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THE POTENTIAL OF FEMINIST  
PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH TO  
ENCOURAGE THE DISPLAY OF  
FEMINIST SUBJECTIVITIES IN YOUNG  
MEN

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores the potential that feminist participatory action research (FPAR) offers to stimulate the creation of feminist subjectivities in young men. FPAR is a process whereby participants use a gendered focus to reflect upon, investigate, and challenge the conditions of their own reality (Reid & Frisby 2008). While it has previously been proposed that FPAR with young women can stimulate the creation of feminist subjectivities by participants (Cahill 2007), this study aims to investigate whether similar effects are observed when working with young men.

To do this, the research involved two groups of young people in two FPAR projects - one in a school setting, and one in a youth group. Throughout both projects, interviews and observations of the young people were conducted in order to track the effect of involvement on the participants' relationships between the self and feminism.

Consideration of the two projects, and the nature of the engagement of the young people with them, centres around three themes. In the first, the detailed nature of conducting FPAR with young men and women is examined. In the second, the nature of feminist subjectivities displayed by the young men within the space of the project is scrutinised. Finally, the analysis considers the extent to which these displays existed outside of the spaces of the projects, by exploring the ways in which the feminist subjectivities of the young people existed in the spaces of the school and youth group. From this analysis, the thesis concludes that not only did involvement of young men in FPAR projects create rich and diverse projects which encouraged the display of feminist subjectivities, but that these displays of subjectivities extended out of the project space, and into the wider spaces of the school and the youth group.



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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This thesis explores the potential that feminist participatory action research offers to encourage the display of feminist subjectivities in young men. While several research projects have argued that involvement of young women in feminist participatory action research can lead to increased displays of feminist subjectivities by these young women (Gaddes 2013; Cahill 2007c; 2007b; 2007a; 2004), currently, no research has considered the position of young men in this research ethic. With the rise in fourth wave feminism, there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of men's involvement in feminism (Messner 2016; Van Der Gaag 2014; Cochrane 2013). This research considers the potential for feminist participatory action research to encourage young men's engagement in feminism, by exploring the impact that involvement in these projects has on their negotiation of self, gender and feminism.

My interest in this project stems largely from research I conducted as part of my master's degree. In that research project, I considered the impact of participation in a feminist participatory action research project on the formation of feminist subjectivities in young women. To do this, I involved four young women, aged between 13 and 18, in a feminist participatory action research project which centred around gender and sport. The research argued that involvement in the project led to the display of forms of feminist subjectivities, that extended out of the project space and into the wider space of the sporting environment. However, the project also raised further questions surrounding feminist participatory action research and the creation of feminist subjectivities. Did restricting feminist participatory action research to young women presume a natural association between women and feminism? How would young men of a similar age respond to a similar project? Does a commitment to altering gender relations involve working with the dominant group, as well as the marginalised? This thesis aims to build on this research by attempting to address some of these questions, and in doing so, raise more.

## 1.1. Theoretical Background to the Research

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The term participatory research includes a wide range of approaches and applications, but is based around a commitment to involving those who are conventionally the researched in all or some stages of the research process (Pain 2004). Participatory action research is one of the multiple forms of participatory research, and has been defined as a process whereby participants can "collectively investigate their own reality, by themselves or in partnership with

friendly outsiders, take action of their own to advance their lives, and reflect on their ongoing experience" (Rahman 2008, p.49).

Participatory action research and feminist research have been argued to be two styles of research that share similarities in principle, ethics, and aims (Cahill et al. 2010; Frisby et al. 2009; Langan & Morton 2009; Reid & Frisby 2008; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; Maguire et al. 2004; Gatenby & Humphries 2000; Maguire 1987). One of the key similarities between the two research ethics is their shared emphasis on the stimulation of positive change (Reid & Frisby 2008; Maguire et al. 2004; Gatenby & Humphries 2000; Maguire 1987). The attempted synthesis between the two approaches, that endeavours to blend critical feminist theory and participatory action research, has been termed feminist participatory action research (Langan & Morton 2009). This form of research builds upon the debates surrounding the ethics and practices of participatory action research, but combines this with a commitment to keeping gender central to the research process (Reid & Frisby 2008; Maguire 1987).

Several theorists - including, most notably, Cahill - have argued that feminist participatory action research projects offer the potential to increase awareness of issues surrounding feminism and stimulate the creation of feminist subjectivities in participants (Cahill 2007c; 2004). Cahill performed a large scale feminist participatory action research project in New York that focused on the stereotyping of young women of colour living in this area. She argued that involvement in the project had stimulated the creation of feminist subjectivities in the participants, but argued that it was impossible to determine how this lasted outside of the space of the research project (Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004). In my own previous feminist participatory action research project surrounding gender and sport with young female athletes, I argued that involvement in the project had led to the performance of feminist subjectivities in the young women, and that these subjectivities lasted outside of the research project space, extending into the wider world to a differing degree depending on the individual participant (Gaddes 2013). While research has considered the effect that involvement in feminist participatory action research has on young women and their relationship with feminism, there appears to be a deficit in research surrounding the potential feminist participatory action research may have to stimulate displays of feminist subjectivities in young men.

## 1.2. Project Aims and Research Questions

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This research investigates the potential held by feminist participatory action research to stimulate the displays of feminist subjectivities in male participants. In particular, the thesis aims to address the following research questions:

- Running feminist participatory action projects with young men: What are the practicalities, problems and possibilities?
- Young men in feminist participatory action research and subjectivities: In what ways is feminism accepted, rejected and negotiated?
- Subjectivity and the spatial: How do the young men negotiate feminism and subjectivity across different spaces?

Through considering these questions, this research aims to contribute to the debates around young men, feminism, and feminist participatory action research.

## 1.3. Research Design

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The practical elements of this research were addressed through two feminist participatory action research projects run with young people. Both projects centred around the theme of gender, took place over several months, and involved young men and women aged between 15 and 18. The first project took place in a school setting, while the second took place in a youth group.

During these projects, the young people researched gender in their own communities by drawing upon their experiences from their everyday lives. This research took the form of discussion groups, written research projects, and photography-based activities. These sessions were designed to encourage the young people to explore debates surrounding gender, and from this, to raise issues that they believed to be relevant to young people in their communities. Once these concerns had been raised, the young people in each project then chose one issue or action project, which they then worked as a group to address.

Throughout the projects, the subjectivities of the young people were considered using observations and interviews. Before the project began, each participant was asked to take part in an interview where they were asked to reflect upon the relationship between their sense of self, gender and feminism. During the projects, the young people were observed both within the space of the project, and in the wider spaces of the school and the youth group. These observations allowed me to examine the young people's displays of feminist subjectivities within the space of the projects themselves, and to determine to what extent these displays extended out of the project space. At the end of the projects, the young people took part in a

second interview. In this interview, the young people were asked to reflect upon their time in the project, their perceptions of feminism, and whether involvement in the project had impacted their engagement with feminism.

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#### 1.4. Thesis Structure

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This thesis is comprised of seven chapters. Following this introduction, attention turns to considering the literature that underpins and informs this thesis. The second chapter, entitled *Literature Review: Conceptualising Feminism, Participatory Action Research and Subjectivity*, is divided into three sections. The first section considers the history of the feminist movements, the place of men within these, and the conceptualisation of feminism used in this research. The second section of chapter two provides a review of the literature surrounding feminist participatory action research, the place of men within this research ethic, and the relationship between this form of research and subjectivity change. In the final section, the key themes of these areas of literature are drawn together, and the research questions of the thesis outlined.

The third chapter - *Methodology and Methods* - considers the design of the research project. The chapter outlines the theoretical underpinnings to this research, including the importance of critical realism and feminist epistemologies, before moving on to discuss the nature of the two feminist participatory action research projects, and the interviews and observations that accompanied them. The chapter provides a summary only of the nature and content of the two participatory projects, as these themes are considered in greater depth in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

Chapter four - entitled *Running FPAR projects with young men: Practicalities, Problems and Possibilities* - provides a detailed account of doing feminist participatory action research with young people. In this chapter, the nature of participation, research and action are considered in depth, and particular attention is paid to the gendered nature of these interactions.

The fifth and sixth chapters of the thesis focus on the subjectivities of the young people. In the fifth chapter - *Young men in FPAR and Subjectivities: Acceptance, Rejection and Negotiation of Feminist Subjectivities* - attention is paid to the subjectivity changes of the young people within the spaces of the projects themselves. Here, the subjectivities of the young people at the beginning and end of the project are discussed, and the impact of the projects on these changes is considered. The sixth chapter - *Subjectivity and the Spatial: Negotiations of Feminism and Subjectivity across Different Spaces* - considers the extent to which these changes to feminist subjectivities extended outside of the project spaces and into the wider world of the school and the youth group. This discussion considers the nature of feminist



support and rejection within different spaces, the specific gendered nature of these interactions, and the contradictory and complex forms of feminist subjectivities.

The seventh chapter of this thesis forms the conclusion to the research. In this chapter, the thesis concludes that not only did involvement of young men in FPAR projects create rich and diverse projects which encouraged the display of feminist subjectivities, but that these displays of subjectivities extended out of the project space, and into the wider spaces of the school and the youth group. Finally, the thesis ends with a discussion of the implications of these findings, and areas for further study and discussion.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW: CONCEPTUALISING FEMINISM, PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AND SUBJECTIVITY

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### 2.1. Introduction

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This chapter attempts to provide an overview of the literature which underpins and informs this research. This literature centres around two key areas or themes. Firstly, this thesis is shaped by debates surrounding the history of feminism, the place of men within these movements, and conceptualisations and negotiations of feminism. Secondly, this research is also informed by the literature surrounding participatory action research, feminism, and subjectivities. This thesis engages with both of these areas of debate, and draws upon key themes from each of them.

As such, this literature review is divided into three sections. The first section engages with literature surrounding the history of feminism and the place of men. The second section discusses participatory action research, feminism and subjectivities. While separating these two areas of research is recognised to be an artificial divide, this partition has been imposed for the sake of clarity and structure. In the third section, the key themes from each area of literature are drawn out, and the areas left unaddressed by the current research are considered. Finally, the chapter concludes by establishing the research questions which this thesis seeks to address.

### 2.2. The History of Feminism and the Place of Men

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The first section of this literature review aims to provide a brief overview of historical and contemporary feminist movements, and men's contested position within these. This section begins with a discussion of the meaning of the term 'feminism' before moving on to examine the history of the organised feminist movements. Some of the key events, campaigns and criticisms of each 'wave' of feminist activity are outlined, including a consideration of the place of transgender issues within the movement at that time. The position of men, both cisgender and transgender, within that time period is then scrutinised. Once the history of feminism has been considered, this section considers attitudes towards contemporary feminism, and forms and styles of negotiation of feminist identities. As this research is situated in England, this discussion focuses upon Western feminist movements, particularly those found in the United Kingdom, Europe and North America.

Whilst this section of literature review aims to use academic sources as far as possible, the contemporary nature of some of the issues, trends and perceptions debated here mean this

section of writing may also build upon so-called 'grey literature'. This includes newspaper articles, opinion pieces and online discussion areas and forums. Grey literature sources are combined with more conventional academic sources, in order to fill the deficit that has been argued to be present in academia surrounding recent feminism and the 'fourth wave' of feminism (Munro 2013).

It is also worth noting that the 'wave' metaphor to describe the different phases of feminist activity is used within this section both as a term of reference, but also for the purpose of structuring the discussion. The wave metaphor can be understood to be limited in its lack of recognition of the global differences in feminism, in the many similarities between the different phases of feminism, and through its neglect of the wealth of thought and activity taking place in between these periods (Cochrane 2013; Baumgardner 2011; Snyder 2008). Whilst this review utilises this metaphor, it also attempts to convey some of the 'messy', non-linear, form of the developments of the feminist movements (Rampton 2015; Braidotti 2003).

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### 2.2.1. DEFINING FEMINISM

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The word 'feminism' has been in usage for several decades, but only became popular during the 1960s and 1970s. Before this, 'women's liberationist' had been the preferred phrase with which to describe someone involved in the fight for equality between the genders (feminist.com 2016; Blunt & Wills 2000). Feminism can be defined as a series of movements that "begins with the recognition that all women, because of their gender, suffer injustice and with the refusal to accept that situation" (LeGates 2001, p.370). This definition from LeGates focuses explicitly upon the rights of women, rather than gender equality more generally. In contrast, Blunt and Wills offer a broader conception of the term, one that offers the possibility of inclusion of issues of male equality. They define feminism as the political movements that seek to overturn gender inequalities between men and women (Blunt & Wills 2000). bell hooks, in her 2000 work *Feminism is for Everybody*, offers a definition of feminism as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (hooks 2000, p.1). hooks designed this definition with the intent of creating a definition of feminism that was not anti-male. Instead, she wanted to define feminism as something that encouraged all genders to let go of sexist thought and action (hooks 2000). Both this, and the definition from Blunt and Wills are relatively open-ended definitions that allow for feminism to include not only issues pertaining to women, but also affairs or topics that concern men. In addition to this, Baily has argued that feminism is also defined by its relation to identity or activity. For some, feminism is about identity and personal experience - the 'identity paradigm'. However, for others, feminism is about activity and movement - the 'action paradigm' (Baily 2015).

Throughout this review, a broad understanding of the term feminism is used. This phrase is used to describe any movement, organisation, or individuals that have worked, either deliberately or inadvertently, towards gender equality. This includes both the women's liberation movements, that have focused predominantly on issues surrounding women, as well as the more recent organisations that have focused on issues surrounding inequality and sexism more widely.

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### 2.2.2. FIRST WAVE FEMINISM

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The first wave of organised feminism is often considered to have begun around 1850 (Blunt & Wills 2000; Okin 1988; LeGates 2001). Discussions and writings surrounding the unequal position of women had been going on for some time - Mary Wollstonecraft had written her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* some 80 years earlier - but women in Northern Europe and America still had very few rights (Okin 1988). Women were barred from entering many professions or higher education. They did not have the right to vote, and could not stand for parliament. Upon marriage, they lost the right to own property, and were offered little protection from abuse from their spouses (Blunt & Wills 2000; Okin 1988). During the 1850s, in a climate of expanding political rights and political toleration, the first organised movements for gender equality were born to contest these inequalities (Blunt & Wills 2000).

While the activity of the 1850s is often referred to as the beginning of 'first wave feminism', this growing movement was actually comprised of many differing groups and movements, all working in different places, styles, and focusing on many different issues and agendas. Some of the issues on which campaigns focused included: the male monopoly on education, limited access to professional careers for women, married women's economic and legal dependence, the relationship between women's health and fashion, women's lack of control over their bodies, low wages, and women's lack of suffrage and exclusion from politics (LeGates 2001; Banks 1986). Of these, the campaign for the right to women's suffrage is often perceived to have been the most central and dominant campaign. While this did indeed grow to become a crucial part of the first wave of feminism, it was originally seen as too radical a campaign for many groups to want to support (LeGates 2001; Blunt & Wills 2000). However, over time, the fight for suffrage grew to become the central concern of many groups within the movement (LeGates 2001; Marlow 2000; Banks 1986). In Britain, the fight for suffrage spanned 53 years between the first campaign of 1865, and the achievement of limited suffrage in 1918 (LeGates 2001). Over the years, the movement became divided between the more moderate suffragists, and the more militant suffragettes (Marlow 2000). The suffragettes utilised tactics such as heckling politicians, attacking property, cutting telephone wires, planting bombs and firing up

support using military influenced bands and uniforms (LeGates 2001). The excitement and comradeship of the militant suffragette movement attracted many women who had not previously been involved in the fight for suffrage, many of whom ceased active support when the militant campaign ended in 1914 (Banks 1986).

Common to the many campaigns of first wave feminist movements are several relatively constant forms of opposition and resistance. One of the key forms of opposition to women's rights was the assumption of a biological determinism of female inferiority (Reeves 2007; LeGates 2001). Many members of society - both men and women - believed that women intrinsically belonged in the home rearing children, rather than out in the public sphere. Arguments to support this relied upon biological inferences (LeGates 2001). Cultural, legal, social and economic positions were not considered to have a shaping effect on people. Instead, women were argued to be fundamentally biologically inferior in a way that explained their historical lack of success in politics, the arts, and literature (Reeves 2007).

In Britain, limited suffrage for women was achieved during the First World War, with women over 30 who met minimum property requirements awarded the vote in 1918. The outbreak of the war had already largely ended the militant campaign, and by 1918, their partial victory took much of the urgency out of the campaign (Banks 1986). The campaign had been a long, drawn out struggle, and its successful conclusion was partially responsible for the first wave of feminism losing momentum and feminist activity beginning to recede (LeGates 2001; Blunt & Wills 2000; Banks 1986).

One of the key criticisms of first wave feminism has been the fixation it held on the issue of women's suffrage. Some critics have argued that the movements allowed the suffrage issue to distract it from other campaigns and issues that were just as worthwhile and potentially more achievable, such as access to education for women and legal protection for married women (LeGates 2001). First wave feminism has also been criticised for being largely dominated by white, middle-class women, who shared the conviction that they were able to speak for all women (LeGates 2001; Okin 1988; Banks 1986).

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### 2.2.3. MEN IN FIRST WAVE FEMINISM

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Since the first wave of feminism, men have occupied a contested place within feminism (LeGates 2001). For many men of the time, it was normal to dismiss the plight of women, or to advocate for the continuation of the gender order of the time (Okin 1988). Despite this, there were men who lent the movement both encouragement and support (Reeves 2007; Banks 1986). The majority of these men were white, middle-class, and highly educated. Prominent

male feminists active during this time period included John Stuart Mill, Richard Pankhurst, Henry Nevinston, Henry Fawcett and William Fox. For many of these men, feminism was one of several causes they supported, in contrast to many female activists who devoted their lives to the women's movement. William Shaen, for example, was heavily involved in the stand against the Contagious Diseases Act, but was also active in the temperance and anti-slavery movements (Banks 1986).

In Britain, in particular, the first wave feminist movements contained some prominent and influential male feminists. When the London National Society for Women's Suffrage (LNSWS) was established in 1867, it was run by a group of eminent male and female activists and theorists. While it had a female chairwoman - Clementia Taylor - it also boasted links with John Stuart Mill, Thomas Hare and Henry Fawcett (Reeves 2007). However, other organisations within the movements did not share this inclusive ethos. In America, some women's suffrage groups, such as the American Woman Suffrage Association, contained male officers. However, others, such as the National Woman Suffrage Association rejected male leadership, believing that the presence of men led to women being less keen to present their ideas or papers. They argued that excluding men would encourage political spirit amongst women (LeGates 2001), while other organisations, more pragmatically, embraced the ability of men to act as spokespersons for the movements, particularly in spaces such as parliament to which women did not have access (Banks 1986).

Arguably the most important male feminist of the time was John Stuart Mill (Reeves 2007; Okin 1988). His 1869 essay *The Subjection of Women* was incredibly influential, and was translated into almost every European language (Reeves 2007; LeGates 2001; Okin 1988; Heath 1987a). This essay argued that "the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes - the legal subordination of one sex to the other - is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement" (Mill 1869, p.1). This essay, in particular, focused upon the institution of marriage, and economic and legal dependence this placed upon women (Okin 1988).

As well as being a theorist and writer, Mill was involved in the practicalities of campaigning and running movements for the achievement of suffrage. He was one of the founding members of the London National Society for Women's Suffrage. As well as his interests in suffrage and the institution of marriage, Mill was also interested in education for women, and left a large amount of his money towards scholarships for women that were to be made available to whichever university first admitted women (Reeves 2007).

Despite this, Mill received criticism from some quarters, and was embroiled in several controversies during his work for women's liberation. He was involved in the splitting of the LNSWS into two rival committees, which later reunited shortly after his death. He was strongly opposed to fighting the Contagious Diseases Act of 1864, as he was convinced that the brand of the women's movements would be damaged by association with issues surrounding sex, disease and prostitution (Reeves 2007). Some theorists have also argued that much of the recognition Mill received depended upon his position as a man, and he may have served to hide the many women working alongside him who contributed to and influenced his work, including his wife, Harriet Taylor-Mill (Heath 1987a).

Banks, in her 1986 analysis of trends within membership of first wave feminist movements, concluded that male feminists, in general, were more likely to hold more staid views than feminists who were female. She argued that male feminists were less enthusiastic about proposals such as co-operative housekeeping, and the economic independence of wives (Banks 1986). However, she also argued that men, in the first wave, were not a united enemy, stating that, "the experience of 'first wave' feminism suggests, therefore, that alliances can be a profitable way of male/female collaboration" (Banks 1986, p.125). She concluded this argument by stating that "feminists today may well have something to learn from the past" (Banks 1986, p.127).

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#### 2.2.4. SECOND WAVE FEMINISM

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After the collapse of the first wave of feminism, the feminist movements experienced a phase where they became much lower in profile (LeGates 2001; Blunt & Wills 2000). This period is often portrayed as being a time that experienced the recession of feminist politics, and is sometimes described as the 'counter-revolution' (Blunt & Wills 2000). Despite this, there was still work on going during this time (LeGates 2001). Perhaps most notably, in 1949, Simone de Beauvoir wrote and published *The Second Sex*. This text aimed to raise questions about women, what they were, and what it meant to be a woman (de Beauvoir 1949). *The Second Sex* has been argued to have become an influential text within feminism, and to have had a foundational value for the development of the second wave (Braidotti 2003).

The second wave of feminism is largely considered to have emerged during the 1960s (LeGates 2001; Blunt & Wills 2000). These movements developed within the context of other radical movements that were establishing themselves during that decade, and the influence of some of the violent events of the time, including the assassinations of John F Kennedy and Martin Luther King, the war in Vietnam, and the expansion of student protests across university campuses (LeGates 2001). In 1968, the feminist movements kick-started with a series of

protests across the world, including the infamous protest at the Miss America pageant which included the burning of bras, girdles, fake eyelashes and high heels in a trash can (LeGates 2001).

During the second wave of feminism, feminists campaigned for a wide range of issues, including: freedom from sexual violence, women's control over their bodies, the legislation of abortion, greater availability of contraception and equal levels of sexual freedom with men (Blunt & Wills 2000). The movements combined liberal feminism - which was in many ways similar to first wave feminism - with radical feminism. Liberal feminism remained largely focused on the family and personal relationships. Many of its members were older feminists, including liberal writer Betty Freidan, who penned *The Feminine Mystique*, which focused upon the suffering experienced by many women within the home (Freidan 1963). In contrast, radical feminism emerged during the context of the violence and anarchy of the 1960s, and began to talk about oppression rather than discrimination, liberation rather than equality, and revolution instead of reform (LeGates 2001). The two branches of feminism experienced some conflicts, but continued to work together on key issues such as reproductive rights.

Throughout the second wave, the feminist movements developed the importance of the concept of personal, or lived, experience (Braidotti 2003; Blunt & Wills 2000). The American Liberation group The Redstockings were the first to coin the phrase 'the personal is political' (Blunt & Wills 2000). This politics of experience called for all theories about women and gender needed to develop from real life experiences (Snyder 2008; Braidotti 2003). Experience was hoped to be a collectively shared and constructed place, that could be jointly occupied by women of different backgrounds (Braidotti 2003). Consciousness raising groups were designed in order to allow all women to speak, to prioritise non-hierarchical knowledge creation, and to encourage women to break down their own internalised sexism (hooks 2000). Consciousness raising was for women, and provided women only spaces for discussions and discoveries that could not take place with members of the oppressing group present (Bartky 1998).

The movements of the second wave were varied, daring and creative, and it was a time of great progress in many areas (Blunt & Wills 2000; Bartky 1998). In 1961, the contraceptive pill became available, with this availability extending to all women in 1974 (The British Library 2017b; The Guardian 2013). In 1964 the Married Women's Property Act was revised to allow married women to be legal owners of money they earned while married (The British Library 2017b). In 1967, abortion was legalised for women up to 24 weeks pregnant (The British Library 2017b; The Guardian 2013). In 1968, 850 women from the Ford plant at Dagenham went on strike over equal pay and conditions, which laid the foundations for the 1970 Equal



Pay Act to be passed (The British Library 2017a; The British Library 2017b; The Guardian 2013). In 1973, the first Rape Crisis centre was established in the UK, while in 1976 the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act was passed to provide greater legal protection to married women (The British Library 2017b).

While second wave feminism experienced great successes, it also came under criticism in some areas. The importance of lived experience has been argued to have been one of the most influential developments - both within the movements, and within feminist theory - but it has also been an area of second wave feminism that has received negative attention (Blunt & Wills 2000). One of the criticisms of this reliance on personal experience has been the divisive impact it has had on feminism, and on the place within the movements of groups such as men and transgender individuals.

During this time period, the lives of gender non-conforming individuals had begun to become more visible (Jacques 2014; Stryker 2007). At this point, the term 'transgender' had not yet entered popular usage. Instead, words such as transsexual, or transvestite, were more commonly used (Stryker 2017). Stryker has argued that the word transgender is now commonly used "to refer to people who move away from the gender they were assigned at birth, people who cross over (*trans-*) the boundaries constructed by their culture to define and contain that gender" (Stryker 2017, p.1). Hines, in a similar definition, defined transgender as "an umbrella term to denote a diversity of identities that challenge the binary categories of male and female and which may (or may not) relate to body modifications" (Hines 2005, p.57). This review utilises the broad and open definitions of transgender proposed by both Stryker and Hines, and for simplification, uses this term when referring to gender non-conforming people from all time frames and historical periods. This review also utilises the word 'cisgender', in order to refer to those whose biological sex aligns with their gender identity, and as such, are "nontransgender" (Stryker 2017, p.13)

By the 1960's, groups of transgender individuals had begun to form networks of transgender activism. At this time, transgender activism was not generally seen as part of the feminist movement (Stryker 2007). While viewed as a separate cause, it did have links or relationships with not only the second wave feminist movement, but also with the contemporary movement for gay liberation (Stryker 2017; Stryker 2007; Blackstone 1998). For example, during the early 1970s, The Radical Queens Drag Collective, a transgender group, had strong relationships with a local feminist lesbian separatist commune (Stryker 2007). Similarly, in both the Compton's Cafeteria riot of 1966, in San Francisco, and the 1969 Stonewall riot in New York, transgender

individuals participated in the action alongside gay and lesbian activists (Stryker 2017; Blackstone 1998).

However, as the 1970's progressed, the tentative ties between transgender activism and feminism began to break down (Stryker 2017; Jacques 2014). Mainstream feminisms' dependence on the identity paradigm assumed that only women-born-women could truly be feminists (Rubin 1998). The tensions surrounding transgender individuals in feminism came to a head in 1973, in a dispute over the presence of transgender woman Beth Elliot at the West Coast Lesbian Feminist Conference (Stryker 2017; Goldberg 2014; Jacques 2014; Blackstone 1998). Elliots' ban from the conference was highly disputed, with not all attendants of the conference in favour of her removal. However, the loudest and most hostile voices dominated (Jacques 2014). In the keynote speech of the conference, Robin Morgan addressed the controversy by comparing Elliot to a rapist, through her supposed violation of their female space (Stryker 2017). This discourse would be echoed several years later, in the highly contentious book *The Transsexual Empire: The Making of the She-Male* by Janice Raymond (Jacques 2014; Stone 2006; MacDonald 1998). Published in 1979, this anti-trans text again compared sexual re-assignment to rape, and became the definitive work on the subject for the next decade. This text both heavily influenced, and reflected, the dominant perceptions of the rejection of transgender individuals from feminism throughout the second wave (Jacques 2014; Stone 2006).

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#### 2.2.5. MEN IN SECOND WAVE FEMINISM

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During second wave feminism, the issue of men within the movements was a provocative topic (Heath 1987a; Smith 1987). In 1987, Stephen Heath declared that "men's relation to feminism is an impossible one" (Heath 1987a, p.3), while in the same year, theorist Paul Smith declared that it was sufficiently controversial as to be almost offensive to some (Smith 1987).

During the second wave, feminism moved from being a series of movements about women's rights, which included both men and women in the struggle for equality, to a series of movements about women's rights, which was almost exclusively for women. It came to be perceived as being solely for the voices of women, and for the actions of women (Bartky 1998; Heath 1987a). The shift to exclude men from feminism reflected the shift in second wave feminism towards the prioritisation of personal experience (Heath 1987a). Without this, men were called upon to accept the fact that they had more to learn from feminism than feminism had to gain from them (Heath 1987b).

In the activist realm, men attempting to enter feminism were viewed with suspicion (Smith 1987). There were meetings that men could not attend, and issues on which men were not expected to comment (Hopkins 1998). Within the academic sphere, Women's Studies remained largely for women, and delivered by women (Bartky 1998). Certain classes and courses were taught and studied entirely by women, with male department staff encouraged to work in other areas (Hopkins 1998). Within both activism and the academy, men were encouraged not to describe themselves as feminists. Instead, they were encouraged to describe themselves as pro-feminist (Hopkins 1998) or woman-identified (Digby 1998). Some theorists acknowledged the impact male feminists had had during the first wave of feminism, but maintained that there was no place for men in the present movements. For example, Stephen Heath argued that while John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* had been an influential part of first wave feminism's history, there was no place for another such man now (Heath 1987a).

Despite this resistance, some men continued to want to be involved in the feminist movements (Heath 1987b). They argued that men could, and have, been allies to the feminist movements. In contrast, they argued, many women could be granted entry to the movements on the basis of their gender, but have not necessarily been allies of feminism (Bartky 1998). The assumption that feminism was for women, and should be grounded in the lived experience of women, also came under critique from some male feminist theorists. Hopkins (1998) claimed that organised feminism was too pre-occupied with subjective and lived experience. He argued that not only was there no common voice of women's oppression, but that the feminist movement's relationship to the concept was contradictory and flawed. Feminist groups had begun to recognise the idea that not only did women's experiences of oppression differ, but that they may also be unaware, or unaccepting of this oppression. These women were termed 'male-identified' and argued to be so steeped in patriarchy that they could not see their own oppression. In response to this, the idea of consciousness-raising was developed, in order to allow women to come to recognise the root and manner of their oppression. However, this idea sat uneasily with the idea of personal experience as the building blocks of feminism. If the importance of subjective experience rested upon the idea that experiences are valid and significant and real, then the concept of consciousness raising rested upon the idea that experiences are invalid, open to false interpretation, and potentially misleading. In this case, this contradiction undermined the pre-occupation with personal experience within feminism, and allowed some male feminists to argue that their lack of lived understanding of women's lives could not be a barrier to participation in feminism (Hopkins 1998).

One group of men who came under particular scrutiny was Female To Male (FTM) transgender men. During discussions of transgender individuals in feminism, attention has often focused on Male to Female (MTF) transgender women (Alter 2018; Rubin 1998). However, where attention was paid to transgender men in feminism, attitudes were often negative. Transgendered men at this time were frequently viewed as traitors to their sex. For some feminists, FTM transgender individuals were women who might have been sisters of the struggle, but who instead had joined the ranks of patriarchal men. As such, they were perceived to have betrayed feminism, and were often excluded from participation in the movement (Hines 2005; MacDonald 1998).

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### 2.2.6. THIRD WAVE FEMINISM

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The beginning of the third wave of feminism is often taken as the early 1990s (Rampton 2015; Cochrane 2013; Snyder 2008). In 1992, Rebecca Walker - daughter of the poet and novelist Alice Walker - wrote the words "I am not a postfeminist feminist. I am the Third Wave." (Walker, 1992, cited in Cochrane 2013). For many, this declaration was the trigger that began the third wave feminist movements (Cochrane 2013; Snyder 2008).

Third wave feminism was a diverse and challenging set of movements, that campaigned on a wide range of different issues (Redfern & Aune 2010). Redfern & Aune argued that seven key areas of interest were evident within third wave feminism: liberated bodies, sexual freedom and choice, an end to violence against women, equality at work and at home, politics and religion transformed, popular culture free from sexism, and feminism reclaimed (Redfern & Aune 2010, p.10). Elements of this list have been echoed by others, with Bly (2012) arguing that body image and double standards on sexuality were some of the main themes discussed within third wave feminism, and Rampton (2015) arguing that the gendered body and sexuality formed key tenets of feminist thought at this time. Cochrane has also argued that protests against pornography remained significant within this time, and in particular, resistance against the infiltration of pornographic imagery into the mainstream (Cochrane 2013).

Third wave feminism saw itself as more inclusive and diverse than the second wave (Snyder 2008) and as such, the concept of intersectionality became central to the movements (Rampton 2015; Snyder 2008). The term intersectionality was first used by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her 1989 paper considering employment discrimination against black women (Jordan-Zachery 2007). In this paper, she described intersectionality as the "various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences" (Crenshaw 1989, p.139). The concept was originally discussed in relation to two axes of inequality; race and gender (Evans 2016), but was rapidly expanded to incorporate

class (Jordan-Zachery 2007). Since then, the concept has been broadened, and now includes factors such as sexuality, disability, faith and age (Hulko & Hovanes 2018; Evans 2016; Taylor 2010; Taylor et al. 2010; Jordan-Zachery 2007; Taylor 2005). The concept encourages the differences within essentialising categories to be examined, and adds complexity to the supposed commonality of gender categories (Hines 2010; Taylor 2010; Snyder 2008; Jordan-Zachery 2007; Hines 2005). Since its rise to prominence in the third waves of feminism, the concept has been used by gender theorists such as Connell and hooks, both of whom argued that intersectional analysis was needed to grapple with the interrelated nature of gender, race and class oppression (Connell 2001; hooks 2000b; hooks 2000a).

Activism in the third wave of feminism took place in a range of ways (Baumgardner 2011; Redfern & Aune 2010). Traditional style protests took place on topics including lad's magazines, lap dancing clubs, and the staging of the Miss World competition within the UK. Campaign groups such as the Fawcett Society worked towards single issues such as equality within the workplace, while local and national networking and organising groups thrived (Redfern & Aune 2010). In addition to this, third wave feminism saw a surge in activity and interest in feminist pop-culture, including music, zines, and magazines that supported women (Bly 2012; Dyer 2012; Baumgardner 2011; Redfern & Aune 2010). Feminist zines - small circulation, self-published magazines - grew rapidly in popularity in the years following 1992, forming a marginal and ephemeral space for feminist voices (Bly 2012; Dyer 2012). In addition to the growth of popular culture, third wave feminism also saw the rise of a highly individualised form of feminism. Feminism became portable, with members moving away from group meetings and organisations, and into an individual-driven understanding where feminism could be brought into any room you entered (Baumgardner 2011).

The movements were largely young movements, filled with women too young to have been involved in the second wave of feminism (Snyder 2008; Redfern & Aune 2010). These young women referred to themselves as 'grrls' and aimed to celebrate 'grrl' and woman power (Rampton 2015; Bly 2012). They positioned themselves heavily against the second wave feminists of their mothers' generation, claiming they were less rigid and judgemental than those who had gone before them (Snyder 2008). Among a growing sense of ridicule and caricature within the media coverage of second wave feminism, third wave feminists attempted to reclaim make-up, high-heels, and a sense of glamour and fun (Rampton 2015; Snyder 2008; Walby 2011).

The more inclusive and open approach adopted by third wave feminism was reflected in the approach to transgender individuals within the movements (Jacques 2014; Stryker 2007).

Transgender activism had remained largely cut off from feminism during the 1970's and 1980's. However, during the 1990's, transgender groups had begun to re-establish relationships with both feminism and gay and lesbian activism (Stryker 2017; Blackstone 1998). This relationship was encouraged by the 1991 publication of *The Empire Strikes Back: A Post Transsexual Manifesto* by Sandy Stone. This article addressed the earlier transphobic text by Raymond, and provided a counter-discourse around the nature of transgender experience and its intersection with feminism (Stone 2006). This text was "widely seen as the founding text of transgender studies" (Goldberg 2014, p.1) but also served to open up discussion around transgender experience and feminism. Despite the overriding shift towards inclusivity of transgender issues with feminism, there still remained some small pockets of resistance to transgender inclusion, most notably from radical feminist groups (Jacques 2014).

Third wave feminism has received criticism for being formed of more disjointed, disparate movements than the second wave. However, feminism, particularly in the UK, has very rarely been a national scale, organised campaign (Redfern & Aune 2010). Instead, feminism has always involved multiple smaller groups working on separate issues (Munro 2013; Redfern & Aune 2010).

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### 2.2.7. MEN IN THIRD WAVE FEMINISM

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As second wave feminism transformed into third wave feminism, many of the ideas surrounding the position of men in the movements were initially carried over from one series of movements to the next. Men who expressed an interest in feminism were still greeted with largely negative responses, including surprise and doubt (Digby 1998) or questions surrounding their masculinity (Digby 1998; Kimmel 1998). Michael Kimmel, the sociologist and feminist, reflected on some of the responses he received when he travelled America during this time, offering lectures about feminism at universities around the country. He was often told he couldn't be a 'real man', and received questions about his sexuality. Many of these comments came from what he termed the 'angry-white-men-in-training' (Kimmel 1998, p.59). However, he also received negative responses from some female feminists, who objected to his claims towards feminism. This often took the form of a barrage of hard questions, which Kimmel interpreted as questions designed to make him angry, make him slip, make him make some mistake, so that they could prove that after all, he was just another patriarchal man (Kimmel 1998).

To Kimmel, this response illustrated the discomfort some female feminists continued to have around the concept of male feminism. He argued that some feminists needed to retain an idea of men as a monolithic group of oppressors, in order to maintain what they understood to be

one of the core principles of feminism - that all men are oppressors. For other feminists this discomfort seemed to stem from a deeply embedded belief that feminism had previously thrived without men, and that opening feminism to men may allow them to flood in and take over control (Kimmel 1998). This, they believed, would not only negate the efforts of the women that had gone before, lessen the opportunities for female leadership within the feminism, but also disrupt the productive dynamics of women-only groups (Baily 2015; Baily 2012). However, these fears proved largely unfounded, as Jessica Baily concluded in her 2012 empirical research into mixed-gender feminist groups. In this research, she proposed that power is too complex and multi-layered to be determined just by gender, and that group roles and personalities also strongly influence group dynamics (Baily 2012).

Despite the continuous unease of some female feminists, the place of men in the feminist movements appeared to experience a gradual shift as the third wave progressed. Over the course of the third wave, men became more and more accepted within feminism, and continued to join the movements and support feminist reforms (Baily 2015; Holmgren & Hearn 2009).

For some, this was because they believed this to be the ethical, or moral thing to do (Kimmel 1998). Others came to feminist theory through academic and philosophical pathways (Digby 1998). And for others, it was through a belief that men, as well as women, were harmed by the current gender order (Digby 1998; Hopkins 1998). Throughout this time, there was a growing awareness of the improvements to men's lives that feminism could bring about. Improving relations between men and women was beginning to be perceived as a task that would eventually improve the lives of both genders, as Kimmel argued in 1998, when he stated that "I suggest that men should want to support feminist reforms: not only because of an ethical imperative - of course, it is right and just - but also because men will live happier and healthier lives" (Kimmel 1998, p.59).

By 2012, the UK Feminista website showed that the number of mixed-gender grassroots feminist groups had increased, with 52 of the 91 groups now listed as being mixed-gender (UK Feminista, 2012 cited in Baily 2015). Female feminists were becoming increasingly willing to work with men, and consider men's issues. In particular, younger and newer feminists were found to be more and more inclusive of men within feminism (Baily 2012). In 2010, Redfern and Aune conducted a survey of feminists who they defined as being new to the movements (those who had become feminists since 2000). Of their participants - 91 percent of whom identified as female - they found that over two thirds believed men could be feminists, and that 66.5 percent of participants believed feminism should be concerned with men's issues as

well as women's issues (Redfern & Aune 2010). Baily, in her study of men in UK feminist organisations, found similar trends. She interviewed both men and women who were involved in feminist groups, and claimed that "almost all of my interviewees felt that men can and should be involved in feminism in some way" (Baily 2015, p.448). When she asked her participants to reflect on why they believed that, she received a wide range of responses. These included pragmatic reasons surrounding men's contributions, the need to challenge negative stereotyping of feminism, and the need to stop feminism from becoming niche. In addition to this, the interviewees also raised moral and political reasons, such as the need to not reinforce the very gender divisions the movements sought to break down, and the fact that men themselves have much to gain from the breakdown of patriarchy (Baily 2015).

While there was a growing acceptance of men in feminism at this time, this acceptance did not always extend to transgender men. While transgender individuals were more included in third wave feminism (Jacques 2014; Stryker 2007), their presence was still viewed by some as complex or even controversial. Rubin has talked about his own experiences of being a FTM transgender individual in feminism at that time. In his account, he outlined three main ways in which feminists constructed and understood his involvement in the movement at the time. He argued that some feminists were keen to work with him, because he was seen as a hybrid, or mix, of male and female. As such, his female lived experience allowed him to be positioned as a male feminist. The second perception he encountered was that he was a female who had utilised technology to access male power and privilege. As such, he was perceived as a feminist, but in a way that positioned him as a woman and denied him a male identity. Thirdly, he encountered feminists who retained the dominant ideology of second wave feminism in relation to transgender men, which was that he was a traitor to women (Rubin 1998). These accounts demonstrate the tension that was evident at this time in approaches to FTM transgender individuals in feminism.

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#### 2.2.8. FOURTH WAVE FEMINISM

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The year 2013 saw a huge rise in feminist activity in the UK (Cochrane 2013; Sanchez 2013; Plank 2013). Robin Thicke's controversial hit *Blurred Lines* triggered uproar, with a string of universities across the country - including Plymouth, Edinburgh, Kingston and Leeds - boycotting the song (Cochrane 2013). The decision to remove Elizabeth Fry from the five pound note sparked a successful campaign calling for female figures to be represented on bank notes (BBC News 2013). The Everyday Sexism Project, a website providing a platform for people to share stories of sexist experiences, went viral, receiving 25,000 responses in its first year (Bates 2013). Notable music artist Beyoncé declared herself a feminist in an interview



with Vogue UK (Ellison 2013), while singer Lily Allen released an explicit critique of sexism in the music industry with her song *Hard Out Here* (Cragg 2013). This 2013 surge in feminist momentum has been argued to have been the start of the fourth wave of feminism (Rampton 2015; Cochrane 2013; Munro 2013; Thorpe 2013). Thorpe argued that 2013 marked the year that "a groundswell of new feminism dubbed the fourth wave begins to have true influence" (Thorpe 2013) while Cochrane stated that "everywhere you looked in the summer of 2013, a fourth wave of feminism was rising in the UK" (Cochrane 2013, p.4%).

While the fourth wave is made up of multiple movements, that campaign or focus on a range of different topics and issues, it can be distinguished by the fact that all of these multiple movements are connected by their reliance on the internet (Cochrane 2013; Munro 2013; Wooten 2012; Baumgardner 2011). The fourth wave has used blogs, twitter campaigns, websites and online media (Baumgardner 2011). The technological possibilities have changed and grown, and enabled women to raise their voices in new spaces (Cochrane 2013). In particular, social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have experienced a rapid surge in female users, with women making up 72 percent of social media users in some areas (Munro 2013). Social media has been utilised by many feminists due to its ability to provide a platform for the marginalised, and has allowed many feminist issues to gain momentum and move into mainstream attention (Cochrane 2013). Feminist campaigns such as *The F Word*, *The Women's Room*, *The Everyday Sexism Project* and *No More Page 3*, have attracted thousands of online supporters who are able to use them as both a forum for discussion and a route for activism (Munro 2013).

The existence of a fourth wave surrounding digital media has been challenged by those who do not believe that the internet, and its increased usage, is significant enough to mark a new era in feminism (Munro 2013). Online campaigns have sometimes been accused, in a derisive fashion, of being 'slacktivism' or 'clicktivism' (Cochrane 2013, p.57%) where individuals sign petitions that have no real effect other than to make those involved feel good (Munro 2013). However, many online campaigns and appeals have offline applications (Cochrane 2013). For example, the organisation behind the 'SlutWalk' protest marches was conducted almost entirely online, through Facebook, Twitter and email conversations, and spread from one march in California to over 100 marches across 15 countries (Wooten 2012). In addition to this, other campaigners have argued that it is increasingly false to draw a line between 'online' and 'offline' by calling attention to the internet as another part of public, social space (Cochrane 2013).

The reliance on the internet as a hub for fourth wave feminism has come under critique for failing to make feminism accessible to all. Fourth wave feminists have been argued to have unwittingly hidden their politics from their older, or less computer-savvy peers, creating a divide between those who are sufficiently networked, and those who are not (Munro 2013). A side effect of this has been fourth wave feminism's relative invisibility in academia. Discussions and activity taking place online in a modern, unconventional format, often leave no easily traceable record (Wooten 2012). Academic feminism may therefore struggle to engage with and study the fourth wave (Munro 2013; Wooten 2012). Indeed, it has been argued that academia has been guilty of "failing to properly examine the shape that the fourth wave is currently taking" (Munro 2013, p.24).

Fourth wave feminism shares several similarities with the wave of feminist movements that preceded it. Like third wave feminism, fourth wave feminism has members of all ages, but with a particularly high concentration of young members (Cochrane 2013). It also shares with third wave feminism a propensity to be formed largely of separate campaigns, many of which are single-issue and are led by individuals rather than organisations (Thorpe 2013; Redfern & Aune 2010). For example, many of the signature campaigns of fourth wave feminism, including the five pound note campaign and the Everyday Sexism Project were led by individuals - Caroline Criado-Perez and Laura Bates respectively (Thorpe 2013).

The fourth wave has also maintained the importance of intersectionality across these multiple campaigns and issues (Rampton 2015; Cochrane 2013; Baumgardner 2011). However, this concept has been extended and developed since its origins in the third wave of feminism. Collins and Bilge proposed a new intersectional framework in their 2016 text *Intersectionality*. Here, they defined intersectionality as a way of understanding and analysing complexity in the world through engagement with the diverse and mutually influencing factors that shape and create inequality. In this framework, they included gender, race and class, but also ethnicity, citizenship, sexuality and ability (Collins & Bilge 2016). Intersectional analysis has been framed within new language, through the creation of the popular phrase 'check your privilege'. This phrase has become popular within the fourth wave of the feminist movements, and is used to encourage individuals to recognise "where they stand in social power structures and ensuring they advocate and make space for those who are marginalised" (Cochrane 2013, p.82%).

Fourth wave feminism maintained and developed the inclusion of transgender individuals in feminism that the third wave had advocated for. The majority of the fourth wave movement considers itself to be transgender inclusive. For example, the 2017 Women's Marches in protest at the appointment of Donald Trump as President of the US attracted support from

millions of women across the globe. These marches explicitly defined themselves as trans-inclusive, and the Washington DC march featured several prominent transgender speakers (Stryker 2017). Those supporters of transgender men and women in feminism have termed the phrase 'transfeminism' to recognise the importance of transgender experiences within intersectional approaches to feminism (Van Der Gaag 2014).

Despite this, a minority of the movement still remain opposed to the inclusion of transgender individuals, and particularly transgender women, in feminism (Stryker 2017). For example, in 2014, a group of radical feminists met in Portland at an event titled Radfems Respond, to discuss their belief that transgender women are really men, and as such, should not be included in the feminist movement (Goldberg 2014). In 2008, the term TERF, or Trans-Exclusionary-Radical-Feminist, was coined to describe those who remain opposed to transgender individuals in feminism (Stryker 2017).

Some commentators have pointed out that it is hard to see how the fourth wave of feminism will mutate. Questions have been raised surrounding the development of the fourth wave, including whether it will fully materialise, or quickly fade into insignificance (Rampton 2015). Questions have also been raised about the tactics currently being utilised, with some saying that the new wave has so far been too reactive, and has taken on too many single-issue campaigns that aren't large scale or ambitious enough (Cochrane 2013). At present, fourth wave feminism remains multiple and chaotic, with tensions, points and counter-points abounding (Rampton 2015). While it is not yet clear what precise direction the movements will take, it is clear that with thousands of women and men of all ages involved, across multiple campaigns and differing issues, feminism in this country is thriving (Rampton 2015; Cochrane 2013).

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#### 2.2.9. MEN IN FOURTH WAVE FEMINISM

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While fourth wave feminism remains in many ways unpredictable, multiple and contradictory, the role of men within the movements appears to be largely supported across different organisations, level of activity, and age groups (Messner 2016; Van Der Gaag 2014; Cochrane 2013). Men are increasingly being seen as possible feminists, and there is a small but growing involvement of men in feminist activity (Van Der Gaag 2014). Van Der Gaag, in her online survey of feminists of multiple gender identities, found that 83 percent of feminists she spoke to believed men could be feminists. While there was a significant difference between age groups - with 90 percent of younger feminists agreeing, compared to 73 percent of feminists over 50 - there was a general positive view of men in feminism (Van Der Gaag 2014). The Fawcett Society, in their 2016 survey conducted by Survation, found that four percent of UK

males considered themselves to be feminists, compared to eight percent of women (Survation 2016; The Fawcett Society 2016). A 2015 YouGov survey, in contrast, found that 27 percent of their male respondents considered themselves to be feminists (YouGov 2015), while a 2014 Ipsos survey across 15 countries, including the UK, found that 48 percent of their male respondents identified as a feminist (Ipsos 2014).

This change has been echoed by the rise in organisations and projects that are either aimed directly at men, or which explicitly state they encourage men as well as women to become involved. For example, Laura Bates, of The Everyday Sexism Project, has stated that this project, while aimed primarily at women, strives for men to be involved as well (Cochrane 2013). The United Nations (UN) Women 'HeForShe' campaign - which was launched in 2014 by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and UN Women Global Goodwill Ambassador Emma Watson - is a targeted platform which aims to engage men and boys and encourage them to become "change agents towards the achievement of gender equality" (UN Women 2016b). This high profile project includes hundreds of thousands of men from around the globe, including heads of states, chancellors of universities and CEOs of major companies (UN Women 2016a). Other, smaller projects include the MenEngage Network, which was launched in 2012 by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, to raise awareness of the important influence men can have in reducing all kinds of inequality and gender-based violence (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe 2016).

Echoing developments in third wave feminism, much of this support for men in feminism is based upon the conviction that both men and women will benefit from equality (Van Der Gaag 2014). However, despite the growth in men who identify as feminists, organisations aimed at involving men in feminism, and female feminists who believe men can be involved in feminism, the question of men in feminism still has the potential to create highly polarised and forceful responses. When Van Der Gaag asked participants why they believed men could, or could not, be feminists, she received answers that ranged from support for men in feminism such as "we need men for gender equality", to outright rejection of men in feminism supported by statements such as "men do not suffer oppression in the same way as women" (Van Der Gaag 2014, pp.41–42).

Perhaps some of the most crucial pieces of evidence of a shift in the perception of men in feminism can be found in discussions of the anti-men approaches of some second wave feminism. Van Der Gaag has argued that historical perceptions of men as representatives of the oppressors, or of the patriarchy, was a failing of feminism. She argued that second wave feminism was sometimes guilty of attacking men, to the movement's detriment (Van Der Gaag

2014). Messner has made a similar claim, arguing that previous anti-male monologues were guilt-imposing, and served only to shut off conversation, rather than as openings for dialogue (Messner 2016). Finally, Cochrane has argued that now, it is perceived by some feminists as strange, and counter-productive when they encounter people or groups who seem to be anti-men (Cochrane 2013).

Fourth wave feminism, as a movement that is largely inclusive to transgender individuals, has become increasingly aware of the potential offered to the movements by FTM transgender men (Alter 2018; Van Der Gaag 2014). In line with this, fourth wave feminism has built increasing relationships with transgender activist groups and communities. These relationships recognise the way that many transgender men and women are challenging traditional notions of gender (Van Der Gaag 2014). In addition to this, there has been a growing awareness that those transgender men who were raised and socialised as female, are able to offer reflections on the different experiences they have had in the gender order as they have transitioned and lived as men (Alter 2018).

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#### 2.2.10. NEGOTIATIONS OF FEMINISM

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Despite the recent surge in feminist activity, public perceptions of the feminist movement often remain dominated by negative impressions, stereotypes and misconceptions (Charles et al. 2018; Swirsky & Angelone 2016; 2014; Jenen et al. 2009; Aronson 2003; hooks 2000). These negative connotations have existed for a number of years, with Jenen et al. finding implicit underlying negative attitudes to feminism in their study in 2009 (Jenen et al. 2009), while Aronson described the "negative public discourse by antifeminist organisations and media figures" in 2003 (Aronson 2003, p.905). Many of these negative perceptions are based upon misrepresentative or derogatory stereotypes. This includes the conception of the radical, angry feminist, with terms such as 'bra-burning crazies', and 'femi-nazis' used to describe members of the feminist movement (Swirsky & Angelone 2014, p.230). In addition to this, feminists are often compared to, or conflated with lesbians, which relies upon in-built homophobia to discredit the feminist movement. The feminist movement has struggled to successfully change this negative image, although young people have been argued to be increasingly challenging the stigmatisation of feminist identities (Charles et al. 2018).

In a study of involvement with the feminist movement among young women, Swirsky and Angelone reported a discrepancy between the number of individuals who supported feminist ideas, issues and campaigns, and the number who identified as a feminist (Swirsky & Angelone 2016; 2014). In their survey of 494 women, almost 20 percent of the participants rejected a

feminist identity. Despite this, many of these women also stated that they agreed with many of the issues, causes or tenets of the feminist movements (Swirsky & Angelone 2014).

This disjuncture echoes that found by multiple studies that have considered how both men and women relate to feminism (Swirsky & Angelone 2016; 2014; Zucker 2004; Aronson 2003; Riley 2001). As far back as 2003, Aronson found that few young women would identify as feminist. Instead, women who agreed with feminist principles would "express feminist ideas without labelling them as such" (Aronson 2003, p.905). This was echoed by Zucker in 2004, and Jenen et al. in 2009, who both argued that many people were reluctant to call themselves feminists, regardless of whether they did or did not agree with feminist ideals (Jenen et al. 2009; Zucker 2004). Swirsky and Angelone termed this phenomenon the 'feminist paradox' (Swirsky & Angelone 2016, p.445). This paradox is epitomised by the phrase 'I'm not a feminist, but....', which several theorists have argued is used by women to reject the feminist label or identity before proceeding to align themselves with feminist beliefs (Francis 2006; Zucker 2004; Aronson 2003). Swirsky and Angelone argued that this disjuncture is linked to the negative conceptions and stereotypes surrounding the feminist movement (Swirsky & Angelone 2016). As such, many individuals may support feminist goals, but be reluctant to describe themselves as a feminist due to the stigma surrounding the movement (Swirsky & Angelone 2014; Zucker 2004; Aronson 2003).

In addition to the desire to avoid associations with the negative perceptions of feminism, other theorists have argued that some men and women do not consider themselves as feminists due to their understanding of the relationship between feminism and activism. For some, involvement with feminism appears to be synonymous with activism. As such, some men and women appear to reject a feminist identity, not because they disagree with the labels or ideas, but because they think they are not active enough to be considered part of the movements (Swirsky & Angelone 2016; Zucker 2004; Aronson 2003). In a study of negotiation of feminism, Zucker termed these individuals, who are politically informed and opinionated, but do not see themselves as being active within the feminist movement, engaged observers (Zucker 2004). In this case, engagement with feminist identities may be higher if there was more awareness of the importance of ideological support, without individuals engaging in traditional forms of feminist activism (Swirsky & Angelone 2014).

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### 2.2.11. FEMINISM AND MASCULINITY

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Several theorists have specifically considered the way in which those who identify as men negotiate their involvement with feminism (Schmitz & Haltom 2017; Precopio 2015; Pleasants 2011; Riley 2001). The negative stereotypes surrounding men in feminism have been argued to

be at odds with stereotypical notions of masculinity (Schmitz & Haltom 2017), and as such, identifying as a feminist can be seen to pose a threat to successful negotiations of masculinity (Silver et al. 2019).

Connell defined masculinity as "simultaneously a place in gendered relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices on bodily experiences, personality and culture" (Connell 2001b, p.34). Brittan, in more concrete terms, defined masculinity as the dominant form of male behaviour in any particular milieu (Brittan 2001), while Hearn has argued that in many cases, the concept of masculinity has been used simply as a normative standard to which men aspire (Hearn 1996). Connell also proposed that masculinity is a social practice that is not fixed, but instead is constructed through social interactions. The concept of masculinity is inherently relational, and only has meaning in contrast or opposition to notions of femininity (Connell 2005). Masculinity must also be understood in relation to other social structures, such as race, class, age and ethnicity (Robinson 2015; Connell 2005; Connell et al. 2005; Connell 2001b; Connell 1995), with the masculinity of white men understood not only in relation to women, but also to other groups such as black men (Connell 2005).

Central to theorisations of masculinities has been Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity (Robinson 2015). Hegemonic masculinity was defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted style of patriarchy, and guarantees the continued position of men (Connell 1995). Hegemonic masculinity is enacted by only a small minority of men, but many other men are complicit in maintaining the hegemonic complex (Connell 2001b; Connell 1987). Hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to not only women, but also in relation to subordinated masculinities (Connell 1987). Both gay and transgendered masculinities exist as forms of subordinated masculinities, whilst simultaneously challenging and disrupting the concept of masculinity (Edwards 2005; Ekins & Kind 2005). For gay masculinities, this challenge arises from their position as a contradiction in terms: even as some gay men work to reclaim the idea of masculinity, their position as gay men is viewed as a negation of masculinity (Edwards 2005). For transgender men, this challenge arises from the movement between genders that challenges the rigidity of gender barriers (Ekins & Kind 2005).

Forms of masculinity are understood to be diverse and multiple in nature (Robinson 2015; Ward 2015; Watson 2015; Cohen & Maurino 2014; Connell 2014; Connell 2005; Connell et al. 2005; Connell 2001b; Hearn 1996; Connell 1987), with Connell declaring that there is "not one universal masculinity, but rather multiple masculinities" (Connell 2014, p.219). Ward has

argued that not only do forms of masculinities alter between individuals, but also that individuals move between different forms of masculinities in different moments. Ward proposed that individuals are "not the bearer of one all-encompassing masculinity that is always, and everywhere, the same" and used the term "chameleonisation" to describe the complex process of shifting between forms of masculinity (Ward 2015, p.218). While Ward argued that men are capable of negotiating different forms of masculinity, he also acknowledged that the success of these negotiations is impacted by other elements of the individual's identity, including their class, race and location (Ward 2015), or what Connell referred to as "fixing mechanisms" (Connell 2001a, p.8). Robinson termed these movements between forms of masculinity "transitional masculinities" and considered these movements over different spaces (Robinson 2014, p.156), while Spector-Mersel argued that both space and time need to be considered in order to fully understand shifting forms of masculinity (Spector-Mersel 2006).

In recent years, research has increasingly begun to focus on men's feminist identities (Silver et al. 2019). Precopio has argued that many young men still view feminism as a movement for women, and associations with the feminist movements risk young men being feminised (Precopio 2015). Similarly, Schmitz and Haltom suggested that the negative stereotypes surrounding men in feminism are at odds with stereotypical notions of masculinity (Schmitz & Haltom 2017). Silver et al. have developed this view in their research, by considering the different stereotypes associated with feminist men, including their increased likelihood of being feminine, gay, cross-dressers, or less sexually attractive (Silver et al. 2019). Robnett and Anderson have also considered the relationship between masculinity and ethnicity in feminist negotiations, and found that men across many different ethnic groups reported feeling discomfort with identifying as feminists (Robnett & Anderson 2017). Riley, however, has argued that while feminists themselves are still viewed negatively, men are increasingly conscious of the desire to not appear sexist. As such, they must negotiate a need to distance themselves from the feminist movements and the negative connotations it is associated with, with a need to appear interested in equality. To do this, Riley suggested that men use the 'I'm not a feminist, but...' language in a similar fashion to women, to combine support for equality with a distancing from the feminist movement (Riley 2001).

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#### 2.2.12. FEMINIST ENGAGEMENT: DICHOTOMY OR SPECTRUM?

