‘CAPTURING THE EXPERIENCES OF FEMINIST EDUCATORS’

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QUOTATIONS

...'feminism' is not merely a 'perspective', a way of seeing; nor even this plus an epistemology, a way of knowing; it is also an ontology, or way of being in the world ...

(Stanley, 1990, p.14)

Many women have found that neither the struggle for "social equality" nor the focus on an "ideology of woman as an autonomous being" are enough to rid society of sexism and male domination. To me feminism is not simply a struggle to end male chauvinism or a movement to ensure that women will have equal rights with men; it is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels – sex, race, and class, to name a few – a commitmtent to reorganising .... society so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desires.

(hooks, 1982, pp.194-195)

'It is contradictions that while females have structured a women's liberation movement that is racist and excludes many non-white women. However, the existence of that contradiction should not lead any woman to ignore feminist issues ... ... I choose to re-appropriate the term "feminism", to focus on the fact that to be "feminist" in any authentic sense of the term is to want for all people, female and male, liberation from sexist role patterns, domination and oppression'

(hooks, 1982, p.195).

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to capture the lived experiences of contemporary feminist educators, with particular emphasis on their influences, activism, praxis and challenges. There is particular interest in their styles, approaches and pedagogical practices; alongside the formal and informal spaces in which they operate. This study is primarily based on in-depth interviews, conducted with four feminist educators and applies secondary research; the overall methodology is feminist. The primary objective was to uncover subjugate knowledge regarding feminist praxis; in order to contribute to the wider field of feminist education.

The main finding implied that a combination of their individual passions and strong ethical ethos underpinned their praxis in everything, including feminist education. The thesis argues that it is through this combination, these women have come to negotiate the space between informal and formal learning spaces. Subsequently, the researcher offers a hypothesis, accepting firstly that praxis is central to feminist principles or an engaged pedagogy; the core providing strength and stability like a tree trunk. The individual passion and value system is aligned with the grounding roots or principles, nourishing their praxis. The branches and leaves become symbolic of the ingredients essential in bringing that trunk and roots into the learning space; those ingredients are identified as the 'P's of feminist praxis, which include: process, passion, participation, political, prioritising women's voices, personal engagement, power and personal learning. It offers a comprehensive description of a holistic engaged praxis and powerful potential for practice.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CVS	Community & Voluntary Sector
esp.	Especially (see glossary)
FE	Feminist Education
FP	Feminist Praxis
FR	Feminist Research
ICA	Irish County Women's Association
MU	Maynooth University
NQAI	National Qualifications Authority of Ireland
PAR	Participatory Action Research
WCE	Women's Community Education
WS	Women's Studies

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Activism/activist	A policy of taking direct and often miltant action to achieve an end, esp. a political or social one.
Bourgeois	A member of the middle class, esp. one regarded as being conservative and materialistic or capitalist.
Capitalism	An economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.
Capitalist	A person who owns capital, esp. capital invested in business.
Counter-hegemonic	Against or in opposition to – domination of one power or state
Critical	Containing analytical evaluations
Cultural Imperialism	The extension or attempted extension of authority, influence, power, etc., by any person, country, institution, etc. (particularly in relation to social pursuits, events or enlightenment relating to a culture)
Dichotomy	Division into two parts or classifications, esp. when they are sharply distinguished or opposed
Emiperical	(philosophy) of knowledge derived from experience rather than by logic form first, principles
Epistemology	The theory of knowledge, esp. The critical study of its validity, methods, and scope.
Neo-libearlism	Modern form – liberal opinions, practices, or policies
Ontology/ontological	(philosophy) the branch of metaphysics that deals with the nature of being
Paradigm	(in the philosophy of science) a general conception of the nature of scientific endeavour within which a given enquiry is undertaken
Patriarchy/patriarchal	A form of social organisation in which a male is the head of the family and descent, kinship, and title are traced through the male line / any society governed by such a system
Pedagogy	The principles, practice, or profession of teaching
Radical	Favouring or tending to produce extreme or fundamental changes in political, economic, or social conditions, institutions, etc.
Tacit	Understood without direct expression

LIST OF APPENDICES

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

This chapter is an introduction to the research topic and objective, outlines the thesis structure and offers brief introductions to the remaining chapters.

1.1 What is this study about?

My primary aim is to *'capture the experiences of feminist educators'*; however, in order to understand the broader context and meaning, two other elements are important: feminism and feminist research. A detailed discussion of the latter is provided in chapter two; however, I will point out the ideal fit with the topic and my own fundamental beliefs. I will not pretend to provide an elaborate analysis of feminism or in-depth history; partly as it's beyond the scope of this thesis, nor do I want to deviate away from the main focus too much. However, it is important to acknowledge the development and history of feminism, particularly that of an educational nature; it's widely documented, to understand any topic or movement in its contemporary format, it's important to understand its historical significance, development and connection to the wider subject area (Baker & Cox, 2001; Choudry, 2009; Croteau, 2006; Fuster, 2009; Geedes, 2011; Hall, 2012; Hall et al, 2012; Landy, 2009; Mayo, 1999; Nilsen & Cox, 2013; Wainwright, 1993, 1994, 1998; Winter, 1996; Wright, 1995). Hence, a selection of guides are included in the appendices (A, B, C, D, E, F, G & H); including pictorial versions, useful for a quick and easy introduction or as an educational resource.

Feminism is now widely accepted as a diverse topic, comprising of a broad collection of views, theories and practices; certainly not the monolithic body of theory or practice often portrayed (Connolly & Ryan, 1999). Moreover, Cochrane (2013) suggests the emerging contemporary wave is 'intersectionality', where various issues are considered collectively, including: class, race, sexuality, gender (Appendix E). Ultimately feminism is about prioritising women, their interests and needs (Oakley, 1981); as eloquently explained:

> ‘Feminism’ embraces a plurality of definitions and viewpoints, but all the different versions share two common themes. First, feminism places a high value on women, considering us worthy of study in our own right, not just in comparison with men. Second, feminism recognises the need for social change on behalf of women. Therefore feminist education is avowedly political (Connolly & Ryan, 1999, p.2).

1.2 Feminist Education

Paradoxically, feminist education takes place in a variety of formal and informal spaces; the women’s studies (WS) classroom within academia is most commonly cited (Appendix E). Realistically, feminist education includes informal women’s groups and learning spaces, activist circles and Women’s Community Education (WCE) programmes. A gap or divide between academic and grassroots practices of feminist education is commonly recognized (DeVault, Jones & Passuth, 1983; Evans, 1997; Gore & Luke, 1992; Mercer, 1997; Stacey, 1985; Stanley, 1997); between the formal and informal, or classroom versus community based practices, where informal initiatives are often not recognised as educational (Fitzsimons, 2010). It’s widely acknowledged the second wave of feminism – women’s movement – provided immense insight, wisdom, meaning and language (Belenky et al, 1986; Connolly, 2010; Gunew, 1991; Harding, 1991; Jagger, 1983; Mitchell, 1976; Oakley, 1981; Rowbotham, 1973; Rowhotham, Segal & Wainright, 1979; Ruth, 1980; Wainwright, 1994; Stanley, 1990; Stanley & Wise, 1993); particularly regarding empirical or experiential learning, consciousness raising, shared learning and tacit knowledge (Appendix E).

In line with feminism, contemporary feminist pedagogical practice is generally considered to prioritise women’s voices and strive to achieve social change towards emancipation; where the interception of theory, action and reflection, otherwise known as praxis is fundamental. However, there’s a necessity for ‘reflexive questioning’ the assumptions on which knowledge is based; as isolated reflection will not create emancipatory education (Connolly, 1999, pp.117-118). It is really questioning reflexively which brought me to this research topic; through my own practitioner experience, I’ve noticed immense variations in the practice, ethos, approach and delivery of feminist education, particularly within Women’s Community Education

(WCE). Likewise, I have witnessed the powerful and transformational potential, for women's lives through both formal and informal spaces and believe the two could learn from each other. Thus, it is the space between the two I find most interesting and wish to explore further; particularly how feminist educators are negotiating that space.

1.3 Research aspirations

With that in mind, I identified in-depth interviews with feminist educators as the most fruitful way to gain understanding of how their individual lived experiences have moulded their feminist perspectives, practices, styles, pedagogies, tools, emphasis on praxis, values, underlying beliefs and spaces in which they operate. Essentially, I wanted to capture the stories or lived experiences and perceptions of other feminist educators practicing in contemporary Ireland; with particular interest in their influences, activism, feminist education and challenges they encountered. I set upon this journey, hoping to uncover subordinate knowledge held by the participants, themes or issues they prioritise; furthermore, I felt listening to and documenting their experiences would offer validation of their experiences and insights. While feminist literature of a thematic or academic variety has become increasingly available by feminists in Ireland; to my knowledge there aren't any in-depth studies prioritising their individual lived experiences. Certainly, the narratives of the women in this study have not been documented before. Taking this approach is equivalent to taking a leap into the dark, not knowing what I will uncover; however, I do believe the stories of ordinary women can be extraordinary, if given time and space to share their narrative.

The subject of knowledge raises interesting questions, such as: Who has it? Who owns it? What is it? How do we get it? How do we value or recognise it? On that basis, I'm interested in 'really useful knowledge', linking theory and practice; a concept discussed in detail by Jane Thompson (2007). Stanley (1990) raised legitimate concerns regarding the construction of knowledge within academia, they suggest 'the white', 'middle-class', 'heterosexual', 1st world woman' was the basis of assumptions of 'woman' as a category; they emphasise, that women are a diverse group, their lives, struggles and lived experiences also vary greatly. Subjugate knowledge conversely, delves into the

reality and uniqueness of women's lives, the minutae (Connolly, 2008, p.53); furthermore, placing value on those unique experiences, including emotions and their effect on values as illustrated by Alison Jaggar (1997).

Given the connection with feminist praxis, it's perhaps no surprise reflexivity is vitally important; I've attempted to illustrate my reflexivity and subsequent insights throughout the thesis. For instance, careful consideration was given to a variety of ethical issues and implications; discussed in an integrated manner throughout. Protecting the anonymity of the interviewees is of paramount importance, given the sensitive nature of the material shared by interviewees; the study draws on four in-depth interviews as the primary research and secondary research is applied. Hopefully, the work may be useful to other practitioners; hence, I've tried to make it as accessible as possible to accommodate those outside of the academic realm, particularly given the potential exclusionary nature of language. I have purposefully used accessible language and provided explanations for academic terminology where possible, such as including a Glossary of terms. It is also an attempt to facilitate the evolvement of an organic discussion, between the formal and informal spaces of feminist education.

1.4 Thesis Structure

The presentation is radically different from traditional format; where separate chapters are usually dedicated to specific topics (Antonesa, Fallon, Ryan, Ryan, Walsh & Borys, 2006). It seeks to promote the overall holistic and integrative learning process, central in feminist education. The primary motivation behind this decision is to produce a thesis which symbolically reflects the core elements of the research topic and methodology - prioritising women's voices and an engaged pedagogical praxis. There is no doubt, writing in this way requires more thought, preparation and is more complex, although perhaps appears more simplistic; ironically, also symbolic of feminist praxis, in my opinion. Taking an experimental approach is perhaps a risky manoeuvre on my part; nonetheless, I decided to take the risk and follow my principles.

The thesis comprises of seven chapters, this first chapter is simply an introduction to the overall research process, topic and thesis layout. **Chapter 2** see my departure from the traditional thesis layout. In this case, it's the central body of the thesis; it's reflective of the dialogical process between theory, action and reflection, which naturally occurs when researching or indeed educating through praxis. It includes discussion of the research method, explores the research question, maps my position as researcher under the sub-heading of background, education, practitioner, challenges, theoretical position and lastly a detailed discussion of the methodological process.

Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 are dedicated to prioritising the voices of the four interviewees – Sheila, Marie, Nora and Amy. Each chapter illustrates the story of an individual woman, entitled with their name (pseudonyms), and presenting their lived experience, under the thematic headings used throughout the thesis: Influences, Activism, Feminist Education and Challenges.

Finally, **chapter seven** explores the main research findings from an analytical perspective, forms connections with relevant theory, particularly in relation an engaged pedagogy. It also provides a brief synopsis and recommendations resulting from the overall research process, indicating areas needing further exploration.

CHAPTER TWO – INTERSECTION OF RESEARCH, POSITIONING & METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the research process, including: an account of what brought me to identify as a feminist researcher, the kind of knowledge I hope to produce through using this approach, the politics and ethical considerations involved, my position as researcher (background, education, practitioner & theoretical), applied method and approach. In an attempt to reflect feminist praxis, it contains the guiding theoretical literature, the actions undertaken and reflectivity as researcher. Given the quantity of information, it is structured in 12 sections, with sub-headings where relevant.

2.1 Choosing a Methodological Approach

In the wider research field, there are two main research categories: quantitative & qualitative. Bryman (2008, p.366) provides detailed analysis of the two strategies, including their similarities, differences, positives and limitations. Both orientations attempt to tackle the following research complexities: answering the research question; relating data analysis to literature; consider variations, frequencies & data reduction; ensure that deliberate distortion does not occur; promote transparency and promote the use of a research method suitable to the research question. He indicates that qualitative research generally places emphasizes on words in the collection and analysis of data; rather than the quantification approaches of its counterpart. Furthermore, he illustrates that research conducted with people and the social worlds they occupy, accepts that there is a capacity to construct meaning; a quality not attributed to the traditional objects of quantitative research, such as: atoms, metals and molecules. A preference to view the world through the eyes of those researched and their specific social lives; often results in researchers purposefully avoiding predetermined assumptions regarding the processes under study. The chosen methodology for this study is feminist research (FR), using qualitative methods given the fit with the topic and capacity to prioritise interviewees worldviews.

Bryman (2008) acknowledges the level of detail can appear superfluous and can present a danger that the researcher may become too entangled; nonetheless, he suggests it is a valuable and necessary component to provide understanding of a social group or behaviour in context. He traces this practice:

> '... back to many of the classic studies in social anthropology, which often demonstrated how a particular practice, such as the magical ritual that may accompany the sowing of seeds, made little sense unless we understand the belief systems of that society ...' (p.387).

Legitimizing the process, is often one of the main challenges qualitative researchers face due to its 'soft' image; however, it does provided a broader understanding and deeper insight into the whole complex human experience and associated meaning (MacDonald, 2012, p.38).

