work as a cartoonist. By using creative methods, Mary explores issues of equality and hopes to eventually include these approaches within her academic work as well to give a more well-rounded approach to gender research. She believes that by using these approaches she is challenging the status quo in academia and what she describes as *the sausage machine of journal articles*. She also finds creative methods much more personally fulfilling:

You know, for me it's much more creative and much more fulfilling and satisfying to be doing something that I'm doing at the moment which is a graphic essay with the findings of my gender research. I can say as much in that theoretically as I do in an article. So things like that are exciting and they are I suppose in a sense they're not breaking the rules of the game, but they're pushing the rules of the game.

Mary's excitement and passion for creative approaches to research was evident as her tone of voice was elevated. Despite this, Mary is not particularly optimistic about the culture of academia and thinks that there are signs that there is a *massification of higher education*. When she talked about these issues Mary's tone changed and she became angry, speaking more loudly and shaking her head. However, during the recent strikes over pay she felt that there was some resistance to the performance measurement culture:

But in that time people had the time to sort of almost like surface from this kind of crazy life that most academics and professional staff lead. And realise actually that this is just, you know, such a, it is such a game. And that there are ways in which people are being controlled by the TEF and the REF and you know the whole sort of metric tide that are leading us to say my work is only good if it's REFable. I sensed then and I don't know if it will continue, and I don't know if it will continue, but I sensed then that there was a bit of a groundswell against that. By people who were fairly established in their careers.

Mary appeared to be hopeful about academia, despite her strong criticism of it and the anger she expressed when talking about the performance measures. Although she does not know if the

resistance will continue, the atmosphere around the strikes made her feel slightly more optimistic about the future of academia.

Mary plans to continue her own resistance through creative approaches and bringing these into her academic work, including her poetry. Mary is committed to being critical in her job role and will continue to conduct research around issues of inequality and diversity. Throughout the interview, Mary was passionate and at some points angry, she seemed to feel grateful for her role, whilst also positioning herself as "other" to management academics and early career academics. When she left, I remained in the café and reflected on our interview.

Reflecting on Mary

The café that I met Mary in was a very open space and from the beginning I was worried about the recording of the interviews and the level of background noise. Mary seemed relaxed and was immediately friendly and eager for the interview to start. I knew I would have to be flexible with the interview process and adapt to the surroundings and so we found the quietest area we could within the café, but still had some people sat close to us. I started the interview timidly, asking Mary similar getting-to-know-you questions as Jill. I expected a similar experience to my first interview, with Mary and I having shared values and some shared experiences. Despite this, much of Mary's development as a feminist and her values around social justice occurred through her sexuality. Through coming out, Mary found herself feeling different to the women and girls in her life, which developed her position as a feminist. Although I was sympathetic to this and a strong supporter of LGBTQ rights, I could not relate to it on a personal level and therefore found myself to be less connected to her experiences emotionally. Due to this, rapport was slightly more difficult to build and I found that I felt slightly intimidated by Mary and wanted to remain respectful towards her. As a result of this I unintentionally became more objective, asking questions based on what she was saying and seeing the process as more formal, rather than conversational. This may have inhibited the narrative slightly and could have led to Mary mirroring my disconnectedness, potentially causing her to approach the interview from a more

practical perspective than emotional. Despite some clear expressions of anger, much of her response was stated in a rational, factual way, with little mention of emotion. I wrote in my research journal: "I felt like I wanted more. I wanted more activism and fight but there was very little of the idea of a fight". In hindsight what I was looking for was emotion and passion but I myself was unemotional and potentially hindering this in Mary.

Despite a lack of emotional connection, I found that Mary's interview challenged me in multiple ways. Her more radical approach to Athena Swan made me think about it differently, considering it to have more activist potential than originally thought. She also challenged me through her conception of activism as she often referred to the importance of involving men in feminist activism and Athena Swan as a form of activism. I had never considered Athena Swan as activism in itself but after she explained the ways she uses Athena Swan as a sort of tool for activism, my perspective began to change. Similarly, I was open to the idea of men as feminists and activists but did not necessarily see them as equally important actors as women. She challenged this assumption and I wrote in my journal: "she kept emphasising the importance of having men involved, I suppose the more people the better, I wonder if I am too expectant of women". This small questioning of my own assumptions changed the way I approached the latter interviews, particularly the ones I conducted with men as I became more open to the idea of men playing a large role in feminist academic activism.

The interview with Mary was challenging due to the busy setting and the questions it provoked about my own assumptions. Her loud and confident way of speaking was slightly intimidating to me, as well as her clear anger at certain aspects of academia. This was important as it made me more open in the interviews that followed and made me realise that I wanted more of a range of emotion and passion to come through. I realised that to do this I would have to be open and vulnerable myself, particularly to experiences that differed to my own.

Re-telling Megan

I met Megan at her home, where we sat in her living room and had a cup of tea and a biscuit. Megan spoke softly and had a warm and kind demeanour. Her cat came and joined us, sitting between us, and Megan began to tell her story.

Megan used to be a Senior Lecturer at a post-92 university and had been working as an academic for over 20 years. She decided to leave in 2017 as she felt that academia was no longer right for her:

Um, I felt, I felt like actually I was going to be doing the same job for the next 20 years because it didn't feel as though there was much opportunity for development.

Part of Megan's motivation for leaving was that she felt her feminist values were not aligned with her university's culture. Despite this, she defined herself as a feminist academic activist when she was working in academia. Now she refers to herself as a *recovering academic* and *ex academic.* Even though she still enjoys research, she believes that the term academic can feel too *institutionalised* for her identity. She does however still define herself as a *feminist researcher* and *activist*.

Megan thinks that she has always been a feminist due to her strong social justice values and an internal sense of what is right and wrong. For Megan, gender inequality is inherently wrong and so being a feminist is a given:

one of my really strong values is social justice and for me gender is just such a, it's just such a structure which really damages, you know, women and women's positions and it just seems to be, it's just everywhere, like everything is gendered.

Megan also describes herself as a *tomboy* and explains that when she was growing up she always liked stereotypically male toys such as cars and action men. Being different developed her understanding of gender and feminism due to a feeling that she was not *fitting in* to the expectations of girls. This developed Megan's passion for equality and social justice and

ultimately led to her pursuing a career, which she thought reflected those values. Megan believes that education can have the power to improve social justice and equality, and therefore pursued an academic career.

Megan's academic research reflected her social justice and feminist values as she focused on gender and sexuality in literature. She enjoyed her research and was passionate about it but the university's research culture was one of the reasons she ultimately decided to leave:

I think the rules of the game are exploitative and exploit people's passion, because what you, you know, you go into academia, because you're passionate about a subject, about sharing that subject both through research and through teaching and you get exploited because of that.

Megan spoke with sadness and a sense of loss about her experience of academia, suggesting that she was disappointed that she felt she had to leave. Yet, before deciding to leave, Megan attempted to change the culture by speaking out about inequality to senior staff members:

So, I started just speaking really and initially it was just, I said something in a meeting which was a meeting with our then Dean and who was an acting Dean and just in terms of, you know, pointing out numbers and stuff. So, it just began like that and I didn't even know I was going to do it. It was just like, there seemed to be an opportunity, because he talked about some things not to do with gender but about some things that I found problematic around gender.

Despite her attempts, Megan felt that she was having little impact and found it really hard to keep fighting and that the effort was affecting her mental health:

I think at the university I suppose I was battling against just trying to do that, as quite a small voice, you know, but with other people, obviously, but we were just small voices and it felt like we were just battling all the time, it felt too, you know, really crampingly top down.

As Megan spoke, she became quieter, almost mirroring what she was saying about being a *small voice*. She sighed and began to explain that she felt that change was impossible due to the senior management at her university:

No I think. I think, they're too busy chasing league table scores. You know, National Student Survey (NSS) and TEF and REF and all these, it's like that's their priorities.

Megan displayed some anger, speaking slightly louder but mainly looked sad, looking at the ground and stroking her cat as she spoke, for comfort. Megan still maintains a passion for education but she believes that universities have changed in ways that no longer align with her values. After much consideration, she decided it was time to leave:

So, it was about my values really, feminist values and then also about the values of education that have shifted now, that it's become more of a consumer culture as well so, that. I'd gone in really really valuing education and I still do definitely but the changing climate that the fees have brought about and the increasing marketisation etc. It's just, so that was all against what I wanted to be, so it was a sort of a gradual realisation. But then came as a point where I just realised I'm doing the wrong thing and then started to think of ways to get out.

Despite Megan's initial expression of disappointment about academic culture, as she told me about leaving she became more energised, speaking with more assertiveness and confidence. She told me that she was sure of her decision and once she had made it she began to feel better emotionally. Megan told her close colleagues she was leaving and then took voluntary severance:

So they were just, when I first told them, everyone you know, so this is just the inner circle, they were really pleased for me that I'd made this decision and they could all… It was interesting, actually, because everyone except one of them, like none of them asked like why are you doing it or don't go, you know. There was no, so it was an absolute understanding of like yeah of course you know that that felt like it was the right thing and there was only one friend who'd said, who was more cautious and sort of like with the What are you going to do, because I had no idea what I was going to do. And I just said I don't know.

Megan smiled as she recounted the support she received from her friends and colleagues. She is still friends with many of her feminist colleagues and admires their abilities to stay in academia and keep fighting for gender equality:

I guess just doing this made me reflect on that, I really kind of commend the feminist academics that are in there and stay in there, because I think for me it just felt so much of a battle that I had to get out.

After applying for some jobs and being offered something, Megan decided to turn it down and is now self-employed, starting a business focusing on LGBT and gender equality. She is doing some part-time work in order to survive financially whilst she sets up the business. Despite the challenges of starting a business, she feels it has been the right decision to leave academia:

I mean I don't feel crushed anymore. I feel I can do whatever I want to do. I'm still working within the areas that I was really interested in which is the equality, so the values are there. And people in other organisations are so thirsty for the knowledge and skills that I can share, around what, well what you do, it will also just fall out of your head but stuff around gender that people don't think about. And so, you know I feel like I'm being valued when I am in places and doing things, like really valued. And it's just it's, again, it's still touching on my values around the equality, especially around women and LGBT but also around education, It's just educating in a different way. So it's still all kind of there, but yeah I feel different now, I feel excited about the future.

Megan spoke with more enthusiasm, smiling and laughing as she talked about the future. She expressed a relief at her decision to leave and explained that she feels much happier now. She now thinks she is able to maintain her values and be authentic to herself, whilst still making a difference in terms of equality and social justice.

Reflecting on Megan

I drove to Megan's home to conduct the interview and felt slightly nervous about being in such an intimate space, a space that belonged to Megan. Despite this, I knew that being in her home might make Megan feel more at ease and more open to my questions. Thankfully, Megan made me feel comfortable in her home, offering me food and tea and asking me where I would

prefer to conduct the interview. The presence of her cat reduced the initial tension and made for a talking point before the interview started.

I knew before the interview that Megan had chosen to leave academia, as she had emailed me after seeing my call for participants on Twitter and explained her situation. She still felt she had a lot to offer as a feminist academic activist and I was intrigued to hear what I thought would be a very different perspective. I was also concerned that she may be so negative that she would affect my own feelings about working in a university. However, throughout her interview, she emphasised how her experience was deeply personal and she mentioned that she admired feminists who still worked in universities. I was reassured by this, writing in my research journal: "I was scared Megan would put me off academia but actually she made me realise that there is strength in working within a system and trying to change it". This does not mean to imply that Megan left due to a lack of strength, in fact, I admired her ability to admit that academia was making her unhappy and that she put herself first. Feminist literature in academia often talks about how fixing the problem of patriarchy in the academy falls to the oppressed and that this requires emotional labour on the part of women academics (Blackmore, 1996; Morley, 1998; Carroll, 2012). This was something Megan was no longer willing to participate in and, as a feminist, I completely respected her decision based on the amount of work it takes and the emotional toll of challenging oppressive structures. I myself have experienced the exhaustion and anger and disappointment that is an inherent part of being a feminist. Megan's interview made me think of Sara Ahmed a woman who has been inspirational in my own feminist development and a BME feminist academic who also chose to leave academia as a form of resistance. In her book *Living a Feminist Life* she writes "A feminist movement is not always registered in public. A feminist movement might be happening the moment a woman snaps, that moment when she does not take it anymore" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 3). Megan's narrative brought to mind that classic feminist motto the personal is political and made me think that leaving academia could be in itself an act of feminist academic activism. Her experiences led me to widen my idea of feminist academic activism beyond challenging gendered norms in the academy to refusing to play the game at all. This thought-

provoking interview was strangely hopeful and my final line in my research journal that day was "choosing to leave can be just as powerful as choosing to stay".

Re-telling James

I met James at his university and we sat down in his office. He was quiet and softly spoken, fidgeting as if he was slightly nervous. James is a lecturer at a pre-92 Red Brick University. James grew up as a girl and now identifies as a trans man. He hesitated as he told me this, looking nervous and slightly uncomfortable. He took his time forming his sentences, thinking through his wording carefully. He told me about his upbringing as a girl, which was very traditional:

It's funny, my family, my parents fit the traditional division of labour model. My mother worked part-time in the caring profession of sorts. They both had working-class origins, but I guess they're middle class these days. I had a dad who'd go out to work and he'd expect tea on the table when he got back. In that sense, it was quite gendered.

James laughed as he told me about his parents, suggesting that, despite the traditional gender roles, he enjoyed his upbringing. He told me that even with the gendered division of labour in his household, James never felt that his parents had expectations of how a girl should behave and so within his home setting he did not feel limited by his gender. He is grateful that his parents encouraged him to be himself, despite being identified as a girl at that stage in his life. Beyond the home, James found that things were *very gendered* and he found himself being angry and frustrated about it at a young age, particularly in school:

Well, school uniforms are very gendered. I always had that awareness of the roles about what supposedly was proper for girls and boys. I felt that they were bollocks.

James laughed as he said they were *bollocks* and waved his hand, continuing to speak quietly but more assertively. James thinks that he has always been concerned about and aware of gender norms and their limitations and he always thought that they were *nonsense.* Yet, James acknowledges that gender norms are powerful and impact people's lives; he has experienced their impact from both gender binary positions and has found as a man he is sometimes benefitting from them:

Some ways really seemingly casual ways. If you talk to the workmen or go to a garage or go to any male environment it's, "All right, mate. How are you doing?" There's that assumption of community or the assumption of shared gender and history of gender. It's like belonging to a special club which might not have hugely tangible rules but there's that sense of kinship which is there because you're a bloke.

James mimicked a stereotypical *bloke* as he described this, expanding his body and speaking in a deeper voice. He continued to tell me that he has had more success in academic publishing since using his male name. His experiences of being perceived as both female and male have heightened his frustration and he has become increasingly passionate about challenging gender norms, which are restrictive, within and outside of academia.

James always wanted to go to university and was still living as a woman when he undertook his undergraduate degree. He got pregnant in his second year of university and his partner was thinking of joining the army. He was scared about what that meant for his future and found that his partner and his friends expected him to drop his studies and follow his partner's career goals whilst he raised their child:

Anyway, I am having this conversation with one of his mates who was a nice public schoolboy. I said, "Well, look if you go in the army and I go abroad, and you go abroad, then what about me?" This is me by this time thinking about academia. I'm going to do a Ph.D. His friend said, "Well, you can get a little job in a shop on the base." It's like where do we even start?

James laughed in an exasperated way, revealing frustration about the expectations of him due to his perceived gender. He rejected the advice he was given, continuing his academic study whilst raising his daughter. He found his undergraduate studies gripping and thought to himself *I had to do a PhD*.

James transitioned when he was working in a university environment, which he felt was a relatively good place to transition, but faced some difficulties when he first came out:

The usual trans issues around public toilets. What do you do when you look physically like one gender, but you are declaring that you are another gender? Actually, my boss and colleagues were… fine, but there were some people who double-took seeing me in the gents' when I look female. I did expect a couple of complaints, if there were any they didn't make their way to me.

James paused here when he was trying to think of how to describe the response of his boss and colleagues. When he eventually said the word *fine* it sounded hesitant as if to say they could have been better or that he was potentially being polite about them. He talked softly and seemed to be thinking carefully about every word he said, showing some nerves about sharing his story and the impact of it or response it might receive. James also felt like he was being talked about during the time of his transition and found it really hard that his university had no gender neutral toilets for him to use. When he changed his name, he found that his colleagues and students were accepting and used his new name immediately, but the processes within the university structures made things more difficult for him:

In practice, you can't change your name at the University because of all the records. The point between transition and formal name change, I could ask colleagues to call me James, but I couldn't make the people in computing change my name on the email which is quite a big reminder or big thing by the way that we're addressed; the same as payroll.

James felt upset that the university could not change his name and pronouns officially, as for him it was a huge part of being recognised as the correct gender and acknowledging his identity. Similarly, he has experienced staring and confusion from people at university events, which has made him feel uncomfortable:

I remember being at a dinner for one of my colleagues' inaugural lecture, and there were nametags and this was just at the point, it was maybe the night before the official announcement, so my new name was on the nametag. And the serving staff were watching me sitting there, looking at the name, and watched me when I went out to go to the loo. And I heard them saying, "Oh so

that's what it is," when I went into the gents. So, there are some little things like that which are unpleasant.

James' tone became sad whilst he recalled these reactions to his transition and he feels that he is often looked at or talked about even now within his university:

I think the university is a bit different because I transitioned when I was here. Funnily enough, although I don't know everybody on campus, just about everybody knows me and my name. Clearly, I'm being talked about. There are relatively few people who meet me and don't know that I'm trans. Their treatment of me would not be of a man. It would be, "That's that bloke who used to be female".

James' experiences being perceived as a woman in academia, transitioning to male and now being identified as a trans man really developed his sense of gender norms and their impact within university structures:

One of the things that frustrates me about academia, or maybe my academic discipline, is the way it's very macho. You're a good academic if you work till two in the morning and you never take a holiday or if you go on holiday you give the print of your book. It's normative not to have a life at all and not to have any weaknesses in any way, shape or form.

As he said this, James raised his eyebrows, suggesting he disagreed with the culture he described. His awareness and critique of gendered norms leads him to attempt to challenge them but as someone who has a complicated history, he feels that safety is an important consideration for him:

I try to do little things where it feels safe enough, so the stress workshop, for example, talking to colleagues about their families, talking about my family, and trying not to buy into that stereotype of macho invulnerability; trying to present a picture of the academic, as in me personally, and in general, as a human being in little ways, and sometimes I do it more, I do it better than others.

Feeling safe seemed to be a present concern for James during the interview, as he looked at his door several times, spoke quietly and chose his words carefully. He seemed to be worried about the interview and his safety, particularly his anonymity. Despite this concern, James challenges the masculine culture in his university by refusing to conform to the expectations of a man in academia. He feels that it is safe to do this because he is not actively obviously challenging things but is doing it in more subtle ways in his everyday actions:

To challenge institutions and practices and rules and expectations even in minor ways, on an ongoing basis, it takes a lot of emotional energy and intellectual energy. You have to feel safe to do that. You have to be in an environment where it is safe enough to do that. You have to be one of the people who's willing to say, "No, that's not right".

James thinks that if he is too obviously challenging the status quo his safety and sense of security is at risk. He struggles between wanting to change things and his own survival as an academic and the fear of mistreatment and abuse of his identity as a trans man. Another way James challenges university culture in a *safe* way is through his teaching and work with students:

In every encounter with students, I'm probably trying to subvert their expectations of instrumental education, the importance of getting a good job straight away. I'm more interested in them realising that they're people foremost and that we're not machines. I will tell them things like, "The world won't end if you don't pass your degree."

James finds aspects of academia really challenging and uses strategies to try to maintain his own sense of identity and safety:

I haven't been promoted. First 5 to 10 years of academia, I could have got promoted probably during that time. I didn't because I'm not good at bigging myself up, and other colleagues are. There is a lot of that, there's an awful lot of people telling everybody how wonderful they are until you-- it seeps in at some level.

James looked sad as he talked about his lack of promotion in his career. Yet, despite not being promoted, James is aware of the criteria for promotion but does not comply with them as he feels more comfortable being himself:

I don't think I'm a good enough boy. I think I would not fit in, what the private sector might call the corporate image of the ideal employee, which does apply in universities. Not fitting in that mould, yes, I think that has an impact. You're not the first person who comes up on the list of who would be good for that, which in some ways is nice because I hate networking. I'm quite happy not to be thought of as the ideal candidate to do networking.

James' tone became more positive as he further explained why he thinks he has not been promoted, laughing at the idea of himself as a not a *good enough boy*. By putting himself first James is able to maintain his sense of identity but he also feels he is "other" in academia, partly due to his gender identity and partly due to his feelings about what he is naturally good at and not good at. James' "otherness" leads him to keep relatively quiet, despite not conforming to aspects of academic culture he does not agree with:

A fit between particular personality types and particular environments, and having opportunities to do things in certain ways which are challenging enough but not catastrophic. Most of us have to work within the boundaries of what's safe enough.

Despite James thinking he does not *fit in* he enjoys his work as an academic and feels he is able to be himself within a university environment:

If I'm not too tired, and I've got space to do some research, and I'm in a grip of writing something, I think it's the best thing in the world.

James' presence as a trans man in a male dominated discipline is in itself a challenge to the status quo. James is simultaneously happy to be challenging the culture whilst wanting to maintain his safety and being acutely aware of his position as "other". Throughout the interview, it was clear that safety was very important to James, potentially as he may have perceived a higher risk to his

safety due to his identity as a trans man. Despite the challenges he faces he feels that academia was the right choice for him and is a rewarding career, as well as somewhere he feels is safe enough to remain whilst being himself. After the interview, I left James' office and found a café to reflect on the interview experience with James.

Reflecting on James

James seemed nervous when we met and slightly reluctant to speak with me. I knew James was trans before meeting him and I was aware that it might be more challenging for him to feel comfortable and open when talking to me. I was torn between wanting to make sure he felt safe by letting him choose whether he wanted to speak about his gender identity and also wanting him to talk about it as it seemed like a fundamental part of anyone's experience. I wrote in my research journal: "I was aware that he is transgender before I met him but did not want to ask any questions about this and wanted to leave it up to him to share. I'm glad he chose to do that as it's great to get a different perspective for my research but I feel guilty that my intentions are to make my research more interesting when this is his life." It is important to recognise that my participants are human beings and not just data for the purpose of my research. I found myself conflicted when talking to James because I really felt for him on an emotional level but I was also thinking about data analysis and how his story might progress my PhD. This paradox as a researcher is important to recognise and acknowledge and by challenging my own expectations, I was able to see James as a human with depth and history and not just a means to an end in my research.

I found James really compelling and thought that he was brave to be so open about his gender identity and experiences. Something, which struck me throughout his story, was his feelings of "otherness". Growing up as a girl he felt "other" due to his growing sense of his gender identity, transitioning he felt "other" due to not being perceived as either male or female and as a trans man he feels "other" due to people knowing he was not born biologically male. "Otherness" seemed to run through his identity. When we spoke about his decision to be a participant in my study he also suggested "otherness" in relation to my other participants despite not knowing

anything about them due to being slightly unsure of certain perceptions of feminism and activism. I wrote in my research journal: "I can see why he might feel uncomfortable with those labels as he seemed very nervous about the risks of being too outspoken and of being judged or attacked for his views and his identity". James' fears represent a very real threat to trans people from the media, politicians including Trump and from trans exclusive feminists. Current debates within feminism include trans identity and I can see why James as a trans man would increasingly feel disengaged with that and as "other" in relation to feminists. James' interview occurred at a time when I was being exposed to feminist critiques of trans as a gender identity. James' account made the impact of these stand out even more to me and since I have become much more vocal about supporting trans individuals as part of my own feminist activism. James' story increased my desire to fight not only for women's rights but also for LGB and trans rights. He therefore contributed to my own development as a feminist and activist. Much like many of my participants, I acknowledge that I am always growing as a feminist and my development is not complete. Being exposed to new perspectives and experiences through my research has been really valuable in developing my identity as a feminist and challenging me to be more inclusive of people with different backgrounds to my own. I found James to be inspiring and moving and I am very grateful that he took part in my PhD not as a means to an end but as someone who has developed my perspectives on a personal level. At the point of James's interview I was also beginning to consider myself as an activist. I was more actively thinking of ways I could enact this activism and speaking to James made me realise that I wanted my actions to reflect feminist values but also values around supporting those of all sexualities and gender identities. I realised that feminism meant more to me than just supporting women; rather it encompassed LGBTQ rights and other intersectionalities.

