

MYPLACE



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Deliverable 7.1: Ethnographic Case Studies of Youth Activism

UK Feminista: young women's feminist activism

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1. Introduction

This study focuses on young women who are feminist activists. The context for it is the recent upsurge in feminist activism amongst young women in the UK after a period during the 'post-feminist' 1990s when feminist activism was not very much in evidence (Banyard 2010; Redfern and Aune 2010; Dean 2010). In the wake of the fragmentation of the Women's Liberation Movements (WLM) in Europe and North America, the black feminist critique of their basis in identity politics, and the post-structuralist deconstruction of the category 'woman', it has been argued that there was a backlash against feminism and the emergence of a new, post-feminist era (McRobbie 2008; Faludi 1992). It is against this backdrop that third wave or new feminism emerged during the first decade of the 21st century (Long 2012; Banyard 2010). This resurgence coincided with the election of a Conservative-led coalition government which has introduced austerity measures which have hit women harder than men (Stephenson and Harrison 2011; Sands 2012, 2013) and include the abolition of 'quangos', such as the Women's National Commission, and unprecedented cuts to the funding on which women's and feminist organisations rely.

The upsurge in feminist activism is understood by some as a third wave of feminism, the first and second waves being the movement for women's suffrage in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and the women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The wave metaphor derives from social movement theory and refers to 'cycles of protest' - periods of intense social movement activity punctuated by periods when movements go into 'abeyance' and activities continue but in a less spectacular more institutionally-based form (Tarrow 1994; Bagguley 2002). Social movement theory also alerts us to the predominance of young, educated people in the new social movements of the mid-20th century (Offe 1985; Johnstone et al 1994), the importance of resources to political mobilisation (McCarthy and Zald 1987), their cultural as well as political dimensions (Scott 1990) and the significance of social networks and collective identities to these forms of activism (Melucci 1989).

The conceptualisation of social movements as occurring in waves is both contentious and has entered into the vocabulary of activists themselves. It is criticised for not taking into account the different temporality of feminist activism around the world (McKay 2011; Woodhull 2003) and has led to fierce debate about whether there is a third or even fourth wave of feminism (Munro 2013; Cochrane 2014). However it is defined, most agree that the politics of third wave or 'new' feminism is about coalition and 'transversity' (Krolokke and Sorensen 2006) rather than being based on a universal identity which women share and which crosses boundaries of class, race, age, dis/ability and nation. It is also concerned to develop a feminist theory and politics that honour 'contradictory experiences and deconstruct categorical thinking' (Krolokke and Sorensen 2006: 16). This means that it starts from a position of 'multiple differences rather than from a position that advocates equivalence' (Budgeon

2011: 4). Coalition or transversal politics is central to the upsurge of new feminist politics. It is a politics of 'dialogue and cooperation' which recognises that women have different identities but also that they can come together around specific issues (Yuval-Davis 2006: 281; Cockburn 2007). It is materialised in a reflexive and self-critical concern with intersectionality (Davis 2008). The other issues that are central to new feminism are men's participation, transgender and the 'sex wars' (see for e.g. Coveney et al 1984).

This new wave of feminist activism is noted for its 'creative use of new technologies' (Long 2012: 200) and has been linked to the establishment of The F-word website in 2001 aimed specifically at younger women in their teens, 20s and 30s (Dean 2010: 130). This website was launched to provide a focal point for feminists and to reclaim 'feminism' for younger women (Redfern and Aune 2010; Dean 2010). According to one analyst, it 'reflects and has facilitated the growing emergence of forms of activism such as Reclaim the Night, Million Women Rise, Ladyfest, Feminist Fightback, Feminist Activist Forum, Object and several others' (Dean 2010: 162). Campaigns have also grown from just one woman setting up a website, opening a Twitter account and launching an Internet petition (see for e.g. The Everyday Sexism Project (<http://everydaysexism.com/>), No More Page 3 (<http://nomorepage3.org/>)).

As well as the Internet being a useful tool for feminist activism, young women have set up new groups and networks. In 2004 Finn McKay set up the London Feminist Network and also re-established the Reclaim the Night marches (McKay 2011). In 2004 the first of a series of national feminist conferences was organised by Kat Banyard, now director of UK Feminista, in Sheffield (<http://www.femconferences.org.uk/>) and, in 2010 UK Feminista was established as 'a movement of women and men' and to provide training and support for feminist activists. It provides resources which are essential for mobilisation and take different forms such as labour, time, money, skills, ideas and networks (McCarthy and Zald, 1987). It has also raised the media profile of feminism and catalysed the emergence of grassroots feminist groups across the UK. UK Feminista and associated groups and networks are the focus of this study which aims to explore how UK Feminista works, its relationship to feminist activism, and how it is engaged with by young feminist activists.

1.1 Research questions

1. What is UK Feminista and how does it relate to feminist activism?
2. How do young women become involved in feminist activism? What are the issues that are important to them? How do they understand feminism?
3. What forms of feminist activism do young women engage in? How do feminist activists relate to UK Feminista? How do they relate to other social movements?
4. What are the affective dimensions of feminist activism? What is the meaning of adopting a feminist identity?

5. How is feminist history remembered and how important is it as a source of identity for young feminist activists?

2. Methods

In order to address these research questions data were collected over a period of 15 months using semi-structured, voice-recorded interviews and participant observation. In addition, documentary material in electronic and print format was gathered through Internet searches and at events attended. Participant observation of some key events took place before interviews started in order to gather information about UK Feminista, its values, principles and activities, and its links with feminist activists. This also facilitated the refinement of the interview schedule and a reassessment of observation strategies where appropriate. Participant observation was recorded in field notes while recorded interviews were transcribed. Both sets of data were anonymised, coded (using Nvivo) and analysed thematically. Documents were analysed and used to enhance data from interviews and participant observation.

2.1 The case study organisation

UK Feminista (<http://ukfeminista.org.uk/>) was selected as a case study organisation because it is a leading national feminist organisation and is unique among feminist organisations in the UK and elsewhere in Europe in terms of its aims and how these are to be achieved. It has adopted the social change model from movements such as People and Planet. It is not a classic membership organisation which initiates and fights particular campaigns itself. Instead it supports feminist activists by providing campaign resources and training, helping to build links between activists and women's NGOs and raising public awareness of the need for feminist activism. It aims to bring about a 'world where women and men are equal' (<http://ukfeminista.org.uk/about/>). Its main form of activity is an annual summer school which provides training and workshops in feminist activism but it also organises one-off events to draw media attention to feminist activities. It works closely with a number of feminist organisations (such as Object¹ and Imkaan²) and, in 2013 it joined with Object to launch a campaign, Lose the Lads' Mags (<http://www.losetheladsmags.org.uk/>). Its core funding comes from Rosa, the UK Fund for Women and Girls, while grants for specific campaigns such as the UK Feminista Lobby of Parliament come from various other funding bodies (such as the Joseph Rowntree Trust). Funding is not secure and has to be applied for on a regular basis. In 2013 UK Feminista had one part-time and two full-time organisers. It has

¹ Object describes itself as a national human rights organisation which challenges the sexual objectification of women through lads' mags, sexist advertising and the sex work industry.

² Imkaan sees itself as a national black feminist organisation which fights against violence against women and girls.

a board of directors which employs the paid workers. The unique structure of UK Feminista's operations and its links with a diverse activist base guided the construction of the interview sample and selection of events observed.

2.2 Interviews: design

Interviews explored what motivated young women to become interested in feminism and how this interest developed; what types of issues and activities constituted their activism and what links they had with UK Feminista; how young women experienced feminist engagement and felt about collaboration and relations with other activists, groups and larger organisations; the transmission of feminist ideas through generations; and activists' view of feminist history and their connections with feminisms past and present. The interview schedule (see Appendix 1) was based closely on the 'common themes' of the ethnography work package (WP7) adopted in July 2012, which were chosen to facilitate triangulation with data from the WP5 interviews. It was designed to stimulate a structured yet adaptable conversation with respondents lasting between 45 minutes and two hours. The longest interview took an hour and 54 minutes while the shortest lasted only 24 minutes. With two exceptions (where two respondents were interviewed together), all interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis.