2.2 What Constitutes Feminist Research?

Stanley (1990) illustrates how this methodology evolved due to the discontent amongst feminists the 1960s, regarding the sexual bias evident in traditional social sciences. In theory FR could be applied to any topic; however, as previously illustrated this research incorporates three feminist components: the research method, the research focus (i.e. feminist educators) and indeed the wider arena of feminist education itself. As a feminist researcher I am operating from the understanding that women are oppressed; hence, the core values are to prioritise women's issues, voices and lived experiences (Hesse-Biber, 2014). My primary interest is to explore topics, issues and questions which are of specific importance to the lived experience of women, particularly those which contribute to social justice and change; whereas my primary objective is to uncover hidden or subjugated knowledge (Connolly, 2008). Hesse-Biber (2014, pp.199-200) advocate that feminist researchers pay particular attention to 'reducing the hierarchy between the researcher and the researched'. A fundamental factor in doing so is being acutely aware of the issues of power and authority in the relationship and overall process; thereby, taking reasonable measures to redress balance. The politics associated, has caused much debate over the last forty years or so, between feminist research scholars, such as

Oakley (1981), Reinharz (1983), Stacey (1991), Patai (1991) & Lentin (1993); predominantly, regarding how little or much of themselves should the researcher disclose. In formative years of the early 80s, there was an overwhelming argument made by pioneering feminist researchers; they believed that by the researchers sharing their biography with the researched it would enhance relationships, reducing the power and authority associated with their role (Oakley, 1981; Reinhaz, 1983). At the other extreme, some argue that getting too close could create a delusion that power or authority are not concerns; moreover the researcher could potentially jeopardise their ability to acquire subjective knowledge or at worst leave participants feeling more vulnerable having revealed more than they otherwise might (Stacey, 1991). I could see the merit in both extremes; hence, I positioned myself midway, disclosing my own experience as a feminist education, my interest in the topic but being mindful not to inflict my views or experiences on participants.

Reflexivity is embedded in the practice of feminist educators and researchers alike; constantly questioning whom and what we chose to study, how we make certain decisions and what informs those decisions. Hesse-Biber (2014, p.210) suggest reflexivity enables us to appreciate difference which in turn '... allows us to ask the questions: Which women? Are all women around the world the same? How are they different and what differences are important to my research question?' Furthermore, she argues that difference is detectable at each and every stage of the research process; acknowledging this provides the researcher with perspective as to the impact on the research. Traditionally differences are considered dealt with, when segregated or if we're being honest sidelined; positivistic researchers often take this approach by attempting to minimise the effect. In contrast, the radically different perspective of *intersectionality* was established by black feminist theorists (Appendix E) - such as Collins (1990); Crenshaw (1991), hooks (1993), James (2012), Lorde (1984) and Wallace (1982) - stressing the critical importance of difference and our examination of those connections, such as: *race, glass, gender and sexuality.* This is exactly the critical perspective brought to the classroom of feminist educator, bell hooks; through her catalytic engaged pedagogy. Hesse-Biber (2014, p.216) states: 'Differences should be explored and embraced, for ignoring and disavowing them could have negative effects on your data and overall project'.

It is quite typical within the social sciences to provide the reader with a synopsis of the researcher's fundamental beliefs, how they see the world and why they value specific types of knowledge; in other words their ontological and epistemological positions. These factors understandable influence our understanding of knowledge, approach to knowledge creation, type of knowledge we create, research methods and analysis. Within feminist research it is widely accepted that a strong interconnectedness exists between these factors; therefore, emphasising one's position is of paramount importance Harding (1991); Stanley (1990, 1997); Stanley & Wise (1993); hooks (1994) etc. In fact the researchers' journey begins with reflexivity prior to embarking on the actual research journey (Stanley, 1990).

2.3 Mapping My Influences

I freely admit that I am strongly predisposed to feminist research, given that I am a feminist and feminist educator; in fact, it would be disingenuous to state otherwise. However, it is only in the last few years and particularly through doing this research; that I have come to realise or join the dots if you like, that various influences in my upbringing have massively impacted my way of understanding the world and praxis as a feminist educator. These factors played a fundamental part in my research approach and on the various decisions I made along the way. On that basis, I made a conscious decision to be very explicit about my own position, which I found to be a challenging process in itself; I've provided an account under the headings of background, education, practitioner and theoretical.

2.3.1 Background

As far back as I can remember I rebelled against gender stereotypes, was drawn to those sidelined as different or 'other' and had a natural curiosity in communities which deviated from mainstream society, such as: Indigenous groups, Indians, & Tribes. I can only assume these interests were at least partly

due to the fact that my family of origin and upbringing was not in line with the typical Irish family. I always had sensitivity towards mothers, mothering, birth, adoption, family type; having been adopted from one of the infamous mother and baby homes in 1979. Growing up in 1980's Ireland, there was an overbearing affiliation between church and state; society shamefully classified my mum as a *deserted wife*. Despite coming from an extremely apolitical home, I distinctly remember that snobbery was very evident, between different sub-classes of widowed, separated and divorced; at the age of nineteen, I went onto to inhabit the category most shamefully of all, *'those never married',* which did impinge on my initial experience of motherhood. Throughout my youth, mum held at least two jobs, along with having lodgers and foreign students, just to make ends meet; the answer to 'childcare' in those days was simple, at the age of six I went to work too. Thus, my childhood and current existence are very much imbedded in the working class culture; I learned to be independent, through the example of mum's matriarchal leadership.

My first introduction to women's groups was also my home, where mum was actually running one unbeknown to herself; through natural instinct and her own experience, she created all the necessary qualities and conditions one would associated: welcoming; inviting; non-judgemental listening and supporting other women to articulate their stories and experiences. As an empirical bystander, I noticed that the process of identifying commonalities in their experiences; enabled them to gradually dismantle some of the associated classism amongst lone parents. Many of these women progressed to become involved in more formal support groups, including mum who became a group leader. Our home was regularly given over to writing experiential talks, where a group of women would embark on weekends of sharing and supporting each other; through this deeply emotional, expressive and enormously cathartic process. On an individual level, increased confidence, personal growth and shedding of internalised shame were very evident; significantly these changes began to ripple into other significant actions, for instance, in my mum's case she received the first divorce in County Longford, after the referendum was passed in 1995. Hence, I gained respect for the empowering process of peer-learning and creating shared knowledge. However, it is only in the last few years that I've

come to appreciate how this impacted on my own way of being, approach to working with women and groups and indeed the development of my own thinking.

2.3.2 Education

Through the years, I've experienced an eclectic mix of being a student within different educational settings, including – traditional education, distance learning, women's community education, women's studies, counselling, peer learning, community development, alternative therapies, humanistic & integrative psychotherapy training etc. I personally encountered a clear class divide, which limited my ability to fully integrate in college. At a later date, I realised the complexities involved in trying to access 3rd level education as a lone parent based in a rural midlands town; I began my route back to education through distance learning, when my son was two.

I gained invaluable insight to working with individuals and groups; through my training in counselling and psychotherapy. In relation to understanding individuals, I was drawn to the humanistic approach of person-centered psychotherapy developed by Carols Rogers. According to Connolly (1999, p.118), the 'history of humanistic thought is that of the fight against a culturally encoded paradigm – the centrality of the authoritarian, all-powerful deity and the peripherality of the powerless, passive, humanity'. The approach basically illustrates the potential to create equal and meaningful relationships with others, when people develop awareness and function from their true or autonomous self. Connolly (1999, p.115) suggests that "integral to the development of selfhood is consciousness, the capacity to reflect and be aware". However, in order to reach their full potential or 'self-actualisation', their basic needs first need to be met, such as food, safety, shelter and love. This process is illustrated by Maslow's matrix *'Hierarchy of Human Needs'*, which is illustrated in Appendix O. Connolly (2008) discusses how the focus on individual needs and rights; illuminated the social and democratic complexities involved in the fulfilment of

those needs. Furthermore, she outlines how these qualities underpin the educational practices of a radical disposition, such as adult & community; in that they break away from misogynistic language and traditional theory of the ignorant student and the expert teacher, stating:

> Tutors require empathy and positive regard for the students in order to create the safety the Maslow identifies. Empathic understanding entails seeing the world from the other's point of view, without getting entangled with it; and unconditional positive regard means not judging them, and being positively disposed towards them (p.69).

On a more practical level, my fundamental insight to working with groups, their dynamics, stages, roles, boundaries and facilitative techniques; derived from the work of various theorists, combined with ethnographical and empirical learning. For instance, Corey, Corey & Corey (2010, pp.7-9), promote working with groups from three perspectives: cognitively, by drawing out thinking and thought processes; affective, by focusing on the feelings of group members and behavioural, where the combination of action and process are central to the therapeutic process. They encourage practitioners to work from an integrative approaching from various techniques and theories; emphasising that a style of practice and knowledge develops alongside experience. These concepts demonstrate remarkable similarities to techniques utilised in feminist education spaces; including dialogue, shared learning, praxis and consciousness raising on a personal and collective level. Perhaps most interestingly, they imply that theory and people are not separate entities; similarly to hooks, they advocate that we should bring ourselves into our practice, by incorporating our uniqueness, personality and values. Parallels are also evident, in terms of the ontological, epistemological and experiential influences on the practice of feminist researchers/educators; with the integrative approach they promote in facilitating therapeutic groups:

> In developing and conceptualizing your integrative approach to counselling, consider you own personality, interpersonal strengths, life experiences, and worldview as you choose the concepts and techniques that work best with a number of theories (Corey, Corey & Corey, 2010, p.7).

The Women's Studies programmes and tutors were truly inspirational; I was particularly struck with the teaching approach of Aideen Quilty. I now consider the opportunity of being a student in her classroom as an enormous privilege; her praxis clearly derived from an engaged pedagogical approach. The term *engaged pedagogy* was coined by bell hooks, where:

> '... she weaved together feminist education, working-class education and race education to create the form of education in which people were engaged in analysing the minutiae of everyday life ... ... Subjectivity is at the centre of engaged pedagogy, and hooks sees the subjective experience of her life as a catalyst for education' (Connolly, 2008, p.53).

I will return to explore hook's concepts in greater detail; however, at this point I must admit I did struggle at first, to accustom to this non-traditional approach to teaching within academia. It was also the first exposure I had in forming connections between the 'personal' and 'political'; which is one of the major tributes to the 2nd feminist (Appendix E).

2.4 Mapping My Practitioner Experience

Over the years, I've worked with in formal and informal spaces of grass roots feminist education; including issue based women's groups, course and networks. When I first began working with groups, I attempted to create a dynamic similar to what I had experienced in the Women's Studies classes; over time I gained experience, confidence and began to recognise my own skills. My practice mirrored the principles of Women's Community Education (WCE); I appreciated WCE evolved through the preceding work of women's groups, their actions to address social issues and inequalities within their communities, such as: poverty, unemployment, emigration, drugs & lack of infrastructure. I could immediately identify with the similarities with community development approaches; which obviously lack the same priority on women, their voices, experiences and the subjugate knowledge they hold. However, it took a few years before I started to recognise myself as a feminist education; furthermore, it

was only through participating on this masters that I identified the Freirean influence.

Paradoxically, tangible and accessible literature was really only beginning to emerge on the topic around the time I entered the area, almost a decade ago. Perhaps the most influential, was a guide to best practice in WCE, entitled '*Flower Power'*, developed by AONTAS in 2009; the handbook aims to provide a '*Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)'* encouraging women's community groups to reflect deeply on what they're doing, the meaning of their work and how they could make improvements (Connolly, 2010). Importantly, the guide suggests that the principles of WCE ensure women's human right to access education is achieved; as established in equality and justice for women, under the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1995 Beijing Declaration (AONTAS, 2009, p.17). According to the guide, it is:

> ... not just about providing course for women learners. Women's Community Education is a women-led, political and strategic education process. It is rooted in the complex and diverse realities of women's lives where organisations both provide educational opportunities for women, but also focus on collective empowerment and the achievement of equality for women ... (p.75).

Essentially, WCE is a theory of praxis, illustrated by a flower, with each part symbolising a different aspect of the overall process; the underlying principles are women-centered, quality, equality, justice and leadership. As illustrated in the quote above, in practice WCE should be women-led, political, realistic and strategic (Appendix N). The importance of WCE groups having an overarching vision for their work is also highlighted; including how they hope to fulfil empowerment, recognition and the aspirations of participants (AONTAS, 2009).

Patterson & Dowd (2010, pp.124-131) highlight the importance of recognising WCE as an educational approach; stemming from responsive women's groups in the recessional 80s and the positive community implications of those practices

and principles. This recognition was delivered in 2000 in The White Paper, Learning for Life; the paper also recommended that the underlying principles of WCE should be duplicated by all variations of adult education. Furthermore, they highlight the centrality of evaluation and critical reflection, are fundamental elements of WCE. They provide an inspiring portrayal, capturing how WCE contributes to both individual women's lives and society as a whole:

> Women live in a political, social and cultural environment that excludes many from equal access to education and employment, the exercise of real choice in their lives and from taking up leadership roles in society ... ... (WCE) provides on-going social analysis of gender equality and social inclusion issues. It is a potent collective education process that supports the empowerment of women and seeks to address the socio-political aspects of women's experience through collective activism. Women-centred and participative, WCE ensures that women experience affirmation, recognition, dignity and leadership through their learning experience (Patterson & Dowd, 2010, p.123).

Ryan, Connolly, Grummell & Finnegan (2009) and elsewhere Connolly (2003) suggest that community education is an emancipator process; enabling participants to become empowered in their own lives and bring about wider change. WCE also highlights the differences in approach in comparison to traditional forms of education, as illustrated in the following table.

WOMEN'S COMMUNITY EDUCATION	EDUCATING WOMEN
• Feminist/gender analysis • Owned and directed by women (leadership with) • Community development • Involves social action • Intensive outreach • Aims to achieve women's equality • Collective empowerment • Power shared equally between learners, facilitators, management • Developed with learners • Radical • "No crèche, no class"	• Could be run by men and women • Education developed for learners, not with them • Does not necessarily foster gender/ social analysis • Provider-centred • May not include childcare • Learners may not progress to leadership • Service provider • Confidence not priority goal • Apolitical (not political) • Leadership may be outside the community

(Aontas, 2009, p.220.)

2.4.1 Practitioner challenges which led me to this research

I was increasingly frustrated working in the community sector, with the growing contradiction between the bottom-up practice of education and grassroots activism and an increasing drive towards top-down 'professionalism' and decision making. A movement away from engaged practices, where activists, facilitators, managers and participants were working collectively, sharing knowledge, skills and resources; towards more separation between the various roles. Perhaps most disturbingly, I found these hierarchal distinctions were becoming more common within the delivery of feminist education; as more value being placed qualified tutors, the apparently '*unqualified educators'* (Fitzsimons, 2010) such as myself, were becoming increasingly undervalued and pigeonholed as simply facilitators. As much is written on these complex issues and their implications, including: Banks (2004), Bane (2007), Christie (2005), Connolly (2007; 2014), Cox (2014); Cox & Nilsen (2014, 2014b); Fitzsimons (2010), Grummell (2014), Hurley (2014); Lynch (2006, 2010), Murray (2014), Murtagh (2014), O' Neill, Fitzsimons & O' Reilly (2014), Ryan (2007; 2014) & Thompson (2007). I intend to simply limit my discussion to reflect a synopsis of the main difficulties I encountered.