Another way in which James challenged me to reflect was by asking me questions about my own feminist identity and activism. He was one of the only participants who did this and it resulted in a mutual vulnerability that added to the interview experience. By opening up to him, we built rapport and he may have felt more comfortable with sharing difficult experiences with me. I spoke about sexual violence and he spoke about violence towards him as a trans man. Despite

the huge difference in our experiences, we were able to relate to each other through our experiences of struggle and violence due to our gender identities. I thought about Freire during this interview and his notion of dialogue, outlined in chapter 4. Talking to James felt like dialogue as we fed off each other's different experiences and challenged each other's assumptions of trans gender identity and feminist identity whilst being respectful and treating each other as equals. I wrote in my research journal: "this really shows the power that simply talking about different experiences can have on people's perspectives". Similarly, Freire's argument is that dialogue will result in a more critical awareness and this will lead to activism. Talking to James led me to think more critically about trans exclusion in feminism and to include fighting for trans inclusion and rights in my own activism. Could this be Freire in action?

Re-telling Sara

I met Sara at her university building, she was late and I was sat in the hallway waiting for her. When she arrived she apologised, made me a cup of tea and we sat down in her office. Sara is a professor at a pre-92 university in which she has been working for 24 years. Sara worked in practice in her discipline for 7 years before entering into an academic career. Before higher education Sara taught in a Further Education college and pursued her Masters degree at the same time, realising that she wanted to pursue an academic career:

I worked as a practitioner for a number of years before coming into academic life. When I worked as a practitioner, I was always organising talks and inviting speakers in to talk about particular issues that affected our work. I enjoyed that part of it. I was curious as well. I was always still reading quite a lot. I remember one of my managers couldn't understand why I was reading an academic book when I was a practitioner because I was always curious. I think that all contributed to maybe coming into academic life.

Sara spoke confidently and kept reiterating her curiosity, her eyes lit up revealing a passion for learning and reading. This passion fuelled her desire to pursue a PhD, which she continued to do after her Masters.

Sara’s feminism began without her being fully aware that it was happening, as she looked at her Mother’s life and thought about her own:

I think the seed of that was there from when I was in my early teens, but I wasn't in an environment, I wasn’t in a family or environment where people around me, where gendered issues were being talked about. But the seeds were growing because I can remember at fifteen saying to my mother, “I don't want to be like you. I'm not having any man come telling me when I can do this and when I can't do this.” I was fifteen. At that age, I didn't know that that was expressing some feminist ideals. That's when I look back on it. That's what that was because I was looking at my mother's life and thinking “No way, I don't want that.”

Sara spoke with conviction about wanting to be free to make her own choices without being limited by men. She thought that her Mother's experience was unfair and unjust before she had the language to consider her thoughts as feminist. Her growing sense of social justice and fairness continued when she experienced her friends talking about gendered violence in a casual way:

Then when I was about 19, in terms of how that links to my feminist ideas developing and how it linked to why I became interested in gender-based violence. When I was about 19, I had a group of friends I used to hang around with. We used to go clubbing and things like that. Young men and women, we were a mixed group. We'd met up one day and one of the guys in the group, his knuckles were all bruised. When somebody asked him, his knuckles were all bruised, one of the women asked him, "what's that?", he said, "I had to punch a girl so hard last night. I think I've damaged my knuckles." Everybody laughed and I was like, "I don't think that's funny."

Sara became very serious telling his story, speaking clearly and slowly and shaking her head. This instance was a big realisation for Sara and she slowly distanced herself from the group of friends and began referring to herself as a feminist. Being exposed to gendered violence through her friends, and gendered norms through her mother, she started to get a real sense of what her values were and developed a desire to do something about them.

Alongside this, Sara was doing a lot of reading into issues of race and racial violence but mainly from the perspectives of men:

I started to read things like Malcolm X. I've read those much earlier than I was reading feminist writing. My way into critical race was reading fiction, non-fiction I was also reading. I was reading a lot of the male writers, the Black Panther Movement. I was reading that first, much earlier and then I got into black women's writing. Then that was a way into really developing a black perspective on things so it was through the reading.

Sara's passion for reading was clear as her voice became elevated and she seemed to have so much to say about books that were inspirational to her development. Reading for Sara was a really important part of her developing identity and a way for her to connect with people who shared her

growing values. Sara found that both the reading she did into race and the feminist ideas she was developing could be combined, particularly when she started reading black feminist authors. Sara acknowledges that she is part of a history of black women who have fought for human rights and she is inspired by their bravery, despite the risks they faced:

Sojourner Truth had that phrase, 'Ain't I a Woman?', she said that at a speech where she was talking to white women at that time in the US who were campaigning for getting the vote and getting rights for women. There was very little consideration for black women who were slaves. I think of that and I think "Well if Sojourner Truth had just said, 'I can't take any more of this. I'm giving up.'" Or if the women who have really just put their necks on the line had said, "I can't be doing this today. I've got to go and get my nails done. My nails are more important." Then we wouldn't be sitting here. I wouldn't be sitting here. Sometimes I think of that.

Sara paused and really emphasised the phrase *I wouldn't be sitting here.* She looked around the room, suggesting that she felt the space was only accessible to her because of black feminist women before her. The historical context of oppression is so important to Sara because she feels grateful to black women in the past who fought for black women's rights. The risk that they took to help others and make the world a better place keeps Sara motivated and helps her to feel hopeful about the future.

Despite the amazing progress that black women activists have made historically, Sara still feels that she is *constantly* being discriminated against due to her identity as a black woman, particularly in the academy:

A colleague you've known them for years and you're on the main road and they will pass you and you're invisible. It took me a while to make sense of all that. You go to say hello and you're not seen. It took me a while. I'm thinking, "What's going on?" Then I realise, because the main road, it's a very mixed black neighbourhood. Not on the campus, when you're out on the street and I thought, it took me a while to realise, "When I'm on the main street, I'm just another

black face, that's what it is. Even though I've been sitting in a meeting with you, not long ago, I'm invisible." It's those kinds of subtle microaggressions.

Again, Sara spoke with conviction and her tone became angry. Yet, Sara feels that her colleagues are not even aware of behaving in those ways because they are mainly *unconscious,* but she notices. She also finds that she is always presumed to be in a non-academic role within academic settings, due to her race:

I'm going to write a book when I retire called, "We Thought You Were…" you can fill in anything you want. Because over the years, it hasn't been said, I haven't heard that for a while, for a couple of years but over the years I'd heard so many times, I call it misrecognition, "We thought you were the secretary. We thought you were a student. We thought you were the administrator. We thought you were--" I've always been mistaken for everything. I've never been mistaken for an academic.

Sara laughed in an exasperated way, emphasising each example independently and pausing between each one. However, despite Sara's negative experiences she has been able to find spaces that she feels she can be herself and gain support from others:

For me, it was always, as I said, not losing my voice and not being afraid. As I said earlier on, not being put-off by the raised eyebrows or the non-verbal communication which we get when we're raising something to point out some inequalities. As I talked about in my book, for me it was finding spaces that enabled me to really talk about my experiences in an open, truthful way and find ways to look at some of those experiences as strengths rather than limitations. I was able to do that by finding mentors outside of the institution from black women who understood some of the issues. I didn't have to explain why I didn't think that person was going to be able to mentor me for.

Support from other black women academics is really important for Sara and has allowed her to continue working in academia despite the challenges she has encountered. She is grateful for those mentors but acknowledges that she had to seek them out and find ways of coping for herself.

Sara's experiences of gendered and racial *microaggressions* has led her to act in ways to attempt to change her university to improve gender and racial equality and support younger black female colleagues:

I mentor some of the earlier and more junior colleagues, mainly around their research. I'm helping them to develop their social... I'm also helping them to be more confident about themselves. It's something I've struggled with early, a lot of women struggle with.

Ironically, Sara came across to me as very confident as she spoke, speaking assertively and with passion. Sara thinks that by making university spaces more inclusive for younger black women academics, by mentoring them she is challenging the culture of academia itself. In her case, she believes that simply existing within academia, as a black woman, is a challenge to the rules of the game:

For me, it was finding ways to navigate. Finding ways that were how to hold on to my beliefs and my values to navigate these rules because I don't think those rules are for a lot of women and certainly for black women they're not made for us.

Sara had an air of defiance throughout, suggesting that she would not let others stop her from entering the spaces she wanted to enter and do the things she wanted to do. Sara's existence within a system which is predominantly male and white, is in itself a challenge to the rules of the game as she proves that black women can be highly successful academics, without conforming to gendered and racial norms which exist in the academy. This was made possible for Sara through her defiance and her determination, as well as the support she received from other black feminists.

Reflecting on Sara

I met Sara at her university in an unfamiliar city. She arrived late and slightly flustered. I was tired and frustrated at her lateness as I had another interview to conduct in another part of the city. When she first started talking, my mood made me feel irritated but as she continued, I found her story really powerful and personally very rewarding. I was also nervous as she was my first

black feminist participant and I wanted to prove somehow that I was being thoughtful about race within my work. Meeting Sara made me realise that I was not in fact thinking about race enough and only thinking about intersectionality in theory, as opposed to thinking about it in relation to people's lived experiences. Her recollection of not being recognised by a white colleague on the street made me feel really sad but also made me wonder if I ever behaved that way towards black women unconsciously. When I left the interview, I reflected on her experiences and decided I had to be much more critical of myself and my own assumptions in regards to race. I wrote in my research journal: "Although I consider myself anti-racist I am part of a society of institutionalised racism and I will be affected by norms and unconscious attitudes. I need to do better." Like the experience with James, engaging with Sara felt like a form of Freire's dialogue as I reflected on her experiences during the interview and started to think more critically about race and race relations.

Since the interview with Sara, I have tried to engage more with black feminist authors and theorists. I now feel that I need to act to be truly anti-racist, challenging racist inequalities and norms. This mirrors Freire's process of conscientization, I engaged in dialogue, became more critical and then felt that I had to act to do something about the injustice. This was similar to my experience with James and I wrote in my research journal: "it is so important to engage with and have conversations with people with different backgrounds and identities to my own". This is something I have become committed to, not just in research but also in my personal life and in my use of social media. The experiences of interviewing people from different backgrounds including Sara has opened up my feminism and led me to wanting to include all oppressions in my own activism.

Sara's defiant attitude during the interview really inspired me, refueling some of my own passion for activism. Sara's interview was in the later stages of my research and I was continuing to perceive myself as an activist, due to my participants' perceptions of my work as feminist academic activism. Sara's attitude made me feel hopeful and I wrote in my journal: "keep fighting,

even entering spaces that aren’t made for you is progress”. She inspired my activism, making me want to be louder and more aggressive in speaking out for all women.

Chapter 8:

Synthesis of Data

Introduction

Following the re-tellings, this chapter synthesises the narratives of the other ten participants into a coherent whole. Each participant is represented by a different colour, highlighting their subjectivity and individual story. In this chapter I address three areas of commonality across the narrative interviews. These include feminist identity and background, activist identity and challenges faced by participants. This chapter re-tells the ten other participants narratives in a succinct way, whilst maintaining their individualities.

Key to Participants

Paula, Asha, Jada, Isaac, Katie, Rachel, Ruby, Phillip, Tess, Hannah

Feminist Identity and Background

During the interviews, participants often chose to share their background and the ways in which they developed as feminists. As part of the re-readings, I focused on participants' perspectives of themselves and their identities. The interviewees considered their feminist identities and some suggested that their feminism developed when they were young due to their family backgrounds. Paula attributes her feminist development to her sister introducing her to gender issues: *I have an older sister who also studied sociology. She went to university four years before me, well, yes, she's four years older than me. I think it was just through her relays of ideas, things that she was learning, and sort of began to introduce me to. At the same time, I was doing sociology A level and started to get interested in the issues around gender. I think that was the beginning.* Through the sharing of ideas with her sister, Paula began to think more about gender and realised she would be interested in studying it too. For Asha it began even earlier with her parents instilling feminist values in her throughout her upbringing: *I think it was always there. I was brought up to be a feminist by both my parents, and yeah, there was never any question that,*

you know, we should strive for equality for all human beings. And, yeah, I think that's how the values in my home were like, and so I think, yeah, it was just kind of, like, my upbringing. Asha's feminist development almost happened unconsciously and was an inherent part of her family life. On the other hand, Jada found that her parent's lack of action and her mother's experiences of disadvantage led her to think about her own future as a woman: *My mum was always very outspoken when I was growing up about the ways in which she felt like she hadn't achieved the things that she wanted to do. Part of that was because of her situation, but part of that was wrapped up in some of what she believed to be her lack of opportunities being a woman at that time, from a particular type of background. She talked about it a lot. She wasn't kind of an activist in the sense that I would understand it, but what that meant is she kind of drove me to challenge those kind of wider structures and to think about what I can achieve.* By seeing her mother's disadvantages, Jada realised that she wanted to have a different sort of future and to do that she needed to challenge her surroundings. Similarly, Isaac's background growing up in the Middle East and the political turmoil at the time led him to question his environment: *I'm coming from a different background, I'm from the Middle East. In there, you really need to be aware of the environment that you are in. It's not like a jungle, but it's like that. For instance, now in my country there is a devaluation that's going on. When you are waking up, your money-- For instance you can buy this bottle of water for £1 there, tomorrow you can buy it for £2, the same bottle. You have to make sure that you are aware of your environment. This led me to be more aware and see why this is happening. I haven't witnessed that, but the revolution of Iran has a quite massive impact in my life, my father's, my mother's life and everybody that's in the country.* Becoming more critical and aware of his environment came before any conception of feminist values for Isaac, but it began the process of him questioning other aspects of society beyond his own experience, including gender inequality.

Other participants suggested that they did not have much experience of feminism when they were growing up, instead their feminist values started to develop when they encountered instances of sexism. Katie experienced sexism when she was at her sixth form college: *There is a*

funny story about when I was a sixth former we had an Ofsted inspector come into the, it was a Latin class and the inspector, I don't know what I did, I said something, the inspector turned to another person and said "She's very bossy, isn't she?" I then put in a complaint and the school complained because my response was, I was a bit shocked at the time, but I said afterwards you wouldn't have said that if I was a boy. This experience led Katie to begin to question and reflect on inequalities in society and developed her sense of right and wrong which is integral to her feminist perspective. Similarly, Rachel experienced sexism, but rather than an individual instance it was embedded within her upbringing: *Well, I think, partly, partly, I was brought up to be a wife, a mother, and a good Catholic wife and mother, my mother trained me to do everything in the house, and to learn to be passive and to be a good girl. And everything that that meant… I've always been, in spite of all of these conformist cultures that I was a part of, both in the home, in church, in school, I was in many ways quite conformist. I've always been independent and bloody minded as well and stubborn. And it took me a while to learn that I could think and do independently and that that was okay.* Rachel's recollection of sexism was not based on one particular moment; rather it was integrated within her upbringing. For some participants such as Katie, the beginnings of their feminist development appeared to be attributed to one specific instance, in the form of a sudden realisation. For others, like Rachel the process of becoming feminist happened more slowly based on the accumulation of moments.

Similarly, participants who had not experienced an instance of sexism that they recognised or who were not exposed to ideas of equality and feminism during their upbringing tended to develop as feminists during their studies, also in the form of a slower realisation. Ruby had never really thought about feminism but when she started studying for her undergraduate degree she was introduced to some critical perspectives: *I took this course and what that course did was it got me to engage with women's history in a critical way that made me critical of the present, and the way women's position was in the present at that time. So that, I didn't realise at the time, that was my step on to becoming feminist.* Ruby's feminist development almost happened unconsciously as she became gradually more critical due to her educational experience. It was only on reflection

she realised that this was the beginnings of her feminist development. Ruby went on to study women's history for her Master's degree and started to engage with feminist theory, beginning actively to define herself as a feminist. Phillip also found his undergraduate degree in sociology started to awaken feminist ideas in him: *Um, I'd say in my undergrad, or maybe slightly before my undergrad, maybe A level, see I studied sociology, we studied feminism there. So that probably just leads on to me being interested in the subject.* Phillip could not attribute a specific moment in his education, which began his development, unsure whether it was his undergraduate degree or his A Levels, yet he acknowledges the impact of sociology on his gradual increasing interest in feminist ideas.

Higher education allowed other participants to put words to something they had already been feeling but had not been able to express. Hannah felt dissatisfied and uncomfortable with aspects of society but during her undergraduate degree, she was able to identify her feelings as a discomfort with gender inequality: *Then when I went to university and did courses on feminist perspectives and women's writing and learnt about feminist theories and then did like more gender and queer theory into my MA. That was really the point at which, [laughs] that was one of my greatest, best moments, and also gave me, I guess, a context for a lot of the discomfort that I had felt anyway about society. It was like just everything makes sense. I guess that's when it started and then more actively so since then.* Unlike Hannah, Tess had a very right wing, traditional upbringing and even during her undergraduate degree and Master's degree maintained the traditional perspective she was brought up with: *I didn't have the same lens to interpret what was happening to me then as I do now and no one talked to me about feminism, no one talked to me about equity, no one talked to me about critical perspectives of looking at things, or challenging in who's interest does this serve? The first time that ever happened to me, I went all the way through, my master's thesis was on Chaucer's Prioress for God's sake. I was looking at women at work in the 14th century and I didn't ask these questions. How? How did that not get picked up? It didn't happen until my first or second semester of my doctoral program when a professor was talking on adult education.* Only when she was exposed to a particularly influential teacher did

Tess start to engage with feminist ideas; for her, the teacher was more important than the teaching, to her feminist awakening. Those whose feminist identities developed earlier through family or experiences of sexism such as Paula, Isaac, Katie, Asha, Jada, and Rachel also found that their university education embedded their feminist values and continued their development as feminists. As academics, all of the participants had undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Many of them studied subjects, which would have involved a critical element such as sociology, gender studies, history, education and English that may have impacted their exposure to feminist ideas and literature. This is not to say that those who are not university educated cannot be feminists, or do not make good feminists, rather that, for these participants, university education was important for their personal feminist development. Despite differences in background and initial exposure to feminist ideas or sexism, a commonality exists across the 10 participants as they each mentioned their university education as an important aspect of the development of feminist identities. Even those who had no exposure to feminist ideas and whose development was a slower process, acknowledge their university experience as a key factor.

Activist Identity

Reflecting on their identities as feminist activist academics, some participants referred to activism by considering ways in which their activist identity developed and ways they enact it within their roles as academics. For many participants, activism is an inherent part of their feminist identities, to be a feminist involves enacting feminism in the everyday. Within the interviews, participants self-identified as activists and I left them to define what that meant for them personally. I discuss this further in the discussion chapter but it is important to note that activism is subjective and this was reflected within the interviews and the following quotes. When Phillip reflected on activism he realised that questioning himself and others and critically reflecting is a way in which he enacts his principles: *I'm challenging those kinds of attitudes and stereotypes that lead to the harms that you want to correct in your everyday life, you know not judging someone because of their particular gender, not judging someone because they're a particular colour or whatever, can be seen as advancing the cause. So, that's my newfound definition of activism, which*

I've just come up with now, then, yeah, suppose you could say that you're an activist every time you challenge something, every time someone says something in conversation and you're like, no, you can't say that, why would you say that, let's think about what you're saying there and that is activism. Phillip feels that any form of challenge, no matter how seemingly small, to gender norms or assumptions, including his own, supports his identity as an activist. Tess also suggested that her activism is an integral part of her feminism and she turns her critical awareness of gender norms into action*: I look at it as a badge of honour. I look at it as another way to question in whose interest does this serve? Who benefits from this choice and how do we in our activism, because you can be a critical thinker and not do anything but I think a feminist is fundamentally about action. By acting in feminist ways, I'm acting in ways that act out my critical orientation and my question of who's interest does it serve.* Similarly, Isaac's activism is based on challenging the status quo by being different and doing things differently: *Activism is to swim against the tide, if you like, to be critical of whatever you are doing, always asking questions, and be active member of the society.* Just as Phillip and Tess suggest, Isaac's activism emphasises questioning the status quo in a critical way and acting differently to what might be expected by others.

Relating to enacting activism through critical thinking and questioning, many of the participant's suggested that their identities as academics are linked strongly to their activism. Through their academic research, they are able to critically address issues and enact their feminist principles. Jada feels that her research is an integral part of her feminist activism: *One of the things I do quite a lot is to create alternative theorisations of things that we think we know about. I see my role as kind of developing that knowledge, developing those alternative perspectives because so much of our knowledge is steeped in masculinised, patriarchal systems that we don't sometimes see these things are just missing, this knowledge from these perspectives is missing. I believe that, obviously, we need to use that to bring about real change in terms of policy change, but also change in everyday life. So as an activist, I work with different groups, I set up a forum in the North East and then obviously work with existing organisations to then take that research and bring about real change to mostly women's lives.* Through research, Jada feels able to make a

difference to women, not only in a direct way but also by developing theories of alternative approaches to phenomena by critically reflecting on current approaches. Rachel shared a similar perspective, suggesting that through her research and teaching she is able to question and challenge the world as it is: *I think it means that in my research, I'm seeking to challenge existing power structures and seeking to raise questions about how the world is as it is and why it's like that and that my teaching is underpinned by that research.* For Rachel, teaching is as important as research to her activism as she is able to offer different perspectives to her students and potentially trigger their critical awareness of the world.

In contrast, some participants felt that they were not doing enough to define themselves as activists, despite conducting critical and feminist research, yet on reflection realised that they were actively challenging gender inequality in small more subtle ways. Upon reflection, Katie realised that her actions were examples of activism but she struggled to include activist as part of her identity: *I suppose I must be. You don't go around founding organisations without being an activist [chuckles]. If the label fits, wear it, but I don't wear that label myself. I don't think of myself as an activist. I think of us as an organisation that does activism. This is a body who facilitates activism, but I don't think of myself as an activist even though I clearly am.* Katie feels that the organisation she is involved in is an activist organisation, yet on an individual level, she was less able to assign herself that label. Ruby had a similar response, she was able to talk about her activity as activist activity but also found it difficult to call herself an activist: *So, I cite women more, draw attention to women's work more, pay attention to issues of my students, in relationships, gender both men and women. And so yeah, I feel like that infuses every part of what I do as an academic, it has the activist side. I don't think I do enough to call myself an activist.* Ruby's notion of activism was that it is a more organised, vocal movement and therefore despite describing activities she does which support women and gender equality she felt unsure about identifying herself as an activist. Hannah had similar preconceptions about what activism means, feeling that activism tends to exist more outside of universities: *I kept pondering the activism. When you said that I kept thinking, "Am I an activist?" I am definitely a feminist academic and I am involved in pursuing and making*

changes where I can in higher education around that. I always assume social activism or with grass roots, stuff that happens outside the academy I guess or more politically oriented. Again, Hannah was able to refer to activities she was doing for gender equality but did not feel they fit with what it means to be an activist. Paula's reluctance to define herself as an activist developed from a fear of being criticised: *Yes, but then that label, I wouldn't claim in an explicit or public way. Maybe that's also because, I think, you then open yourself up to criticism as to whether or not you're doing activism right, or the right kind of activism.* By publicly claiming she is an activist, Paula felt that she would be making herself vulnerable to criticism, particularly from other activists and women of different backgrounds. Asha was also worried about other people's conceptions of activism resulting in assumptions being made about her when identifying herself as an activist: *you know, like, they associate it with, like, radical actions, like Greenpeace would do, perhaps, which I actually, you know, Greenpeace is doing great stuff, but I don't think I'm necessarily doing activism like that. I think it's a lot more subtle, perhaps, in more everyday things, in everyday conversations, or things like that.* The connotations of activism were important for many participants and made them question whether they associated themselves with those connotations. Participants all talked about activist activities, some of which were similar, such as conducting critical feminist research and teaching, and supporting other women. Yet, some of the participants were comfortable with calling themselves activists whilst others felt they should have been doing more to warrant that label, or that the label came with risks. Despite this, all of the participants responded to a call for feminist academic activists, so must have considered themselves to fit within that category on some level, even if not publicly. A critical approach to the world was mentioned by most participants, whether they actively identified as activists or not. Many felt that by questioning and examining their world critically they were able to challenge gendered norms in their academic institutions and beyond.