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For both men and women, negotiating feminism remains a complex process (Zucker 2004). Individuals negotiate the multiple meanings and conceptions of feminism (Aronson 2003) in a nuanced, and multi-faceted way (Swirsky & Angelone 2014). In this process, individuals must



negotiate not only the complexity of the different meanings, interpretations and perceptions of the feminist movement, but how these intersect with their sense of self. The multiple and complex manner of these negotiations adds complexity to conceptions of feminist engagement as a clear dichotomy between 'feminist' and 'not-feminist'.

Several theorists have argued that further attention needs to be paid to the range of identifications with feminism (Swirsky & Angelone 2016; Aronson 2003). Aronson argued that many women and men embraced and engaged with some elements of feminism, and with some feminist principles, while at the same time, rejected others. As such, they failed to classify themselves as either a feminist or a non-feminist (Aronson 2003). Swirsky and Angelone echoed this, arguing that many of their participants identified with some aspects of feminism, but not others (Swirsky & Angelone 2016). They called for a removal of the tendency to dichotomise feminist identity into either 'feminist' or 'not feminist'. Instead, they called for more awareness of the multiple locations or shades that exist between these positions (Swirsky & Angelone 2016; 2014). Both Aronson and Swirsky and Angelone argued that the continuous and dynamic nature of feminist engagement should be recognised through a continuum approach, rather than a dichotomous approach (Swirsky & Angelone 2016; Aronson 2003).

### 2.3. Feminist Participatory Action Research, Subjectivity and Gender

The first section of this literature review has considered the history of feminism, and the place of men within these movements. Now that some of the debates in this area have been outlined, this section can proceed to discuss the second key area of literature, by engaging with debates surrounding participatory action research, feminism, and subjectivities.

This section provides an overview of the theoretical and practical nature of feminist participatory action research. To do this, this overview begins by considering the origins of participatory action research, including both participatory research and action research. The review then considers the theoretical underpinnings of these research ethics - with particular attention paid to the writings of Paulo Freire - before proceeding to consider some of the practicalities of doing participatory action research. This overview also considers the specific nature of feminist participatory action research, and the place of men within this research ethic. Finally, this section of the chapter discusses the concept of subjectivity, and the relationship between feminist participatory action research and changes to subjectivities.

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### 2.3.1. ORIGINS OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH: PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

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Since the latter half of the twentieth century, participatory research methods have gained respectability and attention both within and without of the academic world (Pain 2004; Cornwall & Jewkes 1995; Hall 1992). The term participatory research (PR) covers a wide range of approaches and applications, but is based around a commitment to involving those who are conventionally the researched in all or some stages of the research process. Depending on the scale of involvement, this can include participation from the initial problem definition right through to results dissemination and action (Pain 2004; Cornwall & Jewkes 1995). PR aims to create knowledge that is relevant and morally aware through collaborative, non-hierarchical processes (Pain 2004). As such, it can be understood to be a research ethic - rather than a method - with multiple possible techniques available to be mobilised within its overarching framework. These techniques include participatory mapping, diagramming, theatre, art exhibitions, music, dance, photography, storytelling, video documentaries and oral history sharing (Pain 2004; Hall 1992). PR, as an approach that attempts to work in depth with a community, can create rich and detailed knowledge about this area or group. One of the benefits of PR is therefore the possibility to work with a marginalised community to forefront the perspective of these groups and challenge social exclusion (Pain 2004).

PR originated not from within the academy, but from an adult education setting. In the 1950s and 1960s, the dominant international research paradigm was based on the US and European model of positivism (Kitchen 2006; Hall 1992). Through colonial and post-colonial relationships, international scholarships and the training of researchers in Europe and North America, this dominant paradigm was extended across most of the globe. The concept of PR developed in Latin America in the 1970s as a critique of the positivistic research paradigm (Hall 1992).

Many of the principles of PR were influenced by the work published in the 1960s of Paulo Freire. Freire was a Brazilian educator and philosopher writing in the second half of the 20th century (Freire Institute 2015; Goulet 2013). The unifying thread of his work was the idea of critical consciousness as a route to emancipation (Goulet 2013). He created the concept of *conscientização*; this Portuguese word translates into the English idea of 'conscientization', or 'consciousness raising' or quite simply 'realisation' (Reverso 2015). PR researchers have built on Freire's work to argue that participation within research can facilitate the process of *conscientização* in participants, who then go on to lead social change (Cahill et al. 2010; Cahill 2007c; Cornwall & Jewkes 1995).

With the origins of PR rooted in the community, there have been debates surrounding the appropriateness of conducting PR both from within the academy (Maguire et al. 2004; Brydon-Miller et al. 2003; Hall 1992) and from government-led or official programmes (Jupp 2008; Jupp 2007). Many PR projects are led by academics as part of a university endorsed research project. However, the pressures surrounding knowledge production, career advancement and the difficulty of publishing collaborative work offer the threat to distort the PR process (Brydon-Miller et al. 2003; Hall 1992). Involvement in government-led programmes has also been critiqued for remaining blind to the unequal power dynamics existing within them, and incorporating participants into existing decisions, rather than allowing true decision-making (Jupp 2008; 2007). Cornwall and Jewkes have argued that as the term PR becomes more widely used, there has been some conceptual blurring around the term 'participatory'. While some research projects that have called themselves participatory have a high level of in-depth participation, there are others which are limited in their interactions with the researched community (Cornwall & Jewkes 1995).

Participatory research is an overarching term that includes multiple forms of research. These differ not only in the depth of participation they offer, but also in the format this participation takes (Campbell & Lassiter 2010; Pain 2004; Cornwall & Jewkes 1995; Hall 1992). In addition to participatory action research, PR includes research ethics such as co-productive research, collaborative research, and community co-authored research (Durose et al. 2011; Larson et al. 2011; Campbell & Lassiter 2010). Collaborative research involves working 'with' the researched community and aiming to give them greater control over the research process (Campbell & Lassiter 2010). Co-production in research has been similarly defined as a research form that involves "working 'with' communities and offering communities greater control over the research process" (Durose et al. 2011, p.2). This research approach, however, also aims to include elements of activist, action orientated activities to the process (N8 2016, p.12). Community co-authoring shares this focus on the production of an output for the community, but focuses on the creation of written documents and the processes of creating these (Larson et al. 2011). These approaches, whilst all differing slightly in their approaches, formats and styles, can all be understood as forms of participatory research due to their shared commitment to involved the researched in some or all parts of the research process.

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### 2.3.2. ORIGINS OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH: ACTION RESEARCH

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Action research is another form of research ethic which shares similarities with PR. Action research (AR) can be defined as the study of a social situation with a view to bringing about

change as part of the research act (Campbell & McNamara 2010; Brydon-Miller et al. 2003). It has been argued that "the fundamental aim of action research is to improve practice rather than produce knowledge" (Campbell & McNamara 2010, p.14). Like PR, AR can be understood not as a methodology, but as an approach to inquiry (Reason & Bradbury 2007). Like PR, AR draws on the work of Freire and his ideas of *conscientização* (Gaya Wicks et al. 2007; Reason & Bradbury 2007). AR works closely with small groups or communities, and like PR, it has its origins within the community, and occupies a contested place within the academy (Reason & Bradbury 2007; Brydon-Miller et al. 2003). One of the most interesting intersections between PR and AR is the concept of participation. AR theorists have claimed that all AR should be conducted with a participatory ethos, and that all AR should, by definition, be participatory (Gaya Wicks et al. 2007; Brydon-Miller et al. 2003). This shared commitment to the participatory nature of research may be argued to place AR within the bounds of PR, as one of its many sub-groups or types. However, theorists working within the AR framework claim to be able to trace its origins back prior to the development of PR. Brydon-Miller, Greenwood and Maguire, in their introduction to the first edition of the Action Research Journal, argued that AR can be traced to work being done in the 1940s in the US by Kurt Lewin (Corbett et al. 2007; Brydon-Miller et al. 2003). Campbell & McNamara have echoed this, also claiming that AR dates back to the 1940s, while Wicks has developed this by arguing that the development of the concept came later, and was influenced by the civil rights, feminist, and anti-war movements (Campbell & McNamara 2010; McIntyre 2008; Gaya Wicks et al. 2007). Both AR and PR have a complex history that emerged over time from a broad range of fields (Brydon-Miller et al. 2003). While the interlinked nature of their development remains debated, PR and AR share a clear overlap of theoretical and moral underpinnings.

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### 2.3.3. PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

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Fals Borda was the first person to combine the concepts of PR and AR to create the term participatory action research (PAR) (Hall 1992). Fals Borda was a Colombian theorist who began publishing his work on PAR in the 1960s (Guardian 2008). He originally used the term action research in his work, but later combined this with participatory research theory to create the label participatory action research (Rahman 2008; Hall 1992). He coined this term to encourage a form of research that gave people a true sense of ownership over enquiries. While Fals Borda was the first person to use the term PAR, some PAR theorists have argued that prior to this it was being practiced under different names in different places, such as emancipatory research in Germany (Rahman 2008).

Since then, PAR has evolved to become understood as a process whereby participants can "collectively investigate their own reality, by themselves or in partnership with friendly outsiders, take action of their own to advance their lives, and reflect on their ongoing experience" (Rahman 2008, p.49). McIntyre, the education theorist, has argued that PAR is defined by adherence to four underlying tenets; collective commitment to investigating an issue, the desire to engage in self and collective reflection, the decision to engage in beneficial action, and the building of alliances between researchers and participants (McIntyre 2008). These definitions from Rahman and McIntyre explicitly draw together the action and participatory strands of PAR. Other theorists, however, have defined it with much more emphasis placed upon the participatory element of the project, and left the action elements implicitly suggested. Cahill has defined PAR as simply a process where those studied are involved as decision makers and co-researchers in some or all stages of the research (Cahill 2007c). McIntyre, later in her 2008 work, has also drawn attention to the importance of the depth of participation. She claimed that PAR requires a quality of participation, and that to truly participate, participants must be involved in the way the research is conceptualised and conceived (McIntyre 2008).

This focus on the extent of participation has been argued to be the key differential between PR and PAR. PAR, as it draws upon both PR and AR theory, can be understood as a type, or subgroup of both research approaches. The position of PAR within PR can be considered in relation to the depth of participation. Cornwall and Jewkes have argued that within PR, PAR is an approach that aims to involve the participants in all stages of the research process (Cornwall & Jewkes 1995). Within the field of study of AR, PAR is considered to be one of the family of practices and ideas in the services of humans that AR encompasses (Reason & Bradbury 2007).

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#### 2.3.4. PAR AND PAULO FREIRE

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As PAR shares the theoretical underpinnings of both AR and PR, it also shares several of the key theoretical underpinnings that these approaches both rest upon. Like both AR and PR, PAR draws heavily upon the work of Paulo Freire (Cahill et al. 2010; McIntyre 2008; Rahman 2008; Cahill 2007c; 2007b; 2007a; Corbett et al. 2007). Like PR and AR, PAR has focused mostly upon Freire's idea of *conscientização*, or the development of a critical consciousness as a route to liberation. PAR theorists have argued that the awakening of the critical consciousness in participants can occur through critical reflection upon one's everyday lives. Through the process of critically questioning issues important to themselves and their community,

participants can come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process and open to change (Cahill et al. 2010; Cahill 2007c).

PAR, by involving participants in both a participatory and action orientated approach, has also incorporated Freire's work on the unification of theory and practice (McIntyre 2008). Freire argued that the two processes must always be used together. Only when intellectual thought and reflection are combined with action can true liberation occur. This, the crucial combination of action and reflection, Freire termed "praxis" (Freire 1996, p.47). PAR epitomises this combination, through encouraging participants to both reflect and act throughout the research process (McIntyre 2008).

While some elements of Freire's theories are employed by PAR in a relatively unproblematic fashion, there are other elements of his theories that PAR negotiates with somewhat more controversy. One such element is Freire's ambivalence towards those whom he terms 'the oppressors' (Freire 1996, p.26). Throughout his writing, Freire outlines the importance of working with the 'oppressed' (Freire 1996, p.26). It is the oppressed whom Freire sought to liberate, and the oppressed who were the primary recipients of his educational reforms and emancipatory adult education programmes (Freire Institute 2015). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he explicitly declares:

**Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity of liberation?**

**(Freire 1996, p.27).**

PAR theorists have interpreted this as a call for them to work primarily with the oppressed or the underprivileged (Rahman 2008; Reid & Frisby 2008). Indeed, in Rahman's 2008 work, he explicitly defined PAR as a process that specifically works with the underprivileged by declaring that PAR was an approach where "the central thinking in this perspective is that ordinary, underprivileged people will collectively investigate their own reality" (Rahman 2008, p.49). However, Freire also made it clear that he believed that any successful breakdown of an unjust social order would require not just the liberation of the oppressed, but also of the oppressors. He argued that the unjust social order causes not only the dehumanisation of the oppressed, but also of the oppressors themselves through the violence they themselves engender. He declared that "this, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well" (Freire 1996, p.26). This liberation must be led by the energy and passion of the oppressed, but also of those who are "truly solidary with them (sic)" (Freire 1996, p.27). Here, Freire appeared to say that there was a place in his

libratory processes for those who are understood as the oppressors, the privileged, or the dominant. If this is the case, then there exists a disjuncture between Freire's writings, and their interpretation within PAR projects. If PAR truly aims to build on the theories of Paulo Freire, then the definition of whom can be involved in the PAR process may be wider than currently declared by some theorists.

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### 2.3.5. DOING PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

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There is no fixed formula for how PAR must be done, and no overriding theoretical framework that underpins it. Instead, it draws from a variety of theoretical and ideological perspectives. It is used across multiple disciplines and subject areas, including health studies, community issues, agricultural technology, women's development, mental health studies and disabled rights (McIntyre 2008). However, across this wide body of research, some similar themes emerge in many PAR studies.

Within PAR, the emphasis within participation needs to be on quality and depth of participation, rather than the proportionality (McIntyre 2008; Cahill 2007c; Pain 2004). The group needs to decide what form this participation will take, and the most practical and doable way of achieving this (McIntyre 2008). Theorists have discussed several ways of negotiating this with the group. McIntyre, in her project with young people in deprived urban areas, proposed beginning the project by discussing the nature of PAR and what it means to participate. To do this, she got her group of participants to define and discuss the terms participation, action and research. From here, the group delineated how they believed members of the group needed to participate, and how they would democratically approach any decisions that needed to be made. Once these decisions had been made as a group, they drew up contracts that outlined these conditions, and agreed it was the joint responsibility of every member of the group to maintain this (McIntyre 2008). Cahill, in her study of young womyn (*sic*) of colour living in the Lower East Side of New York, used a similar approach. She started her project with the creation of a set of informal guidelines that outlined how the participants expected themselves and others to conduct themselves within the space of the project. These included being present at meetings on time, respecting others' opinions and points of view, actively listening, and disagreeing in a way that was constructive (Cahill 2007a). Establishing contracts or guidelines early on in the project emerges here as a theme common to both projects (McIntyre 2008; Cahill 2007a). Cahill argued that these guidelines were necessary in order to create an environment where everyone involved would feel comfortable to express themselves and contribute (Cahill 2007a).

Creating a suitable environment for the project, in which all members of the group feel they can participate, is not just something that must occur at the beginning of the project. Instead, this is an ongoing process, and one that Cahill has argued is the primary element of the researchers role as facilitator (Cahill 2007a). The role of the researcher as facilitator is one of the most common themes discussed by theorists in relation to the 'doing' of PAR (McIntyre 2008; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; Corbett et al. 2007; Cornwall & Jewkes 1995; Maguire 1987). Cornwall & Jewkes have argued that the reality of PAR is messy, exhausting and chaotic. They described the facilitators role as being centred around assisting the group with the negotiation of the research process in the face of the barriers of time pressures, exhaustion and the threat of possible backlash from both within and without of the project (Cornwall & Jewkes 1995). For McIntyre, the role of the facilitator, or practitioner, was to assist with steering the project when it was floundering, and to provide a slight push when needed. She argued that the group sometimes needs the guidance of the facilitator, but that the facilitator must remember that the group are the primary tellers of their own stories, and their voices must be prioritised throughout (McIntyre 2008). In contrast, Maguire reflected on her role as a facilitator in a project with a group of women, and realised that in her concerns over the voices of the group, she had failed to realise she needed to be more proactive as a facilitator. After the project had concluded, she realised that by taking a more active role, and using boards, pens and other resources, she could have encouraged group cohesion and used her skills to get the most out of all her participants (Maguire 1987).

Cahill, from her position as a geographer, used spatial theory to explore the role of the facilitator further. She described the project as a space, or environment, and argued that the role of the facilitator was to ensure that this environment was a safe space for honest and constructive dialogue (Cahill 2007a). This was echoed by Corbett et al. who declared that the role of the facilitator is someone who "makes it possible for participants to create a space in which they can share experiences and information to create common meaning and develop actions together" (Corbett et al. 2007, p.83). Cahill argued that the facilitator must create the environment, and then allow the participants to use this space to lead their own research. In practice, this often involved disrupting the dominant voices and allowing others to speak, or breaking down and clarifying for everyone what was being said (Cahill 2007a).

For many researchers, negotiating their position as facilitator within the group can be challenging. McIntyre discussed her research with young people, and the difficulty of being an adult facilitator within a group of teenagers. Throughout the project, she had to keep reminding them that she was not their teacher, and was not going to take up that position within their group. The young people were accustomed to the hierarchical nature of schools



and learning in the 'banking style' of education, and were unused to questioning authority. As a facilitator, she had to negotiate this difference in order to allow the participants to feel they could take an active role in the decision making of the project (McIntyre 2008). For Cahill, negotiating sameness and difference was also an issue. She also discussed the fact that young people often identify researchers with adult authority figures. She also, however, had to negotiate her position as the only white member of the group in a project that centred around the issue of race. She argued that acknowledging whiteness at least went some way to identifying the invisibility of whiteness. When negotiating difference, she argued, the only possibility was to be transparent, and to reveal all the issues of negotiating the facilitators positions and its possible effects on the project (Cahill 2007a).

Another common theme raised in discussions of PAR is the issue of recursive, or circular, knowledge. Within PAR, the participant has to explore aspects of their lives, communities or concerns. To come to this point, several theorists have pointed to the importance of re-visiting either group-meeting transcripts, or reflexive writing (McIntyre 2008; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004). McIntyre, in her project, used the transcripts of group meetings. She argued this was not data that belonged to the researcher, but instead, a shared resource. Her participants were able to go over these repeatedly, drawing out the key themes in a circular, reflexive process (McIntyre 2008). Similarly, in Cahill's project, her participants used reflexive writing as the main method of inquiry. Writing, she argued, was not a way to transmit a message, but a way to grow and develop ideas. They used an ongoing method of data-analysis, with the regular practice of comparing experiences and findings, in a looped process that attempted to create theory organically from within the writing (Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004).

Action within the research process is another of the themes found in discussions around PAR (McIntyre 2008; Reid & Frisby 2008; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; Reid 2006; Cahill 2004; Maguire 1987). Reid defined action as "a multi-faceted and dynamic process that can range from speaking to validate oneself and one's experiences in the world, to 'the process of doing something' such as taking a deliberate step towards changing one's circumstances" (Reid 2006, p.317). Similarly, McIntyre argued that action can be defined as any effort to remove some impediment, be this structural or ideological (McIntyre 2008). However, this boundary between structural and ideological may perhaps be a false dichotomy. Instead, many projects, and indeed actions, move between these forms of output. For example, in McIntyre's work, the PAR group organised events such as a clean-up of the local area (McIntyre 2008). This clean-up could be argued to be a structural action, as it directly improved the appearance and safety of the neighbourhood. However, it may have also worked to remove ideological impediments to those living in the community. By improving the appearance of the area, the

perceptions of the community may change to both internal and external actors. In addition to this, the success of this project may have led to a change in the way that the young participants of the project conceived of their sense of self, identity and worth. In this sense, this action was both a structural and ideological one, that had ramifications for both the participants and their community in diverse ways. Similarly, in Cahills' project, there is also a movement between the two forms of action. The project involved the creation of a website that aimed to provide a resource for young women in the area. This website not only provided a forum space for young women to communicate, but also offered links to advice, services and other resources that were targeting women of their demographic (Cahill 2007c). This website aimed to remove ideological barriers by breaking down and problematising stereotyping of young women. However, it also aimed to remove structural inequalities by helping these young women to access services and resources that available to them (Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004).

Heavily overlapped with the discussion of action outputs of PAR projects has been a discussion of how knowledge generated in the project can be presented. McIntyre has proposed using photographs, paintings and collages. These methods can be incorporated into the circular process of knowledge creation to be both a form of knowledge production and presentation (McIntyre 2008). Other theorists, such as Cahill, have attempted to combine approaches such as these with more traditional, literature based approaches. In her project, as well as the production of the website and a sticker campaign, she also co-wrote an academic paper with members of her project (Cahill 2007c).

While PAR has no fixed formula defining how it must be done, it is clear that there are several themes that are commonly present across PAR projects. The issues of negotiating participation, the place of the facilitator, the formation of knowledge and the output of the project are all discussed across PAR projects. Several PAR theorists have called for more accounts and discussions of the nature of PAR projects, in order to inform researchers working with PAR (Reid & Frisby 2008; Cahill 2007a). Cahill, in particular, declared that "To advance the field of youth participatory research, we also need self-reflexive accounts of practice evaluating what works and what does not" (Cahill 2007a, p.299).

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### 2.3.6. PAR AND FEMINIST RESEARCH

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During the development of PAR, issues surrounding gender, and 'women' as a category rarely received specific attention (Reid & Frisby 2008). Instead, women were included in the concept of the 'oppressed' or the 'community' more generally (Reid & Frisby 2008; Maguire 1987). While participatory action research and feminist research hold no explicit historical

relationship (Reid & Frisby 2008; Maguire et al. 2004; Gatenby & Humphries 2000; Maguire 1987), they have been argued to be two styles of research that share similarities in principle, ethics, and aims (Cahill et al. 2010; Frisby et al. 2009; Langan & Morton 2009; Reid & Frisby 2008; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; Maguire et al. 2004; Gatenby & Humphries 2000; Maguire 1987).

One of the key similarities between the two research ethics is their shared emphasis on the stimulation of positive change. Both feminist researchers and participatory action researchers aim to improve social relations for the better by attempting to remove oppression (Reid & Frisby 2008; Maguire et al. 2004; Gatenby & Humphries 2000; Maguire 1987). Maguire et al., in their introduction to a compilation of feminist PAR essays, described this as PAR and feminist research sharing a 'mutual destination' that they have travelled separately towards (Maguire et al. 2004, p.ix). Previously, Maguire had discussed this in more detail in her 1987 book on feminism and participatory research. She described both PAR and feminist research as being alternative research paradigms. She argued that the prevailing ideology surrounding the concept of positivism had made it more than a set of research techniques. Instead, she argued, it had become the dominant paradigm. Participatory, Marxist and feminist forms of research all formed alternative research paradigms that sought to disrupt the status quo of positivism and emancipate people from oppressive structures (Maguire 1987).

Of these alternative paradigms, she argued that participatory and feminist forms of research, in particular, share several key similarities. She outlined five areas in which she believed that PR and feminist research overlapped. These included: the importance of challenging the idea of objectivity, the importance of challenging the idea of the detached or unemotional researcher, avoiding a need for generalisations in favour of more localised or personal research, the use of language and naming in the research process, and finally, the importance of breaking down the idea of the social scientist as a detached, impartial advisor (Maguire 1987).

More recently, other feminist PAR writers have raised additional similarities between PAR and feminist research. Torre and Ayala argued that PAR shares with feminist research a commitment to theorising from the flesh. They argued that PAR aims to challenge traditional notions of expertise by assuming that everyday people carry deep knowledge about the conditions of their lives (Torre & Ayala 2009). This idea was echoed by other PAR and feminist theorists, including Frisby et al., who argued that both feminist researchers and action researchers believe that all humans are able to build theory. They argued that humans are

intrinsically connection-building, meaning-creating beings, who constantly attempt to make sense of the world through these processes (Frisby et al. 2009; Cahill 2007a; 2007c).

Amongst these similarities, there are also, of course, differences. Maguire argued that the primary difference between participatory forms of research and feminist research lies in the research process itself. She argued that feminist theory contained many discussions of the underlying reasons for conducting feminist research, and the topics of feminist research. However, she argued that there was a deficit of discussion surrounding the actual doing of feminist research (Maguire 1987; see also, Reid & Frisby 2008). Many feminist researchers at the time protested any suggestion of a feminist methodology, leading to a lack of work that promoted anything as innovative or exciting as the theory behind it. In contrast, PAR writers have focused heavily on the intricacies and contradictions of the doing of PAR (Maguire 1987).

Several theorists have argued that these similarities and mutual goals would benefit from ongoing dialogue between the two research ethics (Reid & Frisby 2008; Maguire 1987). Maguire has argued that of the five key areas of similarities between PR and feminist research, there are several where each could learn from the other. Participatory researchers, she argued, have not been critical enough of the way in which they may use sexist or gender blind language within the research process. The use of language and naming is therefore an area where PR could learn from increased dialogue with feminist researchers. In contrast, she argued that feminist researchers are beginning to engage with the changing role of the social scientist as an activist being, but that they have not reached any agreement on how far this can extend. In this sense, feminist researchers, she argues, could learn from discussion with participatory researchers (Maguire 1987). Reid & Frisby have echoed this more recently, arguing again that feminist research has been guilty of not looking at specific strategies that can contribute to activist agendas. In contrast, they believe that PAR has been guilty of gender blindness by failing to engage with women specifically (Reid & Frisby 2008). Both Maguire, and Reid & Frisby, have argued that both approaches could work towards addressing their respective oversights and limitations through dialogue with one another (Reid & Frisby 2008; Maguire 1987). This was summarised by Reid and Frisby, who stated that:

**FR [and] PAR... share some mutual goals, and ongoing dialogue could create synergies between them....not only are they more powerful as a larger and connected community, but epistemologically and methodologically they serve to buttress one another.**

**(Reid & Frisby 2008, p.94).**

This attempted synthesis between the two approaches, endeavouring to blend critical feminist theory and PAR, has been termed feminist participatory action research, or FPAR (Langan & Morton 2009).

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### 2.3.7. FPAR FRAMEWORKS

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Several writers have proposed frameworks for feminist participatory action research. Maguire, in 1987, proposed a framework for FPAR that was itself an example of praxis, as it was developed in conjunction with several women's PR groups. This framework was separated into nine parts, and called on feminist forms of participatory research to: critique androcentric elements of PAR, ensure gender holds a central place on issues agenda, ensure gender holds a central place in theoretical debates, pay attention to gender issues throughout the project, give attention to how gender effects the receipt of project benefits, consider gendered language use, consider gender within the research team, consider gender as a factor to consider in the overall project evaluation, and finally review all projects with gender in mind (Maguire 1987).

In 2008, Reid and Frisby also proposed a framework for FPAR. This framework aimed to help feminist researchers to pursue transformative research, by engaging in action-orientated and participatory research. This framework began by discussing a similar theme to that raised by Maguire in her earlier framework - the centring of gender within the research process (Reid & Frisby 2008; Maguire 1987). However, they then developed this by also raising the importance of remembering intersectionality, of honouring voice and difference, of exploring new forms of representation, or considering reflexivity, and of honouring the many forms of action (Reid & Frisby 2008).

The importance of the many forms of action have also been discussed by other theorists. Maguire argued that FPAR is often not revolutionary in nature. It does not, she argued, contribute to major social change. Instead, it may trigger small changes, which may in turn lead to more (Maguire 1987). In this sense, she argued, "transformation is a process, not a one time event" (Maguire 1987, p.210). Reid et al, also discussed the nature of action in FPAR. They argued that within the literature on FPAR, it was difficult to pinpoint precise definitions of action. This, they argued, has led to expectations regarding action differing considerably. Smaller, personal, local actions may go unrecognised. They attempted to define action as a "multi-faceted and dynamic process that can range from speaking to validate oneself and one's experiences in the world, to the process of doing something, such as taking a deliberate step towards changing one's circumstances" (Reid 2006, p.317).

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### 2.3.8. FPAR IN RESEARCH

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Over time, the amount of feminist PAR projects that have been attempted have increased (Frisby et al. 2009). These projects have engaged with a wide range of topics, issues and themes. These have included studies on the effect of conflict and its aftermath, such as a study on the effect of post-war violence on women and girls in Guatemala (Williams & Lykes 2003), study of the effect of education on women within prison systems in America (Fine et al. 2003), and on women from low income groups in Canada (Reid 2006). Many of these studies have been heavily interlinked, and have drawn upon multiple forms of critical theories, combining feminist theory with post-colonial, Marxist, or other critical theory. In particular, there has been a significant amount of literature that engages not only with FPAR, but also with anti-racist or post-colonial theory. For example, Cahill has not only conducted research on women of colour living in the lower east side of New York (Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004), but also on young people of Mestizo descent living in Salt Lake City, USA (Cahill et al. 2010). Maguire's research, in her 1987 book, was considering battered women of the Native American community in New Mexico (Maguire 1987), while Hayhurst has also considered Aboriginal women in North America and their involvement in sport social development programmes in Canada (Hayhurst et al. 2015).

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### 2.3.9. FPAR - WITH MEN, WOMEN, OR EITHER?

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Reid et al. defined FPAR researchers as those who "seek to facilitate building knowledge to change the conditions of women's lives" (Reid 2006, p.316), while Langan and Morton, more recently, defined FPAR as research that "enables a critical understanding of women's multiple perspectives" (Langan & Morton 2009, p.167). These definitions both explicitly link FPAR with women, women's lives, women's perspectives, and by extension, women as participants.

While Reid et al. and Langan & Morton have explicitly defined FPAR in relation to women, there are many more FPAR theorists who implicitly suggest that FPAR should be carried out with women. Maguire, in her nine-point framework for feminist PR, does not at any point declare that FPAR should be solely conducted with women. She does, however, discuss the voices of women, the concerns and perspectives of women, and the place of women within the category of the 'oppressed' or 'community'. Her own FPAR research project, that she discusses throughout the book, was a project that worked with a group of women (Maguire 1987). These implicit suggestions are echoed by several other FPAR theorists. Gatenby & Humphries also allude to the relationship between FPAR and women, by discussing the importance of women and their perspectives on their lives, before discussing their own FPAR research project that worked with young female graduates (Gatenby & Humphries 2000). Reid

& Frisby also discuss the place of women within FPAR, this time focusing on their place within the idea of the oppressed, and the increase in projects that aim to involve women in FPAR (Reid & Frisby 2008). While these theorists do not necessarily directly define FPAR as being solely with women, they do discuss FPAR in relation to women in a way that assumes a natural relationship between FPAR and female participants.

As outlined in the overview above, there have been multiple FPAR studies that have worked with groups of women or young girls. FPAR studies that work with men or boys are more elusive, with none apparent within the current literature. However, some FPAR theorists have mentioned the possibility that FPAR could be conducted with men or boys. While Reid & Frisby, in their 2008 work, mentioned only the prospect of FPAR with women, Frisby et al., in a later paper, declared that researchers should be equally interested in men's lives. They argued that all beings are gendered beings, and that gendered expectations and socialisations impact men and boys as well as women and girls. They called for a transformative approach, for FPAR to be used to help male participants see how gender influences their actions and those around them (Frisby et al. 2009).

FPAR, like other forms of PAR, draws on the work on Paulo Freire. As discussed earlier, there remains a disjuncture between Freire's writings on the possible role of the oppressors within the emancipatory process, and the focus retained by many PAR theorists on the oppressed. It appears that FPAR theorists have echoed this trend, with the majority of FPAR theorists focusing on women or girls as participants. While some groups of men are marginalised by other intersecting forms of their identity, men as a group are generally understood as a dominant group (Hearn 2003). FPAR theorists have currently focused on the role of the oppressed group, but if FPAR truly aims to build on the theories of Freire, then the definition of whom can be involved in the PAR process may be wider than currently declared by some theorists.

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### 2.3.10. SUBJECTIVITY

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Subjectivity is a relatively unexplored concept (Gill 2008) and one that has been argued to be difficult to define (Rorty 2007). Moore attempted to define subjectivity as "the term we use to refer both to the process and the form of the relation of the individual to the social" (Moore 2013, p.203). In this definition, Moore focused on the interaction between the individual and the social. This echoes the definition proposed by Hall, in 2004. Hall attempted to define subjectivity as a "social and personal being that exists in negotiation with broad cultural definitions and our own ideals" (Hall 2004, p.134).

The terms 'subjectivity' and 'identity' are often used interchangeably, although the two terms mean something slightly different (Hall 2004). Identity is a narrower and more constant concept of the self (Moore 2013; Hall 2004). Hall defined identity as "that particular set of traits, beliefs and allegiances that, in short or long term ways, gives one a consistent personality" (Hall 2004, p.3). In contrast, he argued that subjectivity was "much broader and more multi-faceted" (Hall 2004, p.134). He developed this by arguing that a person's subjectivity is formed of multiple identities. "We may have numerous discrete identities, of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc., and a subjectivity that is comprised of all of these facets" (Hall 2004, p.134).

Here, Hall has called attention to the multi-faceted nature of subjectivity. The subject is not whole, but unstable and fragmented (Hall 2004). Each self therefore has multiple, shifting forms. These forms are often contradictory and conflicting, with individuals taking up different subject positions within different situations (Moore 2013; Eckermann 1997). Becoming a subject is never a finished or a closed process. Instead, subjectivities are made and remade constantly (Moore 2013; Gill 2008).

Within discussions surrounding subjectivity, there has been much debate around the creation of an individual's subjectivity from the different subject positions made available in society (Moore 2013; Schraff 2013; Gill 2008; Hall 2004; Jefferson 1994; Butler 1993; Violi 1992). Gill has argued that there is very little understanding of how culture relates to subjectivity. She argued that many conceptions of how culture is adopted by individuals are too simplistic in nature, and assume a simple one-to-one relationship between viewing subject positions and taking them up (Gill 2008). Instead, it has been argued that we must consider the complexities of both the external and internal world, and the relationships between them (Jefferson 1994). Subjectivity is a complex construction, that is formed through the identity with, or resistance to, the various subject positions available to the individual (Moore 2013). The images and representations of selves made available in society must be negotiated in some way by the self. They may be used in very different ways by each individual, with some adjusting well to existing social representations, some attempting to reject as much as possible, and some attempting to modify their form (Violi 1992).

In an attempt to better comprehend the relationship between the self and the social, scholars have proposed theories building upon a wide range of disciplines, including psychoanalysis (see Jefferson 1994) and language and discourse studies (see Violi 1992). Within psychoanalysis, Jefferson has argued that individuals adopt certain subject positions as a mean to gain power in relation to others, in order to protect their vulnerable selves (Jefferson 1994).



Within language and discourse studies, Violi has argued that narrative is used in such a way as to construct subject positions, through a process that involves the use of Othering, differing narrative chains, and plot space. In turn, these narrative tools are used in such a way to make different subject positions available to some but not to others, causing them to be taken up or rejected by different groups (Violi 1992). While theories such as these have been proposed, other theorists have declared that further research is needed to help us understand why some subject positions are taken up, while others are not (Gill 2008).

Debates around the adoption or rejection of different subject positions are closely related to debates surrounding agency and subjectivity. The concept of agency is often seen as controversial, as by probing agency, bigger questions surrounding responsibility and accountability are also raised (Moore 2013; Hall 2004). The relationship between subjectivity and the socially available subject positions raises the question of how much the social determines the self (Moore 2013). Within these debates, arguments have been made that fall at either end of the agency/determinism spectrum. Some work, including much of the writings of Foucault, have been argued to be overly totalising in their accounts, and to have produced an idea of the individual as a governed, docile, subject. In contrast, some authors have fallen at the other end of the spectrum, by assuming that individuals can have full autonomy over their actions and subjectivity (Gill 2008). While some of these debates have been highly polarised, several theorists have argued that individuals do in fact have agency - but within restricted conditions (Schraff 2013; Hall 2004). Hall has argued that individuals do have the choice to adopt or reject different subject positions. However, he has also argued that in reality, each individual has only a relatively narrow range of options from which to select. These are dictated by an individual's particular gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality and location (Hall 2004). In this sense, society "simultaneously enables and inhibits" subjectivity (Hall 2004, p.100). The individual needs society for their subjectivity to exist, but at the same time, society also limits subjectivity. In this sense, the relationship between subjectivity and society can be understood to be contradictory and conflicting in nature.

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### 2.3.11. SUBJECTIVITY AND GENDER

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If social conditions and norms are responsible for the creation of possible subject positions, then subjectivity must be engendered. Despite increases in equality between genders, the difference between men, women, and other gender practices are still seen as one of the basic differences of humankind (Moore 2013; Violi 1992). One therefore cannot become a social being without taking up a position in relation to the categories of 'male' or 'female' (Moore 2013).

Femininities and masculinities can be understood as the culturally constructed ensemble of attributes, behaviours and subject positions generally associated with women and men respectively (Schraff 2013; Gill 2008; Jefferson 1994). Despite the dichotomous construction of these two subject positions, gendered subjectivity is not reached simply by acquiescing to a single model of gender. Instead, the picture is much more complex, and involves engaging with or rejecting elements of differing models of gender, and gender identifications (Moore 2013). As the take-up of these gendered subject positions is not 'natural', the construction of a gendered subjectivity is also not 'natural'. Instead, this construction is an ongoing, constantly repeated, staged performance of gender (Schraff 2013; Gill 2008; Butler 1993). This practice - the creation of a gendered subjectivity - was termed 'performativity' by Butler (Butler 1993, p.175).

The gendered nature of subjectivity has been discussed by multiple theorists, with writers considering both the construction of gendered subject positions within society and the way in which individuals accept or reject these subject positions (Gill 2008; Jefferson 1994; Braidotti 1992; Violi 1992). Gill, for example, has considered the creation of gendered subject positions within the media, and has argued that neoliberal, post-feminist representations of women create subject positions that rest upon not only sexuality, but also psychological requirements such as confidence and light-heartedness (Gill 2008). In debates around the take-up of these subject positions, Violi has considered the ways in which men adopt or reject subject positions created by narrative, arguing that men use narrative to both understand and construct subjectivity (Violi 1992).

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### 2.3.12. SUBJECTIVITY AND PAR

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As discussed previously (see section 2.3.4), PAR theorists have argued that the awakening of the critical consciousness can occur through the process of involvement in a PAR project. Through the process of researching and questioning issues important to themselves and their community, participants can come to be more critically aware of the world (Cahill et al. 2010; Cahill 2007c). This premise is also one of the underlying tenets of PAR, and draws upon the work of Freire, and his interest in the stimulation of a critical consciousness, or *conscientização*, among members of the oppressed (Freire 1996).

While the literature surrounding PAR has grown over the past few decades, much of this literature has focused on discussions of PAR as an ethical, moral way of creating knowledge, or of the practicalities and intricacies of 'doing' PAR. Many of these studies have made little or no mention of changes to participants, their subjectivities, or their critical consciousness (see, for example, Hayhurst et al. 2015; Langan & Morton 2009; Torre & Ayala 2009; McIntyre 2008;

Corbett et al. 2007; Maguire et al. 2004; Fine et al. 2003; Williams & Lykes 2003; Gatenby & Humphries 2000).

In fact, a relatively small proportion of the literature written about PAR has discussed the effect that involvement in PAR projects has on participants. Although PAR builds upon Freire's theories of the importance of a development of a critical consciousness within the oppressed, very little research has attempted to address the question of whether involvement in PAR does indeed have a consciousness raising, or liberating effect. As Cahill summarised:

**Most of the benefits of PAR are identified in terms of its potential as a vehicle for social change and action. PARs role in personal change is less well understood.**

**(Cahill 2007c, p.269).**

Despite this, there has been some research done into the potential that PAR - and in particular FPAR - has to stimulate the creation of critical consciousness in participants. Cahill performed a large scale feminist PAR project in 2002. This project, named the Fed-Up-Honeys Project, involved six young women of colour living within the Lower East Side of New York, and focused on the stereotyping of young women of colour living in this area. In this research, Cahill framed her consideration of the participants around the concepts of subjectivity, subjectivity change, and the creation of feminist subjectivities. She equated the creation of feminist subjectivities, within FPAR, to the creation of a critical consciousness within PAR more generally. She argued that involvement in the project had stimulated the creation of feminist subjectivities in the participants (Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004).

In my own previous PAR project surrounding gender and sport with young female athletes, I also considered the effect that involvement in the project had had on the participants. In this project, I involved a group of young female sailors in a project to create a gender equality policy document for the youth sailing charity with which they were involved. In this project, I also used the concept of subjectivity to consider how the participants had changed over the course of the project, and whether this change had included the performance of feminist subjectivities. In this research, the multi-faceted nature of the concept of subjectivity allowed me to consider how elements of a critical consciousness were displayed as part of the multiple, often contradictory nature in which young girls performed their identities. In this research, I argued that participants did display elements of feminist subjectivities, as well as evidence of wider critical thought, and that these subjectivities extended out of the project space to a differing degree depending on the individual participant (Gaddes 2013).

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## 2.4. Analytical Framework

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The previous two sections have provided an overview of the literature that underlies this thesis. The first of the two sections of this review discussed the position of men in the organised feminist movements, while the second section moved on to consider the position of men in feminist participatory action research. This final section now brings together the key themes that have emerged from each area of literature, in order to situate this research within them.

To do this, this section first briefly calls attention to the key points from each area of literature, considering first the position of men in feminism, before discussing men in feminist participatory action research. This section then considers the areas left unaddressed by the current literature, and the questions that arise from these. Finally, the chapter concludes by establishing the research questions which this thesis seeks to address.

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### 2.4.1. MEN IN FEMINISM

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The nature of feminism has transformed and evolved over time, addressing many different issues and forms of sexism, working in very different methods and styles, and engaging with a wide range of players. As the feminist movements have changed over time, so too has the 'man question' within feminism (Holmgren & Hearn 2009). The involvement of men in campaigning for gender equality is not a new phenomenon (Van Der Gaag 2014), as can be illustrated by the many men of the first wave who worked tirelessly towards women's equality (Reeves 2007; LeGates 2001; Okin 1988; Banks 1986). In the UK in particular, men have a history of supporting the fight against gender discrimination (Baily 2015). It was only during the second wave of feminism, when personal or lived experiences became prioritised within feminism, that both men and transgender activists became more likely to be excluded from organised feminism (Bartky 1998; Heath 1987a). More recently, throughout the third and fourth wave of feminism, both cisgender and transgender men have gradually become more accepted in the organised feminist movements, with increasing amounts of mixed-gender grassroots organisations forming, and growing numbers of initiatives being aimed directly at men (UN Women 2016c; Baily 2012).

In contemporary feminism, there is a growing recognition of the benefits that the feminist movements can have for men as well as women (Baily 2015; Messner 1993). While women, as a group, are oppressed by their gender identity, men can also be harmed by the gender order (Messner 1997; 1993). Men can be hurt by the system of power, just as some women benefit from compliance with the system (Baily 2015; Messner 1997; 1993). As hooks argued in 2000,

"males as a group have and do benefit the most from patriarchy, from the assumption that they are superior to females and should rule over us. But those benefits have come with a price" (hooks 2000, p.ix). Messner echoed this in 1997, when he declared that "men tend to pay heavy costs for their adherence to narrow definitions of masculinity" (Messner 1997, p.8). These costs are higher for those men who do not easily comply with the gender order, with transgender men at risk of significant gender based discrimination and prejudice (Stryker 2017).

Conceptualising the place of men in feminism involves considering not just these factors, but also the definition of feminism being used, and the type of feminist paradigm being invoked. For some, feminism is about identity and personal experience - the 'identity paradigm'. However, for others, feminism is about activity and movement - the 'action paradigm'. For many feminists, men remain excluded from the former, but can become involved in the latter (Baily 2015). Feminist theorists have utilised different definitions of feminism, with writers such as LeGates rejecting the inclusion of men's issues and involvement in the movements, while others, such as hooks and Blunt & Wills, have provided more open-ended definitions that allow for people of all genders to be involved in feminism (LeGates 2001; Blunt & Wills 2000; hooks 2000).

To conceptualise men in feminism, this research will start from an understanding that while some genders are oppressed by the current order, all gender identities are in some way limited, confined or harmed by their gender. As such, this research will utilise an 'action paradigm' approach to feminism, one that is interested in the potential of activism, operations and processes to effect feminist change (Baily 2015). For a definition of feminism, this research will employ the definition proposed by bell hooks of feminism as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (hooks 2000, p.1). This open-ended definition includes those who identify as male or female, those who identify as both or neither, and those who consider themselves transgender, cisgender or agender. In conceptualising feminism as such, this research is based on the premise that all can be involved in feminism so long as their actions and responses endeavour to break down or remove gender-based discrimination. In doing so, this approach follows the tradition of third and fourth wave feminism in arguing that "feminism, it turns out, is something we can all do" (Hopkins 1998, p.52).

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#### 2.4.2. MEN IN FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

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In the second section of this chapter, the origins, theories, and practices of participatory action research were discussed. Several PAR theorists have discussed the nature or 'doing' of PAR projects, in order to help inform and educate researchers working in the field (Reid & Frisby

2008; Cahill 2007a). These discussions have considered the nature of participation in PAR projects (McIntyre 2008; Cahill 2007c; Pain 2004), the role of the facilitator (McIntyre 2008; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; Corbett et al. 2007; Cornwall & Jewkes 1995; Maguire 1987), and the place of action within the project (McIntyre 2008; Reid & Frisby 2008; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; Reid 2006; Cahill 2004; Maguire 1987). Several PAR theorists have called for more accounts and discussions of the nature of PAR projects, in order to inform researchers working with PAR (Reid & Frisby 2008; Cahill 2007a). Cahill, in particular, declared that "To advance the field of youth participatory research, we also need self-reflexive accounts of practice evaluating what works and what does not" (Cahill 2007a, p.299).

This section also considered the nature of feminist participatory action research and the position of men within this research ethic. As with the place of men in the feminist movements, the position of men in FPAR remains contradictory, with multiple theorists providing different perspectives on the matter. Some theorists, such as Reid (2006) and Langan and Morton (2009) have explicitly defined FPAR as research that seeks to work with women to consider women's lives, and multiple FPAR theorists have conducted research with groups of women, including Cahill in her study of a group of young women of colour in New York (Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004). However, other theorists, such as Frisby et al., have declared that researchers should be equally interested in men's lives, and that FPAR should be used to help male participants see how gender influences their actions and those around them (Frisby et al. 2009). Despite this, there is currently no evidence of FPAR having been conducted with groups of men, or with mixed-gender groups of individuals.

This absence could be partially attributed to the ways in which FPAR theorists have interpreted the work of Paulo Freire. FPAR, like other forms of PAR, draws on the work of Freire on the breakdown of unjust social orders (Cahill et al. 2010; McIntyre 2008; Rahman 2008; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; Corbett et al. 2007). While Freire focused primarily on the liberation of the oppressed members of society, he also argued that there was a place in the liberation movement for those who were traditionally the oppressors - provided they were truly in solidarity (Freire 1996). In this case, the writings of Freire appear to suggest that individuals of all gender identities could be involved in FPAR projects.

This section also considered the concept of subjectivity, and the impact that involvement in FPAR projects can have on the subjectivities of participants. Moore defined subjectivity as "the term we use to refer both to the process and the form of the relation of the individual to the social" (Moore 2013, p.203), while Hall defined subjectivity as a "social and personal being that exists in negotiation with broad cultural definitions and our own ideals" (Hall 2004, p.134). In

both of these definitions, emphasis is placed upon the interaction between the individual and the social, and the negotiation of sense of self and society. As such, the subject is not whole, but unstable and fragmented (Hall 2004). Research has been conducted that considered the potential that FPAR has to stimulate the creation of feminist subjectivities in participants, including the work done by Cahill with young women of colour, and my own previous research with young female athletes (Gaddes 2013; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004). In both these pieces of research, the concept of subjectivity was used to consider how the participants had changed over the course of the project, and to conclude that involvement in both projects had stimulated the creation of feminist subjectivities in the participants.

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#### 2.4.1. GAP IN LITERATURE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

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This research is informed by themes raised within both of these two areas of literature, and as such, draws upon debates from the nature and history of feminism, and the theory and practice of feminist participatory action research.

When considering the position of men in feminism, this review of the history and nature of feminism has demonstrated the potential for young men to become involved in the feminist movements. With the rise in fourth wave feminism, there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of men's involvement in feminism (Messner 2016; Van Der Gaag 2014; Cochrane 2013). The definition of feminism utilised in this research views young men, both cisgender and transgender, as potential members of the feminist movements. However, questions surrounding the place of men in contemporary feminism remain. How can young men be encouraged to become involved in feminism? How would they negotiate this involvement in feminism? Would these negotiations show similarities or differences with the negotiations displayed by young women?

Despite the fact that much of the writing of Paulo Freire focused on the possibility of the formation of a critical consciousness, there has been relatively little literature produced considering the impact that involvement in PAR has on participants. While there has been some research done that considers the potential that FPAR has to stimulate the creation of feminist subjectivities, this research has all worked with young women (Gaddes 2013; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004). As such, questions exist surrounding the position of young men in FPAR. Would involvement in FPAR projects encourage young men to display feminist subjectivities? Would they negotiate these feminist subjectivities in a similar style to young women, or differently? How would the different elements of an FPAR project impact these displays? Some of this research has explicitly considered these subjectivity changes outside of the project space (Gaddes 2013). However, there has currently been very little research that

attempts to consider the extent to which any changes to subjectivities extend beyond the space of the FPAR project itself, and none that has considered this with young men. Would any displays of feminist subjectivities from young men extend outside of the project space into the wider world? If so, what forms of similarities and differences would exist between these displays in different spaces?

FPAR has been demonstrated to be an exciting, viable form of research. Despite the individual nature of each project, several PAR theorists have called for more accounts and discussions of the nature of PAR projects, in order to inform researchers working with PAR (Reid & Frisby 2008; Cahill 2007a). Cahill, in particular, declared that "To advance the field of youth participatory research, we also need self-reflexive accounts of practice evaluating what works and what does not" (Cahill 2007a, p.299). How do young men and women negotiate the intricacies of doing participation, research and action? How do groups of young people construct a group dynamic, and work through moments of tension or cohesion? How can the facilitator manage their own role in the group? And what role does gender play throughout these themes?

This research therefore aims to consider the potential for feminist participatory action research to encourage young men's involvement in feminism, by exploring the impact that involvement in these projects has on their negotiation of gender, feminism and subjectivity. In order to engage this overarching question, the research will attempt to address the following three areas of enquiry:

- Running FPAR projects with young men: What are the practicalities, problems and possibilities?
- Young men in FPAR and subjectivities: In what ways is feminism accepted, rejected and negotiated?
- Subjectivity and the spatial: How do the young men negotiate feminism and subjectivity across different spaces?

Through considering these questions, this research aims to contribute to the debates around young men, feminism, and feminist participatory action research.



## 3. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

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### 3.1. Introduction

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In the previous chapter, the key themes of the underlying literature were outlined and the research questions of this thesis formulated. Now that these have been determined, the methodology and methods used to consider these research questions can be discussed.

This chapter begins by considering the theoretical positions that underpin this research. In particular, attention is paid to the influence of debates in the fields of critical realism, feminist epistemology and methodology, geography and spatial theory, and approaches to working with young people. From there, the location of myself as the researcher is examined, with particular attention paid to my relationship to feminism and my background of working with young people. Once the underpinnings of the research have been established, the research design is then considered. This includes a discussion of the two PAR projects central to the research, including consideration of access, timetabling, project content, and the participants. After this, the interviews and observations used alongside these projects are discussed, before some of the ethical issues that emerged throughout the project are reflected on. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of the process of analysis.

While this chapter provides a brief overview of the PAR projects, further discussion of the complexities of doing PAR takes place in the fourth chapter of this thesis. This subsequent chapter engages in depth with the intricacies of both projects in order to consider the dimensions of doing FPAR with mixed gender groups of young people.

### 3.2. Theoretical Underpinnings to the research

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The research project is underpinned by several theoretical positions, which are explored in this section of the thesis. Only once these positions have been established can the research design and methods that build upon them be discussed.

#### 3.2.1. CRITICAL REALISM

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As a researcher, I was heavily influenced by discussions surrounding the ontological and epistemological position of critical realism. Critical realism is a philosophical position that was developed by Roy Bhaskar in the 1970s as a response to the persistent dominance of the positivist approach to research (Fletcher 2017; Gorski 2013; Bhaskar 1998; Bhaskar & Lawson 1998; Bhaskar 1975). In his 1975 text, *A Realist Theory of Science*, Bhaskar stated that the

primary aim of the movement was "the development of a systematic realist account of science. In this way I hope to provide a comprehensive alternative to the positivism that has usurped the title of science" (Bhaskar 1975, p.8). While there is no one definition of critical realism, it has been argued that critical realism centres around four key beliefs: ontological realism, epistemic relativism, judgemental rationality, and cautious ethical naturalism (Archer et al. 2016). Throughout these, critical realists have also been argued to share a commitment to the creation of casual statements instead of general laws (Fletcher 2017; Gorski 2013), and to the attempt to explain social events in order to inform policy recommendations and societal change (Fletcher 2017).

This research drew upon many of these themes. In particular, this thesis is underpinned by a belief in the underlying realist nature of the world, combined with the idea that this reality is always situated and comes from different standpoints and experiences (Archer et al. 2016). In addition to this, this research was influenced by the belief that research should be created from a desire to effect positive change to society (Fletcher 2017).

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### 3.2.2. FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGIES AND METHODOLOGIES

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The research was also influenced and shaped by ongoing debates within the field of feminist epistemologies and methodologies. Feminist epistemological and methodological debates emerged in the late 1970s (Letherby 2015; Stanley & Wise 1990) as a critique of mainstream positivist expectations of research (Alcoff & Potter 1993). There is no one definition of what feminist research is comprised. Instead, multiple theorists have proposed what they believe to be the key tenets of feminist research. Stanley and Wise, in their 1990 collection of texts on feminist research, argued that feminist research had originally been conceptualised as research that focused on women, conducted by other women, in order to change women's lives for the better. However, they argued that feminist research has now evolved to include emphasis on the researcher/researched relationship, on emotion as part of the research experience, and on the complex question of power in research and writing, amongst other issues (Stanley & Wise 1990). Alcoff and Potter also argued that feminist research should centralise the study of gender, but that this should be considered as one of the many axes of oppression. In addition to this, they argued that "for feminists, the purpose of epistemology is not only to satisfy intellectual curiosity, but also to contribute to an emancipatory goal" (Alcoff & Potter 1993, p.13). Letherby has argued that feminist research should have the "insistence that research should mean something to those being studied and should lead to change" (Letherby 2015, p.78), and Pini and Pease, in their discussion of feminist research conducted specifically with men, argued that feminist research centres around the belief that "addressing

gender inequality is a critical political task" (Pini & Pease 2013, p.4). Pease also argued that feminist research conducted with men must focus on a strategy for changing men's subjectivities and practices to contribute to gender equality (Pease 2013), while Hearn argued that the study of men and masculinities should build upon elements of feminist research to avoid reproducing patriarchal social relations (Hearn 2013). While these different frameworks propose a range of factors that make up feminist research, it is worth noting that the theme of emancipation and the removal of gender inequality runs throughout all of these writings.

This research builds upon several of the key themes raised in the accounts above. In particular, the project attempts to: centralise gender as a key theme throughout the research, research in a non-hierarchical fashion and reflect on issues of power throughout, and aim to break down and remove gendered inequality.

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### 3.2.3. APPROACH TO WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

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Theorists working with young people have argued that children have increasingly begun to be seen as social actors in their own right, able to speak and express their own views (Alderson 2001; James et al. 1999). The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child stated that a child capable of forming their own views has the right to express them (The United Nations 1989) and encouraged an increasing respect for children as subjects who can speak in their own right, and report valid views and experiences (Alderson 2001).

Children are among the groups that have been the most excluded in research (Alderson & Morrow 2011) and within this, teenagers have been particularly neglected (Bassett et al. 2008; Weller 2006). The challenges of working with children are extensive, and include compliance with rigorous ethical procedures (Tani 2014), the practical issues surrounding location and access (Bassett et al. 2008), and establishing the level at which to pitch the research (Alderson 2001).

My research worked with young people between the ages of 16 and 18 years old. Young people of this age sit between the categories of 'child' and 'adult'. They exhibit a betweenness, as they fit uncomfortably in the adult:child binary (Weller 2006). Teenagers such as the participants in my research are "young people living between childhood and adulthood" (Tani 2014, p.362). To negotiate working with these young people, who are neither fully child or fully adult, I attempted to build upon the 'ethical symmetry' framework that was proposed by Christensen and Prout. This framework "recognises commonality but also honours difference" when working with young people (Christensen & Prout 2002, p.480). In this framework, the researcher takes as their starting point the view that the relationship between researcher and

participant is the same whether they are an adult or a child. Differences may emerge from this point, and the research can evolve to embrace this, but these differences are not assumed in advance (Christensen & Prout 2002). While this framework was primarily intended for consideration of ethics when working with young people, my thesis aimed to build upon this framework by applying this approach to the research more broadly. By doing this, my project aimed to approach working with the young people without assumptions of in what they could, or could not, participate.

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### 3.2.4. GEOGRAPHY AND SPACE

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Although this research has been conducted from a sociological perspective, it has also been influenced by my background in the discipline of geography. As such, the research drew upon some elements of geographical research, including the emphasis on the inclusion of space as a concept for studying the social world. Space, as a notion, is fundamental to geography (Thrift 2003; Harvey 1993). David Harvey, in his work on space and place, argued that geography is framed by 'a recognition that the dimensions of space and time matter' (Harvey 1993, p.2). The concept of space is complex and rich, and has been interpreted and defined in many different ways (Thrift 2003; Crang & Thrift 2000; Massey 1994; Harvey 1993). While different geographers hold different views on the precise meaning and use of the term, there is an agreement of the importance space holds in understanding social meaning (Crang & Thrift 2000; Harvey 1990). Space has also been argued to be important in the construction of gender, through the ways in which different spaces are gendered (McDowell 1997; Massey 1994).

While this research has been written from a sociological perspective, it was influenced by geographical debates around the importance of space in theorising the social world. As such, this research attempted to utilise the concept of space during the research, in order to better understand the negotiation of feminist subjectivity as a contradictory process that alters over space and time. This research utilised the notion of space as defined and understood by Doreen Massey. Massey has argued for a conception of space which she termed "space time" (Massey 1994, p.4). She argued that space, rather than existing independently, is constructed by social relations. As such, spaces can be viewed as weaves, or meshes, of social relations. While social relations shape and create spaces, spaces must also be understood to impact social relations and society (Massey 1994). As such, space is something that is inherently political, and imbued with power relations (Massey 1996; 1994). Space, in this sense, can be framed as "the sum of all our relations and connections" (Massey 2002, p.23).

Spaces can be understood on all scales, and are multiple and contested in nature. As individuals and groups experience the world differently, so too do they create and view the

world as a series of difference spaces (Massey 1994). Layers of spaces exist as a multiplicity of spaces that co-exist, contrast and contest with one another (Massey 2001). These shifting, over-lapping spaces are also in constant flux and transition. Spaces, like the social relations which shape them, are dynamic and ever-shifting (Massey 1994).

In order to understand the dynamic and multiple nature of spaces, time and space must be understood together as "space-time" (Massey 1994, p.4). Space and time have been perceived by some as a dichotomy, with space being seen as fixed and static, while time is viewed in relation to change and progression. Massey argued for the removal of this dichotomy and for social relations and the spaces they create to be considered in terms of time (Massey 2001; 1994). This conception drew upon the argument that "space is not static, nor time spaceless" (Massey 1994, p.264).

This research built upon Massey's conception of space in order to conceptualise the FPAR projects as spaces that were constructed and maintained by the social relations of the groups. Rather than being anchored to a specific place or location, the spaces of the projects were defined by the young people participating, and evolved and shifted as the projects progressed. As such, the research involved research methods that attempted to consider the subjectivities of the young people both within the space of the project, and within the wider environment of the school or youth group. In addition to this, this formulation was also reflected in the research themes and subsequent structure of the research analysis, with chapter five considering primarily the space of the project, while chapter six discusses subjectivities displayed outside of the space of the FPAR projects. In this sense, the research is an interdisciplinary project that draws upon debates and concepts from both sociology and geography in order to effectively consider how individuals' gendered subjectivities are negotiated differently as they move through space and time.

