

Institution: University of Derby
Unit of Assessment: 36
Title of case study: Representations of Gender in Contemporary Britain
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This body of research comprises two distinct and complementary projects that raised public awareness of attitudes towards, and representations of, gender in 21st century Britain. Aune and Hogan, respectively, challenged popular assumptions and stereotypes about the value of feminism for a) younger women through transformative action and text (Aune) and b) older women through film and photography (Hogan). This research is part of the unit's well-established strand of expertise addressing how gender inequalities and gendered social differences are constructed. The research highlighted gender inequalities and suggested ways they may be alleviated. Aune showcased examples of British feminist activism and Hogan used the creative arts to interrogate images of older women, challenge stereotypes and provide positive alternatives, leading to increased well-being and quality of life.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The feminist activism project was undertaken from 2008-10 by Aune, Reader in Sociology, assisted by a Research Assistant (Holyoak, employed 2008-2010). The third researcher (Redfern) is employed by the NHS and contributed as founder of the webzine <i>The F Word</i>. The University of Derby's Research-Inspired Curriculum Fund funded the project (£6,750). Research had two stages: a survey of people involved in new manifestations of feminism emerging in the UK since 2000 (2008-9; 1,265 respondents), and 30 semi-structured interviews with a sample of survey participants (2009-10). Survey data fed into the book <i>Reclaiming the F Word</i> in 2010 and interview data into subsequent publications, papers and public lectures (2010-ongoing).</p> <p>Findings challenged assumptions made in the press and by academics, who claimed feminism is 'in abeyance' and inactive; or that younger feminists focus on popular culture and self-development at the expense of material inequalities. The research countered this, showing that those involved in new forms of British feminism are concerned about many of the issues associated with 1970s feminism (notably economic inequality and violence against women).</p> <p>In the second, complementary project, Hogan, Professor of Cultural Studies & Art Therapy, was co-investigator, contributing the visual methodology employed and leading the visual art project stream of the <i>Representing Self Representing Ageing</i> project (RSRA), an ESRC project within the cross-council New Dynamics of Ageing Programme, conducted collaboratively with the University of Sheffield. This included running practical workshops, co-organising the launch, and liaising with the curator for exhibition selection and management. The research comprised four projects with different groups of older women. Over 30 research outputs were produced between October 2009 and 2013. Responding to needs identified at the Second World Assembly on Ageing (2002) to challenge stereotyped images of ageing, particularly of older women, this study used creative arts to interrogate images of ageing with a view to highlighting discrimination, challenging stereotypes, and emphasising older women's capacity and contribution to society. In doing so, it built upon Hogan's previous work on gender and art therapy (which includes many articles and three edited volumes; these books (<i>Feminist Approaches to Art Therapy</i>, 1997, <i>Gender Issues in Art Therapy</i>, 2003, and <i>Revisiting Feminist Approaches to Art Therapy</i>, 2012) are now established in the curriculum for the training of art therapists. The initiative brought together researchers from gerontology and art therapy with a cultural development agency that uses the transformative power of the arts to make a difference to people and places.</p> <p>Women's images were exhibited around Sheffield to mark the centenary of International Women's Day 2011 (and are still on tour). Insights from the RSRA research included contributions to theory in critical feminist gerontology about conventional visual tropes for representing older women in popular culture, theories on embodiment in later life and discourses on women's experience and anticipation of later life. Contributions to knowledge about visual methods were also made in a</p>

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series of papers. Outputs included 5 project films and findings revealed that 'women in the Third Age of life (baby boomers) were far more aware of and felt more pressure from media and advertising imagery than did participants in the Fourth Age (80s and 90s). The ESRC also made a short-film about the project' (End of Award Report 24/11/12) and £3,500 was awarded by the AHRC for the Connected Communities Showcase (July, 2013) to make a short film as a toolkit for social science researchers.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1: The feminism project led to the publication of a book by Aune and Redfern (2010), *Reclaiming the F Word: The New Feminist Movement* (London: Zed Books). It was republished in India (2010, Books for Change) and translated into Turkish (2012, with the title *Bas Harfi F*, Ayizi Books). Zed Books published a second edition in 2013 (*Reclaiming the F Word: Feminism Today*). The book was positively reviewed in academic journals (*Gender & Development* 2010, *Capital & Class* 2012, *Sociology* 2013). Two further peer-reviewed articles (one journal article and one book chapter) were published:

2: Aune, K. (2011) 'Much less religious, a little more spiritual: The religious and spiritual views of third-wave feminists in the UK', *Feminist Review*, 97: 32-55. DOI 10.1057/fr.2010.33

3: Aune, K. (2013) 'Third-wave feminism and the University: on pedagogy and feminist resurgence' in Helen Thornham & Elke Weissmann (eds) *Renewing Feminisms: Radical Narratives, Fantasies and Futures in Media Studies*, London: I.B. Tauris.