2.3 Interview locations and characteristics of the sample

As UK Feminista is a national movement, interviews were carried out in various locations in the Midlands, London, Manchester and Edinburgh. Interviews were held in the workplace, school, university or home of respondents or at cafés; two interviews took place in a park. Respondents were recruited initially through academics who had already carried out some research into feminist activism and through events the researchers had attended as participant observers. The final selection of respondents was based both on convenience sampling (those who agreed to be interviewed) and purposive sampling (active targeting of women under 21 and of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women as a means of diversifying the sample).

Three categories of respondents were identified consistent with the potential activist constituencies targeted by UK Feminista through training projects such as 'Generation F' (for schools) and 'start a [local] group' (for universities and local communities). The first category of respondents included schoolgirl activists who have contributed to UK Feminista training events and have received support from the latter to set up their own feminist societies. The second category comprised university students almost all of whom were research postgraduates. The third category were members of a grassroots feminist group based in the West Midlands who have participated both individually and as a group in UK Feminista events

and have helped organise such events at local level. This was the most diverse category in terms of occupation and included university students (both undergraduates and postgraduates), a schoolgirl, employed and unemployed women. In addition a fourth category of respondents consisted of UK Feminista organisers at national and regional levels and close collaborators in other national feminist organisations such as Imkaan and Object.

In total 30 young women were interviewed, all of whom were asked at the start of the interview to complete a brief socio-demographic questionnaire. Respondents were aged between 15 and 36. Of these, 13 were under 21 years old, 14 were 30 and under and 3 were aged between 31 and 36. The majority of respondents (17) identified themselves as white (including white Irish, white British, English and white other) and three as 'British' while 6 self-identified as mixed. One respondent stated she was Indian and another that she was of (an)'other ethnic group'. One respondent said she was 'Caucasian' whilst another chose not to select an ethnic category because she did not think categorising people along ethnic lines was a good thing politically. The majority of respondents (22) were in full- or part-time education at the time of interviewing (12 of them were at school, one was being home-educated and 9 of them were in higher education). Seven were in full or part-time employment and one was unemployed. Twenty two were single and 15 of these lived at home with their parent while four lived with friends and one lived on her own. Of those who did not declare themselves single, seven lived independently with their partner and one was married. None had caring responsibilities for either children or dependent adults. A socio-demographic profile of each respondent is included in Appendix 2.

The young women in the sample were overwhelmingly middle class and very well educated with high levels of social and cultural capital. Without exception they had all been to university, or were planning to go, and several had higher degrees or were working towards them. Only two of the respondents had come from what they expressly referred to as working-class backgrounds.

Although respondents were not asked explicitly about their sexual orientation, several of them spontaneously spoke about their sexuality with 6 defining themselves as queer, trans, lesbian, gay or bisexual. None explicitly defined themselves as heterosexual.

2.4 Participant observation

Participant observation was conducted at several events, in various locations, organised by UK Feminista and the networks and organisations (national and local) with which they are linked to gain an in-depth understanding of their vision, ideology and practice and of the relation between organisations and activists. Advance information about events was accessed through local and national media and through the feminist contacts built up. In total, the researchers observed and participated in 26 events/meetings (see Appendix 3). At each event detailed

field notes were taken to supplement the interview data and provide information on the event's atmosphere and dynamics. These were recorded in fieldwork diaries.

A number of UK Feminista training and support events were attended including two of their annual summer schools in 2012 and 2013, a lobby of parliament, a meeting at the House of Commons in support of the Lose the Lads' Mags campaign (Plate 1³) and a local workshop on why feminism mattered and how to start a campaign. The annual summer school which runs over two full days comprises training workshops (Plate 2), stalls (Plate 3) intellectual discussion, debates, panel meetings with successful activists and entertainment. The summer schools attract hundreds of accomplished and novice activists from all over Britain and rapidly sold-out in 2013. The lobby of parliament lasted a day and was composed of a morning session on how to lobby MPs, a short rally and march to the Houses of Parliament (Plate 4) and culminated in a lobby of MPs by activists. In addition to UK Feminista events, the researchers attended workshops, street protests (Plate 5), marches and socials organised by collaborating organisations such as War on Want women, Million Women Rise (Plate 6, Plate 7), Rise for Justice (Plate 8) and Women's Networking Hub Birmingham. Three school feminist society meetings were attended and eight fortnightly meetings of a local grassroots feminist group selected because of the group's longstanding links with UK Feminista. Finally the researchers attended a number of one-off events including a day conference at the British Library on intergenerational histories of second wave feminism and a debate at the University of Warwick on 'No More Page 3'.

2.5 Documentary material

The documentary material gathered includes leaflets, posters and song sheets from organised protests and meetings, publicity and information material produced by feminist organisations, UK Feminista 'toolkits'/training packs, screen shots of relevant web pages, videos produced by organisations, and photographs and video-clips taken by the researchers at events. These sources highlight issues of importance to the organisations, their respective histories, their links with the public, the media and the political system, and how they 'do' activism.

2.6 Data analysis

All interviews were anonymised and coded using Nvivo 9.2. Respondents were given pseudonyms. The interviews were coded and the coding tree was developed by means of an iterative process of coding interviews, discussion and agreement of Level 1 and Level 2 nodes. Nodes reflect the content of interview narratives rather than being predetermined by the structure of the interview schedule. The analysis of Level 2 nodes and their child nodes was

³ All Plates are reproduced in Appendix 4.

informed by theory to produce a number of key themes agreed by the researchers and used to structure the 'Key findings' section of the report.

2.7 Ethics

Respondents were asked to sign a consent form before interviews commenced, were given an information sheet outlining the research and providing contact details of the researchers, and were assured that they could withdraw from the research at any point. They were promised confidentiality. This was potentially problematic for some of them who have high media profiles and special care was taken when anonymising interviews and writing the report to ensure that their identities were concealed.

2.8 Positionality

The positionality of the researchers was significant to this case study. Almost all the respondents were participating in education, either at school or university, and the two researchers are university educated and share the experience of higher education with the respondents. They are both women and middle class, one being white and the other being British Asian. They therefore share gender, class and ethnic identities with many of their respondents. In addition they have both been active in feminist politics and are engaged in researching gender-based politics and inequalities. This positioning and their prior experience of feminist politics (in both cases) and migration (in one) legitimated their presence and facilitated their participation in feminist activist events.

3. Key findings

This section explores how young women who are engaged with UK Feminista came to identify themselves as feminist and become activists; the issues that are important to them and the forms of activism in which they engage; the affective dimension of feminist activism; and how they see their own activism in relation to previous waves of feminist mobilisation.

3.1 Becoming a feminist

Young women become active in feminist politics for a variety of reasons. These include experience of domestic or sexual violence, discovering that feminist writings reflect how they've 'always felt' (Redfern and Aune 2010: 209), or being brought up by a feminist mother or with a role model of a 'strong woman' (McKay 2011; Long 2012). In addition to these factors, opportunities provided by the Internet, engagement with music and other cultural forms, and involvement in other social movements were also important routes into feminist activism. Below, the transmission of feminist political culture through the family and the

education system is considered first, before exploring the influence of the Internet and other cultural and political activities. Two aspects of the turn to feminism are highlighted: on the one hand, a positive identification with strong feminist women and feminist ideas and, on the other hand, a reaction against negative experiences of sexism and male power. Feminism gives these young women a sense of identity, a voice and a way of engaging with the injustices they experience in their everyday lives.

3.1.1 Transmitting feminist political culture

A strong theme emerging from the interviews is that feminist political culture and feminist values are transmitted through families. Many of the respondents said that their mothers were feminist and that they had grown up thinking that feminism was 'common sense' (Estelle); several had been brought up by single mothers supported by women friends and other family members who were seen as 'strong' women. Some mentioned older sisters or other women relatives of their own generation who had become feminists on going to university and who had been influential. One or two said that their fathers were feminist and one recounted how her father had given her Marx's *Communist Manifesto* to read when she was ten or eleven (Tina). They spoke about their parents being left wing, of having been taken on anti-war demonstrations as young children, and of politics being a topic of conversation at meal times. The younger women, who were still at school, said they had received support from their parents for their feminist activities, such as setting up feminist societies in their schools or speaking at a UK Feminista summer school. They also talked about their parents adopting an egalitarian gender division of labour in the home and of seeing women working alongside men when they were growing up. These young women had strong and, for many, feminist women as role models as they grew up.