Challenges Faced

All participants referred to challenges to their feminist academic activism including resistance from other academics, balancing their academic careers and maintaining their values,

and the emotional and physical toll of being activists. Ruby has faced some resistance from both male and female colleagues when she has talked about feminist issues and tried to set up groups for women: *So, I think that it's quite difficult being a woman in this department but it's definitely been difficult being a feminist because I mean the other day I suggested, in my old institution we had feminist Fridays, where we went for, all the women in the department went for lunch, we had fish and chips, and it was just a kind of, to create a community of women in the department and to like, we talked about things just like that you wouldn't talk about around other colleagues and it was nice. And I told people here about it and how amazing it was and the reaction I got was well men wouldn't be allowed to do that so why are women allowed to have lunch meetings? It just feels like you do get a lot of pushback.* She has found it really frustrating and it makes her doubt whether she should be so openly feminist within her workplace. Similarly, Katie has found some resistance from senior female colleagues when setting up a group for women: *It's very interesting to see that a lot of senior women don't tend to think that we are with them, it's a really interesting mind set. That kind of gendered competitive thing has actually been a major factor as to how some senior female colleagues have coped and had to cope, and how they've been conditioned, and breaking out of that.* The divide that Katie perceives between herself and some of her more senior colleagues has been a challenge to her bringing women together in a group setting. Phillip has also encountered a divide, specifically as a male feminist, finding that some of his female feminist academic colleagues have responded negatively to some of his actions: *And I think it's very important and I have faced you know a number of difficulties and kind of setbacks and frustrations and I have become quite frustrated with it, to the extent that I'm questioning the word feminist. I'm not sure where I'm going to end up but I think the only way that's going to change is if you just continue to get involved, and you try to change the culture surrounding activism, gender activism and gender equality activism, just change the culture around that so it is acceptable to be a male feminist.* By existing as a male feminist, Phillip hopes he can challenge the notions of gender within feminist activism itself to be more inclusive of men. Isaac has found that his attempts to bring about change have not always been successful, as his colleagues have

not taken on board what he has said: *I just become a module leader for one program and there's a module blackboard it's online. There is a blackboard for the whole program and in that, when I had just enrolled there was pictures of-- there's two different cohorts, one is for the basketball players and one is for the open program, and for both there was all male basketball players who are white. And for the open program there were pictures, there were all white male and female in the pictures and I said, "Guys we're in the process of getting Athena Swan and I'm sure that you are aware but these are not right, these should be changed." I think they haven't changed yet.* It was frustrating to Isaac that he had spoken out but been ignored by colleagues, even after justifying his perspective by referring to Athena Swan to relate his comments to the institutions aims. Other participants have faced challenges as they have tried to maintain or establish an academic career whilst staying true to their feminist values. Hannah found it difficult when she was trying to establish a career, as an early career researcher, to have the confidence to speak out about gendered issues: *I think when you are in that precarious position, you're staying conscious of not wanting to be the troublemaker or the one that is going to raise the awkward equality and diversity issue, or something. You just have to keep quiet. Whereas now, I would probably feel a bit more secure and maybe essentially something along these lines. Yes, it's uncomfortable.* Being in an insecure position was a challenge for Hannah as she found herself feeling less able to speak out about gender and stand up for her values. Similarly, Rachel has encountered challenges to maintaining her academic career and her feminist, social justice values. She has overcome these challenges by negotiating her career in a dignified way: *So, for example, the University held a major review of this school and was threatening to close us down. In the end, they took away school status, and we were merged with another school. I and one other person here are probably the only two people left, who fought that. And I lost my career at that point, because I decided to stay and fight them. And the key thing in all of that is demonstrating dignity. In other words, there are times when I did want to shout on the street like Elsie Tanner on Coronation Street and have a right, good old, you know, go, But you've got to keep your kind of dignity, but constantly show that their*

data and their interpretation of the data is wrong. By being tactical Rachel is able to negotiate difficulties without becoming too confrontational.

Working within a gendered institution, whilst trying to challenge it, was highlighted by many participants as a difficulty. Tess feels that sometimes she is being unethical by being complicit in an institution, which she feels is unfair: *I don't know that I feel ethical in this environment. I feel like so much of what I'm asked to do is unethical. My work is very frequently supporting unethical structures. For example, the bonus thing that's been in the papers. They're making money off of our work, and if they work us harder and they push us harder, they get bigger bonuses on top of already astronomical salaries. What? I've had real ethical issues with that, but at the end of the day, I don't see myself leaving.* Despite this conflict, Tess still believes it is better to stay and fight from within than to leave academic altogether. Asha also feels that by speaking out and challenging gendered norms in the academy, she is able to manage the challenging aspects of academia: *It's very hard, but I think voicing it and being a bit more of an activist helps, because it makes me sleep at night, because I just say stuff. And yeah, I don't just stand there and go, Okay, well, I'll just take it and I'll be really upset. It would just not work. So I think saying things is making it a bit better, acting on things and challenging people. But it is hard.* Asha uses her activism as a way of coping and feeling better about herself working in an institution that is gendered. Other participants have found that being feminist academic activists has taken an emotional and psychological toll and had a detrimental effect on their mental health and wellbeing. Jada experienced emotional exhaustion from working so hard to challenge her own institution that she found she was sacrificing her own mental wellbeing: *I think at some point in our lives, many of us have experienced that thing. It can be really triggering, even if it's a totally different context to how you might have experienced those sets of feelings, but that feeling trapped and unable to choose a direction or find a way out, and so yes, I had to get therapy. I think sometimes it does come to that stage where you just need to-- and If I don't look after those things, I think I'm probably someone who's more aware than most. I think if I don't look after those things I can't, then-- it gets to an acute stage and you then find yourself having to take months and months off*

because it's had such an impact on your health or mental health as well. Jada was able to continue in her job but only because she sought professional support with her mental health. Paula has also struggled with the emotional labour of being a feminist academic activist and has found that at times she does not have the energy to continue as an activist or an academic: *I just feel a bit vulnerable at the moment. I think this is like you really feel some, and I really hate a lot in my work, quite critical of the concept of resilience and how it gets used. Sometimes you do have to think about how resilient you are feeling to be able to challenge things. I think at the moment I'm not really feeling I'm mentally strong enough to be a troublemaker and strong enough to put myself out there.* Each participant has encountered challenges as feminist academic activists, whether from their colleagues, internal challenges about their values and their careers and challenges from the emotional labour of being a feminist academic activist. There is a commonality across participant experiences that suggests that being a feminist academic activist involves an element of overcoming and surviving challenges.

Each participant developed as a feminist academic activist in a distinct way based on their familial background and relationships, their educational background, the challenges they faced, and their personal history. Yet there are commonalities across the interviewees' narratives, which this chapter highlights. Firstly, many participants highlighted familial background and university education as important factors in their development as feminists. Higher education facilitated participants to have a critical perspective on the world, developing their values in equality. Secondly, participants all engage in some form of activity to enact their feminist values, some identifying it as activism and others feeling less connected to the term. Much of the activity stemmed from being critical and questioning the world, whether through conducting research or challenging themselves on a personal level. Thirdly, all participants faced challenges due to their identity as feminist academic activists. From resistance from colleagues or other feminists, struggles with balancing feminist values with an academic career, to issues with mental health and wellbeing due to the emotional labour of activism and academia. These commonalities and the narrative re-tellings provide the basis for the following discussion chapters, which aim to answer

the research questions. I expand on the ideas presented within the narratives and the synthesis chapter. I further explore developing feminist academic activist identity, in relation to embodiment specifically, to answer the research questions. I then consider challenging the rules of the game, building on the experiences of the participants within the narrative and synthesis chapters. Finally, I build on the challenges that I have outlined within the previous two chapters that feminist academic activists faced, considering feminist academic activist survival in higher education.

Chapter 9:

Discussions

Introduction

In the synthesis chapter, I presented the results from the other ten narratives, addressing areas of interest, which developed through the narrative interviews and former five narrative re-tellings. Following on from that, I now address the specific research questions, which I outlined at the start of the PhD, in the following discussion chapter.

This PhD aims to answer the overarching research question:

What are the experiences of feminist academic activists attempting to challenge the rules of the game in UK academia?

The following subsidiary research questions developed:

1. Are the rules of the game in UK academia gendered?
2. Who are feminist academic activists?
3. In what ways do feminist academic activists challenge the rules of the game in UK academia?
4. How do feminist academic activists persevere within gendered institutions?

In this following discussion chapter I answer these research questions in three sections. I refer back to the narratives and the synthesis chapter and also continue to use additional quotes as evidence for the arguments made in the discussion chapters. I use quotes throughout the discussion to allow participants to constantly co-construct the research, in line with my feminist methodology. The use of additional quotes builds on the narratives presented as re-tellings and a synthesis, providing further evidence within the discussion in order to answer the research questions. The quotes differ from those used in the narrative re-tellings and synthesis, building on the data presented in those chapters. Yet, those chapters equally contribute to the discussion as I

refer back to them throughout the following sections in relation to the research questions and literature. They also helped to establish the areas of discussion, alongside the research questions.

The first discussion section focuses on feminist academic activist identity, this relates to the research question: 2. Who are feminist academic activists? Within the narratives and synthesis all participants referred to ways in which their identities developed and ways in which they enact their identities. By considering the ways in which participants define themselves as feminist academic activists and how their identities developed, the chapter provides insights into their experiences embodying this identity within an academic context. I draw on the literature reviews by considering ways in which theories of conscientization and empowerment relate to feminist academics' lived experiences of their feminist development. As well as referring to the narratives and synthesis, I continue to use quotes to support the discussion, bringing in further examples from the participants, allowing their perspectives to be constantly co-constructing the discussion.

The second discussion section considers the rules of the game and the ways in which feminist activists challenge them within their roles as academics. This specifically addresses the research questions: 1. Are the rules of the game in UK academia gendered? And 3. In what ways do feminist academic activists challenge the rules of the game in UK Academia? This was a particularly prevalent area of interest within the narratives and synthesis of narratives in chapters 7 and 8. Thus, based on the participant narratives, in this section I consider feminist research and teaching, speaking out and feminist activism within the everyday. These areas of discussion developed as a way of answering the question about how participants challenge the rules of the game, from the interviews with participants and their suggestions about how they challenged the rules of the game in their universities.

In the final discussion section, I consider feminist activist survival, addressing the research question: 4. How do feminist academic activists persevere within gendered institutions? I use a definition of feminist survival offered by Sara Ahmed (2017) in her "Killjoy Survival Kit" (p. 235). In this section I address various strategies used by the participants to survive as feminist

academic activists within patriarchal systems and institutions. The strategies I discuss include activism as survival, feminist support networks and connection, “self-care” and maintaining hope. I suggest that without the survival of individual feminist activists, feminism itself cannot survive.

These discussion sections will answer the overarching research question and the subsidiary questions. Following this discussion chapter, I present my own narrative reflection in chapter 10, using the reflexive, auto-ethnographical approach as outlined in the methodology chapter. The final chapter concludes the PhD by suggesting the potential impact of these discussions and the ways in which they can contribute to knowledge and practice.

Section 1: Developing Feminist Academic Activist Identity

In this section, I discuss the development of feminist academic activist identity, using data presented within the narratives and synthesis, and further data from the interviews with participants. I also draw on theoretical perspectives from Freire and feminism as discussed in chapters 4 and 5. I begin by discussing the concept of identity, arguing that categories of identity cannot be universalised, rather they are subjective and influenced by socio-cultural norms in specific contexts. Secondly, I discuss the development of feminist identity through family relations and home life, suggesting that the family represents wider gendered power relations present in society, whether it reproduces these relations or subverts them. Thirdly, I consider feminist academic activist identity developing through education, referring back to Freire and the notion of dialogue, developing a critical consciousness, in this case a feminist consciousness. Fourthly, I discuss the impact of feminist and academic relationships on feminist activist identity and the ways in which peers and mentors can affect people's feminist academic activist development. Finally, I consider the ways in which individuals embody feminist academic activist identity and the various challenges faced by participants trying to balance each aspect of their identities. I continue to develop on ideas from the narratives and synthesis chapters, whilst specifically answering question 2. Who are feminist academic activists?

Identity

Identity is a broad concept and can refer to personal characteristics, social characteristics and the behaviours, beliefs, and appearances that a person exhibits (Lawler, 2014). From a sociological perspective, identity is produced not only internally but sociologically, through social relations and culture (Lawler, 2014). In *Gender Trouble* Butler (2006) argues that there is no common female identity and thus there is no universal feminist identity. Feminist identity and womanhood are experienced individually by a subject, whilst being produced and reproduced through social relations:

"The political assumption that there must be a universal basis for feminism, one that must be found in an identity assumed to exist cross-culturally, often accompanies the notion that the oppression of women has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination" (Butler, 2006, p. 5).

As I suggested in chapter 1 when referring to the categories of feminist, activist and academic, I am not ascribing them as universal, rather they are individual, subjective and embodied in various ways by those who identify as feminist academic activists. I do not intend to generalise about these categories of identity but instead show ways in which individuals have developed themselves to self-identify and how they embody their identity within their roles as academics and beyond. For example, within the narratives and synthesis of narratives, each participant had subjective notions of their identities, referring to differing experiences leading to them self-identifying as feminist academic activists. Yet it is important to recognise that feminist, academic and activist all have cultural and social constructions, which constitute meaning as I explored in the early chapters of the PhD, particularly chapters 1 and 2. I previously argued that people's perceptions of their identities will relate to these constructions and the norms which may be internalised by individuals. According to this, identity is thus embedded within socio-cultural definitions as well as being experienced and embodied subjectively by individuals. It is impossible to separate the wider societal meanings inherent in categories of identity from people's experiences of it. Just as it is impossible to separate people's experience of sex and gender from the societal constructions of both categories. However, as Lawler (2014) and Butler (2006) suggest, the social and cultural conditions are context specific and cannot themselves be universalised. Identity is simultaneously subjective and personal, and developed by and through wider social relations and constructions. It thus has a broad definition, referring to people's personal sense of who they are as human beings and how they present themselves to others (Lawler, 2014). In line with Lawler's definition, the term identity is used to refer to categories including gender, feminist, activist, academic and the personal reflections by participants about who they are in relation to these categories. Identities are also simultaneously individual and collective, constructed so that individuals can relate their

personal feelings about who they are to others in society, including family, friends, co-workers and institutions (Lawler, 2014; Weir, 2013). This chapter thus explores several contexts in relation to identity, including the family, higher education, relationships and embodiment. These contexts are considered as they were referred to within participant narratives, as presented in chapters 7 and 8.

Closely relating to identity is the concept of power, as identity is embedded within wider power relations and the way in which power is constructed in society (Butler 2006). Power is central to notions of feminism and activism but also academia, which exists on a hierarchy as I outlined within chapter 3 on the rules of the game. Academics are also considered to be producing knowledge and therefore have power over what people perceive as truth (Lawler, 2014). Chapter 5 refers to power in the context of empowerment, as encompassing gendered power relations and the oppression of women. Relating to this definition, power may be challenged, or produced and reproduced, through people's identities (Collins, 2000). Identity is thus produced by power relations and these ascribe certain norms or rules to certain identities (Drydyk, 2013). Subverting these rules creates a new identity, for example subverting the rules of womanhood, could result in the creation of a feminist identity. Or subverting the rules of heterosexuality could create the identity of homosexuality. This does not mean to say that identities are necessarily binary, of course people identify as both woman and feminist, rather that new identities are created by subverting the power relations within present identities. Power is thus present in all identities, whether in the subversion of power relations or in conforming to them.

Family

Family constructs, according to the social constructionist approach, which I outlined in chapter 1, relate to wider power relations within society, whether they reflect those relations or subvert them. For feminists, growing up in a gendered household may lead them to want to subvert the norms they grew up with, or growing up in a feminist household may lead them to seek to identify as feminist. This was the case within several participant narratives as seen within the

synthesis chapter and the longer narrative re-tellings, as many participants referred to family. The narratives suggest that to begin to develop as a feminist within a family context, one either conforms to feminism, which is already present within the family or subverts gendered norms, which are present in the family, or a combination of both. Jada expressed this idea when referring to the impact her mother had on her feminist development:

"My mum got married when she was very young. Part of the reason for that was that her father died quite young. She had quite a different, difficult kind of childhood and marriage was one of her only routes to independence to some extent. To leave the family home. She did get married when she was very young. She didn't finish her education, which she deeply regrets. There are lots of things like that that fuelled my perspective. I guess she's quite an important person, I suppose."

Jada witnessed her mothers' disappointment at having to sacrifice education for marriage and motherhood and found her perspective on gender relations to be developing in a more critical way. Alternatively, within Asha's narrative, presented in the synthesis, she suggests that she maintained the perspective instilled in her by her parents and upbringing. Power relations within the home contributed to feminist identity development for some of the participants, including those like Asha who had a feminist upbringing and others like Jada who had an outwardly gendered upbringing. The family provided the basis for developing an understanding of power relations, which participants began to relate to wider gendered power relations within society. Butler refers to the family construct as reinforcing gendered power relations, which in turn affects the internal development of family members (Butler, 2006). Family and upbringing can therefore be a powerful context for feminist identity development. Family relations can mirror gendered power relations in wider society or provide an initial basis for showing an alternative to the subscribed rules within society. For some participants, the family dynamics and their upbringing led to them beginning to question their world in relation to gender. As outlined in Mary's narrative re-telling, she began to question her position due to her mum's "traditional" role within the family. Mary's

traditional upbringing in regard to gender norms, meant that she started to question her reality, thinking about whether it was fair for her mother to do everything in the home. This relates to the feminist slogan of personal is political, as participants' personal experiences of gender during their upbringing may have initiated their feminist development. Feminism is an inherently political movement, as bell hooks argues:

> "Feminists are made, not born. One does not become an advocate of feminist politics simply by having the privilege of having been born female. Like all political positions one becomes a believer in feminist politics through choice and action…Before women could change patriarchy we had to change ourselves; we had to raise our consciousness" (hooks, 2000, p. 7).

The critical response by participants to a gendered upbringing relates to the process of developing a critical consciousness. As hooks (2000) suggests, people have to become feminists, having some form of feminist development. Family is one way in which this process can be initiated, and people can develop a critical conscious. As the chapter on Freire (1996) outlined, his theory of conscientization suggests that a critical consciousness is developed when people begin to become aware of oppression and the reasons for it. If people witness oppression within their family context in the form of restrictive gender norms in the home, they may begin to see oppression as an injustice and begin the process of conscientization. Yet, not all those who are subject to gendered norms become feminists, but for several participants being witness to oppression initiated a sense of unfairness in relation to gender. By thinking about their family members, particularly mothers, some participants started to consider issues of fairness and equality. They then started to apply this lens beyond the home and started to question society's structures critically. For many people, family provides their first experience of gender norms or oppression, whether it mirrors society's norms or subverts them. Family can therefore initiate the process of feminist identity development as individuals may begin to consider their personal experiences of family life as political and develop a critical perspective on the world. When asking: Who are feminist academic activists? There is one commonality amongst participants, which is that they all seek alternatives to the

world as it currently is, specifically alternatives that support gender equality. Family is one way in which alternatives may start to emerge.

Education

Not everyone begins to question their reality during their upbringing or within the family context as shown in the synthesis chapter when several participants referred to other aspects such as education. One reason for this is that social norms can be internalised and thus people may not question their upbringing or family dynamics. Butler's (2006) notion that there is no universal feminism also suggests that the process of developing feminist activist identity is highly subjective and happens at different points for individuals. Another context for this process is education. The re-tellings and synthesis chapters showed that many participants were introduced to ideas of social justice and feminism in their university education. It is important to note that all of the participants were university educated and many were from social science, humanities and arts disciplines. Considering the range offeminist theories I outlined in Chapter 2, courses which expose students to those debates or perspectives may be more likely to impact feminist development. However, criticality in general can cause people to question their world which may result in questions in terms of gender. Those disciplines often have a critical element, if not specific courses on gender and social justice, which those from other disciplines may not be as likely to be exposed to. Thus, education may not be transformative in terms of developing criticality in everyone; rather it has the potential to develop feminist academic activism by promoting a critical consciousness for some individuals. For example, Hannah became more critical due to her university education introducing her to feminist ideas:

"I think it was something that really developed in my undergrad, I did courses on feminist perspectives and women writers and that was where I… I think before that I just had quite a negative association."

For Hannah, her education helped her to challenge her preconceptions about gender and feminism. Within the synthesis chapter, Hannah specifically refers to her university education as the starting

point for her feminist identity development. This suggests that the internalisation of gendered social norms may be challenged through a critical education and exposure to new ideas. Feminist literature and teaching can provide this education as they highlight gendered social norms and ways of challenging them, the voices of women from different backgrounds, intersectionality and an alternative approach to reality. This can provide people with an understanding of power relations, particularly the ways in which they can limit certain groups and result in dominant groups in society (Weir, 2013). A feminist education can provide people with alternatives to the gendered social norms, which are present within society, challenging dominant perspectives. It therefore allows those who have internalised social norms to begin to reflect and see other ways of being:

"In those days most of us had been socialised by parents and society to accept sexist thinking. We had not taken time to figure out the roots of our perceptions. Feminist thinking and feminist theory urged us to do that." (hooks, 2000, p. 19)

By learning about feminism and women's experiences people may begin to develop a feminist activist identity. If feminist identity begins within one's consciousness then it is an internal process, relating to the process of empowerment outlined in chapter 5. Similarly, as Freire suggests, a critical perspective on the world may initiate the desire to change the world for the better and thus may inspire activist intentions. James' narrative re-telling outlined how his activism developed out of his social justice values which were established during his education and through his personal experiences:

"It has led to me wanting to do something about it. For me, it feels like a normal progression."

James' values resulted in a desire for change, which made him begin to think about what he could do to bring about that change. This mirrors the process that Freire (1996) and feminist pedagogical theorists outline (Shrewsbury, 1993; Weiler, 1995; hooks, 1994, 2000), whereby a critical education and experiences of oppression result in a critical consciousness, and this ultimately leads

to action. Relating to the research question: Who are feminist academic activists? This suggests that they are those who have undergone some form of this process of developing a critical awareness of the world and who feel they have to turn that awareness into action. Similarly, relating to empowerment, they may have undergone an internal process, started to consider their decisions in the context of patriarchy and then become actors of change, following the empowerment process as outlined in chapter 5. For some participants, as I refer to in the synthesis chapter, self-identification occurred once they were able to express in vocabulary what they were feeling about unfairness and social justice in society. For participants in this study that vocabulary was feminist or a combination of feminist, anti-racist and queer theories. They were only introduced to these vocabularies through education and reading, mainly in a university context. Despite this, there are certain limitations in that not everyone may experience the same access to literature and education, which is critical and can facilitate this process. Feminist activist development does not necessarily happen through education alone and this does not mean to imply that those who are not university educated cannot undergo feminist development and establish a critical perspective. Education is one way in which participants found that their feminist activist identity developed, yet academics are in privileged positions in relation to their access to academic literature and the spaces to debate and discuss issues of social justice. This PhD specifically focuses on the experiences of academic feminist activists and therefore cannot generalise about feminist activist development for non-academics or those without an academic education. Despite this, a critical education can provide the basis for developing a critical consciousness, which may allow people to consider gender critically and initiate feminist activist identity. For participants, this critical education tended to occur within a university setting which does not mean to say that it cannot occur in other settings and environments.

Feminist Relationships

Another way in which feminist academic activist identity can develop, as outlined in the re-tellings and synthesis, is through positive relationships with other feminists. This was the case

in Jill's re-telling, as she found her relationship with her PhD supervisor to be highly impactful on her development as a feminist academic activist:

"my former PhD supervisor was an eminent feminist sociologist and she was hugely influential, like massively. And again, I've written, I've written about her as a kind of tribute to her after she died there was a special issue of a journal that was a tribute to her. Because again it was just so important to have that kind of erm you know, and you know yeah she was amazing."

Jill found that her supervisor not only introduced her to feminist ideas but also supported her values and passions within and outside of her academic work. Within the re-telling, I outline the specific support Jill received from her supervisor, including supporting her with sexual harassment that she experienced. Having an encouraging external voice and being given a space to talk and debate about feminist academic activist issues can support the development of feminist academic activist identity. Similarly having these conversations with someone who offers personal support, as well as academic support could make individuals more open to listening to different ideas and share personal experiences. This is similar to feminist pedagogy and dialogue as it could be an example of a mutual and loving relationship that Freire describes as key to dialogue, as I outline in chapter 4 on Freire and feminist pedagogy. Similarly, hooks (2000) suggests that before people had access to education through women's studies and feminist courses, they learnt about feminism in groups by talking and sharing experiences together.