I was continually raising concerns regarding these kinds of practices and movement towards impersonal format of professionalization; as I could see the practice spilling over into the internal or micro operations of women's groups. I believed they would alienate ordinary women and would only enforce a system within these spaces; ironically, similar to the very systems feminist education spaces were originally set up to challenge. Unfortunately, I witnessed a slow movement away from supporting diverse women's groups, representing a range of different backgrounds, ethnicities, races, classes and sexualities; towards groups apparently representing collective women's voices, despite their declining participation, with many of them becoming increasingly white, middle-class, middle-aged and able-bodied. Simultaneously, access to funding for supports to maintain participation, such as childcare, transport and resource workers became gradually more difficult to obtain. It seemed to me, lack of

participation was being justified due to a lack of resources and a lack of interest from women; rather, than what I perceived to be the root cause, a change in approach and delivery which was parallel to declining participation. I advocated for the voices of women on the ground to be heard and the value of using creative techniques to facilitate that process; however, I continually meet with resistance from various sources and a desire to create solutions *'for'* women rather than *'with'* and *'by'* women. While I acknowledge the immense pressures and funding led criteria, community groups and organisations face in order to exist; I struggled with the lack of resistance or alternative strategies many groups demonstrated before being lured away from their ethos, principles and values. Bell, Gaventa & Peters (1990), indicate that due to the probability behaviour of people to mirror the systems there in; there is a necessity to guard against leaders buying into their positions of power and in turn becoming oppressors. A concept which Freire (1970) first presented in his pedagogy of the oppressed. The process of creating change is equivalent to the process of radical education; it requires 'constantly evolving, questioning and exploring' through collective organising and not repetition of past mistakes or systems (The Trapese Collective, 2007). Freire does not offer solutions; however, he does recognise this phenomenon and demonstrates faithfulness with his beliefs; when he turns down large amounts of funding, stating: 'if we need money to implement educational projects ... we must be the owners of the destiny of the money' (de Figueiredo-Cowen & Gastaldo, 1995, p.75). An option which is open to all group and organisation leadership, is it not? Ironically, Connolly warned against such compliancy in the Irish context as early as 1999, stating:

> Collectively, people need to create a vision and work progressively towards it. This is all the more important for women: women have made adult education the channel for the women's movement. It would be devastating if it were to become a route to conformity and domestication (p.127).

I came to the Masters to develop my own theoretical perspective and knowledge, of the power dynamics taking place in the micro and macro environments of feminist education; in an attempt to learn how to challenges these practices, in such a way that would bring about positive changes for all involved or find

alternatives. I soon discovered *power*, *politics* and *oppression* were central themes; throughout historical movements, such as the women's movement, revolutions and the dynamics within the learning environment between 'teacher' and 'student'. It lead me to question how feminist education, particularly that of a radical nature; may continue to grow and exist in the face of such challenges; therefore, my contribution if you like was to undertake this research.

2.5 Mapping My Theoretical Position

I found Paulo Freire inspirational, it became apparent to me that his theories were the underlying beliefs of my practice. How can that be? I wasn't sure to begin with; I realised that some of the work/education I've been involved with either evolved directly from Freire or was strongly influenced by his work. Coincidently, Freire describes a similar scenario, encountering Gramsci: 'It is fantastic when we discover that we had been influenced by someone's thought without even being introduced to their intellectual production' (de Figueiredo-Cowen & Gastaldo, 1995, p.64). A Brazilian educator, philosopher and leading advocate of critical pedagogy; 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', is the platform from which he offers his educational theory. Clearly situated in the context of the South American revolutionary struggle; a comprehensive text with a Marxist credence and 'more than a hint of liberation theology' (thenewobserver.co.uk, p.1). The fact that he is not just a speculative theorist is very appealing; alongside theoretical influences[i], his writing is strongly influenced by experience, as prisoner, exilic, philosopher and predominantly as educator.

Liam Kane (2013) illustrates the contribution of Freire's 'critical pedagogy', in the evolvement of various pedagogies and creative methodologies, often collectively referred to as 'popular education'; indicating the terms of 'radical' or 'transformative' education are widely accepted and often perceived as more attractive. Kane (2013, pp.81-83) argues that 'the emergence of a radical adult education movement in Latin America, operating outside the state', in the 1970s 'sparked world-wide interest among educators working for social change'. He illustrates the common characteristics, shared by most variations, include: challenging social injustice, inequality and social factors to bring about change

(political); recognising different types of knowledge & encouraging dialogue between them; learners are 'authentic subjects of change', thinking critically & taking action (praxis); learner-centered methodologies and supporting collective action. There are also some really useful pragmatic tools available; for instance the Training for Transformation guidebooks, which are basically a collection of practical resources for community workers (Hope & Timmel, 1984). Similarly, an interesting variation was developed by Augusto Boal, a Brazilian theatre practitioner; who designed a radical pedagogy entitled 'Image Theatre' in the 1960s. It provides drama as a platform for participants to name, discuss and politicise their individual oppressions; identifying collective issues and explore solutions (Crone, 2003).

Connolly (2001) implies popular education practices are massively underdeveloped in an Irish context; however, she demonstrates the similarities with community education practice. It is also positioned within the struggles and real interests of ordinary people, seeking to stimulate progressive changes of a social and political nature. She acknowledges a strong philosophical grounding and inter-connection between community education and community development; however, arguing a misconception that they are one of the same, with the latter lacking emphasis on working collectively. Whereas, drawing on the work of AONTAS, she argues that community education is firmly founded on Freire's philosophies, in particular conscientisaton and praxis. She illustrates how the focus on method and process has allowed the incorporation of 'really useful knowledge' identified by Thompson (2007), for example: 'how', 'what', 'why'; as pedagogical practice is dialogical and reflexive. Working in this manner is expected to produce the 'acquisition of skills, knowledge and further directions' for participants; thereby, also harnessing social and community empowerment and advancement. Connolly (2001, p.3) powerfully argues that 'women's community education goes further, towards emanicipatory education, the process which enables people to raise awareness, to reflect and to bring about change'. It further explores the relationship between the minute experiences and influence; where the process of developing a person-centered relationship is central to social analysis and educating to politicise. She makes a distinction between Freire's pedagogy as aiming to capsize relationships between the oppressed and oppressor; while Hope and Timmel (1984) view a

commitment to building unity as central to education of this nature. Women's community education was a starting point, from which to establish ways for marginalised groups to connect within wider community development initiatives; endeavouring to offer students the tools to discover their own power and 'it helps to overcome the problems of shared leadership such as stagnation, disunity, accountability, and running out of steam' (p.3). Connolly (2001) passionately indicates the remarkable manner in which women's community education has bridged 'the gap between the personal and political in a tangible way' in Ireland over the last twenty years:

> Women's community education, to use Linda Connolly's phrase, 'mushroomed' to become a measurable, influential force in Irish society, enabling the engagement of ordinary women with the women's movement, in a meaningful way. It has enabled women to see themselves as active participants in Irish society, women who might otherwise, through socialisation, perceive themselves as operating within the private sphere only. It has emancipated women to a level of citizenship, which they have hitherto been denied, in spite of the legal and social changes which resulted from the 1971 Commission on the status of Women ... (pp.1-2).

Connolly (2001) suggests there are significant accounts of women who have participated in WCE but do not identify as feminist; yet they do acknowledge the process as liberating and empowering, which she feels builds towards increased power, resources and position within society. She attributes significant changes for women in Irish society to feminist progress since the 1970s and believes that WCE has acted as a vehicle of bringing the womens movement to a wider cohort. The Flower Power (Aontas, 2009), guidebook for WCE, as discussed previously, proudly acknowledges the connection between the women's movement; nevertheless, it neglects to explicitly reference Freire's influence on the central elements or any theorist for that matter.

My practitioner experience has enabled me to recognise the diverse approaches and understanding, of delivering WCE; from the radical perspective of forming connections between the personal and political, bridging the gap or dichotomy of public and private for women, which Connolly (2001) alludes to in the previous quote. On the other hand, I've encountered the perception, from providers I might add; that the 'special' circular classroom set up, is definitive of

WCE. I don't attempt to diminish the set up type, rather suggest that seating arrangements are only one aspect of the overall process, a spatial ingredient. Correspondingly, a similar divide or gap, between formal and informal spaces of feminist education, are well debate within literature (Broughton & Potts 9001; DeVault, Jones & Passuth, 1983; Harding, 1991; Gore & Luke, 1992; hook, 1994; hooks & McKinnon 1996); both offer learning to the other and often meet quite well through WCE principles as illustrated by Connolly (2001), for example WS delivered in the community rather than universities. While much credit is due to such spaces, enabling women to link the personal and political, becoming politicised on a personal level; the is a need to be reflexive, as to why that is only the case for some participants, who seem to translate their insights into a fully formed praxis of their own, incorporating action – often resulting in activism in their local communities or on specific feminist issues. The merger between personal insights and activism of a political nature, appear to have a stronger presence abroad; for instance, it is clearly evident in the writings of many America based feminists, such as Naples (1998, 1999) and elsewhere Naples & Bojar (2002). There's no doubt such learning is transformation and potentially empowering for both the individual women and their communities; however, it is the subtleties within practice and learning spaces that most interests me and I wish to explore further, particularly the skills or pedagogical practice applied to produce such outcomes. Starhawk (1990) states:

> 'Action is ritual, myth, vision, quest ... ... The shapes in our minds that limit our power-from-within are mirrors of the prison, the gun, the guard. To reclaim our power, we must move into the territory of the real threats with which our culture controls us. ... ... We can dissolve the shadow of the inner bomb when we openly confront the makers of the real bomb. Within that kingdom, when we join in community, in solidarity, we too can find sources of strength and renewal – the true magic that dissolves fear'. (Starhawk, 1990, p.94).

Although offering her perception from the world of worship and magic, as a self-proclaimed witch; she does sum up the subtle but powerful possibilities of finding our power through women's groups or communities. I believe there is a mystical element, which occurs in feminist education given the right conditions; not necessarily in the magical sense Starhawk applies, but mystical all the same, given the tricky task of finding adequate language, to explain something so

subtle and yet so potentially powerful. Likewise, she encourages feminist teachers to treat each class as the art of magic, creating an environment for each individual to evoke the power from within themselves; by listening to and valuing each voice. Additionally, she describes the potential to change relationships by changing structures; advocating non-hierarchal structures, she believes that hierarchical structures are based on a ladder format, the rungs creating a divide between those at the bottom and those who succeed in reaching the top and exert power.

On reflection, the Women's Studies classroom was my own first experience of radical education; whilst hooks (1994), denotes the feminist classroom, as the first space within academia, she:

> ... encountered any attempt to acknowledge class difference. The focus was usually on the way class differences are structured in the larger society, not on our class position ... ... students (mostly female) from materially disadvantaged circumstances would speak from that class positionality, acknowledging both the impact of class on our society status as well as critiquing the class biases of feminist thought ... (p.181).

Freire's theories are greatly expanded by bell hooks, in my opinion she provides a far more advanced and wholesome perspective; not only is her 'engaged pedagogy' explicitly feminist in position, it also acknowledges the holistic student and recognises the liberator can come from within the oppressed group. I must admit it is hardly surprising it appeals to me, given my strong feminist position, desire to work collectively and mindfulness of student's wellbeing as full humans. Principally, I draw on one of her most influential writings, 'Teaching to Transgress: Education as a Practice of Freedom' (1994); as it specifically outlines the thinking, passion, insight and praxis behind the 'engaged pedagogy' she proposes.

> Urging all of us to open our minds and hearts so that we can know beyond the boundaries of what is acceptable, so that we can think and rethink, so that we can create new visions, I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions – a movement against and beyond the boundaries. It is that movement which makes education the practice of freedom. (hooks, 1994, p.12)

2.5.1 Influences on hooks

She is best known by her pen name, bell hooks, I have honoured her tradition of using lower case letters throughout this thesis (hooks, 1994); she purposefully does so, to distinguish herself from her grandmother, but also to prioritise the substance within her writing, as oppose to whom she is as author (en.wikipedia.org, 19/10/15). Her birth name is Gloria Jean Watkins (1952); an American author, feminist, social activist and professor at Berea College, Kentucky (hooks, 1994). Her work, writing, feminism, theories and pedagogical practice are strongly influenced by her 'lived experiences', particularly that of being a black woman in a colonial society, oppressive to both women and race. She recalls the inspiring approach demonstrated by her black female teachers in grade school; community members themselves, they had a familiarity with the students, their families and the socio-economic circumstances (hooks, 1994). In her childhood, she was drawn to theory, as she felt it offered her respite, a space from which to view the world critically, to explain and heal her hurt, imagine a different future and challenge her current reality; moreover, she tried to encourage others to do same.

Encountering Freire was the first time either hooks or myself, discovered a language for liberatory learning; both at a point of questioning and struggling against various oppressive forces within learning. She suggests he 'offered ... a way ... to understand the limitations of the type of education I was receiving to discover alternative strategies for learning and teaching' (hooks, 1994, p.17). She argues the merger of Freirean and feminist pedagogies, is far more useful than either as a separate entity. Due to his experience in Chile, she suggests Antonio Faundez exemplifies the power available to us, when our individual day to day lives are guided by our revolutionary thoughts, rather than beliefs which exist abstractly in our minds (hooks, 1994). Additionally, Martin Luther King inspired her, he wrote a powerful piece advocated for 'a true revolution of values'; advocating movement from a 'thing-oriented' to a 'person-orientated' society (hooks, 1994, p.27). Freire contributed substantially to the development of hooks' pedagogical practice; however, he was not alone, philosopher Thich Nhat Hanh also had a significant impact on her thinking. Not surprisingly, both contributors valued praxis, with the latter emphasising a holistic perspective; he

indentified the teacher as healer, in a process where the knowledge available from the whole human being is of greater value, than knowledge isolated within textual sources. He advocates a unity of knowledge within our body, mind and spirit; particularly, through drawing from the complexities within our lived experiences and how we live in the world (hooks, 1994).

2.5.2 Activism by hooks

hooks (1994) suggests the real starting point is recognising that no education is politically neutral, committing to practice from an:

> ... engaged pedagogy is an expression of political activism ... ... The choice to work against the grain, to challenge the status quo, often has negative consequences ... that is part of what makes that choice one that is not politically neutral ... (p.203).