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### 3.3. Researcher Location

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As part of the commitment to ethical feminist research, it has been argued that written accounts of feminist research should locate the feminist researcher firmly within the activities of their research (Letherby 2015; Hearn 2013; Alcoff 1995; Code 1993; Stanley 1990).

As a researcher, my project was shaped and influenced by a variety of different elements of my personal location. Crucial to the construction of this research was my own perception and relationship to feminism. As outlined in the first literature review chapter of this thesis, approaches to the feminist movements have varied over time and space. My own approach to feminism has been heavily influenced by the fact that I was living in London and studying

gender during the summer of 2013. The year 2013 saw a huge rise in feminist activity in the UK, and has been argued to be the start of the fourth wave of feminism (Rampton 2015; Cochrane 2013; Thorpe 2013; Baumgardner 2011). During this time, my perceptions and understandings of feminism were influenced by the campaigns, discussions and activity going on around me. My attitudes concerning the place of men in feminism reflect those held by many of the other so-called fourth wave feminists (Messner 2016; Van Der Gaag 2014; Cochrane 2013).

This research has also been heavily impacted by my previous work with young people. Prior to being a PhD student, I worked with teenagers in a variety of roles: as a teaching assistant in a secondary school, as a sports coach in a local team, and in a charity working with young people in a sporting context. This previous experience created both possibilities and problems for this research project with young people. My background working in schools meant that I was comfortable and experienced with the ways schools worked. This helped me to gain access into a school for my first PAR project, and to successfully negotiate some of the initial logistical and practical complications and hurdles. More generally, my experience working with young people meant I confidently interacted with the participants of my research and found it easy to build a rapport with them quickly. However, my past experiences also created limitations and difficulties of which I rapidly became aware. While I was confident establishing a relationship with the young people, I became aware that this relationship was affected by my previous position as a member of staff in a school. At times, despite my best efforts, I caught myself engaging in behaviours that were more akin to that of a school classroom teacher than a PAR researcher, such as clicking my fingers for attention, and standing in front of a whiteboard talking. As the research progressed, I had to deconstruct as far as possible my previous conception of myself as a coach and teaching assistant, and attempt to rebuild my sense of self as a researcher with young people, who attempted to work with them on an equal footing (for a further discussion of this, see also section 4.6.2).

In addition to my perceptions of feminism and my background working with young people, my research was also heavily influenced by my personal identity - and in particular, by my age and gender. My location as a young cisgender woman shaped my interactions with the young people of both projects in multiple and diverse ways. As these impacts were felt most heavily during the two FPAR projects, they are considered more fully in sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.3, as part of the wider discussions of my position as a facilitator in the projects.

### 3.4. Research Design

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In the section above, the theoretical underpinnings of this research and the position of the researcher have been outlined. Now that this has been established, the research design and methods utilised during this research project can be explored in depth.

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#### 3.4.1. BRIEF OVERVIEW

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The research design encompassed a range of different methods. The research was centred around two PAR projects, conducted with two different groups of young people, in two different settings. The first project took place in a school, while the second took place in a youth group setting. In addition to these projects, a combination of interviews and observations were used to track the subjectivities of the research participants over time. Participants took part in an interview at the beginning of the project, in which they were asked to reflect on the self, gender and feminism. During the course of the project, observations of the young people were conducted both within PAR meetings, and also within the wider space of the school and the youth group. Throughout the early stages of the project, while the participants knew the research was concerned with changes to their subjectivities throughout the project, they were not made aware that negotiation of feminism was the main change to their sense of self that I was attempting to observe. This was in order to prevent this knowledge from altering their behaviour (see also - section 3.5.1). By the end of the project, the young people were made aware of this, and then took part in a second, longer interview, in which they were again asked to reflect on the project, self, gender and feminism.

The structure of the research was based upon a longitudinal case study design. Longitudinal research can be defined as research where data is collected from the same sample on at least two occasions (Bryman 2012). This approach is used in research that aims to observe or interpret developments as they occur over time (Mason 2002). A longitudinal approach was chosen in order to allow the performance of the participants' subjectivities to be monitored and tracked over the course of the project.

Conventional case study design usually involves detailed and intensive analysis of a single case (Bryman 2012). In this research, two case studies were used - of two projects, and two groups of participants. This design was chosen in order to strike a balance between the need for a substantial amount of participants in the research, and the intrinsic limit to the amount of participants that can take part in a single PAR project. While this research was specifically interested in those who identify as young men, the decision was made to run projects with mixed-gender groups, rather than solely with young men. This decision was made for two main

reasons. Firstly, the approach to feminism adopted in this research holds that all can take part in feminism, so long as they work to remove gender discrimination. Selecting solely those who identified as young men, and excluding those of other genders, would therefore have been contradictory to this approach, and would have served to reinforce the very gender divide that this approach to feminism seeks to remove. Secondly, the previous research done in this area, by both myself and Cahill, (Gaddes 2013; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004) has argued that FPAR can stimulate the performance of feminist subjectivities in young women. While investigating the potential for a similar effect to be observed with young men, I wanted to have some indication whether the project itself, or other considerations, had been the factor effecting the participants' subjectivities. If none of the young people had displayed feminist subjectivities over the course of the project, I would have had to question the success of the project itself, rather than solely the effect of gender.

The decision to keep the projects open to any gender, however, made it likely that each project would only have a few people who identified as young men taking part. In order to ensure I had a substantial amount of participants who identified as male in the research, I decided to run two FPAR projects. These projects followed roughly the same format, themes, and structure. However, they were not intended to be direct mirror of each other, or to be compared to one another. Instead, they should be seen as two individual case studies, to be discussed with a recognition of the inherent differences that exist between any two PAR projects, that have been led, shaped, and constructed by two different groups of young people.

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### 3.4.2. THE FPAR PROJECTS

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#### 3.4.2.1. *Overview*

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In this section of the methodology chapter, the two PAR projects will be discussed. A brief overview of the two projects will be given, before they are then considered in more depth. This section is intended to outline the design of the research, and to give a sense of the main themes of the project. However, many of these discussions will be continued in more depth in chapter four of this thesis.

Two FPAR projects were conducted over a period of 12 months. As PAR projects, each project aimed to fulfil the tenets proposed by theorists such as Rahman, McIntyre and Cahill. To do this, the projects aimed to allow participants to explore their own experiences, be involved in action projects of their own, and to be involved as decision makers in some or all stages of the research (McIntyre 2008; Rahman 2008; Cahill 2007c). As feminist PAR projects, they built on



the frameworks proposed by Maguire and McIntyre who proposed that gender must hold a central position within the research process (McIntyre 2008; Maguire 1987). Both projects therefore focused on the theme of gender, and the effect this has on the lived experience of the young people as teenagers in South Yorkshire. During the projects, the participants led discussions, took part in research, and contributed to action projects, all of which centred around their experience of gender.

The first project to be conducted took place in a local Sheffield school. The school, located on the rural-urban fringe of the city, was largely attended by white working or middle-class students from relatively rural villages. This project started with recruitment of participants in July, at the end of one school year, and began in earnest in September with the beginning of the next school year. This project ran from September through to the school Easter holiday, which fell that year in the middle of April. It combined short, 20 minute, meetings, with longer, 60 minute meetings. Over the course of the project, over 40 meetings were conducted, totalling approximately 28 hours of meeting time. This project, while primarily a FPAR project, also ran alongside the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), an optional award run in schools that asks students to work either individually or in a group to create a piece of research (AQA 2015; Edexcel 2015a; 2015b; OCR 2013). The inclusion of the EPQ into the framework meant that the project was longer than the second PAR project. At the beginning of the project, nine participants applied to take part. Of the initial nine participants, six took part in the duration of the project. Of these six, two were cisgender male, and four were cisgender female. All the participants were aged either 16 or 17 at the beginning of the project, and 17 or 18 by the time it concluded.

The second project to be conducted took place in a youth group for young people who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or other related identities (LGBT+). The youth group took place in the city centre, but attracted young people from all over the city and the surrounding area. All of these young people identified as LGBT+, with members of the youth group including those who identified as transgender, non-binary, lesbian, gay, bi, pan and asexual. Similarly to the school group, the majority of these young people were white, and came from a range of middle and working class backgrounds. This project began with recruitment in early April, and ran through to the end of June. This project contained much longer meetings, with the majority of meetings falling between 90 and 120 minutes each. The long nature of these meetings - combined with the fact that this project did not include extra sessions for the EPQ - meant that this project contained considerably fewer meetings, with six sessions conducted, totalling approximately 10 hours of meeting time. Eight young people applied for this project. Of the initial eight participants, five took part in the duration of the

project. Of these five, two were transgender males, two were cisgender males, and one was cisgender female. All of these participants were aged between 16 to 17 at the beginning of the project, and aged between 16 and 18 by the end of the project.

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#### 3.4.2.2. *Access*

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Before the projects could begin, access to each space had to be negotiated. As I have already mentioned (see section 3.3), before embarking upon my PhD studies I had worked with young people in multiple different settings, including several different roles in different schools, and various sporting contexts. However, at the start of my PhD, I moved house, city, and university. In my new city, I had no existing contacts with schools or youth groups, and my old contacts were now several hours journey away. In order to gain access to new spaces, I had to approach a range of schools and youth groups, and attempt to persuade the staff and young people in these spaces to become involved in the PAR projects. In many ways, this was the most difficult and emotionally draining part of the fieldwork.

I knew from my past experience of working in schools that gaining access to school environments can be an incredibly difficult process. In order to convince the school staff to provide access, I would need to offer both them and the students some tangible benefits. I would also need to be able to demonstrate how my research would fit into the school setting and its heavily structured timetable. In order to do this, I decided to align my research with the existing framework of the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). The EPQ is an optional award that can be run with Year 12 and Year 13 students - who are normally between 16 and 18 years old at this point in their school careers. The EPQ asks students to work either individually or in a group to create a piece of research or an artefact. This can range from a 5,000 word dissertation to a concert performance, an artefact, a report, or design or blueprint of an object. The project requires students to be given contact time or 'guided learning hours' by the school, and a supervisor who is an expert in the field in which the student is working (AQA 2015; Edexcel 2015b; OCR 2013). It is the equivalent to an AS level, and is worth a maximum of 70 UCAS points (UCAS 2016). Schools that run the EPQ need to find staff who are able, or willing, to supervise projects. As a researcher, this allowed me to offer something to the school, and made it more likely that I would be granted access. The expected achievement of grades or UCAS points also offered the participants a tangible reward for their time.

For the school project, much of the timing was defined by the timetable of the EPQ. Many schools start the EPQ either directly after the AS Level exams in June, or at the beginning of the academic year in September. In order to fit with these timescales, I started approaching schools in March. I began by researching schools in Sheffield that ran the EPQ award, and

noted an initial four schools that seemed suitable for my research. These schools all had a significant number of students involved in the EPQ, providing a large pool for recruitment, and offered some flexibility in how the EPQ and its compulsory elements would be delivered. I then sent an email to the staff at each school responsible for the EPQ, briefly outlining my research, and asking to come in and discuss the project. Of the four schools I contacted, two responded negatively - one to say it was too late in the year to begin arranging a new project, and another to say their students had expressed no interest in the PAR project. However, two schools replied positively to my email, and invited me to visit to discuss the proposal further. After each of these meetings, I then received an email from the staff I had met with, formally inviting me to run the project at their schools. With access to two schools secured, I found myself in the fortunate position of being able to decide which setting was the most appropriate in which to run the project. One school had slightly fewer students involved in the EPQ, many of whom were high-achieving students interested in areas like medicine or dentistry. I had some concerns about my ability to successfully recruit from this setting. The second school, in comparison, had the whole of the year group doing the EPQ, providing me with a larger, and more diverse, pool of students. This school, in addition, had presented a relaxed and open atmosphere when I had visited, and I had got on well on a personal level with the EPQ co-ordinator. It felt clear to me that the second school was a better fit for my research project, and I accepted their offer only a few days after the meeting.

Negotiating access to the youth group took place several months later, once the school project was well established. In October I began approaching local youth groups to enquire about the possibility of running a PAR project in their settings. During my search, I became aware of a youth group in the city centre that was aimed at providing support for young people who identified as LGBT+. This youth group appeared to be the ideal setting for my research. For many LGBT+ young people, issues surrounding gender are central to their negotiation of their own sense of self and identity. As well as being a relevant project for many of them, and one with the potential to yield rich and complex data, I hoped that the FPAR project would also offer them some personal benefits. LGBT+ young people have been shown to face victimisation both within school and the community (Kosciw et al. 2009; Ryan & Rivers 2003). This can include verbal and physical harassment and assault, sexual harassment, social exclusion and isolation (Kosciw et al. 2009) and is linked to mental health problems such as elevated levels of depression and suicidal ideation (Russell et al. 2011). Previous research into young people's subjectivity change during involvement in FPAR projects has shown positive changes to the participants including increased confidence, positive changes to perception of the body, and a determination to resist negative stereotyping of themselves and others

(Gaddes 2013; Cahill 2007a). While some members of the group may have found some elements of the project challenging, for others, the FPAR project may have provided a space that allowed them to confront some of the issues facing them as LGBT+ young people.

I emailed the charity, and was invited to meet with the youth worker responsible for the youth group. After this meeting and after a discussion with the head of the charity, the youth worker contacted me to let me know they were happy to go ahead with the project, providing the young people were interested. I was invited to the youth group one evening to present an outline of the project. The next week, the young people voted on whether or not they wanted the project to take part in their youth group space, and the majority voted to approve it.

Gaining access to each space took a number of months from the first approach to the final agreement. In both cases, there was then also a few months wait from that point to the point of beginning the project, as the appropriate paper work was resolved, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check was run or provided, and recruitment took place. While in both cases I was able to eventually gain access, the entire process was long, drawn-out, and involved constant work to persuade and convince people to allow me into their setting. I chased people for replies to emails, re-scheduled meetings that had been forgotten, and battled to jump through time-consuming administrative hoops. During this time, I was conscious of the constant pressure I felt under to ensure that the projects would go ahead successfully, and a change of heart from a key player would not lead to the project being delayed or cancelled entirely.

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#### *3.4.2.3. Timetabling and Location*

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As briefly mentioned in the overview of the two projects (section 3.4.2.1), the school project began with recruitment of participants in July, and began in earnest in September, at the beginning of the next school year. From September, the project ran until the Easter school holiday in April. In total, between September and April, the group met over 40 times, with around 28 hours of meeting time.

In line with PAR ethics, the young people participating in the project were encouraged to dictate the nature of their commitment to the project (McIntyre 2008; Cahill 2007c; Pain 2004). To do this, I arranged an initial meeting with all of the participants during the school day at the beginning of September. In this meeting, I asked the young people to decide when, and for how long, we would meet. I gave them certain parameters, including practical limitations surrounding room bookings, and the upper limit to the amount of times a week I was able to travel to the school. From this discussion, the group decided they would like to meet twice a week. These two sessions would take place on the same day of every week, which they

decided would be Thursday. On Thursdays, they agreed, I would meet them for the 20 minute tutor time session, between 10:20 and 10:40, and then would meet them again for a 60 minute session after school, from 3:05 until 4:05. Initially, it was agreed, these sessions would run until the February half-term holiday. However, early in the new year, the young people requested an extension to continue working on the action scheme of the project.

For the original duration of the project, from September to February, the meetings followed a reasonably regular structure. During the morning tutor time session, a 20 minute discussion group would be run by either myself or one of the young people. This time was entirely for PAR activities. The after-school sessions, in contrast, combined designated time for EPQ training with PAR activities. However, after the February half term holiday, the EPQ element of the project had come to an end, and the after school sessions became entirely focused on PAR activities.

In addition to these regular sessions, the project also included several other events, including group trips and a presentation evening. The presentation evening took place at the school. In this session, the young people presented their research to an audience that included each other, members of school staff, and researchers from the local university. In November, the participants and I travelled to the local university library to assist with their EPQ preparation. As part of the trip, the participants requested that we stop at McDonalds for a group lunch, which we did. At the end of the project, the young people also took it upon themselves to organise an end of project trip out, which took the form of lunch out in a local pizza restaurant.

The majority of meetings took place in the school conference room. The room could seat approximately 15 people around a large oval table, and contained a computer, projector, and a whiteboard. While the room could be used as a classroom, the layout of the room was designed primarily for meetings rather than teaching. As such, the room combined the practical benefits of a teaching space - such as a projector and a whiteboard - with a less formal layout that was more suited to a non-hierarchical research and power relationship than a conventional classroom would be.

In comparison, arranging the timetable for the youth group was a somewhat more straightforward process. Recruitment began at the start of April, with the project beginning fully at the end of April. The nature of the youth group setting meant that there was inherently less choice about the timetabling of the sessions, as meetings were limited to the two hour youth group sessions. How the meetings were going to fit into this format was discussed with the participants at the start of the project. They decided that in order to maintain some contact with the other members of the youth group, they would spend the first 20 to 30

minutes of each session in the main room, with the rest of the group. In this time, the participants ate snacks, chatted, and took part in the introductions and warm-up activity. Once this was finished, the group left to go to a different room, where they took part in the PAR project for the remainder of the session.

Similarly to the project in the school space, this project was initially scheduled to end earlier than it eventually did. The project was initially designed to take place in six meetings over six weeks. However, one meeting was cancelled as few of the young people were able to attend the session. Following this, the participants asked if they could extend the project by several weeks, in order to make-up the lost time. The project was therefore extended by two extra weeks, which took it until mid June. However, during this time, another meeting was cancelled, as it clashed with special activities being run by the main youth group. This meant that although the project was extended in timescale, the project remained spread over six meetings. In total, between April and June, the project encompassed six meetings and around 10 hours of meeting time.

The youth group project meetings took place in a large counselling room in the same building as the main youth group space. This meeting room contained sofas, armchairs and beanbags that could seat around 10 people, as well as a coffee table and a large whiteboard on one wall. While the informal nature of the space made it suitable for a PAR project in many ways, it also offered some practical difficulties. There was no projector or TV screen, so any video clips had to be watched with the group crowded around my laptop. Most frustratingly, as the room was in the basement, there was no internet access available in the room, meaning I had to buy a portable WiFi router that provided at best a patchy and unreliable internet connection.

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#### *3.4.2.4. Project Content*

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Although the two projects were different in length, both followed the same overall structure. The first half of the project was heavily centred around discussion groups. As the projects were FPAR projects, these discussions all involved examination of themes surrounding gender in the lives of teenagers in South Yorkshire. At the beginning of the project, these discussion groups were led by myself as the facilitator and included themes such as gender in school, gender and sport, gender and toilets, and gender and mental health. Once I had led several discussion groups, the participants took over. This allowed the young people to choose which themes they felt were the most important to their own lives and experiences, and bring those themes to the fore of the project. In the school project, each participant led one group, and several opted to run a second one later in the project. These included themes such as gender and language, gender and crime, gender and catcalling, gender-neutral parenting, and the multiple

nature of gender identities. In the youth group setting, most members of the group chose to lead a discussion group, although one member preferred not to. These discussion groups included themes such as gender and religion, gender and Freud, and gender and clothing. During these discussion groups, members of the group took turns to take notes on the whiteboard. At the end of the session, these notes were photographed as a record of the views of the young people.

These discussions, and the notes that originated from them, formed a large part of the knowledge-making process within the PAR projects. In other PAR projects, theorists have used exercises such as reflexive writing, or re-visiting group meeting transcripts in order to generate the key themes of the research (McIntyre 2008; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004). However, in this project, I wanted to try producing the key themes of the research through discussion and debate, and use the white-board notes as a record of these conversations that could be revisited repeatedly to allow the key issues and arguments from the research to grow organically from them.

In the second half of the projects, focus turned from generation of themes towards acting on them. For the action stage of the project, the participants identified the key issues that had arisen from their discussions. These key issues were identified by looking through the PAR photographs, as well as the EPQ projects in the school group, and a photo collage in the youth group, and recording any issues that had been raised on pieces of card.

In the school project, the young people decided to focus upon the lack of gender neutral toilet facilities in the school. They wrote a letter to the school senior leadership team, in which they outlined the reasons they believed all the toilets in the school should be made gender neutral. The school leadership team, after reading the letter, meeting with the participants, and then meeting with the school building owners, decided to change all the toilet signs in the building, making every toilet in the school gender neutral.

In the youth group, the participants decided that the project they were the most interested in was a commitment to promote media that portrayed transgender and other LGBT+ characters positively. The young people spent some time collating a list of media, including films, TV programs, books, music, and video games, that they personally believed portrayed transgender and other LGBT+ individuals positively and sensitively. Initially, the young people considered promoting this list with other LGBT+ young people. However, as the end of the project grew nearer, the young people decided to focus on sharing this knowledge between themselves, thus engaging in a more personal form of action.

In addition to the introductory activities, the discussion groups, and the action parts of the project, in which the two PAR projects followed the same overarching structure, each PAR project contained unique sections of project content. The first project, the school project, which ran alongside the EPQ, also contained some sessions of training or 'guided learning hours' that were included as part of the provision of the EPQ itself (AQA 2015). These included training in methods such as surveys and interviews, discussions of the structure of the EPQ, and a trip to the local university library in order to access academic literature. In the youth group, the project also included a mind mapping activity centred around photos. In this activity, the young people were asked to bring in several photos or images that related to how they saw their own gender. These images were used to facilitate discussion, first by the participants discussing the reasons behind their own image choice, and then by the group as a whole attempting to group these photos in categories and draw links, meaning and commonalities between the different themes the group had raised.

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#### *3.4.2.5. The Participants*

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Recruitment of the participants took place through the school and the youth group. In the case of the school, initial contact with participants took place through the school EPQ launch event, where information about my project was given to all students in the year by a member of staff. Over the following few days, I also visited each form room to talk to every tutor group about the project, answer questions, and hand out forms for students to use to express their interest in the project. Nine students - five cisgender girls and four cisgender boys - handed in forms expressing their interest in the project, and all were given spaces in the project.

In both projects, there was a considerable amount of attrition of participants over the course of the project. In the school project, of the nine who applied to take part in the project, only six completed the course of the project. Two participants left before the project began. One of the girls left the school and moved to a different college before the project started in September, and one of the boys changed his mind about taking part, and left the project before it began in earnest in September. After a month or so of the project, I felt fairly confident that the group would not change for the remainder of the project. The group felt settled and tightly knit, and all members seemed excited by the group, the project, and the meetings. However, in early November, one of the remaining boys broke the news to me that he was leaving the school and moving to a different college. Kristian had already had some disruption in his school career, and had finally decided that he needed a fresh start elsewhere. He arranged the transfer rapidly to a different college, and left the school several days later without telling any of the other students. The remaining six students formed the core of the



group, and remained part of the group until the end of the project in April (for more information about the profile of the school group participants, please see Appendix One).

I had expected there to be a clear separation between the participants of the two projects. Sheffield is a large city, and my projects were taking place in different areas of the city, with different groups of people. However, when I first attended the youth group to ascertain if there was sufficient interest from the young people for the project to run, I was shocked to see Kristian. Although I was aware that he had been out at school as gay, and he had discussed his sexuality in the interview and meetings, I had thought the chances of there being overlap between the two projects to be small. In that session, I spoke briefly about the research, answered questions, and then stayed for the remainder of the session and joined in with the groups' planned activities. The following week, the youth leader asked the group to vote on whether or not they would like the project to take place in their youth group. The majority voted for the project to go ahead, so I began going about arranging the rest of the administrative tasks needed for me to come into the group. I later learnt from the youth worker that Kristian had been a huge part in helping to convince the group to support the project. He had spoken enthusiastically about the part of the previous project he had been involved in, answered people's questions about it, and committed himself to taking part in the youth group project. Before the PAR part of the project began, I attended several evening sessions, where once again I talked to the young people about the project, and handed out expression of interest forms. Eight young people - two cisgender females, four cisgender males, and two transgender males handed in forms expressing their interest in the project, and all eight were given a space in the group. Not only did Kristian form part of this eight, but his boyfriend of the time also joined the project.

In this project, there was once again some attrition. One girl signed up for the project, but changed her mind before the project began. In addition to this, two of the cisgender young men also left the project. Kristian and his boyfriend both attended the first meeting of the project. However, the following week, they arrived at the youth group after the first 30 minutes. When the youth worker asked them if they wanted to go straight down and join the PAR group, they declined. Shortly after that, they stopped attending the youth group altogether. They did not give a reason for this departure, but it was doubly frustrating given the fact that Kristian had already taken a place in one PAR project and left abruptly. The remaining five members, who included two cisgender males, two transgender males, and one cisgender female, all took part in the remainder of the project (for more information about the profile of the youth group participants, please see Appendix Two).

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### 3.4.3. PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS

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Throughout the duration of the two PAR projects, I conducted participant observations of the young people involved in the projects. Participant observation has been defined as "methods of generating data which entail the researcher immersing themselves in a research 'setting' so that they can experience and observe first hand a range of dimensions in and of that setting" (Mason 2002, p.84). Participant observation as a method has been argued to offer the opportunity to see the embodied, or unconscious practices of participants, in a way that is not possible during interviews or many other forms of qualitative methods (Robinson 2013). In my research, the observations were intended to allow me to witness the participants' negotiation of sexism, feminism and self, within the wider space of the school or youth group environment.

Much has been written about the problems for participant observation studies of gaining access (see, for example, Bryman 2012; May 2001). In the case of my research, participant observations were part of the initial access agreement I made with both the school and the youth group. In both settings, I was assured that observations would be a simple matter to arrange. In the case of the youth group, this was indeed the case. The lead youth worker with whom I arranged the project had control over access to the youth group sessions, so as soon as the necessary police checks were completed, I was able to begin observations. However, in the school project, negotiating access was a more complex procedure. While the member of staff who was acting as my gatekeeper to the school was happy for me to carry out observations around school and in lessons, access to each individual lesson was ultimately controlled by the subject teacher. To arrange my access into these spaces, the gatekeeper I was working with sent around an email to all members of teaching staff, introducing me, and warning people that I may be approaching them to request permission to observe lessons. Once this had happened, I was able to use the validity this conferred upon me to approach individual teachers by email to request permission to enter their lessons. In this email, I made it clear that I was not there to observe the teaching - only the young people - and that allowing me into lessons was entirely optional. One teacher replied asking me not to come into her lessons, but did not give an explanation for this request. The rest of the teaching staff assured me they were happy for me to come into their classrooms.

Once my access into the space was secured, I was able to begin the observations. In the school setting, these observations largely took place in the lessons of the young people, or when walking around the school site with participants. In the observations of lessons, I watched as the young people undertook group tasks, listened as they engaged in discussions with each

other or the subject teacher, and tried to unpick some of the complex negotiations of subjectivities being played out in front of me. I tried to undertake roughly the same number of observations of each participant. In reality, arranging this timetable of observations was more complex than I had anticipated. One of the participants did largely science subjects, and was a relatively quiet student in classes. The content of the subjects she studied, combined with her own demeanour, meant that I struggled to get much rich or relevant data from observations of her lessons. Another participant had very few lessons on the day I was usually in school for sessions, and the lesson she did have was taught by the member of staff who did not want me to observe her classes. In contrast, there was a small group of participants who had chosen similar subject combinations, including particularly English, Psychology and Sociology. Observations of these young people were therefore particularly effective, due to the helpfulness of the sympathetic staff in these departments, the relevant content of many of these lessons, and the fact that I could be observing several young people at once. Once I had arranged my timetable in order to address all of these factors, I still often faced problems. It was not unusual for sixth form lessons to be cancelled if a member of staff was absent, or moved if the classroom was needed for a larger group. On several occasions, I arrived for the second period of a double lesson, only to find that the group had moved classroom, left no indication as to where they had gone, and not notified the staff in the office who were in charge of timetabling. These instances could be frustrating, and at times, disheartening.

Despite these problems, the observations in the school setting did yield rich data. The amount of time the young people spent in school meant that each week I was able to conduct a significant number of observations. The nature of the subjects which many of them studied meant that I was often present for discussions of issues surrounding gender, sexism and feminism, or other critical topics such as race, class, and environmental issues. Although I had been worried about reports from other researchers who had worked in schools about awkwardness or tensions in lesson observations (Eisenhart 2001; James 1996; Erickson 1984), both staff and students quickly became accustomed to my presence in their lessons. Students who were not participants in my research began to chat to me at the beginning and end of lessons, and staff gradually began to include me in some discussions while teaching. In one memorable moment, I was observing a psychology lesson where the teacher was introducing the topic of psychological research to the group. At the beginning of the lesson, he gleefully couldn't resist asking the young people to name an example of academic research going on around them, and laughing when the young people eventually realised he was referring to me.

The observations in the youth group took a slightly different format. Before the PAR project began, I observed three youth group sessions. In these sessions, I took part in making glittered

stress balls, helped facilitate group discussions, and consumed vast amounts of Nutella on bread sticks - which was the snack of choice for the young people. Once the project began, these observations were limited to 30 minutes at the start of each evening, where I would mingle with the young people while they snacked and signed in, take part in the introductions and ice-breaker game, before leading the PAR participants to a room downstairs for our session. One week, the majority of the PAR group was not able to attend, so the rest of the participants took part in the main youth group session, and I was able to use that time as an extra observation. Once the project had come to an end, I was able to conduct three more observations of the full, two hour sessions.

While these observations did not come with the same logistical challenges and frustrations of the observations in the school setting, they did come with their own problems. While the school setting had allowed me an extensive amount of observation time, my time in the youth group was incredibly limited. I had only a few sessions either side of the PAR project, and then the short slots at the beginnings of each session, in which to conduct the whole of my observations. I was unable to extend these observations at either end of the project, as it was tightly sandwiched between the Easter and Summer school holidays, when attendance at the youth group was expected to drop dramatically. However, the nature of the setting did offer benefits for observations as well. The informal nature of the sessions, and my more active role in them, led to some rich observations, and in the limited time available I was able to gather some incredibly engaging data.

The differing nature of the school and youth group observations meant that the role I took as a researcher differed slightly in each setting. There have been multiple frameworks proposed by theorists to categorise the different roles a researcher can take during participant observations. As far back as 1969, Gold proposed a three-part framework which included 'complete participant', 'participant as observer' and 'observer as participant' (Gold 1969, cited in, May 2001, pp.155). More recently, Bryman has proposed a six-part framework of the different roles in participant observation. He described the six categories as being; 'covert full-member', 'overt full member', 'participating observer', 'partially participating observer', 'minimally participating observer' and 'non-participating observer with interaction' (Bryman 2012, pp.P442-444). In reality, once I was in the observations, I felt that I moved between different roles depending on the setting, tone and activity of the observation. In this sense, my experiences echoed those of Mason, who has discussed the blurring and continual negotiation of these categories (Mason 2002). On the whole, I often took on something akin to the role of 'minimally participating observer' in the observations within the school, while my more active

role within the youth group sessions could possibly be seen as similar to a 'participating observer' or 'partially participating observer'.

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#### *3.4.3.1. Ending the Observations*

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In each setting, at the end of the project, I had to negotiate drawing the observations to a close. Deciding when to leave the field, or disengage from observations, can be a complex decision which requires the researcher to be reflexive about the project, its aims, and its future (Bryman 2012; Iversen 2009). In the school setting, deciding when to draw the observations to a halt was a relatively straightforward process. The young people had decided when the FPAR project would conclude, and the observations concluded at the same time. They chose for their end point the school Easter holiday, which provided a clear cut-off point at which to finish the observations. However, ending the observations was more complex in the youth group setting. Again, the young people were responsible for deciding when to finish the FPAR project. In this case though, the observations went on for several weeks past the end of the FPAR project. Deciding when to draw a halt to these observations was a difficult decision. I was enjoying my time in the youth group, and had been asked by the lead youth worker if I would like to stay on after my research had ended as a volunteer. While I was severely tempted to stay on longer, and at the same time do some more observations, I was concerned that lingering would place me in a more ethically challenging situation during the writing up of the project. The week after the observations were due to finish, I had leave booked to go away for the week. I decided that I would not return after the leave, providing a clean break for both myself and the young people.

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#### *3.4.3.2. Fieldnotes*

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Ethnographers hold different views about what fieldnotes represent, and how they are produced (Mason 2002). Some theorists have argued that researchers should make two sets of notes - initial 'scratch notes' which are made at the time of observations, and then a more complete version that is written up at the end of the day, or whenever the researcher is next out of the field (Bryman 2012; Campbell & Lassiter 2010). In addition to these two sets of notes, some researchers have argued for the importance of also keeping a personal and reflexive diary, in which to collate the thoughts, reflections and emotions that emerge from their time in the field (Campbell & Lassiter 2015; Mulhall 2003). This diary may take the form of a personal record, which is more honest about the researcher's self in the fieldwork, and may not be intended for viewing by others (Campbell & Lassiter 2015).

In addition to the diverse forms they can take, the different role of fieldnotes has also been discussed by researchers. Some researchers see fieldnotes as a form of 'raw data' that can gradually be built up into a data set, while others see it as another form of representation of the events, which must be interpreted as such. For some, these notes may be a thinking space, in which hunches can be developed and initial ideas tested out (Campbell & Lassiter 2015; Mulhall 2003; Mason 2002). For others, these notes may be intended to form part of the future logic of the analysis of the research for readers, and as such need to be understandable to others reading them (Mulhall 2003).

Throughout both of the two PAR projects, I produced multiple forms of fieldnotes. In the school project, I created immediate notes whilst carrying out observations in lessons (see Appendix Three). In these notes, I originally began by recording instances where the participants discussed feminism, or remained silent when others brought it up. The notes began by being brief and to the point, detailing things such who was in attendance, what was said and done, and how the participants and other young people reacted. However, as I attended more and more lessons, the style of these notes also began to evolve. Multiple observations of similar scenarios can be a stage of the research often seen as boring by researchers (Bryman 2012; May 2001), and observations of lessons often involved periods of time where the participants were silently engaged in either listening to the teacher, or doing written work. In these moments, in order to not allow ennui to creep over me, I spent time using these notes as a space in which to reflect upon ideas and theories I was currently testing out. In this sense, for me, these notes did become as much of a thinking space as a record of events.

As I was conducting my observations in a school environment, it felt appropriate to make notes as I was observing. Several researchers have discussed the problems that can occur when making notes about people in the observation space, particularly the possibility it has to make participants highly conscious of the researcher (Campbell & Lassiter 2015; Bryman 2012). However, in the formality of the school environment, where members of staff are frequently making notes and recording information about the lesson or the students, taking notes of observations felt appropriate. What physical medium to use for notes has also been discussed by some researchers, with researchers discussing the relative merits of notebooks, scraps of paper, computers, and audio recorders (Campbell & Lassiter 2015; Mason 2002). Audio recorders were not a valid possibility. A laptop computer would have been possible, and would have made converting the notes into a form for analysis quick and efficient. However, I was worried about the noise my typing on my laptop would make, the added visibility of the note making, and the potential practical problems of carrying around a laptop and ensuring it was

always charged. Instead, I chose to make these notes in an A4, ring bound, notebook, such as are used by many members of staff around schools.

In the youth group, where the nature of my observations were much more involved, and active, it did not feel appropriate, or even possible, to carry around a notebook and pen and make continuous observations. Instead, my notes were often made in a corner of the room, on a scrap of paper that could then be quickly stuffed into a pocket. Later, these notes were copied up into my notebook, in order to keep them in order (see Appendix Four). In this sense, my experience echoed that of Malhall on immersion in observations, who argued that in some situations "if too much time is devoted to writing detailed notes then the deeper, intuitive experience of being within a culture will be lost" (Mulhall 2003, p.311).

Throughout both projects, I also kept a fuller, more personal diary of my time in the field (see Appendix Five). This diary fulfilled many roles. It was a personal space, which allowed me to express, reflect on, and remember the many and varied emotions involved in PAR projects. For example, I often reflected on the excitement and joy of discussion sessions with the young people, or the stress and worry involved in other elements of the projects, such as in gaining access to both spaces, and ensuring the projects could go ahead. In addition to the more personal elements of the diary, there are also sections that acted as a straightforward record of events, with times, dates, and email exchanges all documented in order to provide me with an accurate description of the events and timescales of the project. As well as this, the diary included detailed writings on the meetings, the reactions of young people, and other pieces of information that when included with the immediate notes, provided me with a detailed view of the two projects.

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#### 3.4.4. INTERVIEWS

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At the beginning and end of each PAR project, the participants took part in an individual interview which attempted to give them the opportunity to reflect on their sense of self, their relationship with feminism, and the PAR project they were involved with. These interviews took the form of in-depth, semi-structured interviews. This approach allowed me to combine structured questioning around the themes of research, with less regulated discussions around topics that the participants themselves raised (Mason 2002; May 2001). All the interviews were recorded using an audio-recorder, to be later transcribed.

The initial interview, which took place at the beginning of the project, asked the young people to discuss their own identities, including their own gender, sexuality, class and ethnicity. It also asked them their opinions on several 'big issues' - the environment, LGBT+ rights, and

feminism. While I was not primarily concerned with their opinion on the environment or LGBT+ rights, the interview was structured in this way to ensure that it did not draw attention to feminism as the main enquiry of my study (see also, section 3.5.1). Finally, the interview asked them to reflect on why they had decided to join the project, and if relevant, what they had enjoyed or not enjoyed so far about the project. In the case of the initial interviews within the school, which were conducted several months before the youth group project was due to start, these questions were partly to inform the analysis of the project, and partly to help shape my recruitment in the second PAR project. In the school project, the initial interviews took place several weeks after the project had begun. These interviews took place in the school building, in the young people's free periods. However, in the youth group project, this approach was not possible, due to the time constraints caused by only having the young people together for two hours a week. Instead, these interviews took place in youth group sessions immediately before the project began.

The final interview took place shortly after the projects had ended. These interviews were considerably longer than the previous interviews, and touched upon a wider range of themes. The interviews asked the young people to reflect again upon their sense of self, and this time to discuss any changes to their subjectivities over the course of the project. In these interviews, the young people were either already aware of the research's interest in feminism, or were made aware of it at this point. The interview therefore also asked them to reflect once more upon feminism, and their relationship with it. Finally, I asked the young people to discuss their perceptions, emotions and thoughts regarding the PAR project.

To facilitate the discussion of these themes, the interviews combined conventional questioning with reflection on statements from the previous interview and discussions of events I had witnessed during my observations. To allow the young people to reflect upon feminism, their relationship to it, and any change to this relationship, I read the participants statements about feminism that they had made in their initial interview several months earlier. We discussed whether or not their views had changed, and if so, what had altered for them. I had had some concerns during the planning phase of the interview that this technique might lead to the young people worrying about judgement of their earlier or present opinions. However, in reality this part of the interview worked incredibly well. This may be due in part to the relaxed nature of the relationship I had formed with the young people by this point in the project, but I also took care to make sure I approached this topic in a sensitive and neutral way.

The participants were also asked to reflect on events, conversations or silences I had witnessed during the course of my observations. In particular, I asked the young people to consider



examples of times when they had supported, or not supported, issues that I or they perceived to be feminist issues. To facilitate these discussions, where possible, I discussed with them instances I had observed over the course of the project, and asked them to reflect upon their own actions, thoughts and perceptions during the event.

In the school project, these interviews took place several weeks after the project had finished, in the free periods of the young people. In the youth group projects, these interviews also took place in the weeks following the end of the project, but were held in the office headquarters of the charity.

Creating the interview questions for the final interviews was an ongoing, reflexive process, that went on throughout the projects. During project meetings, observations, or when reflecting on the project in my fieldwork diaries, I would note down questions, and areas of interest in my project notebooks. These mind-maps formed the underlying basis of my interview questions. For the initial interviews, this process was slightly more straightforward, as the underlying questions arose from my research questions. For both sets of interviews, these underlying questions were then transformed into smaller questions that could be asked to participants. To do this, I utilised Mason's approach to designing an interview plan, which involved a circular process of subdividing large issues into smaller questions, and then repeatedly cross-referencing to ensure all areas of interest were covered (Mason 2002). Once a general interview plan had been created, these plans were then modified for each participant with the relevant quotes and observations (see Appendix Six). While Mason had discussed her preference to use themed cards (Mason 2002), with questions collected together onto cards by theme, I decided instead to create for each participant a paper hard copy of the interview plan. In the interview there were several questions I needed answers to from each participant - particularly the ones regarding their approach to feminism by the end of the project - and this approach allowed me to cross off each question as it had been answered, and then easily print a fresh plan for the next interview.

After planning the interviews, it is usually advisable to do a pilot interview with someone who fits the category of people you will be interviewing (Mason 2002). However, the nature of my study meant that only my participants fitted into the category of people to which the interview would apply. Instead of doing a full pilot interview, I instead discussed the interview questions with one of my colleagues, and asked them to reflect upon whether the wording and structure of the questions was clear and understandable.

One of the issues of conducting research with young people is the practical issue of finding an appropriate location in which to conduct the research. I was conscious that during these

interviews, I would be alone with people who were legally considered to be children. The safeguarding policies of both the school and the youth group advise adults to avoid being alone with a child or young person, and if this is impossible, to make sure they are always in sight or hearing of another member of staff (----- School 2011; ---Youth Group 2009 - *Names removed to protect anonymity of participants*). Discussions of suitable locations in which to conduct interviews with young people in have been ongoing for several years (McDowell 2001; Valentine et al. 2001). However, one of the benefits of conducting research in a school or youth group is that they may have purpose-built spaces for one-to-one meetings with young people. Both the school and the youth group allowed me to use a small meeting room designed for this purpose, with a glass door to ensure our interview could be seen by other members of staff, while still ensuring the privacy of the participants.

Throughout all of these interviews, I was constantly engaged in the challenge of being reflexive about the interview process. I was aware in all of my discussions with participants that language is an act of representation (May 2001) and so attempted to constantly consider what they told me in their interviews in the light of the possible acts of representation in which they were engaged. To do this, I compared their words with the things I had already discussed with them at previous points, and observations I had of them around the school or youth group, in an attempt to draw together a coherent understanding of how they constructed their subjectivity. I was conscious throughout the interview process of the impact of my own presence - both on the young people and how this would affect their own representation of self - but also on my own understanding of the interview process and knowledge created as a result of it. While I did not attempt to remove this 'bias' (Mason 2002), I strived to remain constantly aware of it, and to reflect on its many implications for the research.

### 3.5. Ethical Considerations

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Research ethics have been increasing in prominence across the social sciences in recent years (Wiles 2013; Hammersley & Traianou 2012; Bay-Che 2009; Skelton 2008; McDowell 2001). In the wake of this rise in ethical awareness, theorists have defined multiple approaches to ethics, including consequentialist approaches, principlist approaches, the ethics of care approach, and the virtue ethics approach (Wiles 2013). My approach to research ethics was informed by the University of Sheffield guidelines, as well as the British Sociological Association (BSA) advice (The University of Sheffield 2016a; 2016b; 2016c; 2016d; 2016e; 2015a; 2015b; British Sociological Association 2002). While the advice of the BSA is somewhat less prescriptive than that of the University of Sheffield, both sets of guidelines operate largely from a principlist approach. This approach assumes that ethical decisions can be made based

on notions of what is morally right and following a set of pre-agreed ethical principles (Wiles 2013). In contrast to this, my own approach, informed by feminist theory, was based largely on an ethics of care approach. This approach is based on the principles of care, compassion and a sense of responsibility to participants and their well being. Decisions surrounding ethical issues are not made simply using rules and principles, but instead aim to primarily be reflexive and engage with the complexity of each individual case to respect the needs of others (Wiles 2013).

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### 3.5.1. CONSENT

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When conducting research, University of Sheffield regulations state that voluntary, informed consent must always be received. Where possible, this consent should be written. When working with children, the regulations state that informed consent of one of their parents or guardians should also be obtained, where appropriate and feasible (The University of Sheffield 2015b).

In both of the PAR projects, the participants were under 18 at the start of project. As such, they were defined by the University of Sheffield as one of the groups of people whose competence to exercise informed consent is in doubt (The University of Sheffield 2016d). As previously discussed in this chapter, my approach to working with young people in research attempted to follow Christensen and Prout's 'ethical symmetry' framework. This approach involved not making assumptions about the competence of children, instead working from a point of assumption of their similarity to adults (Christensen & Prout 2002). The participants of my study were all at the older end of the definition of childhood, and all able to understand the form of the research project and consent to take part.

In the case of my school participants, in line with the ideals of ethical symmetry, I would have ideally preferred to have only sought consent from the young people themselves. However, the regulations advised otherwise, and since there was little chance of harm arising from parental/guardian consent being obtained, written consent forms were taken home by the participants for their parents or guardians to sign. However, young people, like adults, have a right to be informed about the research process and decide whether or not to be involved (Skelton 2008; Matthews 1998). This is recognised by both the BSA, who state that "the consent of the child should be sought in addition to that of the parent" and the University of Sheffield, who similarly state that researchers should "obtain the child's or young person's free and voluntary consent to participate" (The University of Sheffield 2015b, p.28; British Sociological Association 2002, p.4). In order to address both of these elements of consent, I utilised the consent/assent approach created by Morrow and Richards in 1996. This approach,

while created over 20 years ago, still perfectly encompasses the desire to receive the formal consent from the parents, whilst also allowing the young people to formally assent to their participation as well. The consent form therefore required two signatures, one from the participants indicating they assented to involvement in the research, and one from their parents or guardians, showing they consented to them taking part (see Appendix Seven).

However, the issue of consent was much more problematic for the young people involved in the project at the youth group. For LGBT+ youth who have not disclosed their identities to their parents, consent from parents can risk 'outing' these young people before they are ready (Skelton 2008; Taylor 2008). In 2008, Taylor argued that the need for parental consent of young LGBT+ people risked excluding them from research, or asking them to be put in harm's way in order to participate. She stated that research consent procedures "need to be made much more sensitive to the contexts of participants' lives" (Taylor 2008, p.36). Since then, some studies with LGBT+ young people have been granted permission to go ahead without consent from participants' parents (Chesir-Teran & Hughes 2009; Skelton 2008). For example, in 2009, Chesir-Teran and Hughes did research on heterosexism and victimisation rates in schools with young LBGQ students. In this study, they did not gain parental consent of participants, but instead asked participants to assent themselves (Chesir-Teran & Hughes 2009). Similarly, in her research into LGBT+ youth, Skelton argued that "seeking parental consent for their child's participation in the research was not an approach we could use" (Skelton 2008, p.32).

The University of Sheffield policy on participant safety and well-being states that the researcher has a commitment to "protect participants from harm arising from research" (The University of Sheffield 2016b, p.1). Similarly, the British Sociological Association statement of ethical practice states that "sociologists have a responsibility to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of participants is not adversely affected by the research" (British Sociological Association 2002, p.2). In this study, acquiring parental consent for the research would have involved making parents or carers aware that their child was attending a youth group for young LGBT+ people. Asking young people to 'come out' to their parents may have risked causing emotional, psychological or physical harm to the young people involved (Taylor 2008). As such, it would have violated the core principle of protecting the well-being of participants.

Given the risk that parental consent had for harm in this context, and the fact that all potential participants were aged 16 and over, I did not insist on all participants providing parental consent in order to take part in the project. Instead, two different consent forms were made

available to the young people in the project. One asked for consent from both the parents and the young person involved. The other form only asked for consent from the young person involved. In all other ways, the two forms were identical (see Appendixes Eight and Nine). I discussed the consent procedure individually with each participant, and explained to them that the form without parental consent was specifically for those who had not disclosed their LGBT+ identities to their parents or carer. Having discussed this with the participants, I then allowed them to take the appropriate form away with them. In the end, only one young person took the form that did not include parental consent. This approach was designed to allow the research to be flexible to the needs of the individual participants, while ensuring that parental consent was still gained where possible and appropriate.

The consent forms, and the accompanying information sheet, contained information about the project, its aims, and what participation would involve (see Appendixes Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten and Eleven). However, on both the consent forms and information sheets, the research was described as being interested in the effect that involvement in the projects would have on the young people participating. In these descriptions, and in conversations with the young people about what the projects would involve, I did not explicitly discuss the importance of feminism or feminist subjectivities to the research project.

The place of omission within research such as this has been discussed by multiple theorists and bodies (The University of Sheffield 2015b; Wiles 2013; Hammersley & Traianou 2012; Lugosi 2006). Hammersley and Traianou discussed the need to give participants sufficient information to consent to take part in a project, but argued that a full understanding of the projects aims and interests may significantly influence or alter participants' behaviour (Hammersley & Traianou 2012). Revealing detailed specifics of the research may risk reducing the validity of sociological research (Wiles 2013; Hammersley & Traianou 2012). The University of Sheffield states that withholding information about the true objectives of the research from participants is acceptable when necessary to protect the validity of the research (The University of Sheffield 2015b).

Throughout the early stages of the project, while the participants knew the research was concerned with changes to their subjectivities throughout the project, they were not made aware that negotiation of feminism was the main change to their sense of self that I was attempting to observe. This was in order to prevent this knowledge from altering their behaviour, and by doing so, to protect the validity of the research. At the end of the project, the young people were made aware of the central focus of feminism to the research. At this

point in the project, it was made clear to the young people that they could choose to withdraw themselves and their data from the project, although none of the young people chose to do so.

The formal, written part of the consent process took part at the beginning of the project. However, as the projects grew and developed, consent was a constant renegotiation. In the case of the school project, withdrawal from the research also meant the participant would need to leave the group EPQ project, due to the difficulties of reporting on the group progress, dynamic and negotiations without the consent of one member. Over the course of both projects, some members of the group did leave the projects (see section 3.2.4.5). In the school project, this occurred early in the project, and the young person easily returned to undertaking their EPQ project under the normal supervision pattern. In the case of the youth group, it was made clear to the young people that they could at any time return to the normal youth group sessions taking place at the same time.

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### 3.5.2. WELL-BEING

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The University of Sheffield regulations state that researchers have an obligation to protect their participants from harm, whether this be physical or psychological (The University of Sheffield 2016b). When I was planning the research, I was concerned with the risk of emotional or psychological harm. I was worried that the young people would engage with potentially sensitive topics, and that I would need to be aware of the risk of some of these topics being painful for the young people to discuss. I made it clear that the young people could leave the room at any point if they wished, but none chose to do this.

However, the main issue surrounding the well-being of the participants actually arose during the writing up stage of the research. During the project, the young people often shared incredibly personal or sensitive information about themselves with the group, and with me. In these moments, I often suspected that the young people had on some level forgotten my role as a researcher, and had seen me only as one of the group. Some of the information the young people disclosed was part of rich and interesting data surrounding the participants' sense of self and identity. When writing about this data, I therefore had to negotiate carefully what I should include, and what I should omit. In line with the feminist ethics of care approach that my research utilised, I attempted to place the well-being of the participants at the forefront of each decision. If there was any possibility that the young people would feel hurt, upset, or embarrassed by something being shared - even in an anonymous form - I did not include it in the thesis.

While much of this discussion has focused upon the well-being of my participants, it is also worth noting that I did have to consider my own well-being at some points over the course of the projects. Many of the procedures for researchers working with children and young people are designed not only to protect the participants, but also to make sure the researcher is protected in case their motives and behaviours come into question. At all times during the research, I followed not only the advice outlined in the University regulations, but also in the safeguarding policies of the school and the youth group. These included advice on avoiding being alone with children where possible, not giving out personal details to students, and not having physical contact with a student that is inappropriate (---- School 2011; ---- Youth Group 2009).

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### 3.5.3. ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

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The University guidelines state that participants have a reasonable expectation of privacy (The University of Sheffield 2016c). When participants decide to take part in a research process, the private sphere is broken down and reinstated with a new level of boundary, that now falls on the other side of the researcher. The researcher needs to exercise caution in how this information is passed on to others who fall outside of this boundary (Hammersley & Traianou 2012). In many projects, this is ensured through anonymity, by repeating what is learnt in the research process, but in a way that cannot be traced back to the person who said it (The University of Sheffield 2016c; Wiles 2013; Hammersley & Traianou 2012).

However, anonymity is in many ways a controversial approach (Hammersley & Traianou 2012). In some research projects, participants want to be named and identified. This is especially true in participatory methods such as PAR, where participants may want to claim ownership over their research (Wiles 2013). In line with these considerations, the decision to be anonymous or not was one that had to be negotiated and agreed upon by the groups. In both cases, the participants discussed the matter, before deciding as a group to retain their anonymity. In the case of both groups, the names of the young people were changed to pseudonyms. In the school project, the young people also decided to choose these names themselves. The names of the school and the youth group have also been concealed in order to further protect their anonymity.

Confidentiality is an area where working with those legally considered children requires extra caution. While participants can expect a degree of confidentiality from the researcher, there are times when this may need to be broken (Hammersley & Traianou 2012). As a researcher working in a school and a youth group, I was guided in this regard by the respective safeguarding policies of each environment. Whilst I aimed to endeavour to maintain the

confidentiality of the research participants, if I suspected a participant or another young person was in danger or possible harm, then I would have reported this to the designated safeguarding member of staff at either organisation. However, in both projects, this situation never arose, and I was able to maintain the confidentiality of the young people.

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#### 3.5.4. POWER

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Research with children and young people raises particular issues surrounding power (McDowell 2001). Some of the specific issues surrounding power that arose during the projects will be discussed in the following chapter (see section 4.6.1). However, there were also issues that arose during the research surrounding power that concerned the observations and interviews carried out during the research.

The nature of childhood in an adult-centric society means that power is normally imbued in adults rather than children (Corsaro 2005; Christensen & Prout 2002; Morrow & Richards 1996). Power can affect subject positions in diverse and contradictory ways (Moore 2013). The complexly constituted self identifies with or resists the dominant discourse and the various subject positions made available to them in different ways (Moore 2013; Schraff 2013). It is not necessarily the case then that the participants would seek to act and converse in a way that they believed would please me (Punch 2002). While some of the young people did at times seem keen to please and impress me in small ways, generally the young people did not seem interested in altering their behaviour for me significantly. In many occasions during the observations, the young people did not appear concerned by my presence. Instead, they were more occupied with the many other things in which they were involved, including the lesson and its activities, their behaviour in relation to the subject teacher, and their negotiation of their relationships with their peers. In these moments, I believed that the young people were much more concerned with negotiating the dynamics of the lesson, than in trying to please me.

When interviewing, there is also sometimes a conception in research that the interviewer holds all the power in the interaction, and that the interview can be a fundamentally exploitative relationship (Oakley 1990). However, the relationship of power during research is not a stable entity. Instead, it remains in flux throughout the research project (Grenz 2005). While as an adult, and a researcher, in an adult-centric society, this did mean the power was normally imbued in myself (Punch 2002), there were definitely elements of the interview process in which the participants did hold a large amount of power themselves. For example, when conducting my final interviews with the school students, there was one student who failed to turn up to her arranged interview time. Wondering if I could find her around school, I



wandered the school hallways looking for her in the usual spaces the sixth form students lurked. While walking, it occurred to me how important this interview was to me as the researcher, and how unimportant this interview might seem to her, given the other pressing concerns that young people have in that time in their life - including pressure to revise for their A-Level exams, pressure to get into university, pressure to decide what university offer to accept and decline, as well as a multitude of social and emotional issues that they may not choose to disclose to us. In that moment, knowing that she could choose to prioritise all of these issues above my research, and that I would be able to do nothing to stop her, I felt powerless indeed.

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### 3.6. Data Analysis

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During the research, multiple forms of data were generated. These included audio recordings of group meetings, audio recordings of interviews, hand-written notes from observations and typed fieldwork journals. Before this data could be analysed, it had to be collated in a format that was compatible with the computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) that I was intending to use.

The majority of the transcription of the audio files was done by myself. However, due to the volume of recordings of group meetings, some of these were transcribed by a professional transcription company. These recordings were transcribed in a strict verbatim fashion, ensuring that everything on the recording was transcribed. However, in the transcriptions I did myself, edited verbatim was used. This meant that some brief sections were left untranscribed in order to make the process more efficient. These sections were generally very short, and were accompanied with timestamps and details of what had transpired during that time period, in order to allow me to easily return to them later if necessary. In addition to the audio files, the hand-written notes also had to be transformed into a format that could be analysed on the CAQDAS program. As these notes were clear and easy to read, I scanned them into a digital format rather than typing them up.

Once the data had been collated, formal analysis could begin. Thematic analysis was used in order to identify and analyse the main patterns and themes within the data (Braun & Clarke 2006). To do this, the data was coded using NVivo CAQDAS software. There is significant freedom in how to approach coding (Bryman 2012; Ryan & Bernard 2003), which allowed me to adopt an approach that suited my research project and style. Before formal coding began, I used the 'mapping' function on NVivo to mind-map some of the possible themes that codes could be organised into. These codes were based upon the constant informal analysis that I

had been engaged in as I conducted the fieldwork and collated the data. Coding then began formally. Codes were either provisionally grouped into these themes, or into new themes that emerged throughout this process. At the same time, notes and annotations were made on the data to highlight possible connections, links, and key ideas. Once all the data had been coded, the themes were then sorted and clarified. Throughout this process, the repetition or pattern of key ideas or themes was considered. However, in addition to this, attention was paid to the missing data (Bryman 2012), including crucial moments of silence or distinct absences.

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### 3.7. Concluding Thoughts

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This chapter has given an account of the research process, in order to provide the reader with the context in which the data this thesis rests upon was constructed. In this chapter, the theoretical positions that underpin this research - including critical realism, feminist epistemology and methodology, geography and spatial theory, and approaches to working with young people - have all been discussed. In addition to this, my location as a researcher has been examined, with particular attention paid to my relationship to feminism and my background of working with young people. Once the underpinnings of the research were established, the research design was also considered. This included a discussion of the two FPAR projects central to the research, as well as consideration of the interviews and observations that took place alongside these projects. The chapter then outlined some of the ethical issues that emerged throughout the project, before concluding with a discussion of the process of analysis.

Now that the methodologies and methods that underpin this research have been considered, the main analysis section of this thesis can begin. The next three chapters address the three research questions of this thesis, beginning by considering the practicalities, problems and possibilities of running FPAR with young men, before proceeding to consider the nature of displays of feminist subjectivities by the young men, both within the space of the projects, and within the wider spaces of the school and the youth group.

## 4. RUNNING FPAR PROJECTS WITH YOUNG MEN: PRACTICALITIES, PROBLEMS AND POSSIBILITIES

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### 4.1. Introduction

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PAR is a context-specific process, with every individual project shaped by the interests, experiences and personalities of the group. Each project is a unique and complex process, and as such, there is no fixed formula for how PAR should be done (McIntyre 2008). Despite the individual nature of each project, several PAR theorists have called for more accounts and discussions of the nature of PAR projects, in order to inform researchers working with PAR (Reid & Frisby 2008; Cahill 2007a). Cahill, in particular, declared that "To advance the field of youth participatory research, we also need self-reflexive accounts of practice evaluating what works and what does not" (Cahill 2007a, p.299).

In the previous chapter, a brief overview of the two FPAR projects central to this research was provided. In that discussion, the features and content of the two projects were outlined, as well as the nature of the participants who engaged in them. This was intended to offer a sense of the two projects, and to provide context for the discussion of the use of interviews and observations conducted alongside them. However, this discussion did not delve deeply into the PAR projects - into the intricacies of the doing of the participation, research and action, into the dynamics, tensions and cohesions of two groups of young people, into the ever changing role of the facilitator, and most crucially, into the role gender played throughout these themes.

This chapter engages with these considerations by providing an account of doing FPAR projects with young men and women. By doing so, this chapter aims to respond to calls from PAR theorists asking for detailed examination of PAR projects, while at the same time addressing the first of the three research themes of this project - *Running FPAR projects with young men: What are the practicalities, problems and possibilities?* To do this, this chapter draws upon not only the records of group meetings, but also the personal reflections of both myself and the participants. PAR is a fluid, recursive process, where different elements of the project exist in an intertwined and interlocked fashion. While this chapter tries to convey some of the messy nature of this process, discussion is divided into separate elements for the sake of structure and clarity. The chapter begins by first discussing the logistics of engaging with the three key elements of PAR - participation, research and action. The discussion then turns to the dynamics of the group, before considering the role of the facilitator within the project. Finally, the chapter concludes by arguing that these projects demonstrated that FPAR with groups of

young men and women can not only create viable FPAR projects, but FPAR projects that are exciting, rich and successful.