This suggests that those who may have had a less critical education could potentially start to think about feminist ideas through their relationships with other feminists. By talking about feminist issues with someone she admired and respected, Jill felt that she was becoming more engaged with feminist ideas. Through dialogue and the sharing of stories and experiences people may start to think more critically about their situation, by relating it to others and beginning to see it as a wider societal problem. This relates to chapter 4, supporting Freire's notion that dialogue can lead to people understanding their own and others' oppression. Jill's narrative shows that she found this to be the case with several other feminist relationships, as well as her supervisor,

particularly with women. Jill's re-telling refers to the difficult conversations she had within women only spaces and the impact this had on her feminist development. The impact of sharing stories and experiences about gender oppression with other women really affected Jill emotionally and this emotion further solidified her feminist academic activist identity. Again, this relates to the feminist slogan the personal is political as the sharing of personal experiences allowed Jill to consider sexism as a political problem.

As well as sharing experiences, feminist relationships with more senior academics can provide role models for those who aspire to be successful academics. Sara's re-telling refers to her seeking out black female academic role models when she was beginning her career, as she wanted to see someone like her within a successful position:

"I could've found a black mentor, but I wanted one who worked from a feminist perspective and worked from a critical race perspective. At that time, it wasn't easy, but it was possible."

Sara wanted to form a relationship with someone who shared both her feminist values and her critical race values in order to receive some mentoring from someone similar to her. hooks talks about the ways in which race was excluded from mainstream feminist theory when she was growing up and the "reluctance of white feminist thinkers to acknowledge the importance of race" (hooks, 2000, p. 58). Sara's experience as a feminist is intertwined with her experience of black womanhood and she sought someone who would not deny the racial aspects of her experiences. By forming a relationship with a feminist mentor who also had a critical race perspective, she was able to talk through difficult experiences she encountered as a black woman working with academia. Some of these experiences are within her narrative re-telling, including the microaggressions she experienced on a regular basis. She needed support from other black feminist academics to understand these experiences in context:

"I needed some space and some support to make sense of some of the passive-aggressive and the nuances in the dynamics that there were a group of white academics, male and female.

There was gendered and racial stuff going on there. I needed space to make sense of it, to think about my strategy."

Sara's identity as a feminist academic activist developed through her relationships with feminist and critical race theorists as she was provided with the space to share any difficulties that she encountered. She also talked through strategies, as outlined in her re-telling, including ways of challenging academic culture through activism. Feminist relationships can be impactful on feminist academic activist identity, by providing the basis for sharing experiences, not only in relation to gender but also to race and other characteristics. By sharing lived experiences of gender and race with feminist academics, Jill and Sara were able better to understand their personal experiences within a context of gender and race relations in wider society, entrenching their feminist values and increasing their activist intentions. Relating to the research question who are feminist academic activists? They may be those who have had conversations about feminism and share their experiences with others, particularly those who are similar to them and share their values and perspectives.

Embodiment of Feminist Academic Activist Identity

The re-tellings and synthesis show how family, education and relationships affected participants' feminist academic activist development to varying degrees. Their experiences were subjective, yet some commonalities occurred which have been outlined in this chapter. For everyone, their identity was deeply personal, yet all participants found the embodiment of each aspect of their identity challenging. As a subjective lived experience, identity is lived through and by the body, as many identities are identified by others through bodily aspects. For example, Simone de Beauvoir's famous quote, quoted also by hooks: "One is not born, but becomes a woman" (de Beauvoir, 2011, p. 249; hooks, 2000, p. 30) highlights the way that a body is gendered by society. Female bodies are ascribed certain characteristics and behaviours based on notions of femininity:

"Even in the most simple body orientations of men and women as they sit, stand, and walk, one can observe a typical difference in body style and extension. Women generally are not as open with their bodies as are men in their gait and stride. Typically, the masculine stride is longer proportional to a man's body than is the feminine stride to a woman's" (Young, 2005, p. 32).

This does not mean to suggest that these characteristics are essential to male and female bodies; rather they are constructed by social and cultural conceptions of masculinity and femininity based on the material differences between bodies. Although there may be multiple masculinities and femininities, the hegemonic versions contain certain features such as masculine notions of rationality, strength and competitiveness and feminine notions of passiveness and emotional and caring tendencies (Schippers, 2007). Embodiment therefore emphasises the way that bodies act towards the world, due to socio-cultural meanings placed on the body and the material existence of the body within the world. Butler (1988) suggests that bodies are performative and gender is created and recreated through people acting it out. This suggests that people use their material bodies in a way, which forms gender definitions and is formed by gender definitions. Similarly, feminist, activist and academic identities have ascribed norms, which affect the embodiment of these identities by individuals. For feminist identity, the body can be a site of resistance or a way in which gender norms are produced and reproduced. A female body can be a site of oppression and discrimination, with sexual harassment and assault being a bodily experience. Alternatively, it can be a site of power and resistance for women through reproductive rights, contraception and sexual freedom. Similarly, academic embodiment involves an element of the academic culture in which an academic is working and activist embodiment involves conceptions of what it means to be an activist. This section explores the embodiment of these identities and the ways in which they interact.

Within the re-tellings and synthesis, many participants' accounts of their academic identity involved references to their bodies. Megan talked about feeling *"crushed"* due to the managerial culture in her university and the performance measurement that she had to undergo. Within

academia, the body is a form of capital as it contributes to the production of research, teaching and administrative duties and is thus a means to an end, the end being the production of work for the university (Granovetter & Swedberg, 2001). The academic body is thus commodified to produce knowledge outputs for the university (Jacob, 2009; Bridges, 2018). For Megan, her embodiment as an academic involved a feeling of being *"crushed"* by academic culture and workload. The word *"crushed"* highlights an extreme pressure on the body, one that left her feeling unable to continue, ultimately leading to her leaving academia. Megan's academic embodiment represents her social and physical interactions with the university, offering insights into a university culture, which values productivity and performance. Academic embodiment is not only a subjective lived experience of personal academic identity but also represents the organisational demands on the identity of academics: "they are nevertheless constrained by appropriate versions of embodied identities" (McDowell, 2009, p. 58). An academic career requires at least some level of conforming to university norms, embodying an appropriate academic identity (Clarke & Knights, 2015). Megan felt that her academic identity was not aligned with the appropriate embodied identity ascribed by academic culture and thus her identity was conflicted. As a feminist and activist, she felt that by conforming to academic practices she was less able to embody her feminist and activist values:

> *"I am a feminist in the academy and out of the academy, just as a person, and most of my research was around you know women's voices really, and so the irony of then being you know in an academic context in which women's voices are dampened quite significantly on the whole."*

Feminist academic activists are working within an institution they consider to be gendered. Their embodied experience may be somewhat conflicted as they try to act towards the world in a way which feels authentic to each aspect of their identity and maintain an academic career. Similarly, the synthesis chapter refers to Rachel's concern that she would be perceived as aggressive if she shouted too loudly in resistance to gendered norms within her university. Rachel's dilemma about coming across as aggressive when speaking out about gender inequality, relates to her notion of

academic embodiment and female embodiment. She was aware of the pressures to conform to an ideal academic (Bleijenbergh et al., 2012), one which does not show emotion and is rational thinking, whilst also embodying womanhood correctly with notions of femininity and passivity. Many academics are also embodying their identities within their research, situating themselves within it physically through social research methods such as ethnography and auto-ethnography (Rudberg, 1997). An academic identity can include embodiment of personal conceptions of what it means to be an academic and personal values around education. It can also include institutional conceptions of an academic and the physical and emotional act of conducting research. For many participants, these overlapped and at times contradicted each other. This relates to Meyerson and Scully's (1995) notion of tempered radicals who are those who work within an organisation that is not in line with their personal and political values. The tempered radical is torn between the identities of their organisation and their personal beliefs, making them an "outsider within" (Meyerson & Scully, 1995, p. 587) maintaining a duality of identity. Both parts of their identity are equally significant and this can result in a personal and emotional struggle for individuals who fit within the tempered radical definition (Meyerson & Scully, 1995). Feminist academic activists balance their feminist activist identity alongside their academic identity, embodying potentially contradictory values. Yet, many participants' academic development happened alongside their feminist development, particularly those who found their feminist identities developing through education and academic literature. Their embodiment therefore is a form of tempered radicalism, with some experiencing difficulties with their overlapping identities and their competing values. This was the case for Megan and is evident in her narrative, which outlines her decisions for leaving her university.

Activism much like academia also involves physical and emotional labour and requires energy to undertake. One other way in which participants embody feminist academic activism is by not conforming to certain ascribed norms of academia and gender. Many of these ways of non-conforming are through a physical embodiment of feminist activist identity. Within the synthesis,

I outline the ways that Phillip felt he was not conforming, including his accent and the ways in which he looked different from other academics:

"I have the accent that does stick out in a room full of the general academics, you know, I've got other reasons as well, I just don't look like you would probably expect a tutor at this university to look, you know I've got the long hair, I've got the beard, I've got the earring, I've got the piercings or whatever."

For Phillip, looking different and challenging notions of masculinity was a way in which he resisted the conceptions of an ideal academic. Within chapter 3 on the rules of the game, I suggest that the figure of the ideal academic is present within university processes and practices, which is in itself gendered. By not conforming physically to this ideal Phillip felt he was able to maintain his feminist values whilst working within a gendered space. His physical non-conformity through embodiment could also potentially challenge this notion of the ideal academic and the structures that are based on it.

Alternatively, as mentioned in the synthesis chapter, some participants felt that they were not fully embodying an activist identity. Paula suggested that activism was more *"radical"* and *"loud"* than the actions she was doing to promote gender equality. Similarly, Ruby felt that she was too *"passive"* and that an activist is outwardly *"active"*. The idea that an activist has to be loud, bold and potentially aggressive about their cause may be attributing stereotypical masculine characteristics to activism, when in fact feminine attributes can still be challenging in more subtle ways. There is also a suggestion that an activist must constantly be living and embodying activism in order to be able to self-identify:

"Drawing on a 'perfect standard' of politics and activism grounded in the core values of rigor and humility, an activist must 'live the issue', demonstrate relentless dedication, and contribute a sustained effort to duly merit the label. This conception of activist effectively places the label 'out of reach' for many social movement actors" (Bobel, 2007, p. 147).

For these participants, conflicting aspects of their identities, particularly in balancing their feminist activism alongside the demands of academia, limited their ability to feel they were embodying activism all of the time. By expanding the definition of feminist activism to include any act which challenges gender inequalities, all participants would fall under that definition. Yet, embodiment of activism is difficult if one feels one has to be constantly appearing to be challenging gender inequality by speaking out, protesting, physically non-conforming and other bodily actions. For feminist academic activists, embodying all three aspects of their identity is a challenge and they may feel that one aspect is not as significant as the others, in this case activist identity. Returning to the question who are feminist academic activists? They are those who embody an aspect of all three identities, whether through their physical appearance, their physical action towards the world or the ways in which they do not conform to certain bodily expectations. Embodying all identities at once can be difficult and may result in individuals thinking they are not embodying one or all aspects of their identity enough. Despite this, feminist academic activism is an embodied identity, lived through and with the body and its relationship to universities and norms of feminism and activism.

Participants developed as feminist academic activists in various ways. Some found that their upbringing and family contributed to their development, either by exposing them to gendered relations or by instilling feminist values taught to them by their parents. Many felt that their education was a factor in their development, particularly critical courses and literature, which allowed them to develop a critical consciousness and ask questions about their world. Feminist relationships also developed feminist academic activist identity by providing participants with a space to talk about feminist issues with inspirational feminists that influenced them, engaging in dialogue. A commonality amongst participants suggested that as their feminist academic activist identities developed, they experienced some challenges when embodying each identity simultaneously. Academic identities had conflicting aspects including personal values about education and institutional values and the expectations of an academic. Similarly, feminist activist

identities sometimes contradicted academic identity as participants were working in and potentially complicit in gendered institutions. The notion that an activist should constantly be embodying action limited the ways in which some participants self-identified. Feminist academic activist is a complex identity in that it is multifaceted and involves conflicting approaches to embodiment. Despite this, participants found ways to self-identify as each aspect simultaneously, often taking a tempered radicals approach and embodying their identities in an ambivalent way, sometimes making one aspect of their identity more visible and another less visible and shifting these in day to day circumstances. When questioning who feminist academic activists are, it is possible to understand them as subjective individuals, each with a personal story of identity development, whilst being impacted by social and institutional definitions of certain identities. They are those who are balancing feminist, academic and activist identities, attempting to change the academic institution from within. This section highlights the areas that can facilitate feminist academic activist identity development, whilst suggesting that the embodiment of identities is complex, particularly when different aspects of identity are somewhat contradictory.

Section 2: Challenging the Rules of the Game

In this section, I discuss ways in which participants challenged the rules of the game in UK academia, addressing the subsidiary research questions: 1. Are the rules of the game in UK academia gendered? And 3. In what ways do feminist academic activists attempt to challenge the rules of the game in UK academia? I draw on the literature review in chapter 3, on the rules of the game, as well as participant accounts of challenging the rules of the game from the interviews. Within the section, I explore three approaches to challenging the rules of the game, which developed out of commonalities found across participant narratives. These include: challenging through feminist research and teaching; challenging by speaking out in various forms; and challenging by enacting feminist principles in everyday academic activities, including more subtle ways. Finally, I consider the notion of challenging academia by leaving it and no longer being complicit in the gendered structures, which contribute to gender inequality in higher education. These areas of discussion directly developed from the interviews and data analysis as I noted commonalities in methods of challenging across different participants' narratives. Within the literature review chapter 3 on the rules of the game I outlined the ways in which the rules of the game in UK academia are gendered, including the notion of an ideal white, male, academic with no familial responsibilities (Bilmoria et al., 2008; Bleijenbergh et al., 2012). Within this chapter, I argue that participants sought to challenge this ideal through their behaviours and actions as academics in the aforementioned ways. As self-identified feminist academic activists they all perceived academia as gendered, within the practices and structures which underpin universities. Inherent to their self-identification as feminist academic activists was the notion of action and challenge, which I highlight within this chapter. I refer to participant's individual experiences, as well as outlining links and commonalities between participants.

Challenging Through Feminist Research and Teaching

One aspect of challenging the rules of the game, which was outlined in the narrative re-tellings and synthesis, was participants resisting the gendered academic culture within universities through their research and teaching. For many participants this involved applying their feminist

principles to their research and teaching, rejecting masculinised approaches as outlined within the rules of the game chapter. This was the case for Paula:

"I think I proudly identify as a feminist academic, both in terms of my research interest and perspectives, which are rooted in feminist concerns, around gender and other intercepting oppressions".

Paula uses her feminist research to inform her practice as an academic and to enact her ethics and values. One way in which she does so is to consider her research from the perspective of multiple oppressions not only looking at women but other categories. By "bearing witness" (Fine, 2006, p. 84) to oppression through researching the oppressed it is possible to highlight injustices and unequal power relations. Research on oppression can contribute to solutions on how to improve inequality and social justice within society:

"The critically engaged scholars cited here would probably all agree that social injustice is not simply a cognitive problem. With enormous variation, they recognize the possibilities and also the limits of social research to awaken a sense of injustice, to provoke social action" (Fine, 2006, p. 102).

Researching oppression can challenge the rules of the game in academia, by providing insights into the ways in which academia may produce and reproduce oppression. It can also encourage those who read the research to think more critically and develop their desire for action and change. It can do so by showing the lived experiences of those who are oppressed and challenging preconceptions about meritocracy. Mary challenges the rules of the game in a similar way, taking an intersectional approach and highlighting the voices of not only women, but also other potentially marginalised groups. In Mary's narrative re-telling I discuss the ways in which she makes her research inclusive, including reaching out to: "*male, female, academic, professional services…transgender staff and gender non-binary staff."* Mary's effort to include everyone in her research offers a broad range of experience and provides a voice for people who may have

been previously silenced. This relates to the concept of intersectionality, as discussed in Chapter 2, as Mary considers her feminist activism to include other marginalisations as well as gender. Furthermore, voice is a key concept in feminist theory, showing the ways in which oppressed groups' experiences are silenced. By facilitating the voices of individuals, the marginalised are able to take ownership of their own experiences and stories, becoming co-constructing subjects within research, as opposed to objects for enquiry (hooks, 1989). By centering the voices of the marginalised in research, it is possible to present them as subjects with important experiences and stories. Academics contribute to what the world considers as truth and therefore increasing the diversity of voices can change the notion of truth in general to be more representative of different groups. As previously mentioned within chapter 3 on the rules of the game, due to performance measurement and outcomes through the REF and TEF, university norms may overemphasise more mainstream approaches to knowledge and truth. Research which seeks to expand knowledge by adding marginalised voices and experiences can challenge the performative culture around research (Morley, 2013), resisting the idea that the only valuable forms of research exist within these mainstream approaches. Centering the experiences of women and other marginalised groups can also challenge the notion of meritocracy in academia and beyond, showing the ways that certain groups can be disadvantaged and other groups can be privileged. They may do so by presenting experiences as social and cultural, suggesting the ways that different individual experiences relate to wider societal power relations. This relates to chapter 5 on empowerment in which I suggest that feminist research is an example of empowerment as it presents a challenge to perceived truths about women's position in society and can facilitate criticality in those who engage in the research.

Yet, as highlighted by Chapter 2 on Feminist waves, theories and movements, voice is a difficult concept when there are ongoing debates within feminism itself, particularly around what constitutes a female voice. There are increasing debates both within and beyond academia about what constitutes a woman and arguments based on gender critical feminism and transgender

identities (Hines, 2019). Most participants in this study suggested that their feminism was trans inclusive and did not outwardly subscribe to any feminist approach such as gender critical feminism. Yet, some feminist academics who are gender critical refer to the idea that there is a lack of freedom of expression and debate around transgender existence and potential risks for cisgender women. For example, Kathleen Stock a prominent gender critical feminist academic suggests that she is marginalised in her university due to her position that biological sex cannot be changed (Grove, 2020). Gender critical feminism has also become more influential through the use of social media and hashtags (Hines, 2019). I argue against gender critical feminism as I believe like many feminists that it is harmful to transgender people, particularly transgender women. It often labels transgender women as predatory, denies their existence as real women and argues that they ought to be excluded from feminism (Hines, 2019). Some feminist academic activists are engaging with these issues and using their teaching and research to support and include transgender people in feminism and argue against their exclusion (Hines, 2019). Furthermore, over four thousand academics from across disciplines and universities in the UK signed an open letter in support of LGBTQIA+ people, particularly transgender and gender non-conforming individuals in UK higher education (Dodds and Ashton, et al. 2019). This is a particularly important area of social action within higher education, influencing contemporary feminist academic activist agendas.

Rachel also uses her research to try to challenge the culture of universities and influence others to think about the world differently. Within the synthesis chapter I refer to Rachel's action of asking questions about gender and inequalities within her research and this research informing her teaching. Rachel's approach to challenging the rules of the game is to influence individuals by offering them alternative perspectives, particularly her students. This is similar to notions of feminist pedagogy and the facilitating of a critical consciousness outlined in chapter 4. By facilitating a critical consciousness in others, more people may begin to question their world and their intentions may increase to act to change it. Universities may become more transformative

institutions, challenging the culture of education for outcomes and performance measurement, teaching early career scholars and students to play a different game. Teaching can provide a space for feminist academic activists to facilitate critical consciousness in others, by engaging in dialogue in the classroom and bringing gender issues into the consciousness of students. This may inspire a new generation of activists who continue to work to improve inequalities within academia and beyond. Similarly, the synthesis chapter outlines Jada's approach to providing alternatives within her research and teaching, developing knowledge beyond masculinised norms of competition and performance measurement:

"We need to pay attention to gender and we need theorise on the basis of paying attention to gender. One of the things I do quite a lot is to create alternative theorisations of things that we think we know about. I see my role as kind of developing that knowledge, developing those alternative perspectives because so much of our knowledge is steeped in masculinised, patriarchal systems that we don't sometimes see, these things are just missing, this knowledge from these perspectives is missing."

By bringing gendered issues to light and suggesting alternatives within her research and teaching, Jada, like Rachel, Mary and Paula, is challenging current approaches to knowledge to bring about new realities and truths. This is in line with feminist pedagogical notions of feminist epistemology, which focuses on women's experiences as key contributors to knowledge (Haynes, 2008). Producing new ideas about the world in this way can challenge dominant discourses and masculine approaches to knowledge (Letherby, 2003). Through feminist research and teaching, participants were able to challenge the rules of the game and enact their feminist principles. Enacting feminist principles may be an example of empowerment as they represent an individual's process of an increasing awareness leading to agency and action for change. Research and teaching can challenge gendered norms within the academy by adding to theories of knowledge, including marginalised people's voices, and highlighting injustices, facilitating critical consciousness in students and other academics, critiquing the notion of meritocracy within the academic system

and beyond and challenging masculine research cultures of performance measurement and competition.

Challenging by Speaking Out

Relating to the notion of voice, the narrative re-tellings and synthesis show how several participants attempted to challenge the rules of the game by speaking out. This involved talking about injustices to colleagues, senior management and policy makers. Sara felt compelled to speak out, particularly for those who were less able to due to vulnerability:

"For me, it's about raising the issues and particularly, in my field, I think it was an incredible place to see the consequences of policies and practices as it impacted on people. I always saw myself as having a responsibility and a voice to bring those issues to the attention of wherever, whether its government or policymakers, et cetera."

Sara's motivation to speak out was to try to raise awareness of issues around race and gender to try to influence those in positions of power. By increasing senior academic managers' awareness of gender and racial inequalities, it may be possible to facilitate them to think more critically about university structures and their roles as managers in relation to them (O.Grada et al., 2015).

The racialised nature of higher education is being increasingly highlighted by decolonial feminist scholars. They argue that universities have a problem with institutional racism in that, as I argue with gender, racism exists within the structures of universities and the processes, norms and practices present in universities (Arday and Mirza, 2018). The existence of structural and institutionalised racism is a major political challenge that has become increasingly relevant due to the recent Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests in the UK and across the world. Feminist academic activists are engaging not only with gender but with issues of institutional racism within and beyond the academy. Many feminist academic activists call for the decolonisation of universities, meaning the transformation of universities in terms of racist practices and an acceptance by universities of the existence of institutional racism and colonial histories (Arday and Mirza, 2018).

For Sara this was about speaking out about racism and raising awareness of its impact, just as the BLM protests have done for many.

Isaac also took a speaking out approach to challenging the rules of the game, as shown in the synthesis chapter, directly speaking out to academic colleagues:

"We have a collective of academic activists who are active in terms of changing the university's policies, or changing the culture of the organisation, bringing it to the attention of the other academic colleagues, the things that are going around the university, and how it's affecting them, us, and how we can promote that."

This approach to challenging the rules of the game attempts to encourage those in a position of power bring about change. This approach may be more commonly used by those who do not feel they are in a position to change academic structures and processes themselves due to their position within the academic hierarchy. It can be a useful strategy therefore for those who want to bring about change but feel unable to do so directly in their position. Despite this, challenging the rules of the game in this way could be risky for academics, potentially affecting their career prospects and reputation. Those who are early in their careers or in precarious positions may think that older more senior colleagues have more opportunity to challenge the rules of the game, as they are more "well-established" (Bristow et al., 2017, p. 1186).