She advocates that both teacher and student bring their true identity and experiential 'knowing' into the classroom; educating for freedom is possible, when this knowledge is accepted and valued it (Thompson, 2007; Connolly, 2008). Parallel to the widely accepted concept, that knowing or understanding historical events or social movements, is important for in-depth insight of current practices, experiences and subsequent learning - Casambre (2010); Cox & Flesher Fominaya (2009); Finnegan (2009); Hall et al (2012); Mayo (1999) & Wainwright (1994).

> Identity politics emerges out of the struggle of oppressed or exploited groups to have a standpoint on which to critique dominant structures. Critical pedagogies of liberation respond to these concerns and necessarily embrace experience, confessions and testimonies as relevant ways of knowing, as important dimensions of any learning process. (hook, 1994, pp.88-89)

For hooks (1994) it's vitally important that we are aware of the impact when various oppressive issues intersect, particularly race, class, social standing, sexuality and gender; whilst actively challenging potential imbalances of power within the teaching community. Moreover, part of her activism is looking towards the future and working steadily to alter future dynamics both within the classroom and academia generally. She highlights the slow pace of

multicultural change within academia; nevertheless, she suggests if we look to history, we are provided with reassurance that change is possible, if patient.

> As backlash swells, as budgets are cut, as jobs become even more scarce, many of the few progressive interventions that were made to change the academy, to create an open climate for cultural diversity are in danger of being undermined or eliminated ... ... To create a culturally diverse academy we must commit ourselves fully. Learning from other movements for social change, from civil rights and feminist liberation efforts, we much accept the protracted nature of our struggle and be willing to remain both patient and vigilant. To commit ourselves to the work of transforming the academy so that it will be a place where cultural diversity informs every aspect of our learning, we must embrace struggle and sacrifice ... ... Our solidarity must be affirmed by shared belief in a spirit of intellectual openness that celebrates diversity, welcomes dissent, and rejoices in collective dedication to truth. (p.33)

hooks (1994, p.205), journeys with her students, beyond the classroom and in ways 'continues to teach them'; through her engaged pedagogy. The lesson of mutual engagement enables them to continue the process of shared learning. Additionally, she acknowledges learning also occurs in spaces exterior to the classroom, particularly, when discussions of a serious nature are supported. In practical terms, hooks' activism becomes most visible in her attempts to build a community within the classroom. She suggests establishing a classroom community, creates a binding sense of openness, shared commitment and common goal; thus, stimulating intellectual experiences. An environment where there is mutual responsibility amongst educator and students for learning, where educators invite feedback from their students; creates a sense of oneness, where power is more equally held by all, in different ways.

2.6 Feminist Education through an 'engaged pedagogy'

hooks (1994) believes establishing a 'bottom up' classroom community, combined with the amalgamation of theory, action and reflection, otherwise known as praxis; is essential for stimulating activism and transgression. A progressive holistic education, *'engaged pedagogy'*, emphasises well-being and self actualisation; where both teachers and students enter the classroom with their intellectual minds, but also with their body and soul. A pedagogical perspective, in direct opposition to the split between body and mind associated

with the 'banking' system of education. She impressively argues that respecting and caring for the souls of students, is vital for deep and intimate learning to begin. There is no space or acceptance within the repressive classrooms of traditional education, for emotional responses or contributions; whereas, hooks, views emotion as part of the body and soul and therefore worthy of inclusion, stating 'creating a space of emotional trust where intimacy and regard for one another can be nourished' (hooks, 1994, p.132). On that basis, she acknowledges if we integrate fun and passion as aspects of human emotion within the classroom, we also need to recognise pain. A complete acceptance of the whole student, rather than an expectation that they should recover privately outside of the classroom; a behaviour enforced by repressive traditional settings, which deny the unity of body, mind and soul. Central to hooks' pedagogy is the possibility to create change; she realises the potential power the educator possesses in changing the direction of their student lives and the collective power to change reality. Recognising the power resides within the learning process; she eloquently sums up the underlying meaning and purpose in her work, when she states:

> The classroom, with all its limitation remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality, even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (p. 207)

hooks (1994, pp.47-48) provides a pragmatic analysis, of Freire's 'conscientization'; she acknowledges the important emphasis placed on the initial phase of transformation, 'that historical moment when one begins to think critically about the self and identity in relation to one's political circumstances.' Freire argues that conscientization in itself is not sufficient, but needs to be joined by meaningful praxis; a process by which transforming the world and giving meaning becomes possible. hooks (1994, pp.193-194) illustrates the imperfection, given that praxis requires reflection of the mind, and action by the body; thus, ironically, supports her argument for entering the classroom 'whole', to fully surrender ourselves to learning. Similarly, she suggests if teachers are discussing prejudice, it is necessary to 'speak about themselves as subjects in history'; as it is our physical bodies which locate us in historical contexts. The

holistic learning environment promoted by hooks (1994, pp.11-14), where knowledge of lived experiences is claimed and shared equally; eliminates internal segregation and dehumanisation within the classroom. Thereby, she translates the Freirian terms of ‘conscientization’ and meaningful praxis, into 'critical awareness', 'engagement' and ‘active participation’. She believes teachers truly become educators, when they are willing to adapt their techniques, reinvent and rethink their ideologies; particularly, when faced with new experiences or knowledge. She distinguishes her emphases on reflection and action in order to change the world as a feminist praxis, rather than solely for women. Putting language on the hurt to begin healing does not need to be embedded in academic language; its real value and ability to change the lived reality is due to its accessibility. Additionally, she discusses various techniques, by which to ensure these qualities are established within the learning community; for instance, space & movement, voice, knowledge, facilitation skills and passion.

2.6.1 Space & Movement

hooks (1994) condones the static positioning of the teacher behind a desk or podium, as it visually reinforces hierarchical power and control and exercises the mind in isolation. She advocates movement amongst students, forming eye contact and connections; thereby, dismantling the concept of the teacher as the all knowing expert. Similarly, through her own lived experience, she highlights the importance of how space is organised:

> I still remember the excitement I felt what I took my first class where the teacher wanted to change how we sat, where we moved from sitting in rows to a circle where we could look at one another. The change forced us to recognise one another’s presence. We couldn’t sleepwalk our way to knowledge (hooks, 1994, p.146).

2.6.2 Voice

A sense of courage by the educator is necessary in order to transcend beyond the manufacturing learning approach, where students are expected to passively devour and memorise information provided to them as a homogenous group. In

contrast, the educator should perceive and respond to the students as unique beings; their approach must offer inclusion of all students, dismissing the notion that there is a 'single norm of thought and experience' (hooks, 1994, p.35). To establish classroom communities, hooks (1994) advocates creating a silence from the background noise for individual voices; she discovered her own true voice, by coming to terms with and critically reflecting on her past. She believes in teaching students, to respectfully and seriously listen to each other voices and concerns; which does not imply a necessity to agree, on the contrary she advocates critiquing everything we hear for ourselves. She identifies the importance of encouraging all students to 'come to voice'; not only is it empowering for the individuals, but it challenges and dismantles the potential class divide. For instance, she's found in privileged colleges, students often feel they have a right and confidence for their voices being heard; whilst, in public colleges, the students are generally working class, assume they are perceived as having nothing valuable to say or contribute to the dialogical exploration of ideas. Moreover, she suggests within 'banking', disruptive social traits in the classroom are generally associated with lower classes; students are often labelled as troublemaker or silenced, absorbing bourgeois values in order to find acceptance. Creating spaces where diverse voices and language is valued, interrupts the cultural imperialism notion that you are only worthy of being listened to if speaking the oppressors language. Alternatively, she argues you can use the oppressor's language to reclaim your power; producing a new variation which transforms it into a language of rebellion and resistance. This alternative practice or counter-hegemonic worldview, creates different ways of thinking and knowing; thus, produces alternative cultural and epistemological influences. She states: 'We take the oppressor's language and turn it against itself. We make our words a counter-hegemonic speech, liberating ourselves in language' (p.175). Creating engaging spaces, encourages a process by which students develop a communal awareness of diversity and experience within the classroom and a sense of equal ownership; thereby, they are more likely to value and remember each individual's uniqueness. She suggests students should also be trusted to interact in accordance with their own needs; thus, creating an environment where the student takes responsibility for their own choices, not waiting for guidance.

2.6.3 Knowledge

A collective recognition and value on each other's voice, enhances the desire to learn, a participation in the acquisition of knowledge; similarly, acknowledging everyone's contribution creates a learning resource. In her experience, hooks (1994) indicates students are willing to dismantle the barriers of knowing and surrender themselves to ways of learning and re-learning that go against the grain. Interestingly, she suggests the educator also values learning from their students; for instance, gaining a clearer intellectual understanding of how to share knowledge. Her progressive approach enhances the capacity to know and claim knowledge, whilst forming linkages with academic theory, through shared lived experiences; however, she emphasises the necessity of educators being roles models, demonstrating their own vulnerability through confessional narratives or stories, if they are to expect the same of their students. While risky, it is potentially empowering, as it breaks down systems of domination, as she illustrates:

> I share with the class my conviction that if my knowledge is limited, and if someone else brings a combination of facts and experience, then I humble myself and respectfully learn from those brining this great gift ... (hook, 1994, p.89).

2.6.4 Facilitation Skills

Adequate facilitation skills are required by the educator, in order to constructively engage students in dialogue; thus, advancing the Freirian assumption, that creating the conditions of problem-posing education is a sufficient. hooks illustrates these skills are required within the classroom; to ensure verbalisation of critical contributions is equal amongst all students. Like hooks, the contemporary fields of adult education, take facilitation skills and managing group dynamics more seriously. For instance, Connolly (2008, p.92) illustrates the skill of facilitation: 'it is a highly organized, critically reflective, skill-based process that depends on the approach and expertise of the facilitators, and underpinning principles of respect, tolerance, trust and transparency'. I have to concur based on my own practitioner experience, it is a multi-dimensional process, involving tasks, tutoring, lecturing, facilitation,

knowledge and the ability to create an environment where students come together to learn, grow and develop. She further advocates facilitation as a tool for democracy, enabling links between learning and the citizen to develop (Connolly, 2008).

2.6.5 Passion

According to hooks (1994), pleasure is a rich quality not included in either the work of Freire or feminist pedagogy. She demonstrates enjoyment in the learning space can be catalytic; promoting a deeper level of participation and engagement between teachers and students. A phenomenon often feared and viewed as disruptive in traditional education, where it is assumed a seriousness is required: *'students should be almost dead, quiet, asleep, not up, excited, and buzzing, lingering around the classroom'* (p.145). She believes the classroom should be an exciting pleasurable place, with fun incorporated; however, cautions that collectively bringing our passions, can create an overwhelming experience inciting fun and/or pain. We should treat each classroom similarly to students, each being different and unique; it is necessary to have a flexible agenda, to be continuously creative allowing for adjustable directions and not one blueprint for all. 'When a classroom is truly engaged, it's dynamic. It's fluid. It's always changing.' (hook, 1994, p.158). The educator brings their passion for theory, rooted in a love for ideas that can inspire and create a dynamic place of learning; the transformation of social relationships are actualised and the false dichotomy of the world inside and outside of academia disappear, when that passion is injected in the classroom.

2.6.6 The Challenges of engaged pedagogy

A number of key challenges are self-identified within her pedagogy. hooks (1994) acknowledges the capacity to think critically about ourselves and our lives, is generally not encouraged by society. Promoting this level of engagement, is undoubtedly more draining on the educator; thus, being mindful of self care in order to protect their wellbeing, against burn out is essential. From a practical perspective, maintaining a learning community is problematic if classes become too large; as it becomes impossible to engage deeply with

students within and beyond the classroom. In an attempt to protect her students future experiences and indeed make a small but gradual change to equalise the system; she endeavours to teach students they can exist in both worlds simultaneously, their background and the unfamiliar language or behaviour within academia, rather than feel pressurised to choose between them. However, she indicates the necessity for them to believe they can alter the landscape is essential to do so; finding creative ways is often necessary to transcend the boundaries.

2.7 Cultivating a Research Question

From the beginning I intended to conduct research based on feminist principles; however, identifying the precise research was an evolving process for numerous reasons: the usefulness of specific topics, limitations, access to research participants, feedback from peers/academic staff and politico-ethical influences. The initial research proposal outlined the aspiration of 'Capturing the experiences of Women's Community Educators in the current climate'. Once the research process had commenced and potential interview participants were being identified; it became apparent that specifying 'Women's Community Education', could potentially be misleading. As it could be interpreted to apply the assumption that all women community education is incorporated; when in actual fact, the focus was on feminist educators, with experience of working in the delivery of both formal and informal education including community education. Furthermore, given that feminist education tends to be a diverse and multi-disciplined approach; it was imperative to seek out the views of feminist educators themselves. This was a very significant and important component of the overall research; as the main focus of the research was to prioritise their voices and experiences. As my interest focuses on finding out their views, on what works in these kinds of educational settings, the challenges in the current climate and particularly their thoughts on what can be done to sustain and advance feminist education in the face of these issues. Thus, I made the decision to call the research exactly what it is, "Capturing the experiences of feminist educators in the current climate". As I was typing up the transcripts, I began to realise that 'in the current climate' did not fit with the detailed biographical accounts; furthermore, it indicated an unproven conjecture on my

part, that participants may perceive challenges in the current climate. On that basis I removed those four loaded words, leaving a thesis which is primarily focused on the interviewee's experiences, i.e. 'Capturing the experiences of Feminist Educators'.

2.8 Choosing an Appropriate Method

Brannick & Roche (1997) suggest that the method chosen for data collection is crucial to the overall research process and will impact on the research findings; a decision strongly influenced by the researcher's overall methodological strategy, their research approach and research question. Ryan (2006) further suggests that becoming familiar with the three main categories that methods of data collection fall under – *Information extraction, Shared Understanding & Discourse*; enables the researcher to reveal their epistemological stance and the method best suited to the type of knowledge or information they wish to uncover. As there were elements in both last two methods which appealed to me, I constructed a table in order to identify the aspects I would utilise and their cross-connections (Appendix P); the characteristics identified stimulate the production of rich and descriptive material. I dismissed the use of impersonal methods, such as questionnaires, surveys; the primary research method identified as most suitable for this research project, was to conduct in-depth personal interviews of a semi-structured nature. Secondary research was also conducted in the form of reviewing appropriate literature; the material found to be appropriate is integrated throughout the structure of the thesis.

2.8.1 Sampling

From the outset, my intention was to interview a relatively small selection of feminist radical educators (approximately 5-6); to ensure I could present detailed individual accounts of each interviewee's, perspective, motivations and subsequent approach. However, the size also highlights perhaps the most fundamental limitation in this case; that the findings cannot be assumed to be reflective of all feminist educators. Patton (2002) suggests that in order to substantiate the smaller sample size; researches need to pay particular attention to explaining the rationale and procedures which they embarked on and are

obliged to discuss how those choices affected the research findings, strengths, weaknesses, analysis, interpretation and design. He suggests purposeful sampling, goes a long way towards alleviated concerns regarding a small sample size. He reminds us to be cautious not to over-generalize and fully utilise the in-depth material. I feel the important element, is not to assume two people have the same insight or experience if they've offer similar material; it's to really probe into the material and highlight the insights, learning and perspectives developed through their individual experiential account and highlighting differences.