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## 4.2. Participation

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From the outset of the project, the centralisation of participation within the project needed to be established and prioritised. Within all PAR projects, emphasis must be placed on the quality and depth of participation (McIntyre 2008; Pain 2004). The group themselves should negotiate what forms this participation will take, and establish the nature and expectations of their involvement in the project (McIntyre 2008).

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### 4.2.1. INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

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In PAR projects, the process of negotiating group participation can be initiated by running introductory activities with participants at the beginning of the project. In my projects, I drew upon the work of McIntyre and Cahill (as discussed in section 2.3.5 of the literature review) to develop my own introductory activities for the projects (McIntyre 2008; Cahill 2007a). For the first activity, I drew upon McIntyre's advice on stimulating discussion on the meaning of PAR. In her project with young people, she proposed beginning the project by defining and discussing the terms participation, action and research (McIntyre 2008). To do this, I split the participants into three groups, and asked each of them to define one key term on the whiteboard. Following this, I gave each group one of three definitions of PAR - from McIntyre, Rahman and Cahill - which I had printed out on large sheets of paper (McIntyre 2008; Rahman 2008; Cahill 2007c). The young people discussed these definitions, and added any elements to the whiteboard that they had not yet included. Once this was done, the groups as a whole attempted to create their own definition of PAR from which to conceptualise their own project, and the way that they were expected to participate within it.

The young people also took part in a contract writing activity. Again, this exercise drew on recommendations, this time from both McIntyre and Cahill. In both of their projects with young people, participants drew up a contract outlining their understandings of what to expect from themselves and each other throughout the project (McIntyre 2008; Cahill 2007a). In my project, the participants were asked to do this early on in the project, but after the first session. This allowed them time to have experienced at least one FPAR meeting, and to have had chance to reflect upon what issues might arise in future sessions. The contracts were drawn up on the whiteboard, with each participant contributing. Points that were included in the contracts included the serious - keeping things confidential, being respectful to the views of all the participants, taking care not to talk over each other - but also the more light-hearted,

such as a reminder to bring cake when requested, and to not call the facilitator 'Miss'. After it was finalised, the young people all signed underneath, and the finished contract was photographed.

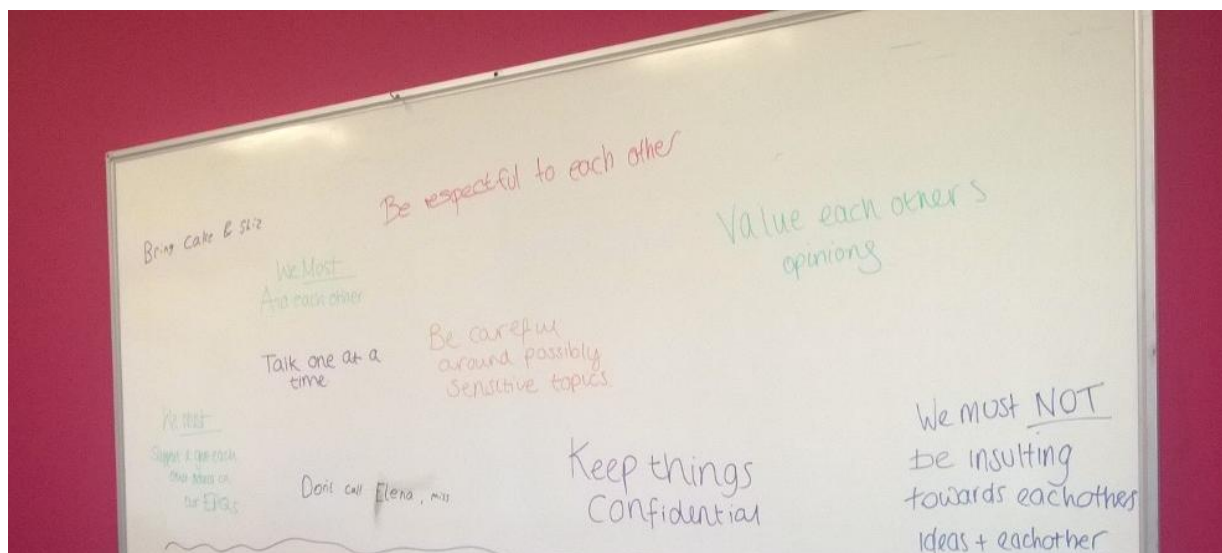


FIGURE ONE: PAR CONTRACT FROM THE SCHOOL PROJECT

These two activities were intended to encourage the young people to conceptualise the project and their role within it. However, in addition to this, in both projects these activities also served to help shape or solidify the collective nature of the group, and their sense of self and cohesion. This was particularly pronounced in the school project, where these activities took place slightly later than in the youth group project. While I had intended to run these activities in the second or third meeting of each project, in the school setting the constraints of the shorter meeting lengths combined with the need to resolve some of the administrative tasks surrounding the EPQ project meant that these activities took place a couple of sessions later than was originally planned. By the time these activities were conducted, the group had already begun to construct tentative ties of group identity and a combined sense of self and purpose.

- Winston:** Don't insult Winston's car.
- Facilitator:** Oh, don't insult Winston's car? We can put that on the contract if you like. If that's a hint, I should, stop making, stop laughing at your car?
- Eleanor:** It is a Dad car.
- Facilitator:** Yeah, that, I feel like that could go on, for Winston.
- Monica:** [Laughing] A dad car.
- Deano:** A dad car?

In this section of dialogue, one of the group recurring jokes - the undesirability of Winston's car - was raised as part of the contract writing process. By doing so, Winston appeared to be affirming a sense of group identity by calling attention to the jokes that already existed as part of their group dynamic. Here, Winston was not only reaffirming the beginnings of their collective identity, but also using the contract to formalise the position of these group jokes within the group sense of self. After this point, the group jokes that were mentioned in the creation of the contract, including Winston's car and the desire to call the facilitator 'Miss', became recurring themes throughout the project.

It was at this early point in the first project that I began to feel a sense of cautious relief. Until that point, I had been worried about keeping the new group together amidst the competing time and priority pressures the young people were under. The group had felt fragmented, and the young people within it had felt somewhat detached from me and from one another. After the meeting, I reflected in my fieldwork journal:

**Winston jumped up to write one on the board straight away, as we started, and he wrote "call Miss, Miss". It feels like we, as a group, have in-jokes now. They felt like a group. And they laughed - a lot. Pretty much hysterics, the whole way through. It feels good.**

In this sense, the introductory activities served not only to shape the nature of the participation within the project, but also allowed the group to strengthen their sense of group identity.

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#### 4.2.2. PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

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While the beginning of the project was the stage at which participation was initially negotiated, this process was one that was continually evolving throughout the course of the project.

During the research stage of the project, the nature of the young people's participation was multi-faceted and evolving. At the beginning of the project, the majority of the research took the form of discussion groups that were initially run by myself as the facilitator. In these discussions, the young people participated by considering the general themes I raised in relation to their own lives and experiences, and by steering and guiding the conversation, often without realising it, into the areas they felt were the most relevant and pressing.

Once the first few discussion groups had been led by myself, the young people began to expand the nature of their participation in the research by leading these sessions themselves. Their discussion groups were focused upon the themes and issues that they themselves

believed to be most crucial to their own lives and our project. While handing control of this element of the research over to the young people was central to the participatory nature of the projects, it was not as straightforward as I had initially anticipated. In the school project, running their first discussion group did appear to cause some slight anxiety amongst some of the participants, but they threw themselves into the sessions. All the participants brought video clips, newspaper articles or presentations to trigger the debate, and then took responsibility for keeping the dialogue flowing and on track, often by using a list of follow-up questions they had prepared. The engaged, animated discussions that ensued meant that the group soon appeared to relax into their new participatory roles.

However, in the youth group, despite my best efforts to reassure them, some of the young people involved in the project viewed the idea of choosing a topic and steering a discussion as a formidable undertaking. In part, this may have been down to the slightly younger demographic of this group, or it may have been down to the individual personalities involved. One member of the group decided he would prefer not to run a session, and was happy to simply engage with the themes that the other members brought to the table. In these discussion groups, the young people chose to take a more relaxed approach to their participation in the research, and usually brought a list of questions with which to stimulate debate, rather than bringing pre-prepared trigger materials as the other group had. Despite the different style in running them, these discussions were just as stimulating and energetic.

As well as this structured approach to participation, it is also worth noting that the young people constantly participated in shaping the project direction through less structured means. The young people often brought questions, worries, or concerns to the sessions in order to discuss them with the group. For example, Ernest, the participant in the youth group who had chosen not to lead his own discussion group, often took the initiative in sessions to raise issues he faced as a young transgender person. In one meeting, while the group were settling down and sharing out snacks amongst themselves, he began a discussion about the difficulties of sourcing products such as binders for young transgender men. This concern was quickly echoed by the other members of the group, and this rapidly evolved into a spirited discussion of the issue. In this way, Ernest was participating in the shaping of the themes of the research, but doing this in a way with which he felt comfortable.

The formal discussion groups were recorded by the young people using the whiteboards found in each of the project spaces. The creation of these records was also a key form of participation for the young people, as they determined which parts of these discussions would be conceptualised as knowledge. Brightly coloured mind-maps formed the core of these

records, although the young people also used diagrams, images and drawings to record their thoughts. To make sure that everyone equally participated in this process, the young people ensured that they all took turns in making these notes. This was a process that as a facilitator I had expected to organise, but instead, the young people were proactive in taking responsibility for this themselves.

**Facilitator:** Who would like to do today's notes on the board?...Are you doing it already?

**Eleanor:** I'll do it. I've not done it yet.

In addition to ensuring that they all participated in determining what constituted group collective knowledge by taking turns to lead taking the notes, it is also worth noting that members of the group were always careful to check and affirm the note-making process with one another.

**Brittany:** Cisgender.

**Facilitator:** Oh, of course.

**Wiley:** Is that, cisgender?

**Elliot:** Yeah.

In this section of dialogue, from an early meeting of the youth group, Wiley, who was taking the notes on the board can be seen checking with the rest of the group that he had a clear understanding of what consensus the group has reached. In this sense, although the note-taker had a key role in determining what knowledge was retained on the whiteboard, the entire group participated in this process.

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#### 4.2.3. MAKING PARTICIPATION WORK

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As well as participating in the main content of the project, there were also times when the young people needed to participate through the making of major decisions about the project, and its direction or future. For the majority of the decisions that needed to be made collectively, both groups had decided on the apparently straightforward approach of voting. In these situations, a majority would carry a decision, although in most cases the discussion beforehand meant that a consensus was reached in the eventual vote.

**Facilitator:** Who would be up for a trip to Western Bank library as a group?

[Pause. They vote]

**Facilitator:** Everyone! Okay.



In this extract from a meeting of the school PAR group, the vote process appeared to be relatively straightforward. Prior to the vote, the group had discussed the relative advantages and disadvantages of the proposed trip, and so by the time the vote was cast, the group had already reached a consensus. In this sense, while the vote represented the formal moment in which the groups participated in negotiating their views on the directions of the projects, the discussion beforehand is just as important, if not more so, in determining what decision will be reached.

It is also worth considering the fact that exercising participation in this way can have drawbacks. In some of the votes, I worried that the visible nature of the vote casting process meant that some members of the group may have felt pressured into casting their vote in a certain way.

**Facilitator:** Yeah, of course. Eleanor, can we have your vote on what you want to do?

**Eleanor:** Oh I don't, I feel under pressure!

**Hannah:** Go on, do it, do it.

**Eleanor:** I'll just go with the majority.

In the extract above, the young people from the school project were deciding whether or not to extend the project after the February half-term holiday. The group had already discussed this in some depth at the beginning of the meeting, but had decided to vote on it at the end of the meeting, in order to give them some reflection time. However, Eleanor had to leave a few minutes early in order to catch a bus, and so would have been absent from the final vote. As she was leaving, I asked her to cast her vote, to ensure that she had a chance to take part in the decision-making process. However, as is clear from this section of dialogue, Eleanor appeared to be under some pressure from the rest of the group to vote along with them. Although Hannah was speaking with an air of humour to her comment, the extent as to which Eleanor felt she could truly vote as she wished remains unclear.

In these projects, there is therefore a tension between the different forms participation takes within PAR. One form of participation in these projects was the ability for the young people to determine how they, as a group, would decide on some of the big issues that would shape the project. However, the way in which they chose may have actually limited their ability to freely participate without constraint. At the time, when they chose to use a verbal voting system, I thought that was a valid, sensible way to make decisions. It was only when I reflected back on the transcripts of the meetings later that I became uneasy with this method.

These reflections raised questions for myself as a facilitator. Would a different method of decision-making have allowed all the young people to participate in group decisions more freely? Should I have encouraged the groups to move towards a different method of decision-making? If so, would too much influence from myself also be a contradiction in participation? These questions illustrate the tensions that can sometimes exist between the different forms of participation within PAR.

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#### 4.2.4. GROWING PARTICIPATION

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As the project progressed, both groups increasingly engaged with their freedom to participate in all elements of the project. Throughout the project, both groups participated actively in the main content of the project, and took part in reaching consensus over a variety of issues. However, in addition to this, over time, the young people took increasing responsibility for both the logistics and running of the small details of the project, and for the emotions and dynamics of the groups.

Outside of the large decisions that the groups formally voted on, both groups originally seemed relatively content to let me organise the day-to-day details and logistics of the running of the project. I prompted people when it was their turn to bring cake, provided stationery and other resources for sessions, and reminded group members of the timings of the next sessions. In many ways, the initial slippage into these roles on the part of both the young people and myself may in part have been a reflection of the normal expectations surrounding young people and adults in settings such as schools and youth groups. Both schools and youth groups are environments in which the adult staff of the institutions make many of the mundane decisions surrounding the lives or experiences of the young people in their care (Heath et al. 2007). In an environment where adults generally carry out tasks such as booking rooms, providing resources for tasks and dealing with emotional or behavioural issues, it is possible that both young people and adults can quickly revert to assuming these expected roles.

However, as the project progressed, the young people seemed to begin to move away from these expectations as they began to take on a greater role in managing the details of the project.

**Monica:** Err, Hannah can't make it this morning, but she said, has anyone brought cake or does she need to go and fetch some at lunch?

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**Monica:** He might not have my number.

**Eleanor:** He might answer it though.

**Monica:** He might be in bed.

[Phone on loudspeaker: "Welcome to the O2 messaging –."]

**Monica:** [Gasps] Right!

**Eleanor:** Hasn't he had a double lesson, though?

**Facilitator:** Do you want me to -?

**Eleanor:** -Ring him on Facebook.

These two sections of dialogue taken from group meetings each illustrated moments at which the participants of the school project took control over the organisation of some of the logistics of the project. In the first quote, Monica was communicating with Hannah, who was offering to go and source cake for the later meeting of the day. In this moment, not only were Hannah and Monica participating in the logistics of the project, but for Hannah this participation was also taking part outside of the main space of the project.

In the second piece of dialogue, Eleanor and Monica can be heard trying to contact Deano to remind him of an upcoming extra meeting that they suspect he will have forgotten. In this extract of dialogue, Eleanor can be heard cutting over the facilitator in her final suggestion to ring him on Facebook. By this point in the project, the young people were not only willing to participate in the logistics of the project, but they were also aware of when they were better placed to do this than the facilitator. In this moment, Eleanor appeared focused on the task in hand, and aware that she had more to offer in solving this issue than I did as the group facilitator.

A similar pattern can be seen when considering the ways in which the young people participated in managing the group emotions and dynamics. As the project progressed, the young people increasingly engaged in the task of managing the emotions of the others in the room to ensure the smooth running of the sessions.

**Elliot:** To be honest, they were just doing condoms on demonstrators. I think. We did it this time last year, and that's all they did.

**Ernest:** All they did was the condom thing? Okay. Great.

In this section of dialogue from the youth group, Ernest had been worried that he would have found the sex education session the rest of the youth group were taking part in informative and useful. The rest of the group were keen for him to stay in the PAR session, as it was their last session together as a group. As Ernest became restless, Elliot tried to reassure him that he wasn't missing anything. As this was a repeat of an earlier session that the group had attended, Elliot went upstairs and checked that nothing different was happening. In this

moment, Elliot actively worked to soothe Ernest, and ensure the smooth running of the session by encouraging all of the members to stay and participate.

In these moments, across both projects, the participants had moved away from traditional expectations of the role of young people in school and youth groups and broadened their understanding of participation. From the beginning of the project they had been involved in participating in the main content of the project, and involved in reaching group consensus around larger issues. However, as the projects progressed, they also began to take a greater responsibility for the dynamics of their group, and the logistical details of the project.

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#### 4.2.5. THE GENDERED NATURE OF PARTICIPATION

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In the school setting, there was a noticeable difference in the way in which the young men and women enacted participation. While both genders participated in the project, the way in which they engaged and participated differed somewhat.

Throughout the project, the girls were more likely to be the ones who engaged in arrangements such as timings and food arrangements. It was one of the young women who initially suggested the cake rota, and organised this. It was other young women who messaged the rest of the group from home to check if cake was being brought in, or who drove to the local shops in their free periods to buy cake. It was the young women who set up the food during the presentation evening, and a young woman who arranged the end of project lunch. In contrast, while the two young men participated fully in the research activities, in the action stages of the project, and in many other elements of the project, they were less likely to be involved in these kind of arrangements. One of the young men in particular, Winston, was actually at times called out by the group for his seeming inability to bring cake to the meetings - despite his full participation in the eating of cake brought by other members of the group. As I reflected that evening in my fieldwork journal:

**Winston was the only one who was being quiet - he has apparently forgotten to get cake again and the rest of them were pretty cross at him because this is the second time now that he has failed to get cake.**

This difference in behaviour from the two genders may reflect some of the larger stereotypes and expectations facing young women and men both within the school itself and wider society. In wider society, gendered expectations surrounding the provision of food, or "foodwork" (Meah 2014, p.672) still largely assume that women will take responsibility for these tasks (Meah 2014; Hooff 2011). While men are increasingly involved in foodwork (Meah 2014), foodwork appears to remain rooted in the traditional gendered roles of men as wage-earners and women as homemakers (Kemmer 2000). While the project was designed to be a space in

which the young people learnt to critically examine and broke down some of the gender norms they faced in their everyday lives, here it appears that in some ways, the project allowed the young women and men to continue to engage in roles that were shaped by stereotypical gender expectations.

In the youth group project, no such patterns of gendered roles in participation were noticed. The youth group, focused as it was on LGBT+ issues, was an incredibly diverse and gender non-conforming space. As such, it could be that this environment encouraged less gender stereotypical roles to be carried out by the young people, or it could be that by definition the young people in this space were less likely to conform to stereotypical expectations.

Either way, it is clear that in both projects, the nature of participation was impacted by numerous interlocking causes, including potentially the space the project was conducted in, gender expectations, and many more.

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### 4.3. Research

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The second key element or component of PAR is research. PAR allows the participants to explore aspects of their own lives, communities or concerns (McIntyre 2008). There is no set framework of methods that must be used to facilitate this research, and so projects work in ways that are shaped by those involved (Hall 1992). Each project must be tailored to the desires of the participants by allowing the research to be led by their interests and preferences (McIntyre 2008).

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#### 4.3.1. RESEARCH THROUGH DISCUSSION

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In both of the two PAR projects I facilitated, the central method by which research was conducted was through discussion. As outlined briefly in the methods chapter (section 3.4.2.4), these discussion groups covered a range of topics. In the school project, this included:

- Gender in schools (run by myself)
- Gender and sport (run by myself)
- Gender and transgender issues (run by myself)
- Gender and mental health (run by myself)
- Gender and race (run by myself)
- Gender and revenge porn (run by myself)
- Gender and violence
- Gender and sexual assault

- Gender and street harassment
- Gender and language
- Gender and naming
- Gendered identities
- Gender and families
- Gender and employment
- Gender and feminism (run by myself, at the end of the project)

In the youth group, these topics included:

- Gender and school (run by myself)
- Gender and language (run by myself)
- Gender and transgender issues (run by myself)
- Gender and clothing
- Gender and religion
- Gender and psychology
- Gendered identities
- Gender and feminism (run by myself, at the end of the project)

As is clear from these lists, there were places of both divergence and convergence between the two projects. Some of the topics run by myself as the facilitator were common to both projects, including the first and last discussion group of each project. However, in each group the other topics varied depending on the interests of the group.

As discussed in the participation section of this chapter (section 4.2.2), the ways in which the young people ran these sessions differed somewhat between the two groups. In the school project, relatively formal preparation took place of the triggers used to begin discussion, whereas in the youth groups a more casual approach was taken to beginning conversations. For example, the discussion groups in the school project generally began with a YouTube video or slide show presentation showed by the young people. In contrast, the youth group sessions often began simply with a topic or question posed by one of the participants. Despite this, in other ways the discussion groups took a similar form in both projects. They generally lasted between 20 and 40 minutes per topic, (although one particularly animated discussion between members of the school project ran all the way through the morning meeting and through the following break time). While the themes of each discussion group were generally quite broad, all of the debates surrounding them pertained to the lives and experiences of the young

people in the group. Notes were made on the whiteboard as the group spoke, and these notes were photographed at the end of the session to create a record of the knowledge created.

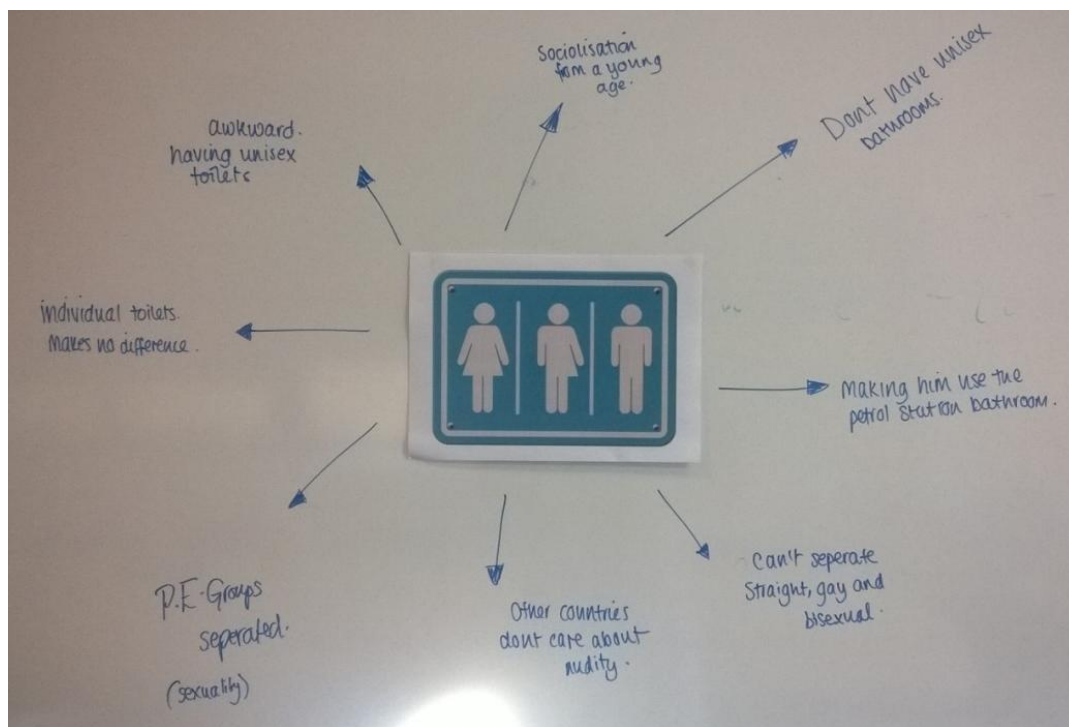


FIGURE TWO: EXAMPLE OF PAR NOTES

In these discussion groups, the young people used the act of speaking to create knowledge about their own lives and experiences. Cahill has argued that speech can be a site of collective action and knowledge in PAR projects (Cahill 2007c). She argued that talking can be a way for young people to process their thoughts, and to shape them into coherent ideas or arguments (Cahill 2007a). In these arguments she drew upon the work of Fulwiler, who argued that language can be a tool used by the speaker to process or assimilate information. He argued that often speech is used for the benefit of the speaker, in order to shape their own experience, rather than for the benefit of the listener (Fulwiler 1983). Britton described this process as 'shaping at the point of utterance' (Britton 1970, p.53).

**Winston:** I think that's completely different, though. If you get hacked and somebody's stolen then - if you like, then there's, like, a lot more issues. But if you sent it to people - like, if you sent it to one person it stayed with them forever, they never shared it, then fair enough. But, like...

In this quote from the school group, Winston can be seen trying to work through and construct his own views through speech. The discussion group in question was surrounding the issue of 'revenge porn' - explicit images that are taken by an individual, but then shared without their consent. This discussion group was one of the most animated and controversial ones that took

place in the school project, as the young people grappled with their own discomfort, fears and conceptions surrounding this topic. Here, Winston can be seen working through his thoughts about this topic. As he spoke, he broke off and then restarted as he thought of other potential elements of the complex situation, and engaged in turn with these different scenarios. In this piece of speech, Winston did not seem to be speaking for the benefit of the listening group, but rather for himself as he tried to resolve his own thoughts on the subject.

- Kristian:** It's not wrong. I mean, some people might see it as wrong 'cause why would you expose your body like that on the internet, of all places, or -
- Winston:** Especially when you're taught from, like, Year 6 about e-safety [laughs] and all that stuff, and don't trust people. To then think – you get taught that anything you put online is there forever.
- Monica:** What if it's not online?
- Facilitator:** Yeah, what if you've just privately sent it to someone?
- Monica:** Yeah, like your girlfriend?
- Winston:** But like you said, then, somebody can hack into it and that's doing it on...

In this second section of dialogue, which followed several seconds after the former quote, Winston can be seen discussing this topic with some of the other members of the group. In this section, another of the benefits of speaking for creating knowledge can be seen. As well as using speech to learn, by working through his own thoughts, Winston was also able to learn by responding to speech from other members of the group. Kristian and Monica were both arguing that sending photos privately to someone you trust was not a 'wrong' thing to do. By doing so, Kristian and Monica both encouraged Winston to re-conceptualise his views in different ways. Kristian did this by airing his own opinions and views ("It's not wrong"). By doing this, he challenged and opposed Winston's views, while simultaneously offering a different position for Winston to take up. Monica did this through questioning ("what if it's not online?"). Winston was forced to respond to her questions, and through this, was forced to speak and work through further issues with which he had not previously engaged. In this sense, discussion groups and dialogue allowed the participants to learn through themselves and through each other in multi-faceted ways.

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#### 4.3.2. RESEARCH THROUGH MULTIMODAL METHODS

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In addition to the use of the discussion groups, both projects also used other methods to build knowledge about the lives of the participants. Including multiple ways of constructing knowledge in the project can act as an equaliser between different participants (McIntyre 2008). One approach, such as speaking, may be embraced by the self-confident, but may serve



to marginalise those who are less suited to expressing themselves verbally (McIntyre 2008; Cahill 2007a). Multiple modalities may therefore aid in contributing rich and nuanced bodies of knowledge (McIntyre 2008).

In the school project, discussion groups were complimented by the writing of the EPQ projects. Each participant, bar one, wrote a 5000 word research project over the course of the project. These topics were on a range of issues:

- Gendered use of taboo language amongst teenagers in South Yorkshire
- Awareness of male and female classical authors amongst teenagers in South Yorkshire
- Analysis of the gendered divide in participation in youth football in South Yorkshire
- Attitudes and awareness of male sexual violence amongst teenagers in South Yorkshire
- Attitudes towards teenage pregnancy amongst teenagers in South Yorkshire

*(Exact titles have not been provided in order to retain participants' anonymity).*

These research projects offered the young people an opportunity to investigate an issue or theme in which they felt particularly interested, or felt was particularly important. Cahill has described the use of writing in PAR projects as an "important generative and productive process through which one can start to make sense of feelings and experiences" (Cahill 2007a, p.303). The EPQ projects offered a space for the young people to explore issues through the process of writing, and to engage in depth with one particular question or topic.

In addition to this, the EPQ projects also involved the young people in using both primary and secondary data to inform their writing. The young people received training from myself as a facilitator in research techniques, including literature review writing, qualitative data collection, ethical considerations, and referencing. The participants used a range of sources, including academic articles, qualitative and quantitative surveys, interviews and participant observation. By doing this, the young people were able to extend their understanding of the topic or issue through investigation into a wider group of young people than the members of the PAR group. As the PAR project informed and shaped the EPQ projects, the results from these projects informed and educated us as a PAR group as well.

In the youth group, the less formal nature of the environment meant that embedding the EPQs into the PAR project was unfeasible. However, in order to still utilise multimodal methods of research, this project also involved the use of photographs. Photography allows young people to document their own lives from their perspective, and to show their own insider knowledge about aspects of their identities (McIntyre 2008). In this activity, the young people were asked to bring in several photographs or images that related to how they saw their own gender.

These images were used to facilitate discussion. The participants shared the reasons behind their image choice, and then the group as a whole attempted to organise these photographs into categories and draw links, meaning and commonalities between the different themes.



FIGURE THREE: GENDERED IDENTITIES PHOTO ACTIVITY

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### 4.3.3. RECURSIVE KNOWLEDGE

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While these three methods of data creation - discussion groups, EPQ projects and the photo collage -have been discussed separately, it is important to note that in reality the processes were heavily interlinked. Rather than being separate elements of the same projects, the different methods of data creation fed into each other in a constant cycle of discussion, reflection and analysis. PAR has been described as a recursive process, where projects unfold in a spiral of reflection, investigation and action (Maguire et al. 2004; Cahill 2007a). In both groups, this spiralling nature of the project emerged naturally, as key topics and themes emerged repeatedly throughout the projects, and further discussions and actions forced us to re-confront and re-evaluate those earlier discussions.

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### 4.3.4. KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION

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Some PAR theorists have argued that the data formulated during PAR projects should be used to inform the public or wider community (McIntyre 2008). However, Cahill has also argued that research and the resulting analysis can be focused on the action it will inform, instead of, or in addition to, wider goals of dissemination and information. She termed this "analysis for action" (Cahill 2007a, p.307). In both projects, the primary goal of the research was to inform the action stages of the project. However, in both projects this was combined with some elements of knowledge dissemination as well.

In the school project, the young people and I organised a presentation evening at the school in order to disseminate some of the research findings. The young people presented their research to a group which was comprised of each other, members of school staff, and researchers from the local university. This presentation evening included individual presentations of the young people's EPQ projects, which served to meet the requirements for the EPQ award. However, the evening was also an opportunity for the PAR findings to be disseminated. As such, the schedule included time in which the guests could move around and discuss the PAR project with the participants. These discussions were aided by the photographs of the whiteboard notes that the young people had created throughout the discussion groups.

In the youth group setting, a similar event would have been much more complex. Many of the young people in this project had not come out as LGBT+ to their families, friends, or school peers. As such, a public dissemination event would have risked outing these young people before they were ready to do so (see also, section 3.5.1 of this thesis). Instead, they chose to use their research and analysis to inform their own lives. Throughout the project, they had created a collective knowledge base that built upon their own experiences of being LGBT+ young people in South Yorkshire. This knowledge, while it was not formally disseminated outside of the group, will continue to inform and influence the group members past the end of the project, and may informally spread from them outwards in a gradual sphere of influence.

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#### 4.3.5. GENDER IN RESEARCH

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In both projects, the mix of gender identities in each group led to rich discussions and research. In the school project, the presence of cisgender men and women in the discussion groups meant that differing perspectives on topics were able to be explored by all. As one member reflected:

**Hannah:** **Because it's not something that you consciously think about, but then when you do, it's like, that's so bad, and I can't imagine, being a man, and being like in that situation.... so I thought that was interesting.**

In this extract, one of the young women who participated in the project reflected on how the experiences of the young men in the group encouraged her to widen and re-think some of her opinions.

In the youth group, the presence of not only cisgender young men, but also transgender men meant that an additional dimension of experience was added to discussions. The participants frequently shared their own life stories and experiences, and these were used by the group to grapple with a range of different positions and understandings of the topics under discussion.

- Matt:** It always annoys me that you can only get binders and stuff online, that makes it so much harder for anyone to get them.
- Facilitator:** That was what Ernest was talking about!
- Matt:** That's it, it took me so long to get mine, because I had to mail it to a friend, because I couldn't just go in a store and buy it without my parents knowing, I had to go through all this stuff to get it.
- Ernest:** I recently ordered, I think I ordered four of them, one for me, and some for other people, as well, because it made it cheaper, because the delivery from America's extortionate.

In this section of dialogue, the two young transgender men in the youth group project considered some of the issues they had experienced when transitioning. In this discussion, they contributed another element of personal experience to the group research.

As outlined in the literature review (see section 2.3.7), both Maguire and Reid & Frisby, outlined frameworks for feminist PAR. In these frameworks, they stated the need for gender to be the key focus of the research and action of the projects (Reid & Frisby 2008; Maguire 1987). In the school project, the young people were clear on the importance of gender to the research element of the project. They often referred to themselves as the 'gender group' or the 'gender EPQ group' to outsiders. While their discussions ranged over many topics, the central theme of gender always remained as a clear anchoring point.

However, in the youth group setting, it was less simple to keep gender central to the research. As the young people were all members of an LGBT+ youth group, and the project took place within this setting, the young people were all heavily united by their LGBT+ identity. Their LGBT+ identity was an ever-present element of the project that encircled the group and informed their sense of group identity. When I worked with the young people to frame and conceptualise the project, the group defined transgender issues as being gendered issues. In addition to this, the complementary nature of topics surrounding sexuality were also explored. However, in reality, negotiating this distinction was complex. Matters surrounding the gay, lesbian, pansexual or asexual identity of a young person may be considered to fall under systems of gendered power and the interlocking heteronormativity of this system. However, they can also be considered to be subjects relating to sexuality and LGBT+ issues. In this sense, treading the edge of what was considered to be issues surrounding gender suddenly became more complex than I had imagined. These discussions were rich and complex, but left me as a facilitator constantly trying to negotiate a blurring of the central theme of the project. While in the school group gender had been our 'anchoring point', in the youth group, LGBT+ remained the 'anchoring point' and it was harder to keep gender centralised throughout the research.

## 4.4. Action

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'Action' is the third and final key aspect of PAR. In the literature review (see section 2.3.5), action was defined using Reid's notion of action as a 'multi-faceted' concept that can involve many different forms and types (Reid 2006, p.317). In these two projects, the forms of action in which the young people chose to engage differed wildly in both style and scope.

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### 4.4.1. CONCEPTUALISING ACTION

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Before the action stage of the project could begin, the notion of 'action' had to be conceptualised by the participants. Both groups took part in a discussion group activity, where the concept of action was explored. In the school group, this took place in one of the designated discussion group time slots, and was started with a trigger video provided by myself as the facilitator. In the youth group, this was a slightly shorter discussion, but again begun by myself. In both discussions, the young people considered what kind of forms action could take, what kind of causes or issues could be addressed by such actions, and in which of these they themselves would be interested in taking part. In these discussions, it became clear that the young people already had a nuanced understanding of the concept of action, which included not only protesting, spreading awareness of issues, and attempting to make structural changes, but also included an appreciation of the personal nature this could take, and the importance of the effect of the project on themselves as individuals.

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### 4.4.2. HIGHLIGHTING ACTION ISSUES

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In both projects, the next part of the action process involved deciding what issues would be carried forward as potential projects. To facilitate this process, I brought records of the group research with me, along with pieces of card. These records included printed copies of the photographs of the whiteboard notes from discussion groups for both projects, the photo collage for the youth group, and a summary of the EPQ conclusions the young people had made in the school project. The participants poured over each source, taking key concerns that were raised and writing them on pieces of card. Each source was passed around, until it had been seen by each member of the group, to ensure no important issue was omitted.

After the key issues had been noted, these cards were then laid out and sorted by the group into 'yes', 'no' and 'maybe' groups. The 'yes' group was for issues that the group felt were feasible for them to tackle in some way, the 'maybe' for those that were undecided, and the 'no' for those issues that the group agreed were too large or impractical for them to feasibly tackle on their own.

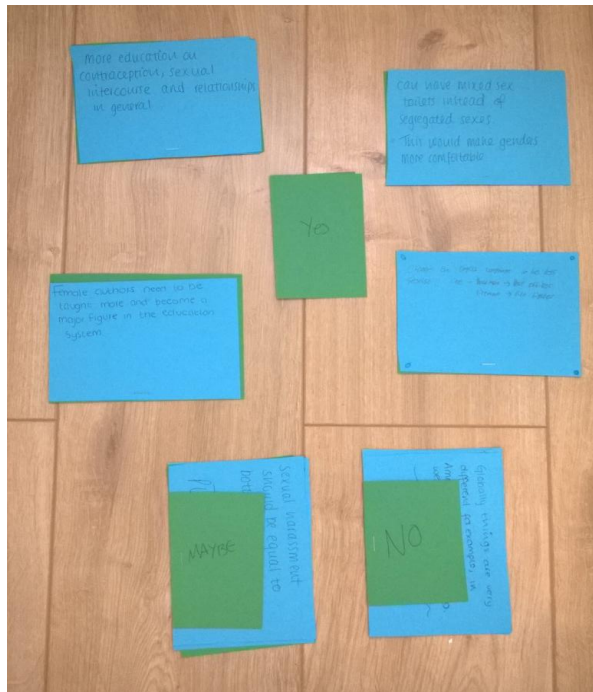


FIGURE FOUR: ISSUES RAISED IN THE SCHOOL PROJECT, SORTED INTO PILES

Once the cards had been sorted into these piles, potential action projects could then be discussed. The participants went through the 'yes' and 'maybe' piles, and discussed what possible actions could be used to address these issues.

- Facilitator:** Okay, lack of LGBT representation in mainstream media?
- Matt:** Support the mainstream media that does the LGBT representation?
- Facilitator:** That's a good one. What about, something else we could do? Something pro-active?
- Cameron:** March in solidarity.
- Facilitator:** Yeah? Well marching is always good. Anything else? Who's in charge of a lot of the media, maybe the TV and radio media, in this country?
- Cameron:** Government.
- Facilitator:** So what could you do?
- Matt:** Just write a letter to the BBC?
- Cameron:** Write a freedom of information request.
- Ernest:** Lots of people could write letters.
- Cameron:** Or we could write a bit of box of letters and send them out. Like big crates.

In this section of dialogue from the youth group, the young people discussed a selection of possible types of action in which they themselves could take part. Once these possible actions had been listed, they were recorded on different pieces of card.

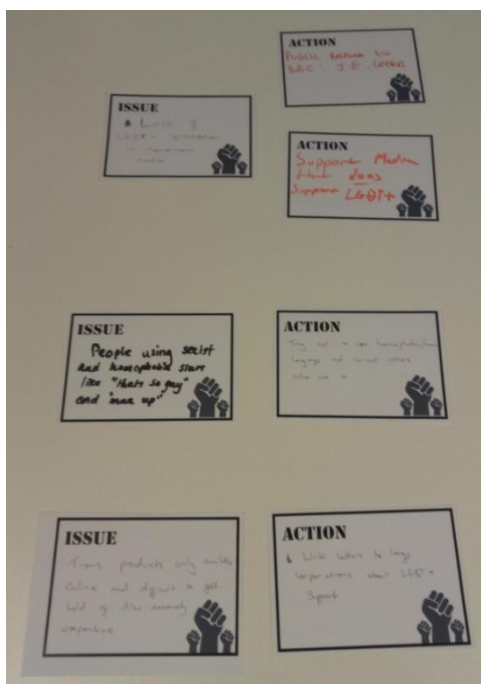


FIGURE FIVE: ISSUES AND ACTIONS RAISED IN THE YOUTH GROUP PROJECT

Once a range of possible issues and actions had been listed, the participants had to decide which ones, if any, they would take forward as an action project. The youth group participants had several favourite actions, including reducing the use of sexist and transphobic language, supporting media that offered strong LGBT+ representations (with a particular focus on representations of transgender and non-binary individuals), and writing to large media companies explaining the need for this representation. The members of the youth group were quickly able to settle upon a favourite to pursue, which was the action of encouraging support for pro-LGBT+ media projects.

In the school group, four possible actions were initially outlined as favourites. This included lobbying the school to provide gender-neutral toilet facilities for students, improving sex education in the school to include a greater emphasis on relationships and the danger of revenge porn, expanding teaching about female authors in the lower school to provide more female role models to students, and producing and signing a language contract committing each member to using more gender-neutral language. Of these four, two were then selected as favourites, which were the provision of transgender toilets, and the need for better sex-education in schools. Further research was then done surrounding these two possible actions,

and the sex education action was dropped after the young people discovered more about the proposed changes that were being debated by the government at that time. From then on, they decided to focus on the toilets issue.

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#### 4.4.3. TAKING PART IN ACTION

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Once the focus of each action project had been agreed upon, the young people had to decide how they would approach the project. In the school group, the young people were keen to ask the school to make all of the toilets in the school gender neutral. This was a feasible request, given that the school building was a relatively new building that had been designed with individual toilets in separate rooms, each with their own sink and mirror. At that point, each of these rooms were allocated for use by either 'male' or 'female' students, and had signs on the door that reflected this. As such, it was realistic for the school to change the signage to make all of these toilets gender neutral.

Initially, the young people had joked about taking action into their own hands and removing the signs from the toilets.

**Winston:        I say we go get some crowbars and get rid of the signs on the toilet doors!**

However, the young people quickly realised that a more prudent course of action might be to attempt to secure support from members of the school staff. They decided to directly approach the school headteacher and attempt to convince him to aid them in making the change. To do this, they chose to write their proposal as a formal letter, and allow him to read this letter before he discussed their ideas with them.

The actual process of composing this letter was one that took several meetings. The young people logged onto the main computer in our meeting room, and projected the letter onto the interactive whiteboard as they worked on it. This allowed the whole group to easily see the letter as it was being written, and also allowed two people - both the person on the computer, and the person with the interactive marker - to control the cursor and actively aid in the letter-writing process. Working on the letter was therefore a process in which the whole group was involved and engaged. Throughout the process, the young people took it in turns to shout suggestions, bickered with each other over wording and grammar, and triumphantly proof-read and checked their final effort.

The meetings spent writing this formal letter were relatively different from the normal format of our meetings, and from the prioritisation of either speaking or academic writing. As it was noted in the research section of this chapter, different forms of research can allow different



participants to thrive and participate (McIntyre 2008; Cahill 2007a). It is also possible that the action stage of the project can likewise allow different participants to flourish and take ownership of this stage of the project. In the school project, one participant in particular became much more vocal and assertive in this stage of the project. Deano had often taken a quieter role in the discussion groups, allowing some of the more vocal members of the group to take the lead in conversations. However, in the letter-writing process, Deano increasingly volunteered ideas and advice.

**Deano:**           **What's the school motto?**

**Hannah:**       **Where people thrive?**

**Deano:**           **And allowing people to thrive.**

**Winston:**       **Quote it.**

**Deano:**           **And express themselves. Something like that.**

In this section of dialogue, Deano can be seen proposing that the group linked the letter to the school motto. Deano appeared to be confident with the formal writing process, and easily saw how the group could relate the letter to wider currents and discourses within the school. The group ended up using Deano's proposal in the final conclusion of the letter.

----- School,  
----- Road,  
-----,  
-----,  
Sheffield.

Year 13 Gender EPQ group,  
CO/MR Meeting Room.

Dear -----,

We are writing to you from the EPQ group researching the topic of gender with Ellie Gaddes, a PHD student from The University of Sheffield. We would like to discuss with you proposed changes to the toilets available to students at ----- School.

We as a group had weekly discussion groups about issues surrounding gender. For example, gender and sport, gender in schools, gendered use of language, transgender identities, teenage pregnancy and sexual assault. In one of the discussion groups we came across an issue of a transgender student in a school in America who was banned from using both female and male toilets. This is when we realised there needed to be a change.

We believe that schools should introduce gender neutral toilets for students. In particular, we would like ----- to be one of the schools to lead the way in making this change.

According to the BBC there are 650,000 transgender people in the UK<sup>1</sup> and roughly 65 million people in the UK<sup>2</sup>. This means that 1 in every 100 people are transgender. Therefore at some point if there is not already, there will be a transgender student at ----- School.

A transgender student would benefit from gender neutral toilets. On a daily basis, transgender individuals face the problem of not being accepted in either of the toilets available meaning everyday they have to make the difficult choice of which toilet will be 'acceptable' for them to use. In short, this will benefit these individuals because it will allow them to become more welcome within the school environment, escape ridicule and feel supported in a time where they are already under intense pressure.

As society is changing people are more comfortable being who they are, with more people feeling able to come out as transgender. Therefore as this change is already occurring, it is only practical to start the change in the school now.

In terms of practicality, this change will not lead to much disruption for the school. We are aware that changes to the school toilets will cost money, as signs need to be changed, sanitary bins need to be provided along with any other additional costs. We think the solution to this cost issue is to have a fundraiser to support the change.

The only effects of this change will be positive as the centre of this school is equality. What better way than allowing 'people to thrive' through expressing themselves in whichever way they want?

Thank you for taking time to read this and we hope you take this as seriously as we do.

-----

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-35302670>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/uk-population/>

FIGURE SIX: LETTER TO THE HEADTEACHER

After they had written the letter, the young people invited the headteacher into a meeting to discuss their propositions. They gave him the letter they had written, printed and signed, allowed him to read it, and then discussed the contents of the letter with him. The headteacher was supportive of the proposal, and gave incredible amounts of encouragement to the young people. After the meeting, he discussed the proposal with other members of the senior leadership team and the building owners, and then emailed the young people to let them know that the school would support their proposal, and that these changes would be made in the next few months.

In the youth group, the action project upon which the group had settled involved the young people attempting to encourage support for media projects that provided good representations of LGBT+ people, with particular emphasis on the place of trans or non-binary individuals in the media. Together, they pooled their knowledge to produce a list of different music, TV shows, films, video games and apps which they felt did this.

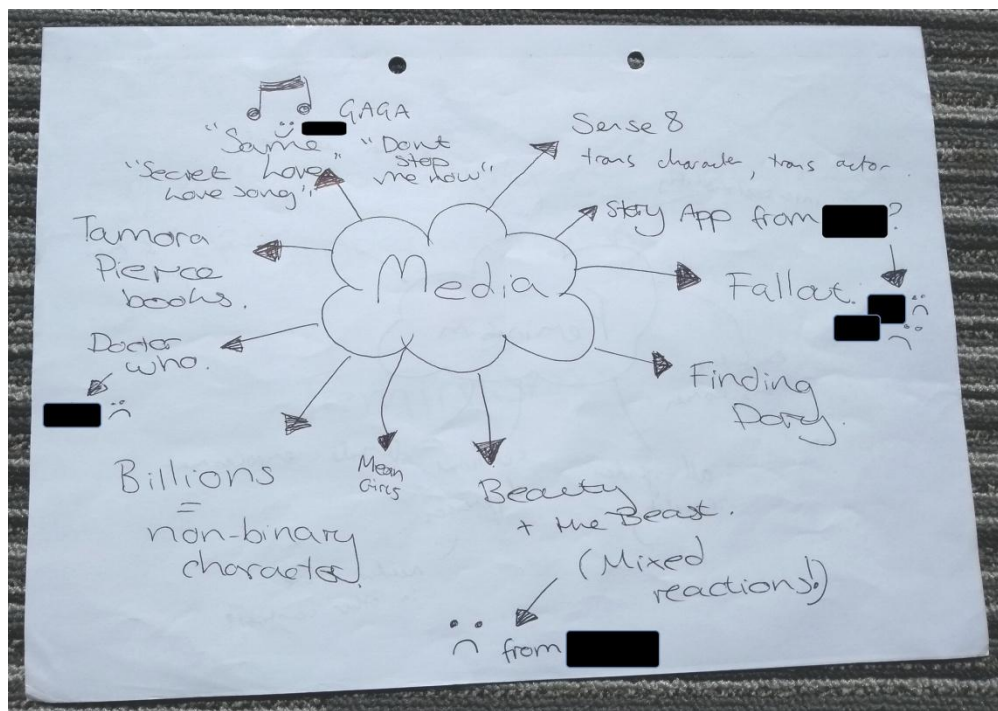


FIGURE SEVEN: THE LGBT+ SUPPORTIVE MEDIA LIST

After this, they then discussed two different paths of action that they could take with this list. The first was to acknowledge the importance of sharing this list amongst themselves, and thus promoting this media amongst themselves. The second was to further publish this list, and make more young people aware of it. One of the young people suggested they make an image or visual display of the list, which could be easily circulated digitally through Facebook and other social media sites. Initially, the group were enthusiastic about this plan, and one member

of the group volunteered to begin the process of making this visual display. However, as the end of the project drew near, and the visual display showed no sign of progress, the group's enthusiasm waned, and they decided to stick to their first idea of personally engaging with the media they had discovered through their combined knowledge, supporting it, and in turn promoting it, in a more organic style. In this sense, the young people decided to engage in one of the smaller, more personal forms of action that can often go unnoticed in PAR projects compared to the more tangible forms of action that make take place in other projects such as the school project (Reid 2006).

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#### 4.4.4. REFLECTING ON ACTION

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After the project, the young people reflected on their action projects in the final interviews. Participants of both projects described the action stage of the project in a mixture of both positive and negative terms that reflected the complex and contradictory nature of this stage of the project.

In the youth group project, when the young people reflected on the action stage of the project, they did so with phrases like "it was good" and "it was interesting". However, for some of them, these phrases were also combined with a tentative expression of regret that they did not pursue the project further. One young person said that:

**Ernest:**            **I think it would be good to try and inform more people about trans and non-binary inclusive media. I think that would be good.**

In this quote, this young person appeared to be expressing some regret that the promotion of media did not actively extend out of the space of the project. Another participant, when asked about how they perceived the benefits of the project, pointed out that the benefit of the action:

**Matt:**            **Depends how many people it reaches.**

In this quote, again the young person appeared to be declaring that it would be good if their action project could have had an impact outside of the space of the project. In both of these quotes, the young people appeared to be expressing some regret or frustration surrounding the way in which the action project ended.

In the school group, the young people also reflected with a mix of both positive and negative emotions. Participants responded with words like "pleased", "happy" and "enjoyable". However, several participants also described some of the difficulties they had experienced since the action project had been successful.

**Eleanor:** I felt pleased. Yeah, I'm pleased. It's just.... people have not reacted to it like positively. And I'm really surprised.

-----

**Hannah:** I think, obviously not everyone is going to agree on gender neutral toilets. In fact, I've had quite a lot of people, in fact, in Business [Studies], I had a bit of a heated debate, let's say, about the gender neutral toilets.

In addition to these two young women, one of the young men also described an argument he had had with some of his friends about the changes. Winston received a message on a group chat from one of his friends complaining about the school's decision to make the toilets gender neutral. Despite the fact that nearly all of his friends seemed to be opposed to the changes, Winston argued fiercely with them in defence of the group's action project.

Despite the differing nature action took within each group, this part of the project appeared to be one that the young people negotiated in a complex fashion. In both projects, the young people reflected on the action stage with a mixture of both positive and negative emotions. It appeared that both small scale and larger scale action projects run the risk of either frustration that the action did not go far enough, or backlash because of how successful the project was.

However, despite the backlash or frustration faced after the action stage of the projects were ended, all the young people reflected on the effect the action had had on them as individuals. In particular, the action projects had changed how they saw society, and their ability to make meaningful change within their own community.

At the beginning of the projects, many of the young people were sceptical about their own ability to change anything.

**Monica:** Right, the literature canon.

**Eleanor:** That should say literacy. Sorry everyone.

**Monica:** Is stereotypically white, upper class, authors, and includes more male authors.

**Eleanor:** We can't, because we aren't Oxford lecturers.

**Monica:** We could at school.

**Winston:** We aren't above, above the government.

**Monica:** Yeah but you could at school.

**Winston:** You can't because there is a curriculum.

Here, the young people in the school project were attempting to list possible actions they could take to improve awareness of female authors in the literacy canon. However, in this



section of dialogue it is evident that the young people were somewhat sceptical about the possible effect they could have. However, by the end of the project the young people were aware of the impact they had had in effecting real change, no matter on what scale.

**Hannah:** **Erm, I sort of, I wasn't like the biggest fan of doing the erm, the action things, in the project, but I think that was just because I was thinking, what are we going to do? You know what I mean? There's like six of us. What are we really going to be able to do? Well, actually when you're in a group, and you've got quite strong opinions, it's quite powerful.**

In this quote, one of the young people in the school group project reflected on her own change in attitudes over the course of the action project. In this quote, she outlined her own realisation that a small group of people can actually have the power to make real change happen. In this sense, the experiences of the young people in these projects echoed McIntyre's assertion that "acting on something that people have control over is exactly the kind of thing that contributes to people's beliefs that they are creative, knowledgeable, and capable of making a difference in their own lives." (McIntyre 2008, p.40).

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#### 4.4.5. GENDER IN THE ACTION STAGE OF THE PROJECT

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In both groups, the young people chose and designed an action project with the primary goal of aiding young transgender or non-binary people living in their community. However, these decisions, while orientated towards similar goals, stemmed from incredibly different group locations.

In the school project, none of the young people participating in the project identified as non-binary or transgender. When they decided to lobby the school for gender-neutral toilets, the group viewed this change as being one that was designed to benefit transgender and non-binary young people. The provision of gender-neutral toilets may be viewed as an action that has benefits for individuals of all genders, through the challenge it offers to reinforcement of the male/female gender binary. However, the young people in the school project viewed this action as one that was aimed at benefitting young transgender people specifically. In their letter to the school senior leadership team, they stated that:

**A transgender student would benefit from gender neutral toilets. On a daily basis, transgender individuals face the problem of not being accepted in either of the toilets available meaning everyday they have to make the difficult choice of which toilet will be 'acceptable' for them to use. In short, this will benefit these individuals because it will allow them to become more welcome within the school environment, escape ridicule, and feel supported in a time where they are already under intense pressure.**

(For the full letter, see figure 6). This action was therefore not intended to be of direct benefit to members of the group themselves. Instead, it was made to benefit other young people living in their community.

In the youth group project, the young people also decided to work on an action project that they viewed as being primarily aimed at benefitting transgender people. They believed that raising awareness of positive media representations of transgender and non-binary identities would allow young people to see positive representations of their own gender identities in the media, but would also serve to educate and inform other members of the community. For them, this was an incredibly personal issue as two of the members of the group were transgender young men. These young men were highly conscious of the effect that negative representations of transgender people had on perceptions of transgender individuals, and experienced and lived the effects of this every day.

The two projects therefore demonstrated contrasting illustrations of how the gender identities of the members of the FPAR groups could shape the actions that arose from the projects. While the members of one of the groups chose to engage in action with which they held a personal relationship, the members of the other group chose to involve themselves in action that they perceived to be of benefit to other members of their community.

Some feminists have argued that men in feminist movements can attract attention away from the key issues facing women. As such, some of the feminists who hold these views have warned of the possible detrimental impact of men on progress on issues surrounding women (Baily 2012). This thesis defines feminism as being a movement for members of all genders, against all sexist behaviour (see also, section 2.4.1). As such, if involvement of more young men in the movement did lead to more action aimed at removing sexism against men, this would not be viewed as problematic. However, underlying this argument is an assumption that members of feminist activism groups are likely to drive action towards projects that benefit themselves. Instead, these two PAR projects have demonstrated that activism and mobilisation may be influenced and moulded in much more complex ways.

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## 4.5. Group Dynamics

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### 4.5.1. FORMING A GROUP

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Some theorists have argued that in an ideal PAR project, the researcher would wait to be approached by a group (Maguire 1987). However, in reality it rarely works like this, and instead, researchers often either approach pre-existing groups, or form new groups entirely

(McIntyre 2008; Maguire 1987). In both of my projects, I did the latter. Although I entered the existing settings of the school and the youth group, I formed new groups within these for the projects. In this case, Noffke and Brennan have argued that the researcher must attempt to construct a new community from this group by finding something shared within the group, and building a shared community of understanding around this (Noffke & Brennan 2004).

In the school group project, I was conscious that this process actively needed to be initiated. The young people were drawn from across the same school year, but shared little apart from an interest in gender and in the project. In order to draw out the similarities between them, one of the first sessions involved a group-forming exercise. In this activity, the young people listed some of the key elements that shape a person's identity, such as gender, age, ethnicity, sexuality, class and location. Once this had been done, the young people then went down the list they had made, and discussed each one in turn. They considered not only the importance of that element on a person's identity, but also where the points of convergence and divergence were in the list. In particular, they focused upon the two areas that they felt the group definitely shared, which was age and location. As such, the project was conceptualised as a project that focused upon gender, and the shared experiences of a group of teenagers negotiating this in South Yorkshire.

As previously discussed in the research section of this chapter, the young people in the youth group setting came into the project with a very strong sense of shared identity (see section 4.3.5). As such, an activity to encourage group cohesion and community building was not needed in the same way. Instead, the young people were already incredibly conscious of their own shared identity.

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#### 4.5.2. COHESION, CONTENTMENT AND CUSTOMS

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Despite the two different starting point for the groups, both groups very quickly established a strong sense of group cohesion. For many of the participants, reflecting on the group in the final interviews, this was down to the sense of comfort they felt in the group.

**Brittany:**        **It was like a safe, kind of...kind of like - kind of like little environment. You could, like, you could just say what you wanted to say.**

---

**Maddie:**        **I felt like I could say my opinion and people could say their opinion back and we would all be respectful to each other.**



In these two quotes from the final interviews, young people from both projects reflected on how they had felt in the group. The participants described the groups as somewhere they felt they could freely speak, and be respected.

In both groups, several of the participants reflected on the importance of working in a group with other people who shared perspectives or senses of self. In the school group, several of the young women discussed the feeling of comfort and support that arose from being surrounded by other feminist young women.

**Eleanor:**            **Err, I think it's just because I'm with people who have the same views as me. I feel like comfortable talking to them about it.**

---

**Monica:**            **It made it like easier, because I think sometimes, when you're the only one arguing a point, you feel a bit intimidated, because everyone's like, what's she talking about? But in there, it didn't matter what anyone else thought, because I thought, well Hannah might have a similar view.**

Here, two young women from the school group reflected on the impact that the nature of the group had on their engagement in the discussions. For these young women, the support of the other feminist young women in the group allowed them to feel comfortable and confident enough to express their views.

In the youth group, comfort and solidarity also impacted the young people and their participation in the discussion groups. In this group, one of the young transgender men reflected on the impact of being in a group that contained another young person who identified as a transgender man.

**Ernest:**            **Because I feel like, cos there, I feel like I can't always kind of be vocal about trans equality, cos I feel awkward. Whereas here I don't feel awkward, cos I'm not the only one. In places where I'm the only trans person, I feel awkward because people kind of look at me, like I'm some kind of representative or something, and I yeah... whereas here, I'm obviously not the only one, so I don't feel like people are thinking that my opinions are those of every trans person.**

In these comments from the interview, Ernest reflected on the impact of Matt's presence on his ability to discuss his own opinions and experiences. Here, rather than being concerned primarily with support and views that reinforced his own, Ernest reflected on the comfort created by knowing that another member of the group can share the responsibility of speaking for the trans community. In this sense, Ernest appeared to be desiring comfort through the provision of views that may challenge or contradict his own.