Isaac's narrative suggests that, as an early career academic, he manages his precarious position alongside his activism by speaking out within a collective of academic activists in order to avoid any individual being held responsible for the action. Precarity and casualisation are highly relevant issues in the current climate of higher education. Precarious employment of academics has been rising in the UK, with an increase in temporary, part-time and even zero hours contracts (Loveday, 2018). Precarity is also a feminist issue as it disproportionally affects women and BME academics (Zheng, 2018). This relates to the neoliberal, increasingly marketised landscape of higher education as outlined in Chapter 3 on the rules of the game in higher education. Alongside a decline in government funding and increased competition, precarious positions have become the

norm in UK universities, particularly for early career scholars (Ivancheva, Lynch and Keating, 2019). Precarity often means that academics are expected to move around the UK for jobs and compete with each other for increasingly insecure jobs (Loveday, 2018). It also means that those who do not play by the rules of the game, particularly early career academics, may be more at risk of failing to secure less precarious employment (Raey, 2004). Furthermore, it privileges those who fit within the image of the ideal academic as discussed in Chapter 3. The recent (2018) strikes over changes to pensions within the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) also sought to address issues around casualisation and precarity within higher education and many senior academics came out in support of their junior colleagues (Denmead, 2019). Isaac's approach to activism is one way in which he manages his own precarious position and the potential risks and insecurity that he deals with alongside it. By forming a collective he is able to challenge the rules of the game, whilst offering himself some security and protection from more senior academics in his collective. This is a form of solidarity, which returns to a Transnational and Intersectional feminist notion of shared feminist struggle across class, race, gender, sexuality and other categories and the notion that those with privilege should support those who are more marginalised (Mohanty, 1988; Mountian, 2017)

James also uses the speaking out method of challenging the rules of the game and, like Isaac, considers the risks and the specific context when choosing whether to speak out or not. Within the narrative re-telling, I refer to James speaking out but doing so in ways that felt safe for him. Finding a safe space to be able to speak out is important to James, particularly as he experiences potentially further risks to his sense of safety as a transgender man. He challenges the rules of the game by pointing out instances, which he perceives as right or wrong, but mainly does so to colleagues within similar positions to him in the academic hierarchy, rather than senior members of the university. This approach can allow him to do as Isaac does and find a collective group to support him in challenging the rules of the game. Being within a collective can also challenge the neoliberal, individualist culture of universities and academic work, which the rules of the game chapter 3 outlined as gendered. This, and other ways of surviving as feminist academic

activists, will be discussed in the following discussion section on feminist academic activist survival. Returning to the notion of gender critical feminism, James may perceive himself as more at risk due to the current rhetoric around transgender identity and some people's denial of transgender existence. This also may relate to why James, unlike Isaac, struggles to form collectives with other feminists as there is a risk to his sense of safety as a transgender man even within feminist circles.

As suggested by Isaac and James, speaking out may be perceived as a risky method to challenging the rules of the game, yet many academics felt it was effective. Within the synthesis chapter 8, I outline Katie's suggestion that speaking out takes *"courage"* but can *"make a difference"* as it can show fellow academics that they are being complicit in gendered structures that can disadvantage women and those who do not conform to masculine norms (Benschop & Brouns, 2003). This represents a further example of facilitating a critical consciousness in others by raising awareness of gendered norms. Speaking out may be considered as a form of dialogue which challenges others to behave differently. As the earlier theoretical chapter 4, on Freire, suggested, dialogue includes the practice of self-reflection which encourages people to question themselves in relation to their world (Freire, 1996; Leistyna, 2004). By speaking out about gender inequality academics can encourage self-reflection from senior management and other colleagues, which may result in them taking a more critical approach to academia in their work.

Alternatively, Hannah's activism as shown in the synthesis chapter 8, focuses on engaging students, which is also the case in her approach to speaking out:

"I've always been quite vocal about being a feminist because I think it's really important for students to get that message and to see people who are feminists kind of talking about it and being open about it"

Hannah speaks out about feminist issues to her students in order to promote dialogue between them about gender inequality. By being a vocal feminist, she thinks that students may be more inclined openly to self-identify as feminists too. The re-tellings in chapter 7 and the synthesis in

chapter 8, suggest that the participants who use speaking out to challenge the rules of the game all do so to raise awareness of gendered issues, whether the audience is fellow colleagues, senior management, policy makers or students. Speaking out about gender can support others to engage with feminist issues and is a potential site for the process of dialogue and critical consciousness to occur. Creating the spaces for others to think critically about the world could have an impact on others' desire to bring about change, potentially increasing momentum around activism. According to chapter 4, for Freire (1996) change can only happen when people begin to approach the world critically and start to consider alternative realities. Speaking out and raising awareness is one way in which academics attempt to facilitate this in others and challenge the status quo within academia.

Challenging in the Everyday

The re-tellings and synthesis indicate that some participants were less inclined to give specific ways in which they challenge the rules of the game and instead suggested that they are constantly challenging the rules through their everyday actions. Tess suggests that challenging the rules of the game is about: *"always acting in feminist ways"*. By being a feminist activist academic within a gendered institution, Tess feels that she is always challenging the rules of the game because she is doing things differently. Challenging the rules of the game can involve simply existing as a feminist within a gendered culture. Activism could be understood as existing within new connections between people, including small groups of people within a gendered institution. This could challenge power relations within smaller social networks, potentially snowballing to further connections between people, creating a chain of potential for further activism (Martin et al., 2007). Making new connections and links may seem too small an act to bring about change, yet "it is these linkages that allow organized political activity to emerge" (Martin et al., 2007, p. 80). To exist as a feminist academic within a gendered institution can disrupt certain power relations such as the notion of the ideal academic. By existing as a feminist and acting as a feminist within the everyday, it is possible to make new connections and challenge existing power structures. An individual embedding their feminist identity within the context of academia can

thus challenge the social dynamics of a university. This may be a more subtle approach to challenging the rules of the game but as Martin et al (2007) suggest could result in more organised, collective activist activity. Asha's perspective on activism as shown in the synthesis chapter was to challenge the rules of the game in everyday, more subtle ways:

"I think it's a lot more subtle, perhaps in more everyday things, in everyday conversations, or things like that."

Again, Asha lives her feminist identity in the everyday within her university. Based on her experiences as outlined in the synthesis chapter, her presence as a feminist and her conversations around that signify a challenge to gender inequality within the academy. Ahmed (2017) uses the figure of a "feminist killjoy" (p. 4) to represent the way that a feminist presence is perceived by others as disruptive and challenging. Feminists are considered to be "killjoys" as their existence within spaces can feel uncomfortable for those who do not wish to see change. This creation of disruption and discomfort is in itself a challenge to the rules of the game as it poses a problem: "she too poses a problem as she keeps exposing a problem" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 99). This may result in some risk for feminists working within gendered spaces if they are seen as being a problem themselves. The following section of discussion explores how feminist activists survive despite risks drawing further from Ahmed and her "Killjoy Survival Kit" (2017, p. 235). This section suggests that existing as a feminist within the academy is in itself a challenge to the rules of the game. Relating to Chapter 2 on feminist theories and waves, when women entered the academy in the second wave of feminism women's studies courses emerged and a huge amount of feminist theories and scholarship developed. This is potentially an example of the way in which women entering spaces and being different can impact them.

Within the re-tellings and synthesis, other participants suggest that they enact feminism in the everyday in their academic practices. For Ruby, this means focusing on women's work and trying to promote it. Within the synthesis chapter, I quote Ruby who refers to citing women as part of her everyday academic practice. Citation is an everyday act for academics, occurring within

academic writing and teaching. The rules of the game in chapter 3, outlined the importance of publishing for academic success and citation is one measure of a publications' impact. Citation is a feminist issue as it relates to who is attributed the responsibility for creating knowledge and ideas: "citational practices can be a tool for either the reification of, or resistance to, unethical hierarchies of knowledge production" (Mott & Cockayne, 2017, p. 954). In male dominated disciplines, citing women can be a way of increasing the visibility of the work of women within those disciplines. Making women's work more visible can challenge the masculinised norms present within certain disciplines and academic processes. Citation is therefore another way in which feminist activists can turn an everyday practice into an act of feminist resistance to the rules of the game in academia. Supporting other women academics is something, which Jill referred to in her narrative, doing so within her everyday role as an academic to try and challenge the rules of the game:

"So, things like supporting students who are making sexual harassment claims against a colleague, mentoring other women, looking for opportunities for other women to pass off things that maybe I've been invited to do but actually somebody else could do it and it would be a benefit to them. Like having, doing research on women's academic careers and talking about it and trying to make recommendations and promote change and all that kind of thing. So, everything you do."

A commitment to supporting and promoting other women can create a more collegiate environment, which challenges the neoliberal masculinised culture, including competition and individualism, that I argued in chapter 3 is present within universities. Again, this is a subtle, less obvious everyday activity, which allows participants to enact their feminist principles and challenge the gendered rules of the game within their universities. Not only does existing as a feminist pose a challenge to power relations and gendered norms, but existing as a woman within a masculinised culture and promoting the visibility of the existence of other women can also result in the reconfiguration of social relations and norms. Challenging in the everyday is one way in which participants address gendered norms within higher education, whether by simply existing

and making themselves present as feminists or by making sure their smaller everyday practices contribute to promoting women and challenging the culture of masculinised individualism.

Challenging by Leaving

Alternatively to all the other participants, Megan's re-telling outlines how she decided to challenge the rules of the game in academia by leaving it. Her narrative involves her story of leaving the university, relating to her values as a feminist and her difficulties with trying to bring about change. She felt the only way to challenge the gendered rules of the game was to stop playing them and stop being complicit within a gendered culture. Megan felt that her values were not aligned with academia and that by continuing to work she was being inauthentic to her beliefs and less able to be an activist. Leaving was an action she took which allowed her to stop being involved with practices that she perceived as wrong due to their gendered nature. The previous discussion section on feminist academic activist identity suggested that people's internal values are particularly important aspects of their identities. Participants embodied their values in various ways, balancing different aspects of their identities. Megan she felt that she was unable to embody her feminist and activist values to the extent she wanted to as the institutional academic values were more demanding on her embodiment. The constant attempt to maintain her feminist activist values alongside her academic career was becoming exhausting for Megan and she felt she was: *"treading water".* Tiredness and emotional exhaustion can cause further limitations on activism as it too requires emotional and physical energy, resulting in "activist burnout" (Gorski, 2015, p. 696). Megan's exhaustion caused her to feel unable to be authentic to her activism and only by leaving she became able to have the energy and motivation to engage with her activism again. If feminist activists are too exhausted to be able to enact their feminist principles, then they may not be able to challenge the rules of the game in UK academia. By leaving academia, it may be possible to regain the energy needed to be an activist and to challenge gendered norms. Despite this, Megan still considers herself as a feminist academic activist as she still uses her previous research and academic knowledge to inform her feminist activism outside of academia. By challenging gendered norms within society that limit women, universities may be impacted as

well. If change occurs on a societal level it may feed into universities, particularly as universities require individuals to support them through funding and student numbers. It is possible to challenge the gendered rules of the game within universities by leaving and challenging them from the outside. This could allow feminist activists to enact their feminist principles without limitations from the university. This is not to suggest that feminist activists should leave academia, rather that those who do choose to leave can still challenge university culture and the rules of the game.

Leaving academia can also be considered an act of protest, whereby an academic is expressing that there is a problem and they are no longer being a part of the problem. It can therefore draw attention to the existence of an injustice, in this case gender equality in academia:

"Resigning was speaking out. It was saying: this is serious enough that I have had enough. Resigning was also a feminist hearing. What do I mean by this? Feminist ears prick up at this point. A feminist ear picks up on what is being said, sounds of no, the complaints about violence, the refusals to laugh at sexist jokes; the refusals to comply with unreasonable demands. To acquire a feminist ear is to hear those sounds as speech" (S. Ahmed, 2016, p. 1).

As Ahmed suggests, resigning can draw attention to the reasons for resignation, in this case feminist issues within academia. Other feminists and colleagues within the academy may become more aware of the issues and their activist intentions may increase too. Megan's resignation from academia could be considered a form of activism and a direct challenge to the gendered rules of the game in academia. By speaking to her feminist friends about it she found them to be: *"understanding"* and *"supportive",* potentially reminding them of their activist identities and making them further question their institutions.

In regard to question 1: Are the rules of the game in UK academia gendered? Both chapter 3 on the rules of the game at the start of this PhD and participant experiences of trying to challenge the rules of the game as outlined in chapters 7 and 8, suggest that they are, as they are perceived to be gendered by feminist academic activists. When considering research

question 3: In what ways do feminist academic activists challenge the rules of the game in UK academia? Feminist academic activists challenge the rules of the game in UK academia through a combination of resisting gendered norms and actively challenging academic culture. This includes challenging through research and teaching, centring women's voices and experiences, citing women, developing knowledge and recommendations for gender equality, using research to inform practice and introducing students to feminist ideas. All of these are ways in which feminist academic activists enact their feminist principles through research and teaching, challenging gendered notions of traditional masculine research practices and the notion of meritocracy in academia. Another way feminist academic activists challenge the rules of the game in academia is by speaking out and raising awareness of gender inequalities. This can help to facilitate questioning in others, potentially resulting in the development of a critical consciousness by other academics and colleagues. Some participants did so in groups to maintain their feeling of safety and minimise risk, they also sought to speak out to senior managers who potentially could have more of an impact. Participants also challenged the rules of the game within their everyday actions and practices as academics. One way this occurred was for participants simply to exist as feminists in gendered spaces, challenging social structures and power relations through their open stance as feminists. Another everyday approach is supporting women colleagues, citing women and engaging in feminist conversations within everyday academic spaces. All these activities were attempts to challenge the rules of the game by altering social relations and gendered norms in more subtle ways. Finally, one participant challenged gendered norms by leaving academia, as a form of protest against the gendered rules of the game within her institution. Feminist academic activists are also challenging some of the contemporary issues within higher education more generally. This includes issues around casualisation and precarity, as well as transgender exclusion and safety. The differing strategies employed by academics represent the various ways in which it is possible to challenge the rules of the game in UK academia, to try to improve gender inequality and change the potentially masculinised processes and practices within universities. Participants all engaged in a

combination of approaches, yet all of the participants sought to bring about change within their universities and the sector as a whole.

Section 3: Feminist Survival in UK Universities

The survival of feminists is essential to the survival of feminism. If people feel they are no longer able to be actively feminist, challenging patriarchal structures, then the existence of feminism itself is under threat. In this chapter, I draw on the notion of feminist survival presented by Sara Ahmed in her book *Living a Feminist Life* (2017) and suggest the various strategies employed by participants to survive as feminists within gendered systems. As Ahmed suggests, being a feminist activist can feel "like making your life harder than it needs to be" (2017, p. 235) as feminists are constantly aware of subtle and overt gendered injustices that are occurring around them. Paying attention to injustices and trying to do things differently in academia requires work and can come with resistance and disapproval from others, all of which can cause a feminist activist to feel worn out and become emotionally and physically exhausted. This is may be particularly true for precarious academics who are also fighting to maintain security within an academic career. I consider the survival of feminist activists in universities in order to answer the subsidiary research question 4: How do feminist academic activists persevere within gendered institutions? I explore various ways in which participants manage their feminist values and action alongside their careers in order to survive as feminists within academic institutions, which are gendered. These include activism as survival, feminist support networks, "self-care" and maintaining hope. I developed these aspects from Sara Ahmed's "Killjoy Survival Kit" (2017, p. 235) as well as from the narrative re-tellings and synthesis which involved the various suggestions participants had about how they continued as feminist activists despite the difficulties involved.

Activism as Survival

The act of challenging gendered norms and working to end gender inequality could itself be a means of survival for feminist academic activists. To act to change the injustices they perceive allows individuals to feel a sense of authenticity and commitment to their values, which could help them maintain their strength to continue. In the synthesis chapter, I refer to Paula's feeling of vulnerability around being an activist and the ways in which this puts her at risk. Yet, Paula's

way of coping with this vulnerability and working within a gendered institution is to challenge it and to try to change it:

“Although we do things that we hope will benefit others, and I think there have been examples of where that has happened clearly. It's also about for our own benefit, and as a form of survival in what we all feel is sometimes quite a toxic environment. That idea of being an activist it's not this, "We need to be careful of not saying it." It's not this completely selfless act. It's also what we do as activists is also about bringing benefits to ourselves as well as hopefully others.”

Despite Paula’s feeling of vulnerability, she thinks that it is better to do something than nothing, as this could potentially improve the world for herself and others. Paula maintains her commitment as a feminist academic activist by challenging her own institution. This allows her to believe that change is possible and the situation can improve, as she is one of the people instigating it. Being a feminist academic activist could in itself be a means of survival, not to be an activist would be admitting defeat:

“claiming the figure of the killjoy, saying in this situation or that ‘I am her’ can be energising; there is something about her, a sense of vitality perhaps, a sense of rebelliousness and mischief, perhaps, naughtiness, even, which might be how killjoys keep circulating, keep proliferating” (Ahmed, 2017, p. 247).

By being a feminist activist academic, Paula is able to continue within a gendered institution. Her commitment to change the institution to make it better for herself and others helps her to survive within a context, which is challenging for women due to the gendered norms which exist within it. Activism itself can be survival, it can provide a justification for continuing to work within a gendered institution for those whose values are feminist.

Feminist support networks and connection

Another aspect of survival, which participants referred to in their narratives as shown in the re-tellings and synthesis, is the importance of feminist support networks and connection.

Feminist academic activists constantly deal with challenges as they are trying to bring about change, which is not always seen as the right approach by others. Within participant narrative re-tellings and the synthesis chapter, I refer to several challenges faced by participants including resistance from others, stress and burnout, activist failures and balancing feminist activism with maintaining an academic career. This could potentially damage motivation and momentum to keep trying to change the system if people are constantly facing difficulties and challenges as a result of their activism. As mentioned in the previous discussion section, feminist activism requires work and can take an emotional and physical toll. Relating to the importance of feminist networks suggested by participants in the synthesis, Tess survives by seeking support from other feminists:

"I've got great people around me, with me, and supporting me, and those networks. Both men and women all over the world who I can ring up or Skype and say, I've got a bit of a, I'm in a pickle here, what is your advice. And there are loads of people out there who will support me."

When Tess is struggling, she seeks support from others who she knows share her outlook on the world. She can receive advice and share experiences with people about problems that she encounters. This connection with other feminists can help to give emotional support and can reaffirm the importance of continuing to try to bring about change: "It is about the experience of having others who recognise the dynamics because they too have been there, in that place, in that difficult place" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 244). Within a patriarchal system, women are often taught to doubt themselves, particularly in relation to men (hooks, 2000). Social norms could cause feminists to internalise feelings of self-doubt and make them feel their contribution to feminist activism is not valuable. The synthesis shows how several participants struggle to define themselves as activists as they think they are not doing enough to warrant that identity. A shared experience and connection between feminists could help them feel less alone in their difficulties and could help to re-establish confidence in their activism and the feminist movement itself. In the synthesis, I refer to Asha's difficulty to refer to herself as an activist as she associates the term with more radical actions. However, Asha's feminist support network helps her to rebuild

confidence in her feminist activism as she has people to turn to when she is feeling unsure of how to act or if she has a concern:

"So just gathering my colleagues, most of them tend to be female colleagues, and just sharing experiences. So just saying, you know, this has happened, so beware, and perhaps let's think about how we could, you know, as a group answer these issues. So, that, I would say, that's the everyday, so the everyday is a support network. So, I think that sort of developed organically, really. But yeah, I work nowadays with a lot with friends, they're not colleagues anymore, they are friends. And so we've got this informal support network, and again, we sort of share experiences, and try to support each other."

Support networks can allow feminists to feel they are part of a movement, rather than feeling that they have to bring about wide systematic changes on their own. It can also address feelings of inadequacy in relation to activism as a network could help feminists to feel that they are part of a movement. Furthermore, feeling part of a movement can be a powerful motivator and could enable feminist activists to maintain a sense of purpose whilst working within gendered universities as: "we need each other to survive; we need to be part of each other's survival" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 235).

Support networks can also provide a space to talk about feminist issues within an institution that has limited spaces to do so. Within the re-tellings and synthesis of narratives, some participants refer to finding spaces to enact their activism within their universities. Megan set up an informal network for women in her university for this reason:

"what women said about it was that it was a really positive space because it enabled them to say things they couldn't say elsewhere. And it enabled some things to be brought up anonymously, whereas they didn't want to, you know, make a complaint or anything like that. So it was good because I did a little survey around how people were feeling, how women were feeling that were coming to the network. It was women only, we decided to make that women only for that

time. So they, yeah, and the things that they came back with was that it was great that it was happening, that it was a supportive space that they felt that they could bring things to it."

If universities themselves do not have the space for discussing feminist issues due to gendered norms or competing priorities, then feminist support networks can create the space to do so. Within certain spaces people can feel included or excluded, thus a space devoted entirely to feminist issues could allow people to feel solidarity and connection (Burke et al., 2017). This solidarity and alliance could further support precarious junior academics as they could challenge from a collective position instead of an individual position and may even receive career support from other feminists in their networks. The labour involved in being a feminist academic activist could affect people's ability to continue the work of activism for gender equality. Making spaces where it feels safe to talk about difficulties could have a therapeutic affect for feminist activists, allowing them to survive and continue their work to make the university a better space. Feminist support networks and connection can help feminist activists to survive in a gendered institution as they can offer solidarity, space to talk about difficulties, emotional support, a reaffirmation of feminist goals and friendship. For the aforementioned participants this allowed them to continue despite working within a gendered institution and the labour involved in trying to change it.

"Self-care"

"Self-care" is a widely debated concept in feminist discourse, hence I use inverted commas. The notion of "self-care" can be used to support a neoliberal agenda whereby mental health improvement is the responsibility of the individual and "self-care" becomes synonymous with self-improvement and the selling of beauty products (Rottenberg, 2014; Ahmed, 2017). Despite this, "self-care" has also been framed as a deeply feminist and political concept, particularly in relation to Audre Lorde's famous and influential quote: "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (Lorde, 1988, p. 131). The suggestion that "self-care" is political as it allows activists to survive and persevere, distinguishes the definition from a "self-care" which is about individual gain, instead framing it

as a political act to support commitment to a movement (Ahmed, 2017). “Self-care” in this context is therefore a means of survival for feminists to continue their work of changing the world to improve gender equality.

One approach to “self-care” can be to take a break from activism, using the time out to rebuild emotional and physical strength. Jada found that she needed to take a break to survive:

“That emotional labour takes its toll, so it means that you also have to take a break sometimes. I once worked on a project that had such an emotional impact on me and I had to keep re-working with the material, so I was going to a conference and I was on a flight to Finland, I think. I found myself in tears because it's just really overwhelming at times. I actually went and got some therapy after that because there are things that can be really triggering for me, particularly around if they coincide with things that I also feel like I've personally-- I think one of the things I find so often when working with vulnerable groups is not feeling that you've got a voice and feeling like things are being done to you and you have no way to challenge that.”

By taking some time away from her feminist activism and deciding to pursue professional help, Jada was able to return to an emotional and physical state where she felt able to continue in her feminist activism. To survive as a feminist activist academic in a gendered institution means allowing yourself to take time out, giving yourself permission to stop:

“Time out from being a killjoy is necessary for a killjoy if she is to persist in being a killjoy. Being a killjoy is not all that you are, and if you are too consumed by her, she can drain too much energy and will. Come back to her; she will come back to you: you will, she will” (Ahmed, 2017, p. 242).

Taking a break from activism does not mean one is no longer an activist, rather that one is taking care of oneself to be able to continue as an activist.

Another approach to “self-care” is to set personal boundaries to deal with the emotional labour of feminist academic activism. In Mary’s re-telling, I refer to her commitment to building

relationships with colleagues as a means of involving people in Athena Swan and her research. Yet, she suggests that building relationships can be difficult and it is necessary to set boundaries with her feminist colleagues:

"I'm the sort of person who usually likes to do something about things. So, I think over time I've been able to sort of set the boundaries a bit more and say look I think this should be made known."

To cope with colleagues coming to her for support Mary had to set boundaries within her role. Although she wanted to help her colleagues, she realised she also needed to look after herself. Saying no to certain actions can allow feminist academic activists the space to care for themselves first. As outlined in chapter 3 on the rules of the game, the division of labour within universities may itself be gendered, with women expected to take on more caring and supportive roles (Barrett & Barrett, 2011). By saying no, Mary is not only caring for herself but challenging the notion that she is responsible for the work of emotionally supporting other women when the university fails to do so. "Self-care" can be saying no, setting boundaries or taking time out. In this sense, it is not a self-indulgent act, rather a way of preserving the self to continue to do the work of feminist activism and survive in patriarchal systems.

Maintaining Hope

Section 1 of the discussion chapter suggested that the goal of feminist academic activists is to improve gender equality within their institutions and their wider worlds. This requires a belief that the situation can improve, otherwise any effort would be pointless. Another word for this belief in the possibility of improvement is hope. Feminist academic activists are required to maintain hope in order to continue in their work of challenging gendered norms and structures: "survival can also be about keeping one's hopes alive" (Ahmed, 2017, p. 235). Remaining hopeful whilst working within a gendered space can be a difficult task, particularly if one encounters resistance from others. Yet, without hope, feminism would not survive, as feminist academic activists would have no faith in the impact of their actions.

Despite the difficulties referred to by participants in the narrative re-tellings and synthesis, participants have various ways in which they maintain hope. For Jill, hope could be maintained through social media and the connections she made through it:

"So, you find the spaces and you find a different way of kind of expressing you know what's going on. And I think that helps, so social media has probably been hugely helpful in that sense of connecting people. And saying hey you know it's still a sexist institution. Like we were maybe working in different ways into different expectations and we kind of see that now and we get that, but things haven't changed that much so where, where can we still keep the conversation going and how do we still keep fighting and all that."