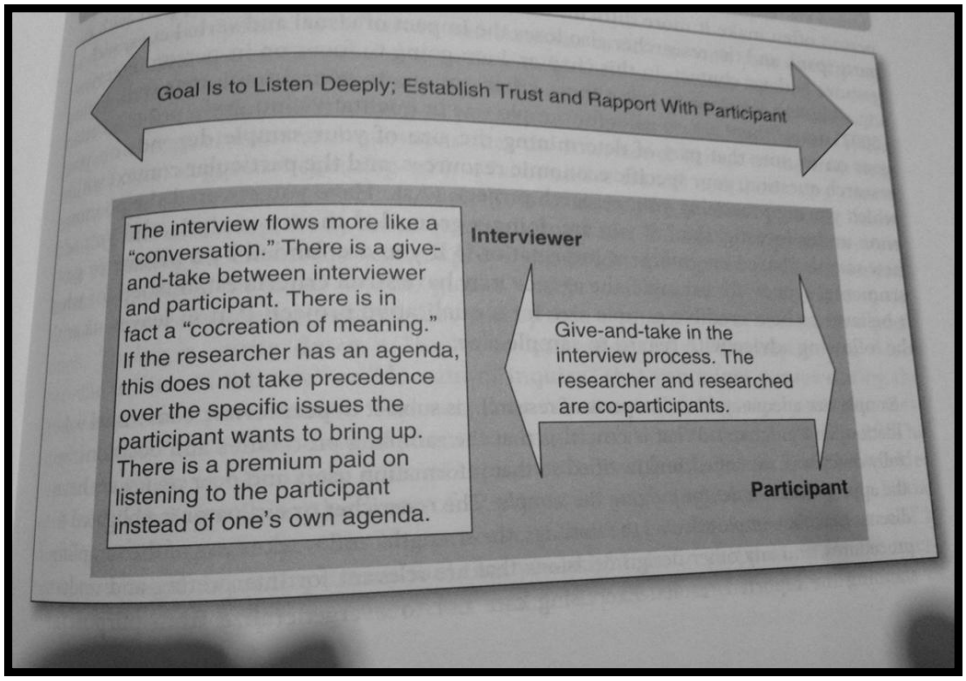
As I entered into the research phase, I realised I could not assume that all feminists involved in teaching or indeed women working within the Women's Community Educational initiatives, were actually utilising feminist approaches. Hence, I found it necessary to identify my interest more specifically; which lay in interviewing women educating from a feminist perspective. Furthermore, I was very aware of celebrating difference; ideally, I wanted to include a multiplicity of participants, incorporating different levels of experience, age brackets, backgrounds, such as class, racial & sexuality and representative of the diversity of feminist educational spaces, such as: academia, community settings, activist projects and women's groups/networks. While it is by no means a checklist or tick box exercise, capturing the unique subjectivity of a range interviewee's influences and experiences; would certainly provide rich insight and learning, if you follow hooks' analogy of engaging with and analysing the 'minutiae of everyday life' (2008, p.53). The participants did occupy these diversities, with the exception of race.

I prepared a list of potential interviewees, adding to it as I went; including candidate's names, contact details, research invitations and responses received. The initial sample of interviewees was chosen from a combination of my own awareness of feminist educators, having worked in the area and recommendations from others; including some of the interviewees themselves. I started out from a desire to discover what experiences and learning influenced the evolvement of their feminist thinking and impacted on their practice; I prepared appropriate open research questions as a template, illustrated in Appendix M.

2.8.2 In-depth Interviews from a Feminist Position

Having identified in-depth interviews as the most appropriate method; I set about designing the actual specific style of interviewing I would undertake. A broad spectrum of approaches exists towards interviewing; ranging from informal interviews, with very little structure or control to formal interviews where the research exerts total control over the agenda (Ryan, 2006). Hesse-Biber (2011) maps this continuum, identifying the relationship between the interview structure and the use of open or closed ended questions. The interviewing approach used in this study, sits between the low and middle structures; hence, a semi-structured approach.

Feminist in-depth interviewing is generally more like a process of give-and-take where information flows back and forth between '*coparticipants'* as illustrated in the diagram below (Hesser-Biber, 2014, p.191). The researchers' reflexivity is paramount in this process, 'whereby the researcher is sensitive to the important "situational" dynamics that exist between the researcher and the researched that can affect that creation of knowledge' (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.201). This is important regarding differences in terms of background, gender, race, class, and ethnicity, between researcher and research participants; particularly, the intersect, as previously discussed (Collin, 1990; Hesse-Biber, 2014; hooks, 1990, 1994). Charmaz (1995) states that rich detailed data provides you with: explicit material; thoughts, feelings, actions, context & structure, empirical understanding and views on human existence that is generally inaccessibility or hidden in normal discourse. On reading the various literatures regarding feminist in-depth interviewing; I was struck by the strong similarities existing amongst the techniques promoted and those within radical education pedagogies, WCE and counselling & psychotherapy. For example, the production of knowledge is very similar to that advocate by Freire, of conscientization through dialogue; while creating a deeply engaged dialogical relationship with the interview is very similar to the engaged pedagogy hooks promotes, generating conditions for participants to form connections through praxis.



(Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.213)

Additionally, different types of probes are recommended in feminist in-depth interviews, as a means of encouraging to interviewees to continue, delve deeper into what participants chose to discuss and reduces the need for question – such as: gestures, nodding, echoing, repeating, and clarifying (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.197). These are comparable to the use of active listening, demonstrating empathy and non-verbal responses in counselling. Similarly, the importance of recognising all forms of language both during the interview and when writing up, is raised by DeVault (2004, p.235); she argues that interviewees often use hesitant language, such as 'you know', when 'this halting, hesitant, tentative talk signals the realm of not-quite-articulated experience, where standard vocabulary is inadequate, and where a participant tries to speak from experience and finds language wanting' (Hesse-Biber, 2014, pp.202-203). This is particularly true in relation to Carl Rogers (1951) three core conditions – congruence, empathy and unconditional positive regard. Furthermore, I have since discovered that such links have already been highlighted in the work of Connolly (Connolly, 2012). A central component for a feminist researcher is the importance of the relationship between researcher and participant; where researchers pay close attention to possible power and authority issues and try to establish a balance,

particularly in relation to data collection and analysis interpretation (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.3).

2.9 Pre-Interview Process

Firstly, I secured approval from the University to conduct this research and an overall research schedule. I designed a general interview checklist in preparation for the interviews and a template to record relevant details of each interview; these are illustrated in Appendix I and J consecutively.

A pilot interview was conducted, as a means of exploring if this method and my proposed questions would work in practice; a practice promoted by Hesse-Biber (2014), who suggests that doing so provides the researcher the opportunity to test the effectiveness of their research design and modify if necessary. Subsequently, I recognised the richness of data available when asking participants about their own background and experience in education as a means to explore how their current thinking and praxis developed; thus, the research questions were altered slightly to allow more focus on this area.

I identified six potential interviewees and contacted them all via email, with the exception of one, who I contacted initially on Linkedin; four of whom responded. I was very aware of the power I held in the relationship with interviewees, as researcher. As a feminist educator myself, I am an 'insider' or on an equal footing to the participants; however, I also hold the position of an 'outsider' as a student and in terms of other variables, such as difference in age, experience, outlook and status in relation to being a student, a mother and not married etc. In order to try and readdress this power dynamic, I tried to give as much information and power to the participants as I could. Furthermore, as some of the interviewees may well have associated me with having previously worked with specific organisations; I made it clear that I was no longer associated with any organisation and was conducting the research completely independently. I disclosed my experience as a feminist educator and identified my wish to learn about the evolvement, experience and practice of other feminist educators.

Being mindful of my potential *power* as researcher to influence the direction interviewees took in their responses and my learning from both the pilot interview and relevant literature; I made a conscious decision to make the questions as open as possible. I invited questions from the proposed participants and clarified that participation would be on a voluntary basis. With that in mind, I indicated the time participants would need to dedicate to the process; including approximately one hour for interviews and additional time to review transcripts for approval at a later date.

I also encouraged participants to schedule interviews, picking both times and locations which suited them and they would feel comfortable; emphasising that I was most concerned with an environments where they would feel at ease conducting personal interviews. In two cases, participants suggested their own homes and went above and beyond to make me feel welcome; one lady even went so far as to make me lunch afterwards. Lentin (1993) took a similar approach in her research.

The written consent of participants was vitally important and a primary ethical consideration; careful consideration and redrafting was given to preparing the consent forms (Appendix L). I endeavoured to make them as inviting and informative as possible; as a means both of outlining my interest; with particular emphasis on hearing interviewee's evolution and experiences as feminist educators and how I intended to use the information provided in the interviews. Additionally, it was made very clear, that participants had the power to withdraw at each stage of the process. Also that their wishes would be fully respected, should they wish to take out or edit any material; in a bid to ensure they had utmost control over their own 'voices', used in the final data analysis (Oakley, 1981). This was reiterated in the consent forms, during interviews, when sending transcripts and once final approval was given, making it clear that the option to withdraw was open up until the end of April, at which point the final stage drafting the thesis would be underway. It was made clear from the outset, that a copy of the thesis would be made available to participants in the format most suitable to them (i.e email or printed).

2.10. Conducting the Interviews

The interviews were semi-structured, for which I had pre-prepared open questions as previously discussed. The interviews were all ranged in duration, two taking just over an hour, the third 1 ¾ hours and the fourth two hours. I purposefully chose to conduct face-to-face interview, enabling me to establish a strong rapport; which was reflected in their welcoming hospitality, generosity of time and interest expressed in the research topic and my findings. Providing participants the space and freedom to contour the interviews, share what was important to them from their lived experience was paramount; hence, my skill set from counselling and group work was instrumental, including: active listening, congruence, non-judgemental positive regard, reflection, gentle probing, non-verbal cues, instinctive responses and awareness of emotive discourses. The level of similarity in approach, with elements of humanistic person-centered psychotherapry and empathic facilitation skills; as mentioned previously, this insight has been established by Connolly (1999, 2008), who emphasises incorporating them from a radical perspective. It is also worth highlighting the similarities with an engaged pedagogy presented by hooks (1994); particularly in relation to real engagement with the whole student and listening to individual experiences.

> Radical humanism has the tools to overcome the blocks to equality. Critical analysis is central to resisting and destabilizing the social roles that are imposed upon us, and to the movement toward collective action. Group work can enable women to develop consciousness and awareness, necessary to take control over our own lives. It can, if it is clearly underpinned by a radical agenda, provide the tools to resist the 'business as usual' track, that the dominant groups maintain. In this way, group work can advance women's struggle for equality (Connolly, 1999, p.126).

Like, Hesse-Biber (2014), I was happy to follow the direction of the interviewees and mindful of not interrupting, but rather waiting until a natural opening in conversation occurred to interject. Additionally, responses by one interviewee led to incorporating specific themes - such as reflexivity - into the remaining interviews, if not first raised by interviewees; hence, demonstrating the cross-connections Ryan (2006) discusses.

I wanted to capture the language in which participants used to describe their lived experience, including what was not said and language which may otherwise be perceived as *muted*. (DeVault, 2004, p.235). Furthermore, I was very aware of the ebb-and-flow associated when moving between being an insider and outsider; as the course of discussion moved between different topics. Hesse-Biber (2014) suggests that being an outsider can stimulate you to ask for clarity as you're not operating from a position of shared understanding; paradoxically, I found that it was the instances where shared knowledge could justifiable have been assumed, were most important for me to seek clarification and not make the mistake of assuming that my experience or understanding was the same as interviewees. However, it would be disingenuous to say I don't have an agenda, which in this case is an interest in a specific topic. This point also illuminates the primary difference between in-depth interviews and oral histories; as portrayed in the following account:

> The in-depth interview seeks to understand the "lived experiences" of the individual. We are interested in getting at the "subjective" understanding an individual brings to a given situation or set of circumstances. In-depth interviews are often issue orientated. In other words, a researcher might use this method to explore a particular topic and gain focused information on the issue from the participants. The oral history method of interviewing usually covers a participant's entire life story (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.189).

As previously discussed, I initially intended interviewing five or six participants; however, due to the substantial level of detail, information and personal experience shared by the four respondents, the question of conducting more interviews arose. On one hand, conducting more interviews would fulfil the original research design; paradoxically, it would also mean producing more data, thereby potentially limiting adequate space to comprehensively explore the themes already captured. As part of delivering a presentation on the overall thesis, this was one of the issues I raised for discussion and feedback with co-learners and MU staff. The unanimous decision was to work with the four interviews conducted and should the need arise there would always be the opportunity to conduct further interviews. According to Patton (2002), the adequacy of sample size 'like all aspects of research, is subject to peer review, consensual validation, and judgement'.

2.10.1 Protecting Anonymity

I realised taking part could have ramifications for participants; hence, from the outset I highlighted the fact that the research would be viewed by my supervisor, MU staff and possibly others such as MU students. I clarified the option for participants to remain completely anonymous should they so wish. However, once I started to actually conduct the interviews, the depth of honesty and information provided by participants, made me rethink this position and come to the conclusion that they should indeed be kept completely anonymous. Furthermore, through input from interviewees, I also realised it was imperative that all organisation names and identities of others be removed from the transcripts. This involved re-drafting the transcripts, several times in some cases; which was a significant process in itself bearing in mind the full transcripts ranged between 32-65 pages of detailed dialogue. In saying that, my primary focus was to ensure participants were fully satisfied with material used and attempts to protect their identity; thus, it was a vital part of the process.

2.11 Post-Interview Process

Engaging with participants was the most important element in this process. During transcription I recorded every single word, including the: *emm's, ahh's* and *you know's* for two main reasons; firstly, I was concerned with not exerting my power as a research to determine which of the interviewees words were relevant or important. Secondly, paying attention to muted language is vital both during the interview and when representing 'our participant's voices in writing up our research findings' (Hesse-Biber, 2014, pp.202-203).

The participants were invited to pick their own 'pseudonym', rather than me doing so for them; in most cases they agreed to proceed with a name I initially put on transcripts. In hindsight, if I had thought of doing so, I would have liked to give participants the opportunity of coming up with their own pseudonym in the first place; I'm afraid it was only when I came to transcribing the interviewee's this occurred to me, but certainly something I would be mindful of in any future research projects. As previously outlined, I sent copies of the transcripts to participants, encouraged feedback, edited transcripts to their

request and sent copies of new versions. Furthermore, on completion of the thesis a final copy of the thesis and a thank you card was sent to each participant.