In many ways, these quotes reflected some of the tensions evident in the place of gender within the projects. Both projects were recruited to include a mix of genders. In the youth group, I did not consciously recruit two transgender individuals. Instead, I tried to recruit broadly and hoped for participants with a range of gender identities to apply for the project. In this way, I was attempting to make an individual's gender less important to the recruitment process, and by doing so, adhere to my own understandings of the role that gender should have in determining an individual's opportunities. However, the reflections of these young people raises questions for future projects. Should I have recruited to ensure an even distribution of gender identities? Would this have allowed groups such as transgender individuals to feel more comfortable taking part in the project? But if we recruit in this way, are we once again prioritising gender as crucial to determining a young person's opportunities? These questions highlight some of the tensions evident when negotiating mixed gender groups in FPAR.

In addition to feeling comfortable around one another, another theme that arose frequently in discussions of the group dynamic was a shared sense of trust and openness. In both projects, the young people described how they felt able to share things with each other, and sometimes even dismayed or outraged if another young person chose not to share things with them.

**Hannah:**        **Whispering, that's illegal.**

**Deano:**        **That's not a thing in this group.**

**Hannah:**       **That is so illegal.**

In this section of dialogue from the school group, two of the young people were trying to discuss something in whispers to each other, before being called out by the rest of the group. In other similar situations, participants pointed out to each other and myself that sharing, and honesty were both key elements of the group identity.

**Monica:**        **Winston, I'm getting annoyed now! I've told you stuff.**

**Winston:**       **You haven't told me anything like personal!**

**Facilitator:**   **Err, I think we all found out something very personal about Monica the other day.**

**Monica:**        **True that.**

Much of this group sense of self was established through the customs or rituals that took place in group meetings. Cahill has discussed the place of "practices, or 'rituals' that were collaborative" and "facilitated group ownership" (Cahill 2007a, p.303). In her PAR project, these took the form of designated time for writing in meetings, and agenda setting at the

beginning and end of meetings (Cahill 2007a). In each of the two PAR projects I facilitated, rituals or customs emerged organically from the meetings. In the school group, these rituals were a morning discussion group, followed by EPQ or action based activities in the later meeting, beginning each afternoon meeting with food and an informal catch-up period, and certain topics of conversation or updates that each meeting involved. In the youth group, customs or rituals included, similarly, snacks at the beginning of each meeting, and each participant's turn to make notes on the whiteboard.

In the school group, the majority of the project took a similar format. In the morning, we would meet for our shorter meeting, where the group would almost always take part in a discussion group. In the second meeting of the day, the activities would focus on the EPQ section of the project, or later, the analysis and action stage of the project. As such, Thursdays at the school took on a familiar pattern or ritual each week. The young people knew what to expect from each stage of the day, and settled into a group routine based upon that familiarity. Tied into this routine was the ritual of cake at the beginning of the afternoon meetings. The tradition of having cake each week was one that was initiated by myself as facilitator, when I brought cake to a few early meetings in an attempt to create a relaxed, informal atmosphere. Once I had done this a few times, the young people quickly set up a cake rota, and took responsibility for bringing cake each week. As briefly touched upon in the participation section of this chapter, the young people took an active role in making sure that cake was always supplied, and cake soon became a central theme of the meetings. Although the production of cake was significant as a ritual in itself, it also held associations with the start of meetings being a time for the group to informally talk and catch-up with each other. For the first few minutes of each session, the young people divided up cake, compared notes on flavours, and caught up on each other's news. Cake therefore served not only as a ritual in itself, but also as something that facilitated a time in each meeting for the group to enjoy just spending time with each other.

While these rituals were established fairly early on in the project, another ritual emerged organically in the second half of the project. As previously discussed, as the group had become closer to one another, they had become more open to sharing details of their lives with one another. Some of these details were intimate, some embarrassing, some upsetting. However, the project became seen as a space where these details could be shared with one another, without fear of judgement, and with the hope of receiving support, encouragement, or just humour from one another.

**Deano:** **Winston, this is like a support group. Between this group, we have a lot of experience.**

**Monica:** Yeah, between Deano, me and Eleanor!

**Deano:** And Ellie [the facilitator].

**Monica:** And Ellie.

In this section of dialogue, Deano encouraged Winston to share some of the details of his ongoing flirtation with a girl at the school. Winston, prior to this point, had been reluctant to talk about this with the group. However, once he did, it became a near constant feature of the group meetings. Each week, at some point in the meeting, someone would quiz Winston on his love life. The group would pick over details of what had been said between Winston and the girl he liked, her actions in other spheres, and the possible meanings of it all. When Winston finally moved on from her, and formed a relationship with another girl at the school, the group cheered his success, and demanded to know every detail of this new relationship. Over time, discussing Winston's love life became as much a part of the ritual of the projects as eating cake, or starting the day with a discussion group:

**Facilitator:** So let me get this straight.

**Winston:** [Sighs]

**Facilitator:** Err, no we'll come back.

**Eleanor:** No, I feel like we need to address it-

**Monica:** -Just get it out of the way-

**Eleanor:** -Just get it over and done with.

In the youth group, food also played an important role in the group customs. In this project, the young people did not bring in their own food for the project. Instead, as food was provided by the youth group, the young people each week began the meetings by choosing which food to bring downstairs with them into the project space. In a similar vein to the school group, the beginning of each meeting therefore became a time where the young people discussed their week with each other as they fought over the chocolate spread and poured drinks for one another.

Another ritual associated with the PAR project in the youth group was the use of the whiteboard pens. At the beginning of each project, I had ordered a pack of whiteboard markers. When ordering these, I had taken care to find packs that included interesting colours, including purple and orange, rather than the standard blue, black and red. In the school group, the initial excitement of writing on the whiteboard had soon worn off, but in the youth group space it remained a point of interest to the young people throughout the project. The young

people enjoyed writing on the whiteboard, drawing on it, and fought over the desired board pen colours.

**Facilitator:** So, I have the board pens.

**Matt:** Woop woop!

**Brittany:** I love how you picked purple.

**Ernest:** You know, the P in PAR actually stands for purple.

The rituals of the two groups were a mixture of multiple customs and group traditions. Some of these rituals were created early on in the project, by the group as they negotiated their own participation and involvement in the projects. In contrast, other rituals emerged organically as the projects progressed. In these projects the creation of a group identity and group traditions was an ongoing process, which evolved and changed shape as the project progressed.

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#### 4.5.3. NEGOTIATING DISSENT

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The participants in both groups formed a cohesive group dynamic, based around their own sense of group identity and the rituals and customs they had created. However, in PAR projects there needs to be dissent as well as cohesion. The PAR project needs to be a space in which all can air their views, even if those views differ from the opinions held by others. There is a danger that participatory research can prioritise consensus, but PAR also needs to be a space for differences to be aired constructively (Cahill 2007a).

In both projects, the young people had moments of agreement, and moments of dissent. There were times when the group agreed on some elements of the debate and not on others, and times where they could agree on very little at all.

In the youth group, the young people disagreed with each other over the use of gendered language, over the way to approach those who were sexist or transphobic, and over whether the re-make of *Beauty and the Beast* was a triumph in its gendered representations, or a disaster.

**Matt:** The one who enjoys cross dressing had to be gay as well, you know, great, not stereotypical at all. I just, sorry, I didn't like it.

**Facilitator:** Okay, I'm going to put sad face from Matt.

**Matt:** Yes. It's very sad face from Matt.

**Ernest:** If we praise them for taking a tiny step, they might do a bigger one, and then we can praise them more. And then it'll be like rewarding like a puppy or something.

- Facilitator:** Yes, we've got to think of Disney as like a puppy.
- Ernest:** You've got to give them dog biscuits and lots of praise, pat on the head, and then they'll get it right.
- Elliot:** But they need to do it in small steps, because let's say if they just came out, let's say they didn't do anything, and suddenly they did an animated picture which was just an hour and a half, which was just about being gay and everything, that would be, loads of people would think that was really bad.

In this group, the young people often disagreed with one another. However, it was very rare that these disagreements were confined to the same people each time. Different people disagreed with each other in different moments. In the section of dialogue above, Matt, one of the transgender males in the project, debated with Ernest, who is also a transgender male, and Elliot, who is a cisgender male. As such, there did not seem to be a clearly marked gender divide in the approaches to the disagreement.

In contrast, in the school group, the disagreement in discussions sometimes occurred along gendered lines.

- Monica:** I think getting pregnant, having a baby, getting fit and going back to work is harder than just constantly working.
- Winston:** Yeah but then isn't the man having to work harder cos he's got to provide. But then hasn't the man got to work hard to provide?
- Hannah:** He's not working harder than he did before though, is he?
- Winston:** It's a bit of incentive. Maybe before he was like, meh.
- Monica:** If you think, a woman, she does her job while pregnant, which obviously is more tiring, then she goes off, has a baby, gets fitter, comes back to work, has to get used to coming back to work-
- Eleanor:** -And has to look after an infant.
- Monica:** Different jobs, different strengths and weaknesses, whatever, whereas a man, much as he does work hard will do the same job for a -
- Winston:** - My mum didn't spend much time off, she went back to work as a teacher straight away, and my dad stayed off.

In this section of dialogue taken from a meeting of the school group, the young people were discussing the gendered nature of work and employment. This discussion group was one of the more controversial discussions the group had, and by this point in the meeting, feelings were running high. Deano, the other young man in the project, was absent from this meeting due to illness, meaning that Winston was the only person in the room who identified as male. In this section of dialogue, the three more vocal young women in the project - Monica, Hannah and

Eleanor - all sided with each other in what essentially became an argument about which gender works harder in the traditional South Yorkshire family.

This discussion group was not the only time where Winston and Deano had ended up being opposed by all the girls in the group. In several discussion groups, the young men had aligned their arguments, essentially splitting the discussion groups into women versus men. As one of the female participants reflected after the project:

**Eleanor: [Winston] tried to, I don't know, I think, I don't know if he just felt, a bit isolated as well. But I think Deano just sort of went along... but I think Winston's very like, men are good!**

In these occasions, the debate occasionally descended into both genders assuming the 'sides' of the gender they identified with. Winston here supported the idea that men work as hard, if not harder, than women, while the three girls argued that women work harder. In these moments, the mixed gender nature of the group became divisive, and in some ways began to exacerbate some of the gender divides that the group sought to break down. On these occasions, the young people positioned themselves in opposition to one another, and began to build up boundaries based on their gender. Winston positioned himself as male, and as someone who sided with male interests in the conversation, while the women united themselves as female to defend female interests in the debate. As such, the gendered nature of the individuals became heightened in these moments, as what felt like battlelines were drawn across the room. In these occasions, the recognition the group had of the gendered system being detrimental to all genders disappeared, and the discussion became an argument of which gender was more oppressed.

When I reflected back on these moments in the project, I became conscious that as a facilitator, I should have stepped in to do more to reconcile the group. While they constructed barriers between themselves based on gender, they were less able to relate to one another, less able to learn from one another's experiences, and less able to engage with the problems each faced on a wider scale. Although these moments were relatively rare, as a facilitator, I should have tried harder to keep the young people discussing gender in a less divisive fashion. However, many of the issues the young people were talking about, such as gender and employment in this example, or street harassment, or revenge porn, were incredibly emotionally charged topics. For the young people, the topics being discussed were either issues they or their friends or family had faced already, or issues that they knew would plague them throughout their foreseeable future. With some loaded topics being discussed, feelings were bound to run high. Reining in the young people's passion may have stopped some of these conversations becoming so divided, but the emotional currents running through the

research also contributed so much richness and depth to the project. In this sense, as a facilitator, balancing the need to allow the young people to express themselves, their own experiences, and their emotions with the need to keep the young people working together and airing themselves constructively, is one that is incredibly complex and delicate.

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#### 4.5.4. PROBLEMS OF PARTICIPATION, POWER AND PROJECT FATIGUE

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In every PAR projects, there will be some issues surrounding the group, and their dynamics. In both of the PAR projects I facilitated, the groups encountered problems surrounding participation in the project by some members, and problems relating to power and how this played out within the group. In the longer of the two projects, the group also experienced a phase of group fatigue towards the middle of the project, where the dynamics between the members of the group became more tense.

In both projects, the lack of participation of some members of the group caused problems and tension. In the youth group, participation levels were a slight issue throughout the whole project. The youth group session that the project was based in took place on a Friday evening, between five and seven o'clock. Because it was a youth group, the young people were accustomed to dropping in to sessions when they wanted, and then having phases of not coming. The combination of these two factors meant that many weeks the group was missing one or two members. Participants often had other commitments on Friday evenings, such as social events with friends, or weekends away with families. One evening, multiple members of the group were missing because they were all at different school proms. Because of this, the entire group was rarely together, and some meetings were held with only a small number of participants.

In the school project, the issues of participation were slightly different. The project took place either within the school day, or directly after school on a Thursday. This time slot was a much quieter one, and the young people were much more likely to be able to attend. In addition to this, the young people were expected to be at school around the morning session, and before the afternoon session, so the culture of participation was much more orientated towards attendance. However, the problems of participation in this project arose surrounding one member in particular. Attrition in the PAR projects was expected, and some members dropped out in the early stages of the project. However, one member dramatically lessened her attendance in the late stages of the school project. Maddie was struggling somewhat with the workload associated with A Level, and was behind with several of her coursework assignments. While the larger size of this project meant that the school group sessions were still a good size,



this did cause some frustration and anger amongst the other participants, who felt that her lack of attendance was a slight to them, and let down the group as a whole.

As a facilitator, I went into each project expecting attrition as the projects progressed. In light of this, I slightly over-recruited in each project, meaning I had one participant more than I necessarily needed in each project. However, with hindsight, I should have over recruited far more than this, to allow for more attrition than I did. This was particularly notable in the youth group project, where the group size was slightly smaller than was desirable.

In addition to this, there were also problems surrounding power in both groups. These played themselves out in several ways. In particular, through the presence of group 'leaders' who became influential in shaping the projects, and through problems of over speaking and interruption.

As with many groups, certain dominant individuals or 'leaders' emerged in each projects. These young people were the most confident in airing their views, and the most assertive when it came to shaping group decisions.

**Facilitator:** So it's kind of up to you what you want to do.

**Hannah:** Why don't we do like, Thursday, cos that's.....And just say meet like Tuesday, [corrects] Thursday tutor and then afterschool?

**Facilitator:** Yeah?

**Hannah:** And then, just....

And then, a few seconds later:

**Facilitator:** So, Thursday tutor time, and then Thursday after school? Okay. How long do you want after school?

**Deano:** Like an hour.

**Maddie:** Yeah.

**Winston:** Yeah.....till 4?

**Hannah:** Four.

**Facilitator:** Yeah? Is everyone happy with that?

**Maddie:** Yeah.

**Hannah:** That's fine.

In this extract, the relative position of dominance that Hannah occupied in the school project can be seen. Throughout this conversation, Hannah was one of the more commanding voices, both through the amount of times she spoke, and in the assertiveness she used when she did

speak. This can be seen both when Hannah herself proposed an arrangement, such as the meetings slots, but also when others, such as Winston, proposed something, and had it affirmed by Hannah. As the facilitator, I attempted in this interaction to ensure that all in the group got a chance to speak by opening it up to the rest of the group. However, even when the rest of the group answered, it was unclear to what extent they were influenced by an unwillingness to oppose the decisions already proposed.

It is interesting to note that although a 'leader' emerged in each project, the gender dynamics surrounding this were different in each project. In the school project, the individual who emerged as arguably the most dominant personality was a cisgender female. In the youth group project, the young person who emerged as somewhat of a 'leader' was a transgender male. As discussed in the literature review, one of the criticisms of men's participation in feminism has been the perception that they will dominate and take over control of groups (Kimmel 1998). Some feminists have argued that this would lessen the opportunities for female leadership within feminist movements, as well as disrupt the productive dynamics of women-only groups (Baily 2015; 2012). However, in these two projects at least, the group dynamics played out in a different way, with group 'leaders' having different genders in each project. This echoes the findings of Baily, who argued that power in groups is unlikely to be determined by just gender alone. Instead, she argued that group roles and personalities also strongly influence group dynamics (Baily 2012).

In both projects, power not also affected the creation of 'leaders' or dominant personalities in the groups, but also affected how the group as a whole negotiated speaking and listening. In both projects, the effect of having a group of energetic teenagers in a room together, discussing a controversial, interesting or personal topic could sometimes lead to slightly chaotic meetings. The young people interrupted each other, spoke over each other, and led the conversation off in rapidly shifting directions. Fine et al., discussed this issue in relation to their project, and argued that over-speaking reflects power, and the fact that within each project there will always be those who feel they can speak, and take risks, and those who feel less able to do so (Fine et al. 2003).

Throughout both projects, the young people frequently interrupted each other and spoke over each other. In some cases, this did have the effect of silencing some members of the group, while allowing some voices to be prioritised.

**Facilitator:**      **So what if you double barrel your names?**

**Deano:**            **See, I don't mind that-**

**Winston:** -depends who you're with.

**Facilitator:** Try and talk one at a time!

In this excerpt from the school group, Winston can be seen speaking over Deano. Throughout the project, Winston was a self-assured, assertive member, who was confident in airing his opinions. Deano, in comparison, although a confident young man, was much less likely to express his views in discussion group sessions. In this example, Winston's interruption prioritised his own voice, and silenced that of Deano. In fact, throughout the project, Winston was often guilty of speaking over others. The group rapidly became aware of both this, and of my attempts to negate this somewhat. Winston himself was even aware, but in many cases saw it more as a source of humour than a serious issue.

**Hannah:** Anyway, continue Ellie.

**Facilitator:** Oh my!

**Hannah:** Shush!

**Facilitator:** So I have to ask you, at this point-

**Winston:** -Sorry for interrupting!

In this section, Winston made light of the fact that he had a reputation for interrupting. In this situation, it was myself as the facilitator he had been interrupting, so it was less disruptive to the power dynamics of the group. However, he was frequently responsible for silencing other members of the group, and as a facilitator my efforts to prevent this were perhaps not always assertive enough.

After the project, I reflected on the gendered nature of this over-speaking. Was it a coincidence that the participant who was most responsible for speaking over others was a young man? Several theorists have argued that men are more likely than woman to interrupt the speech of others during conversations (Kidd 2017; Hancock & Rubin 2015; Anderson & Leaper 1998). In particular, Hancock and Rubin, in their study of the influences of gender in conversation dynamics, argued that not only are men more likely to interrupt others, but that they are most likely to do this when speaking to a woman. They argued that this may be caused by unequal social status of men and women, and the use of language by men to gain and maintain dominance. They also argued that rather than simply being caused by power, it may also be influenced by more general gender expectations or subcultures (Hancock & Rubin 2015). Kidd has argued that this effect serves to silence women and train them in self-limitation, while it promotes men's use of unsupported overconfidence (Kidd 2017).

At one point in the project the young women explicitly related Winston's constant interruptions with his need for power.

**Hannah:**        **Are we all witnessing, what is happening right now? Desperate for power, desperate for power!**

In this quote, Hannah herself questioned the nature of Winston's constant need to speak over other people, and related it to the power dynamic in the group. Winston's constant desire to interrupt other members of the group may indeed be determined by a desire for dominance, or it may be linked more generally to normative expectations of masculinity and male behaviour. In this sense, it appeared that the FPAR group existed as a space in which gendered expectations and dimensions of power were simultaneously reinforced and subverted.

Over-speaking can be a symbol and a consequence of the unequal power of different voices in the project. However, it can, on some occasions, be a positive effect of strong group cohesion and a sign of the group's ability to work well together.

**Matt:**            **Yeah, if both partners have talked about it and agreed to it and everyone's happy then it's not cheating-**

**Ernest:**        **-It's completely different-**

**Matt:**            **-It's their relationship and they can do what they want!**

In this section of dialogue, Ernest and Matt used over speaking in a supportive way that demonstrated their agreement with each other and support for each other's arguments. As Matt outlined his belief that polygamy was not morally wrong, Ernest spoke over him briefly in enthusiastic support. Rather than silencing Matt, Ernest was encouraging and supporting him. In this sense, while over-speaking is commonly conceptualised as a damaging effect of unequal power in groups, it can also be a sign of the participants' approval of each other, and their expression of their enthusiasm and agreement with each other.

One of the final key problems that emerged with group dynamics was the effect of group fatigue in the longer of the two projects. In the approach to Christmas, the school project had just passed the half way stage. The young people still had their EPQs to finish, and the action stage to begin. They were tired, and began to lose motivation. At this stage in the project, the young people began to lose some group cohesion, and began to become more fragmented and argumentative with each other.

**Eleanor:**        **Winston, you're banned from the group.**

**Winston:**        **Oh that's fine, seeing as you've all broke the contract against me, it's all fine.**

**Facilitator:** Oh god. It's all going wrong. Last week before Christmas and they've all decided they hate each other.

In this section of dialogue, the tensions between members of the group could be clearly seen. Here, the young people were bickering over the fact that someone had discussed Winston's love life outside of the group, thus breaking one of the agreements in the contract. In contrast to this, Winston had also upset some members of the group by not inviting them to his house party. These two events, combined with the sense of group fatigue, led to some tense conversations in group meetings.

At this point in the project, I did worry that the project was too long, and was beginning to wear on the young people. Over the school Christmas holiday, I worried that the young people were losing interest, and would want to leave the group soon. However, that was not the case. The young people came back with energy, and asked to extend the project from February to Easter, to give them more time together. In this sense, the project was perhaps not too long, but a little too intense at times. It may be that these problems could have been avoided by the young people taking more breaks earlier in the project.

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#### 4.6. The Role of the Facilitator

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Multiple theorists have discussed the role of the facilitator in PAR projects (see section 2.3.5). Cornwall and Jewkes argued that the facilitator's role is to steer the group through the inherent mess of PAR (Cornwall & Jewkes 1995), while Cahill argued it is to create a safe space conducive to allowing participants to speak (Cahill 2007a). Once this space is created and maintained by the facilitator, the participants will be able to successfully use this environment to lead their own research and action (Cahill 2007a; Corbett et al. 2007). In reality, multiple theorists have described how this process involves taking an active role in attempting to disrupt dominant voices and allow others to speak, or breaking down and clarifying for others what was said (McIntyre 2008; Cahill 2007a).

During both projects, I attempted to guide and assist the groups of young people, while allowing them to steer the projects and take the lead in running them. To do this, I facilitated discussions by asking questions of the group to encourage them to push their thinking forward, or by opening questions to the whole room to gain a wider range of experiences. I attempted to keep the young people moving forward through the project, by encouraging them to stay anchored in discussions to the concept of gender, and trying to keep them on track when they took part in activities. I provided support and encouragement to the young people, through praising them for airing their views or experiences, and reassuring them when they worried about the progress they were making. In other moments, I tried to provide clarity to the

projects, by asking the young people to expand on comments that were unclear, or by defining terms or explaining concepts that were unfamiliar to some group members. Throughout the projects, I moved constantly through these roles to try and ensure the smooth running of the projects, and the satisfaction and happiness of the participants.

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#### 4.6.1. AS A FACILITATOR WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

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Power is a central concept to all forms of participatory research, and all participatory projects are complex spaces in which to negotiate power (Pain 2004). When working with young people, the relationship between the facilitator and participants can be complicated by the difficulty of being an adult facilitator with a group of teenagers (McIntyre 2008). The power imbalance when working with children and young people is heightened because of the age and status difference (Corsaro 2005; Christensen & Prout 2002; Morrow & Richards 1996).

At the beginning of each project, I was aware that the young people were cautious of the fact I was an adult, and may have been reluctant to engage fully in the discussions out of concern over what I might learn. In particular, these issues were especially heightened in the school project (Wang 2013; Punch 2002). Here, my position as an adult placed me with the teaching staff in the minds of the young people. At the beginning of the project, the young people often referred to me as 'Miss' despite my repeated requests to use my first name. In fact, my objections to being called 'Miss' were so vehement that it became something of a joke with the school students, who included it in the group contract, and addressed their thank you card at the end of the project to 'Miss', which had then been crossed out, with 'Ellie' written underneath.

In response to this, I made a conscious effort in both projects to attempt to deconstruct their assumptions about my status as an adult. In schools, the age-hierarchy and the difference between staff and students are reinforced by dress. While both staff and students are expected to dress smartly, the control of the school uniform is positioned in opposition to the relative freedom of staff dress. In order to combat assumptions made about my role as an adult, and the power imbued in that, I deliberately dressed in a way that visually placed me in opposition to the rest of the staff. While many of the female staff generally wore smart trousers, dresses, blouses and heels, I deliberately wore jeans, boots, and jumpers. This outfit choice helped to label me as 'student' rather than 'teacher'. In the youth group setting, both adults and young people wore more casual outfits, so this distinction was less pronounced. However, I once again tried to dress in a more casual manner than most of the other staff.

In addition to the visual marker of dress, I also tried to reflect on the everyday acts of my behaviour within the research space. I took care to seat myself with participants, rather than at the front of the room, or stood up in front of the white board, like a teacher. While these small everyday acts may seem unimportant, it has been argued that "such little actions, however mundane, are not insignificant" (Sultana 2007, p.379).

While I attempted to position myself away from the label of 'adult' or 'teacher' through these markers, in the end it was the content of the topic that began to break down the boundaries of age. During the discussions with both groups, I was involved in frank conversations with participants about gender, sexuality, identity and the self. We discussed experiences in school, the effect of relationships, the risks of sending explicit photographs and other, sometimes sensitive, topics. As the young people became more comfortable, these discussions expanded. The young people asked for my advice and opinions on matters relating to relationships and sex and what to expect from university and moving away from home. As the project progressed, I felt that the young people began to see me less and less as a member of staff. After only a few meetings, the young people felt comfortable discussing sensitive issues around me, telling me (sometimes embarrassing) stories from their own lives, and asking me questions about mine. I was confident that at least to some extent, the young people had become comfortable enough around me and each other to engage fully in the PAR project without restraint.

While I felt confident that I had broken down much of the conception of myself as a teacher, and allowed the young people to become comfortable around me, that is not to say that I had removed myself from a position of power. In fact, in many ways I became conscious that I had simply removed one position of power and replaced it with another. While the young people no longer saw me as a teacher, instead they now saw me as a young student. This was a similar experience to that described by Wang, in her study in a secondary school. She realised that the young people had conceptualised her as a student, and frequently asked her questions and advice about university and applications (Wang 2013). However, whereas in Wang's study she felt this broke down the power dynamic between herself and the student, in this project it appeared to do the opposite. For the participants, the role of student was perceived to be somewhat glamorous and exciting. They were curious about my life, and quizzed me on my university experiences, my relationship with my partner and my future plans. As this happened, I became conscious that while I had attempted to break down one form of power relationship, I had simply replaced it with another.

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#### 4.6.2. MOMENTS OF MISSTEP

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In both projects there were moments of success, and moments where I later reflected I could have done better. In both projects, I often failed to be assertive enough when dealing with issues that arose between participants. As previously mentioned, when discussing group dynamics, I was perhaps not assertive enough when dealing with the dominant voices of some individuals in the groups. This was probably the case in both of the two groups.

However, there were some moments of failure that were specifically rooted in one project. In the school group, I particularly struggled with negotiating my position as an adult in the school setting. Although I tried to position myself as a facilitator, rather than a teacher, there were moments where this role slipped. In one moment, I found myself clicking my fingers to gain attention from the young people. At other times, I found myself standing and speaking more like a teacher than a facilitator. As the project progressed, I was able to adapt to my role as facilitator more and more, and these things occurred less and less often. However, there was one particular moment, later in the project, where I once again failed to successfully negotiate the boundary between facilitator and teacher. As the school Christmas holidays approached, the young people were somewhat tired, and unmotivated. They still had the bulk of their EPQ essays to write, and had yet to start the action stage of the project. Concerned about their need for progress, and their lack of motivation surrounding the assignment, I asked them all to complete half of the EPQ (or 2500 words) over the holidays. I told them to bring in their completed work to our first meeting of the new year, in order to ensure they had the motivation to meet the deadline. However, later that evening, thinking back over the days meetings, and recording these reflections in my fieldwork journal, I realised that 'setting work' was not exactly compatible with the participatory nature of the project. After reflecting on the matter for a while, I sent the young people another email, in which I retracted the task. Instead, I told them, they must balance their time as they saw fit. When they returned after the Christmas holidays, most of them had written some of their EPQ essays, but for the majority this was far less than the 2500 target I had initially set. When the deadline approached, many of the young people could be found frantically finishing the essays at the last possible minute, and just about managing to submit them on time. In this moment, I reflected on the decision I had made. Had I done the right thing in allowing them complete freedom? Would they have got better grades if I had forced them to do more work earlier on in the process? Did I owe them, and the school, the attempt to help them achieve the best grades possible? Was this compatible with a truly participatory project? These questions raise some of the contradictions and tensions of working with young people, and in particular, in the integration of the EPQ into the PAR project.



The project run within the youth group setting also generated its own challenges for me as a facilitator. The youth group sessions ran between five and seven o'clock on a Friday evening. Before attending the sessions, I would have spent time in my office working on other elements of my PhD studies. It was the end of the week, and I was often mentally and emotionally tired by the time the sessions came around. Some weeks, despite the fact I had meticulously prepared for the session, I made major logistical or organisational errors. In this extract from my fieldwork journal, I reflected:

**Oh, I even didn't set another discussion group for next week. Nightmare. Losing it. I'm really struggling with the sessions being at the end of Friday - because by that point I'm so tired and out of it. The last two weeks have been a disaster in terms of my brain power.**

In this entry, I realised I had not asked another young person to run the next weeks discussion group session. To rectify this, I had to contact the young people during the week, and ask someone to volunteer. However, mistakes like this led to progress in the project slowing down. One week, I had told the young people they could send me their images for the photo collage for me to print them for them. However, I had not got the necessary information for me to be able to contact them. Not only did this not mean they could not send me the images, but it also meant I could not remind them of the task. Many of the young people therefore forgot to bring their images, and so the task was postponed another week. At the beginning of any project, there can be logistical challenges and complications. However, in this project, these were exacerbated by errors on my part that stemmed from my own tiredness at that point in the week. When running future PAR projects, as a facilitator, I would think more carefully about the timings of group meetings, and what that will mean for not only the participants, but also for myself as a facilitator.

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#### 4.6.3. THE FACILITATOR AS A GENDERED BEING

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In her FPAR framework, Maguire argued that attention must be paid to the gender of the research team (Maguire 1987). When negotiating my role as a facilitator, I needed to consider the effect of my own gender on the project.

In the youth group project, I had expected some questions about my own identity, and my own experience of LGBT+ issues. As a cisgender female, I was conscious that I had no personal experience of the challenges facing transgender young people. However, the young people unquestioningly accepted my presence in the project, and did not particularly ask me questions about my own identity.

While I had expected my own identity to impact heavily upon the youth group project, it was actually the school group where I became most conscious of my own difference or otherness. During this project I became increasingly aware of the impact of my female identity on the dynamics of the group. At the beginning of the project, I had attempted to make it clear to the young people that it was their knowledge and personal experience that the project was concerned with. My own perspectives and opinions were not more significant than their own. As such, my own gendered experiences were not intended to significantly impact on the project.

However, in one outburst from Winston, it became clear that my own location was impacting his perceptions of the group more than I had realised. During the slightly heated discussion group surrounding women and men in employment - where, as already mentioned, the young people appeared to arrange themselves into 'sides' based on their gender - I tried to encourage Winston to listen to some of the young women's personal experiences, and to not devalue them. To this, Winston exclaimed:

**Winston:        So, just because I'm a man, that makes it sexist because you're a female!**

At the time, I was unsure how to react. Winston appeared to be frustrated at the importance I was placing on the lived experience of the young women, and declared that I was sexist for doing so. In this moment, it appeared that Winston thought I was potentially biased towards the young women in the project because of my own identity as a woman.

Other facilitators have discussed negotiating difference within PAR projects. Cahill, in her work with young women on colour had to negotiate her own whiteness. She did so by openly discussing the issue with the young people, and by being as transparent as possible about the issue (Cahill 2007a). After the project, I reflected on my own position as a facilitator, and considered whether I should have been more open and transparent in addressing my own gender within the project, and the simultaneous sameness and difference that this produced in each project.

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#### 4.7. Concluding Thoughts

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This chapter has aimed to provide an account of two FPAR projects conducted with young men and women. Throughout this section of the thesis, the nature of participation, research and action in the projects have been considered, as well as the dynamics of each group, the position of the facilitator and the role of gender within these themes. Several PAR theorists have called for more accounts of the nature, practice, and doing of PAR projects, in order to

inform researchers working with this research ethic (Reid & Frisby 2008; Cahill 2007a). This chapter has aimed to respond to these calls, and by doing so, address the first of the three research questions of this project - *Running FPAR projects with young men: What are the practicalities, problems and possibilities?*

Within both projects, the young people engaged in multiple forms of participation. These modes of participation included engagement with both the main content of the project, and the details and logistics of organising meetings and activities. The nature and form of this participation was influenced by the personalities of the young people, the space of the two projects, and gender norms. Gendered expectations appeared to be particularly noticeable in the school project, where the forms of participation in which the young people engaged differed slightly between the genders. In this sense, the FPAR projects appeared to exist as spaces in which gendered norms were simultaneously challenged and reinforced.

Research within both projects took place through multiple modes of analysis and exploration. In the school project, discussion groups were combined with the EPQ projects, while in the youth group, discussion groups were used alongside photography based exercises. The multimodal forms of research production acted as an equaliser between different participants, as individuals were observed engaging and thriving in different elements of the projects. As such, these observations echo those of PAR theorists McIntyre and Cahill (McIntyre 2008; Cahill 2007a). In both projects, the young people reflected on how the diversity of gender identities within the projects added richness and depth to this research. In the school project, this took the form of cisgender male and female participants engaging with the life experiences of one another, while in the youth group project, the inclusion of transgender young men added further dimensions to discussions.

The young people of the two groups engaged in somewhat different action projects, with the young people of the school group pursuing a relatively tangible form of action, while the young people of the youth group engaged in what PAR theorist Reid has described as the smaller, more personal forms of action (Reid 2006). In this stage of the project, the impact of gender appeared to be complex and contested, with no clear relationship evident between the gender identity of the participants and the projects they chose to support. In the youth group, the young people chose an action project with which some of their group personally related, while in the school group the young people chose a project which they constructed and understood as being for the benefit of other members of their community.

Within both projects, the dynamics of the groups were influenced by power and status, the personalities of the individual members, and negotiations of gender. In both projects, the

young people formulated practices or rituals that aided in their construction of a group identity. The concept of these rituals echoed those described by Cahill in her research (Cahill 2007a), although the nature of these shared practices appeared unique to each group. In the school group, the young people were at times observed constructing divides based on gender identity, while in the youth group this was less evident. In both projects, 'leaders' of each group emerged. The different gender identities of these individuals suggested that leadership and control of the group was not solely impacted by gender, and that young men do not necessarily dominate decision making. In this respect, these dynamics supported the contention that individual personalities and group roles impact group dynamics as much as gender (Baily 2012).

In both projects, I had to negotiate my position as a facilitator. PAR theorists such as McIntyre have argued that this relationship can be complicated by the difficulty of being an adult facilitator with a group of teenagers (McIntyre 2008). My attempts to mitigate this unequal power dynamic by locating myself as a 'student' did prevent the young people perceiving me as a 'teacher' or 'youth worker', but appeared to only replace one position of power and status with another. My position as facilitator was affected by my own gender identity, and this impact was particularly noticeable within interactions with the young people of the school project. After the projects had concluded, I reflected on the need to have addressed this more openly at the beginning of each project.

Through discussion of these key themes, this chapter has aimed to provide a detailed account of two FPAR projects conducted with young men and women. These discussions have illustrated the complex and messy nature of FPAR, and of the position gender occupies within this. The location of young men - both cisgender and transgender - within the projects added richness and variety to the research that the young people participated in. Within the action stage of the project, the inclusion of young men in the projects did not appear to necessarily drive the action stage of the projects towards activism aimed at helping young men, and both young men and women at times dominated and led the projects. These projects therefore both demonstrate that FPAR with groups of young men and women can create viable and rewarding projects, that are filled with passion and complexity. In this respect, these projects appear to lend support to Freire's contention that both the oppressed and the oppressors can participate in liberatory activity (Freire 1996), with both young men and women participating together to create FPAR projects that were exciting, rich and successful.

The next chapter considers the impact that involvement in these projects had on the young men and their negotiation of feminist subjectivities. In this following chapter, the discussion

considers whether involvement in the FPAR projects has encouraged these young men to engage with feminism within the space of the projects.

## 5. YOUNG MEN IN FPAR AND SUBJECTIVITIES: ACCEPTANCE, REJECTION AND NEGOTIATION OF FEMINIST SUBJECTIVITIES

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### 5.1. Introduction

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The previous chapter sought to provide a detailed account of the intricacies of doing FPAR with young men. By doing so, the chapter addressed the first research theme of this thesis - *Running FPAR projects with young men: What are the practicalities, problems and possibilities?* In this account, the nature of participation, research and action in both projects were considered, with particular emphasis placed upon the role of gender within these negotiations. The accounts of both of these projects demonstrated that FPAR with groups of young men and women can create not only viable FPAR projects, but FPAR projects that are dynamic, exciting, and rich.

Now that the two FPAR projects have been discussed in depth, the impact of these projects on the feminist subjectivities of the young people can be considered. This chapter addresses the second research theme of this thesis - *Young men in FPAR and subjectivities: In what ways is feminism accepted, rejected and negotiated?* By doing so, this section aims to address the deficit in literature surrounding the impact of FPAR on feminist subjectivity creation in young men. As previously discussed in the literature review of this thesis (see section 2.4.1), despite the fact that much of the writing of Freire focused on the possibility of the formation of a critical consciousness, there has been relatively little literature produced considering the involvement that PAR has on participants. While there has been some research done that considers the potential that FPAR has to stimulate the creation of feminist subjectivities, this research has all worked with young women (Gaddes 2013; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004).

Throughout this chapter, the subjectivities displayed by the young people as they moved through the space of FPAR projects are discussed. This section of the thesis focuses primarily on the displays of subjectivities within the space of the projects themselves, while the following chapter goes on to consider the negotiation of these subjectivities within the wider spaces of the school or youth group. To do this, the concept of space is briefly re-visited, before the nature of the participants' feminist subjectivities are examined. This discussion takes place chronologically, considering in turn, the subjectivities displayed at the start of the projects, within the projects and after the projects concluded. The chapter then considers the relationship between these subjectivities and the PAR project, before considering the importance of the other elements of the identities of the participants. Finally, the chapter

concludes by arguing that this analysis demonstrates that FPAR projects with young men do offer the potential to encourage displays of feminist subjectivities in young men.

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## 5.2. Space and Analysis

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Before the discussion of feminist subjectivities can commence, the role of the concept of space within this analysis must be considered. This concept was outlined in more detail in the methods chapter of this thesis (see section 3.2.4). As formerly discussed, this research utilises the notion of space as defined and understood by Doreen Massey. Massey argued for a notion of space that is constructed from social relations, and is considered alongside time to engage with their dynamic and multiple natures (Massey 1996; Massey 1994). She proposed that spaces can be understood as meshes of social relations. They are multiple and contested, as each group or individual creates and views the world through different spaces (Massey 1994). As such, the FPAR projects can be understood as spaces that were constructed and defined by the participants.

This concept of space has shaped the design of the research as a whole, and also shapes how the following analysis is structured. This chapter addresses the second research theme by concerning itself primarily with the subjectivities of the young people within the space of the FPAR projects. The subsequent analysis chapter considers how the young people negotiated these feminist subjectivities within the wider spaces of the school and youth group. Through this, the research considers not only how participation in FPAR influences the creation of feminist subjectivities, but also how these feminist subjectivities are negotiated within different spaces.

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## 5.3. Subjectivity

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This research project builds upon the definitions of subjectivity proposed by both Moore and Hall (Moore 2013; Hall 2004) (see also section 2.3.10 of this thesis). Moore defined subjectivity as "the term we use to refer both to the process and the form of the relation of the individual to the social" (Moore 2013, p.203), while Hall defined subjectivity as a "social and personal being that exists in negotiation with broad cultural definitions and our own ideals" (Hall 2004, p.134). In both of these definitions, emphasis is placed upon the interaction between the individual and the social, and the negotiation of sense of self and society. As such, the subject is not whole, but unstable and fragmented (Hall 2004). Each self therefore has multiple, shifting forms. These forms are often contradictory and conflicting, with individuals taking up different subject positions within different situations (Moore 2013; Eckermann 1997).

Over the course of the project, the subjectivities displayed by the young people demonstrated a range of forms of engagement and disengagement with feminism. In order to consider this in detail, the changing nature of the subjectivities of the young people over time are now considered by moving through the projects in chronological order, starting with the beginning of the two FPAR projects.

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### 5.3.1. FEMINIST SUBJECTIVITIES: THE BEGINNING OF THE PROJECTS

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At the beginning of each project, the young people were asked in an interview to discuss their views surrounding gender and feminism, and reflect on how these views were incorporated as part of their sense of self. In these interviews, the young people displayed differing amounts of engagements with feminism, and significant variety in how they framed their approach to feminism and subjectivity.

In the school project, the two young men who took part in the project both began the project with a contradictory, conflicting view of feminism.

**Facilitator:** Do you see yourself as like supporting-

**Deano:** -oh supporting. Equality. Er... yeah, yeah to a certain extent. Yeah. I think.

**Facilitator:** What do you mean by a certain extent?

**Deano:** Like, I think, I believe in equality, but I just think, sometimes women, or feminists, they go, they try and find little things that maybe aren't that big of a deal. Erm, but yeah, I support equality.

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**Facilitator:** Do you think of yourself as a feminist then?

**Winston:** I would say yeah, I agree that it should be equal.

**Facilitator:** Yeah?

**Winston:** But obviously there are, [pause] situations, where probably not.... like, this sounds really stupid, but like, in tennis, a couple of weeks ago, they were talking about equal pay for men and women, but I do think men should get paid more, because they play longer games. And then, we were talking about in English, we were talking about women not being on the front line, and our teacher, said, her friend who's a man agrees with that because she feels sometimes that women aren't as physically strong, and you've got to trust them with your life and stuff, and that if you're not all at the same standard, but yeah, I would say that I am.

In the first section of dialogue, Deano appeared to be combining tentative support for equality with a negative perception of the feminist movement. Similarly, in the second section of dialogue, Winston also combined support for equality with speech that mediated this support.



Immediately after describing himself as someone who agrees with feminism, Winston then volunteered examples of situations where his views appeared to contradict this desire for equality. In both of these cases, the young men were simultaneously accepting and rejecting feminism. They combined statements that supported gender equality with statements that distanced themselves from feminism.

In addition to this, in these sections of dialogue, both Deano and Winston used the word 'equal' or 'equality' when responding to a question on feminism. Through this use of language, and the use of mediating speech discussed above, both young men appeared cautious to describe themselves in a way that related them to the feminist movement, or positioned them as a feminist. However, this was combined with statements from both young men that asserted that they believed in gender equality: the key tenet of feminism as defined in this thesis.

This disjuncture echoes that found by multiple studies that have considered how both men and women relate to feminism (Swirsky & Angelone 2016; 2014; Zucker 2004; Aronson 2003; Riley 2001) (see also section 2.2.10). Theorists have argued that there is a discrepancy between the number of individuals who support feminist ideas, issues and campaigns, and the number who identify as feminist (Swirsky & Angelone 2016; 2014). This discrepancy may be caused by some of the negative perceptions that still surround feminism (Swirsky & Angelone 2014). As such, many individuals may support feminist goals, but be reluctant to describe themselves as a feminist due to the stigma surrounding the movement (Swirsky & Angelone 2014; Zucker 2004; Aronson 2003).

The words of both Deano and Winston appeared to be echoing these trends. Both of these young men began the project by negotiating the contradiction between supporting feminist ideals, but distancing themselves from the feminist movement. For these young men, this may well have been linked to the negative connotations feminism retains, both within wider society, and within the space of their school itself. When the young people in the school project were asked to describe how feminism was seen in their school, the majority felt it was overall viewed negatively, although members of the sixth form of the school were more likely to have a positive view of the movement. When reflecting on feminism and the members of his school, Winston even went so far as to say:

**And even if they don't agree with it, I think a lot of them still stand for stuff like equality, even if they don't want to be labelled as a feminist. I think, a lot of people are feminists, they just don't want to admit it, because of the negative connotations that go with it.**

In this quotation, Winston was referring to other pupils at the school. However, when discussing their relationship to feminism, he may have drawn upon his own experiences of negotiating feminism. As such, it is possible that both Winston and Deano avoided describing themselves as feminists because of the negative connotations attached to feminism. At this point in the project, the young men appeared to be negotiating a complex, contradictory relationship to feminism that simultaneously accepted and rejected feminism.

The four young women who took part in the project displayed a range of attitudes to feminism at the beginning of the project. One of the young women who took part in the school project displayed a negotiation of feminism that echoed many of the themes found in the views of Winston and Deano:

**Eleanor:**        **Like, I wouldn't say, like, I'm a feminist, but I do get quite annoyed at like, how much, like, the lack of equality and things.**

In this statement, Eleanor again combined acceptance and rejection of feminism. In particular, the language Eleanor used illustrated the feminist paradox to which Deano and Winston also ascribed. Her statement "I wouldn't say, like, I'm a feminist, but...", perfectly encompassed the combination of the rejection of the feminist label or identity, with the support of the cause of feminism. Zucker reported that many of their participants used the phrase "I'm not a feminist, but...." (Zucker 2004, p.423), while Francis reported usage of the phrase "I'm not one of those women's libber type people but..." (Francis 2006, p.475).

The other three young women in this project all described themselves as a feminist, but with varying degrees of commitment to the movement. One of the young women described herself as a feminist, but also expressed some reticence about this description:

**Monica:**        **I am a bit of a feminist. I'm a bit of one. Not, I'm not a strong one because I think it's never going to be equal because of the world that you live in, but every so often my brothers, they're a bit younger than me, and they bully me a bit about being a woman and I'm like, I have to fight back the corner, and say it's not fair.**

This young woman appeared to identify herself with feminism directly, rather than discussing gender in terms of language such as 'equality'. However, this support remained mediated by her following comments expressing doubt in the future success of the movement. In this section of speech, the young woman may have been using these negative descriptions of the future of feminism to distance herself from the movement, in a similar fashion to Eleanor, Winston and Deano. Or, she may have been expressing full support for the ideology and identity of the movement, but have been lacking in confidence in the potential feminism held

to create real social change. Either way, her support and identification with feminism remained tentative and uncertain.

In contrast to this, the remaining two young women in the project displayed a more unreserved support for feminism.

**Maddie:** I'm, like, a really big feminist [laughs]...And I think it's really important.

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**Hannah:** I think feminism is important and....it has changed a lot, but I don't think we're fully there yet.

**Facilitator:** So do you think of yourself as a feminist?

**Hannah:** I'd say I am. I try to be anyway.

Here, the final two young women from the school project discussed their strong commitment to feminism. Their engagement with feminism was sufficiently strong that they both raised feminism in the interview as a topic to discuss, rather than allowing themselves to be questioned on it, as the rest of the participants had. In this sense, their engagement with feminism in the space of the interview appeared to be active, rather than re-active. These young women did not mediate their acceptance of feminism in their accounts, and they did not reject the word feminism. Within the confines of the interviews, these young women did not appear to be dissuaded by the negative connotations surrounding feminism. Both of these young girls openly discussed having an ongoing and active relationship with feminism, and spoke in a way that indicated that they regularly displayed feminist subjectivities.

The six young people who took part in the school FPAR project began the project exhibiting a range of views towards feminism. Within the youth group, the young people negotiated feminism in slightly different ways. While both of the young men in the school project had described relatively similar relationships to feminism, the young men in the youth group projects described a wide range of identifications with feminism. Two of the young men - one cisgender, and one transgender - freely discussed their commitment to the feminist movement:

**Facilitator:** So do you see yourself as a feminist?

**Cameron:** I'd say yeah. I'd say, at the end of the day, they're [women] doing the same job or the same, and yet they get treated differently, why?

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**Facilitator:** Do you think of yourself as a feminist?

**Matt:** I'd say so, yeah. I'd like to be at least.

These young men discussed their relationship to feminism in a way that suggested they openly embraced feminist subjectivities. Both young men were able to describe particular actions they had undertaken, or causes that they were interested in, with Cameron detailing the commitment he had made on the 'He for She' website, while Matt talked about his interest in equal pay for men and women. These young men appeared to be relatively interested in feminism, and informed about key parts of the movements.

In contrast to this, the other two young men in the youth group projects expressed slightly more contradictory relationships to feminism. One of the cisgender young men described himself in similar terms to those used by the two young men in the school group project:

**Facilitator:** **So... on that note, do you see yourself as being a feminist, at all then, or not?**

**Elliot:** **Erm.... I think, a little bit. I think, erm it should be more equal. I don't think one gender should be more, important, or powerful than the other.**

In the description given here by this young man, he used the word 'equal', rather than discussing his views in relation to words such as 'feminist'. In this sense, he appeared to distance himself from the feminist movement through his use of language. However, unlike the young men in the school project, Elliot did not mediate his support for feminism with examples of elements of feminism he did not support. In his account, he appeared to distance himself from an association with the feminist movement, but support the key tenets of the movement.

For the final young man in the group, identification with feminism was a complex matter:

**Facilitator:** **So do you think of yourself as a feminist?**

**Ernest:** **Erm... well.... I think, ideologically, yes. But I don't actually do anything. I don't campaign or anything. And I erm.. I think of it as being more equal rights than being... and also some people who call themselves feminists, actually think that women should have more rights than men, and instead of improving women's status, they should actually decrease what men can do. Which isn't right. You know, cos obviously that, it, it just makes your argument not credible, and its sexist, but it's to men instead.**

Throughout the interview, Ernest, a transgender young man, showed an appreciation for the feminist movement, and an awareness of some of the issues and currents relevant to contemporary feminism. However, this awareness was combined with some cynicism. As discussed here, Ernest perceived some elements of the feminist movement to be discriminating against men. As such, he viewed feminism with mixed emotions.

In addition to this ambivalence to the feminist movement, Ernest was one of the few young people to discuss their relationship to feminism explicitly in relation to action versus ideological support. While Ernest saw himself as someone who supported the ideals of feminism, he was cautious to describe himself as someone with a feminist identity, due to his lack of active support through conventional methods like campaigning. In this, Ernest mirrored some of the findings of theorists studying feminism. Several theorists have argued that some men and women appear to reject a feminist identity, not because they disagree with the labels or ideas, but because they think they are not active enough to be considered part of the movements (Swirsky & Angelone 2016; Zucker 2004; Aronson 2003). Zucker termed these individuals, who are politically informed and opinionated, but do not see themselves as being active within the feminist movement, engaged observers (Zucker 2004) (see also, section 2.2.10 of this thesis). Ernest's discussion of his ideological support of feminism appeared to echo this, and demonstrated the conceptions that this young man held about the meaning and nature of feminism, and involvement in the feminist movement.

The young woman who participated in the youth group project described her conception of feminism in a way that echoed elements of the views expressed by Ernest.

**Facilitator:** Do you think of yourself as a feminist?

**Brittany:** Well, I think that girls should have the same rights as, err, boys, but I don't think, I don't know if I should, I don't know if I would call myself, I don't really know.

**Facilitator:** Why not?

**Brittany:** Cos I don't really know much, like loads about feminism to call myself one.

While the hesitance expressed by Ernest was attributed to his lack of active engagement, for Brittany it was related to her lack of knowledge about feminism. Brittany positioned herself in support of feminism, but did not view this support to be sufficient to describe herself as a feminist. In this sense, her comments expressed a similar element of hesitation to that demonstrated by Ernest when he spoke of feminism.

In this section, I have given an overview of the position of the young people at the beginning of the FPAR projects. From this discussion, it is clear that the young people who participated in the projects joined the projects with differing relationships to feminism. Some of the young people identified themselves as feminists, but for others, their relationship with feminism was more complex, or more contested. For some of the young people, feminism was something they supported ideologically, but this engagement was not deep enough for them to consider their subjectivities in terms of feminism. For some of the other young people, feminism was

something they discussed in contradictory terms, simultaneously accepting and rejecting feminism in ways that suggested a multi-faceted, tentative, or conflicting attitude to feminism.

When considering how these young people positioned themselves in relation to feminism, it became evident that there is no simple binary between feminist and not-feminist. Instead, the young people displayed simultaneous forms of support, rejection, and mediation, which allowed many of the young people to occupy positions between the dichotomy of feminist and non-feminist. Several theorists have argued that feminist support should be conceptualised as a spectrum, or continuum (Swirsky & Angelone 2016; Aronson 2003) (see also, section 2.2.11). In this conceptualisation, the young people of both groups began the FPAR projects from differing positions of the continuum or spectrum of feminist support and identification.

From this discussion, it also became clear that at this point in the project, there was no simple gender divide that existed across both projects. In the school project, the boys were less likely to identify with feminism, and those that claimed a strong sense of feminist subjectivity were all female. However, in the youth group project, the opposite appeared to be the case. In this project, the sole female member of the group was one of the young people who held a weak relationship to feminism, while the two who expressed strong feminist subjectivities were a cisgender and transgender male. When looking at both projects together, the young people who identified most strongly with feminism were both male and female, and both trans and cisgender. In this sense, gender did not appear to be creating a simple divide in attitudes to feminism.

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### 5.3.2. FEMINIST SUBJECTIVITIES: DURING THE PROJECTS

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The two FPAR projects, although the same in overall design, evolved into very different projects. As such, the ways in which the young people negotiated feminism during the projects differed heavily between the projects.

In the school FPAR project, the group's negotiation of feminism shifted and developed as the project progressed. At the beginning of the project, the young people had demonstrated a range in approaches to feminism and levels of engagement with feminist subjectivities. However, as the project progressed, the group as a whole began to move towards a higher level of engagement with feminism, and all members of the group began to display feminist subjectivities within the space of the project.

This development can be illustrated by contrasting two moments from the project. Early on in the project, one of the discussion groups run by myself as the facilitator considered young transgender people and their access to toilets within schools. As discussed in the previous

chapter (see section 4.4.3), this issue became a central point of the project, and during the action stage of the project, the young people decided to focus on the provision of gender neutral toilets within their own school. As part of this, they composed a letter to their headteacher, requesting the school make all of its toilets gender neutral. By considering two moments from the project - the first discussion group on this topic, and the letter writing process - in more detail, we can consider how the group as a whole altered their perceptions and attitudes over the course of the project.

During the discussion group, the group watched a news report about a young transgender man in a dispute with his school over which toilet and changing facilities he could use. Immediately after the video had concluded, the young people tried to work through their understanding and opinions on the topic.

**Winston:** So, is that a....girl who wants to be a boy?

**Facilitator:** Girl living as a boy. Born a girl, living as a boy.

**Hannah:** Looks more like a boy, don't it?

**Winston:** Yeah, I thought it was a boy, trying to be a girl.

**Facilitator:** No, no. So he wants to use the male bathrooms.

**Winston:** The one's with like urinals in? [Unclear speech] be a bit worried?

**Facilitator:** Well I don't know, I'll defer to your greater knowledge of the boys bathrooms.

[Laughter]

**Winston:** The thing is!

[They erupt into talking over each other]

**Winston:** At our school, it doesn't really matter, because they're all individual things, I guess when it's like that, it's a bit harder.

**Monica:** They've got to have cubicles.

**Deano:** It don't even matter then, because I'm sure they're closed. You know what I mean?

**Winston:** Exactly.

**Hannah:** It's well gay, it's not like [pause] wait, hang on!

**Deano:** He wants, she -

**Hannah:** They're probably thinking because, it, she, he, was originally a female-

**Deano:** -still is -

**Hannah:** -erm that, he's going to be attracted to males, and that's going to put people out.

In this section of dialogue, the young people's struggle to conceptualise and work through this issue together could be seen. For many of the young people, the issue they were discussing was one they were relatively unfamiliar with. As this was a topic many of them had rarely discussed before, they struggled to find the appropriate language with which to frame the debate. Both Hannah and Winston, at the beginning of this section of dialogue, referred to the transgender man in the video as 'it' while they worked out which pronoun would be most appropriate. However, as the discussion went on, and the young people became more comfortable and familiar with the issue they are discussing, many of them moved to referring to the young man in the video as a 'he'. In particular, Hannah, by the end of this section of dialogue, referred to the young person as a 'he' in her last words. The young people were quickly adjusting, and within a few seconds most of them had moved into using the preferred pronouns of the young man naturally and easily.

As well as the initial disorientation that can be seen here, there is also evidence of some deeper discomfort with the issue at hand. The young people were all vocally in support of the young man being able to use the toilets of his choice, with Winston, Monica and Deano all discussing the logistics of this, and considering the amount of privacy an individual should be afforded in the toilets. However, despite being on one level of speech in support of this young man, some of the group participants still displayed some discomfort and uneasiness. In particular, Deano seemed unwilling to consider the young man as truly male. When Hannah stated that the young man was 'originally a female', Deano interrupted to argue that the young man 'still is'. In this section, we can see that not only was Deano unwilling to consider the young man as truly male, but that this discomfort was strong enough to make him interrupt another member of the group to assert this.

This discomfort can be seen more explicitly in a later section of dialogue, in which the young people have turned to considering their own experience and knowledge of gender-neutral toilet facilities.

**Eleanor:** You know in Sheffield, you know the Diamond building, they're all unisex, in there.

**Deano:** [With what sounds like disgust or disbelief in his voice] What, unisex toilets?

**Monica:** They did that at, you know when we went to York university, there was like, there was a wall between-

**Hannah:** -oh that was dodgy that!



**Monica:** There was, the men's cubicles, female's cubicles -

**Hannah:** -So weird!-

**Monica:** -but then there were joint sinks. That was a bit weird.

Here, as the young people related the discussion to their own lives, some of their uneasiness and discomfiture became more evident. Deano, once more, was the most vocal in expressing this, and exclaimed in disbelief when Eleanor described the gender neutral facilities at the local university. Monica and Hannah also both described the gender neutral toilets they had used at another university with language such as 'weird' and 'dodgy'.

In these two sections of dialogue, the young people's attempts to grapple with these issues can be seen. Here, they combined a general support for the transgender young man seen in the video to use the toilet facilities of his choice, with elements of personal uneasiness around the language of the topic, and the ramifications of this in their own lives.

The tone of this debate can be contrasted with later discussions surrounding transgender young people and toilet access during the action stage of the project. In this extract, the young people again discussed transgender people and the provision of gender neutral toilets, this time as they worked together to compose the letter to the school headteacher:

**Hannah:** What else? Ethos, that's the last thing we gotta write about.

**Monica:** That sounds very sarky, [reads] 'surely that should be the ethos of -----  
- school'.

**Hannah:** Right, so what am I saying then? So this, the change is positive, and.....  
something about the ethos.

**Winston:** I said about, ----- school should be promoting equality, isn't that  
something about the ethos?

**Eleanor:** What is ethos?

**Facilitator:** What the school, think, things that are important.

**Hannah:** Equality? Right, what did you say Winston? I put, [reads] 'the change is  
positive as the centre of this school is equality'.

**Winston:** I said something about-

**Deano:** -what's the school motto?

**Winston:** - -----school should be promoting equality.

**Deano:** What's the school motto?

**Hannah:** Where people thrive?

**Deano:** And allowing people to thrive.

**Winston:       Quote it.**

**Deano:         And express themselves. Something like that.**

By this point in the project, the way in which the young people were approaching the same issue had undergone several changes. Firstly, despite the initial discomfort felt by many of the young people in relation to their existing experiences of gender neutral toilets, they had chosen this as an issue to pursue, and were attempting to make all toilets in their own school gender neutral. In this sense, the very nature of their approach to the issue had altered, and they had either broken down and removed this initial discomfort, or placed this discomfort to one side in order to adopt changes they believed would have a positive impact on society. In particular, Deano, who had previously been vocally uneasy with the idea of gender neutral toilets, could here be seen actively participating in the letter writing process, and having a productive input in the content of the letter.

In addition to this, their comfort and increased support for this cause can also be seen through the use of language in this section of dialogue. Whereas before the young people had previously conceptualised gender neutral toilets through largely negative language, in this section of text, the positive language they used can be clearly seen. The words 'thrive', 'equality' and 'express' were all used in the context of the writing of the letter, which demonstrated the ways in which the young people now perceived this issue, and wished others to perceive this issue.