Social media allows Jill to stay connected to feminist issues and a wider network of feminists than she had available within her own institution. It also provided a basis for sharing ideas and strategies to challenge academia and survive within in it. Much like face-to-face feminist networks, social media can provide a connection with other feminists when they are not available in a face-to-face capacity. The instantaneous nature of social media sites and the ability to share information can allow feminists from across the world to connect with each other (S. Jackson, 2018). This wider connection can make people feel connected to a global movement, which could feel more hopeful than an individual effort. Social media itself can also be a site of activism as I suggested in chapter 2, with hashtags such as #yesallwomen and #metoo creating momentum within the feminist movement and beyond (Baer, 2016). This can offer people a sense of community as well as a potential feeling of safety to speak out about difficult experiences, as they are not doing so in person but from the safety of a screen (Keller et al., 2018). Similarly, within a neoliberal political context, which emphasises individualism, social media can be a basis for collectivism, challenging the post-feminist notions of individual freedom and economic empowerment (McRobbie, 2009; Baer, 2016). Despite the potential positives of social media there can be online abuse and resistance to feminists and, as mentioned in the previous section, it can be a ground to spread gender critical feminist ideas and anti-transgender rhetoric. However, for

some people it can be a platform to connect with other feminists across the world and feel part of a collective movement. This could be a means of maintaining hope within a gendered world and institution.

Another approach to maintaining hope is to take inspiration from feminists of the past and feminist authors. In Sara's re-telling, I refer to the ways that reading the works of black activists and black feminist activists inspired Sara's feminist academic activism. Sara still considers these activists as sources of inspiration, thinking of black feminists who paved the way for her feminism in the present:

"I'm thinking of black women who came before me and I'm thinking-- I don't know if you've heard of Sojourner Truth, she was an African-American slave. You should go and look her up when we finish this. She was an African-American woman. She was a slave so she was-- we're talking about 18 something. She had that phrase, 'Ain't I a Woman?', she said that at a speech where she was talking to white women at that time in the US who were campaigning for getting the vote and getting rights for women. There was very little consideration for black women who were slaves and et cetera. I think of that and I think well if Sojourner Truth had just said, "I can't take any more of this. I'm giving up", or if the women who have really just put their necks on the line had said, "I can't be doing this today. I've got to go and get my nails done. My nails are more important" then we wouldn't be sitting here. I wouldn't be sitting here. Sometimes I think of that."

Sara's approach to maintaining hope is to feel connected to other feminists, but for her these are black feminist activists from the past, relating to feminist theories outlined in chapter 2 such as - Post-colonial feminism, Intersectional feminism and Transnational feminism. By considering the ways in which historical feminist activists have changed society for black women, Sara can maintain the belief that change is possible, as it has occurred before. It is possible to maintain hope by drawing inspiration from feminists who lived before us, realising that their activism changed the world to be more equal in terms of gender and race: "Their words reach me, their words teach me. Wherever I go, they go." (Ahmed, 2017, p. 240).

Hope is not an arbitrary concept; it is a subjectively experienced emotion. We feel hope as an emotional experience and it is linked to our other emotions. Emotions can therefore help us to sustain hope, even emotions that might be considered "negative". Within the narrative re-tellings and synthesis, I outline the ways that participants respond emotionally to certain experiences, often referring to negative emotions such as hopelessness, sadness and anger. Yet, Tess's experience of anger is linked to her feeling of hope:

"Right now, I'm so freaking angry about stuff that's happening that has to do with feminist issues. I told someone I don't remember ever being so enraged about things that are happening, that are anti-feminist and anti-woman that are happening right now."

Despite the apparent negativity of anger and Tess's reasons for feeling it, she spoke with enthusiasm and passion. Her anger further emphasised the importance of her feminist activism and the need for change. Hope is not necessarily always a "positive" feeling, it can be tied in with what are perceived as "negative" emotions:

"Different feelings seem to flow through these chapters: discomfort, grief, pleasure, anger, wonder, and hope. The focus on attachments as crucial to queer and feminist politics is itself a sign that transformation is not about transcendence: emotions are 'sticky', and even when we challenge our investments, we might get stuck. There is hope, of course, as things can get unstuck" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 16).

Anger can be a motivator for feminist academic activists, increasing a desire for change, with hope as a feeling that change is possible. Emotion can therefore be a way of maintaining hope, even if an emotion is experienced or perceived as "negative". Within feminism, the personal is political and therefore personal emotions are political, providing a basis for political action. Survival as a feminist academic activist within a gendered institution is therefore not based on dismissing emotion but using emotion to maintain hope and motivation.

The notion of feminist survival involves ways in which feminists are able to continue to exist within gendered environments and continue with their activism despite the challenges they face. This chapter aimed to answer the question 4: How do feminist academic activists persevere within gendered institutions? within the framework of feminist survival offered by Ahmed. Methods of survival are subjective, with individuals finding personal approaches to survival in their institutions. This chapter offers insights into the various strategies and approaches used by participants to continue as feminist academic activists within gendered universities and with the wider gender norms within society. One strategy was to use activism itself as a means of survival. By committing to change the gendered academy, it is possible to justify continuing within it and thus activism can itself be a survival strategy. Other participants were able to continue by drawing on their feminist support networks and connections with others. Support networks offered participants a space to talk through feminist issues and negative experiences, as well as having the feeling of being part of a movement for change, instead of an individual attempt to bring about change. Feminist connection can be a motivator by providing solidarity and emotional support for people who are struggling or doubting their feminist academic activism. Another strategy is "self-care", in the form of self-preservation. For participants, "self-care" meant various things including taking time out, setting boundaries and saying no, all of which encompass preserving the self so that feminist academic activism remains possible. Finally, participants used the feeling of hope to survive and continue as feminist academic activists. This involved transforming difficult emotions into hope, drawing inspiration from feminists of the past and finding connection through social media. All of these strategies allowed participants to maintain their sense of hope about the possibility for change and their goals as feminist academic activists. These may not be the only possible strategies for survival but they are the ones that individual participants highlighted within their own narratives, about how they continued as feminist academic activists within gendered institutions. Feminist survival could be considered as a form of empowerment, as outlined in chapter 5. Survival is maintaining one's ability to be an actor of change, whilst remaining aware of gendered power relations. Participants' continued effort to improve their institutions and the

world to make it a better space for women requires them to survive when institutions and others do not necessarily wish them to. Without individuals' sustained commitment to feminism and activism, feminism itself diminishes. Each participant's personal approaches to survival help to maintain the feminist movement itself, potentially empowering others.

Chapter 10

Reflexivity: My Narrative

The reflexive sections after the five narratives involved my reflections on the process of those specific interviews and the narrative telling which occurred. In this chapter, I reflect on the PhD process as a whole, telling my own narrative of the process, adopting an auto-ethnographical style. Having multiple reflexive sections within the PhD evidences my reflexive process, which was constantly occurring whilst I conducted the PhD. As a feminist activist, researching academia from within, it is highly important that I am reflexive about my own assumptions and their relation to the PhD research (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Berger, 2013). I tell my personal experience of the PhD process, connecting it to my positionality, to the PhD questions and the experiences of my participants. I expand on my brief outline of positionality, which I presented within chapter 1, relating it more closely to the PhD process. I reveal personal information, which relates to the PhD, yet at times I am somewhat vague, maintaining my own sense of safety and not wishing to expose myself beyond what is necessary for the PhD. I use the term "gendered violence" for which I mean violence that I experienced partly due to my gender and the gender of the perpetrator. This term is not specific but allows me to share my experiences in relation to reflexivity, whilst maintaining my sense of safety and security.

At the start of the PhD, I knew I wanted to conduct research which felt somehow positive, rather than focusing on the negative impact of gendered norms and structures within higher education, I wanted to know whether anything was being done to improve those structures. I was yet to consider activism but, as a feminist, I was extremely interested in feminist theory and the application of it within higher education. Reading about education and feminism, I stumbled across Freire and found his work highly influential to my PhD journey. His ideas about a radical education spoke to me as I had found my own education, particularly in school, to be limiting and frustrating. I was not very good at sticking to a syllabus and I found myself wanting to ask bigger questions than the exam boards allowed. When I went to university, I finally felt that I was allowed

to think for myself and had the freedom to read and write about things that truly interested me. Doing a philosophy and politics undergraduate degree opened me up to existential and ethical questions about right and wrong, the way the world was constructed and the nature of my own identity. The experience I had in seminars felt similar to what Freire spoke of as dialogue, as we were constantly questioning our own and each other's assumptions whilst discussing big philosophical ideas. I also had a growing sense of what I perceived to be injustices and I felt that all forms of inequality were unfair and wrong. Growing up I had left-wing parents and a feminist mother, whose conversations about politics and inequality led me to think more critically about my surroundings. It was no wonder that Freire's notions of critical consciousness, dialogue and oppression spoke to me.

Despite this, I must acknowledge that I am a white, middle class, able-bodied woman with academic parents. My upbringing was deeply privileged, and I had access to academic knowledge about feminism and social justice from an early age. I used to attend conferences with my parents, sitting at the back and listening to the academic papers. My impression of academia was that it was a wonderful world of knowledge and international travel. I had not thought about the fact that not everyone would have the same access to knowledge, even within academia, as myself or my parents. Yet, I understood gendered oppression, not only in theory but through my experiences. I was a victim of gendered violence on multiple occasions as a teenager and I experienced my school and my peers having certain expectations of me because of my gender. I was angry and I was frustrated and I always felt I wanted to do something about the injustices I experienced and perceived. It was only when I started thinking about doing a PhD that I realised that academia itself was gendered and that privilege played a huge part in people's academic journeys. Upon reflection, my choice to consider feminist activism developed from my own desire to take action about the sexism and inequality I had experienced and witnessed growing up. I was at a stage in my life where I needed to feel that it was possible to change the world for the better, as I was becoming disillusioned with the world on a personal level. The PhD's focus on feminist academic

activism may have been a way in which I was trying to prove to myself that others felt the same as me and that people were trying to make the world a better place.

After reading Freire and feminist authors such as bell hooks, I started to consider feminism alongside activism. I started to question whether feminist activism could exist within universities and reading around this idea of feminist academic activists. Looking at my Mum and the ways in which she enacted her feminist principles within her academic role, I always felt that it was possible to be a feminist activist within academia. I was beginning to form ideas about what I thought activism meant and realised that I believed it to be any action, which challenged the status quo to improve equality. Despite this, much like some of my participants at the start of the PhD I did not self-identify as a feminist academic activist as I felt I was not yet a "proper" academic and not doing enough to be an activist.

As the PhD process continued, I became exposed to feminist academic activists, including, but not limited to my participants. I had ideas of what feminist academic activism was in theory, but by being exposed to those who identified that way and a community of people through conferences I learned what it was like in practice and realised that I was in fact doing it. Interestingly Freire and feminist activist theory often refer to praxis, or the notion of theory and practice combining into action. This is what Freire envisioned as the outcome of conscientization, that radical knowledge would become a source of action. Praxis was something that I was engaged in and the development of my understanding of it and the ways in which my participants understood it led to me self-identifying as a feminist activist. In conversations with other feminist academics, many said to me that they perceived me as a feminist academic activist because of my PhD focus. Again, this shifted my view of my own identity and developed my own sense of myself as a feminist academic activist.

Similarly, my notion of my feminist identity developed during the PhD. My initial feminist development was partly due to my mother and partly due to my experiences of gender inequality mentioned above. I always felt that class, sexuality, race, religion, disability and other

characteristics were important but it wasn't until I began reading more diverse authors and coming into contact with diverse feminists that I realised how interlinked these oppressions are in academia and beyond. At the start of the PhD, I was aware of the concept of intersectionality but more as an abstract concept than thinking about peoples' lived experiences of race and gender or disability and gender. This is due to my lack of exposure to diverse women and relatively sheltered upbringing in a particularly white middle-class city. After speaking to a black participant, I realised how little attention I was giving to race, and that my feminism was overly white and middle-class too. I felt ashamed and decided that from that point on I wanted to engage with more black feminist theory and non-western feminist theory, not only for my PhD but also for my personal sense of justice. This is when I first learnt of the notion of decolonisation in the academy and this really started to affect my notion of feminism. Decolonisation is based on the idea that universities are institutionally racialised, as they were created by and for white people, similar to the notion of the ideal academic (Mirza, 2018). To decolonise is to change university structures and practices to create an equal, inclusive space for BME students and academics (Mirza, 2018). I now believe that feminist academic activism should be directly linked to decolonising the academy, as a feminist movement is not about equality if it does not include all women and all oppressions. This increased awareness of the importance of race shaped future interviews as I began to think about whether white participants were thinking enough about race within their feminist academic activism. When talking about initiatives to improve gender equality I began asking questions about the Race Equality Charter as well as Athena Swan. On a personal level, I am now constantly trying to challenge my own assumptions, even when it makes me uncomfortable. I try to listen to the perspectives of women with different backgrounds to my own and challenge my own potential complicity in racist and patriarchal systems.

I have also expanded my notion of gender, as at the start of the PhD I acknowledge non-binary in theory, but again, had very little exposure to the lived experiences of non-binary people. Through my increasing engagement with diverse feminists on social media, I now deeply believe in the existence of gender on a spectrum. I understand the power of masculine and feminine norms

on people's lives but also that people can self-identify as they choose and that their experiences of gender as different to binary norms is just as valid and worthy. In fact, the whole PhD process has opened up my mind and I am much more likely to be open to people who live differently to prescribed gendered norms, norms of sexuality and norms of race. I myself started to think about my own identity, no longer considering myself as a straight woman and instead thinking about my sexual and gendered identity as more fluid.

Despite this increasing openness, one aspect which I found challenging during the PhD was interviewing male participants. I wanted to be open to the idea that anyone can self-define as a feminist, including those who identify as male. Yet I found myself being less comfortable when I interviewed male participants and felt a slight disconnect. As I have stated within my narrative interview reflections and at the start of this chapter, I wanted to see myself in others in order to revive my own hope in the impact of a feminist movement. With the male participants, particularly the cis-gendered ones (those who identify as the gender they were assigned at birth), I was less able to see myself in their experiences and felt that they had certain privileges which meant they could not entirely understand what it feels like to exist as a woman. I felt marginalised as though they thought my work was self-indulgent, despite them not expressing this view. As a feminist PhD researcher, I was aware of my precarious position, in that feminist research is not as highly valued as other forms of research in higher education (Benschop & Brouns, 2003; Bleijenbergh et al., 2012). The internalisation of this may have been the cause of my insecurity when interviewing male participants, particularly as all of them expressed a certain amount of difficulty with using the word feminist to define themselves. I thought that it was interesting that the male participants accepted the invitation to be interviewed for a study that was focusing on the experiences of feminist academic activists, without fully identifying as feminists. This also may have been a source of discomfort for me during the interviews. Despite this, I think it is really important that the invitation was open to people of all genders and that cis-gendered male experiences were included. If men are not included within discussions about changing the academy then all the work of feminist activism is left to women. The more people that are engaged with feminist issues, the

more likely it is that a feminist movement will have an impact. Even though I did not see myself in the male experiences, upon reflection they have provided me with some hope about the feminist movement and the impact it can have.

Throughout my life, I have struggled with mental health problems and at the start of the PhD, I was diagnosed with PTSD related to the gendered violence I had experienced. As the PhD progressed so did my journey of healing within therapy. I believe this is really important to the PhD as I became deeply emotionally invested in feminist theory and feminist experience. For me, feminism itself was a lifeline, a way of surviving, and guided my ideas around feminist survival and the focus on developing feminist identity within my interviews. This may have been another reason I connected more with my female participants, as for many of them feminism was a personal and emotional aspect of their identity, which did not come out as strongly with the male participants. I have found myself becoming more and more invested in feminism throughout the PhD journey, developing more radical views and approaches to social change and gender equality. Feminism is one way in which I felt able to heal from my traumas, and the connections I made with my female participants and other feminists I met through the PhD have really supported that process. Much like many of my participants suggested, connecting with other feminists has been one way in which I have survived. The PhD itself and the focus on feminist academic activism is intertwined with my emotional journey of therapy and healing. About half-way through the PhD, I got a tattoo which represents feminist values, my growth and development as a feminist and my growth and healing of my mental health:

Related to this, during the interviews, I was extremely aware of my own safety and the safety of my participants. I stated before each interview that both of us could pause at any time if we felt uncomfortable and that I wanted to build a space that felt safe for both interviewer and interviewee. I believe this allowed me to build rapport with my participants as I let them know that the safety measure was just as much for me as it was for them, helping us to build a mutual understanding at the start. It also meant that I was opening myself up to my participants as potentially vulnerable, allowing them to feel able to be vulnerable also. I believe that creating this safe space may have allowed participants to speak more openly about difficulties they had experienced due to their gender which were personal and emotional.

As my feminist academic activism developed, I discovered Sara Ahmed and her work. She really inspired me and her book *Living a Feminist Life* which I draw from in my discussion chapters, especially the feminist survival chapter, had a really powerful effect on me. She left academia in a form of protest due to sexual harassment cases, which were going on in her university, and the way the university was handling them. I found her so inspiring and her book has deepened my own commitment to living a feminist life. This to me is similar to some of my participants in that it means enacting my feminist principles in the everyday, boldly speaking out about my feminism and challenging injustices. Her feminist survival spoke to me due to the mental health problems I was experiencing.

My own experiences draw many parallels with many of my participants in that my feminist identity developed through a combination of my upbringing, my experiences of sexism and gendered violence and my education and feminist literature. My PhD is one way in which I challenge the gendered rules of the game, by focusing on the experiences of feminists and using a feminist methodology. My survival mechanisms are also similar to some of my participants as I draw inspiration from other feminists and use feminist activism itself as a means of survival. The PhD journey has allowed me to explore my own development and identity in relation to my participants. They have taught me so much about the sort of feminist I want to be, the sort that

decolonises the academy and is inclusive of all women and aware of intersecting oppressions. They have also taught me what sort of academic I want to be, challenging gendered norms and supporting other women. Finally, they have taught me that it is possible to survive as a feminist academic activist, challenging the rules of the game and having a successful and meaningful career.

Chapter 11:

Conclusion

In this PhD, I aimed to address the experiences of feminist academic activists attempting to challenge the rules of the game in UK academia. Within the PhD, I have considered the overarching research question:

What are the experiences of feminist academic activists attempting to redefine the rules of the game in UK academia?

From this, I have addressed the following subsidiary research questions within the chapters of the PhD:

1. Are the rules of the game in UK academia gendered?
2. Who are feminist academic activists?
3. In what ways do feminist academic activists challenge the rules of the game in UK Academia?
4. How do feminist academic activists persevere within gendered institutions?

In this chapter, I bring together the findings from the PhD, firstly by summarising the early PhD chapters, then by offering a summary of the findings in relation to the literature. I outline the key contributions of the thesis, both methodologically and theoretically. I then consider the limitations of the study and offer recommendations for future research, for feminist academic activism and for academics.

Summary of early chapters

Within the introduction chapter I offered some evidence which suggests that universities are gendered institutions, showing that women are less likely to reach senior positions in academia (HEFCE, 2015; HESA; 2017/2018). I also provided a snapshot of my own positionality, offering insights into my decision to focus on the rules of the game and feminist academic activism. This included my upbringing by academic parents, a feminist mother, and my experiences of gendered

norms and violence. I continued by focusing on the prominent notion of the ideal academic (Benschop & Brouns, 2003; Monroe et al., 2008; Mauthner & Edwards, 2010; Bleijenbergh et al., 2012; Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013; Morley, 2013) which led me to consider the rules of the game and the more intricate processes and procedures in universities that can produce and reproduce gendered norms and power relations. Leading from the introduction, I outlined the current and historical context of feminist academic activism. This included the Women's Liberation Movement and the increase in women's and gender studies, as well as recent issues such as fourth wave digital feminisms and the Me-Too movement. This chapter embedded the study within a vast history of feminist academic activism, acknowledging the importance of the past whilst highlighting existing issues within academia in the present.

Within the third chapter, I delved more specifically into the research area and reviewed the literature on the rules of the game in higher education. I suggested that the rules of the game are gendered, some more informally and embedded within academic culture, such as the valuing of more traditionally male characteristics in academic promotion (Bagilhole, 1993; Due Billing & Alvesson, 2000; Bagilhole & Goode, 2001; Morley, 2013). I addressed several aspects of the rules of the game, which were present within the literature, including socio-economic factors and their impact, publishing, and the distribution of labour. Based on the literature I argued that the rules of the game are dependent on wider socio-economic factors, particularly neoliberal economic policies which are linked to hegemonic masculinity and notions of individualism, performativity, and competition (Mauthner & Edwards, 2010). In regards to publishing, I argued that some prestigious journals still value more masculinised approaches to knowledge including rational, scientific enquiry and quantitative data (Townsend, 2012). Similarly, I suggested that publishing is highly competitive and often requires academics to work beyond their assigned weekly hours, which may disadvantage those with familial responsibilities, teaching contracts, or in part-time, temporary employment, more commonly women (Benschop & Brouns, 2003; Monroe et al., 2008). Relating to this I outlined the ways in which labour is distributed in universities, claiming that often women take on more of the teaching, administrative, and supportive roles due to

feminised notions of women as more caring and less suited to highly competitive roles (Barrett & Barrett, 2011). The literature I reviewed offered insights into the subtle ways in which the rules of the game are gendered, particularly in relation to a male, white, middle-class, able-bodied "ideal" academic. I therefore provided an overview of the context which feminist academic activism is attempting to challenge.

Within chapter 4, I aimed to provide a theoretical framework for feminist academic activism within higher education by drawing on Freire and his notion of radical education (Freire & Horton, 1990; Freire, 1996; 2013). I suggested that Freire had a huge influence on feminist activism discourse within education, due to his radical ideas about how to change education into a more equal space, which promotes dialogue and action (hooks, 1994; Weiler, 1991, 1995). His work has also influenced theories of feminist pedagogy, which forms the basis for feminist academic activism in the sense of creating educational spaces that highlight feminist issues and support women and minorities (Weiler, 1991, 1995; Shrewsbury, 1993; Morley, 1998; Cahill et al., 2010). Within this theoretical chapter I outlined Freire's notion of conscientization, whereby people can become aware of their oppression by considering the world critically and asking questions about their realities. According to Freire, conscientization can occur through a critical education, not only in terms of teaching but also exposure to critical ideas and through promotion of dialogue. His theory suggests that education needs transforming in order to create new approaches to knowledge, which include the voices and perspectives of the oppressed. In relation to this, I outlined the links to feminist pedagogy including the aim of increasing critical consciousness in others and the commitment to feminist research and teaching, offering new approaches to knowledge, which include marginalised women's voices. This theoretical chapter provides the basis for a theory of an alternative, critical education, which could be the foundation of transformation for a more equal academy.

Leading on from Freire and feminist pedagogy, I considered the process of becoming a feminist academic activist within the framework of empowerment in chapter 5. Much of the

literature on Freire and feminist pedagogy suggests that to become aware of oppression and become a critical being, people experience an internal process of change. I outlined within the empowerment chapter that feminist literature debates the notion of empowerment alongside notions of activism due to the multiple meanings it encompasses. This includes the term's potential use as a buzzword by neoliberal organisations in mainstream media and development and society, losing its original feminist meaning (Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Cornwall et al., 2008; Pereira, 2008; Sardenberg, 2008; Calvès 2009; McRobbie, 2009; Lewin, 2010; Calkin, 2015). Empowerment originally had strong political feminist connotations based on transforming power relations so that women can challenge gendered norms in society (Sardenberg, 2008). This original feminist notion of empowerment is closely linked to the notion of conscientization, as it involves an internal process of becoming aware of oppression that results in women being able to act to change their world. In chapter 5, I critically reviewed the literature on empowerment, suggesting a feminist definition, which emphasises becoming an actor for change, providing a potential framework for activism within higher education. Chapter 4 on Freire offers insights into a potential theory of a critical education and chapter 5 on empowerment alongside it offers a theory of activism within higher education and how it might create the transformative education that Freire envisioned. The early chapters therefore offer an overview of the context of feminist academic activism in UK higher education, insights into how the rules of the game in academia are gendered, how an alternative approach to education might change the rules of the game, and the process individuals might undergo in order to become actors for change to create an alternative education.