For some of the young women, however, the families they grew up in showed them the dynamics of gendered power in a different way and it was their reaction against this that led them to feminism. One young woman talked about how her male cousins were favoured in terms of education and she thought that this was quite unfair; others had lived in very male-dominated households and several had witnessed domestic violence, either between their parents or other close relatives. Their turn to feminism had been as a reaction against these abusive forms of male power and was often accompanied by considerable anger and emotional pain. Reproductive politics, such as a priest adopting an anti-choice view on abortion, was also a trigger for a turn to feminism.

The education system was significant even for those young women who had grown up within a pro-feminist familial culture and it was often at school or university that young women became involved in feminist activism for the first time. At both school and university feminist teachers were identified who had been influential both through what they taught and by encouraging young women to participate in feminist conferences. Some of them had

discovered feminism through reading a particular book or following a course and, at school, some of them had first heard of feminism through the history of women's suffrage. In contrast none had learnt about second wave feminism as part of the school curriculum. They all talked of feminist writers who had inspired them citing a wide range of authors from Mary Wollstonecraft and Simone de Beauvoir to Alice Walker and Natasha Walter. For many, exposure to feminist ideas led directly to activism.

The only way I could actually live with this new realisation and the anger I had around it and the sense of injustice I had around it was by feeling that I was doing something. (Kira)

It was also at school or university that many of the young women became aware of sexism, either of lecturers or of their male peers. One recalled that when she went to university, 'sexism hit me like a brick wall and so I had, there were various sorts of sparks I guess and those included having a sexist lecturer' (Kira).

The younger women interviewed, who were still at school, spoke about boys not allowing them to have a voice which, rather than silencing them, made them all the more vocal. One defined herself as a 'vocal girl'.

Feminism is being, a case of being a vocal girl, because in my classes, like there was a kind of idea that if you were a girl that you sat at the back and you weren't allowed to voice an opinion, especially in like social sciences like modern studies or history. (Regan)

They expressed a strong belief in gender equality, a belief that was undermined by the activities of some of their male peers and which they responded to by adopting a feminist identity.

3.1.2 Feminist activism and social media

The Internet was an important way into feminism and several respondents had initially encountered UK Feminista through the Internet. It enabled them to investigate what feminism is, to blog about their own experiences, to participate in campaigns by signing petitions, Tweeting and emailing, and to form connections with others in similar situations. One respondent explained that she 'came to it [feminism] through blogging'. She thought that without the Internet she 'would have found it a lot harder to meet anybody because there wasn't a group' (Kristina).

Engaging with feminism through the Internet created an online community which enabled women to feel that they were not alone. One respondent,

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...started looking for people a bit like me on the Internet [*because she felt*] a bit lost because none of my friends were interested in feminism; //...// I wanted to find, I guess, people who understood what I was talking – who I didn't have to explain things to. (Yolanda)

It was also seen as a consciousness-raising process akin to the process which took place in Consciousness Raising groups of the 1970s (Lovenduski and Randall 1993). It enabled young women to realise that their experiences were shared and that they were caused, not by individual failings but by the society of which they were part.

There's kind of two sides of Internet access, Internet activism, one side is kind of almost like the old consciousness raising groups, when you've got all these people talking on forums, talking on social media, writing blogs and commenting on each other's blogs, a lot of that is consciousness raising and the development of language to understand oppression, and like another side of it is going on other parts of the Internet and introducing these ideas to other people and I think that's really important. (Reese)

Internet activism, rather than taking the place of face-to-face interactions, often led to a decision to set up or join an offline feminist group. A similar process was described by a young woman who had escaped an abusive relationship and who had begun to understand what had happened to her and to regain a sense of self after encountering feminist writings about domestic violence on the Internet. She 'came out' as a survivor, found that many other women had similar experiences, and began writing her own blog which was a way of influencing others.

3.1.3 Cultural politics

Some respondents had become involved in feminist activism through music or art and continued to pursue what they saw as cultural activism.

So music was my way of finding out about lots of other things and so getting into bands like the Smiths and Morrissey is one of the most famous vegetarians and so I'd find out a lot of stuff through being involved in, like, music and that is what kind of led me onto the whole kind of feminist activism around cultural involvement //...// And so there were bands that were having really positive messages. I didn't know at the time that it was part of the Riot Grrrl movement. (Sandy)

Riot Grrrl developed as a feminist response to the male-dominated music scene and took its inspiration from Punk and DIY activism (Monem 2007). Several respondents had become

feminist activists through engagement with music or art that had a feminist message and continued to be involved in cultural politics.

A lot of cultural stuff isn't just cultural it's creating kind of accessible routes in for people to discuss politics in a way which isn't jargon, which isn't that kind of like dergy Marxist, Leftist. It's about creating, and this is totally was what was in my mind with Riot Grrrl, it gave you a new vocabulary and you could start to think through issues in your own way which I think as a young woman is really important because you feel like you are defining things for yourself even if you are perhaps not. (Roxy)

3.1.4 Other social movements

Research demonstrates that activists are often involved in more than one social movement (Savage et al 2008; Haenfler et al 2012) and this is supported by the findings of this case study. The young women were engaged not only in feminist activism but also in other forms of activism such as anti-racism, disability rights, LGBTQ activism, environmental activism, animal rights, left-wing politics and student politics. Some had been on the student demonstrations against the tuition fees and involved in the Occupy movement, particularly when it had taken place on university campuses. The schoolgirls, as well as setting up 'Femsocs' in their schools, were engaged with school Amnesty groups and, in one school, a gay rights society.

3.1.5 Identifying as feminist

UK Feminista adopted the name UK Feminista in order to challenge the stigmatisation attached to 'feminism'. The adoption of a feminist identity is conscious and deliberate. It is part of a campaign to reclaim a stigmatised identity and can be seen as a process of collective identity formation (Melucci 1995). The language used to talk about being a feminist reflected this; young women talked of 'coming out' and being 'proud' of being a feminist.

I felt like everybody would hate me, and I over-estimated I think the amount that people would react negatively, because actually when I came out and I was openly feminist it wasn't that bad. (Yolanda)

Many of the respondents felt very strongly that feminism was an extremely important form of political engagement that had a long history of which they were proud to be part. They spoke about how it was disrespectful to the feminists who had gone before them to refuse the identity of feminist and were proud to claim this identity. They were angry that other young women did not accept that they were also feminist and saw one of their missions as

explaining to their peers what it was to be a feminist. One talked of how her peers starting a sentence with 'I'm not a feminist but...'

...used to really, I mean, get on my nerves and also just upset me, cos I was like what, why, like you, you say you're not a feminist then you say a feminist statement after it so what's the harm with then calling yourself a feminist?
(Jalayah)

The stereotype of a feminist that these young women are being compared to is that of the angry, hairy, humourless, bra-burning, dungaree-wearing lesbian who is bitter and twisted because she is envious of women who are able to get their pictures in lads' mags. They thought this probably dated from second wave feminism and those who did not know very much about this movement thought that it had been an angry and quite extreme, man hating movement. At the same time they thought that this stereotype was probably a media creation bearing little relation to reality.

The older feminist activists also fought against this stereotype with some suggesting that the radical feminist position fuelled the idea that feminists were man-hating. The question of men's inclusion in feminism is a heated one in the contemporary feminist movement and while the schoolgirls interviewed, on the whole, understood feminism in terms of equal rights, there was more variation in the understandings and self-definitions of the women in their twenties and thirties. They defined themselves as feminist in different ways; some were radical feminist, some Marxist or socialist feminist and some black feminist. Most were critical of feminism for being so exclusively white and middle class. The issues which divided them were the inclusion of men, the inclusion of transgender women, and their position on sex work and prostitution. Moreover, despite the commitment to intersectionality, black feminists, feminists who had come from working-class backgrounds, trans-feminists and disabled feminists often experienced the movement as exclusionary and as based on a white, middle-class, able-bodied identity. One respondent defined herself as 'queer':

So when I call myself queer I'm not just talking about my sexuality, it's also my race as a mixed race person. So yeah and so I don't really think that I belong to a community. (Deanna)

She explained:

This is why I think the White people generally are, I don't like the word generally, but they are socialised not to see race because this is a problem not only within feminist movements but LGBT movements too and when I do go to, say, a political Black event it is usually sexist. So whenever, there are always problems. (Deanna)

Thus, while the discovery of feminism may help activists make sense of their lives and give them an identity, it is not always an identity that they see reflected in UK Feminista or the contemporary feminist movement.