These two extracts from the project illustrate the relationship of the group to feminism, and feminist subjectivities. In the earlier meeting, the majority of the young people were displaying feminist subjectivities through their vocal support of the right for all people to be free from oppression because of their gender. However, this feminist support came with some levels of uneasiness, and discomfort. For others in the group, such as Deano, they negotiated this discussion with a much more mediated sense of feminist support, combining support for the issue with statements that illustrated their rejection and discomfort with the issue at hand.

However, in the second extract, from much later in the project, all of the young people were displaying a much more engaged, and less mediated form of feminist subjectivities. Rather than combining support for the issue with rejection and distancing, they appeared to wholly support the issue. In this sense, the feminist subjectivities displayed at this point in the project were far more engaged and supportive of the issue. Even Deano, by this point in the project, had become involved in the action project, and displayed feminist subjectivities through his active participation.

The display of feminist subjectivities in these two moments of the project had not only changed in the way in which the young people negotiated and mediated their support for feminist issues, but had also changed in the nature of these subjectivities. In the earlier extract, the young people were engaged in feminist support through reflection, discussion and vocal support of feminist issues. However, in the second extract of the project, not only had the young people increased their support for this issue, but they had also channelled this into action. In this sense, the subjectivities displayed here illustrated feminist support through the active pursuing of a project that the young people believed would bring about greater gender equality.

In this project, the majority of the young people displayed less mediated feminist subjectivities as the project progressed. These changes were clear and noticeable throughout the length of the project. In the youth group project, the young people negotiated their subjectivities in a slightly different way.

In the FPAR project that took place in the youth group, the young people began the project from a dramatically different starting point. As can be seen from the extracts from their initial interviews in the section above, the young people occupied a range of positions in relation to feminism. Two of the young men were keen feminists, while the rest occupied positions of tentative or mediated support for feminism. However, while these young people did not all begin the project identifying as feminists, they did all begin the project from a position of relatively high knowledge about issues surrounding gender. As members of an LGBT+ youth group, all members of the group were relatively well informed about issues surrounding gender, with a particular emphasis on the multiple nature of gender identities, and issues surrounding those who identified as non-binary, gender-fluid or transgender. While only two members of the group identified as transgender, the rest of the group all had friends who were either transgender or non-binary, and through these relationships and the environment of the youth group, had been exposed to these issues before.

As such, the project began in a slightly different vein to the project that took place in the school. The young people in the youth group project entered the project space with a collective knowledge and experience that established the project space as an environment full of gender awareness from the moment the project began. From the very first group meeting, the young people showed a level of critical engagement and awareness that had taken much longer to become established in the school FPAR project.

In the first meeting of the project, the young people displayed a wide knowledge and understanding of gender, sex, and the many gender identities with which people may identify.

- Facilitator:** Can we, like, think about what gender actually means, because some people still use it wrongly.
- Brittany:** I don't know. What you want to be identified as.
- Matt:** Yeah, how you identify.
- Cameron:** Your gender is who you identify as, regardless of your genitalia.

In this section of dialogue, several of the young people demonstrated an understanding of the meaning of gender itself. As the facilitator, I had been concerned that some of the young people in the group would not understand some of the key terminology that the project would be using. In the early meetings of each project, I therefore discussed several of these terms with the young people, including gender and sex. However, in the youth group project, the young people were already aware of these terms, and able to explain them with confidence and ease.

In the first meeting, as well as showing awareness of terms surrounding gender, the young people in the youth group project also independently brought up issues surrounding gender that interested or affected them.

- Cameron:** And what really bugs me is when people say, be a real man.
- Facilitator:** Ah.
- Cameron:** That is one of my pet hates.

Here, Cameron used a moment of lull in the first meeting, where the group were transitioning from one activity to another, to air an area of concern for him. In the initial interview, Cameron had spoken about identifying as a feminist. In this instance, he echoed those sentiments by showing a strong awareness of feminist issues, and in particular, the role of language in perpetuating gendered stereotypes. In this moment, Cameron displayed feminist subjectivities through his pro-active raising of issues surrounding gender and sexism. From this, he also triggered a discussion of stereotypes and toxic masculinity in which the whole group engaged.

From the beginning of this project, the young people displayed a high understanding of issues surrounding gender. In addition to this, several of them, including Cameron, showed a high commitment to feminism. From this stage, the changes in this project were much smaller in nature than those observed in the school project.

As the end of the project approached, the final discussion group focused on feminism, and asked the young people to think about their own understanding of the feminist movement. In

this session, the young people debated the place of transgender people within the feminist movement:

**Matt:** Don't even get me started. T.E.R.F.s, God. I can't deal with that.

**Facilitator:** Go on, tell us more.

**Matt:** So, basically, there is a group of 'feminists', they call themselves feminists, the term that most people use is T.E.R.F.s, it's Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists. That basically think that trans women have male privilege and that they shouldn't be included in feminism, because they're like, technically men, and it's just....

**Ernest:** How would they feel if a bunch of trans men with beards and big muscles and stereotypically male features turned up and refused to leave because they were technically women?

**Matt:** I don't know how most feminists feel about trans men actually, I've not heard a lot about that. I've just heard a lot about them being very upset about trans women in the community, because they're not real women.

**Ernest:** In that view point, trans men are real women, if they think trans women aren't real women.

In this section of dialogue, Ernest and Matt, who both identified as transgender men, considered their views and knowledge of the place of transgender individuals in the feminist movement. In this discussion, they reflected on T.E.R.F.s, male privilege, and the question of what it means to be a woman. Here, as in the first meeting of the project, the young people demonstrated a high level of awareness of issues surrounding gender and identity. In a similar fashion to that of the first meeting, members of this group were able to discuss these issues using correct and precise terminology.

In another echo of the earlier meeting, the young people also used this discussion to raise issues or points that they believed to be important. In this debate, it was Matt who began the discussion around the place of T.E.R.F.'s, and by doing so, actively drew awareness towards an issue that he believed to be key to this discussion. In this moment, Matt demonstrated his engagement with feminism by actively raising issues to enrich the ongoing debate.

In this later meeting from the youth group project, the young people participating in the project demonstrated many similar behaviours and attitudes to those they showed in the first meeting of the project. Their awareness of issues surrounding gender and sexism, and the language they used to discuss this, showed a relatively high level of engagement with issues surrounding gender. Throughout the project, the changes to the subjectivities of the young people were much smaller in nature than those observed in the school project. If the young

people did become more engaged and aware of feminism, these changes were much more modest, and much more slight.

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#### *5.3.2.1. During the Projects: Feminist Subjectivities as Partial and Dynamic*

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By the end of each project, all of the participants were displaying forms of feminist subjectivities. For some, this engagement was modest, and was illustrated by less frequent or less passionate displays of feminist subjectivities. For others, this was a strong engagement shown by the frequent display of feminist subjectivities. However, for all of the young people in the projects, the feminist subjectivities displayed were in some way partial and dynamic. As well as the moments where the young people displayed strong feminist subjectivities, there were also moments when the young people acted in a way that contradicted or complicated their display of feminist subjectivities. For many of the participants, the primary form this took was through the use of gendered or sexist language.

In both projects, the young people had taken part in research and discussion groups surrounding the topic of gendered language. In these discussion groups, the participants examined the ramifications and impacts of using gendered or non-gendered language, and in particular, using gendered terminology when referring to different professions (such as airhostess, fireman, or fisherman). In these discussions, the young people were supportive of the use of gender-neutral terms to describe professions, and considered gender neutral alternatives to popular terms (such as flight attendant, firefighter and fisher). In both groups, the conversation then turned to more general uses of gendered language, such as the phrase 'man-up'.

- Facilitator:** So with 'man-up', do people think that it's generally seen as acceptable to say that?
- Cameron:** Well, technically it doesn't work, because Matt is more manly than me, because I've got the highest pitched voice.
- Ernest:** What would you say to a woman? Would you say woman up?
- Elliot:** And it's because it's used so broadly, it's become okay. Erm, so you can't just say, no, it's not okay, because people are just led to use that now.
- Facilitator:** Yeah, it's really hard to get people to stop using it. In 30 years time, do you think we'll still say man up?
- Elliot:** There will always be someone.
- Facilitator:** Yeah, so say in 30 years time, the next 30 years of the youth group, do you think they'd hear something like, 'you're so gay', and 'man-up'?

**Matt:**            **Not as much as us. I hope so anyway.**

In this section of dialogue, the young people in the youth group project were sceptical of the use of gendered language, but hopeful that over time it would be used less and less. In these discussions, both groups seemed conscious of the damaging effects that gendered language could have on society and individuals.

During the action stage of the project, both groups discussed the possibility of creating a contract for members of the group to sign, declaring that they would commit to use less unnecessary gendered language. In the school project, this potential action was one of the four favourites of the group, and was only dropped when the group decided to focus on gender-neutral toilets. However, despite seeming to be aware of the problems of using gendered language, and being committed to the idea of using this language less, the young people in both projects continued to use gendered or sexist language on occasion throughout the projects. For example, in the school project, the young people used gendered insults on several occasions, including:

**Eleanor:**            **[Student's name] is just a dick, isn't he?**

In this moment, Eleanor was using language that relied on gendered terms to insult or disparage another student at the school. The gendered language Eleanor used both relied upon and reinforced an assumption of negative associations with male genitalia.

Gendered language was used in a similar vein in the youth group. At one point, in a discussion about the use of the word 'cunt', Ernest attempted to defend the use of gendered slang and taboo language:

**Ernest:**            **But as an insult, it doesn't have that meaning. So, it's kind of...**

Gendered language has been argued to be a form of subtle sexism, that has an insidious impact on society (Swim et al. 2004) and can be used to construct and communicate gender norms (Sczesny et al. 2015). As such, words are not neutral, but instead are part of the reproduction of social inequalities (Thurlow 2001). Both of the gendered insults described above reinforce gender stereotypes in this way, but from different positions and contexts. Using the word 'cunt', which uses a term for the female genitalia to insult someone, operates from a larger patriarchal context in which language such as this is used to devalue women. In contrast, the word 'dick' to insult a man originates from a different place within gendered norms, and so in some ways could be understood as an act of defiance, where this young woman reverses gendered norms around swearing, slang, and the gendered nature of insults (Sutton 1995). However, despite the difference in the form and context of these insults, both

insults use gendered or sexed references to create a negative undertone in a way that can be understood as a sexist use of language.

While the use of gendered insults could be considered to demonstrate sexist behaviour and speech, that is not to say that the young people using this language held fundamentally sexist behaviour. Gendered language is often used by young people with little thought to the underlying meaning of the words spoken, and as such, is often not explicitly thought to be sexist (Swim et al. 2004; Thurlow 2001). While individuals who hold sexist views are more likely to use gendered language, language is also determined and influenced by habit and comfort, and as such, often operates on a subconscious level (Koeser et al. 2015; Sczesny et al. 2015). As such, "habits formed from past language use influence gendered expressions, even if those expressions are not entirely consistent with actors' deliberate intentions" (Sczesny et al. 2015, p.944). The young people using this language may have therefore spoken in a way that was shaped by their own habits, rather than through a conscious desire to use sexist language.

Subjectivities are multiple, unstable and fragmented, and each self may display contradictory and conflicting versions (Moore 2013; Hall 2004; Eckermann 1997). In this discussion of the use of gendered language, the inconsistent and paradoxical nature of the subjectivities displayed by the young people can be seen. In both projects, the young people considered the place of language, and discussed ways to alleviate the use of gendered languages in their own lives. However, during the projects, the young people also displayed subjectivities that appeared to exist in direct contradiction to these beliefs, through the use of gendered and sexist language to tease or insult one another. Throughout the space of the project, subjectivities were made and re-made constantly by the young people. In each moment, the young people negotiated the relationship between their sense of self, society, and feminism. As the young people moved through the projects, they displayed contradictory and conflicting forms of subjectivity, which reflected the constant negotiation and mediation required to navigate the self and the tensions between subconscious habit and newly emerging consciousness.

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#### *5.3.2.2. During the Projects: The Gendered Nature of Subjectivities*

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In the school project, the young people began the project from a range of different starting points. At the beginning of the project, the young men discussed their relationship to feminism in terms of mediated support, while the majority of the young women appeared to hold a deeper level of engagement with feminism. Despite the overall increases to feminist engagement as the project progressed, this divide remained apparent at certain moments in the project, with both of the young men sometimes showing themselves to be less likely to support feminist ideals in discussions, less likely to have noticed gender divides in their own



lived experiences, and less likely to have knowledge of current feminist issues in the press, local area, or school environment.

For example, very early on in the project, the young women raised the topic of a prominent rape trial that had recently taken place in America.

**Eleanor:**           **Cos it was like that Brock person, he was supposed to get six months for rape -**

**Monica:**           **- Which is still disgusting -**

**Facilitator:**       **-He came out after three on good behaviour -**

**Eleanor:**           **- the sentence itself is like 10 years, but he got six months because of where he's from.**

**Winston:**           **They kept referring to him as the swimmer, didn't they? They didn't say -**

**Facilitator:**       **Yeah everything about that case was horrible.**

**Eleanor:**           **Yeah, he's like a good swimmer -**

**Hannah:**           **He's also a rapist.**

**Deano:**             **Who?**

**Hannah:**           **Brock Turner....?**

Here, the young women displayed their outrage at the case and the cover it had received in the media. While Winston engaged in this discussion with the young women, and was relatively well informed about the events that had taken place, it was the young women in the project who had raised this topic, and who were clearly shocked and affronted by the case. Deano, in contrast, had to have the issue explained to him, as he had not engaged with the story in the news. Both young men negotiated this discussion in a way that illustrated their more moderate engagement with current feminist issues.

This gendered divide in attitudes towards feminist issues and engagement with feminism persisted throughout the project. Towards the end of the project, there remained occasional moments where the young men were less likely to display feminist subjectivities than the young women. In one discussion group, led by Hannah, the young people were discussing gender and employment, but throughout the debate, Winston refused to admit that women suffer any gender discrimination in the workplace.

**Hannah:**           **[Question] Number Five. Have you ever come across the so-called glass ceiling, the point beyond which women cannot get promoted? Do you think it's a myth?**

**Winston:**           **I think it's a myth.**

**Facilitator:** It's not a myth!-

**Winston:** -yeah but from my personal experience, my Dad hasn't got any higher as a man, but my mum's got to like the top of her thing.

**Hannah:** [Sounds annoyed] Well, this is what I'm saying Winston. That's one example.

Tensions were beginning to run high in this meeting, with Winston's refusal to engage with opinions and experiences other than his own starting to infuriate other members of the group. As the meeting progressed, the young women eventually confronted Winston about his attitude.

**Monica:** You're just going to argue with everything I say.

**Winston:** No, I'm not arguing with you, I can see what you mean, but I think your point more applies to people that didn't stay on.

**Eleanor:** You're very argumentative today.

**Winston:** [Angry] I'm not trying to be argumentative!

**Facilitator:** The irony of that statement was amazing.

In this meeting - where Deano was not present - Winston placed himself in opposition to the young women in the project (for a further discussion of gendered tensions in this meeting, see section 4.5.3). However, at other times, both Winston and Deano aligned themselves with the young women. In one discussion surrounding marriage, equality and the choice of surnames, Winston attempted to help Deano unpick his assumptions about marriage and equality.

**Deano:** It doesn't seem right without, doesn't show that you're properly together without having the same surname.

**Winston:** But then whose surname do you go with?

**Deano:** I'd keep mine. Purely because.

**Monica:** I love your last name, I'd have your last name.

**Deano:** Cos of like pride, like pride for me.

**Winston:** But then if she wants her last name, and doesn't want to change?

**Monica:** Then you'd double barrel it wouldn't you?

**Deano:** I just wouldn't. We'd stay unmarried then.

In this meeting, Deano was unable to break down some of the gendered assumptions he held surrounding the topic of marriage. However, in this meeting, it was Winston who had attempted to challenge these views through questioning and discussion.

These extracts show that at some moments in the project, the two young men positioned themselves in opposition to the rest of the group, and at times made arguments that either held deep gendered assumptions, or showed a lack of awareness or belief of feminist issues. In these moments, the group felt as though a gendered divide existed as an undertone to the group. However, as the second extract shows, it was not a simplistic case of the young men always opposing the young women of the project and their feminist views. Instead, the young men negotiated agreement or disagreement, and acceptance or rejection of feminist subjectivities in different moments.

In the youth group project, a gendered divide like the one in the school project was not observed. In this project, several of the young men had begun the project from a position of strong feminist subjectivities. All of the young men engaged in feminist debates, and in many of these, took up opinions that appeared to be in keeping with the feminist views they held.

**Facilitator:** So, do you think clothing is used to, reinforce stereotypes, or break stereotypes, or both?

**Ernest:** It's used to cover your nakedness up.

[Laughter]

**Cameron:** It depends what sort of people you're around, isn't it really? Clothing's a way for you to express yourself, but it's the way how other people interpret it, and other people's opinions differ.

**Facilitator:** Has anyone here every felt like they couldn't wear something they wanted to wear?

**Elliot:** Well, for Pinknic last year, I bought some really nice leather booties, and they had a really nice heel and everything, and I really wanted to wear them all the time, then I thought they might look weird, so I didn't.

**Matt:** You see, I've never had that, because, obviously like, with people in my life knowing me as a girl, like, I can wear whatever I want, cos if I'm masculine I'm a tomboy, and if I'm feminine then I'm a girl, and there isn't like the stigma around that.

In this section of dialogue, during a discussion surrounding gender identities and clothing, the young men of the project discussed clothing as both a form of expression and restriction. In this conversation, these young men used their personal lives and experiences to enrich this analysis. It was the young woman in the project who failed to fully engage with the issues that were being discussed. This did not appear to be due to a desire to distance herself from these beliefs or opinions, but instead, appeared to demonstrate a lack of critical engagement with the issues that were being discussed. For example, when one of the young transgender men

discussed the problems of choosing clothing while transitioning, Brittany failed to grasp the implications of his words:

**Ernest:** I spent £90 on this girl's jacket, and I wore it once to the prom, and lo and behold, at the next years prom, mum said she'll let me get a bloke's one. I told her I wouldn't wear the jacket again, and I don't know what to do with it.

**Brittany:** I'd just wear it to a funeral or something like that.

In this section of dialogue, Brittany appeared to fail to fully consider the implications and assumptions evident in Ernest's dilemma. As a young transgender man who had recently transitioned, Ernest was at the time negotiating the changing nature of his own gender, and the difficulties of his transformation phase. Brittany's response to Ernest's concerns over his wardrobe may be influenced by her own personal location as a cisgender woman, and an unfamiliarity with issues surrounding transgender young people.

The extracts above illustrate the complex and multi-faceted impact of gender relations in the two projects. In the school project, the group exhibited both movements of gendered division and cohesion. In this project, it was more commonly the young men of the group who were less likely to support feminist ideals, or show engagement with feminist issues. In contrast, the young people of the youth group project negotiated gender within the space of their project in ways that incorporated divides between those who identified as male or female, and those who identified as trans or cisgender. Within both projects, gender occupied a contested place in the negotiations of feminism and sense of self, and impacted the display of feminist subjectivities in a variety of multiple and interlocking forms.

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### 5.3.3. FEMINIST SUBJECTIVITIES: THE END OF THE PROJECTS

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After the projects had drawn to a close, the young people all took part in an interview in which they were asked to reflect on their sense of self and relationship to gender and feminism. In this interview, the young people were asked to consider how their understanding of the feminist movement had changed, and whether they felt there had been any alterations to their engagement with feminism. During these discussions, the young people were read extracts from their original interviews to encourage them to think about how their views had transformed or remained constant. In particular, the young people were asked to reflect on their original responses to questions surrounding the nature of feminism, and their own relationship with feminism.

In the initial interview, both Deano and Winston, the two young men from the school project, displayed contradictory forms of engagement with feminism, which both accepted and

rejected feminism at the same time. Both of these young men, while not describing themselves as feminists, stated that they supported gender equality.

When Deano was read his original responses, he immediately declared that his attitudes now were different:

**Deano:** Erm.....well I wouldn't respond like that now. Erm, I'm not [stresses words] 'a feminist', but I do agree that there should be equality in, erm, everything, but I don't like, campaign, or anything like that. But I do believe in equality, erm, so yeah.

In the initial interview, Deano had been uncertain in his answer, and had immediately mediated his support for equality with disparaging comments about the feminist movement. In contrast, in the later interview, Deano responded in a much more positive fashion. In these later reflections, he still showed a support for equality that was mediated and partial in its form. However, the nature of this mediation had changed. Instead of using derisive language to dismiss the feminist movement, Deano had instead shifted his response to use mediation through the action/ideological support binary. In this sense, Deano was still negotiating a subjectivity that simultaneously accepted and rejected feminism. However, the changing nature of this mediation reflected Deano's more positive and open approach to feminism.

This changing approach to feminism was also something on which Deano reflected:

**Deano:** Feminism....it's, I understand that its more than just women. Err, wanting, you know, its everyone about being equal, in general, and... you know, equality in general, in more than one aspect in life, erm, you know, that's what I think of it.

**Facilitator:** Has that changed at all since the start of the project? What you see feminism as being?

**Deano:** Yeah, yeah, cos I thought it was just, I thought it was just about, like I said, women, probably complaining. Err, it's different, it's different, and like I said there's more, it's more involved, than that.

At the beginning of the project, Deano had held a very limited conception of feminism. He had believed it was a movement solely for women, and based around the main activity of 'complaining'. However, by the end of the project, this attitude had evolved to embrace an understanding of feminism as a movement for all genders, that centred around the concept of equality.

At the end of the project, Deano's reflections on self and feminism showed a subjectivity that was still categorised by simultaneous acceptance and rejection of feminism. As such, Deano had retained an understanding of his own sense of self that remained distanced from

feminism. While, throughout the project, Deano displayed feminist subjectivities on multiple occasions, he still remained reluctant to openly establish a relationship with feminism. Deano's contradictory negotiation of feminist subjectivities raises questions surrounding his subjectivity, sense of self, and position in society. Did Deano feel the need to perform feminist subjectivities within the space of the project in order to feel socially accepted? Were the subjectivities displayed here created in light of the increasing feminist nature of the other young people in the project space? Or, was Deano happy to show support for feminism in the project, but felt the need to negotiate this differently outside of the project in order to distance himself from the negative connotations of feminism?

While Deano's discussion of feminism still demonstrated a desire to remain detached and distant from feminism, it is clear that throughout the project, Deano had engaged more fully with feminism. His understanding of the movement had increased, and the terms in which he discussed it had become more positive. While his relationship with feminism remained mediated, the changing nature of this mediation demonstrated the growth of his respect for, and engagement with, the movement.

When the other young man in the school project, Winston, reflected on his changing involvement with feminism, his account also contained elements of similarity and difference. Winston had begun the project with a position on feminism that combined acceptance and rejection of the movement. For him, this rejection had been based around the examples and anecdotes he had provided that all illustrated the moments where equality should not apply.

When asked to reflect on that answer at the end of the project, Winston was also quick to establish that some of his views had changed.

**Winston:** Err, I... agree, with parts, like I think it should be about equality. Erm, and with the, I think what I said about the soldiers thing might be a bit wrong, but like, I'm not saying women can't be as physically strong, I'm sure, obviously there are women that are stronger than some men, but I think, with situations like that, they would have to be like the exact same. Erm.... but since our thing, err.... I agree with equality, but I don't agree with some aspects of feminism. Like I don't like the name for a start, cos I feel it's kind of, say somebody had never heard of it, and they hear that, they're gonna, oh fem, female, they're gonna automatically assume. And I think a lot of people go, oh women's rights, rather than equality. So I think it kind of has to be re-branded or something.

**Facilitator:** So, would you say that you see yourself as a feminist?

**Winston:** Yeah, but.... there are things that I don't agree with, at the same time.

Here, Winston reflected on the changing nature of his views and approaches to feminism. At the beginning of the project, he had recounted a story about women being in the military, and the issues of them being allowed on the front line. Winston was quick to distance himself from this view, and to stress that he did not agree with that any more. In this sense, his commitment to equality, and his understanding of issues surrounding gender appeared to have developed in a way that had encouraged him to revisit some of his earlier views.

In addition to his changing opinions in this area, Winston's response also showed a much more nuanced and complex understanding of feminism and the feminist movement than he had displayed at the start of the project. Before the project began, he had been clear on the importance of all genders within feminism, and had showed a relatively high level of understanding of the key issues of the movement. However, in these later reflections, he volunteered a complex and considered discussion of his opinions surrounding the challenge of naming feminism. Winston displayed an increased awareness and understanding of feminism, but in addition to this, showed his increased commitment to feminism through his engagement with this issue.

However, like Deano, Winston was still retaining an element of mediation in his relationship to feminism. When asked, he identified himself as a feminist. However, he then immediately mediated this response by stating that there were things with which he did not agree within the feminist movement. In this sense, while his responses showed a greater engagement with feminism on the whole, he still appeared tentative about his relationship with feminism.

At the beginning of the project, the young girls had displayed a range of engagements with feminism. One of the young women, Eleanor, had discussed her own sense of self without an identification with feminism. While she had expressed support for equality, she did not consider herself a feminist. However, by the end of the project she had come to view herself as a feminist:

**Facilitator:** Okay, so now, do you or don't you see yourself as a feminist?

**Eleanor:** Yeah.

**Facilitator:** Okay, and what does that mean to you? How do you sort of define feminism?

**Eleanor:** Errr, I'd still agree, but I wouldn't say it's necessarily just about equality either, it's sort of about, cos obviously women are still oppressed, it's about like sexuality as well.

Over the course of the project, Eleanor had come to see herself as a feminist. During the project, she had frequently displayed feminist subjectivities, and had engaged with feminist

issues. As such, Eleanor was the only young person, across both projects, to openly begin the project considering herself not to be a feminist, and to end the project by considering herself as a feminist.

In addition to Eleanor, Monica had also begun the project with a hesitant approach to feminism. At the beginning of the project, Monica had described herself as a feminist, but had mediated this response through her uncertainties about the possible future success of the movement.

**Monica:** No, I still do it. I do it probably more now. Just, with more people. I've still kept it up with my brothers, but like if a boy in the common room just passes a comment of, oh she's a girl, and I'm like, excuse me, why does it matter? Or my dad sometimes, if like the boys start doing something, and I say, oh I'll do it, and he's like, you're not strong enough, I'm like, why am I not strong enough? Is it because I'm a girl?

**Facilitator:** So do you still see yourself as a feminist now?

**Monica:** Yeah, yeah.

**Facilitator:** So, over the course of the project, has what you understand as being a feminist, has that changed at all?

**Monica:** Yeah, I just thought a feminist was a woman standing up for women's rights. I didn't realise it was equality for both genders. I thought it was just, cos it's just 'feminis' I thought it was all female based, but it's not, it's clearly about just equal rights between the two genders, which I like.

At the beginning of the project, Monica had already considered herself to be a feminist. In these later reflections, Monica reflected on the changing nature of this relationship. Before the project began, Monica had discussed how she had opposed the use of gendered stereotypes and expectations from within her own family. However, in this section of dialogue, Monica discussed how this had developed, so that she now considered these issues in a wider context. In particular, she discussed the space of the sixth form common room, where the oldest students of the school gathered to work and socialise. In this section of speech, Monica explicitly considered how her relationship with feminism had caused her to display feminist subjectivities, through increased feminist action and speech.

In addition to this, Monica also reflected on her changing understanding of the nature of feminism. At the beginning of the project, Monica had considered feminism to be a movement for women. However, as the project progressed, Monica had widened this understanding to include men in her definition of feminism. During the project, the young people had discussed their understanding as a group of their definition of feminism in one of the discussion groups. Together, they had written a definition for the movement. This definition included the words



'all genders' and was intended to convey that all genders, including those who identified as transgender or other diverse forms of gender, would be welcome in the movement, and welcome to have their issues surrounding gender considered and included. It was therefore interesting that Monica choose to use a definition of feminism that included the words 'both genders'. By doing this, Monica appeared to be engaging with her own definition and understanding of feminism.

The adoption of subject positions by individuals is not a simplistic and linear process. Instead, individuals have been argued to retain agency in the choice to adopt or reject different subject positions (Hall 2004). In this section of dialogue, Monica has shown that throughout the FPAR project, the changes to her feminist subjectivity that she had adopted had been taken up in a process that involved agency and choice. Within the FPAR project, certain opinions, views, and behaviours were prioritised by the group as a whole. Adhering to these dominant views and opinions formed one of the dominant subject positions that was made available to the young people who took part in the FPAR projects. However, Monica chose to embrace elements of this possible subject position, while rejecting other elements. While she adopted a subject position that embraced many of the dominant feminist ideals and behaviours of the project, she also chose to reject certain opinions and positions that the group prioritised. As such, she engaged with the subject positions available in the FPAR space in a way that showed agency to adapt possible subjectivities or create new ones.

The final two young women in the school project began this project from a position of relatively high engagement with feminism. Both young women declared their commitment to feminism, and discussed the ways in which they negotiated and displayed feminist subjectivities in their everyday lives. At the end of the project, when both of these young women discussed their current relationship to feminism and feminist subjectivities, it became clear that while these young women had started the project from positions that were relatively similar, they had diverged as the project had progressed.

One of these young women reflected on her involvement in the project, and discussed how she believed her engagement with feminism had remained relatively stable over the course of the project:

**Facilitator:** Okay. Erm, so now, I'm assuming, from what you just said, that you still see yourself as a feminist?

**Maddie:** Yeah.

**Facilitator:** And what does that mean to you now?

**Maddie:** The same. I think.

**Facilitator:** Has that changed at all over the course of the project?

**Maddie:** Err, no not really, I think.

In contrast to this account, Hannah discussed her sense of self over the course in relatively different terms:

**Facilitator:** So do you see yourself as a feminist now?

**Hannah:** I'm more aware of it yeah. I think so.

**Facilitator:** So, has it changed at all, over the course of the project, what you think of feminism?

**Hannah:** I don't think what I think of it has. I've always sort of viewed it as the same sort of thing. Erm, no, but I'm more sort of active in it. Like I pick stuff up now, if something's being said, and I think, that's a bit, you know, bit rude, like I'll notice it more now, than I think I ever did, and I think its cos I'm more aware, of the different things that is causing this to be such a big issue.

**Facilitator:** So can you give me any examples, of something that you've picked up on now, that you might not have picked up on before?

**Hannah:** Erm....I'm trying to think. Err.... just like simple things. Like, my mum the other day, we were getting all my, you know, getting all my bits for uni and buying like a slow cooker and stuff, and she was like, oh you'll be cooking for everyone, and I thought, now would she say that to a boy? And before I would have just been like, oh yeah, you know, and never thought about that. But now, I just sort of like sat back and thought, that's funny that, I wonder if you would have said that if I was a son. Would you have said, oh you'll be cooking for everyone? I don't think that she would.

While Hannah began the project in a similar position to Maddie, she reflected on her relationship to feminism over the course of the project in terms of change, and increased engagement. For Hannah, while her commitment to, and understanding of feminism, which were relatively strong at the beginning of the project, had not changed, she did discuss how her levels of engagement and action had evolved. In this account, she discussed how her awareness of gendered assumptions had increased over the project, causing her to interpret more of her experiences through a gendered lens.

In the youth group, the changes observed to the young people's subjectivities were much smaller in nature. At the beginning of the project, two of the young men identified as feminist. Both Cameron and Matt began the project with a strong commitment to feminism, and a sense of self that held a relationship with the feminist movement.

When Cameron was asked to reflect on his sense of self and feminism at the end of the project, he discussed his feminist subjectivities in terms of stability:

**Cameron:** I feel exactly the same.

**Facilitator:** So you still think of yourself as a feminist?

**Cameron:** Yeah.

**Facilitator:** And what does that mean to you? How would you define feminism, now?

**Cameron:** I feel a sense of, well, same as what I said before that everyone treated equally regardless.... of their gender.

For Cameron, his support for feminism - already strong at the beginning of the project - had remained constant over the course of the project. However, his understandings and knowledge of feminist issues had developed and increased over the course of the project:

**Facilitator:** So, how you view feminism, has that changed at all over the course of the project?

**Cameron:** Well, I think, sort of, it's changed, sort of, my views on, like, rights, and stuff. There is a lot more things that you would've realised that females haven't got compared to man that they should have.

Here, Cameron reflected on the fact that he had a greater understanding of some of the issues central to feminism than he did at the beginning of the project. In this sense, while his relationship with feminism had remained relatively constant, his displays of feminist subjectivities may have been impacted by his developing engagement with feminist issues.

**Matt:** Err..... I think, I definitely would consider myself a feminist. Yeah, I think, erm, when we talked about it, I think I realised that, you know, feminism is equal rights for all genders, not just like, you know, making women equal to men, because feminism should include everyone you know, even non-binary people.

The comments of Matt echo those of Cameron in many ways. Matt, who began the project with a strong feminist sense of self, also ended the project with very small changes to his relationship between self and feminism. However, like Cameron, Matt discussed how the project had given him a wider understanding and greater knowledge of issues surrounding feminism. While Cameron discussed this in relation to knowledge of feminist issues, Matt discussed this in terms of his understanding of what feminism involves. For Matt, the project had allowed him to gain a wider understanding of the meaning of feminism, and explore how he as an individual could relate to this. As a young transgender man, Matt had previously supported feminism, but not considered it to be something that encompassed and supported his own rights. However, through the project, Matt had now come to conceptualise feminism in a way that may have encouraged him to form a closer relationship to feminism and his own sense of self.

At the beginning of the project, the other two young men occupied complex and contradictory positions in relation to feminism. Elliot began the project by discussing his relation to feminism in similar terms to the two young men from the school project. When discussing feminism, he conceptualised his views using words such as 'equality' to show his support for gender parity while maintaining some separation from the feminist movement. However, unlike the boys in the school project, he did not then mediate this response using negative language or anecdotes. At the end of the project, Elliot discussed his relationship to feminism in similar terms:

**Elliot:** Um....I still agree with that, thinking that there shouldn't be one superior gender or one...less-superior gender. I still think that they should be, an equal um, not amount of power or superiority but...um ...yeah, I think everyone should be treated equally um...based on their gender.

**Facilitator:** Yeah, ok. So, if I was to ask you, now, if you thought of yourself as a feminist, what would you say?

**Elliot:** Um...yeah, I would to some extent.

Here, Elliot again discussed this using language such as 'equal'. When asked outright if he considered himself to be a feminist, Elliot answered in a mediated and hesitant form. In a similar vein to his earlier answer, he was more comfortable discussing support in relation to equality than to the feminist movement. He then maintained this separation from the feminist movement through his last comment, where he positioned himself as a supporter 'to some extent'. In this sense, the hesitant, mediated reflections that Elliot gave echoed the similar response he had given at the beginning of the project.

The final young man in this project, Ernest, had begun the project with an incredibly complex relationship with feminism. In the initial interview, Ernest had discussed at length his ambivalence to feminism, and had shown a keen awareness of some of the currents underlying the contemporary feminist movements. However, in addition to this, Ernest had also considered the place of ideological and practical support for the feminist movement. For Ernest, the divide between these two had been clear, and he did not consider himself to be a feminist since he saw his support being restricted to ideological backing.

**Facilitator:** How do you feel now about what you said then?

**Ernest:** It's true.

**Facilitator:** So do you see yourself as a feminist now?

**Ernest:** More a... kind of..... I think rather than feminism as such, I think I would prefer the term equalism, everyone being equal?

- Facilitator:** What kind of equal opportunities then, if we're not talking about gender? What other kinds of opportunities do you mean?
- Ernest:** Well I mean that, erm, people should be given the same chance to get an education, regardless of their background, regardless of what country they come from, regardless of what race they are, regardless of whether or not they're fluent in English.
- Facilitator:** So, you said you're more interested in that than feminism, how do you define feminism then, what do you see feminism as being?
- Ernest:** I see it as being like equalism, except just women. Whereas, I think it should, in this country, we should be focusing on, cos if we make women equal to other genders, then if there's still issues with disability and race and you know, then that means that disabled women and non-white women, are still.... so you know, obviously feminism would improve it for women in general, but we need more than feminism to actually make everybody equal.
- Facilitator:** So your view of feminism, has that changed over the project, or stayed the same?
- Ernest:** I'm not sure really, I don't think it's changed a lot.

When reflecting on feminism at the end of the project, Ernest discussed his relationship to feminism in terms of stability and consistency. He argued that his views towards feminism had remained relatively stable, stating that it hadn't changed 'a lot'.

During this discussion, Ernest outlined his beliefs about the need for a more general and all-encompassing fight for equality. During these reflections, he talked about the intersecting nature of inequalities, with a particular focus on gender, race and disability. Ernest identified himself as a transgender young man, but also as a young man with a social and communication disability. In these reflections, he considered the importance of reducing the inequalities faced by people with disabilities. In this sense, his own position as a young disabled man had perhaps made him interpret and understand feminism through a highly intersectional lens, in a way that had encouraged him to de-prioritise the importance of feminism in order to focus more fully on the rights of other groups.

The final member of the youth group project was the sole young woman in this project - Brittany. At the beginning of the project, Brittany had described her relationship to feminism in terms of tentative support, but without identifying herself as a feminist. When asked to reflect upon that at the end of the project, she again discussed her subjectivities in terms of stability:

- Brittany:** I feel like I'm the same. I-I wouldn't call myself a feminist because I don't know much about it, but I do -. I know that there's some belief saying that girls and boys should have the same rights and same work pay, same work level, and stuff like that. And I still believe that that's

**what.... needs to happen, because that, in some jobs, that's not happening.**

In this extract from the interview, Brittany reflected on the relatively unchanged nature of her relationship with feminism. At the beginning of the project, Brittany had refused to describe herself as a feminist, due to her belief that she did not know enough about the movement to consider herself a member. At the end of the project, Brittany again expressed her support for the feminist movement, but distanced herself from the feminist movement through her belief that she was not sufficiently knowledgeable to be considered a feminist. In this sense, Brittany's relationship to feminism across the course of the project appeared to be relatively stable.

These reflections have provided an overview of how the young people and their relationships to feminism had developed over the course of the projects. Throughout this discussion, the complex nature of the young people's subjectivities and the variation in responses to the project - from noticeable changes to relative stability - have been evident. From the multiple and elaborate ways in which the young people have negotiated their subjectivities over the course of the projects, several prevailing trends and observations have emerged.

Firstly, these reflections have illustrated the importance of the starting point from which the young people began the project. Those young people who started the project with a higher engagement with feminism were the people more likely to have demonstrated the most subtle or slight changes to their subjectivities. These young people, such as Maddie, Cameron and Matt, all began the project by reflecting on their active and engaged feminist subjectivities. At the end of the project, the changes to these feminist subjectivities were slight. The subtle nature of these changes may be linked to several different factors. It may be that while these young people had engaged in the project, allowed their perceptions of feminism to evolve, and altered their relationship with feminism, the nature of these changes was much harder to detect than the more outright movement towards feminism that other participants demonstrated. Or, the relatively slight nature of the observed changes to their feminist subjectivities may be due to the smaller gains that involvement in the project offered to them. As individuals who identified as feminists from the beginning of the project, and who were already well informed about key issues and debates within the feminist movement, involvement in the FPAR projects may have had less potential to stimulate changes to their critical consciousness than it did for other participants who began the project with a more limited awareness of issues surrounding gender.

The second pattern that has emerged from the reflections from these two studies is the clear divide between the two projects. The participants of the youth group project were much more likely to demonstrate stability in their negotiations of feminist subjectivities, while members of the school group project were more likely to exhibit more dramatic changes to their sense of self and feminism. Again, this pattern may be influenced by several factors, including the shorter length of the youth group project, and the increased preoccupation with LGBT+ rights as a central theme for this group (see also, section 4.3.5). Both of these themes will be discussed in greater depth in the following section of this chapter, which will consider in detail the relationship between participants' subjectivity changes and the nature of the FPAR projects.

The third trend to have arisen throughout this chapter is the complex nature of the relationship between feminist subjectivities and gender. Within the space of the school project, gender appeared to have an impact on the relationship with feminism displayed by participants at the end of the project. All of the young women in the project described themselves as feminist, and discussed this relationship with feminism in terms of support and engagement. In contrast, the nature of the relationship between the young men and feminism was more contested. While Winston considered himself a feminist, and Deano considered himself a supporter of feminism, this support appeared to be described in a much more mediated form. However, in the youth group project, a similar trend did not appear. In this project, the young men of the project, both cisgender and transgender, displayed feminist subjectivities and described their relationship to feminism in terms of engagement in support. In this project, it was the young cisgender women, as well as some of the young men, who reflected on feminism in terms of mediated support. In this sense, there was no clear gendered divide to the relationship between gender and the feminist subjectivities displayed at the end of the project. In addition to this, there was also a lack of a clear gendered divide to the nature of the changes to the feminist subjectivities of the young people. Over the course of the two projects, the young people who had experienced increased engagement with feminism included Winston, Deano, Matt, Cameron, Eleanor, Monica and Hannah. These young people included those who identify as male and female, and as transgender and cisgender. The projects therefore appeared to offer the potential for not only young women, but those who identified as young men, to engage with feminism and display increased feminist subjectivities.

It has already been argued (see section 5.3.1) that the young people's positions at the beginning of the project illustrated the need to conceptualise feminist engagement as a continuum or spectrum. As the projects progressed, the young people's negotiations of

feminist subjectivities were complex, multiple and mediated. Some of the young people, such as Brittany, Ernest and Maddie, demonstrated relatively stable subjectivities across the course of the projects. For others, such as Winston, Eleanor, Hannah and Morgan, these changes were more substantial, and reflected a noticeable increase to their engagement with feminism. All of these young people exhibited a complex relationship with feminism, which was often contradictory and mediated. However, as the project progressed, the young people all appeared to either remain relatively stationary on the spectrum of feminist support, or to have moved along the spectrum towards an increased engagement with feminism. In this sense, it appeared that involvement in these FPAR projects did encourage all of the participants, both male and female, transgender and cisgender, to display and negotiate feminist subjectivities within the space of the projects.

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#### *5.3.3.1. FPAR and Feminist Subjectivities*

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In the final interviews, the young people were asked to reflect on how involvement in the FPAR projects had impacted their negotiation of feminist subjectivities within the project space. During these interviews, the young people considered the impact of the research and discussion elements of the projects, the action stage of the projects, and in the school project, the importance of the EPQ award as a thread that ran throughout all stages of the projects.

The research stage of the projects was formed of several elements that interlocked and overlapped to encourage the young people to explore their own experiences and perspectives of gender, as well as those of other young people in their community. This was primarily based around discussion groups, but also included the EPQ in the school setting, and the use of a photography mind mapping project in the youth group project (see also, sections 3.4.2.4 and 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 of this thesis).

The young people reflected on the impact that the research elements of the projects had had on their relationship to feminism. For many of them, this process began with engagement with the trigger itself, before the discussion it was designed to encourage had fully begun.

**Matt:** I think I just think about the issues a little bit more. So, you know the stuff that we talked about, like the YouTube videos we watched and stuff, that did make me think a little bit more, about how the world is shaped around it.

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**Winston:** Some of the videos we watched were quite interesting, when they asked what feminism was, and a lot of them said, women's rights, rather than equality, which has led me to that, it needs to change a bit.



In these extracts from the final interviews, young men from each project reflected on their engagement with video triggers from the discussion groups. In the second piece of speech, one of the young men explicitly relates the content of the video to his own changing views on feminism, and considers how the video has led him to conceptualise perceptions of feminism.

The discussion group triggers also allowed the young people to consider and empathise with the experiences and perspectives of others.

**Hannah:** Obviously watching the videos and stuff, like, seeing how some people, stuff like that, that we think is nothing, that we say, is something really big to someone else.

**Facilitator:** So what kind of videos, like, can you think of any particular example, had that effect on you?

**Hannah:** Err, the ones, err, about that boy who was transgender, and he had nowhere to go and everything like that. And I just thought, like, you know, if I put myself in that situation, like, you're in an awkward enough situation anyway, with one of your basic needs being like an absolute task, you know, where do you go to the toilet? So, I just sort of thought, you know, it's not just opinions, like, it's affecting people in a bad way.

In this extract from the interview, one of the young women from the school group discussed the impact one of the trigger videos had had on her ability to consider the lives of others. In this section, she discussed how the videos had allowed her to consider more fully the impact of her own words and actions on other people. Through this, Hannah was able to reflect on her own opinions and speech, and the impact this may have had on the lived experience of others in her community.

The discussion groups started with a trigger, before moving on to allow the young people to consider their perspectives and responses to this trigger. These discussion groups encouraged the young people to use conversation and debate to unpick and consider their own views. Through using their own speech to learn and work through their thoughts, through responding to each other's views, and through reacting to questioning, the discussion groups allowed the young people to learn through themselves as a group and create knowledge (see also, section 4.3.1). In the final interviews, the young people reflected on this process, and the impact it had on themselves and their negotiation of feminist subjectivities.

**Maddie:** Like if, they came out with a point a view I didn't agree with, I wouldn't give them backlash for them, and I think it's the same with me, if I said something. They'd probably just dispute it, they wouldn't like make me feel like a bad person for it. So... and then also the one where we were talking about, you know the genders, and how there were like 30

**different genders, everyone had different views on that, and I think we all encouraged each other's views on that.**

Maddie, one of the young women in the school project, discussed here the importance of the constructive form of the debate within the discussion group. She described the meetings as a place where the young people could challenge or 'dispute' things in a positive way. Through this, she argued, the discussions allowed the young people to encourage each other to develop their views.

Within these discussions, the composition of the group played a significant role in influencing the debates. Both groups created spaces that allowed the young people to feel comfort and homogeneity, while at the same time, experiencing difference and challenge (for a full discussion of comfort and homogeneity in the groups, see section 4.5.2).

In both groups, the young people discussed the importance of sharing the project space with others who shared their gender or sense of self. For some of the young people, such as some of the young women in the school group, the support of other young women allowed them to feel confident airing their own views. For others, such as the young transgender men in the youth group space, the presence of others of their gender identity allowed them to share the responsibility of feeling that they spoke for the wider transgender community.

Despite the groups being spaces in which the young people were able to find support and solidarity for their views, the FPAR projects were also spaces where the young people faced challenge and difference. In both projects, the opposing views of others in the group allowed the young people to be challenged by those who had experienced different gendered experiences to them.

**Monica:** But then Winston brought up as well, how like, if a man touches a woman's body, its horrific, and they should get put in prison and stuff, but if a woman touches a man's body, it's just like, brushed under the carpet and no-one really cares. And I think Deano and Winston argued quite strongly about that, so that surprised me.

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**Maddie:** I think, a lot of, like especially with Winston and Deano in the group, and expressing their issues with feminism and stuff, I think that has like made me see, their side of the story more, and how they view it, and what they have issues with, and that's helped a lot.

In these extracts, both Monica and Maddie discussed the position of the two young men in the FPAR project. They both considered the role the two young men played in challenging the rest of their group with perspectives and opinions that were influenced by their own gendered identity. In these comments, it is clear that the young men challenged the young women to

think more critically about gender and society. In that sense, these comments echoed the statements made by Cahill about challenge in FPAR, who argued that participatory research must not only prioritise consensus, but also exist as a space for differences to be aired constructively (Cahill 2007a).

However, in these comments, it is also clear that despite this, the young women both remained acutely conscious of the gender divide that they believed existed between them and the young men. Both young women re-asserted this divide through their discussions that focused on the differences between them and the young men, rather than the similarities.

The nature of the two groups also impacted the research and discussion in other ways. In the youth group project, the LGBT+ collective sense of self had a huge impact on their negotiations of feminist subjectivities over the course of the project. For these young people, the issues with which they engaged often remained centered around transgender young people. As discussed in the previous chapter (section 4.3.5), this project retained a high level of overlap with issues surrounding LGBT+ young people. While many of these issues overlapped, the young people in this project struggled to retain gender as the anchoring point of the project. As I attempted to bring them back to gender, we often returned to issues surrounding transgender young people as a clear area of overlap. These issues were relevant to members of the group, and can also be understood as feminist issues, concerned as they are with gender, and sexism shown to individuals because of their gender identity.

The discussions surrounding transgender young people in the project made for rich and interesting discussion in this area. As FPAR is led by the young people, and engages with their interests and experiences, I allowed the young people to steer the project in this way. However, when reflecting back on the project later, I was concerned that the project had not done enough to engage with the experiences of the young cisgender men and women in the project. I was also concerned that the young people had considered these discussions to be primarily discussions surrounding LGBT+ rights, rather than discussions of issues surrounding gender and feminism. Issues surrounding gender discrimination towards transgender young people can be understood as feminist issues under the definition of feminism utilised in this thesis (see section 2.4.1). However, they can also be considered LGBT+ issues. After the project had concluded, and the final interviews had been conducted, I reflected on my growing concern that while the young people might be more aware of these issues, they did not view this increased engagement to be a part of feminism. If this was the case, then it may in part explain why the young people of the youth group project were more likely to reflect on their

relationship to feminism in terms of stability than the young people from the school project had.

The action stage of the project also encouraged the young people in each project to embrace feminist behaviour and activities. In these elements of the projects, the young people were able to work together to create feminist change. This section of the project was one that facilitated both periods of intense feminist passion and excitement, combined with worry and uncertainty.

**Winston:** I say we go get some crowbars and get rid of the signs on the toilet doors!

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**Winston:** At first, I felt like, it was just going to get laughed at, or ignored, or mocked, or it'll find its way around the school, which it kind of did, but because it worked, pretty good. I wasn't sure it was going to work, especially with all our personalities on it at once. Like it started and ended very differently.

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**Winston:** It made me feel good. Like, I've done change. I think we've actually done something, and it's kind of, makes you feel kind of morally good, like, I kind of felt good about myself, like, oh we've done something that will help other people, it's like, not selfish at all. And I know they won't know it was us, but in a few years if a transgender person comes here, and they were able to go, they won't thank us, but it just makes it easier for them.

These three comments were all made by Winston at different stages of his negotiation of action and feminism. The first statement was made during the early stages of the action element of the project. The second and third statement were both reflections made during his final interview.

These statements all reflected the different emotional responses that Winston experienced during the action stages of the project. In the first, Winston was passionate, enthusiastic and committed to the action project. He appeared to be fired up with excitement for the possible forms of feminism and feminist subjectivity through action that the young people were exploring. However, in the second comment, he reflected on the worry and anxiety that he felt as the action stage of the project progressed. As the action project began to develop, he began to consider the possible negative ramifications of their actions, particularly in relation to the possible response of the school community. At this stage, Winston had begun to explore more fully the potential for negative consequences of his negotiation of feminist subjectivity.

In the final comments, he reflected on how overall, the action stage of the project made him feel good about himself and his relationship to self, feminism and society. When the school senior leadership team agreed to make the school toilets gender neutral, there was a considerable backlash from members of the school community. While the teachers were largely supportive of the move, some members of the student population were vocally against the proposed changes. For the young people who had fought for this change, this created a complex social environment, in which they had to negotiate their own opinions and the opinions and views of their friends and peers. Winston, in particular, faced an uncomfortable situation when his friends announced their disagreement with the proposed plan. In response to this, Winston discussed the reasons behind the move with his friends, and eventually brought many of them around to his point of view (see also, section 4.4.4). Despite the backlash Winston received for his involvement in the project, he still reflected on the action stage of the project as something that had allowed him to feel positive about his sense of self.

The action element of the project can therefore be understood as something that created conflicting emotional responses. For Winston, this stage of the project created excitement and optimism, worry and anxiety, and finally pride and satisfaction. The process of negotiating the feminist subjectivities that were constructed and developed at this point in the project was a conflicting practice, which triggered strong emotional responses and complex negotiations of self and feminism.

During the school project, the young people also engaged throughout the project with the EPQ award and projects. The EPQ projects existed as a thread that ran through the majority of the project, influencing and being in turn influenced by, both the research and action stages of the project. During the final interviews, the young people reflected on how their own EPQ's had helped them to consider certain issues surrounding gender more closely.

**Deano:**            **Just because erm, I guess I was a bit, like narrow-minded before, so I wouldn't have said that, it was more, football's more popular for men, so why shouldn't they be paid more? I guess I would have said things like that. But then, through doing my own project, you know, my EPQ project, I've, opened up, and can see more things now, clearer.**

Here, Deano reflected on how the process of researching and writing for his own EPQ on the topic of gender divides in football had allowed him to be more open-minded about issues surrounding gender and football. The EPQ project gave him the opportunity to engage in depth with issues that were crucial to his own life and experiences, and by doing so, allowed him to explore issues to do with gender parity in these areas.

While the young people were influenced by their own EPQs, they were also at times influenced by the EPQs of the other young people in the group. Winston's EPQ, considering attitudes and awareness towards sexual harassment and assault of men, was one that was commonly discussed by the other members of the group.

**Eleanor:** Erm, I think it probably was like the sexual abuse thing. Cos, obviously then we had to define what was rape, what was sexual harassment, and all that, because, especially like the definitions of it, are so....it's sort of a bit....[unclear] of what it actually is.

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**Monica:** Err, Winston did the definitions of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and all that kind of stuff. I didn't really know the difference, I know that now.

Here, both Eleanor and Monica discussed the interview they took part in for Winston's EPQ. Winston's EPQ was based upon interview data, where he asked young people to reflect upon their perceptions of sexual violence. As part of this interview, he asked participants to match up definitions of different crimes with their correct names, using a set of cards he had made. Both young women reflected on the impact that this interview task had on their knowledge of issues surrounding gender and sexual violence. In addition to the young people engaging in their own EPQs, they also responded to their participation in the EPQ of another member of the group. This process of reflecting and developing knowledge on issues that are central to feminism may have, in turn, impacted their negotiation of feminist subjectivities.

In addition to the content of the projects, the length of the two projects also appeared to impact the young people and changes to their subjectivities. The length of each project was determined by the practical constraints of the two settings. The school project was the longer of the two, due partly to the relative lack of constraints on time in this setting, the inclusion of the EPQ award into sessions, and the young people's desire to extend this project by several months. In contrast, the youth group project was shorter, due to the absence of the EPQ sessions, and the limited times available for meetings (see also, section 3.4.2.3). While the youth group project was extended slightly at the request of the group, in their final interviews, some of the young people still reflected on their desire that the FPAR project could have run for longer.

**Facilitator:** I hope you enjoyed the project.

**Cameron:** I really enjoyed the project. It was a shame it weren't longer.

The shorter length of this project may have been one of the reasons why the young people in the youth group were less likely to display notable alterations to their feminist subjectivities.

The more limited time within the space of the project will have given the young people less time discussing feminist issues, less time to engage in feminist action, and less time to allow the project to impact their sense of self. The constrained nature of this project may have offered less opportunity for the young people to develop a critical feminist consciousness and through this, to engage more fully with the feminist movement. The length of this project may have been one of the factors that led to the participants of the youth group project displaying more subtle changes to their feminist subjectivities.

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#### 5.3.3.2. *Feminist Subjectivities and Gender, Race, Class and Sexuality*

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The previous two sections of this chapter have considered the nature of the feminist subjectivities displayed by the young people as they moved through the FPAR projects, and discussed how participation in the projects had impacted these changes. This section discusses these changes in relation to the wider identities of the young people, by considering how other elements of their sense of self had affected their engagement with the projects and with feminism. While this research is primarily focused on the importance of the gender of the participants of the FPAR projects, the negotiation of feminist subjectivities displayed by the young people is impacted not only by their own lived experience as male or female, transgender or cisgender, but also by other elements of their own identity and sense of self, including race, class and sexuality.

In section 5.3.3 the changes to the feminist subjectivities of the young people over the course of the projects were discussed in depth. In these discussions, it became clear that no simple relationship existed between the gender of the participant, and the changes to their subjectivities observed within the space of the projects. Instead, transgender and cisgender young men and women all negotiated complex elements of change and stability in their feminist subjectivities. In the final interviews, I asked the young people to reflect on their gender, and how they believed this had impacted their engagement with feminism throughout the project.

Some of the young people raised the importance of their own gendered experiences to their negotiation of the project. As one of the young women in the school project reflected:

**Eleanor:** I think obviously, because I'm living as a female, I can relate to it.

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**Hannah:** I think, because there is a lot more... like, inequality, towards women, I think I'm more strongly opinionated on it, because things that have

**been brought up, I've sort of thought, oh yeah, yeah, that could happen to me, or that has happened to me.**

In these extracts from the final interview, two of the young women from the school project reflected on the importance of their own female identity within the project. For these young women, their female experiences had allowed them to relate more easily to many of the themes and issues raised within the project.

Some of the young men also echoed these perspectives. Across both projects, some of the young men argued that they felt less able to apply their own experiences to the project than the young women in the groups.

**Elliot: I wouldn't know how women are treated from a first-hand perspective. I'd only know from what people have said or what I've seen or what I've read. Um, so I wouldn't... have ... um .... I wouldn't have any of that experience.**

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**Deano: I think if I was a woman, I'd know that....like, the fact that there's discrimination, it would be a bit more obvious to me, I think, so I would know more about it, and feel more passionate about it.**

In these two extracts, young men from both the school and the youth group reflected on the impact their own gender had on their engagement in the project. In these reflections, both of these young men considered how their lack of female lived experience had impacted their understandings of discrimination. By doing so, both young men could have been implying either that feminism is mainly concerned with women's issues, or that the projects were mainly concerned with the issues facing women. These reflections raised some questions regarding the projects. Did both projects focus too heavily on issues regarding women? Should I have done more than I already had done to highlight issues facing men? If so, would the young men in the projects have negotiated feminist subjectivities in a different way?

The two young transgender men in the youth group project also reflected on the impact of their gender identity on their engagement with the FPAR project. Both of these young men were still in a transition phase where they lived in some spaces as a young man - such as the youth group or their homes - and in some spaces - such as school - as young women. As such, both of these young people had lived experience as both men and women, and were able to reflect personally on discrimination they had faced not only as a trans person, but as a passing man or woman:

**Ernest: I think it's interesting, because I get seen as a woman by some people, and as a man by others. And it's interesting how I get treated differently, depending on how they see me.**



**Facilitator:** Okay, do you wanna say a bit more about that?

**Ernest:** Erm, I've actually, people seem to treat me with suspicion sometimes, if they think I'm a bloke. It's a bit weird. And then there's been a few occasions actually, where people who think I'm female have actually treated me like I'm a bit thick, and like I don't know what I'm doing. Like looking at things in a model railway shop and someone comes over and starts trying to tell you what kind of thing you need for this kind of model railway, really patronising, and I just sort of said, yeah I know, and you need that for that kind, and the guy looked a bit sheepish and shut up. But, err, yeah, that pissed me off a bit. So, I think people treat men and women differently, and that can be good and bad for both parties. And that's interesting, and also shit.

Here, Ernest reflected on his own experiences of moving through the world as both a young man and a young woman. For both Ernest and Matt, their lived experiences as transgender young people allowed them to engage with a range of perspectives and issues throughout the project.

However, for these young men, their gender identity also impacted their understanding of the project in another way. For these young people, gender was a central focus of their lives, their sense of self, and their identity. As Matt reflected:

**Matt:** Obviously being trans I've had to think a lot about my gender in my life. Like, am I really trans, am I a man, am I a woman? Am I somewhere in between? I had to go through like, you know, I spent like two years of my life constantly thinking about my gender, trying to figure out what it was, and what I wanted to be. I guess most people wouldn't think about it in depth, whereas, because I'm trans, I like, really thought about it in depth!

For these young men, their identity as transgender meant that they had a heightened awareness of the role of gender not only in their own lives, but in society as a whole. This awareness was demonstrated both by these young people, and the other young people of the youth group project, through the high level of knowledge and insight they displayed from the very beginning of the project.

The majority of the young people in the projects identified as working-class, with a few members of the group identifying themselves as middle-class. When asked to reflect on how their class identity impacted their negotiation of the projects, many of the young people argued that their sense of self, particularly as a member of the working-class, was tied up with a perception of themselves as people who moved through the world without access to large amounts of class privilege. As such, this may have made them experience the world with more awareness of inequalities in general. This perception, in turn, might have made them more

receptive and open to the ideas surrounding feminism that they explored throughout the project.