2.12 Data Analysis & Interpretation

The analysis and interpretation of the research findings was not two distinct stages but part of the overall praxis; involving a complex and continuous process of data review, analysis, reflexivity, making meaning and consultation with literature. Sociologist David Karp indicates, there is a tendency amongst social scientists 'to describe patterns as if they were uniform and monolithic'; he suggests we should not shy away from reflecting the *'complexity and ambiguity'* of themes and the world in our writing (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, pp.142-144).

Trying to analyse responses to questions of an open nature, is a rather complex and lengthy exercise; by their nature they encourage assorted responses, illustrating a multiplicity of themes and opinions. Firstly, I identified both common themes and those of a dissenting nature; I achieved this through reading and re-reading the transcripts, listening to the audio recordings, identifying the various topics and displaying them on flipchart pages, which created quite a visual display. I also mapped the main theoretical concepts relating to the various themes and appropriate literature; in order to establish a more comprehensive interpretation of my findings. I had then intended to link the emerging issues under headings and subheadings; however, finding a way to do so took some trial and error. My primary concern was not to lose sense of individual women's voices; in trying to preserve a comprehensive account of the interview, I struggled with identifying which points to prioritise as I was very wearying of diminishing what was important to the participants. These concerns decreased somewhat, once I had made the decision to dedicate a chapter to each participant; as I felt this would keep the integrating and development of their individual experience and centrally position their voices in the research. I structured each chapter under broad headings, in order to allow for comparison and dissident themes in the analysis. I then returned to the transcripts, with the

aid of a highlighter to group the themes under the chapter headings and identify key quotations; in order to generate a cohesive interpretation.

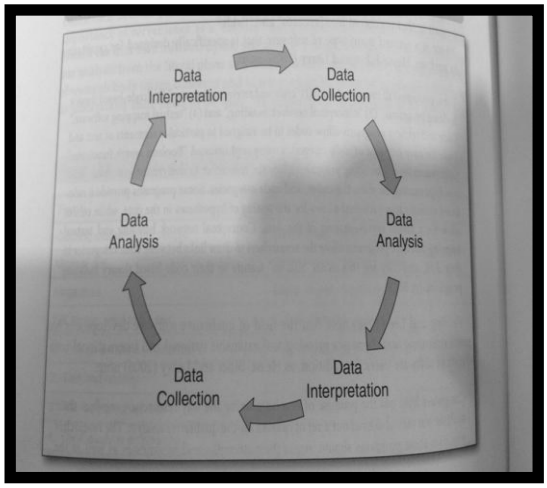
From a theoretical perspective, I used a mixture of two approaches – grounded theory and narrative analysis. On a general note, I must admit when researching the theoretical components of both these methods of data analysis; I was struck not only by the similarities with both the approach and grammatical terms used for collecting data (e.g. shared learning), but also at another level with the practice of engaged pedagogy in feminist praxis and indeed similarities to feminist in-depth interviews. For instance, when speaking about constructing grounded theories, Charmaz (2006, p.10) describes a non liner approach similar to education of a radical nature and a praxis of consulting our interactions with people, perspectives and research, in both the present and learning from past experiences.

Bryman (2008) indicates grounded theory originated from Glaser and Stauss in the late 60s; it is generally associated with both the collection and analysis of data concurrently throughout the research process. However, he stressed due to its evolvement and emerging contradictions it is often viewed as an approach rather than a theory and can generate concepts as well as theory. There are also discrepancies regarding the coding process; however, there is general consensus that '... a movement from generating codes that stay close to the data to more selective and abstract ways of conceptualizing the phenomena of interest ...' (Bryman, 2008, p.543). Charmaz (2006) suggests that it is:

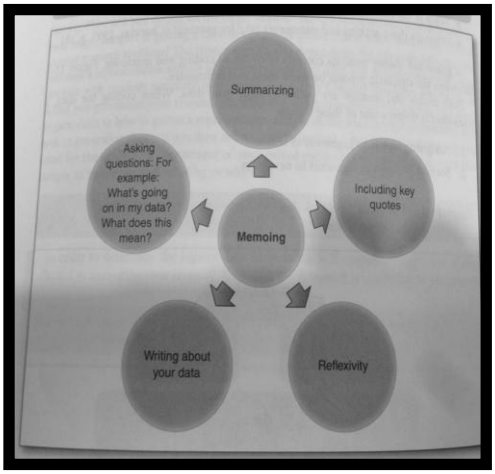
> ... the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to ... ... define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means ... ... Most fundamentally, the empirical world does not appear to us in some natural state apart from human experience. Rather we know the empirical world through language and the actions we take toward it. ... ... We must dig into our data to interpret participant's tacit meanings. Close attention to coding helps us to do that ... (pp.46-47).

The process of generating concepts, categories, coding, theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation are central components; however, memos also play a vital role, they are basically notes written by the researcher to themselves, aiding them to focus their thoughts on topics (Bryman, 2008, p.547). There are of

course criticisms of the approach, for instance Bulmer (1979) indicates that what we uncover when conducting research is largely governed by what we already know; which is not only accepted as true, but celebrated in feminist research as discussed earlier. Nevertheless, I feel by acknowledging my position and opinions from the outset, enabled me to prevent those factors from directing the research. During interviewees I constantly reminded myself to question participants' views and experiences, particularly those similar to my own; as I was very aware that there may well be subtle differences beneath the surface and they may have arrived at conclusions for different reasons. Furthermore, theorists such as Charmaz (2000, p.521) rejected the objectivist approach favoured by grounded theorists - such as: Glaser, Strauss & Corbin – due to its desire to uncover a separate reality; instead she advocates a constructivist approach, claiming that social realities are non-existent as separate entities to human action. There are two meanings to constructionism, both of which are fitting with a feminist research approach; firstly, that ontology influences social relations and secondly, the construction of knowledge within the social world. The aspects of my analysis consistent with grounded theory incorporated a lengthy inquiry into the discussions, reflexivity regarding my interventions as an interviewer and a cyclical process of memoing, open coding, axial coding and in vivo coding. However, it is important to note that I constantly revised my coding and revisited the data, as new themes emerged in order to identify comparisons; hence, fitting with the tools utilised in grounded theory (Bryman, 2008). For instance, I reviewed and adapted the thesis title as the central concepts and categories evolved; likewise, I adapted research questions, as discussed previously. I also drew mindmaps to capture themes and form linkages; which I discovered at a later stage is a technique Charmaz (2006) recommends to sort coding. Additionally, Charmaz (1995) suggests that memoing includes tasks such as: using descriptive accounts to summarise data; including key quotes and writing reflexively about your analysis and interpretation. She also emphases the importance of asking explorative questions, including 'what is going on in my data?', 'How are codes related or not related?' and 'What does it all mean'? All of which was present to a greater or lesser degree.



Cyclical Process in Data Analysis & Interpretation (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.213)



Memoing (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p.398)

Grounded theory has the advantage of being a complementary method when analysing qualitative data (Charmaz, 2006, p.9). In this case, I was also interested in the manner in which participants framed meaning and represented their lived realities in their interview responses; hence, I paid particular attention to exploring the linkages occurring episodically, chronologically in the narrative. The category of narrative analysis includes a variety of approaches, largely concerned with seeking out stories participants utilize in order to express meaning of their lives and surrounding worlds; however, the available literature on the process involved and subsequent analysis, does not compare with other methods, such as grounded theory. Bryman (2008) suggests that at the very least there is an interest in the accounts people give of the past, present and future, their sense of position within events and the role they play in them; it is basically an analysis of the connections and sense of meaning people make between themselves and events. He indicates, participants are invited to take part in an unstructured or semi-structured interviewing discussing all aspects of their story to date. It is more commonly associated with research projects based on biographical material or oral history; research areas that are growing alongside the renewed interest in life history projects (Riessman, 2004). Chamberlayne, Bornat & Wengraf (2000) have suggested the resurgence is in line with the growing interest in social life since the 1990s and the use of multiple rather than the traditional focus on the narrative of a single participant.

Miller (2000, p.19) distinguishes between life 'history' and 'story', with later focusing solely on the narrative or story and the first including the use of additional material, such as such as diaries, letters and photographs. This is generally not relevant within this research project; however, in one instance when a participant, *Amy* went to the effort of showing me a book and cup which were very meaning to her I did take a photo and have included it in the dedicated chapter. Similarly, Bryman (2008, p.442) distinguishes a oral history account as being more specific in tone, focusing on a particular event of time and less so on the individual; he also notes that additional material is sometimes used. In this instance, participants were invited to reflect on their lived experience, however, specifically in relation to the formation and development of their perspectives and practice of feminist education and not all aspects/events of their lives. In saying that, participants did verge into material of a very deep and personal nature, which was relevant to the development of their praxis of feminist education; thus, fitting with the definition of narrative analysis given by Faraday & Plummer (1979, p.776) 'the inner experience of individuals, how they interpret, understand, and define the world around them'. The clear focus on people's lives told from their own words and understanding and is generally concerned with these facts and prioritising the participants voices (Bryman, 2008). This method of analysis allows the stories and voices of participants who otherwise may be ignored or marginalised to be heard (Samuel, 1976); this of course is very true in the case of women. Hence, both of these factors are consistent with feminist research which places emphasis on prioritising women's voices. According to Plummer (2001), there are three distinct styles: naturalistic, which transpire due to the writing of autobiographies; reflexive, which recognise the presence of the interviewer within the overall story and the researched style, which is the most popular, deriving from a quest to uncover and record social phenomenon.

The interviews in this research do fulfil Atkinson's (2004) specification of approximately one and half hours in duration; however, they do not fit with the recommendation of having two interviews per participant, as I wasn't trying to capture the full life story of participants. Reliance on the participants memory, where lapses or distortions are thought to be potential issues, has been a major criticism of narrative analysis (Grele, 1998); however, I would take issue with

that argument, on the basis that if you are genuinely interested on hearing someone's experience of events, then their perspective should be valued not second guessed. Furthermore, Riessman (2004) suggests that some qualitative data may be unsuitable or disjointed by coding; alternatively arguing 'that researchers can turn narrative analysis on themselves' in order to explore the correlation within which the narrative was captured. She specifies four models of narrative analysis: thematic, with emphasis on the content; structural, with greater emphasis on the way in which the story is told; interactional, with emphasis on the dialogue between interviewee and interviewer where themes and structure are co-construction and finally, performance analysis, where the emphasis is on the words and gestures used.

In this case, prioritising the words used by interviewees was important in order to ensure their voices were prioritised; likewise, in keeping with the holistic element of feminist praxis, all four models were utilised where appropriate in order to establish a comprehensive symbolism of the story rather than viewing it from one perspective. Thus, this component of my analysis was not concentrated on a line within the transcript; rather the beginning, ending and content of participant's responses and their use of language and stories as forms of expression.

In summary, this chapter has discussed the methodological approach, outlined the feminist research topic, mapped my position as researcher, explored relevant theoretical material, illustrated the overall research process, including in-depth interviews and provided details of the data analysis and interpretation. At this point, the thesis moves on to explore the lived experiences of the interviewees; which are presented in the next four chapters.

CHAPTER THREE - 'SHEILA'

... education for me ... it's just ... a practice of art ...

3.1 Influences

Sheila received encouragement from secondary school teachers to attend teaching college; humorously speculating 'what that was based on, namely I was able to spell'? Nevertheless, she followed her 'obsession' in visual arts, which remains her 'point of reference'; studying 'public art' was especially inspiring.

> I'm really, passionate about, is art work and facilitation ... ... I would teach them the skills I have, they would practice them, and then we'd create something together, and that was probably my way into, teaching and lecturing ...

She depicts how her 'thinking on feminism' evolved:

> In 2008, ... I remember having a conversation, with a partner of mine ..., who was a male and identified as a feminist, and I was like 'I'm an egalitarian' (laughs), doesn't everybody don't you want everyone to be equal, so, it was literally through conversations, with him and the people or circle of politically minded people, eh, he introduced me to, I kinda, started to, get an understanding of, how to talk, and understand equality and ... ... really grasped feminism.

Undertaking her Masters in 2012, brought her to contemplate feminist theories and politics, in the contemporary world. One lecturer's application of pedagogies proved inspirational; particularly, 'handing' students 'responsibility' for their own learning; a '... learning beyond the perimeters maybe, my education had been before, I was interested in that as much as feminism'. Furthermore, teachings of feminist educators were pivotal in her evolving praxis: 'I came across the teachings of bell hooks, who critiques Freire and talks about' a more 'equal approach, to education', being 'an engaged pedagogy.' Sheila suggests theoretical insights stimulated her own

'conscientization', enabling her to identify Freirean pedagogy within her informal education.

> I realised that, a very early experience for me, had been youth theatre, that was literally a life changing experience, in my teens, and my youth facilitator, used to get us to do exercises developed by, Augusto Baul, who I later learned, was informed by Paulo Freire, so, Freirean pedagogy has been within my education.

3.2 Activism

Initially, she attended a 'public meeting', organised to explore potential responses to the anti-abortion backlash in 2012; her account demonstrates that enjoyment played a large factor in her decision to continue working with the group and illuminates how her passion, skills and critical analysis became united through activism.

> ... a rally for life organised by, an anti-abortion group, ... called, eh, 'Abortion Does Not Tear Her Life Apart', and so, I felt personally targeted by their campaign, I felt that society and culture was being targeted, and because it was such a visual campaign, with strong visual, images of women and their pregnancies, I felt that I, could make a response as a visual artist, and that is what I proposed to that group, and we developed a performance together ... ... I enjoyed working with them so much, that I continued ...

Sheila highlights the potential for achieving shared learning, positive outcomes and political responsiveness, through feminist principles:

> I've always been interested in, exploring, emm, artistic, concepts, around the experiences of working with other feminists, teaching one another, of exchanging skills, learning about other people's experiences, ... alongside my activist work is my art work, and they very often get blurred, ... for me that was the most absolute, eh, example, of how, the personal becomes political, and ... vice-a-versa, even though I know that's a bit old hat to say (laughs) ...

3.3 Feminist Education

Sheila acknowledges being identified as ‘feminist educator’ interested her, as it is a ‘constant’ aspiration. Critically reflecting on her ‘praxis’, she states:

> I’m a bit didactic in my facilitation style, I have to remind myself to open up the floor, make sure it’s more participatory, like allow for people to, emm, innovate and lead their own learning, those three things for me are core ...

Sheila illustrates a feminist educational approach, focuses on the ‘knowledge’ and ‘experience’ in the room, where ‘the person’ is ‘present in the learning experience’.