3.2 Issues and activism

In this section the issues that concern young feminists and the forms of activism they are involved in are examined. The picture emerging from the data is that the most important issues for young feminists are cultural rather than material. They are concerned with the representation of women, i.e. either their lack of representation or the distorted representation of women in the cultural sphere. They are also concerned with violence against women. The forms of activism they engage in range from the setting up of feminist societies in school and university to organising feminist cultural events and taking part in street protests.

3.2.1 The (mis)representation of women

UK Feminista and the young women associated with it are concerned with the 'objectification' of women. By this they mean women's portrayal as sex objects and the 'pornification' of culture in the audio-visual media, from daily newspapers to music videos and computer games to advertising. They are also concerned that women are presented in passive roles, often as victims of crime (rarely as people who are actually doing something about it) or that they are relatively invisible. This view is supported by recent reports published by Object (2009), Eaves et al (2012), Women in Journalism (Martinson 2012) National Union of Students (Phipps and Young 2012) and Girlguiding UK (2013). Almost all the schoolgirls and university students in the sample spoke about sexualised images of women in the media and the impact that such images had on them. For example, at a feminist society discussion on pornography, at a London school, a major concern was that the sexualised images of young women in the media combined with the ready availability of pornography gave young people, and particularly young men, an unreal idea of sexual relationships and how girls were meant to look and act. One young woman reported that boys at her previous school had told her that while they respected most women generally, they had no respect for women where sex was concerned (Fieldwork diary, 19 November 2013). At another feminist society meeting, at the same school, the topic of music videos, in particular Robin Thicke's *Blurred Lines* dominated a discussion on the media (Fieldwork diary, 15 October 2013). Women's representation in lads' mags and whether or not it was anti-working class to oppose the presence of lads' mags on supermarket shelves was also the subject of discussion at one of the community-based feminist group meetings attended.

3.2.2 Street harassment and male violence

Another theme that emerged from the data is that of male violence against women, from everyday sexual harassment in the street to violence in the home. The fact that young women are concerned about violence against women is reflected in the focus that is placed by organisations such as UK Feminista, Object and Imkaan on this issue. The young women spoke about the rise of a 'rape culture' and the licence given to young men to sexually harass young women which was seemingly encouraged by music videos such as *Blurred Lines* and the lyrics of many chart-topping numbers. A large proportion of the sample had experienced sexual harassment or bullying in the street or at school or university. Many young women experienced 'low level' harassment such as wolf whistles and comments on their appearance. They spoke about how uncomfortable and powerless it made them feel (see Younis, 2013 for a detailed account). One of them said:

...you don't have any power in that sort of interaction //...// no matter what you, your sort of political views on it are, when it happens you don't have any control //...// it's just, being made uncomfortable in a public place, when boys aren't made uncomfortable. (Sabrina)

Others experienced more alarming instances of harassment, for example being followed at night in a near-empty shopping centre or having coffee thrown at them when they dared to confront a young male harasser. The importance of the issue of harassment is summed up as follows:

The fact that he can have that much of an impact on me and he can make me feel unsafe, when I'm just walking down the street, I think just shows how much something needs to change, like that is not okay, and no man has the right to make another woman feel that way.// //When I talked about it in school, you know, other girls, I was shocked at how many of the girls had these experiences. (Jalayah)

A number of respondents had been subjected to or had witnessed physical and emotional abuse at home which had made male violence an important feminist issue for them.

3.2.3 Intersectionality

From the researchers' observations and from the sample of young women interviewed, it is clear that the contemporary feminist movement is overwhelmingly young, white and middle class though BME women were present in significant numbers at the events observed. Men were also involved. Almost all the school and university groups with which contact was made included men and, in the co-ed schools in Scotland and London, young men were members of Femsoc. The respondents took the view that patriarchy damages men as well as oppressing

women. At the UK Feminista summer school there were young men present, though they were in a very small minority. In the community-based group, however, men were not included. This issue is a divisive one though UK Feminista's position is quite clear and many of those interviewed echoed it.

I mean Bell Hooks emphasises massively the importance of having men in the movement, we don't want to be, it to be an exclusive movement at all, it shouldn't be excluding of any men or of any women or of anyone else but I think, yeah, it is definitely important to have those [women-only] spaces where people can express their experiences. (Jalayah, 17)

Radical feminist networks, such as London Feminist Network and the Reclaim the Night marches, however, exclude men and also trans-women and some of those interviewed identified as radical feminist and sympathised with this position. UK Feminista is very careful not to align itself with any particular 'brand' of feminism. Its aim is to provide resources for all feminists in order to support any and every form of feminist activism. It therefore adopts an open and inclusive position.

An issue that has emerged as a key issue for feminists today however is that of differences between women and the need for an intersectional approach to the question of gender and oppression. Many of the young women interviewed thought that questions of 'race', disability and class within the movement of the 1960s and 1970s had been ignored and that it was important to deal with these questions in a direct way. The question of intersectionality (the recognition that different axes of oppression intersect to produce different impacts on different groups of women and on the relations between these groups) has been addressed to some extent by UK Feminista. For example, at its annual summer schools, UK Feminista ensures that representatives of BME and migrant women's groups, disability rights' groups, older women's groups and trade union women were present throughout the programme. However, there is a strong feeling among many black and disabled feminists that the feminist movement continues to represent mainly white, middle class women. This charge was made by almost all the young women of BME background in the interview sample. One explained:

It's like when I went to that UK Feminista event and yeah they always talk about women but all they do is universalise the White woman's experience and it's just really frustrating and I would say, well somebody was talking about the LGBT movement and I was like 'well what LGBT movement are you talking about here?' and then she didn't know what to say because she knew she was talking about the White LGBT movement. (Deanna)

Another respondent spoke about the silence within the feminist movement on the issue of both race and class and the seeming inability of feminism to combat the racism and

Islamophobia expressed by far right movements such as the BNP and EDL. She questioned whether the mere positioning of oneself on the left of the political spectrum and of proclaiming radical politics gave any organisation or individual the right to assume they were progressive on all political questions.

You know, as a white person there's a lot that can be said around class and like current kinds of racism like with the English Defence League and all this kind of stuff and it feels like there isn't really a coherent feminist response to that. It just doesn't seem to happen so there might be these anti-EDL rallies that pop up and you go along to but because the EDL specifically targets the white working class I've always felt it's something that you want to confront but again there's not this broader feminist queer place to do it from. So there's still so much that has to be unpicked I think. (Robyn)

3.2.4 Forms of activism

Young women are more likely than are young men to engage in service and community activities and volunteer for non[party]-political and not for profit groups (Niemi, Hepburn and Chapman 2000; Flanagan *et al* 2002; CIRCLE 2002, 2013; Jenkins 2005). In addition, those reporting on the recent upsurge of feminist activity and actions note the many alternative ways in which politics is done (Cochrane 2014; McVeigh 2013; Mesure 2009). Here young women's feminist activism is situated in five categories: educational activism, service and community politics, street politics, cultural feminist activism and digital activism. While these five separate categories of activism are identified, it is recognised that cross-fertilisation occurs between them.

3.2.5 Setting up feminist societies

Of the thirty respondents, five had set up feminist societies at their school or university with a further six organising conferences or setting up feminist networks and organisations. UK Feminista plays an important role in encouraging young women to set up feminist societies. One who had set up a feminist society at her school said:

I went to the UK Feminista thing because obviously they, there's more there about actual activism and what sort of issues you can get involved with and what kind of organisations there are, which isn't so accessible if you're just sort of, cos you don't know where to start if you're just on your own. (Sabrina)

Another had set up a feminist society at university.

Not long after I set up the society, UK Feminista was started, and I remember feeling incredibly inspired by the work of UK Feminista, I think most importantly because it showed me that I wasn't alone in starting up a feminist society.... so we acted as a support society for one another. (Sian)

3.2.6 Street politics

Almost every respondent had participated in some form of street politics. Demonstrations, marches and rallies were the most common type of street protest experienced. During the interview period, a number of respondents reported having taken part in the international V-Day 1 Billion women rising for justice events against violence against women (demonstrations, flash mobs, dance-ins etc.) organised across Britain, the Million Women Rise marches of 2012 and 2013 in London, the Reclaim the Night marches which took place in a number of British cities in November 2012 and 2013, the SlutWalks of 2011 in London and 2012 in Birmingham and other cities.

Participation in street politics was not limited to feminist campaigns. A number of the participants in this study (across the age range) said they had also taken part in street events related to anti-racism, anti-fascism, anti-war and anti-cuts. Two respondents talked about spectacular acts of civil disobedience in which they had engaged including holding up nuclear convoys by singing peace songs in the middle of the road (as part of the 'Women on the road for peace' tour) or by chaining wheelchairs across Oxford Street, in London, bringing traffic to a standstill and highlighting the injustice of disability allowance cuts.