**Deano:** I guess if you were upper class, you'd be privileged, wouldn't you? Being upper class, you might not like understand what, or see the inequalities that other people do, because you're privileged, and you think, everything's good, and when you look at other people, you might not see that, not everything's like equal.

Here, Deano, a young man from the school project, reflected on his views that with more privilege, comes less of an awareness of inequality in society. In this sense, many members of the group argued, their class identity may have contributed to their openness to the feminist issues explored in the projects.

However, for some of the young people, class was seen to play a relatively small role in their negotiation of the project.

**Monica:** We didn't do too much on class, it was more based on gender and homosexuality and stuff.

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**Matt:** I don't think we talked a lot about class.

In these two extracts, Monica, from the school project, and Matt, from the youth group project, both raised the fact that the projects had not dwelled particularly on class. As such, class was not an issue that had been explored often during the course of either project.

The young people were also asked to reflect on how their own racial identity had contributed to their engagement with the projects. All of the participants identified as white British. When asked to reflect upon their race, many of the young people struggled to consider their own whiteness, and the impact this may have had on their engagement with feminism.

**Ernest:** I can't imagine what it would be like to be a different race. I mean I personally wouldn't be different, as a human being, but other people might see me differently, and that might change my experiences and then my opinions might be different.

These reflections, and the reflections of the young people on the place of class in the projects, raised some questions about the FPAR projects. Both projects had been designed with a commitment to intersectional analysis in mind. Both projects had incorporated discussions of class and race into considerations of gender and feminism. And yet, many of the young people still appeared to exhibit a blindness to their own race and class at the end of the projects. Many of these young people appeared able to reflect eloquently and thoughtfully on their own gender identity, and the impact this had on their sense of self and negotiation of feminism.

However, when asked to reflect on race and class, the young people struggled. Had the projects failed to incorporate sufficient emphasis on intersectionality into their design? Had this contributed to the young people's struggle to conceptualise their own race and class? Or, were these struggles influenced more by wider cultures around considerations of race and class, and in particular, blindness towards whiteness as a category?

Many of the young people in both groups also raised sexuality in their reflections on their engagement with the project. The majority of the young people who participated in the school project identified as heterosexual. For these young people, their heterosexual identity imbued them with a form of privilege, of which they were highly aware. In the final interviews, several members on the group reflected on how this privilege may have contributed to a more general blindness to social inequality for them.

**Deano:** **People that are gay, homosexual, they're a minority in society, so, erm, again, minorities are made to feel discriminated against and whatever, so, I think, you could associate with the ideas that feminism has.**

In this extract, Deano, one of the young men from the school project, explicitly linked the experiences of minority groups to a wider appreciation of other issues of inequality, such as feminism.

However, the young people in the youth group, all of whom identified as either homosexual, bisexual, pansexual or asexual, reflected on their sexualities in very differing ways. Some of these young people echoed the views of the young people in the school group, by arguing that their LGBT+ identity helped them to relate to feminism and engage with feminist issues.

**Matt:** **Because, like, we're all LGBT, we've all experienced that kind of discrimination for something you can't change.**

Here, Matt, who identified as pansexual, argued that the LGBT identity of the group allowed them to relate and emphasise with the issues surrounding gender inequality that were considered throughout the project.

However, other members of the youth group appeared to disagree. For them, despite the importance of their sexuality to their personal identity, it was not viewed as a significant factor when considering their relationship with feminism. Both Cameron and Elliot argued that their sexuality had no bearing on their own engagement with feminism. Instead, for them, it was their ability to be open and engaged with all critical issues that was important. As Cameron declared:

**Cameron: Because I think you put yourself in somebody else's shoes and realise what it's like, then you realise what you've got and what people haven't got.**

In this extract, Cameron reflected on the importance of being open-minded and able to consider the experience of others. He believed that this approach allowed him to engage with the wide range of issues that had been raised throughout the project.

This research aims to consider the potential that involvement in FPAR has to stimulate the creation of feminist subjectivities in young men. This research is specifically focused on the relationship between gender identity and the negotiation of feminist subjectivities within FPAR projects. However, by reflecting on the other elements of the identities of the young people, it becomes clear that negotiation of feminist subjectivities is a complex process that is influenced by a wide range of factors. Gender was negotiated by each participant in complex and contrasting forms. However, class, race and sexuality have all combined in different ways to influence the personal journey of each participant throughout the course of the two FPAR projects.

The importance of considering gender in relation to other interconnected categories - including race, class, sexuality and ability - has been outlined in sections 2.2.6 and 2.2.8 of this thesis. Analysis of gender in relation to other intersectional categories of identity allows the differences within gender categories to be examined (Hines 2010; Taylor 2010; Snyder 2008; Jordan-Zachery 2007; Hines 2005). The categories of 'men' and 'women' rest upon an assumed commonality between those of the same gender (Taylor 2010). However, the discussion of the multiple intersecting elements of the young people's identities has illustrated the diverse and multiple nature of gender, and demonstrated the fractures in the notion of 'men' and 'women' as all encompassing categories (Hines 2005). The participants reflected on the importance of class, race, sexuality and gender combining to shape their engagement with feminism. As such, multiple elements of their identities - rather than solely gender - appeared to influence their negotiations of feminism. In this sense, the reflections of the young people on the other intersectional elements of their identities appeared to demonstrate the complexity and diversity evident within gender categories.

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#### 5.4. Concluding Thoughts

This chapter has considered the negotiations of feminist subjectivities displayed by the young men and women across the course of the two FPAR projects. During this section of the thesis, the young people's presentations of feminism have been discussed chronologically, with consideration paid to negotiations of feminist subjectivities at the beginning of the projects,

during the projects, and after the projects had concluded. The impact of the different elements of the two FPAR projects on these displays of feminist subjectivities has also been discussed, as well as the importance of other elements of the young people's identities. Throughout this analysis, this chapter has aimed to address the second research theme of this project - *Young men in FPAR and subjectivities: In what ways is feminism accepted, rejected and negotiated?* - and by doing so, investigate the potential that FPAR holds to encourage young men's involvement in feminism.

Within both projects, the young people commenced their participation in the FPAR projects from a range of different starting points. Some of the young people began the projects from a position of relatively high engagement with feminism, while other members of the groups began the projects from a more mediated and contradictory relationship with feminism. The range of forms of identification with feminism appeared to illustrate the non-binary nature of feminist engagement, and lend support to the argument that feminist support should be conceptualised as a spectrum, or a continuum (Swirsky & Angelone 2016; Aronson 2003). Despite the complex form of these negotiations, it was clear from the beginning of the project that no simple gendered divide existed in these relationships to feminism. In the school project, the young men both held a mediated approach to feminism, while in the youth group project, several of the young men held engaged and supportive approaches to feminism.

As the projects progressed, the two groups developed in very different directions. In the school project the young people became more engaged and supportive of issues surrounding gender, while in the youth group, the high level of engagement from the beginning of the project made any changes much more subtle and hard to observe. In both projects, the complex and often partial forms of these feminist subjectivities displayed the unstable and fragmented nature of the subject and its subjectivities (Moore 2013; Hall 2004), with the young people at times acting in a way that complicated or contradicted their display of feminist subjectivities. The gendered nature of these negotiations was also complex, with the young men of the school project less likely to display support for feminist issues within discussions than the young women of this project, while in the youth group, both transgender and cisgender young men showed a high level of engagement with feminist issues.

After the projects had concluded, the majority of the young people reflected on their relationships with feminism in terms of change and development, while several others considered these relationships in more stable terms. Across both projects, the gendered nature of these changes was again complex, with transgender and cisgender young men and women all displaying increased engagement with feminism. While the impact of gender on

these displays of feminist subjectivities remained unclear, two other factors emerged which did appear to dramatically influence changes to the young people's relationships with feminism. Firstly, the nature of the two different projects appeared to have a significant impact on the extent of these changes, with the young people of the school project displaying greater changes to their feminist subjectivities than those in the young group project. Secondly, the importance of the starting point of each participant became clear, with the young people who had begun the project with high levels of feminist involvement more likely to display only subtle changes to their feminist subjectivities.

These engagements with feminism appeared to have arisen from all stages of the project, with young people reflecting on the importance of both the discussion groups and their triggers, the action stages of the projects, and in the school project, the EPQ essays. In addition to this, the young people reflected on the composition of the group, and importance of both support and challenge in different moments. The mixed gender composition of the groups encouraged the young people to be challenged by the opposing views of those with different gendered experiences to them. In this sense, the mix of different genders in each project provided the challenge that Cahill argued was crucial in FPAR projects (Cahill 2007a).

Finally, the importance of other elements of the young people's identities was considered. Many of the young people reflected on their own gendered identity, and the impact this had on their involvement in the FPAR project. While gender was an important influence on young people's engagement in the projects, the young people also discussed other elements of their identity, including their race, class and sexuality.

This chapter has considered the negotiations of feminist subjectivities displayed by the young men and women across the course of the two FPAR projects. This analysis has built on previous research that has argued that involvement in FPAR projects held the potential to encourage young women to display feminist subjectivities (Gaddes 2013; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004). Throughout this chapter, it has become clear that these two FPAR projects encouraged the young people, whether male or female, transgender or cisgender, to engage with feminism and to display increased forms of feminist subjectivities. In this sense, these projects demonstrate that FPAR projects do offer the potential to stimulate the creation of feminist subjectivities in young men. As such, FPAR holds potential as a method to encourage young men's engagement with a feminist movement that increasingly recognises the need for male involvement (Messner 2016; Van Der Gaag 2014; Cochrane 2013).

This chapter has focused on the negotiations of feminist subjectivities within the space of the projects themselves. Now that the nature of feminist engagement within the FPAR spaces has

been considered, this thesis can move on to consider the negotiations of these feminist subjectivities within the wider spaces of the school and the youth group.

## 6. SUBJECTIVITY AND THE SPATIAL: NEGOTIATIONS OF FEMINISM AND SUBJECTIVITY ACROSS DIFFERENT SPACES

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### 6.1. Introduction

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The previous chapter considered the subjectivities displayed by the young people across the course of the two projects. Within this discussion, attention was paid to the ways in which the participants negotiated their sense of self, gender and feminism within the space of the two FPAR projects. While several of the young people displayed relatively static and stable forms of feminist subjectivities, many of the young people increasingly displayed feminist subjectivities and feminist engagement and support as the projects progressed. This analysis revealed that involvement in the two FPAR projects appeared to hold the potential to encourage young people of all genders to display increased feminist subjectivities.

This chapter considers the extent to which these feminist subjectivities extended out of the space of the projects and into the wider spaces of the school and the youth group. This section of the thesis therefore aims to address the third research theme of this project: *Subjectivity and the spatial: How do the young men negotiate feminism and subjectivity across different spaces?* By doing so, this chapter builds on the previous section of this thesis in order to continue to address the deficit in literature surrounding the impact of FPAR on young men. Research has been conducted into the potential of FPAR to stimulate the creation of feminist subjectivities in young women (Gaddes 2013; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004) and some of this research has explicitly considered these subjectivity changes outside of the project space (Gaddes 2013). However, there is currently a deficit in research considering the impact of involvement in FPAR projects on young men, and the extent to which this impact extends beyond the space of the project itself (see also, sections 2.3.12 and 2.4.1).

Throughout this chapter, subjectivities displayed outside of the spaces of the two projects are considered. These discussions draw upon observations conducted within the school and youth group settings, as well as reflections from participants made during their final interviews. The chapter first considers the ways in which the young people negotiated feminism and sexism by discussing moments of support, rejection and silence. Within each of these themes, the specific gendered nature of these negotiations are considered. Discussion then turns to the young people's reflections on these negotiations, as the reasons and rationalisations behind the moments of support, rejection and silence are explored. The chapter then gives a brief consideration of some of the other forms of changes to the subjectivities of the young people, before concluding that the displays of feminist subjectivities demonstrated within the spaces



of the two projects did appear to extend out of the two projects and into the wider spaces of the school and the youth group.

## 6.2. Space, Time, and Subjectivity

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As previously discussed in this thesis (see sections 3.2.4 and 5.2), this research builds upon the concept of space as outlined by Doreen Massey. Massey argued that space is constructed by social relations, and as such, spaces exist as interlocking and overlapping social weaves or meshes (Massey 1994). This concept of space has not only determined the design of this research, but also shapes the structure of the analysis section of this thesis. The previous chapter considered the subjectivities displayed by participants within the spaces of the two FPAR projects. This chapter will reflect on the extent to which these displays of feminist subjectivities extended outside of the two projects, by considering observations of feminist subjectivities within the wider spaces of the school and youth group.

The previous chapter considered changes to these subjectivities longitudinally, in order to consider whether the young people demonstrated changes to their feminist subjectivities over time. However, this chapter will focus more heavily on change and stability across space, and as such, will focus on observations made during the later stages of each project. In the school project - which started in July, began in earnest in September, and concluded in April - this included observations made from November onwards. In the youth group project - which began in April, and ran through to June - this included observations from the beginning of May onwards. In both projects, this allowed roughly the later two thirds of each project to be considered. These boundaries between 'earlier' and 'later' were generated in order to structure this chapter, and to facilitate the focus upon the spatial. However, it is recognised that these divides are artificial constructions, and do not reflect a dramatic or significant alteration in the behaviour of the young people. Instead, any changes were much more subtle and contested, as the previous chapter considered.

The negotiations of feminism and subjectivity within the school and the youth group took place in notably differing spaces, both in the structure of these spaces, and the atmosphere. Every school is a complex social arena, with all schools having their own gendered regime which influences the making of students' subjectivities (Swain 2005; Haywood & Mac an Ghail 2003; Mac an Ghail 1994). This school environment was comprised of a huge number of interlocking spaces, composed of different lessons, social groups, and environments. The sixth form common room itself could house multiple spaces at any one moment, formed of different groups, relationships and networks. When the bell rang, and the lessons changed

over, the spaces in this room would shift and re-work as individuals came and went. The different lessons each student attended also caused them to move between multiple spaces during the school day. Each student studied several subjects - usually three. Each class could be understood as a distinct space, but also included within it other spaces, as the young people negotiated different groupings and relationships within the larger lesson space. While the young people moved between different spaces rapidly throughout the day, in many ways these spaces were relatively stable. Sixth form lessons ran over a two-year period, so many of the young people had been moving between these spaces for around 12 months before I began observations.

In contrast, the nature of the spaces found within the youth group were much more transient, but also somewhat less numerous. The youth group encouraged the young people to drop in and out as they wished, with little or no long-term commitment ever being established. As such, the young people present each week could vary dramatically, with some of the members of the youth group confessing to me that they rarely knew the names of everyone present. The spaces in this environment were therefore much more rapidly shifting over time, but also less numerous. The much smaller environment, with usually between 15 to 25 young people in total, all in one room, meant that the spaces created by different groups and networks of young people, were much fewer in nature, but often much less easy to perceive than the more clearly demarked lessons of the school environment.

The atmospheres found in the spaces of the school and the youth group also differed considerably. As previously discussed (see section 3.4.2.1), the school environment was populated by young people from a relatively small geographical area. Located on the rural-urban fringe of Sheffield, the students of the school were predominantly working or middle-class students from relatively rural villages. The majority of these young people were white, and across the school, identifying as LGBT+ still appeared to carry a degree of stigma. In the youth group, the young people came from a much wider geographical area. The youth group took place in the city centre, but attracted young people from all over the city and the surrounding area. All of these young people identified as LGBT+, with members of the youth group including those who identified as transgender, non-binary, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual and asexual. Similarly to the school group, the majority of these young people were white, and came from a range of middle and working class backgrounds.

### 6.3. Feminism and Subjectivities: Negotiating Support, Rejection and Silence

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Now that the nature of the spaces in question have been established, attention can turn to the subjectivities displayed within these spaces. Across the two projects, the young people displayed feminist subjectivities outside of the space of the projects to differing extents, and in differing forms. Three themes within these negotiations of feminism and subjectivity emerged across the projects - moments of support, rejection and silence. These three themes are discussed in turn, starting with the concept of support.

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#### 6.3.1. SUPPORT

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In both projects, the young people displayed feminist subjectivities within the wider spaces of the school and the youth group. This feminist support took multiple forms, including feminist analysis and engagement with lesson content, challenges to moments of perceived sexism, expression of feminist opinions in discussions, and rejection of gendered stereotypes.

Within the school environment, the young people of this project most commonly exhibited feminist support through their feminist analysis and engagement with lesson content. During observed lessons, the young people commonly discussed the themes of the lesson in relation to gender, sexism, stereotyping, and feminist views. The extent to which this engagement was actively raised differed, with some of the young people responding to issues surrounding gender in lessons, while others raised gender, sexism and stereotyping in lessons not explicitly related to these themes.

For example, in one English lesson, three of the young people from the FPAR project displayed feminist support through the opinions stated during a discussion that had arisen in relation to the lesson content. The topic under study was the role of gender in shaping the use of language, and the teacher had begun the lesson with a discussion of gender in general, to act as a 'starter' or warm-up exercise. Despite the small size of this class, with less than 10 students in the room, three participants of the FPAR project - Deano, Hannah and Monica - were in attendance. During this discussion, all of these young people expressed feminist opinions and ideas, as shown by the fieldnotes I recorded during this observation:

**....moved on to discuss gendered statements on the board. Girls [Hannah and Monica] launched in with comments about equality between both genders about doors [holding doors for women]. Deano was then (whoop!) heard to rubbish stereotypes about gender, in terms of men and emotion....Although everyone in the room - teacher/girls/men - were often using essentialising stereotypes - talking about "men do this" or "women do this" ....Hannah was the first one to relate things to masculinity and femininity and socialisation and expectations, followed by Monica.**

In this section, the young people responded to the content of the lesson in ways that demonstrated feminist support. All three of the young people expressed opinions that supported equality between the genders, including calling for the removal of stereotypical male gestures of chivalry, such as holding doors for women, and by calling for stereotypes around men and emotion to be broken down. The two young women, in particular, even appeared to lead the discussion towards a more nuanced consideration of gender, through their considerations of socialisation and expectations, rather than general stereotypes. In contrast to the young people from the FPAR group, the other members of the classroom were much less likely to advocate for parity between the genders. Other members of the class, for instance, argued that men in heterosexual relationships should pay the bill during dates and that men should hold doors open for women.

In other lessons, similar displays of feminist support and awareness were observed. For example, in one psychology lesson:

**Studying gender and the biological determinants of gender. Monica, when discussing this, used the word 'identify' when talking about someone changing gender. Which is good. Almost reflects how much transgender issues have become central to the project - interesting that she volunteered this correct terminology, at an early opportunity.**

In this extract, Monica engaged with discussions of the topic of gender, and did so using sensitive and appropriate terminology. As discussed in section 5.3.2, the young people of the school project had developed their understanding of issues surrounding transgender and gender diverse individuals as the project progressed, and with this, had significantly altered the language they used when they discussed these issues. In this extract, Monica demonstrated that her knowledge of these issues and the language used to discuss them had extended outside of the space of the FPAR project, and into the wider space of the school.

In both of these examples, the young people displayed feminist support and engagement. This involvement was not actively raised by the young people, as they had responded to issues raised by their teachers. However, in other situations, the young people actively linked the content of their lessons to gender and feminism with very little urging. For example, in one English Literature class, Eleanor actively chose to discuss the text of *The Kite Runner* through a feminist analysis:

**When they came more into plenary, Eleanor went first, and in her first sentence she used the phrase "discrimination of women". She was straight in there with feminist analysis.**

Here, Eleanor actively chose to discuss the text in relation to gender, power, and social expectations of men and women. In this sense, she actively engaged with a feminist consideration of the issues presented in the lesson, despite the lesson not explicitly addressing the themes of gender or sexism.

In addition to responses to the content of lessons, the young people of the school project also displayed feminist subjectivities when responding to moments that they interpreted as outright sexism, misogyny, or transphobia. For example, as previously mentioned (see section 4.4.4), several of the young people of the school project experienced negative responses or backlash from other pupils at the school in response to the planned introduction of gender-neutral toilet facilities. In particular, Winston was subjected to a barrage of objection to the plans from some of his friends, who argued that the changes were unnecessary and out of place in a school setting. Winston challenged these friends, asking them if they stood for equality, and arguing for the importance of the changes for future transgender and non-binary school students. In this moment, Winston displayed feminist support through his commitment to challenging opinions that he believed to be transphobic.

While responding to lesson content and reacting to moments of perceived sexism were themes that were observed only during the school project, there were also moments of feminist support that occurred within both the school and youth group space. In particular, members of both projects demonstrated feminist support and opinions during discussions and debates, and through their insistence on rejecting and breaking down gendered stereotyping.

In the youth group project, members of the FPAR project expressed feminist opinions and views within the space of the youth group during discussions with the youth workers and other young people. For example, Matt reflected in his final interview on conversations he had had with other members of the youth group about work and employment, and their shared views about the importance of equality of opportunity and pay for all genders. In the school project, the young people similarly displayed opinions and views in support of gender equality in the school space. While this support was at times verbal - as Matt's support for equal pay had been - it also took other forms, including the use of body language and expression to demonstrate their views. For example, at the end of one English lesson, in which both Winston and Eleanor were present:

**Teacher then brought up Ched Evans (in relation to her Year 8s [students]) and this was met with whole-hearted disgust. He had been cleared of rape a few days earlier. Winston was involved in this outcry of disgust - even so far as putting his head in his hands.**

In this section of observations, the class had been discussing the recent news that professional footballer Ched Evans had been found not guilty of rape during a retrial of his case. The teacher mentioned that some of the younger students at the school, including some of her year 8 students, still idolised the footballer, and had entered her lesson singing chants in support of him. In reaction to this, the sixth form students - including Winston and Eleanor - had all made noises of disgust and derision. In this moment, Winston made clear, using his body language, his opinion surrounding the idolisation of the footballer, and the problematic impact of this on young people.

Another type of feminist support that emerged throughout observations was the rejection of gendered stereotypes. In these moments, young people from both projects either critiqued the use of such stereotypes by others, or took pride themselves in not using them. In the youth group, one such moment occurred when two of the young people of the group - Cameron and Brittany - were discussing their plans for the future:

**At one point, they were working and talking about what they want to do when they're older. Cameron wants to work in care, and Brittany wants to be an engineer, or something of that ilk. They were discussing this together and then they both suddenly started calling to me, trying to grab my attention. They told me, triumphantly, that they were both breaking down gender stereotypes. They were so pleased with themselves.**

In this moment from the wider space of the youth group, two members of the FPAR group expressed pride and happiness in their realisation that their own lives and experiences were challenging normalised gender roles. Here, the young people not only consciously considered gendered roles and expectations in their conversation, but also expressed support for challenges to these stereotypes with excitement and elation.

This method of feminist engagement was one that frequently intersected and combined with other themes or types of feminist support. This overlap can be demonstrated by reflecting back on a moment of feminist support from the school space that has been discussed previously in this section - the moment where Deano, Hannah and Monica showed feminist support when discussing statements surrounding gender in their English lesson. Here, the young people responded to a task set by the subject teacher by expressing multiple ideas and opinions that appeared to show support for feminist ideals. This moment of feminist engagement was therefore an example of the young people responding to lesson content with feminist support. However, it is also a moment where the young people, and Deano in particular, showed their desire to break down and critique gendered stereotypes. One of the statements given by the teacher related to men and the perception of them as less able to express their emotions compared with women. As outlined earlier in this section, Deano then

proceeded to point out that this was a gendered stereotype, and did not engage with the reality of many men and their own existence and experiences. In this moment, Deano displayed feminist support through his deconstruction of gendered stereotypes.

Here, four themes of feminist support and engagement have been considered. These themes demonstrate the primary ways in which the young people displayed feminist subjectivities and support within the wider spaces of the school and the youth group. While these themes of support have been discussed separately for clarity, the final example also demonstrates that these forms of support were multiple and intersecting in their forms, as the young people combined and merged different types and styles of feminist engagement in different moments.

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#### *6.3.1.1. Gender and Support*

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In the previous chapter, the relationship between the young people, gender and feminism inside the space of the project was discussed. In this analysis, the complex nature of the relationship between the gender of the participant and their negotiation of feminist subjectivities was established. Within the school project, the young men were less likely to engage with issues surrounding feminism than the young women, and less likely to display feminist subjectivities within the space of the project. However, in the youth group, a different pattern of gendered negotiation of feminism emerged, with several of the transgender and cisgender young men of the group displaying engaged feminist subjectivities.

This complex relationship between gender and feminist subjectivities continued outside of the space of the two projects. As outlined in the section above, several of the young men and women, from both projects, displayed moments of feminist support within the wider spaces of the school and the youth group.

Within the space of the youth group, three members of the FPAR project appeared to display feminist subjectivities within the wider space of the youth group. Matt, one of the young transgender men of the project, demonstrated feminist subjectivities through the opinions and views he expressed within the space of the youth group about gender and employment. Cameron, one of the young cisgender men, and Brittany, the cisgender young woman, both displayed feminist subjectivities through their excitement over challenges to traditional gender roles. These three young people encompassed both young men and women, and both transgender and cisgender young people.

In this project, the observations from the youth group space appeared to largely echo the displays of subjectivities demonstrated inside of the space of the project. Both Matt and

Cameron had displayed engaged feminist subjectivities within the space of the project (see section 5.3.3), and continued these displays of feminist engagement outside of the project. In contrast, the other two young men of the project - Elliot and Ernest - had negotiated feminism through a much more mediated and contested approach. These young men were not observed displaying feminist support within the space of the youth group, and did not reflect upon any such moments within the final interview. The only slight difference within the two spaces came in the form of Brittany. Within the space of the project, she did not describe herself as a feminist, and often negotiated feminism through mediated and partial support. However, within the wider space of the youth group, she was observed displaying feminist support and engagement. This subtle increase in feminist support demonstrated by Brittany raises several questions: Does this difference indicate a disjuncture between her own perceptions of what a feminist identity entails, and the definition of a feminist identity used in this research? Or, does this difference illustrate the partial and contested nature of feminist negotiations across space and time? If so, what differences between these spaces encouraged these changes in behaviour?

In this project, no clear relationship between participant gender and negotiations of feminism arose, with young people of different genders displaying feminist subjectivities. In this sense, these displays of subjectivities within the space of the youth group appeared to largely echo those shown within the space of the project.

When considering the school group, the relationship between gender and feminism appeared to take a somewhat different form. Within the school space, nearly all of the young people of the FPAR project were observed displaying moments of feminist support and engagement. Deano, Winston, Eleanor, Hannah and Monica all displayed feminist subjectivities at different moments, through their engagement with lesson content, challenges to outright sexism, expression of feminist opinions in discussions, and rejection of gendered stereotypes.

The only young person from this project who was not directly observed displaying feminist subjectivities was Maddie. Despite identifying as a feminist from the beginning of the FPAR project, and reflecting eloquently during her interviews on the form her feminist identity took, Maddie was never seen demonstrating outright feminist support within the wider space of the school. However, this apparent lack of support was most likely related to her personality, rather than her level of feminist engagement. An incredibly quiet member of the group, Maddie rarely spoke within her lessons, or around the school site. In this sense, it was incredibly difficult to witness her engaging in overt feminist support in a way that could be defined and recorded. As I recorded in one set of observation notes:



**Observing Maddie is very hard because she doesn't talk much - she's very quiet... so far, she has only spoken twice, and that was to the teacher both times.**

Aside from Maddie, the rest of the group displayed feminist subjectivities across different moments, and in different spaces within the school environment. Both the young men and the young women of this project were observed displaying forms of feminist support and engagement. However, the nature of this support differed somewhat. When considering the differing forms of support demonstrated by the young people, a gendered divide in negotiations of feminism appeared to arise.

While both the young women and the young men of the project displayed feminist support in different moments within the wider school space, the young women of this project appeared to be more likely to display feminist subjectivities, and this feminist support was likely to be stronger and more active. For example, this divide can be illustrated by considering more deeply two of the moments discussed in the section above - Monica and her discussion of issues facing transgender people in a Psychology lesson, and Eleanor and her feminist analysis of *The Kite Runner* in an English lesson.

In the first of these two examples, Monica was heard using language such as 'identify' when discussing transgender people. In this moment, Monica appeared to be demonstrating feminist support through her sensitive and appropriate use of language when discussing the topic of transgender individuals. However, as the lesson progressed, I also noted:

**Deano doesn't seem particularly interested or engaged. I looked over a few times and his eyes were shut. And it isn't just today - last gender psychology lesson he was also asleep.**

In this moment, two members of the FPAR group were faced with the same lesson content, and the same discussion of themes that they themselves had frequently considered within the space of the project. Monica engaged with this discussion, and did so in a way that displayed the level of knowledge and understanding she held of these themes. In contrast, Deano, remained largely quiet throughout this discussion, and did not express verbal support of the issues under discussion. In addition to his lack of verbal involvement, he also demonstrated his lack of engagement with the lesson content through his body language - by keeping his eyes closed, and appearing to doze throughout the discussion.

In a similar example, Eleanor and Winston also negotiated a moment of possible feminist discussion in differing ways. As previously outlined, during a discussion of the novel *The Kite Runner* in one of their English lessons, Eleanor used a feminist analysis when considering the text. However, as I noted a few seconds later:

### **Whereas Winston's first statement links to race.**

In this moment, Eleanor actively engaged with feminism through her decision to consider the novel in relation to gender and feminism. In contrast, Winston opted to consider the text through discussions of race. While Winston was also demonstrating an awareness of critical issues, and applying them to his understanding of this lesson content, he had chosen not to do so in relation to feminism. In this sense, Eleanor appeared to be more directly displaying feminist subjectivities.

In both of these examples, the young women of this project appeared to demonstrate more engaged forms of feminist support, even when negotiating the same space as the young men of the project. This appeared to echo the negotiations of feminism displayed within the space of the project, with the young women of the project showing more engaged, and less mediated relationships to feminism.

When considering feminist support within both projects, two key themes emerged. Firstly, the relationship between the gender of the participant and their negotiation of feminist subjectivities outside of the FPAR space was complex and ambiguous, with no clear gendered divide existing across both projects. Secondly, displays of feminist subjectivities outside of the two projects largely appeared to echo the trends acted out within the space of each project. The ideas and subjectivities explored within the spaces of the FPAR projects appear to have extended beyond the spaces of the project, at least as far as the wider spaces of the school and the youth group.

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### **6.3.2. REJECTION**

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While there were multiple moments within both projects where the young people exhibited feminist support and engagement, there were also moments of rejection of feminism. These displays of rejection were moments of speech or behaviour where the young people appeared to act in a way that did not reflect a commitment to gender equality. These moments were relatively rare across both projects, and when they did occur, were usually small, subtle or contested.

Across both projects, the primary form of feminist rejection was through the use of gendered or sexist language. For example, in the school project, Winston reflected upon times during the course of the project when he had used language that had reinforced gendered stereotypes.

**Winston:**        **Looking back at it, you think it's stupid, I shouldn't have said that, and it's not true, but a lot of people do that, 'oh you're crying like a girl' or something, that's quite a big one, and you hear that a lot.... err, yeah**

**or if I like quote something from somewhere like....some Peter Kay thing, like 'shut up you girl', just stuff like that.**

In this extract from the final interview, Winston reflected upon times when he had used gendered language in a way that he believed to have negatively reinforced gendered stereotypes or expectations. Here, not only did this young man discuss the language he had used, but he also considered his own regrets about these words.

In the youth group, similar uses of gendered language were observed. For example, one of the young people in the youth group project was witnessed discussing his preferred swear words during a youth group session:

**Later, in group work, was with Elliot and two kids I hadn't met before. One of the other kids said 'what's your favourite swear word?'. And Elliot said 'See you next Tuesday' [a euphemism for the word cunt].**

In both projects, the use of gendered language outside of the space of the project appeared to echo the ways in which it was used within the space of the projects. As discussed in the previous chapter (see section 5.3.2.1), the young people of both projects occasionally used gendered language within the space of the project. Despite considering the problematic nature of gendered language within the project itself, the young people used language that appeared to reinforce stereotypical understandings of gender, or rely upon the negative connotations of one gender or their genitalia. This appeared to illustrate the contradictory and often paradoxical negotiations of feminism in which the young people were engaged, as they constantly remade and reinterpreted their subjectivities as they moved between different possible subject positions.

These contradictory subjectivities, while paradoxical, were displayed in relative similarity both within the space of the project, and within the wider spaces of the school and the youth group. In this sense, these observations appeared to illustrate the fluid nature of the boundaries between these spaces. However, in some ways, the moment of rejection from Elliot in the youth group also illustrated the separate and bounded nature of the space of the FPAR project. Shortly after the notes above were written, I also noted:

**He explained to one of the other kids that he should know better because of being in the group project. But then he said that the project was over now.**

In this section of observations, Elliot had explained to the young people he was talking to that he should 'know better' than to use gendered swear words, because of what he had learnt whilst being in the FPAR project. However, he then also justified his use of the word 'cunt' by declaring that the FPAR project was now concluded. In this moment of speech, Elliot appeared to be constructing the FPAR project as something fundamentally discrete and separate, that

once concluded had little or no bearing on his own life or behaviour. In this sense, for this participant at least, the boundaries of the FPAR space appeared to be to some extent fixed and impermeable.

In addition to the use of gendered language, the young people of both projects also occasionally displayed moments of feminist rejection through their use of gendered stereotypes. In the previous section, it was noted that the refusal of gendered stereotypes was an area of feminist support for many of the young people. However, for these same young people, it was also at times a form of rejection of feminism.

In the school project, several of the young people reflected on their continued use of gendered stereotypes within the space of the school. For Eleanor, one of the young women in the project, this had taken the form of refusing to play football during PE lessons, as this was perceived as being a sport for boys. For another of the young women, this took the form of making assumptions about the clothing of others based on gender, through her own expectations that her female friends would wear clothes such as dresses, skirts and high heels on nights out in the city centre. In other moments, the young people also reflected on their own sense of self and gender, and how their own behaviour and subjectivities related to stereotypes and gendered expectations.

**Hannah:**        **Yeah, I'll put that voice on, and I'll be like, [puts on pathetic voice] 'will you come to the printer with me? I don't want to go on my own!'. Stuff like that, and it's like the printer, but I just don't, I want someone to like go and guard me or something like that.....and obviously doing that sort of like plays into its hands, doesn't it, it's almost like, oh you are, obviously, if you can't do that, or, err, women always need supporting, she can't even walk to the printer on her own, and stuff like that.**

In this extract from the final interview, Hannah reflected on her own behaviour, and how it related to stereotypical expectations of feminine behaviour. In this section of dialogue, she considered the impact that her own performance of femininity had on wider constructions of gender.

Similar themes were observed when considering the negotiation of stereotypes in the youth group space. In this project, the young people similarly used gendered stereotypes in their speech or behaviour, with Brittany discussing her own expectation that women have shaved armpits, and Cameron talking about what presents he thought it suitable to buy for someone who identified as male or female. In this project, one of the young transgender men also discussed his sense of self, and the relationship between his own gender and normalised expectations of masculinity:

**Matt:** I spend a large proportion of my time, trying to live up to the male standard, you know? To be seen as a man. And sometimes I force myself to do more manly things, you know, like I'll sit down in a certain way, and then I'll catch myself and be like no, that's how women sit, I must sit like this instead, to be a man.

In this section of dialogue, one of the young transgender men from the youth group project discussed his own negotiation of gender in relation to expectations of masculinity, and to his efforts to 'pass' as male when moving through society.

These negotiations of stereotypes illustrated the complex and contradictory nature of the young people's negotiations of feminism. As discussed in the previous section considering the nature of feminist support (section 6.3.1), in some moments the young people actively rejected gendered stereotypes, and did so with pride and delight. However, in other moments, many of the young people continued to act in a way that was shaped and determined by gendered stereotypes, both when considering the behaviour of others and when negotiating their own gendered behaviours. This apparent contradiction demonstrated the complex nature of negotiations of feminism and feminist subjectivities of the young people. At different moments across space and time, the young people displayed differing relationships to feminism and different negotiations of feminism and subjectivity.

These apparent contradictions also illustrate the difficulties for the young people, and for myself as an observer, in demarking what behaviour can be interpreted as feminist support or rejection. For Hannah, her stereotypical feminine behaviour is something she reflected upon with some discomfort, discussing how her past displays of femininity had reinforced and contributed to perceptions of women as weak, and in need of support and protection. When considering this behaviour, she herself argued that her behaviour contributed to reinforcing the gender divide.

However, when considering the example given by Matt, this question becomes more complex. For Matt, his relationship with expected masculine behaviour was tied to his identity as a transgender man. As such, his performances of traditionally masculine roles, appearance and body language were crucial to his construction of his preferred gender, and to his ability to 'pass' in society. Here, was Matt reinforcing traditional binary notions of gender through his insistence of conforming strictly to one gender role, or was he playing with notions of gender and deconstructing them through his transition and trans identity?

While Matt, and his transgender identity, illustrate this dilemma in a particularly striking light, it is also true that at points in the project, all of the young people took part in stereotypically masculine or feminine behaviour, as part of their own negotiation and performance of gender.

As such, there is perhaps a spectrum evident in the use of gendered behaviour and reliance on stereotypes, with all members of the groups engaging in stereotypical gender behaviour to greater or lesser extents. In this sense, it then becomes very difficult to categorise which of these behaviours is a rejection of feminism through a dependence on gendered stereotypes which reinforce negative perceptions of certain genders, and which is the complex negotiation of gender which all individuals take part in. This tension, between the need to construct and perform one's own gender identity successfully, and the desire to reject gendered stereotypes, is one that the young people were constantly engaged in negotiating.

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#### *6.3.2.1. Gender and Rejection*

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The complex nature of these negotiations of feminism continued when considering the relationship between moments of rejection of feminism, and the gender of the participants. Within both projects, young people of all genders displayed moments of feminist rejection. In the school project, Winston was involved in moments of feminist rejection through his use of gendered language, while Eleanor and Hannah both reflected on the way they had relied upon gendered expectations. In the youth group, Elliot had relied upon gendered language, while both Cameron and Brittany had spoken of their use of gendered stereotypes.

When considering these moments of feminist rejection, some of the trends from within the space of the projects are echoed within the wider space of the school and the youth group. When considering the relationship between moments of rejection and the gender of the participants across both projects, there appears to be no clear pattern evident. Instead, members of all genders displayed moments of rejection. This appeared to echo trends from within the space of the project, suggesting that in this sense, displays of feminist subjectivities extended to some extent out of the space of the FPAR projects.

However, when considering the projects separately, the gendered pattern becomes more complex. Within the space of the school project, the young men of the group were more likely to reject feminist ideals in discussions, more likely to have overlooked gendered divides in their own lived experiences and more likely to be ignorant of current feminist issues in the press, local area, or school environment. However, within the wider space of the school, the young men very rarely displayed outright rejection of feminism. In particular, Deano, one of the two young men of this project was never observed in a moment of feminist rejection within the school space. Deano was the only member of the school project who, at the end of the project, did not consider himself as a feminist (see section 5.3.3). Instead, he described himself as a supporter of feminism. And yet, despite being the only member of this FPAR

project to not end the project describing himself as a feminist, he was one of the few members of the group to not display any moments of feminist rejection.

In the youth group project, a similar circumstance arose. Ernest was one of the members of the youth group who had not described himself as a feminist. Instead, he had also considered himself as a supporter (again, see section 5.3.3). However, he was the only member of the youth group to have not been observed displaying some form of feminist rejection within the space of the youth group.

Both Deano and Ernest, in this respect, raise questions surrounding the relationship between feminist support and rejection. Were they less likely to reject feminism because they were simply less concerned with issues surrounding gender and feminism? Or, were they less likely to reject feminism, particularly when I was present, because they were conscious of their less engaged role in the feminist movement? In contrast, were the rest of the group more likely to demonstrate moments of rejection, or reflect upon those moments with me, because they felt secure in their role as a feminist? Did other moments of feminist support allow those young people more room to play with their identity as a feminist, and to contradict themselves when the need arose? In this sense, how do moments of rejection relate to overall feminist support and sense of self?

The place of Deano and Ernest raised many questions surrounding the relationship between feminist rejection and feminist support. However, observations of moments of feminist rejection did appear to illustrate that with these young people, there was no clear and easy relationship between gender and negotiations of feminism.

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### 6.3.3. SILENCE

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Across both projects, the moments of support and rejection demonstrated similar themes across the spaces of both the school and the youth group. However, when considering moments of silence, the two projects diverged abruptly. Within both projects, the themes of silence within negotiations of feminism emerged. However, in each project, this took different forms.

In the school project, the young people were at times observed to display silence in the face of issues relating to gender, sexism or feminist issues. In these moments, the young people listened to these points being raised or discussed in their presence, but remained quiet or distanced themselves from the discussion. These moments occurred in different spaces across the wider school space, including the sixth form common room and multiple different lesson and classroom spaces.

Within lessons, the young people frequently stayed silent in the face of discussions surrounding gender and sexism. For example, in one English lesson, in which Winston and Eleanor were both present, the members of the group remained soundless while their teacher raised topics relating to gender and language:

**The teacher talked about 'feminine' endings which is in reference to stress in poetry lines. She even said the term in air quotes and made some comment about naming by academics. And yet, none of my group jumped in at that point to critique it.**

In another English lesson, where Deano, Hannah and Monica were all present, the teacher had given them two news articles to analyse. As I observed at the time:

**The teacher was talking about where she got the articles from, which was The Guardian, and saying that to get an article about women's sport, she had to go to the women's section of the lifestyle bit, rather than the sport section.**

In this moment, all of the young people from the FPAR group continued in silence. Even Deano, who had written his EPQ essay on the place of women in sport, did not reply to the teacher at this point, or engage in a discussion of this issue.

On both of these occasions, the young people of the FPAR group remained silent in response to issues being raised in their presence that related to gender, sport and the media, or gender, language and stereotypes. In these moments, the teachers had made comments in a way that appeared to invite discussion and debate, which was not taken up by any of the young people from the FPAR projects. Both of these lessons appeared to be spaces in which feminism would have been supported and celebrated - with members of staff who openly identified as feminist, topics that frequently considered gender, and several students who vocally supported feminism. And yet, all of these young people remained quiet.

When analysing these moments, it initially appeared that the young people used silence in a relatively comprehensive way. All of the young people stayed quiet, and did so for the whole of this particular moment. However, the young people often moved between silence and engagement in different moments in a fluid and dynamic style.

This fluidity can be illustrated by considering the second example given above further. In the later discussion of the article on women and boxing that the young people had analysed, several members of the class, who were not members of the FPAR group, volunteered interesting and insightful comments about gender that had emerged from the text, including the use of sexualised language in the description of the female boxer, and the fact that the sport was referred to as 'women's boxing' throughout the article, rather than simply 'boxing'. In contrast, the young people from the FPAR group contributed much less:



**Hannah and Monica did mention things, but nothing amazing. Deano also responded to direct questioning.**

In this lesson, Hannah and Monica moved between silence in some moments, and more active, verbal engagement with issues surrounding gender in others. In this sense, silence was a tool that they actively mobilised in some moments, before negotiating feminism in different ways in other moments. Deano also moved between silence and speech in this lesson. However, for him, this was a much less active choice. Rather than choosing to speak, Deano was compelled to join the discussion by direct questioning. In this sense, he also appeared to move between silence and speech, but in a way that was not necessarily willing.

In the school project, the young people also used silence within the other spaces of the school environment. Two of the young women reflected on moments in the sixth form common room, when they had used silence to negotiate difficult moments:

**Monica:** He talks about her as if she was a thing, rather than like a person, and I just sit there and think...I'm like, yeah okay. In my head, I'm like, you're so rude, this person, is a girl, she has a name, but I just ignore it.

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**Maddie:** One time I was sat in the common room, and they were talking to this guy about his sex life, and I was just like, oh here we go. And erm, they were saying, because the girl didn't want to do stuff [sexual activities], and he was like telling them, oh, this girl didn't want to do this, and then, a group of girls were like, oh you should get her drunk, and like drug her and stuff, and then she'll do it. And I don't know if they were joking or not, but I was just like seething.

In both of these moments, young women from the FPAR project negotiated difficult moments using silence. For these young women, who were both confronted with opinions surrounding the place of women in sex and relationships that they believed to be offensive and sexist, silence became a tool they used to negotiate these difficult moments.

Within the school project, silence appeared to be used by the young people in different ways in many different moments. Members of the group used silence in different spaces within the school, some of which appeared to be spaces or environments that were supportive of feminism, and some that were not. They used this silence in partial and fluid ways, sometimes actively moving in and out of silence, and sometimes being pressured to do so.

In the youth group project, the theme of silence took a slightly different form. During my observations of the young people in the youth group space, and during their own reflections on their time in the youth group, none of the young people ever described remaining silent in the face of issues surrounding gender, or of falling quiet in the face of sexism. In many ways,

this appeared to be due to the differing environment of the youth group space. In this environment, many of the young people were incredibly well informed of issues surrounding gender, and were generally supportive of equality between all. The nature of this supportive environment appeared to make it less likely that the young people would be forced to negotiate moments of outright sexism - as many of the school participants had - with silence. Similarly, the focus on social activities, and the lack of subject or lesson content in this space likewise created fewer situations where gender arose as a theme of discussion.

However, it is worth noting that in the youth group, a different form of silence existed. While the young people did not respond to issues surrounding gender with silence, they also did not often raise issues surrounding gender or sexism. While they did exhibit moments of support (as outlined in section 6.3.1), they were generally less likely to vocally support feminism or display feminist subjectivities than the young people of the school group. In this sense, they exhibited silence in a different form.

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#### 6.3.3.1. *Gender and Silence*

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Within the two projects, the relationship between gender and moments of silence differed. In the youth group space, the form of silence displayed by these young people, by its very nature, was used by all members of the group. This meant that in this project, young people of all genders exhibited this form of silence. However, in the school project, silence was used slightly differently by the young men and women of this project. In the space of the school, the use of silence when negotiating feminism appeared to hold a gendered dimension.

Within the spaces of the different lessons, the young men of this project appeared to have been more likely to remain silent in the face of issues surrounding feminism than the young women. To illustrate this, one of the examples discussed in the previous section (section 6.3.3) can be re-examined. In the section above, an example was given of moments when the young people used silence in the school environment to negotiate a moment where a feminist issue, or an issue relating to gender, was under discussion. In this example, Monica, Hannah and Deano were all present in an English lesson where the topic of boxing and gender was being discussed. In this lesson, all three of the young people moved with fluidity between silence and speech. However, Deano engaged in significantly less verbal engagement than the two young women did, and when he did end his silence, he did not appear to do so willingly.

In another example, discussed previously in this section (see section 6.3.1.1) similar behaviour was displayed by the other young man in this project - Winston. In this example, the young people were discussing the novel *The Kite Runner* in their English lesson. In this moment,

Eleanor considered the text in terms of a feminist analysis, while Winston instead chose to discuss race. Here, while Winston was speaking and discussing the text, his decision not to consider it in terms of gender reflects another form of silence.

In both of these examples, the young men of the project were more likely to rely upon silence to negotiate discussions surrounding gender or feminism than the young women of the project. In this way, the young men of the project appeared to depend upon silence to a greater extent in lessons than the young women of the project.

However, the young women of the project also reflected upon a different way in which they had negotiated silence within the school environment. Several of these young women discussed using silence as a strategy to negotiate moments of difficulty or potential conflict in the face of sexism or misogyny. As outlined in the section above, both Maddie and Monica reflected upon moments in the sixth form common room where they had heard comments being made about women, sex and relationships, which they perceived to be sexist and offensive. In these moments, the young women relied upon silence as a tool to negotiate difficult moments where they were confronted with opinions that made them uncomfortable or angry. Throughout the project, none of the young men from the group were observed negotiating any moments in such a way, or reflected on any such moments during the final interviews. As such, this apparent gendered divide raises questions about the use of silence to negotiate difficult moments: Were the young women more likely to be offended by moments of sexism and misogyny such as these than the young men of the project? If so, was this due to more sexism being directed at young women than young men? Or, were the young men simply more likely to speak out in such moments? If so, were the young women restricted by expectations of their gendered behaviour or by concerns that their reputation would be negatively affected by their response?

Negotiations of silence within the wider spaces of the school and the youth group showed no simple relation to gender. Within the youth group project, young people of all genders used silence in the same way. In contrast, in the school project, the use of silence demonstrated a gendered element, as the young women and men negotiated silence to different extents, and in different forms.

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#### 6.4. Negotiating Feminism: Reasons and Rationalisations

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In the previous sections, the place of support, rejection and silence within negotiations of feminism have been considered. Throughout the two projects, the young people negotiated feminism differently in different moments, moving fluidly between support, rejection and

silence as they displayed differing forms of self and subjectivity. In many moments, these subjectivities appeared to display forms of inconsistency or contradiction, as the young people moved between different understandings of their own sense of self, gender and feminism. In order to consider these seemingly contradictory negotiations in more detail, not only must the actions of the young people be discussed, but also the young people's own reflections on these moments of negotiation.

In the final interview, the young people were asked to reflect upon their negotiations of feminism within the space of the school and the youth group. In these interviews, the young people were asked to consider moments of feminist negotiation in these spaces more generally, before being asked to discuss a specific moment that had arisen during my observations. Here, the young people were read sections from my fieldnotes, documenting a certain moment of support, rejection or silence, and asked to discuss their own thoughts and feelings as they passed through this moment. This section of the thesis considers the reasons and rationalisations the young people presented in these moments, starting with a general overview of the key themes raised, before discussing the gendered nature of these negotiations.

Within the school project, the young people described multiple reasons and factors that had impacted their negotiations of moments of support, rejection and silence in the face of feminist issues. One of the first themes that was raised by the young people was the question of whether or not they noticed the issue being discussed as a feminist issue or not:

**Deano:**            **You know, it just didn't, just didn't occur to me, or didn't see the need to.**

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**Hannah:**        **I wasn't consciously thinking about it....Well, it's probably that I didn't notice.**

Here, two of the young people from the school project considered their silence in the face of a feminist issue in relation to whether or not they had noticed, or defined, the issue under discussion as a feminist issue. In some moments, this involved the young people simply not noting the discussion that was taking place around them, in other moments, this was a more complex process regarding observing the issue at hand as a feminist issue or not.

The young people of this project also related this to personal experience, and the influences this had on their own perception of what issues were important, and related to feminism. As Deano reflected in his final interview:

**Deano:** Because I think, like I said, I am, I can talk about emotions, and I'm not, I'm not, err, embarrassed about that, or anything, so I think, that were just a general statement, and I don't wanna, I don't wanna be like... I don't know, like put in a category, like, with other men.

Here, Deano contrasted his own experiences and sense of self to the stereotypes with which he had been faced in his English lesson. In this moment, Deano related his own sense of self and experiences of masculinity to his decision to address these stereotypes. In addition to personal experience being a motivating reason to address feminist issues, lack of personal experience was also described as a reason to not become engaged in some moments:

**Deano:** I just wouldn't have been interested in that because I don't read many books, so it's not something that, affects me, or you know.

Here, Deano once again considered his decision to support feminist issues, or reject them, in relation to his own personal experiences and interests. In this moment, Deano argued that without having a personal experience of an issue, he found it hard to remain engaged and interested at the issue at hand. In this respect, he therefore considered himself less likely to engage in feminist support of this issue.

In some ways, this approach to feminist support appears to be somewhat self-interested. However, it is worth noting that not all members of the group negotiated feminism in this way. Instead, some other members of the group explicitly positioned themselves in opposition to this viewpoint. When reflecting on her decision to support Deano's views on the limited nature of the stereotypes of masculine behaviour being discussed in the same English lesson, Monica argued that she always tried to consider:

**Monica:** ...male point of view, as well as a female point of view.... I just like to argue both sides.

Here, Monica did not consider her moments of feminist support or rejection in terms of personal involvement alone. Instead, she described how she tried to relate to others, and consider different elements and viewpoints surrounding the same issue.

In other moments, the young people discussed the complex networks of power and support that underpinned these moments. Here, Monica chose to support Deano, and his opinions. As well as her comments considering the importance of viewing issues through the eyes of others, Monica also stated:

**Monica:** No matter what we're doing, she [English teacher] manages to slip in some comments. I feel sorry for Deano, bless him. When we do like, err, language and gender, it says men interrupt more than women, and men try to dominate conversation and stuff, and she just argues the

**fact that men think they're in control all the time, and Deano's just sat there like..... can't do much about it.**

Here, Monica considered the impact that the discussions within the space of this lesson may have had on the other members of the group, and in particular, Deano. Deano was the only young man in this lesson, and consequently, Monica argued, placed in a difficult position when negative elements of stereotypical masculine behaviour was discussed.

The other young man of this project - Winston - also appeared to face relatively similar problems in some of his lessons. Within the space of his English lesson, Winston was again the only young man. As both he, and Eleanor reflected:

**Winston: Sometimes I feel like they kind of hold like the, 'well, all men are kind of sexist'....especially with [Teachers name], she kind of picked on me a lot last year for it, she'd be like, oh, sorry Winston, that's your lot, and stuff....and sometimes I kind of feel like I'm the only lad, and they don't understand... they look down on you a bit, and assume that you're like that masculine kind of.... stereotypical thing.**

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**Eleanor: Obviously it's quite a female dominated class as well, like there's only Winston, he's the only boy, so we do find sometimes that Winston might feel a bit victimised.**

In these extracts, both Winston and Eleanor argued that within the space of the English lesson, conversations surrounding the role of gender had evolved in such a way as to make Winston uncomfortable. In these discussions, Winston appeared to have been positioned by the classroom teacher as a representative of all men and all forms of negative masculine behaviour. When considering negotiations of feminism within this space, Eleanor discussed her reluctance to engage in discussions of gender within these moments, out of concerns that it will lead to Winston being further victimised and made uncomfortable in these discussions - not simply by herself and her own speech, but also by the contributions and reactions of others in this space.

In other moments, the young people reflected on the more positive reasons for engaging in feminist support. Several of the young people argued that they believed making their opinions known would challenge others, and encourage them to develop their own thinking. As Deano discussed:

**Deano: Just, maybe just got my point across, and erm, I don't know, made people realise that it is just a general statement. And like, someone's that's sitting next to you, says so, you know, it's someone you don't expect. Because they might not expect me to say, oh, you know, I don't**

**think that's true. Yeah, because I talk about my feelings and whatever. So, it might just make them think a bit more.**

In this section of dialogue, Deano reflected on the impact that his own discussions of gender may have had on others within the same space. In addition to this, some of the young people discussed the impact that this, in turn, may have had on themselves:

**Hannah: Erm, well it quite clearly showed what my opinion was. Erm... I feel like it made me look fair. Erm, and a bit balanced with it all, not being erm, even though I'm female, I'm not just thinking for myself, I'm tryna look at it, and think, what would that mean for the other person.**

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**Monica: I always like to say it, because I think it makes me look like a.... well rounded, understanding. I like people to think, well I do think of myself, but I just like people to think, oh, she can understand...**

Here, both of these young women reflected on the impact that discussing their views in front of others may have on perceptions of themselves. In both of these extracts, Hannah and Monica argued that displaying feminist subjectivities made them appear to be 'fair', 'balanced', 'understanding' and 'well-rounded'. In this sense, they appeared to believe that in some moments, displaying feminist subjectivities would contribute to their social status within the wider school space. However, other members of the school project expressed more concerns about the impact of displays of feminist subjectivities on their social status:

**Eleanor: I think so, just to sort of fit in with the norm. Cos obviously like, if that's a really dominant view, I wouldn't want to be like actually, cos it would cause conflict and make me look a bit, well it would be a bit embarrassing.**

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**Deano: I don't know, I think, I don't think people would take me seriously. I don't know, for some reason, I just think, people would probably laugh, or make it a joke. Erm, yeah, probably, that's probably what would happen. To be honest, I think.... they'd think I'm weird, I guess. They'd think, why are you doing that?**

Here, two other members of the school project discussed the impact that they believed displays of feminist support would have on their social status within the school. They reflected on this, using words such as 'embarrassing', 'laugh' and 'weird'. Different members of the group therefore appeared to have different conceptions of the impact of feminist support on their perceptions of self. This may be attributed to different perceptions of feminist support and rejection within the school, or instead, may relate to the different projections of self of these young people, as well as the different spaces they moved through within the wider space of the school.

The themes above were all themes that were raised solely by the young people of the school group. However, there were several themes which were raised and discussed by members of both groups. Once such theme was the significance of the relative importance of the topic under consideration, as one of the young women from the school project reflected:

**Eleanor:** Err, I probably noticed it, but I don't think I classed it as important. Just because, I'm not really, I was probably more focused on the poem rather than the topic.

Here, Eleanor considered her negotiation of a moment of silence within the space of one of her English lessons. In this extract, she argued that the topic under consideration - which was the naming of certain types of stress in poetry lines as feminine endings - was not significantly important for her to engage with. Instead, she was more engaged with the content of the lesson, and focused on her learning. In this moment, Eleanor appeared to be relating her decision to remain silent with two forms of relative importance - the importance of the topic under discussion, and the importance of the other ongoing activities and thought processes which were ongoing at the same time.

In the youth group, the young people similarly discussed the need to decide if the issue at hand was significantly important to justify engagement. For some of these young people, an issue was not deemed important enough to address openly if they believed that the other young people around them were already aware of the issue:

**Elliot:** If I'm out with my friends and we all know what we mean, that I don't really stop, um, don't really stop myself or other people saying it, because we know what they mean. It's probably not the best way to put it, but we know what they mean.

In this moment, Elliot argued that he did not consider some uses of gendered language important enough to discuss or correct. Instead, he argued, the other members of the group did not really mean offence by it, making it an unimportant issue to address.

In other moments, the young people of both projects argued that despite believing an issue was important, there were some moments that they believed it was pointless to pursue it:

**Matt:** If I say something, then I feel like they're just not going to change their minds, I'm not, if I just say, oh that's not okay to say, they'll just go, ohh, whatever, or brush it off.

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**Elliot:** No, they kinda know everything already, 'cause obviously after years of saying things like that, they've kinda heard it all already. At that point where it's just ....I just leave them to it.



In these extracts, young people from the youth group project argued that there were some moments where discussing issues surrounding feminism was pointless due to the responses they expected from the people around them. In these moments, they argued, it was futile to try and engage with them, and easier to remain silent. While these young people spoke in general terms, one of the young women of the school group argued that there were specific moments where she chose to remain silent, because she did not believe the approach being taken by her fellow students was one that was going to yield results:

**Morgan:** Or like, we had this thing where, if a girl's on her period, and they're like I forgot to bring something, has anyone got anything? The boys are like, 'eurgh, we don't want to know', and they'll like throw tampons at them. They're like, 'shut up! Your mum does it, your wife will do it, your daughter will do it'. They get really annoyed, which I like, I like, find it funny, but I don't do it myself, because I think, throwing a tampon at them is not going to change their opinion.

However, in other moments, the young people did feel able to display feminist support. In these occasions, the young people often discussed the importance of confidence in themselves, and their opinions:

**Brittany:** Because I've got more of a good understanding on it, so then ... I've got more knowledge and I can help more.... And then, I'm also getting more confidence so I'm more confident to help the girls or help any boys or anything like that, that want to do stuff.

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**Hannah:** Erm, well I think, to do with gender, I'm quite.... I just think....I think my opinion's right. So, I don't care if anyone argues against me, in that situation, because I think being gender neutral, splitting the bill, being equal, I don't see how anyone can like go against me on that, so I think, because I'm quite confident about it, I'll say it.

In these two extracts, young women from both the school and the youth group discussed the importance of having confidence in their own opinions, and with this confidence, feeling the ability to vocally express themselves. Hannah, one of the young women from the school project, also discussed the importance of feeling supported in these opinions as she expressed them:

**Hannah:** I think, yeah, probably because [the teacher] brought it up, as well, I felt a bit more comfortable, cos I thought, I'm not going to say anything that's going to put anyone about, I'm not going to, you know, if she's brought it up, it's sort of insinuating that she's sort of agreeing with me. So, I then felt a bit more confident to be like, sort of backing her up at the same time, while being able to get my opinion out there in like a supported environment.