In chapter 6 on methodology and methods, I outlined my methodological approach, which was qualitative and focused on feminist methodology and the co-construction of knowledge. I suggested that qualitative methodology alongside feminist methodology emphasises the lived experiences of women and their subjective notions of reality. I therefore rejected the notion of an objective external reality and instead focused on the participant's version of reality (Haynes, 2008; Hennink, 2010; Merriam, 2016). In order to address the experiences of feminist academic activists and their subjective realities I chose the narrative method of interviewing, to allow participants to

construct their own stories about their experiences. I facilitated the participants to reflect on their own memories and tell them in a way, which felt natural to them. This offered insights, not only into individual experiences, but also their experiences in relation to others and to universities as organisations. Finally, I outlined my commitment to reflexivity both in the form of reflective sections after the narrative re-tellings and within chapter 10, the longer reflexive chapter. The combination of the narrative re-tellings, the synthesis of narratives, the shorter reflective sections after the re-tellings, and my own longer reflection provide a multifaceted approach to the research and the data. I offer an in-depth re-telling of five narratives, a consideration of commonalities and differences in experiences of participants in the synthesis chapter, reflections on the individual interviews, and a reflection on the PhD process as a whole. These, as well as the research questions, provide the basis for the discussion chapters and the continued use of quotes allows for the constant co-construction of knowledge by the participants, as well as maintaining their subjectivities.

Summary of findings

In this section I outline the key findings from the PhD and their relationship to previous work and literature in these areas.

The participants' responses showed me that feminist academic activism is highly subjective and that the development of identity can occur for many reasons. Yet there were some commonalities amongst participants, which provide evidence for important factors which contribute to the development of feminist academic activist identity, methods of challenging the rules of the game, and surviving in higher education.

In regards to developing feminist academic activist identity, I found that family and upbringing can have a significant impact. Within the narratives and synthesis, many participants reflected on their upbringing whilst telling their narratives about their experiences of feminist academic activism. Some suggested that their families were important as they introduced them to issues of social justice and equality, whereas others found that their traditional gendered

upbringing frustrated them into thinking about doing things differently. Another important finding is the impact of education on feminist academic activist identity. Within the narratives and synthesis, participants all talked about their own education, some from school level, others at university level, and some referred to more informal education such as personal reading. Finally, relating to feminist academic activist identity I found that feminist relationships were an important perceived influencer on people's sense of their feminist academic activist identities. During the re-tellings and synthesis I re-told sections of the narratives about participant's relationships with other feminists including supervisors, members of their families, colleagues, and feminist friends. These findings are broadly in line with feminist literature, which addresses feminist identity. Within the discussion chapter, I refer to literature which suggests that feminist development relates to social and cultural institutions including families, educational institutions, and relationships, and that becoming feminist involves relating the personal to the political. The findings also strongly relate to the initial theory chapter on Freire, as family, education, and relationships can all facilitate dialogue and critical consciousness, and many participants' descriptions of their identities suggested a process of becoming more internally critical, similar to the process of conscientization suggested by Freire.

Another set of findings relates to experiences of challenging the rules of the game in higher education and the ways in which participants did so. I found that participants employed various approaches including using their feminist research and teaching to challenge gendered norms, speaking out about gendered injustices in the academy and challenging through everyday subtler activities. My findings strongly relate to the literature presented within the rules of the game chapter as participants suggested that they were responding to what they perceived as gendered practices within higher education as well as issues of precarity and casualisation. Many participants referred to the notion of an "ideal" academic, suggesting that by doing things differently, they were challenging the stereotype of a white, male, academic figure, echoing the literature on gender within the academy and the rules of the game presented in chapter 3. Similarly, the findings link to feminist pedagogy and Freire, as participants thought that by conducting

feminist research and speaking out about injustices that they were supporting others to consider feminist issues and encouraging debate and discussion. I would argue that this is a form of trying to facilitate a critical consciousness in others, in order to bring about change and increase action.

My final findings developed out of participants' accounts of difficulties they encountered as feminist academic activists, including the emotional and physical effects of the work of activism. These difficulties were present within the narrative re-tellings and synthesis, which included aspects of the time consumption of activism, the emotional toll of activism, resistance to activism and change from others, and being perceived as someone who is awkward or difficult. The re-tellings and synthesis chapters offered some of the common challenges that participants faced and the discussion on survival considered the strategies employed by participants to continue as feminist academic activists. The strategies used by participants included using activism as survival, feminist support networks, feminist "self-care", and maintaining hope. These findings align with literature on feminist survival, particularly by prominent feminist activist scholars including Ahmed and hooks. They also suggest that without survival strategies, feminism itself would be under threat, as it needs feminist activists to survive. My own auto-ethnographical reflection reiterated the importance of feminist survival and the impact of engaging with feminist academic activism on my own sense of survival.

Contributions of the thesis

The findings in this study build on the work of feminist academic activists and critical educators such as Ahmed, hooks, Collins, and Freire, and further feminist pedagogical scholars mentioned in chapter 4. Yet, I offer further insights, contributing to knowledge both methodologically, theoretically, and in terms of practice.

Firstly, in chapters 4 and 5, I offer insights into the ways in which theories of alternative approaches to education can be enacted and re-enacted in practice by feminist academic activists to challenge gendered norms within the academy. I contribute by building on theories of feminist pedagogy and critical consciousness, suggesting ways that a critical consciousness can develop

and lead to action within the current context of UK higher education. I develop theories of empowerment to return to a feminist conceptualisation, which applies to the current context of UK higher education, combining notions of conscientization, and empowerment. I suggest empowerment can be a political feminist concept, involving a process that leads to activism. This reclaiming of empowerment is important due to the term's broad use and rejection by some as post-feminist. I discount this understanding of empowerment and return to one, which encompasses feminist activism, resulting in a more radical conceptualisation.

Secondly, in chapters 6, 7, 8 and 10 I build on the narrative method of data collection and analysis, contributing my re-telling approach to data. This re-telling and synthesis approach provides an innovative methodological framework, incorporating both participant experiences and my own personal experiences in multiple ways. Using a feminist methodology, I attempted to reduce power relations, creating an equal relationship with participants and a mutual vulnerability. Positioning myself within the research, I make explicit my own ontology and the ways in which my experience relates to the experiences of my participants and the research process itself. By presenting narratives within the thesis through narrative re-telling and the synthesis, I hope that my participants were seen as human beings with valuable experiences, rather than as simply data. This methodology is valuable as I highlight ways in which personal experience, emotion, motives, and feelings can be a source of insight and knowledge worthy of research, including those of the researcher.

Thirdly, as outlined above through my research findings, I contribute to knowledge on the experiences of feminist academic activists and the ways in which they embody that identity. I showed that the embodiment of feminist academic activist identity is highly subjective and that participants often struggled with embodying all three aspects of their identity at once. Yet, I showed that identity is not fixed and participants adjusted their embodiment of their identities based on their context, at times appearing to be more academic and at other times more feminist and activist. As the researcher, my own identity developed and was reconstructed throughout the

PhD. By engaging reflexively with the research through my own narrative in chapter 10, I showed how my own identity was affected by the research process, and the ways in which the research process was affected by my identity development. Engaging with participants through narrative research may itself be a form of dialogue, with the sharing of experiences within narratives in relation to societal norms and identity. Insights into identity and the process of identity development and embodiment through narratives is a significant contribution of this thesis.

Fourthly, my research findings contribute to notions of activism and what counts as challenging the rules of the game in academia. I highlight that for some participants simply existing as "other" to the ideal academic, felt like a challenge to masculinised cultures within academia. I expand conceptions of feminist activism to include any challenge to gendered norms, including challenging by existing as different.

I also engage with current wider political challenges such as precarity, casualisation, solidarity in an individualised environment, institutional racism and gender critical feminism and transgender exclusion. I argue that these form part of feminist academic activist agendas and can potentially be challenged within universities through teaching and research, collaboration and solidarity, speaking out and existing as "other".

Finally, I show ways in which feminist academic activists can navigate within gendered institutions, framing this as feminist survival. Acknowledging that feminist academic activists are working within gendered institutions and can be complicit in them, whilst also attempting to challenge them. Again, this relates to the ways in which their identities are intertwined and complex. In order to maintain these identities participants adopted various survival techniques as outlined within the findings. This highlights the way that the academic profession does not allow for deviation from the norms and to do so can cause difficulties in negotiating the self and require survival techniques. Feminist academic activists not only bear the responsibility for bringing about change for equality, they are also responsible for the survival of feminist academic activism. I further understandings of the ways in which feminist academic activists navigate this

responsibility, whilst trying to maintain academic careers and a sense of their identities as academics.

Limitations of the Study

Despite these key findings and the contribution, both methodologically and theoretically, my study has some limitations which are important to address. It is significant to note that these findings are not meant to be generalisable and the main focus is on the subjective experience of individuals, in relation to universities as institutions. Yet, I mainly interviewed white, female participants in more art and humanities-based disciplines. This was unintentional but occurred due to the responses I received to my call for participants. I had less responses from black, male, and STEM discipline academics. Results may have been different had I interviewed a more diverse group. The somewhat lack of diverse participants means that we cannot be sure that people from different backgrounds would experience feminist academic activism in the same way, or even self-define as feminist academic activists. Despite this, my study did include those who identified as different genders, a small number of BME academics, and those at different stages of their careers. As my reflexive chapter suggested, I became more engaged with issues of race and decolonisation in the academy. This process really emerged after I recruited my participants and formed my research questions and is therefore not reflected within the process of calling for participants.

Recommendations

This brings me on to my recommendations in terms of future research. Research in this area could expand on my findings by interviewing a more diverse group and taking race more closely into account. For example, research could consider more closely ways in which academic activists challenge the rules of the game to attempt to decolonise the university. Other categories could also be considered including disability, age, religion, sexuality, and other characteristics, which may be disadvantaged by social and cultural norms in universities. Similarly, future research could consider other contexts including universities outside of the UK to gain insights into differences in the rules of the game in different cultural and country contexts.

In terms of action and practice, I recommend that feminist academic activists keep forming new approaches to survival, in order to maintain the feminist academic activist movement. Similarly, if increasing numbers of people attempt to embody the feminist academic activist identity it may increase possibilities to deviate from the "ideal" academic, potentially normalising other identities within an academic context. I also suggest that feminist academic activists and those interested in feminist issues continue to conduct feminist research in order to center women's experiences and perspectives, offering new approaches to knowledge. Those in the position to do so could promote the importance of feminist research and continue to allocate funding to work which focuses on marginalised voices. Finally, I would urge all academics, of all genders, to make decisions with an awareness of the impact that gendered, racial, and other norms can have on people's careers and experiences of academia. If academics try to commit to thinking critically about gender and other characteristics within their actions, it may be possible to change universities, bringing about a more equal academy.

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Appendices

Appendix A Approved Ethics Application

FHS RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

Indicate with 'X' the documents that have been included with this application.

Document	Included
Fully completed application form	X
Completed risk assessment	X
Recruitment materials – with date and version number) (e.g. poster or email used to invite people to participate)	X
Information sheet(s) – with date and version number (different version for each group of participants)	X
Consent form(s) – with date and version number (different version for each group of participants)	X
Letter or email seeking permission from gatekeeper/host	
Questionnaire(s) – with date and version number	
If conducting a student survey, confirm that it fits with University policy https://share.hull.ac.uk/Services/Governance/PolicyDocuments/Policy on Student Surveys.docx	
Interview questions / topic guide – with date and version number	X

Data management plan X

Supporting documents should be saved with a meaningful file name and version control (e.g. 'Participant Information Sheet v1.0').

Wherever possible, please ensure that the research title used on consent forms, information sheets, and other supporting documentation is consistent. The title should make clear (where appropriate) what the research is about.

UNIVERSITY OF Hull

FACULTY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE PROPOSAL FORM

(FORM A)

REF NO…………………………DATE OF MEETING..................................

(Office use only)

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">1) SUBJECT INVOLVEMENT (see guidance notes)
Does the research involve ANY patients in a NHS or Social Services environment (clinical or non-clinical)? Please highlight the answer that applies NO</td></tr>
<tr><td>YES
a) ALL research proposals have to be submitted to FHSC Ethics Committee <u>first</u> (or another committee within the University if it applies).
b) Once FHSC ethical approval has been granted and the research concerns NHS patients, you MUST ALSO apply for approval via the NHS Integrated Research Application System (IRAS), which can be accessed at:</td><td>
NO
a) If No, then once FHSC Research Ethics Committee have provided you with written confirmation that ethical approval has</td></tr>
</table>

https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/ (see guidance notes). **c)** Once FHSC ethical approval has been granted and the research concerns **'Adult social care research study proposals, intergenerational studies involving adults and children or families, use of social care databases and some proposals for social science studies'** then **you MUST ALSO** apply via the Social Care Research Ethics Committee (REC) which can be accessed from **the Social Care Institute for Excellence** website at http://www.screc.org.uk/index.asp **Students; please contact your research supervisor in the first instance BEFORE completing Form A as to which is the appropriate research ethics committee for you to submit your proposal within the university and then either** Integrated Research Application System (IRAS) or Social Care Research Ethics Committee or other appropriate approved committee. **d)** Please go to **question 2**	been granted, you are able to proceed with your research study. **b)** Please go to **question 2.**

2) TITLE OF STUDY
The Experiences of Feminist Academic Activists Attempting to Change the Rules of the Game in UK Academia

3) INVESTIGATOR(S)
Name: Florence Reedy

Email address: f.reedy@2016.hull.ac.uk

Contact telephone number: 07896946785

4) STUDENT INVESTIGATOR (IF APPLICABLE)

Name: Florence Reedy

Email address: f.reedy@2016.hull.ac.uk

Contact telephone number: 07896946785

5) LAY SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

Please provide a brief summary of the research (maximum 200 words) using language that can easily understood by a lay reviewer. If necessary, please provide a glossary of terms.

Aim: To find out the experiences of feminist academic activists attempting to change the rules of the game in UK universities

Background: The PhD is based on the notion that universities are gendered institutions with more men reaching leadership positions than women (HEFCE 2015). Evidence suggests that the culture of universities is also gendered and based on an ideal white male academic (Bleijenbergh, Van and Vinkenburg 2012). I define feminist academic activists as anyone who attempts to challenge the gendered rules of the game in academia from their position as an academic. The phrase "rules of the game" is often used to describe socially constructed norms and structures within institutions and different spheres of life (Gertler 2010). This includes formal rules and laws as well as more subtle norms, behaviours, attitudes and beliefs which shape human activity and interaction. Academia could thus be considered a game, with researchers as players, formal and informal rules and rewards such as promotion, research grants and successful publications. This PhD is based on the notion that the rules of the game in academia are gendered and thus aims to question how they are being challenged by feminist academic activists.

Methodology: Qualitative, interpretive methodology as it is based on the experiences of feminist academic activists.

Methods: The research uses a narrative research method involving in depth interviews with feminist academic activists to understand their experiences and relationships to universities as institutions. Alongside the narrative interviews artefacts such as objects and photographs will be used to elicit people's personal narratives.

Research findings will be disseminated in the research thesis and publications which will be submitted to social science journals for publication.

6) INTRODUCTION (BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW)

Please provide a rationale, justification, and underlying principle for the research with supporting literature (maximum 300 words).

This PhD is predicated on current evidence which strongly suggests that women and some other minority groups fail to achieve the highest levels within UK academia (HEFCE 2015). There are multiple factors which might be causing this, including unconscious bias, unsupportive cultures and failures of university and government policy. The evidence for a gender gap in leadership positions is persuasive: women remain a fairly constant 47% of academics in England, but 81% of vice-chancellors and 64% of senior leadership teams are male (HEFCE 2015). In disciplines such as Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths and Medicine, known as STEMM subjects, women academics are particularly under-represented (HEFCE 2015). Women also make up 75% of part-time staff in UK Universities, which suggests that women either choose to work in flexible roles or are less able to gain full time positions. Gender inequality is thus evident in UK universities with women failing to reach senior positions and certain disciplines being dominated by men. This implies that universities are gendered institutions, whereby the numbers of women pursuing long-term academic careers remains limited compared to men and there are far fewer women at senior levels.

This PhD focuses on the rules of the game in academia, which involves socially constructed norms and structures in universities, both formal and informal (Gertler 2010, Hollingsworth 2000). The consideration of the rules of the game is based on social constructionism and the notion that institutions have norms which are created through social interaction, culture and negotiation. The PhD reviews the literature on rules of the game in UK academia, identifying themes of neoliberalism and the impact on managerialism in universities, the importance of

publishing and the emphasis on research performance, the way labour is distributed in universities and networking in academic communities (Morley 2013, Mauthner and Edwards 2010, Bleijenbergh et al. 2012). These themes are prevalent across the literature on UK universities and the rules of the game.

The links between gender and university rules provide the basis for investigating the experiences of feminist academic activists attempting to change gendered rules in UK universities.

7) AIM(S) OF THE RESEARCH

Aim of the PhD:

This PhD aims to ascertain the experiences of feminist academic activists attempting to redefine the rules of the game in UK academia

Overarching Research Question:

What are the experiences of feminist academic activists attempting to redefine the rules of the game in UK academia?

Subsidiary Research Questions:

1. What are the rules of the game in UK academia as perceived by feminist academic activists?
2. Are the rules of the game in UK academia gendered as perceived by feminist academic activists?
3. What are feminist academic activists doing to challenge the rules of the game?
4. What are their experiences of challenging the rules of the game in UK universities?

8) RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. Identify feminist academic activists in UK universities (will be discussed further in section 11)
2. Identify the experiences of those activists in relation to the rules of the game in UK universities
3. Derive outcomes of ways the rules of the game are gendered and in what ways feminist academic activists manage their careers whilst challenging the rules of the game

9) DURATION OF STUDY

a) What is your expected completion date?

September 2019

10) DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

a) Please state what research method you intend to use and justify why.

The proposed method for this PhD is narrative which involves in depth interviews, focusing on the construction of stories and narratives by participants in order to understand their experiences of feminist academic activism. Narrative enquiry creates meaning as it allows participants to organise their experiences into stories which are meaningful to them and requires reflection on their past and future (Polkinghorne 1995). Narrative method will be particularly useful when answering the research questions as it will allow participants to reflect on their own experiences and create their own narrative when expressing them. Reflection on personal experiences may offer insights into participant's processes of becoming feminist academic activist's and their journey of self-identifying as such. By looking at the past it is possible to have a wider understanding of the present and how people's worlds change through time (Janesick 2007). Individual personal experiences can also reveal aspects of social relations, social interaction and interaction with organisations (Haynes 2010). As this PhD is focusing on a university context the in depth nature of the narrative method will not only provide data about the individual's thoughts and feelings but also with their relation to universities as organisations. Individual stories as data can result in shared themes and connections, showing ways in which individuals link together through their own experiences of feminist academic activism (Atkinson 2012). The construction of narratives is equally valuable as it can offer insights into the meaning that participants hold in relation to their lives, careers and identities as feminist academic activists. Due to the in-depth nature of narrative

interviews, participants may be asked to take part in up to 3 interviews each to ensure enough data is collected. Alongside the narrative interviews participants will be asked if they wish to bring objects, photographs or any other artefacts which will aid and elicit their narratives. These will be used as elicitation tools only and not be included in the PhD thesis. I will ask the participant's to explain any objects or photos they bring in their own words. They will also be invited to respond in a way which is most comfortable to them, including through drawing and writing. A narrative interview method requires interpretation on the part of the researcher and during analysis I will endeavour to keep stories intact and avoid fragmentation (Riessman 2008). The specific thematic analytical approach is outlined in section D.

b) What is the sample (description and size)? Please give rationale also where possible.

The sample size will be up to 20 people working as academics irrespective of gender.

All participants will be interviewed at least once and some may be asked to participate in up to 2 more follow up interviews or for further response through email correspondence.

c) How are the participants going to be recruited and by whom?

I will recruit the participants through snowballing techniques which involves contacting some initial potential participants who fit the criteria of my research and taking recommendations of further participants from those initial people (Morgan 2008). Specifically, I will contact the early career researcher feminist academic activist group Res-sisters which is made up of feminist academic activists from across UK universities. I will also contact individuals including Professor Stephen Whittle a transgender activist and a lecturer in law at MMU, Dr Zahra Ali a teaching fellow at SOAS, Dr Elsbeth Robson a lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Hull and Dr Charlotte Mathieson a lecturer in English Literature at the University of Surrey. These initial people have been chosen due to their interest in gender shown in their research activity and engagement in feminist networks. When liaising with my initial potential participants I will ask if they have any suggestions of other potential participants for the study. As well as contacting people directly I will advertise the study on twitter by tweeting "I am looking for feminist academic activists working in UK universities to take part in my PhD research. If you are interested please see the attached participant information sheet and email f.reedy@2016.hull.ac.uk". If I receive more responses than I need I will need to say no to some people. I will choose participants on the basis of having a diverse group including different types of universities, people of different genders and people at different positions or disciplines. I will politely email and thank the participants and let them know there has been a good response but I now have sufficient participants. I will also take their name and ask if they want to receive a copy of any resulting publications.

d) How are you proposing to analyse and interpret data?

I will transcribe the data verbatim and then begin analysing. I am using a thematic approach to data analysis based on a combination of Catherine Kohler Riessman's theory of thematic analysis of narrative methods (Riessman 2008) and Polkinghorne's analysis of narratives (Polkinghorne 1995). Thematic data analysis of narratives focuses on the content of what has been said and aims to find meaning in the participants stories (Riessman 2008). According to both authors, thematic analysis of narrative data involves finding patterns and themes within individual participant's stories (Polkinghorne 1995, Riessman 2008, Kim 2015). To apply this to my data analysis I will read the transcribed data for each participant maintaining their whole extended narrative and highlight relevant sections to the research questions. I will read through those sections further to identify themes which will be named or coded. This process will be applied to each individual participant which will mean I have a list of key themes for each participant. I will then be able to see patterns across the interviews which will be explored in the discussion of the PhD. When the data is presented in the PhD it will be in the form of long excerpts relating to particular themes which have been identified. I will ensure that I maintain each participant's subjectivity by forming themes on an individual participant basis (Kim 2015). Only once this has been done will I look at the patterns emerging across the participant's narratives. The use of long excerpts in the PhD will also help to keep the stories intact (Riessman 2008).

e) Please list the principal inclusion criteria (the most important first).

Self-identified feminist academic activists irrespective of gender

Academics working for or with a UK university from any discipline

f) Please list the principal exclusion criteria (the most important) and explain why they have been excluded.

Those working outside of UK academia as the focus is on UK universities

Administrators or other university employees as the focus is on academics

g) If applicable, what arrangements have been made for persons who might not adequately understand verbal explanations or written information given in English, or who have special communication needs?*(e.g. translation, use of interpreters)*

Not Applicable, those working in UK universities will be able to communicate in English

11)RESEARCH PROCEDURES (these include seeking consent, interviews, questionnaires that will be received by the research participants)			
If applicable, please give details of all **CLINICAL INTERVENTION (S) and PROCEDURES(S)** that will be received by the research participants and complete the columns for each. If not applicable, write N/A			
How many interventions in total			
Specify each intervention/procedure	How long will each take to complete?	Who will conduct the intervention/procedure?	Where will the intervention/procedure take place?
N/A	**N/A**	**N/A**	**N/A**
Please give details of all **NON-CLINICAL INTERVENTION(S) and PROCEDURES(S**) that will be received by the research participants and complete the columns for each. If not applicable, write N/A			
How many interventions in total			
Specify each interventioin/procedure	How long will each take to complete? (i.e. hours)	Who will conduct the intervention/procedure	Where will the intervention/procedure take place?
Narrative interview with artefacts such as photos and objects brought by participants	Maximum 3 per participant each lasting up to 2 hours	Florence Reedy	At the participant's university in a location of their choosing

12)RISKS AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

a) Risk Limitations - Describe potential risks and hazard to research participants.

Anonymity
Participants may be concerned about anonymity as if they were identifiable by their employers they made be penalised

Consent

The researcher may influence the response of the participants and power relations could cause people to feel pressure to take part in the research

Distress
The in-depth nature of narrative interviews may bring up personal issues which could cause distress to participants

Time

Participants will be potentially taking time out of their working days to take part in the narrative interviews which may be disruptive to their work

b) Specify precautions to avoid or limit these risks.

Anonymity
I will use pseudonyms when describing the participants within my PhD and will anonymise participants upon transcribing the data. I will protect the data by storing it on a University of Hull password protected computer.