3.2.7 Cultural feminist activism

Cultural feminist activism has its roots in the do-it-yourself ethic of counter-cultural production of the Situationist International led by Guy Debord in 1950s France. Elements of this activism were borrowed by women's liberation and new left groups in the 1960s and 1970s. DIY activism takes symbols, discourses and representations from mainstream society to produce counter-cultural artefacts – journals and zines, graffiti slogans, posters - in order to disrupt and challenge dominant meanings and thereby raise oppositional consciousness. Feminist cultural activism has been exemplified in the practice of movements such as Riot Grrrl, which first emerged in the early 1990s, in the USA, as a fusion of punk rock and DIY activism. While Riot Grrrl did not constitute as extensive and visible a movement in the UK as it did in the USA, it left a legacy of cultural feminist activism taken up by the UK Ladyfest movement in the 2000s, by feminist girl bands and 'zinesters' who gained the confidence to engage in creative activism through art and which has become part of much feminist Internet production today. Among respondents three declared having a strong cultural feminist side to their activism. This has involved: one of them being a member of the London chapter of Riot Grrrl in 2001; all of them being participants in Ladyfests since the first one, in Glasgow (2001); two of them organising Ladyfests in Brighton (2005) and Manchester (2008)

respectively; two of them running Ladyfest workshops (e.g. on self harm, zine making) in other years; and creating a Ladyfest film archive. In addition to being Ladyfesters, two of the respondents are accomplished zinesters, producing their own zines discussing issues such as violence against women and self harm and one has her own Riot Grrrl-inspired band. Describing the positives of DIY activism, one of the respondents says:

Yeah again this is something, this is what attracts me when you can have an idea in your mind and almost put a call-out and all these strangers come together. This is my favourite form of activism because you don't know what's going to happen and there was probably a core team of maybe around 10 people and we took about a year and we organised this event [Brighton Ladyfest] and it was over 5 days. I think it was over about 13 different venues. These were all young women, there was men involved as well, who perhaps hadn't organised anything before and it was just incredible ... (Robyn)

3.2.8 Digital activism

The Internet plays an enormous part in feminist activism today. According to a survey of 1300 feminists carried out by Redfern and Aune, 70 per cent agreed that 'the Internet has been instrumental to today's feminist movement' (2013: 15) and the argument that the Internet in itself has led to a fourth wave of feminism in the 2000s is one that is put forward by a number of social commentators (Munro 2013). What has emerged from the findings of this study is that the Internet has enabled feminists, especially those just starting out, to try out feminist activism and to call out and challenge sexism and misogyny from a safe place. Blogging and creating and writing for e-zines emerged as one of the first activities in which respondents in this sample were involved, with most using online platforms such as Tumblr and Wordpress. Apart from using the Internet to challenge sexism, many respondents also used it to meet like-minded people, to discuss feminist issues and find out about campaigns. This involvement enabled them to move from indoor 'keyboard activism' to outdoor street politics and action in campaign groups. For example, one young woman met people online with whom she set up the campaign for consent (against poor sex education in schools which generally side-steps the issue of consent and taking part in sex against one's will) and became involved in the 'No More Page 3' campaign. She explained:

And as I got more involved in online communities and things, they started, I started coming across feminist events. I went to like the 'Women of the World' festival, this past February. And obviously like UK Feminista summer school. So, by going to those places I've got to talk to people, which is really nice. (Yolanda)

Another young woman moved from blogging and talking to feminists online to becoming a member of a community feminist group. The Internet is also used extensively for actions such as petitioning decision makers, taking opinion soundings and mobilising activists over

particular issues. This has been done very effectively through online campaigns such as the 'The Everyday Sexism Project', 'No More Page 3', 'Lose the Lads' Mags and the campaign launched by Caroline Criado-Perez in favour of retaining at least one female image on UK bank notes.

3.2.9 Public service and community activism

Many feminist activists choose careers allowing them to practice their feminism and continue their activism once they leave education and training. For a number of respondents, feminist activism formed part and parcel of their working life and leisure time. This was particularly so for those working in the public and voluntary sectors, including public sector trade unions, education, health, social work and women's and social justice NGOs. The possibility for feminists today of making career choices which facilitate their activism is a legacy of WLM activism in the 1960s and 1970s when no such choice existed for feminists and when trade unions and NGOs and the public sector were not open to feminist ideas.

Among those interviewed and in employment or who had been employed before a return to education, the overwhelming majority have, or had, jobs in the women's and social justice NGO sector, local government, community housing, youth probation and higher education. Many have consistently raised women's issues in the workplace and highlighted the gendered impacts of certain social policies on women. One respondent explained:

Everything I did was feminist and everything that I chose to do like the work that I did when I finished the Masters was like I basically spent 5 years working in like a homeless organisation //... // and in that role I basically pushed the women's agenda because women were very much forgotten about because everybody just sees the homeless man on the street and they forget about the hidden homeless which is predominantly women. So for me that was how I was doing my activism within my work environment. (Sandy)

Voluntary work and fund raising for charities was the most common form of civic activism undertaken by respondents. The school girls in the sample undertook fundraising and voluntary work through school feminist society campaigns (e.g. in favour of the Women's Empowerment Project or the organisation Daughters of Eve which fights the practice of female genital mutilation) or through community volunteer schemes supported by their school; helping at a local soup kitchen was cited as an example. Similarly, a number of the university students were also involved in fund raising and undertook voluntary work such as helping out at the Fawcett Society or at a rape crisis centre or other local organisations supporting domestic violence survivors.

3.3 Affect and activism

Affect is important to feminist activism in three ways: it acts as a motivation for involvement; the networks out of which activism grows and which nourish it are experienced as supportive and often overlap with friendship networks; and taking part in activism is exciting and fun. Pleasure, passion and voice are central to being an activist and are sometimes contrasted with their lack in conventional politics. These three aspects are considered in turn.

3.3.1 Anger

Anger and rage were often mentioned in discussions of how women became involved in feminist activism. Women felt angry that they were unable to do everything that boys could do at school, they raged at male perpetrators and colluding mothers, and were frustrated at the lack of power they felt in relation to street harassment. One of the women recounted her anger at her uncle's violence and her continuing anger at men.

I had an uncle who was very aggressive towards his wife and I hated him...he was very jealous and he hit his wife and, you know, talked to her in a very disrespectful way, and I kind of saw that, ... and I remember very clearly when I was fourteen I hit him because I saw him hit his wife. (Shanaya)

Feminism allowed them to channel their anger by providing both an explanation for their experiences and a legitimate way of fighting against the injustices that angered them. It enabled them to direct their anger against sexism and towards a more socially just and gender equal society.

I used to just come home and say, 'oh, a man just beeped at me from his car, what an idiot. Argh.' And I just used to rant and shout all the time, but then I suppose throughout the summer, maybe a bit before, I've been writing things and I've got a blog, so she [mother] said 'Look you need to write this down cos you need to channel it and stop just being angry and put it to some use'. (Cora)

It also allowed them to channel damaging emotions of shame and self blame outwards rather than being eaten up by them. Several of them mentioned that they had experienced periods of mental ill health which were linked to situations of domestic violence or bullying and sexual harassment at school. Discovering feminism in these cases had been part of the healing process and enabled them to become part of a feminist community. Anger was also expressed at injustices within the feminist movement which was perceived as made up largely of young, white, middle-class women. Women were angry about the racism within and outside feminism, at how disabled people are treated, at how issues such as poverty and public expenditure cuts are marginalised, and at how trans people are treated both within and outside the movement. Anger motivates involvement and activism. It is also seen as too

strong an emotion for conventional politics. One of the young women said, 'Like I don't think I will ever be a politician because I'm too angry and I'm too loud.' (Shanaya)

3.3.2 Belonging

It is through a sense of belonging to a feminist community that women experience the feminist movement as supportive and this was enacted at the UK Feminista summer school. One of the organisers took time to tell everyone about a woman who had been unable to get to the summer school and felt very isolated as a feminist. She asked everyone to wave their arms or hold up a sheet of paper with the name of this woman on it while she took a photograph to send to her. There were comments such as, 'It's really lovely. That's what I love about coming to events like these.' One of the younger respondents told us how her involvement in one of the campaigns had led to her feeling that they were like a 'family', 'we're all really close, we're a bit like a family, it's really sweet' (Yolanda). They spoke about how becoming part of a feminist group or finding like-minded women had resulted in lasting friendships and had often created friendship networks when they moved to a new place. One said that 'feminist networks are very much friendship networks' (Roxy) while another told us of the support she got from being part of a group.