Here, Hannah considered one of her moments of feminist support in relation to both the confidence she felt in her opinion, and also the feeling of comfort and support she had in that space. In this moment, Hannah argued that she felt more able to vocally support feminism, knowing that she was not going to be isolated in her views.

The final theme that emerged during both projects was the fear of conflict. Young people from both the school project and the youth group discussed their worries about causing clashes or discomfort with others, and appeared preoccupied with avoiding contention.

**Winston:** Because... probably cause arguments, and fall out. I don't want that to happen. Err, I dunno, I just think, they've not had the same experience I've had, so they won't understand, and erm... just causes unnecessary tension and stuff, doesn't it?

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**Cameron:** You have to get that balance between getting something that's right, but not offending somebody. That's my only worry, that I'd offend.

In these two extracts, members of both the youth group project and the school group reflected upon their concerns about causing arguments, offence or tension. One of the young women from the school project, when discussing her worries about causing conflict, also reflected on the ways that these conflicts can be imbued and underlaid by currents of power and status:

**Hannah:** I feel like sometimes, if someone is of higher status of you, like [teachers names] is, being a teacher, and they say something, if you try and maybe argue that, whether it's for or against, you don't sort of want the sort of backlash on it.

Here, Hannah reflected on the risks of creating tension or conflict with a member of staff by expressing feminist support. In these moments, she argued, creating this tension could lead to moments of backlash, which were particularly difficult to negotiate given the uneven nature of this power dynamic, with adults in schools normally imbued with far greater power than young people (Corsaro 2005; Christensen & Prout 2002; Morrow & Richards 1996).

In other moments, the young people of the school setting also reflected on the problems that this conflict could cause. Hannah again reflected on the problems created by tension and clashes, and argued that in some moments, causing tension by raising feminist issues could actually lead to further sexism:

**Hannah:** Again, they'd have been like, stroppy, or, calm down, or something like that. You know what I mean? Just because I'm arguing back, and again, I think that happens a lot, especially with girls, it's like... they don't say anything, so as soon as we do, straight away, 'you're being stroppy', or

**'you've got face on', or 'oh is it time of the month', something like that. That happens like so frequently.**

In this sense, she argued, speaking out about feminist issues, or calling people out on moments of sexism could actually be counter-productive, in that it would lead to other members of the school population responding with further sexism.

When discussing the fear of conflict, some of the young people reflected particularly on how this conflict was at odds with their personality. As young people from both the school and the youth group discussed:

**Maddie: I just didn't want a confrontation. I'm not a very confrontational person, and I prefer to like.... I don't know.**

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**Matt: I don't like challenging people. I'm quite, I'm very anxious about confrontation, so, you know, I will join in with someone else, and like say my piece, but if someone said something at [the youth group] and everyone else just let it slide, then I probably would too.**

For these young people, moments of confrontation were particularly difficult for them to negotiate, given their natural desire to avoid clashes with others. Here, moments of feminist support therefore appeared to carry greater risks and concerns.

In addition to themes that were common to the young people from both groups, there were also themes that were raised solely by the young people of the youth group. One of the themes raised in the youth group space was the importance of allowing others to have their opinion, even if you did not necessarily share this opinion. As one of the young people discussed:

**Elliot: They could say, "This is my opinion." Because at the end of the day, we can't say people are entitled to their own opinion but then get mad when their views aren't the same as ours. So sometimes, maybe the better thing to do is just leave it.**

Here, one of the young people from the youth group discussed the importance of respecting the opinions of others. Here, he appeared to be balancing the need to raise issues that are important to him, while at the same time avoiding possible conflict over differences in viewpoint.

Another theme raised by the young people of the youth group was the link between their identity or sense of self as an LGBT+ person, and negotiations of feminist subjectivity. As one of the transgender young men from the youth group project reflected:

**Ernest:** I wouldn't really want to.....if I was an active feminist, they'd probably get confused, and think that because I was a feminist I couldn't be trans.

**Facilitator:** Do you think people have that perception?

**Ernest:** I think they do, yes. So they might well kind of think, you know, if you're such a feminist, why don't you want to be a woman.

For Ernest, the already precarious nature of negotiations of his transgender identity would be complicated by displays of engagement with feminism or feminist subjectivities. For him, the nature of his transgender identity, and his perceptions of the meaning of feminist support, added a layer of complexity to negotiations of feminism.

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#### 6.4.1. REASONS AND RATIONALISATIONS: THE GENDERED NATURE OF FEMINIST NEGOTIATIONS

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In the section above, some of the reasons and rationalisations underpinning the young people's negotiations of feminism have been explored. Across the two projects, the young people raised numerous complex factors that they had to consider when negotiating feminist subjectivities. Some of these factors were common to young people of all genders, but others appeared to be inherently linked to wider negotiations of gender by the young people.

Across both projects, there were several reasons and rationalisations that were raised by young people of a range of genders. In particular, factors such as assessing the relative importance of an issue, worries about social status and concerns over causing conflict, were raised by young people of a range of genders. These factors appeared to be common reasons, which were shared by both young men and young women, and young transgender and cisgender people.

In contrast, there were other reasons and rationalisations raised by the young people which appeared to be more commonly demonstrated by young people of a particular gender. One such factor was the impact upon young men of perceptions held by others about men as perpetrators or offenders. In the section above, several of the young people from the school project discussed the impact of negative perceptions of men and masculinity during discussions of feminist issues on the young men present. These attitudes, when expressed by others during discussions of gender and sexism, appeared to place the young men in difficult situations. Some of these young men appeared to be positioned during these discussions as perpetrators, or oppressors, despite their own personal opinions or actions. As such, these negative attitudes appeared to impact how these young men negotiated feminism within the space of the school. As Winston reflected:

- Facilitator:** Do you find it easy in that lesson, to talk about, like gender, with those girls?
- Winston:** No.
- Facilitator:** Okay, why not?
- Winston:** Sometimes I've had the, I can't remember the context, but sometimes I've had the, 'you're not a girl, you won't understand'. That's quite a big one. And sometimes they said something like, 'oh you're a guy, how do you feel?' Like expecting like I'm not going to side with them. Like, assuming I'm on the other side of the argument. But erm, 'you're not a girl, you won't understand', and 'oh it's the lads', and then they look at you, and you're like, it's not me personally.

Here, Winston discussed the attitudes towards men in feminism that he had encountered during debates surrounding gender. These attitudes, he argued, made it hard for him to engage in such debates, out of fear that blame would be placed on him for the behaviour of other men. In this sense, these attitudes appeared to have a silencing impact on some of the young men, acting to make them uncomfortable within these discussions, and less likely to participate. These attitudes did not only impact the young men of the project, as several of the young women of the project also reflected on the impact these views had on their own negotiations of feminism. Both Eleanor and Monica discussed their concerns that the young men around them at times felt victimised by the views of others, with Eleanor listing these worries as the reason she had not engaged with discussions surrounding feminism in some lessons. In this sense, generalised perceptions of men as perpetrators or oppressors appeared to act to silence not only the young men of the school project, but also the young women as well.

Another factor that was raised predominantly by the young men of both projects was the issue of potential offence. In the section above, both Winston and Cameron raised their concerns about possibly causing offence by expressing feminist views. In these reflections, Winston argued that discussions around gender and sexism could "cause unnecessary tension", while Cameron stated that "that's my only worry, that I'd offend". Concerns about causing offence have been argued to be more likely to arise from women (Schumann & Ross 2010; Butler & Landells 1995). Schumann and Ross argued that men are less likely to be concerned about causing offence, in part due to the fact they have "higher thresholds for what constitutes offensive behaviour" (Schumann & Ross 2010, p.1653). In their study surrounding offence in educational settings, Butler and Landells argued that women often try to avoid giving offence, due to their position in gendered systems of power (Butler & Landells 1995). In this sense, the concerns of Cameron and Winston are somewhat surprising, and raise questions surrounding their negotiations of gender, offence, and power. How were the concerns of these young men

impacted by their own sense of power or status? Why were the young women of both projects less likely to raise concerns over possibly offending others during discussions surrounding feminism? What factors, other than gender, impact a young person's negotiation of potential offence to others?

As well as factors that were more likely to be considered by the young men, there were also reasons that were raised primarily by the young women of the projects. One such issue was the importance of confidence and support. In the section above, young women from both projects, including both Brittany and Hannah, discussed the importance of having confidence in their own views and knowledge, with Brittany discussing feminist behaviour in relation to "I'm more confident to help the girls or help any boys" and Hannah stating that "I'm quite confident about it, I'll say it". The young women also related this confidence to support, with Hannah stating that she was more likely to express verbal feminist support if she knew that other members of the class, or the subject teacher, shared those views. These reflections also raised questions surrounding gender and feminist negotiations, including: Why were the young women more likely than the young men to reflect openly on confidence and changes to their own confidence? Were the young women more aware of issues surrounding confidence, or more able to openly reflect on the importance of their own level of confidence? How was this confidence impacted by the sexist backlash that the young women also discussed experiencing? Did the young women need high levels of confidence to express feminist ideals in certain spaces because of the potential for sexist retribution that their gender identity opened them up to?

These factors discussed above all relate primarily to gendered negotiations of feminism from male or female gendered identity. As such, they relate to both transgender and cisgender young people within the projects. However, there was also one element of feminist negotiation that was raised specifically in relation to young transgender men and their gender identity. As discussed in the section above, Ernest discussed his concerns about the impact upon his gender identity of expressing feminist support. Here, he argued that identifying as a feminist could lead to questions about his gender identity, with people believing that "because I was a feminist I couldn't be trans". In this sense, negotiating feminism appeared to include additional elements of complexity when living as a transgender young man. These reflections from Ernest raise additional questions surrounding negotiations of feminism: What perceptions do young people hold about transgender men and their place in the feminist movements? How do these different perceptions impact transgender young men negotiating feminism? How would transgender young women negotiate feminism if involved in a FPAR project?

## 6.5. Feminist Subjectivities: Contradiction and the Continuum of Feminist Support

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Within this chapter, the nature of negotiations of feminist subjectivities by the young people have been considered. Within the spaces of the school and the youth group, the young people moved fluidly between forms of support, rejection and silence in different moments. As such, the subjectivities displayed by the young people within these spaces exhibited forms of difference or contradiction, as the young people engaged in complex negotiations of feminism. In addition to this, the young people also demonstrated moments of divergence and convergence between the subjectivities displayed within the space of the FPAR projects, and within the wider spaces of the school and the youth group. As such, many of the young people also displayed forms of contradiction in the subjectivities they displayed as they moved between the project space and the spaces of the school or youth group.

When asked to reflect upon the reasons and rationalisations that underpinned these negotiations of feminism, the young people gave a wide range of responses. These responses demonstrated the complex nature of the factors that underpinned each moment of feminist negotiation, and illustrated the pressures each young person was under when weighing and balancing the different factors that influenced their behaviour in each moment. These reflections demonstrated the complex nature of feminist negotiation, and illustrated that the relationship between a feminist identity and displays of feminist subjectivities was far from simple.

Previously in this thesis, the conception of feminist support as a spectrum has been discussed (see section 2.2.11). Theorists have argued that the continuous and dynamic nature of feminist engagement should be recognised through a continuum approach, rather than a dichotomous approach (Swirsky & Angelone 2016; Aronson 2003). In the previous chapter (see section 5.3.2 and 5.3.3) the nature of the young people's negotiation of feminism within the project space was discussed in relation to this continuum approach. It was proposed that the young people displayed simultaneous forms of support, rejection, and mediation within the project space, which allowed many of the young people to occupy positions between the dichotomy of feminist and non-feminist. However, considerations of the negotiations of subjectivities within the wider spaces of the school and the youth group added complexity to this view. Rather than individuals occupying a static position on a spectrum - which is demarked by which elements of feminism they support, or to what extent they support them - these young people appeared to negotiate feminist support in a much more dynamic and fluid way. The young people moved between different extents of feminist engagement in different moments, engaging with some feminist issues and not others, or engaging with some issues in some moments, and rejecting

them in others. Throughout this negotiation, they appeared to continually move between different points on the spectrum of feminist support, and at times, to occupy different positions on this continuum within different spaces. In this sense, the young people appeared to negotiate the spectrum of feminist support in a dynamic and fluid way, which demonstrated the elements of contradiction inherent to their displays of feminist subjectivities.

## 6.6. FPAR and Other Elements of Subjectivities

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Throughout the two projects, many of the young people displayed changes to their negotiation of feminist subjectivities. While these changes are the key focus on this research, it is also worth briefly considering other changes to their subjectivities that the young people displayed over the course of the project. At the end of the FPAR projects, the young people described various changes to their sense of self that had occurred over the course of the project. In particular, this included increased engagement in other critical issues, such as racism, and increased positive perceptions of their own self, confidence and worth.

In both projects, several of the young people described their increased engagement with other critical issues. In the youth group, Matt reflected on how the project had encouraged him to think more critically about other movements, including thinking about identity politics and involvement with these movements. Eleanor, from the school project, described her increased consideration of the impact of religion in society, and the interplay between religious views and perceptions of sex, relationships and marriage. Another of the young people in the school project, described the increased awareness he now had about other forms of inequality, and in particular, racism:

**Deano:** I read this article. This footballer was getting abuse from the fans, like racial abuse and then he walked off the pitch, he kicked the ball in anger and then he walked off the pitch, and then, erm, obviously the article like supported him, whoever wrote the article, but then when the manager was interviewed, erm, again he said, it was wrong, the racial abuse, but then he said, oh, he shouldn't have walked off the pitch, like that, which makes me think that he don't really understand, like the... like the seriousness, of, you can't, he can't relate to him, he can't understand what he's thinking.

**Facilitator:** So do you think you would have felt the same way about that article, before the project, or has it made you feel differently about things like that?

**Deano:** Bit differently. Like I said, erm... like I know that gender's like a big issue, and then I can... I also know that there are other big issues, just like gender, and there's, you know, because we've analysed gender in some much detail, and discrimination, and I can see other discriminations, so, yeah.



In this extract, Deano reflected on the increase to his own awareness of the issue of race relations within sport. Here, he discussed how the analysis of gender, and its impacts on society, had encouraged him to apply the same consideration to other discriminations as well. For Deano, the experiences he had had in the FPAR project, appeared to have encouraged him to not only engage critically with sources such as the article he had read, but had also allowed him to empathise more clearly with the footballer being subjected to racism. In this sense, Deano appeared to have become more engaged with other critical issues throughout the course of the project.

Another impact the projects appeared to have had on some of the young people was an overall increase to positive perceptions and understandings of their own sense of self and subjectivity. For some of the young people, this included changes to their own sense of gender identity. Here, two of the young men from the youth group reflected on the impact that involvement in the FPAR project had had on their own sense of self, and identity.

**Cameron:** I feel a lot more... free in expressing myself.

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**Matt:** Erm..... I think, its, I think it has changed, because, just because a lot of the other guys in the project, especially the cis guys have talked about, how they like, like wearing skirts, and doing beauty treatments, and that's made me feel a lot more secure in my gender.

In the first comment, Cameron, one of the cisgender young men of the youth group project, reflected generally on the impact the project had had on his own ability to express himself and the subjectivities he desires. In the second extract, Matt, one of the transgender young men, reflected more explicitly on the impact the project had had on his gendered identity. Here, he considered how conversations held during discussion groups had allowed him to feel more confident and secure in his own gender. For him, the FPAR project appeared to have acted as a safe environment in which he felt comfortable to discuss and explore the experiences of other young men in a way that had then informed his own sense of gender and subjectivity.

Other young people reflected on other positive changes to their sense of self. When discussing this, they used words such as 'value', 'empowering', 'confidence', 'enjoyment' and 'happiness'. For these young people, the projects appeared to have not only allowed them to explore and develop negotiations of feminism and feminist subjectivities, but also to have allowed them to develop other forms of their sense of self. These differing forms of subjectivity change may well have influenced and shaped each other. As some of the young people described their experience of the project in terms of confidence and value, these changes may have also encouraged or facilitated their increased display of feminist subjectivities, as the young people

felt more confident and secure to display these subjectivities. The project appeared to have not only encouraged the creation of feminist subjectivities, but to have in turn, encouraged the formation of other positive subjectivities in a way in which may have mutually influenced and reinforced each other.

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### 6.7. Concluding Thoughts

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This chapter has considered the ways in which the young men and women of both projects negotiated feminist subjectivities within the spaces of the school and the youth group. During this section, the nature of moments of feminist support, rejection and silence have been considered, before the reasons underlying these forms of negotiations were explored. Throughout these discussions, particular attention has been paid to the role of gender within these themes. As such, this chapter has aimed to address the third and final research question of this thesis - *Subjectivity and the spatial: How do the young men negotiate feminism and subjectivity across different spaces?* Through this analysis, this chapter has aimed to explore the potential that FPAR holds to encourage young men's involvement in feminism, and to determine to what extent this involvement extends outside the space of the FPAR projects.

The young people of both projects demonstrated moments of feminist support within the spaces of the school and the youth group. This support took different forms, including engagement with lesson content, responses to moments of sexism, expression of opinions in discussions, and a commitment to breaking down gendered stereotypes. Within the youth group project, there appeared to be no clear gendered pattern in these displays of feminist support, with young people of different genders displaying moments of feminist support. However, in the school group, a clearer gendered pattern did emerge, with the young men less likely than the young women of the project to exhibit feminist support.

Moments of rejection of feminism were also displayed by the young men and women of both projects, although these moments were often subtle and contested. These moments of rejection were often focused around gendered or sexist language, and the use of gendered stereotypes. Within the space of the school and the youth group, moments of feminist rejection demonstrated the complex and contradictory nature of feminist negotiations. Within both projects, those young men who had been most likely to reject feminism within the space of the projects, and least likely to demonstrate overt feminist support in both spaces, were also the least likely to demonstrate overt feminist rejection. Instead, those young people who frequently supported feminism were also the most likely to demonstrate outright rejection of feminist ideals.

Within both projects, the young people also displayed forms of silence when negotiating feminism. This took differing forms in the two projects. The young people of the youth group displayed silence by not actively raising issues surrounding feminism or sexism within the youth group space, while the young people of the school group used silence to respond to issues surrounding gender or sexism. In the youth group, this form of silence was displayed by all of the young people, whereas in the school group, a gendered pattern emerged. The young men of this project were more likely to use silence in response to discussions of issues surrounding gender and feminism, while the young women of this project were more likely to use silence in the face of moments of sexism and misogyny.

The young people of both projects were also asked to reflect upon the reasons and rationalisations underlying these negotiations of feminism. The young people raised a number of different factors to be considered when negotiating feminist subjectivities, including assessing the relative importance of an issue, noticing or perceiving an issue as feminist, the benefits of challenging others, worries about the impact on their social status, confidence and support, and possible conflict. While some of these factors were raised by young people of all genders, others appeared to be more commonly demonstrated by young people of a particular gender. Young men discussed the impact of conceptions of them as oppressors and the risk of causing offence, the young women reflected on confidence and support, and the transgender young people considered the impact of displays of feminist support on their trans identities.

Other changes to the subjectivities of the young people were also discussed. The young people reflected on the impact of the project on their awareness of other critical issues and inequalities within society, such as racism. Other young people reflected on the improved confidence the project had given them in their own identity and sense of self.

Throughout this analysis, several key themes have emerged. Firstly, the young people all demonstrated complex and often contradictory displays of feminist subjectivities, which altered in different moments, and in different spaces. The partial and fragmented nature of these displays of subjectivities again illustrated the unstable and fragmented nature of the subject and its subjectivities (Moore 2013; Hall 2004), and as such, appeared to add complexity to conceptions of feminist engagement as a spectrum or continuum (see Swirsky & Angelone 2016; Aronson 2003). Instead, the young people appeared to negotiate feminist support in a dynamic and fluid way, which demonstrated the elements of contradiction inherent to their displays of feminist subjectivities.

Secondly, many of the demonstrations of feminist subjectivities displayed by the young people within the spaces of the two FPAR projects closely echoed the displays within the spaces of the

school and the youth group. In this sense, the spaces of the FPAR projects appeared to be somewhat permeable and transferable, with the young people carrying elements of their subjectivities with them as they moved between different spaces.

Thirdly, the role of gender within these negotiations of feminism appeared to be complex and contested, with the gender of the participants impacting their displays of feminist subjectivities in diverse ways. Across the two projects, no clear pattern in the relationship between gender and feminist subjectivities emerged. Instead, the young people - whether male, female, cisgender or transgender - all displayed complex and contradictory forms of feminist subjectivities within the spaces of the school and the youth group.

This chapter has considered the ways in which the young men and women of the two FPAR projects negotiated feminist subjectivities within the spaces of the school and the youth group. This analysis has built on previous research that has argued that involvement in FPAR projects held the potential to encourage young women to display feminist subjectivities (Gaddes 2013; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004) and that these subjectivities may extend outside of the space of the FPAR projects themselves (Gaddes 2013). Throughout this chapter, it has become clear that the young men and women of both projects did display forms of feminist subjectivities within the spaces of the school and the youth group. As such, participation in FPAR projects does appear to hold the potential to encourage young men to display feminist subjectivities, and for these subjectivities to extend out of the space of the projects themselves. In this sense, FPAR projects with young men appear to hold the potential to encourage young men to display engagement with issues surrounding gender and feminism.

## 7. CONCLUSION

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This thesis has explored the potential that feminist participatory action research offers to encourage the creation of feminist subjectivities in young men. In order to address this overarching aim, this thesis has engaged with three key research themes - the practicalities, problems and possibilities when running FPAR projects with young men, young men and displays of feminist subjectivities within the space of the projects, and finally, the extent to which these displays of feminism have extended into the wider spaces of the school and the youth group. Through considering these three themes, this research has attempted to contribute to the debates surrounding young men, feminism, and feminist participatory action research.

This final chapter draws this thesis to a conclusion. In this chapter, the key points that have emerged during each chapter of this thesis are discussed, before being drawn together as one overarching conclusion. Following this, the limitations of the research are assessed, and some areas of potential further research outlined. Finally, the thesis concludes with a brief discussion of the implications of this research.

### 7.1. Key Findings

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The first analysis chapter of this thesis addressed the research question *Running FPAR projects with young men: What are the practicalities, problems and possibilities?* This chapter aimed to provide a detailed account of the nature of the two FPAR projects that formed the basis of this research. In this chapter, the nature of participation, research and action in the projects were considered, as well as the dynamics of each group, and the place of gender throughout these negotiations.

Within both projects, the young people engaged in multiple modes of formal and informal participation. The nature of this participation was impacted by numerous factors, including the space of the project and the gender of the individual. Gendered expectations of behaviour appeared to be particularly noticeable in the school project, where the young men and women took on somewhat different forms of participation. In these moments, the projects, despite being constructed as spaces to challenge the normative gender order, also appeared to reinforce and re-construct some gendered norms.

During the research stage of the projects, the mixed gender composition of the two groups added richness to the FPAR projects. The range of gendered accounts available for the group to draw upon not only encouraged the young people to reflect on different lived experiences,

but also to challenge one another, and to break down some of the assumptions or stereotypes they may have held. As such, the different lived experiences of the young people contributed to the creation of insight and knowledge.

During the action stage of the projects, the impact of gender appeared unclear, with no relationship evident between the gender of the participants and the action projects they chose to support. The young people of the youth group chose to support a project with which some of their group personally related, while the participants of the school project did not.

Within both groups, the dynamics of the young people were influenced by multiple interlocking factors. Both groups of young people constructed collective practices or rituals, which echoed those described by Cahill (Cahill 2007a) in overall form, if not in specific nature. In the school group, the young men and women were at times observed constructing divides based on gender identity, although in the youth group this did not appear to happen. In both projects, 'leaders' emerged. The different genders of these leaders appeared to illustrate Baily's contention that factors including individual personalities and group roles are just as important as gender in shaping group dynamics (Baily 2012).

From this detailed consideration of the nature of the FPAR projects, it has become clear that incorporation of young men into FPAR can lead to successful and meaningful projects. The gender of the participants shaped the projects in many ways, but was also only one element of the complex nature of the negotiations that were ongoing throughout these two spaces. While the mixed composition of these two groups created new challenges and complexities within FPAR, they also demonstrated that FPAR with young men can lead to dynamic, rich and exciting projects.

The second analysis chapter of this thesis addressed the research question *Young men in FPAR and subjectivities: In what ways is feminism accepted, rejected and negotiated?* In this chapter, attention was paid to the young people's relationship to feminism within the space of the FPAR projects themselves.

The two projects did appear to encourage the young people - whether male or female, transgender or cisgender - to engage with feminism and to display feminist subjectivities within the space of the projects. While some of the young people reflected on their engagement with feminism over the course of the projects in relatively static terms, the majority considered their relationship with feminism during this time in terms of change and development.

Throughout the projects, the young people displayed complex forms of engagement with feminism. These feminist subjectivities were often partial and contradictory, and as such, displayed the unstable and fragmented nature of the subject and its subjectivities (Moore 2013; Hall 2004). The range of forms of identification with feminism demonstrated by the young people appeared to illustrate the complex nature of feminist engagement, and lend support to the argument that feminist support should be conceptualised as a spectrum or continuum (Swirsky & Angelone 2016; Aronson 2003).

When considering both projects together, the changes to the subjectivities of the young people appeared to hold no clear and simple relationship to gender. In the school project, the young men of the group were the least likely to display feminist subjectivities, while in the youth group, the young men of the project displayed high levels of engagement and awareness with feminism. Across these two projects, there therefore appeared to be no clear relationship between the display of feminist subjectivities and gender. Instead, the young people reflected on the importance of class, race, sexuality and gender combining to shape their engagement with feminism. As such, multiple elements of their identities - rather than solely gender - appeared to influence their negotiations of feminism. In this sense, the reflections of the young people on the other intersectional elements of their identities appeared to demonstrate the complexity and diversity evident within gender categories.

While the role of gender in impacting these displays remained unclear, several themes emerged that did appear to impact negotiations of feminism. One theme was the importance of the position from which the participant started the project: those individuals that started the project from a high level of engagement were less likely to demonstrate dramatic forms of change. The specific nature of the project the young person participated in also appeared to be important: the young people of the school project were more likely to display dramatic changes to their negotiations of feminism than those who participated in the youth group project. Both of these factors appeared to have a clearer bearing on the extent of changes to the displays of feminist subjectivities of the participants than the gender of the individuals themselves.

From this consideration of displays of feminist subjectivities within the space of the project, it became clear that FPAR projects do offer the potential to encourage the creation of feminist subjectivities in young men. In the two projects, the role of gender in determining the young people's engagement with feminism remained unclear, with young people of all genders displaying increased levels of feminist subjectivities over the course of the projects. In this sense, not only do FPAR projects with young men allow for successful and rich FPAR projects,

but involvement in these projects also offers the potential to encourage the display of feminist subjectivities within the space of the projects.

The third analysis chapter of this thesis addressed the research question of *Subjectivity and the spatial: How do the young men negotiate feminism and subjectivity across different spaces?* This chapter considered the extent to which the displays of feminist subjectivities demonstrated by the young people extended out of the space of the projects and into the wider world of the school and the youth group.

The majority of the young people of the two projects displayed moments of feminist subjectivities within the space of the school or youth group. These feminist subjectivities were negotiated through a complex and dynamic combination of moments of support, rejection and silence. Across the two projects, there did not therefore appear to be any universal pattern in the way in which the gender of the participants impacted their negotiations of feminism. In the school space, a gendered element to these negotiations emerged, with the young men and women mobilising different forms of support, rejection and silence in different moments. However, in the youth group, young people of all genders appeared to utilise similar forms of support, rejection and silence. While gender appeared to shape and influence some elements of these negotiations, the extent of this influence appeared to be impacted by other factors, including the specific space in which feminist subjectivities were being negotiated.

For all of the young people, these negotiations of feminism appeared to be multiple, dynamic and at times, contradictory. The young people negotiated feminism in ways that altered in different moments, and in different spaces. As such, feminist support appeared to be a dynamic and fluid construction, which demonstrated the elements of contradiction inherent in their displays of feminist subjectivities. In this sense, these observations challenged conceptions of feminist support as a spectrum, (see Swirsky & Angelone 2016; Aronson 2003), by demonstrating that engagement with feminism does not always appear to occupy a single fixed point on a continuum.

When considering the reflections of the young people on these moments of feminist negotiations, multiple different factors arose that shaped and influenced these forms of negotiations. Some of these factors appeared to impact people regardless of gender, while others arose particularly in the accounts of one gender. The young people therefore appeared to negotiate feminist moments in ways that were constructed in response to multiple diverse factors, some of which intersected and related to their negotiation of gender and a gendered identity.



From this consideration of engagement with feminism, it appears that the displays of feminist subjectivities did extend out of the space of the two FPAR projects, and into the wider spaces of the school and the youth group. Many of these negotiations echoed moments and themes observed within the space of the two projects, illustrating the permeable and unbounded nature of the FPAR spaces, with the young people carrying elements of their subjectivities with them as they moved between spaces.

Throughout analysis of these three research questions, this thesis has aimed to consider the potential that FPAR holds to increase displays of feminist subjectivities in young men. This project has built upon previous research into the potential of FPAR with young women to stimulate the creation of feminist subjectivities (Gaddes 2013; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004) and for these subjectivities to extend outside of the space of the FPAR projects (Gaddes 2013). While this previous research considered FPAR with young women, this project has built upon the writings of Paulo Freire to argue that there is also a place in FPAR for young men. Freire argued that there was a place within the liberation movement for those who were traditionally the oppressors, provided they were truly in solidarity (Freire 1996). In this case, the writings of Freire suggest there is room for those traditionally considered to be the oppressors in PAR projects, opening up participation in FPAR projects to young men. This research has considered such involvement of young men in FPAR projects, and considered both the practicalities of running such projects, and the impact that involvement has on the young men. Through this analysis, this research has concluded that involvement of young men in FPAR projects create viable, rich and diverse projects. It has also concluded that involvement in these projects encouraged the displays of feminist subjectivities by young men, and that these displays of subjectivities extended out of the project space, and into the wider spaces of the school and the youth group.

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## 7.2. Limitations and Areas of Future Research

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This research project incorporated many successful elements. The two FPAR projects, and the young people who participated in them, were engaging and animated, and filled with complex and fascinating moments. The observations and interviews that surrounded these projects yielded rich and interesting data, which allowed the project to address each of the three research themes. In this sense, the research was a successful project, which allowed the aims of the thesis to be met.

However, despite the overall success of this project, there were several areas of limitation. The first such area was in the scope of the project. The nature of FPAR projects requires them to

involve relatively small numbers of participants, in order to allow individuals the opportunity to participate fully in the project. While the small number of participants was mitigated somewhat by the decision to run two projects, this research still worked with a relatively small number of participants - 11 in total, only six of whom identified as young men. As such, this research is limited in the nature of the conclusions it can make. While the projects did appear to encourage the young men who participated in these projects to display feminist subjectivities, these conclusions are drawn solely from two case studies, which worked with a relatively small number of young men. As such, further research is needed to more extensively consider the position of young men in FPAR. Would involvement of young men in a similar FPAR project lead to similar results? How would men of a different age respond to a similar project? In what ways would their forms of engagement, participation, and negotiation of feminism differ?

In addition to the small number of participants involved in this research, the research was also limited by its reliance on one style of FPAR project, run by one facilitator. The debates in this thesis are drawn from two FPAR projects which were both based around the same overall structure and methods, and which were both run by the same facilitator. The negotiations of feminism that arose during this research would inherently be shaped by these factors, and as such, involvement in a different style of FPAR project, run by a different facilitator, would potentially lead to substantially different outcomes. As such, further research is needed which builds upon FPAR projects run in a range of different styles and approaches, and with a range of different facilitators. How would young men engage with different styles of FPAR projects, such as those that are based around the process of writing? Would gendered forms of participation evolve differently in such a project? In what ways would young men in a different project respond to a different facilitator? How would a male or transgender facilitator alter the dynamics of the group, and the involvement of the young men?

A third area of limitation arose from the nature of the timescales of the project. The fieldwork of this project was limited by the three year structure of PhD study. As such, while this research used longitudinal analysis, the length of this longitudinal study was limited to around 12 months. This time period did allow for changes to the young people's displays of subjectivities to be considered, but did not allow for an exploration of how long these displays of subjectivities would be maintained once the FPAR project had come to a close. In order to address this, further research is needed into the longer-term impacts of involvement in an FPAR project. Are displays of feminist subjectivities maintained in the months or years following the end of the FPAR project? If so, how do these negotiations change over time?

An additional limitation of this project was the scope of the spatial analysis used in this research. This research drew upon observations of the young people conducted within the spaces of the youth group and the school environment. While these observations yielded interesting perspectives on the negotiations of feminism by these young people in spaces outside of the FPAR projects, these observations were constrained solely to one sphere of the young people's lives. As such, the research did not engage with the young people's displays of subjectivities within the space of their families, friendships, relationships, jobs or hobbies. Further research could be done to consider the displays of subjectivities demonstrated by young people in a wider range of spaces. To what extent do these displays of feminism extend into all of the spheres of their lives? Do the young people's negotiations of feminism change in different spaces? If so, how do these young people manage these shifting senses of self and subjectivity?

Finally, this research was situated within literature surrounding negotiations of feminism, and the ethics and nature of PAR. As such, it considered the position of young men in FPAR projects in relation to these themes. Further research could seek to conceptualise the negotiations of young men in FPAR through other fields of academic thought, including engaging with research surrounding identity and intersectionality, and literature surrounding men, masculinities, and hybrid masculinities.

### 7.3. Implications of the Research

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As a thesis centered around two FPAR projects, this research has had implications in a range of spheres. These include not only the implications of this research within academic debates and literature, but also the implications that arose more immediately from the FPAR projects themselves.

Many of the implications that arose from the FPAR projects themselves have been considered in detail throughout this thesis. Not only did involvement in the projects stimulate changes to the subjectivities of the young people, but the young people also engaged in action projects which had the potential to create real, tangible change within their communities. The true impact of these implications is impossible to measure, as their effect continues to ripple outwards over space and time. In addition to these factors, involvement in the two FPAR projects also had a dramatic impact on myself as the facilitator. Throughout the projects, the young people and their experiences, opinions and ideas never failed to educate and inspire me. In particular, my time in both projects opened my eyes to the wealth of issues surrounding men, gender and sexism that I had never considered before. In the youth group project, my

time spent with the young people immersed me in debates and dialogue surrounding members of the LGBT+ community, and in particular, issues facing transgender young people. Conducting the two FPAR projects was also an emotional experience for myself as a facilitator. While at times exhausting, stressful and frustrating, the two projects were also a great joy to be involved in.

This research project also holds several key implications within academic debate. Firstly, this research has the potential to impact academics working within the field of FPAR, and with forms of participatory research more generally. This research has aimed to provide detailed accounts of the doing of two PAR projects, in order to contribute to conversations about the nature and practice of this research ethic. These two projects were built upon many of the accounts that had come before, including most notably the work of McIntyre and Cahill (Cahill et al. 2010; McIntyre 2008; Cahill 2007a; 2007b; 2007c; 2004). Many of the themes raised in the accounts of these two projects -including the importance of multi-modal forms of research, negotiations of participation, and the role of the facilitator - largely echo observations from these theorists. However, these projects have also extended these conversations to include more focus on the gendered dynamics of mixed FPAR groups, the practical issues surrounding FPAR with young people in schools and youth groups, and the nature of negotiations as a young facilitator in a school and youth group setting. In this sense, this research offers a greater range of experiences for future researchers working in this field to draw upon.

As well as drawing on the work of Cahill when considering the practicalities of doing FPAR, this project has also drawn heavily upon her research into the potential of FPAR to stimulate the creation of feminist subjectivities with young women. The findings of this project echo and affirm many of the conclusions she drew in her research surrounding subjectivities, FPAR, and young people. However, this thesis has also extended her research to include young men, and to consider more explicitly the negotiations of these subjectivities over space. As such, this research raises more questions about the impact of involvement in PAR projects on participants, questions which it is hoped will lead to further engagement in Cahill's work from other theorists.

It is also hoped that the potential demonstrated by this research will encourage more academics to consider the place of members of dominant groups in PAR more generally, and by doing so, engage more fully with Freire's arguments about the potential for the oppressors to find a space in liberatory movements (Freire 1996). In particular, it is hoped that this

research will encourage more FPAR researchers to work with groups that include young men among their participants.

While these implications for research relate relatively closely to the initial aims of this thesis, another area of potential ramifications for academics emerged and evolved during this research. The discussions surrounding the dynamic and fluid negotiations of feminism, which emerged within considerations of displays of feminist subjectivities, challenge the concept of feminist identity as a static position on a spectrum (see Swirsky & Angelone 2016; Aronson 2003). This challenge offers potential implications for researchers considering negotiations of feminism more generally, and the need for an understanding of these as fluid and dynamic.

In addition to the implications of this research for those people directly working in academia, this research also holds implications for professionals who work with young people. This research has demonstrated that FPAR with young people can create rich and engaging projects that hold the potential to encourage young people of all genders to display feminist subjectivities. As such, it is hoped that this research may encourage professionals working with young people, including teachers, youth workers or sports coaches, to more regularly utilise FPAR, and the benefits it holds for young people.

Since 2013, the fourth wave of feminism in this country has increasingly involved cisgender and transgender men in the organised feminist movements (UN Women 2016c; Baily 2012). There has been a growing recognition of the benefits that the feminist movement can have for men (Baily 2015; Messner 1993) and that men can have for the feminist movement (Alter 2018; Van Der Gaag 2014). Through encouraging academics and practitioners to involve young people of all genders in FPAR projects, it is hoped that in the future, more young people can engage in such research projects. It is hoped that more young people will have the opportunity to participate in FPAR projects that allow them to critically engage with their own gendered experiences and those of their community, and to pursue action projects that address the themes raised in their research. As such, it is hoped that more young people, both young men and young women, will be encouraged to engage in feminism, and to demonstrate support for feminist issues. Whether calling for gender-neutral toilets, fighting for media that recognises diverse gender identities, or supporting any feminist cause, young people of all genders have a place in feminism.



## 8. APPENDICES

### 8.1. Appendix One: Profile of Participants - School Project

<b>School Group Participants</b>	
<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Personal Details &amp; EPQ Title</b>
Deano	<p>Identified as a white, middle-class, heterosexual, cisgender man. Played football for local team. Was studying English Language, Psychology and PE at A-Level. Planned to pursue football professionally.</p> <p><i><b>Analysis of the gendered divide in participation in youth football in South Yorkshire.</b></i></p>
Eleanor	<p>Identified as a white, working-class, heterosexual, cisgender woman. Interested in dance. Worked part-time in a local department store. Was studying English Literature, History and Psychology at A-level. Planned to study English at university.</p> <p><i><b>Awareness of male and female classical authors amongst teenagers in South Yorkshire.</b></i></p>
Hannah	<p>Identified as a white, heterosexual, cisgender woman. Believed her family did not fit easily into class categories. Worked part-time in a local cafe. Was studying English Language, Psychology, Business Studies and Philosophy and Ethics. Planned to study English at university.</p> <p><i><b>Gendered use of taboo language amongst teenagers in South Yorkshire.</b></i></p>
Maddie	<p>Identified as white, lower-middle class. Worked part-time in a local restaurant. Was studying Geography, Biology and Psychology at school. Planned to study Psychology at university.</p> <p><i><b>The psychology of gender and serial killers in South Yorkshire.</b></i></p>
Monica	<p>Identified as a white, working class, heterosexual cisgender woman. Worked part-time in a local cafe. Was studying English Language, Psychology, Business Studies and Philosophy and Ethics. Planned to study Midwifery at university.</p> <p><i><b>Attitudes towards teenage pregnancy amongst teenagers in South Yorkshire.</b></i></p>
Winston	<p>Identified as a white, middle-class, heterosexual, cisgender man. Played football. Worked part-time in a local deli/takeaway. Was studying English Literature, Sociology, Drama and Maths. Planned to study at university, but unsure about subject.</p> <p><i><b>Attitudes and awareness of male sexual violence amongst teenagers in South Yorkshire.</b></i></p>

*Some information has been omitted from these profiles in order to protect the confidentiality or anonymity of participants.*

## 8.2. Appendix Two: Profile of Participants - Youth Group Project

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<b>Youth Group Participants</b>	
<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Personal Details</b>
Brittany	Identified as a white, working class, bisexual cisgender woman. Interested in make-up/beauty. Was studying GCSEs at school. Planned to continue studying at college.
Cameron	Identified as a white, bisexual, cisgender man. Interested in travelling. Employed full-time in adult social care. In addition, was studying health and social care part-time in college. Planned to continue working in the adult social care sector.
Elliott	Identified as a white, bisexual, cisgender man. Interested in dance and drama. Was studying GCSEs at school. Planned to continue studying at college.
Ernest	Identified as a white, middle class, asexual, transgender man. Had a social and communication disability. Was studying A-Levels at school. Planned to study computer game design at university.
Matt	Identified as a white, middle-class, pansexual transgender man. Interested in outdoor pursuits. Was studying GCSEs at school. Planned to continue studying A-Levels at school.

*Some information has been omitted from these profiles in order to protect the confidentiality or anonymity of participants.*



### 8.3. Appendix Three: Sample of Observation Fieldnotes: School Space

the girls, therefore, who felt like they could state the females in the transcript, describing them as "bitchy" and "sarcastic", so girls, here more than boys felt able to speak about other girls in a negative way, and one that works within gender norms to reinforce stereotypes - but this is a very subtle sexism.

English [redacted] [redacted] is meant to be there, but was ill. The email had bounced back, so I was a little nervous about arriving, but it seemed fine - she said "I was very welcome", or "You are very welcome". So, even though this was one of my fieldwork mishaps - that the email bounced back - it went fine. You win some, you lose some. They are reading the handmaidens tale - which is interesting and could raise some interesting discussion they were talking about power, and the commander/officer's interactions, and the survey he holds over here. The girls were all outspoken - intuitive [redacted] remained largely silent. When they discussed "penis envy" it was [redacted] who laughed, and made the flippant comment "surely they would have noticed before now" while one of the girls said "but its not about the penis - its about other things" and moved things on to a discussion of power. And then the girls scribbled lots down - and he didnt. They still just get it, in a way that [redacted] wasnt instinctively thinking. And the girls were using language like "sexualised" "objectified" "oppressed".

### Observations - Friday 28<sup>th</sup>

There was only one incident which really stood out in my observations at the start and end of the session on Friday (I missed some of the start to interview [redacted]). At the end of the session [redacted] was talking to [redacted] about a taxi ride (he had recently in an Uber). And he was talking about the sexism the taxi driver had shown to him when talking about his future plans - i.e. to become a nurse or carer of some kind, and the taxi driver had made some comment about this. Do these young people, just by virtue of what brings them here, have a more critical awareness of society than one might expect?

### **Fieldwork Journal - School Project**

**Thursday 12th January**

I went back in later for the after school session. I wasn't late that time, having resolved I would sort my day out a bit. So, managed to be there in time to park, and was much more relaxed.

The session was good. It's a shame there were only 4 of them (no ----, no ----). We even had doughnuts, which ---- have been shamed into producing (---- claimed this was down to her). Anyway, we are working on the activism stuff, and also spent some time on the production log. So that was good.

The activism stuff was good. I got them (they started in tutor time and carried on after school) to look through photos I had painstakingly printed of all the discussion groups, to think of things that could be changed. And then they sorted those sheets of coloured paper into piles according to whether these were issues they could tackle or not. And then for those that they did think they could do something about, I got them to write, on a different coloured sheet, what they could do about it.

It was great - cos they got really into it. Even ----, who I wasn't sure about. ---- had some great ideas - my favourites are torn between when he talked about language and pointed out that they could all make a commitment to improve their gendered language, and that this in turn would create change that radiates out by encouraging others to do the same. And then he also talked, when we got on to the gender neutral toilets, about going round the school and removing all the gendered signs, right now. With a crowbar, if necessary. I think I might have to type that bit up straight away, and put it somewhere that I look at it every day, to remind me that things are working.

I think maybe I, as a researcher, underestimated the importance of this last section of the project. I was so caught up with the EPQ, and the research side of things. But maybe this section of the project will really be something they can get their teeth in to.

After the activism, we talked a little bit about the EPQ, and the production log - phrasing that. And referencing (which they all seem to have forgotten how to do again). They seem kind of bogged down in their EPQ's - so they definitely just need to get them done. In some ways, that section has dragged on so much. With hind sight I probably should have kept it much, much shorter. But oh well, can't be helped. The project was always planned to go on till Easter - which it can do if needs be.

Anyway - excited for activism!

## 8.6. Appendix Six: Sample Interview Plan

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### Final Interview

Introduction to the interview - going to be asking about you, about the project, and about whether the project has had any impact or effect on you. So a lot of the questions will be asking you to think about things that have happened since the beginning of the project - i.e. since summer last year, but particularly since September. Want you to be honest, tell me what you think, because that's the most helpful thing to me. If at any point you want to finish, or leave, you can.

Identity. I'd like some background information about you, and how you see your identity.

- Tell me about your gender - how do you see this?
- Sexuality?
- Class?
- Ethnicity?
- Want to think now about each of these in turn, and the project.
- Gender. Has this changed or stayed the same over the course of the project?
- What about how you perceive your gender, has that changed at all since the summer?
- Sexuality - Has this changed or stayed the same over the course of the project?
- What about how you perceive your sexuality, has that changed at all since the summer?
- Class - Has this changed or stayed the same over the course of the project?
- What about how you perceive your class, has that changed at all since the summer?
- Ethnicity? Has this changed or stayed the same over the course of the project?
- What about how you perceive your ethnicity, has that changed at all since the summer?

At the start of the project I asked you whether you saw yourself as a feminist. Here is what you told me:

I'd say I am. I try to be anyway. I know a lot of people think, oh its just, wanting rights for women, but no its like..... equal for both..thinking about not only how they're represented but the treatment of people and... I think that that... I think feminism is important and erm, making sure obviously, it has changed a lot, but I don't think we're fully there yet. In terms of being equal.

- How do you feel now about what you said then?
- What about now - do you see yourself as a feminist now?
- What does that mean to you?
- Has that changed at all over the course of the project?
- How do you think your gender affects your relationship with feminism?
- Or class?
- Or sexuality?
- Can you give me some examples of things that you did or said before the project that you considered to be feminist?
- Can you give me some examples of things that you might consider to be feminist that you have done over the course of the project?
- Would you have done those things before?
- Why/why not?

We all do things that might be considered to be feminist, but also do things that might not be feminist, since it is impossible to be some kind of perfect feminist.

- Can you think of anytime that you have done or said something may have been sexist? By which I mean something that was negative to any gender.
- If so - why do you see this as sexist?
- Has this changed over the course of the project?
- As well as being sexist, we might do things that reinforce the patriarchal society - can you think of anything you have done or said that might have done this?
- If so - why do you see this as reinforcing the gender order?
- Has this changed over the course of the project?

Going to talk a little bit now about feminism at ----- school specifically:

- How is feminism seen at ----- by the students?
- What about by staff?
- What would it mean for your social status to be a feminist at B----- School?
- Would this have been different when you were a different age?
- What would it mean to be a feminist at ----- school in different lessons?
- Have you got any examples of parts of school life (for example lessons, in the company of different groups of friends, or extra-curricular activities) where you feel you could be feminist?
- What about parts of school life where you don't feel you can be feminist?

There were some times when I was observing in lessons, where I felt that all members of the group were silent about something that was a feminist issue. In lots of cases, these were things I had heard you guys all speak about passionately at different times. Here's one example:

I was in one of your English lessons in February. It was one of your lessons with Ms ----- . She had given you an article about women in boxing to analyse. And while you started doing that, she started talking about where she had got the article from, and said that she had to go to the women's section of the lifestyle part, rather than looking in the sport section. None of you said anything, particularly -----, who was sat right next to you!

- Can you tell me about why you chose to act like this?
- What were you thinking?
- Did you not notice it? Or was it that you didn't want to/or couldn't say anything?
- What would be the problems of saying something?
- What would have been the benefits?

There were also times when I observed in lessons and heard you be really feminist. Here's one example:

In November, I was in another of your English lessons. Ms ---- asked you some questions about gender, as part of a discussion. I heard you say loads of stuff that I would interpret as feminist, including talking about how couples should always split the bill. You also raised the topic of gender neutral toilets, and when answering questions about what women and men do, were the first one to think about masculinity and femininity, rather than just stereotypes.



- Do you remember this at all?
- Can you tell me about why you chose to act like this?
- What were you thinking?
- What were the problems of saying something?
- What were the benefits?

Want to ask you now a little bit about feminism in spaces other than school.

- Of all these spaces, are there any that you feel more able to be a feminist in?
- Tell me about that - why do you feel able to be a feminist here?
- Can you give me any examples of times you felt you could freely be a feminist here?
- How did this make you feel?
- What about any spaces that you feel less able to be a feminist in?
- Tell me about that - why not?
- Can you give me any examples of times you felt you couldn't freely be a feminist here?
- Why not?
- What did you do instead - how did you handle this?
- How did this make you feel?

Going to ask you now to think a bit more generally about knowledge, things you've learnt, or thought about, since the start of the project.

- Over the course of the project, are there any areas you feel you know more about?
- Can you give me some examples?
- Which of these did you enjoy finding out more about?
- Any you were less interested in?
- Has the project made you think differently about any other areas of life?
- Can you give me some examples?

As well as the group sessions, you guys also had to put up with me in some of your lessons.

- How did you feel about having me in your lessons?
- Did you like having me there, or find it awkward?
- Did it make you feel like you had to say certain things?
- Or make you want to go silent?
- Can you give me some examples?

Going to ask you now to think about the action stage of the project. By this, I mean the writing of the letter to Dr -----, and the effects this has had.

- How did you feel when you were writing the letter?
- How do you feel now?
- Would you try projects like this again at any stage in your life?
- Has it made you feel differently about anything?

Last set of questions I have, which felt like a nice note to end on, is about the group.

- How did you feel about the group?
- Were you friends with any of the group before the project?
- Were there any of them that you didn't know before the project?
- Did that influence your decision to join the group?
- What about now - has the project effected how you see the group?

Anything else you want to say - anything you want to ask me?

## 8.7. Appendix Seven: Consent Form - School Project

### EPQ Group Project

#### Consent Form



The  
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#### Research Title: Researching the Impact on Young People of being Involved in a Group EPQ Project Studying Gender

This form is for all students participating in the group EPQ project and the research being done as part of this. This research is looking at how young people engage with EPQ projects that look at gender, and whether involvement in this project has any impact on them. The study is being carried out by Ellie Gaddes, a PhD student at the University of Sheffield. This form is to show that you understand what the project will involve, and that you are happy to take part in it.

		Student to Initial
1.	I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
2.	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences.	
3.	I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research.	
4.	I agree to take part in the above research project.	

Name of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please complete this form and return to Ellie Gaddes.*

## 8.8. Appendix Eight: Consent Form - Youth Group Project (Version One)

### Participatory Action Research Project

#### Consent Form



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

**Research Title: Researching the Impact on Young People of being Involved in a Participatory Action Research Project Studying Gender**

This form is for young people participating in the Participatory Action Research group project and the research being done as part of this. This research is looking at how young people engage with group projects that look at gender, and whether involvement in this project has any impact on them. The study is being carried out by Ellie Gaddes, a PhD student at the University of Sheffield. This form is to show that you understand what the project will involve, and that you are happy to take part in it.

		Sign your initials here to show you have read and agree to this:
1.	I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
2.	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences.	
3.	I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research, anonymised as appropriate.	
4.	I agree to take part in the above research project.	

Name of young person: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of young person: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of parent or guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of parent or guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please complete this form and return to Ellie or ----.*





The University Of Sheffield.

**Participatory Action Research Project**

**Consent Form**

**Research Title: Researching the Impact on Young People of being Involved in a Participatory Action Research Project Studying Gender**

This form is for young people participating in the Participatory Action Research group project and the research being done as part of this. This research is looking at how young people engage with group projects that look at gender, and whether involvement in this project has any impact on them. The study is being carried out by Ellie Gaddes, a PhD student at the University of Sheffield. This form is to show that you understand what the project will involve, and that you are happy to take part in it.

		<b>Sign your initials here to show you have read and agree to this:</b>
<b>1.</b>	I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
<b>2.</b>	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences.	
<b>3.</b>	I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research (anonymised as appropriate).	
<b>4.</b>	I agree to take part in the above research project.	

Name of young person: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of young person: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please complete this form and return to Ellie or ----.*



### EPQ Group Project

#### Information Sheet

##### **Research Title: Researching the Impact on Young People of being Involved in a Group EPQ Project Studying Gender**

You are being given this information sheet because you have expressed an interest in taking part in a research project. This research project is being carried out by Ellie Gaddes, a student at the University of Sheffield, as part of her studies for a PhD degree. Before you make a decision on whether to participate, it is important that you are aware of why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully, and discuss it with others if you wish. Feel free to talk to Ellie, the researcher, if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

#### **The Project**

This project is researching the EPQ, and the effect that involvement in EPQ group projects studying gender has on the students involved. This research hopes to better understand the potential of group EPQ projects in schools.

If you choose to participate it will involve:

- Participating in a group EPQ project studying gender. You will be asked to attend regular EPQ meetings as a group of around 8 students, in which to work on the project. These group meetings will count towards the time you are expected to work on the EPQ project. As a group, you will be expected to choose a research topic and work together to each create either a 5000 word essay or an artefact. You will be expected to make these decisions as a group, but Ellie will be present in meetings to help assist and guide you with this.
- Being observed in meetings, and around school. Group EPQ meetings will be recorded by the researcher. The researcher will also be present around school, in lessons, and helping out with some activities, in order to get an idea of how young people act in and around school.
- Taking part in 2 short interviews, at the beginning and end of the project, in which you will be asked to think about the project, and your views about participating in it.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do take part you can withdraw from the project at any time. You do not have to give a reason.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Taking Part**

There are no foreseeable risks from taking part, but you can withdraw your consent at any time. You do not have to give a reason. If you have any complaints about the research, you can contact the researcher via the details below. You can also contact the Registrar and Secretary at the University of Sheffield if you have any complaints about the conduct of the researcher, or the school EPQ co-ordinator - Ms -----.

If you do take part, it is hoped you will find the group EPQ project an enjoyable and interesting way of completing the EPQ. In addition to this, it is hoped that you will find the research around this an

thought-provoking experience and an interesting chance to reflect upon yourself, your school life, and your understandings of gender.

#### **Use of Data in the Project**

All information about the research will be kept securely in locked storage at the university, or as a password-protected electronic file. If you wish to withdraw consent for your data to be held, you may contact the researcher and electronic and paper documents will be destroyed. You do not have to give a reason.

All the students in the group EPQ project will need to decide together whether or not to remain anonymous. If the group wishes to remain anonymous, then all names, including that of the school, will be changed to protect the identities of participants.

Information disclosed to the researcher will remain confidential unless the information suggests that a young person is at risk. If so, this information will be shared with a designated safeguarding member of staff at the school. It will not be discussed by the researcher with anyone else.

The audio/video recordings of group meetings will be used only for analysis and for illustration in conference presentations and lectures. No other use of them will be made without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

Information from the project will be used to address the key questions of the PhD and form the basis of a research thesis, which will be made available for participants to access. The information may also be used in conference papers, articles and books, which will discuss themes similar to the thesis. As a participant you are able to request copies of any of the final documents and ask the researcher for further information at any point.

#### **Ethical Approval**

This is a research project conducted by a PhD student based in the Sociological Studies department of Sheffield University. It has been reviewed and met all the standards of the University and departmental ethical boards. The researcher has also received Safeguarding Young People training, and holds a full Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

#### **Consent Form**

If you decide to take part, then you will be given a consent form from the researcher. This form requires a signature from you, as well as a parent/guardian. Please complete this form and return to Ellie at school.

#### **Contact Details**

If you want more information about this project please contact Ellie Gaddes via email at:

[ekgaddes1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:ekgaddes1@sheffield.ac.uk)

You may also contact the researchers supervisor at Sheffield via email at:

[l.warren@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:l.warren@sheffield.ac.uk)



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### **Participatory Action Research Project**

#### **Information Sheet**

##### **Research Title: Researching the Impact on Young People of being Involved in a Participatory Action Research Project Studying Gender**

You are being given this information sheet because you have expressed an interest in taking part in a research project. This research project is being carried out by Ellie Gaddes, a student at the University of Sheffield, as part of her studies for a PhD degree. Before you make a decision on whether to participate, it is important that you are aware of why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully, and discuss it with others if you wish. Feel free to talk to Ellie, the researcher, if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

#### **The Project**

This project is researching a type of group project called a Participatory Action Research project, and the effect that involvement in group projects studying gender has on the young people involved. This research hopes to better understand the potential of Participatory Action Research projects with young people.

If you choose to participate it will involve:

- Participating in a Participatory Action Research project. This will involve working in a group with 6-10 other members of the ---- group and Ellie, for around 8 to 10 sessions. These sessions will take place in the normal ---- sessions and will involve discussions and activities centred around gender, stereotyping, and teenagers in South Yorkshire.
- Being observed in these meetings, and ---- sessions. Group meetings will be recorded by Ellie. Ellie will also be present in ---- sessions before and after the project and will be observing the group to get an idea of how young people act in this environment.
- Taking part in 2 short interviews, at the beginning and end of the project, in which you will be asked to think about the project, and your views about participating in it.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do take part you can withdraw from the project at any time. You do not have to give a reason.

#### **Risks and Benefits of Taking Part**

There are no foreseeable risks from taking part, but you can withdraw your consent at any time. You do not have to give a reason. If you have any complaints about the research, you can contact the researcher or her supervisor via the details below. If you don't feel they have handled your complaint well, you can contact the Head of the Department of Sociological Studies - who will handle your complaint from there.

If you do take part, it is hoped you will find the group project enjoyable and interesting. In addition to this, it is hoped that you will find the research around this an thought-provoking experience and an interesting chance to reflect upon yourself, your life, and your understandings of gender.

### **Use of Data in the Project**

All information about the research will be kept securely in locked storage at the university, or as a password-protected electronic file. If you wish to withdraw consent for your data to be held, you may contact the researcher and electronic and paper documents will be destroyed. You do not have to give a reason.

All the young people in the group project will need to decide together whether or not to remain anonymous. If the group wishes to remain anonymous, then all names, including that of the ---- youth group, will be changed to protect the identities of participants.

Information disclosed to the researcher will remain confidential unless the information suggests that a young person is at risk. If so, this information will be shared with a designated safeguarding member of staff at ----. It will not be discussed by the researcher with anyone else.

The audio recordings of group meetings will be used only for analysis and for illustration in conference presentations and lectures. No other use of them will be made without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

Information from the project will be used to address the key questions of the PhD and form the basis of a research thesis, which will be made available for participants to access. The information may also be used in conference papers, articles and books, which will discuss themes similar to the thesis. As a participant you are able to request copies of any of the final documents and ask the researcher for further information at any point.

### **Ethical Approval**

This is a research project conducted by a PhD student based in the Sociological Studies Department of the University of Sheffield. It has been reviewed and met all the standards of the University and departmental ethical boards. The researcher has also received Safeguarding Young People training, and holds a full Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

### **Consent Form**

If you decide to take part, then you will be given a consent form from the researcher. This form requires a signature from you. Please complete this form and return to Ellie or Lois.

### **Contact Details**

If you want more information about this project please contact Ellie Gaddes via email at:

[ekgaddes1@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:ekgaddes1@sheffield.ac.uk)

You may also contact the researchers supervisor at Sheffield via email at:

[l.warren@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:l.warren@sheffield.ac.uk)

If you wish to make a complaint about the research, you should first contact the researcher and her supervisor. If you do not feel they have dealt with your complaint to your satisfaction, you can then contact the head of the department of Sociological Studies via email at:

[kate.morris@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:kate.morris@sheffield.ac.uk)



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