4: The women and ageing project Representing Self Representing Ageing (RSRA) was funded by an ESRC award (£339,901.21, Res-356-25-0040, award period 12.10.2009-24.11.2011). Principal Investigator Lorna Warren (University of Sheffield) and co-investigators were Hogan (Derby) and Gott (University of Auckland). The outputs include peer-reviewed articles, workshops and presentations (see website for full list <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-356-25-0040/read>)

5: Five Project Films & Virtual Gallery: <http://www.representing-ageing.com/susanhogan.php>

6: Hogan, S. & Warren, L. (2012) 'Dealing With Complexity in Research Findings: How do older Women Negotiate & Challenge Images of Ageing?' *Journal of Women & Ageing* 24(4): 329-350 DOI 10.1080/08952841.2012.708589

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

There was considerable press response to the finding that many active, new manifestations of feminism exist in Britain, with similar characteristics to 1970s feminism.

The Guardian (2010) cited the findings as 'one of many signs that we seem to be entering a new heyday for British feminism', naming Aune and Redfern two of 'the next famous five young feminists'. *New Statesman* (2010) explained: '*Reclaiming the F Word*...charts the emergence of a new breed of feminist: young, political, pragmatic and attuned to issues of class and race, violence and power that are elided by sex-and-shopping feminism'. *Evening Standard* (2010) said the book 'hopes to dispel the notion that feminism is a derogatory word, one which is no longer needed or wanted', adding: 'This is full-on fighting feminism, of the marching and protesting kind. A little less angry than its Seventies sister, perhaps, but sharing much of the same DNA'.

The book ignited public debate about the vibrancy of contemporary feminism. *London Review of Books* (2011) debated the effectiveness of 'the feminist revival that's said to be going on', adding: 'evidence of such a movement might include recent books such as *Reclaiming the F Word*.' *New York Times* (2012) listed it as one of five books responsible for shifting public debate about feminism 'from the perennial 'Where is feminism?' debate to 'What can this resurgent feminism achieve?'

Reclaiming the F Word attracted reviews by the national and international press, women's organisations and readers' websites. Bloggers commented that it introduced and inspired readers towards activism to challenge gender inequalities: 'If you have a younger sister, teen daughter...who's been known to preface a pro-feminist thought with "I'm not a feminist, but..." *RFW* might just be the thing to bring her around' (Easyvegan, 2010); 'The great thing about the book is that it is littered with quotes, statistics and examples, and each chapter ends with a "Take Action!" box that lists a few easy activism tips, thereby encouraging the reader to acknowledge what is wrong but also take action' (glandtastic.blogspot 2012). Readers discussed it at book groups. Aune's media articles (Ms Magazine 10/2010, *TES* 02/2012) highlighted young people's role, and suggested how teachers could teach feminism. Interviewed by civil society and women's organisations (New Left Project 03/2010, Feministing (USA, 10/2010) and De Wereld Morgen (Belgium, 03/2013)) and on TV and radio (BBC Radio Derby 1/11/12, BBC 1 News at Ten, 07/2011), Aune discussed the need for feminist activism to alleviate gender inequalities.

Aune's talks, debates and panel discussions at non-academic events included: seven student feminist societies, three bookshops, one book fair (Edinburgh, 2010), women's groups (Derby Women's Centre 2012, Progressive Women, London 2010, Nottingham Women's Centre 2013), secularist organisations (London and Glasgow 2011), a teachers' conference (Durham, 2011) and women's conferences (Feminism in London conference, 2010; National Union of Students Women's Conference, Oxford, 2011; Women of the World Festival, London, 2012; Bristol Women's Literature Festival 2013; Derby International Women's Day 2013). *Reclaiming the F Word* sold 7,500 copies, indicating considerable public reach.

The second project, Hogan's RSRA project (*Look at Me! Images of Women & Ageing*) also ensured considerable public outreach through film and photography. It gave older women opportunities to engage in photography, discussion groups, exhibitions, phototherapy workshops and participatory arts at Sheffield's Guildford Grange (an extra-care home), Green Estate (a community development initiative) and The Circle (a community venue). Outputs included five films. Art works challenging stereotypes were exhibited in numerous locations and made into postcards and a DVD. A website <http://www.representing-ageing.com/> was created as a permanent resource and teaching aid, and features the project films, exhibition areas and art work samples. The films received public screenings at festivals (e.g. Bristol Encounters and Sheffield's Showroom Cinema).