> ... there are more, like visceral elements to the education, as well as how you feel when you come out of the room, emm, is as important as, what you think you know, or learned in that space.

A Freirean ‘pedagogy’ allows us to create ‘allies’, form connections and dissolve ‘hierarchy between educator and educated’; individuals can ‘actively’ tackling ‘issues’, if they are ‘supported’ and ‘empowered’ through conversation to ‘critically, and honestly’ examine their position and different experiences due to ‘privilege and access to power’. Sheila indicates, hooks’ theoretical expansion, educators become role models for their students, by demonstrating engagement is worthwhile.

> I often invite them, now (laughs), to arrange the room ... ... so that they can put me in a position they feel is comfortable to interact with me in, and we can negotiate from there, physically, and emm ... intellectually, the idea of ... ... introducing yourself and telling a little bit of your story, ... making, sure that, the engaged pedagogy model is, emm, established ...

Sheila liaises with the ‘gate-keeper’, who usually has built up a ‘rapport’ with the group; to discuss a ‘useful direction’ based on their expectations, interests and learning objectives.

> ... artist's cannot parachute in, to community with all these fan-dangled ideas, and then leave again and expect that community to be okay (laughs) ... ... shocks to the system or ideas out of the blue, are not sustainable ...

Sheila feels a 'concocted' plan 'would be too didactic'; acknowledging, not having one leaves uncertainty and a level of risk regarding outcomes, it involves more 'working', 'feeling', and 'thinking things out in conversation' which is richer 'in terms of actual learning'. She indicates that unexpected learning outcomes renew her own passion for learning. In order to gage experience and provide a 'bespoke' proposal, she contacts group members; often using technological tools, but stresses the need to be mindful of skills. Sheila advocates 'floating' a 'proposal'; discussing it and deciding the next collectively.

> If a group, can see that they have, taken a proposal, and developed it, and created their own outcomes, ... have total ownership over their educational process, ... they'll have this whole experience, ... it will have dispelled a lot of the kind of hierarchical approach to learning ...

Sheila encourages students to 'engage', providing feedback on 'content' and 'mode of presentation'. Accepting the 'responsibility' of 'bringing education to a group' brings expectations, she manages through 'constant negotiation':

> ... my aim would be certainly, to accommodate ... different experiences ... ... it's about being really clear ... ... where we as a group can listen to, one another ... ... processing that feedback and making changes, or adjustments or improvements ...

She highlights additional expectations, for instance demonstrating a certain level of 'professionalism', the 'knowledge' an educator has and question over areas of inexperience. She endeavours to be open if she 'doesn't know something', explaining that can leave her predisposed to perceptions of being 'less credible'.

> ... that's a risk I have to take, and it doesn't feel, that comfortable either, but, for me it's important, that there isn't a nauseating, all knowing expert in the room ...

Facilitation skills are crucial, as there's expectations you 'will keep things, fair, balanced, reasonable'. Sheila suggests being respectful of each individual voice and making sure no one voice overpowers, is fundamental to respecting the group; fulfilling the 'expectations, of the learners, is the most central concern'. Outcomes cannot 'hope to be of good quality' unless the overall process has been; investing 'so much in the process, that the product becomes secondary', can attract 'criticism'. In addition, negative experiences in visual arts, are 'systematic of' traditional approaches, owing to 'crazy' expectations 'of excellence'. Reflecting on her personal experience, she highlights expectations to execute a 'perfect' life drawing in leaving cert, with no opportunity to study different angles or complex parts; she was never told about 'preliminary sketches'.

Sheila reminds us that education is a 'learning phase' and articulates the importance of having a positive experience and feel inspired to continue: 'it's important to keep in mind that people are learning, they're not already experts, if they we're then it would be perfect'. She suggests students individual 'life-stage', 'starting point', 'experience', 'aspirations' 'potential', 'subjective experience and interpretation' need to be valued; although difficult to grade. She feels pressure to make 'an amazing product' only 'perpetuates' the 'cycle' and illustrates the learning opportunities through creative approaches:

> ... arts experiences, can be educational on all sorts of levels, the like common parallels for you know, spiritually, and emotionally, and personally, like having a positive arts experience, can make you feel, all kinda different things, that we're not used to describing, about the experience of sitting in a classroom learning ...

3.4 Challenges

Although, relatively new to feminist education, she confirms growing interest in 'exploring feminist methodologies', throughout the decade she's facilitated workshops. Additionally, artists are creating educational opportunities:

> ... inviting people to discuss, the themes, and contexts of the work they do, maybe their actually, creating that work in a participatory project, in every stage along, their working things out, like with the actual participants, so that's, kinda, a broad, description for that socially engaged practice.

She investigated socially engaged art, discovering its roots stemmed from feminist principles:

> I think there's a direct link, there's one art critic called Grand Kester, ... talks a lot about this form of art ... ... he's coined the phrase 'dialogical arts' ... ... he's referencing feminist work, feminist praxis, he's just not calling it feminism (laughs), why don't we just call it feminist art ...

Sheila believes that 'we can have conversations around feminism, without calling it feminism'; however, 'you're denying the history and making invisible, the practice'. There 'is an issue with feminism as a label, because people think it's all about bra burning and man hating (laughs)'; she attributes to the political history and human cautiousness of labels. Furthermore, she speculates that second wave feminism 'influences this social engaged practice', but conversations regarding 'intersectionality' have only emerged in the 'third wave'. She suggests cultural changes, such as movement towards dialogue and participation visible in social media, present opportunities to bring a feminist methodology to conversations; however, advocates awareness when 'operating within a patriarchal space'. She'd love to see a feminist approach 'enshrined in the practice of education', your 'methodology in everything'; providing, a pragmatic example of how it doesn't need to be a 'stand alone thing':

> If you're going to talk about the environment with a group of kids, you don't have to have a feminist class and an environmental class, you can simply go beyond the litter situation (laughs) ... ... addressing the whole culture ...

CHAPTER FOUR - 'MARIE'

... so many people think that you can only learn in school, and that it ends when you leave formal education ...

4.1 Influences

Marie attributes her community spirit and that of her ten siblings, to their upbringing, 'I grew up in a family where it was all about giving, my parents were very much involved in the community'; she believes it's 'intergenerational' and humorously speaks of her daughter's activity. Marie studied commerce after secondary school and had a 'lovely career'; she took 'a leave of absence to tour Europe', met her husband and 'was married five months later' at 21. For occupational reasons, they travelled the US for six years; their eldest daughter was born there, their second daughter and son were born after returning to Ireland in the early '80s. Marie recognises the experience of meeting women from a diversity of cultures was 'tremendously' educational:

> ... it definitely was an influence on, eh the development of eh, my feminist attitudes but I think that eh, I also get that from my mother who was clearly a feminist, she eh, she was tremendously involved in activities at school level and community based, and we would have seen that the, the women had so much to contribute because, what women say and do is different to what men do within a community, and how we work with people, and how we act.

4.2 Activism

At 17, Marie was involved in building a Youth Centre, serving as Chairperson. In 1981, she ended up 'on the parents association', having attended a meeting in her parental role. Marie served on the National Parents Council and numerous committees at primary and secondary level, as Chairperson, PRO and Treasurer; undertaking tasks, such as: organising seminars, presentations and liaising with stakeholders. She worked on a range of programmes, proudly describing the development of Social & Personal Health Education, as part her 'legacy'. She's noticed a massive shift from parents 'not

venturing' beyond the 'school gate' to increasing involvement; personally, she describes it as 'a continuous education' developing her awareness.

> I think once you go through that, and the confidence, and basic skills like learning, how to work on, how a committee works, and the dynamics of that ...

Marie demonstrates that participation, support and developing transferable skills increase confidence; indicating that women who served on parents associations often go on to take up officer positions with women's groups. She portrays past expectations of women to undertake certain tasks, like 'washing the jerseys' or 'make the tea'; emphasising the 'patronising attitudes' and comments. She illustrates that women's voices were often dismissed, 'predominately' by men, who 'might turn around make the same proposal'. She believes attitudes are changing, with more women taking on leadership positions; attributing much to the support of women's groups and networks. Marie explains that she's an ICA member for 20 years and served as her County president; consequently, got involved in establishing and managing the Counties Women's Network. Reflecting on her community involvement and subsequent impact on family life, she indicates that having support was instrumental:

> I wouldn't have achieved anything in my life without the support of my husband, he's unbelievable, he used to drive me around this county to set up parent associations, go have a coffee or a pint and do the crossword in the pub or sit in the car.

4.3 Feminist Education

Marie describes how women 'operate':

> ... we take a gentle approach, we are more encouraging, we take people by the hand ... ... identify the problem and see how we would go about resolving it, we would have a discussion on it and we would be more tolerant of other people's ideas ... ... building consensus and things like that ...

She indicates that poor facilitation can 'do more harm than good', a 'good facilitator' requires certain 'attributes', 'skills', 'training' and 'objectivity'; adding: '... the facilitative aspect is the kernel to the whole thing, isn't it, yeah'. Furthermore, she validates the value of informal education, '... there is great opportunity, eh, to do the type of programmes we were doing outside the classroom, and be as effective or more effective ...'. Marie indicates her County has a high percentage of women, who didn't complete formal education, adding:

> ... some of those women who lacked that experience, in young adulthood ... ... they need something in between, before they get to the stage of going through formal education experience ...

Marie suggests that taking a creative approach can 'bring benefits to all parts of your life':

> ... you can give women the power to change their lives ... or to step out of the shadow, and become themselves and give themselves their voice, by doing that type of programme, ... you would not believe the transformative effect ...

She illustrates this point further, with a specific 'intergenerational' project; some of the women, went from never having put pen to paper to writing autobiographical stories. Moreover, she stresses the importance of affirming and celebrating, both projects and participants: '... some of those women got up on stage at our International Women's Day Event and read their story, that was absolutely life changing ...'. Marie advocates hosting events creatively, for instance substituting conventional meetings for International Breakfast's. Their network hosted some very successfully, laying the room out 'cafe style', supplying food, incorporating group-work and 'literally were down on the floor':

> ... engaged with women and we talked about the issues that were affecting their lives, a lot of them might have been things like roads, or lack of health services.

Further, emphasising they provide women spaces to reflect on 'the role of women in society', link local and national issues, 'validate their experience' and recognise if they've been denied 'opportunities, because they were a woman'. She corroborates positive outcomes, such as highlighting the issues identified 'at the time of the local elections'. Similarly, Marie emphases the importance of networks genuinely representing women's voices, particularly when seeking supports; stating that it 'could be just, a jolly little group' unless you are engaging directly with women, 'identifying their needs' and ways of 'addressing' them.

> If they fail to represent a significant cohort of groups within the County ... it can lead to problems, I don't know whether you, can call yourself a representative group ...

Marie questions the benefit of a network becoming preoccupied with a sole issue, for instance women in politics, as 'then you become a focus group'; acknowledging the importance of that 'piece of work', she indicates that there are numerous dedicated organisations nationally. Alternatively, she advocates a holistic approach, offering a diversity of activities. Marie also illustrates other complexities, suggesting that while there are 'noticeably viable' member groups, situations arise where you question if board member's are 'representing themselves and themselves only'.

4.4 Challenges

Marie also provides insight into the complexities of sustainability, for instance, funding dependency, going 'from activity, then when there is nothing to inactivity'. It 'shows a certain lack of direction', stressing organisations don't give enough thought to the lasting 'impact on women's lives'; for 'staying power' she advocates not 'going along with the herd mentality', but reflecting on 'core values', 'aspirations', 'programmes' and '... thinking about what can we leave after us ... ... you need a legacy'.

Marie highlights not having a designated space from which to operate is ‘detrimental’, often placing unnecessary burden and expense on ‘individual members’; vividly portraying the difference obtaining ‘desk space’ made to their network, after years of ‘carting stuff home’. She feels women’s groups should be adequately supported:

> ... it is difficult, if you do not have a roof over your head (giggles) or a filing cabinet to put stuff, or a few bob to buy some paper or ink ...

Additionally, she ‘questions’ inconsistencies:

> ... some groups can pull down tremendous amounts of money, ... particularly women’s groups in Northern Ireland, ... their floating in money is ... quite bazaar ... how they can manage to get funding from all sorts of avenues ... including Europe, for all sorts of projects, including many overseas trips ...

Adding, her concerns regarding funding of ‘individual faith based groups’; ‘there should be a separation of state, and religion ... of the church’. Marie highlights additional factors influencing participation; for instance, women might ‘have that energy to devote’ to ‘activities outside the home’, when they no longer have childrearing responsibilities. Accessing women’s groups in rural communities can be difficult, with a lack of ‘individual’ or ‘public transport’; further compounding isolation. She acknowledges ‘that childcare and travel are legitimate expenses for women’; nonetheless, in her experience ‘expenses’ become more problematic when it comes to taking on ‘work’, than when attending ‘nice programmes’ or days out. Sustaining an organisation does ‘become difficult’ when it is left to the ‘same few women’, advocating that members should take on management positions where possible; she feels concrete structures are beneficial and largely underpinning the ‘success of the ICA since 1910’.

Marie acknowledges that creating ‘multicultural’ participation within their network proved difficult, despite ‘all sorts of efforts’. She feels racism is ‘vastly breaking down’ but acknowledges it is still an issue; she believes it would further dissolve by multicultural group’s and networks. Engaging traveller women’s groups proved

particularly difficult; she described interaction during a specific programme, where she felt the 'younger' traveller women 'lacked confidence':

> ... it was difficult to get them to engage, they didn't seem to have a voice, ... certainly all of the voices that you hear in 'Z', from the Traveller Movement are predominately, ... the voice of men ...

She also recounted practical obstacles, such as identifying meeting environments and times suitable to all women; for instance, some cultural groups 'wouldn't go out at night', yet women working couldn't meet during the day.

CHAPTER FIVE - 'NORA'

Who washes the dishes is political ...

5.1 Influences

Nora acknowledges her family influence on her volunteerism, her parents have always 'been very involved in community, my father's very involved with St. Vincent de Paul.' Nora 'just wanted to get out working', after school and got a library job. She also travelled New Zealand, Australia and South East Asia; after her return, she humorously tells of an incident, pivotal in the formation of her feminist views:

> I come from family of seven, 3 boys and four girls and it was always women's work and men's work. Sexual division of labour, very clearly defined, and one Sunday, after Mass when the lads were sprawled around the kitchen table, waiting for the dinner to be served, I asked my brother to set the kitchen table. Anyway, he looked at me with such distain, and said 'that's women's work'! Yeah, I lost my temper with him, and I asked him again, and he looked at me as if I had asked him to, you know just do something that was completely unacceptable. But it was the look, of distain, that he, it would be beneath him to actually set the kitchen table. And of course, it was the usual, the men had to be feed at one o'clock on the dot, to go to various football matches or be on the golf course, and my mother, was slaving, in the kitchen, tired, exhausted, and I just asked her, 'mum will you just tell my brothers that they can set the table' and she said just said 'aww, don't start, let there be peace'. That was the motto, you know, it was one of the few times I've lost my temper, I left the house for two days and didn't come back. I was furious.