Any artefacts used during the interview will be for elicitation purposes and will not be used within the thesis to avoid identifiability.

Consent

I will obtain written voluntary consent from all participants. I will also ensure that I discuss confidentiality with participants and gain consent prior to the interviews. The paper consent forms will be stored in a locked cabinet at the University of Hull.

Distress
Sensitivity will be required from myself as the researcher and if any participants do become

particularly distressed or upset I will consult my supervisors on how to manage the participant and their particular issues.

Time

Participants will choose timings which are suitable for them, so they can fit the interviews around their other work commitments.

c) How long do you expect each research participants/patients/public/user/carer to be involved in the research in total?

6 months for up to 3 interviews per participant

d) Describe any inconveniences to study participants, including limitations or restrictions to normal lifestyle.

The narrative interviews will take time but this will all be agreed with participants in advance of the interviews. I will also be flexible in order to agree a time with the participants which is suitable for them and fits within their work and home commitments. Participants may be asked for follow up with up to 2 further interviews but only if they agree to do so. Again, this will be communicated with participants before they agree to take part in the research.

e) Describe any potential benefits of participation in research study subjects.

The research will provide insights into the experiences of feminist academic activists, potentially providing perspectives on barriers to feminist academic activists within universities and the way that they manage their feminist values alongside their careers as academics.

The process may also be affirming as describing personal narratives can be a way of expressing issues and talking them through.

f) Will interviews/ questionnaires or group discussions include topics that might be sensitive, embarrassing, or upsetting, or is it possible that criminal or other disclosures requiring action could occur during the study?

There will be no direct questions on sensitive topics but participants may choose to talk about issues such as discrimination which could be distressing, this will be the choice of the participant. In the unlikely event participants become very distressed I will stop the interview,

allow the participant time to recover, ask if they want to carry on and consult my supervisors after the interview.

g) What are the potential risks for the researchers themselves? *(if any)*

Participants who are high level stakeholders within organisations may wish to exert influence over myself as the researcher pressuring me not to address controversial issues that could be critical of their organisation, or their own behaviour. I will be reflexive throughout the process to avoid influence and pressure. There may also be a risk of lone working (HES 2013), as I will be away from the University of Hull conducting the interviews at other UK Universities. However, I will be able to remain in contact with my supervisors through regular supervision and will be in familiar university environments in offices/rooms with little risk.

13) RECRUITMENT AND INFORMED CONSENT

a) How will potential participants, records, or samples be identified? Who will carry this out and what resources will be used?

I have identified initial participants through feminist networks I am involved in such as the Feminist and Women's studies Association as well as through recommendations by my supervisors. I will contact them via email with an information sheet which will contain details about the nature of the study and the expectations of participants to allow for informed consent. Any further participants recruited through snowballing will also be emailed with the information sheet. I will then give potential participants 2 weeks to consider and accept or reject the invitation to take part in the research.

b) Will the identification of potential participants involve reviewing or screening personal information of patients, service users or any other person?

No

c) How will potential participants be recruited, who will be approached and how much time will they be given to consider participation?

The participants will be recruited through snowballing and sent email requests which will involve an outline of the research project, details of the study, the research method and the commitment involved. There will also be information on anonymity and consent as well as my plans for disseminating the research. This will allow for informed choice and I will answer any further queries via email which potential participants may have. I will give

potential participants 2 weeks to ask questions and to choose whether they wish to take part. Dates and times for narrative interviews will then be agreed.

d) What arrangements will you make for any unforeseen circumstance and what plans will you make to ensure participants receive any information that may become available during the course of the research that could be relevant to their continued participation?

It is unlikely that the research will generate information that needs early dissemination but I will keep participants informed via email of any changes, as long as this fits within the ethical approval given and the University of Hull's ethical guidelines. I will also be supported by my supervisors if any changes or unforeseen circumstances occur.

14)CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PROTECTION. Storage and use of personal data during the study **MUST** be the **Data Protection Act 1998.**

In this section, personal data means any data relating to a participant who could potentially be identified. It includes pseudonymised data capable of being linked to a participant through a unique code number.

a) How do you intend to store personal data? (please be specific)

Interviews will be recorded using my password protected mobile telephone and transferred immediately onto a password protected University of Hull computer and deleted from the phone. The transcriptions of data will also be stored on the University of Hull computer and from this point the recordings will be destroyed.

b) Describe the physical security arrangements for the storage of personal data during the study including long-term arrangements for storage of research data after the study has ended.

Data will be anonymous and will be stored on a University of Hull password protected laptop. Once the study has ended the transcribed data will be stored for up to 10 years.

c) How will you ensure the confidentiality of personal data? *Please provide a general statement of the policy and procedures for ensuring confidentiality, e.g. anonymisation or pseudonymisation of data.*

I will use pseudonyms for participants and refer to their institutions indirectly by categorising them as Russel Group or post-1992 universities. I will maintain confidentiality throughout.

d) How will you obtain consent form the participants? I will ask participants to sign consent forms prior to the interviews when I meet with them.
e) Who will have access to participants' personal data during the study? *Where access is by individuals outside the direct care team, please justify and say whether consent will be sought.* Myself and my supervisors: Florence Reedy (PhD Student) Judith Dyson (Supervisor) Fiona Cowdell (Supervisor)
f) Where will the data generated by the research study be analysed and by whom? Analysis will be conducted by me on a University of Hull Computer
g) Who will have control of and act as the custodian for the data generated by the study? Florence Reedy (PhD Student)
h) List the people and organisations with access to data. Florence Reedy (PhD Student), Judith Dyson (supervisor) and Fiona Cowdell (supervisor)
i) How long will personal data be stored or accessed after the study has ended? Data will be stored for up to 10 years

References:

Atkinson, R. 2012. The Life Story Interview as a Mutually Equitable Relationship. In *The SAGE Handbook of Interview Research: The Complexity of the Craft,* eds. J. F. Gubrium , J. A. Holstein , A. B. Marvasti & K. D. McKinney. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Bleijenbergh, I. L., M. L. Van & C. J. Vinkenburg (2012) Othering Women: Fluid Images of the Ideal Academic. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal,* 32**,** 22-35.

Gertler, M. S. (2010) Rules of the Game: The Place of Institutions in Regional Economic Change. *Regional Studies,* 44**,** 1-15.

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HEFCE. 2015. Equality and Diversity Data Tables: Staff and Student Profiles. Higher Edcuation Funding Council for England.

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Janesick, V. J. 2007. Oral History as a Social Justice Project: Issues for the Qualitative Researcher. 111-121. The Qualitative Report.

Kim, J.-H. 2015. *Understanding Narrative Inquiry*. USA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Mauthner, N. S. & R. Edwards (2010) Feminist Research Management in Higher Education in Britain: Possibilities and Practices. *Gender, Work and Organisation,* 17**,** 481-502.

Morgan, D. L. 2008. Snowball Sampling. In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* ed. L. M. Given. California: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Morley, L. (2013) The Rules of the Game: Women and the Leaderist Turn in Higher Education. *Gender and Education,* 25**,** 116-131.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995) Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,* 8**,** 5-23.

Riessman, C. K. 2008. Narrative methods for the human sciences. London :: Sage.

15)STUDY SITE	
If applicable, please specify all NHS/University/other departments and services (e.g. service specialities, pharmacy, outpatients, intensive care) involved in any way with the procedures or subjects in the study. State whether formal permission has been granted from the head of each department/service.	
Department/Organisation:	**Permission granted and costs agreed by:**
NA	

16)Appendices, i.e. consent forms, questionnaires, information sheets, etc. **Please list all appendices submitted with the proposal**

Please submit your application as ONE document, i.e. include consent forms, questionnaires, information sheets, peer review form, Data Management Form etc. as appendices and email to:

FHS-ethicssubmissions@hull.ac.uk

FHS RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

RISK ASSESSMENT

Title of the research	The Experiences of Feminist Academic Activists Attempting to Change the Rules of the Game in UK Academia
Name of Principal Investigator	Florence Reedy
Location of research	Participant's university in the UK

Brief description of research activity

Narrative Interviews with academics working in UK Universities who self-identify as feminist academic activists. to understand their experiences and relationships to universities as institutions. Alongside the narrative interviews artefacts such as objects and photographs will be used to elicit people's personal narratives.

RISK IDENTIFICATION

Please identify all risks related to this research and indicate WHO is at risk and the measures that are in place or are required to mitigate these.

RISK(S)	**MEASURES IN PLACE / REQUIRED** *(e.g. alternative work methods, training, supervision, protective equipment)*
Training / supervision: *(e.g. information or training required, level of experience, supervisor's input and oversight)*	I will be supported by my experienced supervisors throughout the research process and have received interview training through PGTS
Location: *(e.g. remote area, laboratory, confined space, entry or exit, level of illumination, heating etc.)*	I will be conducting the research in UK Universities which the participants work in. These will be safe spaces and they are likely to be offices or rooms within universities.

Research processes: *(e.g. use of electrical systems, gas, liquids, tissue, potential for contamination, flammability etc.)*	I am not using any risky equipment or research tools, only my phone to record audio.
Equipment use: *(e.g. manual handling, operation of emergency controls etc.)*	“ “
Violence / upset / harm: *(e.g. potential for violence, sensitivity of topic, previous incidents etc.)*	There is a risk that participants may become upset or distressed during the interview. If this is the case I will consult with my supervisors on how to support the participants and remain safe.

CONTINUED…..

Individuals: *(e.g. medical condition, young, inexperienced, disability etc.)*	The participants will be consenting adults working within UK Universities and are thus not a vulnerable group
Work patterns: *(e.g. lone working, working out of hours, working off site, isolated or remote location etc.)*	There may be a risk of lone working, as I will be away from the University of Hull conducting the interviews at other UK Universities. However, I will be able to remain in contact with my supervisors and will be in familiar university environments in offices/rooms with little risk (HES 2013).
Other:	

Name of Principal Investigator:	Florence Reedy
Signature:	F REEDY
Date:	23/01/2018
Name of Supervisor (if relevant):	
Signature:	
Date:	

Email to Potential Participants

Dear

What are the Experiences of Feminist Academic Activists Attempting to Change the Rules of the Game in UK Universities?

I am writing to invite you to take part in my PhD research study investigating the lived experiences of feminist academic activists in the UK. I am going to focus particularly on the experiences of gendered social norms in universities and the actions of feminist academics individually or collectively to challenge gendered norms within UK universities.

I know from your profile and publications that you have a shared interest in this field and I would value your views and opinions based on your knowledge of the sector gained over the period of time you have been in higher education.

If you are interested please refer to the participant information sheet attached.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Florence Reedy (PhD Student, University of Hull)
f.reedy@2016.hull.ac.uk

Participant Information Sheet

Project Title:

The Experiences of Feminist Academic Activists Attempting to Change the Rules of the Game in UK Universities

I would like to invite you to take part in my PhD research study. This information sheet outlines the nature of the research, why I am conducting it and the methods being used. Please take your time to decide. I am open to any questions you may have about the research, do not hesitate to email me and I will endeavour to respond as soon as possible.

The research will be in the form of narrative interviews with academics working in UK Universities who self-identify as feminist academic activists to understand their experiences and relationships to universities as institutions.

Purpose of the Study:

The aim of this study is to find out the experiences of feminist academic activists attempting to change the rules of the game in UK universities. The purpose of this is to gain insights into whether the rules of the game in UK academia are experienced as gendered, what activity feminist academic activists are taking part in and how feminist academic activists balance their activist activity with their careers.

Why have you been invited?

I am recruiting participants who are likely to self-identify as feminist academic activists working within UK universities. From your publications and profile I am aware that you have a shared interest in this field and your knowledge and opinions based on your experience working within higher education would make a valuable contribution to this study.

Choosing to take part:

It is entirely up to you if you wish to take part in the research. I have provided this information sheet to outline what the research entails and I will give you time to decide whether you would like to accept the invitation. You will be given a consent form which I will ask you to sign prior to the interviews to show you have voluntarily agreed to take part.

What is involved in taking part:

Narrative Interviews
The method I will be using is in depth narrative interviews. This allows you as a participant to take an active role in the interview process, constructing your own narrative about your experiences. I will be prepared with initial questions and prompts to support you in this process. There will be 1 initial interview and potentially 2 further follow up interviews. These will last up

to 2 hours and I will travel to your university and conduct the interview at a location of your choice there. I will record the interviews on my phone and transfer the recordings to a password protected University of Hull Laptop. Names and Universities will be anonymised with pseudonyms as I transcribe the data. I welcome participants from any university, in any academic position or discipline as well as anyone who self-defines as a feminist academic activist regardless of gender, race, age and experience.

Artefacts for elicitation

If you choose to, you are invited to bring along any artefacts such as photos or objects that you believe will elicit the narrative interview. Any artefacts are welcome which relate to your experiences of feminist academic activism within UK universities. These will be elicitation tools only and will not be used as data. Similarly, if you wish to respond in non-oral ways such as drawing or writing this would be welcome.

Risk Management:

I do not anticipate any risk and will not be directly asking about sensitive or upsetting issues. If the participant wishes to talk about anything sensitive then they are welcome to do so and I will work with my supervisors to ensure that the participant is supported.

Benefits of taking part:

I hope that the study will increase understanding of the experiences of people who are challenging the status quo in UK universities. This could contribute empirically by providing new data on lived experiences of feminist academic activists, methodologically by applying innovative and newly integrated research methods to understand and evaluate lived experiences of feminist academic activists and in terms of policy and practice by contributing to the development of career paths and the way academics might manage potentially contradictory feminist values and their desire for an academic career.

Problems/Issues:

I do not anticipate any problems. However, if you have a concern about any aspect of the study please do not hesitate to contact myself on 07896946785 or f.reedy@2016.hull.ac.uk

If you wish to make a formal complaint you can do so through the University of Hull.

Withdrawal:

Participants can withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. Any data already collected will be destroyed.

Confidentiality:

I will safeguard confidentiality of all participants by adhering to the University of Hull's ethical code.

Data will be collected by recording on my password protected phone and transferred to a University of Hull password protected computer. I will transcribe the data and use pseudonyms for participants and universities. Raw data will then be destroyed. Transcribed data will be used for the PhD and any subsequent publications. Those with access to the data includes myself and my two PhD supervisors. The data will be kept on the University of Hull password protected computer for up to 10 years.

Research Funding:

This PhD research is funded by the University of Hull.

Contact Details:

Florence Reedy
Email: f.reedy@2016.hull.ac.uk
Phone: 07896946785

Consent Form

The Experiences of Feminist Academic Activists Attempting to Change the Rules of the Game in UK Academia

Florence Reedy

I have read and understood the participant information sheet ☐

I have had time to ask questions and have had them satisfactorily answered ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time for any reason ☐

I understand that any information I give will be used as part of the researchers PhD thesis and any publications in the form of direct quotes but under a pseudonym ☐

I understand and agree that audio will be recorded during the interviews ☐

I understand that data will be stored on a University of Hull password protected computer and may be used in future research including publications and conference proceedings ☐

I agree to take part in the study ☐

Name of participant	Date	Signature

Name of person taking consent	Date	Signature

Interview Questions

Narrative interviews and will begin with some initial starter questions and social niceties outlined here and then go on to more open questions to encourage narrative responses. Throughout I will use prompts to further develop the participant's narrative response.

Starter Questions:

1. What is your main research area?
2. Do you also teach and in what area?
3. Have you worked here long?
4. Why did you pursue a career in academia?
5. Do you enjoy working in academia?

Narrative Questions:

1. You responded to an invitation looking for feminist academic activists, what does that mean to you?
2. What does "rules of the game" in UK academia mean to you?
3. How have you attempted to change these rules?
4. How have these attempts impacted yourself, your colleagues and the university?

Prompts:

I will be flexible with prompts as they will be based on what the participant is saying. These are some examples of prompts I may use:

1. Could you tell me more about X?
2. Why did you feel that way?
3. How has that impacted you/your work?
4. What do you mean by X?
5. You said X, what happened next?

University of Hull

Faculty of Health & Social Care

Data Management Plan

(NB: This form should be completed at the start of all projects where data are not being stored in alternative sources, eg Clinical Trial Data held in the NHS). Shaded areas are considered essential.

Date	
Researcher(s)	**Florence Reedy**
Project title	**The experiences of Feminist Academic Activists Attempting to Change the Rules of the Game in UK Academia**
Brief description	**The PhD is based on the notion that universities are gendered institutions with more men reaching leadership positions than women (HEFCE 2015). Evidence suggests that the culture of universities is also gendered and based on an ideal white male academic (Bleijenbergh, Van and Vinkenburg 2012).**

	I define feminist academic activists as anyone who attempts to challenge the gendered rules of the game in academia from their position as an academic. The phrase “rules of the game” is often used to describe socially constructed norms and structures within institutions and different spheres of life (Gertler 2010). This includes formal rules and laws as well as more subtle norms, behaviours, attitudes and beliefs which shape human activity and interaction. Academia could thus be considered a game, with researchers as players, formal and informal rules and rewards such as promotion, research grants and successful publications. This PhD is based on the notion that the rules of the game in academia are gendered and thus aims to question how they are being challenged by feminist academic activists.

For detailed, updated explanations of the various parts of the document that require completion, please refer to the accompanying Appendices.

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Section 1: Project Information

Project title: The experiences of Feminist Academic Activists Attempting to Change the Rules of the Game in UK Academia
1.1 Project duration: September 2016-September 2019
1.2 Partners (if applicable) Not Applicable
1.3 Brief description This PhD considers the experiences of feminist academic activists attempting to redefine the rules of the game in UK academia. The PhD uses qualitative methodology and a narrative research method involving in depth interviews with feminist academic activists to understand their experiences and relationships to universities as institutions.
1.4 Faculty or University requirements for data management According to the Faculty of Health and Social Care plan
1.6 Funding body(ies) The University of Hull
1.7 Budget (estimate if necessary)
1.8 Funding body requirements for data management According to the Faculty of Health and Social Care plan

Section 2: Data, Materials, Resource Collection Information

2.1 Brief description of data sources Data Sources will be from self-defined feminist academic activists working within UK universities
2.2 Data collection process Narrative Interviews with up to 20 participants Responses in the form of drawings or writing Demographic forms (in REC be clear how these cannot be linked to recorded interviews)
2.3 Will data be available in electronic format (if so then state format(s))? Data will be recorded on my personal password protected IPhone and transferred to a University of Hull password protected computer and destroyed from the phone Any drawings or other visual responses will be photographed on the password protected phones and transferred to a University of Hull password protected laptop
2.4 Will the data be available in hard copy (if so then state format(s))? No data will be available in hard copy

2.5 Will the data stand alone and be comprehensible to a third party or be accompanied by explanatory documentation? The interview data will only be accessed by myself and my supervisors
2.6 Describe quality assurance process for data management I will be supported by regular meetings with my supervisors and discuss data management with them as well as any ethical issues which arise.

Section 3: Ethics, Intellectual Property

3.1 How have the ethical aspects of data storage and subsequent access been addressed? I will be responsible for data storage. All data will be stored on a University of Hull password protected computer. When transcribing the data names and places will have pseudonyms to maintain anonymity. I will maintain confidentiality throughout and invite participants to sign consent forms which will be stored in a locked cabinet at the University of Hull.
3.2 Will the data comply with relevant legislation such as Data Protection Act, Copyright and Intellectual Property? Yes
3.3 If several partners are involved how will compliance with 3.2 be assured? Not applicable

Section 4: Access and Use of Information

4.1 Are you required, and with whom, to share the data subsequent to completion of the project? The data will be analysed and written up as part of my PhD thesis. It may subsequently be used in any publications in journal articles.
4.2 If 'yes' to 4.1, in what format will data be shared? Data will be transcribed and shared in the form of anonymised summaries of the interviews and individual quotes from participants in the thesis and any publications.
4.3 Will the data have to be stored for a specific period (if so, how long)? Data will be stored for up to 10 years.
4.4 Who may need to have access to the data? Myself and my supervisors will have access to the data.
4.5 How do you anticipate the data being used subsequent to the project?

Transcribed data may be used for further publications and presented at conferences.

Section 5: Storage and Backup of Data

5.1 Where and how will the data be stored **during the lifespan of the project?**
Data will be stored and transcribed on a University of Hull password protected computer.
5.2 Where and how will the data be stored **on completion of the project?**
Data will be stored as transcribed on a University of Hull password protected computer.
5.3 What provision is being made for backup of the data?
Data will be backed up on the secure password protected Hull University hard-drive.
5.4 Will different version of the data be stored?
Data will be stored in the form of transcribed interviews on a University of Hull Computer.

Section 6: Archiving and Future Proofing of Information

6.1 What is the long-term strategy for storage and availability of the data? Data will be kept on the Hull University Hard Drive for up to 10 years after the project.
6.2 Will the information be kept after the life of the project, for how long and in what format? Data will be kept on the Hull University Hard Drive for up to 10 years after the project.
6.3 If the data include confidential or sensitive information, how will these data be managed? The data will be anonymized by using pseudonyms and university institutions will be coded as Russel Group, non-Russel Group and Post-92 institutions. This will stop any participants being recognized and maintain confidentiality.
6.4 If meta data or explanatory information is to be stored, how will this be linked to the data? Not applicable
6.5 How will the data be cited? Quotations from interviews, where used, will be attributed to anonymized participants, e.g. Interviewee A,B…..etc.

Section 7: Resourcing of Data Management

7.1 List the specific staff who will have access to the data and denote who will have the responsibility for data management. I will be responsible for data management and my supervisors Dr. Judith Dyson and Professor Fiona Cowdell will have access to the data.
7.2 How will data management be funded? I do not anticipate any costs with data management
7.3 How will data storage be funded? I do not anticipate any costs with data storage

Section 8: Review of Data Management process

8.1 How will the data management plan be adhered to? I will refer to the plan and make sure I am adhering to it. I will also be having regular meetings with my supervisors who will monitor my progress and check on data management.
8.2 Who will review the data management plan? My supervisors Dr. Judith Dyson and Professor Fiona Cowdell

Section 9: Statements and Personnel Details

9.1 Statement of agreement

I/we agree to the specific elements of the plan as outlined:

Principal investigator or PhD supervisor

Title	Dr. and Professor
Designation	Research Supervisors
Name	Judith Dyson and Fiona Cowdell
Date	
Signature	

Researcher

Title	Ms.

Designation	PhD Student
Name	Florence Reedy
Date	
Signature	

9.2 Expertise of Researchers

Title	Ms.
Name	Florence Reedy
Contact Details	f.reedy@2016.hull.ac.uk
Expertise	BA (Hons) Philosophy and Politics MA International Development

Title	Dr.
Name	Judith Dyson
Contact Details	School of Health and Social Work The University of Hull Cottingham Road Hull HU6 7RX J.Dyson@hull.ac.uk +441482 464680
Expertise	Senior Lecturer, Implementation Science Interim Co-Director of Supportive Care, Early Diagnosis and Advanced disease (SEDA) research group Academic Improvement Fellow of the Improvement Academy (YHAHSN) Associate Editor Journal Infection Prevention

Title	Professor
Name	Fiona Cowdell
Contact Details	Professor of Nursing and Health Research Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences fiona.cowdell@bcu.ac.uk 0121 300 4345
Expertise	Doctorate in Professional Practice Post Graduate Certificate in Research Supervision MA Professional Development Post Graduate Certificate, Teaching in Higher Education BA (Hons) Health Care Studies Diploma in Nursing Registered Nurse

Appendix B Screenshot of Call for Participants Tweet

I am looking for feminist academic activists of any gender working in UK Universities to take part in my PhD research. See images below for more info. If you are interested please email f.reedy@2016.hull.ac.uk. RTs would be appreciated. #phdforum #phdchat

Participant Information Sheet

Project Title:

The Experiences of Feminist Academic Activists Attempting to Change the Rules of the Game in UK Universities

I would like to invite you to take part in my PhD research study. This information sheet outlines the nature of the research, why I am conducting it, the methods being used and what is expected of you as a potential participant. Please take your time to decide. I am open to any questions you may have about the research, do not hesitate to email me and I will endeavour to respond as soon as possible.

The research will be in the form of narrative interviews with academics working in UK Universities who self-identify as feminist academic activists to understand their experiences and relationships to universities as institutions.

Purpose of the Study:

The PhD is based on the notion that universities are gendered institutions with more men reaching leadership positions than women (HEFCE 2015). Evidence suggests that the culture of universities is also gendered and based on an ideal white male academic (Bleijenbergh, Van and Vinkenburg 2012). The aim