I just wanted to be part of a group which gave me something more, more feminist actually, because it's emotional support, friendship and laughing and doing and that's what feminism means to me. (Estelle)

Conversely, friendship networks were also essential to sustain feminist activism.

Some links are being sustained because you then create friendships and I think again it comes back to relationships and I think that is so important in activist networks because you get burnt out and because sometimes you are doing difficult things or whatever, it helps you, I don't know, stay a bit more sane or grounded. (Roxy)

The support experienced as part of a feminist community was also important for those who defined themselves as gay, queer, trans, bi-sexual or lesbian and wanted to 'come out', sometimes in a domestic context of homophobia.

Yeah my Dad is [*homophobic*] but he would never say anything to – this is the thing about like racism and homophobia, you might be racist but that doesn't mean you are going to say anything to me because you see me as an exception.... Like he'd prefer that I wasn't [queer] but he wouldn't say anything. (Deanna)

Often the strength to come out resulted from the support of other feminists, both online and off line, and the realisation that they were not the only person going through these experiences.

I was meeting other feminists and through that I actually came out as a bi-sexual... So for me that was a life changing... that was when I met people who were... who were like me, but I had all my life been alone in that sense. (Shanaya)

Feminism allowed young women to find others who were 'like me' and to find the courage to come out.

Humour is an important part of feminist activism partly in order to counter the stereotype of humourless feminists. At the UK Feminista 2013 summer school Laura Bates who set up the Everyday Sexism Project gave an example of how humour can be used as part of an 'alternative protest' in response to Boris Johnson's 'sexist and racist' comment that women only go to university to get husbands. They invited women to Tweet Boris Johnson (the Conservative mayor of London). She said: 'The responses were so funny and so witty... saying things like "Boris, I went to university and don't have a husband, should I apply for a refund? Please advise." ... It was just brilliant because it completely cut down all those people who say feminists are uptight and don't have a sense of humour and it was just a joke...because the protest was so funny.' (Fieldwork diary, 17 August 2013)

3.3.3 Passion

Activism also involves passion.

It's quite sort of exciting and fun to be part of a group that's passionate about changing things, you know, something, a specific issue, or just generally wanting a better deal for women. (Estelle)

It was exhilarating and exciting and the young women we spoke to had a sense that they were going to change the world and make it a better place for everyone. This passion is something that they feel is missing from conventional politics. One of the young women said, 'I just feel like party politics is just not, it's just never really radical enough for me.' (Jalayah)

Involvement in feminist activism gives young women a voice and a way of channelling the anger they feel at the injustices they experience; it is fun, exciting, empowering and supportive but can also run the risk of burnout. It is full of passion and commitment and the vision of a better, more just society where women and men are equal.

3.4 Feminist history

The question of whether young feminists today feel they have a connection with previous feminist movements has been raised recently by both academics and activists as events commemorating the 100th anniversary of the suffragettes have taken place over the last two years and the current upsurge of feminist activism has intensified. The idea that exploring women's and feminist history provides a useful methodological tool for telling one's own story and that of other women has been at the heart of a number of recent events. These include: the discussions which took place at the learning exchange days of the Feminist Activist Forum, in July 2012, on trans and intersex issues and their relationship with feminism from an intergenerational perspective; and the Sisterhood and After conference 'In conversation with the Women's Liberation Movement: intergenerational histories of second wave feminism' which was held at the British Library in October 2013 and which posed questions about the issues and forms of activism linking feminists today with 1960s and 1970s feminism.

As noted above, young feminists' conscious decision to claim an unambiguous feminist identity indicates a willingness to be linked to previous feminist generations and a respect for their achievements. In addition they construct a feminist identity by using the language that feminists used in the 1960s and 1970s; they talk about sexism, patriarchy, women's oppression and so on. There are of course new elements to current feminist identities among which are the awareness of how sexism interacts with other forms of oppression or discrimination like racism and poverty. Overall, however, the history of feminism that these young women relate to enables them to create a collective feminist identity.

3.4.1 Debts owed to previous generations

Young feminists today often talk about owing a debt to previous generations of feminists. In their book *Reclaiming the F Word*, Redfern and Aune state, 'whilst recognising that second-wave feminism wasn't perfect, in our experience younger feminists are quick to acknowledge their debt to older feminists' (Redfern and Aune 2010: xi). Similarly, in this study, many respondents spoke of women today being indebted to the suffragettes who fought for the right to vote and sometimes died as a result of spectacular actions (Emily Davison) or after several rounds of hunger strikes and being force fed by the authorities. Others spoke of enjoying reproductive rights because women in the 1960s and 1970s had battled to win control of their bodies. The importance of feminist history and the need for alternative, feminist commemorations in order to preserve that history was highlighted by a German student who talked about a commemoration in honour of lesbian, other non-heterosexual women and young women labelled 'asocial' by the Nazi regime. These women had been incarcerated in a special concentration camp and eventually exterminated and she felt that it was important that feminists honoured their memories as they were not remembered in any official ceremonies.

3.4.2 Fighting the same battles

Research shows that young feminists feel connected to previous generations through battles fought over common issues and that they do not see a rupture between old and new movements despite the problems of previous feminisms (McKay 2011; Long 2012). In Redfern and Aune's survey of 1,300 women of whom three-quarters were under the age of 35, 85 per cent thought that the 'important feminist issues today are "quite similar" or "very similar" to those of the 1970s' (Redfern and Aune, 2010: 16). This view also came through in the interviews conducted for this study and, in fact, the idea that some of the old issues may have actually become worse. Evidence for this put forward by some young women included that: the pressures on women to conform to certain beauty ideals are more extreme; the conviction rate for rape has gone down; pornography is more visible in our everyday lives than it was in the 1960s and 1970s. On the other hand there is also recognition that the feminism of the 1960s and 1970s is represented as complex and problematic while that of the first wave has been softened by distance. One of the older women put this eloquently:

I think younger activists in particular are hungry for a history, an education, a knowledge of what went before and I think it is all part of that. I also think there's a certain comfort or liberalism about focusing on the Suffragettes, even though they were incredibly radical and I think sometimes people don't realise how much so, but now I think they're now perhaps safe whereas the Second Wave is fraught with problems ... you know, this very increasing focus on intersectionality, privilege checking, etc, and the Second Wave being such a source of criticism for racism, classism, and homophobia and trans-phobia, I can see why some people like to skip over that and go back to something that's so far away, there aren't those criticisms, although of course there have been and black feminists, early on, made a lot of critiques of it but it seems that because of this general historical amnesia, people have conveniently forgotten it and now we can all unite together and the Suffragettes are fluffy and harmless (Frankie).

4. Conclusions

UK Feminista, as a small, non-membership organisation which supports and provides training for feminist activists, can be seen as a mobilising structure. It mobilises activists through the provision both of resources and of an environment for the generation of activist networks. It also catalyses the formation of new feminist organisations and groups through, for instance, supporting young women trying to set up feminist societies in schools. There has been a significant increase in the number of feminist societies in schools and groups at local level in the past two years which suggests that UK Feminista's interventions may be having an effect. Through the events and actions it supports, it also brings established women's NGOs, many of which are social movement organisations originating in the WLM of the 1970s, and grassroots

feminist activists together thereby creating channels of communication which can be understood in terms of bonding and bridging capital. To achieve its goal of supporting and encouraging grassroots activism, UK Feminista builds alliances around particular issues, such as the Lose the Lads' Mags campaign. These alliances can be seen as a form of transversal politics and include a range of organisations and individuals from trade unionists to celebrities.

The findings of this study also show that UK Feminista is associated with the creation of a positive feminist identity. One of its first goals was to raise the profile of feminism in the media and draw attention to feminist activism. There has been an increase in discussions of feminism in the media, not only in newspapers that would be expected to be sympathetic, such as *The Guardian*, but also in other sectors of the media, and UK Feminista organisers are frequently interviewed on radio and TV. The young women interviewed are proud to claim a feminist identity which is constructed in relation to negative stereotypes of feminism and to the history of the feminist movement. Feminist history is a means of constructing both individual and collective identities with feminist colours (green and purple) being prominent in web pages, leaflets, slogans, and dress while images of the suffragettes themselves have been variously used, e.g. in the lobby of parliament which took place in October 2012. Through these actions feminist history is being reclaimed and remembered differently and the predominant understandings, particularly of second wave feminism as strident and angry, are being challenged.