Images produced reached many audiences: three exhibitions in Sheffield attracted over 400 people (at The Workstation and Jessop West exhibition space); exhibitions were held at the Royal College of Art's Inclusive Design conference, British Society of Gerontology's 40th Annual Conference, Derby University, Age UK Sheffield, and will be on permanent display at Swansea University's Centre for Innovative Ageing (and included in a Coming of Age tour which garnered an estimated 30,000 participants: <http://comingofageswansea.com/comingofage/>). The project received local press coverage and in the *THES* (12/2009) and was featured at local authority anti-ageing events, such as the York 50+ Festival (York City Council). The team presented at prominent ageing events, such as Ageism & Sexism in the Media (NDA & Age Concern) chaired by Miriam O'Reilly, Chair of the Commission for Older Women. The Labour Party Commission on Older Women cites the impact report in its Interim Report (Sept 2013: p31).

The End of Award report explains that participants felt activities made a lasting impact on their quality of life; their attitude towards their ageing was significantly altered as a result of taking part: it 'brought attention to them as individuals' and 'celebrated' their ageing. Exhibition visitors commented on their 'celebration of the ordinary', calling for 'more truthful images of older women in the media.' Exhibition questionnaires show that 87% of visitors found the exhibition 'good' or 'very good'; 83% found it 'thought-provoking' and 88% would like to see more images of older women displayed in public – 'I've thoroughly loved this exhibition. Some of the pieces brought tears to my eyes. I only wish my mum could see these images and have them speak to her as they have to me' and 'excellent piece of work on a subject that needs a lot more publicity' (see project website).

Project team members have been invited to contribute to shaping Sheffield City Council's new Strategy for an Ageing Population. RSRA was selected by the ERSC to emphasise the issue of ageism; they produced a film entitled *Monday's Child is Fair of Face* for the project. Images from the work also featured on book covers (Dolan & Tincknell, 2012, *Ageing Femininities*; Ylänne, 2012, *Representing Ageing*).

Together, working across and with a variety of media, these projects exemplify UoA researchers' commitment to challenging gender inequalities and highlight the value of activism and research to challenge stereotypes and improve women's lives. Ongoing work on gender includes an AHRC grant looking at the birth experience, including the experience of birth partners, as well as further work on women within psychiatric services.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

AUNE

1: Evidence of press discussion of the feminism project findings: Cochrane, Kira 'Feminism is not finished', The Guardian, 23/7/10 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2010/jul/24/feminism-not-finished-not-uncool>

2: Evidence of the impact of the book in shifting public debate about feminism: Gentleman, Amelia 'Training Feminism's Next Wave', New York Times, 28/08/12 http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/29/world/europe/29iht-letter29.html?_r=0

3: Evidence of the impact of the book in influencing public debate about feminism: Turner, Jenny (2011) 'As many pairs of shoes as she likes', London Review of Books, vol. 33 no. 24, 15/12/11 pp.11-15 <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v33/n24/jenny-turner/as-many-pairs-of-shoes-as-she-likes>

4: Evidence of press discussion of the feminism project findings: Urwin, Rosalind 'New feminism has started the fight-back at last', Evening Standard, 07/06/10 <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/new-feminism-has-started-the-fightback-at-last-6477572.html>

5: Evidence of the book's impact on readers can be obtained from a letter from Nottingham Women's Centre. The Centre hosts a book group for local women where the book was discussed in May 2013.

HOGAN

6: 33 listed NDA Look at Me! research outputs were produced between October 2009 and November 2011 and are listed here: <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/my-esrc/grants/RES-356-25-0040/read>; however, the outputs are ongoing and are contained on a project data base.

7: The RSRA Look at Me! project has set up a permanent website as a resource: <http://www.representing-ageing.com/>

8: Comments by users and participants are contained at http://www.newdynamics.group.shef.ac.uk/assets/files/NDA%20Findings_10.pdf

9: The Economic and Social Research Council also made a film about the project: Monday's Child is Fair of Face. <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/publications/videos/monday.aspx>

10: The agenda for the Ageism & The Media event is available at: <http://www.newdynamics.group.shef.ac.uk/ageism-and-sexism-in-the-media.html>