This work of reclaiming feminist history and identity can be understood in terms of the formation of a collective identity which is generated within feminist activist networks both on and offline. As with the formation of any identity, however, there are exclusions which were evident amongst respondents and which UK Feminista attempts to counter with a theoretical and practical commitment to inclusivity. This was reflected in the political orientation of respondents. They were opposed to the right wing feminism that can be found in the Conservative party and which promotes Margaret Thatcher as a feminist icon and placed themselves firmly on the left of the political spectrum, often supporting other new social movements and either the Greens or Labour. Many also engaged in anti-fascist and anti-racist activity and several were active within transnational networks.

The Internet was an important way into feminist activism, it operated as a form of consciousness raising for young women trying to find out about feminism and was also an important tool for activism, allowing them to influence others as well as making contact with feminists online. The evidence from this study suggests that it is a cultural politics which appeals to young women who are experiencing lad culture at first hand and are drawn into activism by a politics which promises to combat lad culture and the objectification of women in the media, the rape culture promoted in music videos, and which deals with issues of body image, bullying and street harassment. These are the issues prioritised by UK Feminista and

many other feminist organisations. Issues such as equal pay, public expenditure cuts, increasing poverty and childcare have not been given as much attention. Issues such as this are seemingly glossed over in favour of 'spectacular' issues and actions which are more likely to gain media attention (Benn 2013). It has to be noted, however, that attracting media attention was one of UK Feminista's first priorities in order to raise the profile of feminism. Some respondents were critical of this absence, drawing attention to the importance of these issues to working-class women and arguing that this reflects the middle-class composition of the movement.

Young women acquire a feminist culture and knowledge of feminism through two key institutions – the family and the education system. University, and increasingly schools, constitute an important means of cultural transmission for feminist activism and this close link between feminism and education has meant that feminism is an intellectually-based movement, drawing in highly educated and, in the main, white and middle class women who are rich in social and cultural capital. Some of them had a strong sense of entitlement and were secure and confident in their own abilities. Many came from high achieving families and had a clear vision of what they wanted to do with their lives. Being a 'second hand citizen', as one of them put it, was not part of this. Feminism gives these young women a voice; it enables them to challenge the injustices they experience and to envision a more socially just future. They are able to influence others, they find activism exciting and it involves a passion and commitment. They also find a community to which they can belong and which provides them with support and a positive feminist identity. These emotions and a sense of collective identity are the missing ingredients in formal politics. Moreover, formal politics is not radical enough for these young activists. As one of them said: 'all feminism is radical because it is a movement for change, it is trying to change the patriarchal status quo where men are in charge' (Frankie). She went on to say:

Young people are excited about politics and political engagement, they're excited about thinking that they can make a difference, that they can change the world, that they can matter, that they as a person are having an impact on the world, and if you give them the opportunity to do so they can't fail but be inspired by that (Frankie).

Engaging in feminist activism gives the young women participating in this study this opportunity.

5. Future analysis

There are several directions in which analysis could be taken. One of the main findings of this study is that young feminist activists are overwhelmingly middle class and many of them are linked in one way or another to educational institutions. A comparison of the influence of class and education on political activism and on the political and civic engagement explored in

WP4 and WP5 would be fruitful, especially in light of the fact that a small number of respondents in the WP5 sample were feminist or LGBT activists. It would also be worth exploring the class and gender dimensions of activism across the 3 work packages.

This case study is likely to provide a strong contrast with the other UK WP7 case studies and a comparative investigation of how they are gendered and classed would allow us to deepen understanding of how these variables influence political activism. In particular there are striking points of comparison between the UK Feminista and EDL case studies. Activists in both studies report that their activism provides them with a sense of identity and belonging and that it enables them to make their voices heard rather than being silenced. There are also parallels in the significance of anger and rage as affective motivation for activism and their experiences of domestic abuse as a motivational factor in becoming an activist. In contrast there are differences between the two case studies in terms of familial support for their activism. Finally, a fuller exploration of the gendered experience of a sexual double standard may throw light on sexual politics amongst young activists and a comparison with WP5 would enable this to be extended to young people who are not activists. A comparison between the UK cases studies and with other country case studies exploring these themes would yield important insights into the dynamics of sexual and gendered politics and its class basis.

A comparison of this case study with the findings of three other case studies: Feminist Indignates (Spain), the gay movement in Estonia and AKC Medika (Croatia) would enable analysis of the factors influencing the mobilisation of young people around issues of gender and sexuality in four different countries and test out different theories of mobilisation, how feminist mobilisation relates to gender inequalities and cultures of sexism, and how feminism is understood in different country contexts.

Class appears to be very significant in mobilising young women into feminist activism. The salience of class to different forms of youth activism across different country cases and, particularly, within the Gender and minority rights cluster would be illuminating, particularly in light of young middle-class feminist activists' commitment to intersectionality and the implications of this for tolerance of difference and otherness.

Most of the young feminist activists in this sample were rich in social and cultural capital, supporting the hypothesis that this is a feature of activists. A comparison with other ethnographic studies in the UK would enable a fuller exploration of this, particularly as there are significant class and gender differences between the young activists studied. It would be especially fruitful to explore how gender and class shape young people's feelings of anger and the perceived unacceptability of its expression in conventional politics. A comparison between young feminist activists and those active in the EDL would throw light on gendered and classed processes and experiences.

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7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1: Feminist activism interview schedule

1. The story of the respondent's interest in feminist thinking and activism/action

- When did you first become interested in feminism and why (key turning points; influences/motivations)?
- How did your interest further develop and what forms of activism and activity did you become involved in (early trajectory of involvement – including any breaks - in feminist campaigns/groups etc.
- Over the time you've been a feminist activist what are the main forms of activism (e.g. part of discussion group, demonstrations/occupations, keyboard activism etc.) you've favoured/engaged in and why?
- And what are the main issues you've been committed to and why?
- Tell us about your most recent activities and activism.
- Are you a regular or occasional activist?
- How do you relate to UK Feminista?

2. Organizations/movements

- Why feminism (and not other areas of activism such as anti-racism, environmentalism or class activism)? Or are you also involved in other areas of political activism?
- Are there ideological aspects of the feminism you are part of with which you feel uncomfortable?
- Are there any policies or visions that the movement/organisation you've been part of has embraced which don't fit in with your own world view?
- How do you see and fit in (or not) with relationships in the organization/movement (democracy, hierarchies, leadership, relations between members, regions, generations) of which you have been or continue to be a part?
- Looking back on movements and campaigns of which you've been a part, are you proud of any particular achievements? Have there been any disappointments or any failures in achieving a goal?
- Have the organisations/movements you've been part of had links with other organizations at either local, national or transnational levels (e.g. sharing

resources; being dependent on funding; formulating goals and campaigning around such goals; contributing to policy making)?

3. Personal experiences of activism/participation

- Can you tell us about your feelings in relation to events in which you have participated and which stand out in your mind; especially in terms of how you felt at the time (e.g. was it pleasurable being in a collective, did you feel apprehension or excitement prior to the event perhaps because it was going to entail frustration or danger/risk etc.)?
- Have you experienced a sense of camaraderie and family/community while being part of a movement/campaign/organisation? Have you had the opportunity to meet new people and developed strong friendships?
- Have you had negative experiences as part of a movement/campaign/organisation? Has your involvement at any time made you want to be alone and away from the collective, or made you feel distrustful of people around you?
- What has it meant to be involved in feminist activism and will you continue to be involved?

4. Transmission

- Can you make links between your own activism and that of your parents/siblings/extended family? Was anyone in your family involved in similar activism and issues in previous generations?
- Has anyone in your family (especially parents/grandparents) approved/disapproved of your involvement?
- Have you experienced conflict (ideological or other) with your parents because of your feminist politics and activism?
- Have you drawn inspiration from particular women (or men) in the past (public figures, ancestors)?
- Do you feel you have influenced the political thinking/behaviour of others? Who? In what way?

5. Political heritage/legacies

- How do you situate yourself politically along a left-right continuum; mainstream/radical division etc.?

- Are the ways in which we engage politically very different to previous periods in history? Are we more likely to achieve our goals today than our mothers/grand-mothers/great grand-mothers did in the past?
- Do you relate to the history of feminism? In other words, do you define your feminism as emerging from or being in opposition to previous waves?
- What is your conception of a 'better' society/future and does the past provide any exemplars of such a society or of elements of such a society?
- How might we get young women to be more active politically and to feel they have a stake in fighting for a better future?

7.2 Appendix 2: Socio-demographic profile of respondents

	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Ethnicity (self-declared)	Educational status	Employment status	Family status	Residential status	Relationship to organisation
1.	Alexia	Female	17	White English	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Single	Lives at home with parents	Sympathiser
2.	Alice	Female	17	White English	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Single	Lives at home with parents	Sympathiser
3.	Brianna	Female	21	White British	Currently at University	In full-time education	Single	Lives independently with friends	Sympathiser
4.	Cora	Female	17	Indian	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Single	Lives at home with parents	Sympathiser and occasional participant/UK Feminista Summer School 2013 Panellist
5.	Deanna	Female / self-identified	28	Any other Mixed (African Caribbean, White)	Studying for postgraduate education (MPhil)	In full-time education	Single	Lives at home with parents	Critical sympathiser and occasional participant

		woman		English and Kashmiri)					
6.	Eliza	Female	17	White English/N. Irish	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full time education	Single	Lives at home with parents	Sympathiser and occasional participant
7.	Erica	Female	29	British	Completed university	Unemployed	Lives independently with own partner	Lives with partner	Participant/UK Feminista Summer School 2013 workshop leader
8.	Estelle	Female	29	White other (Swedish and English)	Studying for postgraduate education (PhD)	In full-time education	Single	Lives with partner	Critical sympathiser and occasional participant
9.	Frankie	Female	36	British	Studying for postgraduate education (PhD)	In F/T education	Single	Lives with partner	Critic of UK Feminista
10.	Frieda	Female	26	White English	Completed postgraduate education	In full-time employment	Single	Lives independently with friends	Organiser
11.	Giselle	Female	18	White Irish	Currently in general academic	In full-time education	Single	Lives at home with parents	Sympathiser

					secondary education				
12.	Hettie	Female	17	White British	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Single	Lives at home with parents	Sympathiser and occasional participant
13.	Hilary	Female	16	Mixed	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Single	Lives at home with parents	Sympathiser
14.	Jalayah	Female	18	Mixed Other (Iraqi and Pakistani)	Currently at University	In full-time education	Single	Lives at home with parents	Sympathiser and occasional participant/UK Feminista Summer School 2013 Panellist
15.	Kira	Female	30	British	Completed postgraduate education	In full-time employment	Lives independently with own partner	Lives with partner	Organiser
16.	Kristina	Female	29	White English	Completed university	In full-time employment	Married	Lives with partner	Occasional participant/UK Feminista Summer School 2011 organiser
17.	Lailah	Female	27	Mixed White and Asian	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lives independently with own	Lives with partner and friends	Participant/member of UK Feminista affiliated organisation

							partner		Imkaan
18.	Lili	Female	30	Any other White back-ground	Currently at university	In full-time education	Single	Lives with friends	Sympathiser
19.	Naomi	Female	17	Mixed Race (White and Black African)	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Single	Lives at home with parent	Sympathiser
20.	Penny	Female	25	White English	Completed university	In full-time employment	Single	Lives with friends	Sympathiser
21.	Reese	Female	26	White British	Studying for postgraduate education (PhD)	In part-time employment	Single	Lives with friends	Critical sympathiser and occasional participant/ performed at UK Feminista Summer School 2013 evening event
22.	Regan	Female	17	Caucasian	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Single	Lives at home with parents	Sympathiser
23.	Robyn	Female	31	White English	Studying for postgraduate education (PhD)	In part-time employment	Lives independently with own partner	Lives with partner	Critical sympathiser

24.	Roxy	Female	26	English	Studying for postgraduate education (PhD)	In full-time education	Single	Lives independently alone	Sympathiser
25.	Sabrina	Female	17	British	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Single	Lives at home with parents	Sympathiser and occasional participant
26.	Sandy	Female	36	White Irish	Studying for postgraduate education (PhD)	In part-time employment	Lives independently with own partner	Lives with partner	Occasional participant/contributor to UK Feminista Conference 2010
27.	Shanaya	Female	30	Other Ethnic Group/ Iranian	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lives independently with own partner	Lives with partner	UK Feminista regional organiser Birmingham and Black Country
28.	Sian	Female	24	White British	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lives independently with own partner	Lives with partner	UK Feminista organiser
29.	Tina	Female	15	English	Currently in general academic secondary education (home educated)	In full-time education	Single	Lives at home with parents	Occasional participant

30.	Yolanda	Female	17	Refused to state for political reasons	Currently in general academic secondary education	In full-time education	Single	Lives at home with parents	Occasional participant/UK Feminista Summer School 2013 Panellist
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7.3 Appendix 3: Observed meetings, workshops and other events

1. Shahida Choudhury (Women's Networking Hub), Midlands Arts Centre Birmingham, 9th July 2012.
2. Preparatory Meeting of UK CSW57⁴ National Group, Warehouse Café, Birmingham 3rd September 2012, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.
3. UK Feminista Summer School, University of Bristol SU, 15th October 2012, 10:00 – 5:00 p.m.
4. Women's Networking Hub Social, La Favorita, Sparkbrook, Birmingham, 18th October 2012, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
5. UK Feminista Lobby of Parliament, Hoare Memorial Hall, Church House and Central Lobby, Parliament, Westminster, 24th October 2012, 10:30 a.m. - 3:15 p.m.
6. War on Want and UK Feminista, 'Women resisting austerity and exploitation: global struggles and stories' public meeting, WoW HQ, London, 28th November 2012, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
7. V-Day Billion Women Rising, Victoria Square, Birmingham, 14th February 2013, 12:45 – 2:15 p.m.
8. Million Women Rise march and rally, London (Oxford Street to Trafalgar Square), 9th March 2013, 12:00 – 5:30 p.m.
9. Coventry Women's Voices meeting, The Council House, Coventry, 30th April 2013.
10. UK Feminista Summer School, Bramall Music Building, University of Birmingham, 17th and 18th August 2013, 10:00 – 17:00.
11. Lose the Lads' Mags protest, Tesco, New Street, Birmingham, 24th August 2013, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m.
12. Sisterhood and After Project, 'In conversation with the Women's Liberation Movement: Intergenerational histories of second wave feminism', British Library, London, 12th October 2013, 9:30 a.m. – 4:45 p.m.
13. FemSoc meeting, Girls' School in London, 15th October 2013, 12:45 – 1:45 p.m.
14. UK Feminista and Lose the LadsMags meeting, House of Commons, Westminster, 15th October 2013, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
15. Warwick University Debating Society, 'This house would ban page 3', IMC 2, main campus, 29th October 2013, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

⁴ UN Commission for the Status of Women.

16. UK Feminista workshops 'Why feminism?' and 'Feminist kickstarter', 6/8 Kafé, Birmingham, 2nd November, 12:00 – 15:30 p.m.
17. FemSoc meeting, Girls' school in London, 19th November 2013, 12:45 – 1:45 p.m.
18. FemSoc meeting, Co-ed school in Edinburgh, 2nd December 2013.

Local Feminist Group Meetings (held fortnightly, Birmingham)

1. 5th June 2013
2. 19th June 2013
3. 3rd July 2013
4. 14th August 2013
5. 11th September 2013
6. 25th September 2013
7. 6th November 2013
8. 4th December 2013

7.4 Appendix 4: Visuals

Plate 1: Lose the Lads' Mags Meeting, House of Commons, London 19 November 2013



Plate 2: UK Feminista summer school 2012 (direct action workshop), University of Bristol Union, 15 October 2012



Plate 3: UK Feminista summer school 2013, Rape/Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre stall, University of Birmingham, 17-18 August 2014



Plate 4: UK Feminista lobby of parliament, London, 24 October 2012



Plate 5: Lose the Lads' Mags protest, Tescos New Street, Birmingham, 24 August 2013



Plate 6: 'Feminists rise' banner, Million Women Rise march, London, 9 March 2013



Plate 7: Trafalgar Square rally, Million Women Rise march, London, 9 March 2013



Plate 8: V-Day 1 Billion Rising, Victoria Square, Birmingham, 14 February 2013