Nora also found inspiration in 'Inez McCormack', particularly, empowering other women 'to find their voice' and 'looking behind to see who you can pull up the ladder'. Her activism, work and education are intermingled, often reinforcing and intensifying her feminist views; she identifies most strongly with 'socialist feminism' with a 'left wing perspective and focus on 'equal distribution of power'.

5.2 Activism

Nora volunteered with the Simon Community; motivating her and other volunteers, to study social work as a mature student (1984-86). Her interest 'in grassroots and radical action', developed further during her student experience; she 'was hardly a week' there when one of the lecturers had them 'out protesting' for 'anti-apartheid'. She transitioned from case work to 'working collectively' with groups; commencing with 'a cross boarder community development initiative'. She noticed a complete lack of 'women's groups' and began establishing some; suggesting it was relatively easy to obtain funding in the 90s, for training, 'personal development was the buzz word'.

> I suppose we were always questioning, there's all this activity among women's groups, indeed, it hasn't changed much, and then no women in politics. There's a big, a big gap, as to why they don't take the leap, and their the backbone of the community.

As part of her masters in rural development, she explored if the tutors were coming from 'a psychological perspective' or 'informed by feminist theories, political empowerment'; we identified the ironic similarities with the subject of this thesis, 20 years on. Nora uncovered the majority of 'tutors were coming from, a very non-political' position; also that women avoided conflict and felt they had to 'keep the peace':

> ... if they say, no I'm not doing the dishes, you do the dishes, you do this, I'll do this, you do that, you have to take your share, all hell breaks loose.

Power is 'in the kitchen as well' she adds, '... a lot of us can want to hold onto that power, if it's the only power we have!' Nora passion for women in politics and governance continues, she is involvement in several local and national groups. Additionally, she worked on a project 'raising awareness about women's human rights', conventions signed by our government and producing shadow reports for CEDAW (Appendix G) and was part of a delegation in 2006 to the UN, New York.

> I learned a lot then globally, about other global women's groups ... ... I think, human rights is a powerful tool, to hold governments to account. I mean, Mary Robinson, said of course, "All these conventions, are the best kept secret, the government never tell us about them" ... ... it's all about implementation, they'll sign everything, and they'll ratify everything, everything is great on paper ...

5.3 Feminist Education

Nora recognises her 'facilitative' approach, 'gets a buzz out of organising' and uses 'learner centered methodologies', highlighting the importance of 'venue'. Advocating 'Freire's consciousness raising techniques', she suggests 'ongoing forums' would be 'more powerful' than odd training or seminars; illustrating the benefit of listening to and learning from the voices and wisdom of other women. She indicates that finding your own 'position on something' and articulating your 'opinions', can be 'more challenging' than 'looking towards the expert'. Moreover, she emphasises 'just tea and biscuits that's all it costs, so you don't need, you know resources for that'.

> I don't think there's enough spaces ... to discuss, like whether it's abortion or like some of these very difficult topics, because we all have our own opinions, and sometimes you'd like the opportunity to trash out, well I'm not sure what I think. If I listen, to you and you present a rational, or if I even pull out my own, stream of consciousness or trying to figure what I think ...

Nora advocates starting from 'current issues' using an engaging approach:

> If you were to hold a meeting on poverty, nobody would come. So, it is, to be a bit creative, how you frame stuff, so it is, just take it from where people are at.

Creative approaches such as using native language, crafts or activities work well; as 'people learn' when 'relaxed and enjoying themselves'. She provided examples of 'popular education methodologies'; great to get 'people going away questioning' their 'attitudes', 'structures' and the 'division of power and resources'. Despite looking easy, they take 'quite a bit of' facilitative 'skill', 'preparation', clear 'instructions' and 'posing' interrogating and 'provocative' questions; in order to draw out the learning

effectively. Confirming her familiarity with hooks' engaged pedagogy, she often tells stories herself with a themed connection; for instance, opening a conference with the kitchen table story. She believes it's important to be 'explicit' about your 'approach', stating where you're coming from, 'your values'; 'it's about the personal, which of course the personal is political'.

> If the woman is always washing the dishes, then she has no time for anything else, so you know, stories are a great way ... for explaining, and understanding, just hooking people, rather than giving a lecture, we all relate to stories and the personal ...

Nora emphasises the importance of self-reflection, to 'stop and reflect for half a day' instead of 'outcomes, and targets'; indicating that it's 'counter-cultural' and difficult if not valued by the organisations 'leadership'. She recalls a South African organisation, that would regularly stop everything and 'reflect on how there working, what they need to change. It was integrated into their work, so not leaving it' to one person. Furthermore, she identifies the need to be reflexive regarding 'intersectionality' and participation; if a group is not representative of all women, 'the important thing, is to question', reflect on what you 'could be doing better' and persistently voice 'this isn't good enough' that it's only 'the white, middle-classed, middle-aged women'. Yet being realistic, if there's no money or workers you can only do your best.

> ... to look at how race and class intersects, you know that there's huge diversity of women out there, and the importance of taking, women are not all the same, there not a homogenous group.

5.4 Challenges

Nora highlights the perception 'that gender equality is gone off the agenda'; acknowledging the difficulty of accessing 'funding' and emphasises that 'someone co-ordinating' makes a 'big difference'. Adding:

> ... women's groups have done a fantastic job without a doubt, lead by volunteers. And there is an advantage to that as well; that you can do what you want, when you're not tied into a funder.

Nora emphasises 'there's a lot more, to be done' to tap 'into women's potential' and build confidence; highlighting the need for good role models; as 'you cannot be what you cannot see!' She suggests we need to refocus on locally based women's groups, encouraging them to look at the 'harder stuff'; yet not being 'judgemental' of them doing 'flower arranging' or 'their shopping trip'. She illustrates the need to recognise, that women's 'lives are tough', sometimes 'they just want a break'; indicating the imperative piece is being 'smart' about how you 'engage' them. She highlights the complexities of the feminist label; some will suggest 'oh whatever you do, don't call it feminism', or 'we'll keep it nice and light', while others will say 'why should we'. Nora elaborates:

> I kind of go bit in between with that, because it has such a bad press still, and at the same time, we shouldn't not call it feminism, because that's what it is, and we're feeding into, that, bad press or that hostility ... ... some of the young women in particular, they don't call themselves feminists but their approach is feminism. Because, sometimes you'll have people who are feminists and the last thing they are, is actually empowering, and the last they are doing is actually empowering other women.

Nora suggests it comes back to 'coherence between values and practice', how you 'treat' the person 'beside you'; being aware of potential exclusivity of your 'language' or 'approach'. She indicates there can be 'clicks'; 'if you think differently at all that's not seen as being the good feminist'. Alternatively, she identifies the 'resurgence' and increasing online presence of younger feminists as very 'positive'; suggesting it's been referred to as 'the fifth wave'.

CHAPTER SIX - 'AMY'

> ... that human side and that connection, is all part of [feminism] ... ... it's not just about theory and ideas ...

6.1 Influences

Amy's highlights a generational link with her passion for poetry, creative writing and drama; she describes her family as 'lower middle class', her 'mum' died when she was nine, she has two older sisters and a younger brother. Her 'Dad' a teacher, made a 'conscious' decision to put them 'into a working class school'. She suggests there was a non-materialistic 'attitude towards life'; her Dad would 'make small comments', for instance 'priests should be able to marry'. She was interested in learning; modestly, indicating she achieved 'the highest points' in her school.

She became very aware of 'gender' expectations, whilst categorised as 'one of the girls'. Although also 'middle class', her UCD friends inhabited a 'different world'; she speculates 'maybe it's an' ethical thing, as she hadn't lived with 'wealth, 'being house proud' or 'showy'. Amy studied English and Philosophy, from which she realised, understanding the history of your 'knowledge' or 'ideologies' is important:

> ... our understanding of the world is connected to the world we live in, ideas don't exist separate to who we are, and where we are, and where we're placed in society.

She 'spent a year studying in Amsterdam', where the courses were far more 'progressive': 'Sex Studies', 'Political Terrorism' and 'Anthropology'; a 'liberating' experience, the students were more 'engaging' and 'political', alongside understanding 'Critical Theory', made her see 'the world differently'. For instance, she illustrates it's the readers understanding and perspective that matters; not 'what the author meant'.

> I remember being really tortured around Anti-abortion stuff, because I'd always been Pro-baby you know (giggles), and then I kinda realised that being Pro-choice was a feminist thing.

Inspired by an Australian friend, who was 'linked' into 'decent political radical social work', Amy did 'the Social Policy Higher Diploma'; she 'realised' how conservative 'Ireland' is:

> The other people in my class were so apolitical, ... saying *'what's politics got to do with social work?' ... ...* I felt like banging my head against the wall.

6.2 Activism

Amy illustrates her involvement in college societies, including Drama, Global Action and as English Literary Chairperson and travelled 'to Paris' and 'Scotland' for marches.

> I was one of those people who found it really hard to use the label ... ... embarrassed to use the word feminist, partially because I kinda I felt like it wasn't as big or as important an issue as the Anti-Globalisation, Anti-Capitalist ... ... probably a lot of the guys, and I mean guys, weren't supportive of feminism.

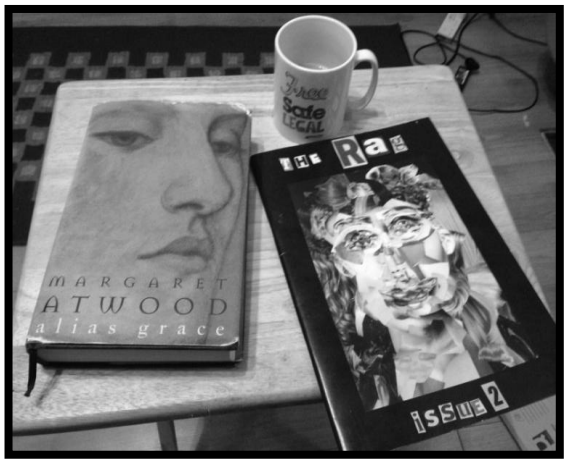
Amy's ran shared learning 'workshops' amongst activist groups; and involved in various 'radical' projects, including: Seomra Spraoi, Shell2Sea and Grassroots Gathering. She's written community education articles for the 'Rag Magazine'; observing 'a massive disconnect between' the 'Rag feminists' and those working on the ground or 'working class feminism'. Furthermore, through her involvement with 'Banúlacht', she learned a lot about WCE; through going to Tanzania, meeting feminists from a 'different generation' and delivering training on feminism from a global perspective. Ironically, I also partook in the training, as a grassroots educator.

While living in Australia for two years, she worked in an explicitly feminist organisation, on women's health and sex education; where she realised 'feminism is broader':

> I could be a feminist in work ... ... I started to feel like feminism wasn't just this one little aspect of politics, and the real stuff is the Anti-Capitalist, Anti-Globalisation, ... you can have a feminist analysis on politics or economics.

Amy passionately discusses volunteering 'at the Women's Aid Helpline', hearing many 'domestic violence experiences'; but didn't find it 'too heavy', as she felt she was 'helping'. She is currently very active with the Abortion Rights Campaign; they are developing a WCE course on 'reproductive health'. It's not being 'developed by experts for these groups'; but focused on 'real participation' from the collective groups involved. Amy illustrates how her practical experience was valuable when running a 'drop-in centre' for 'migrants and asylum seekers':

> I had this, emm, social activism, social movements background, where everything is D.I.Y., so it didn't occur to me, that you'd need money to do anything ... ... I'd just do stuff when I think about it, so I suited the job ...



6.3 Feminist Education

Learning from others had a big impact on Amy's approach, for instance the woman who established 'the drop-centre':

> She'd be like, you know, 'it's all about being nice to people, it's all about connecting, it's all about love', and I'd just be like 'oh for God's sake' ... ... I just kinda thought she was just being a bit sappy and, 'culture and celebration', and I'd be like 'No it's Anti-racism', she's be like 'yeah, celebrate diversity' ... ... I realised, over time, that human side and that connection, is all part of it, and in a way that's kinda feminism isn't it, that it's not just about theory and ideas, it's you know, the human side, and connection and care.

A facilitation skills course had 'the biggest influence' on her, despite being the least 'academic'; illustrating her initial reaction:

> You'll probably find this quite funny because it is such an hilarious idea of adult education (giggles), ... I was the definitely the youngest by miles, and I was definitely the most formerly educated by miles, and the first 2 hour session, was, kinda like introductory group work, ... I was like 'oh my fuck I just went to a course where we talked about our feelings for 2 hours, I don't know if I am going to finish this course that's so fucking boring', cause of course, I was just out of college and I had no confidence issues around education, but sure the rest of the room was older people, who hadn't been studying for years, and had all these confidence issues.

Amy indicates she quickly learned the value of 'empathy', 'group work skills' and the importance of 'watching', 'listening' and 'learning', from unfamiliar 'cultures', 'issues', or 'lived experiences'. She worked with a traveller women's group for four years, 'tough' at the beginning because she was 'young and inexperienced'; it was a 'totally different culture', another example of how she tried to understand 'where they were coming from'. She 'learning a lot' from the manager; he was constructive and supportive, while 'not micro-managing, not interfering', giving her 'space', 'autonomy' and advice when needed. Not everyone has an appreciation of those 'soft skills'; Amy could 'talk' with him 'to let off steam':

> ... sitting round having cups of tea all day and taking care of people, and deflating any conflict or tension, and saying the right thing to the right person at the right time, and that human side, and that care work.

During the last two years she did her Master's in Education, it wasn't 'massively rewarding'; she'd already done philosophy and didn't 'realise that education wasn't really, a discipline in itself'. She portrayed her annoyance with the interviewers; taking 'the piss out of' her 'for being a feminist' and asking 'inappropriate questions', like: 'whether I was promoting violence in traveller community by educating'. Amy had preconceived ideas of having 'stimulating' discussions; realistically, 'it was a bunch of teachers there to get a better job' with no real engagement. She conducted interviews with the traveller women; emphasising that was due to her existing relationship with them. Forming connections between theoretical insights and practical experience; impacted on that work and her later work on aboriginal education in Australia.

> I'm learning all this by reading the history books ... ...writing the thesis and interviewing the women and seeing how that links into policy, seeing how it links into their background, and even nomadic groups all around the world.

Amy often makes 'points' to increase awareness amongst group members and less empathic staff, 'articulating oppression'. She emphasises it's 'all about the process', a core element is 'who has the knowledge and how knowledge is constructed', 'who owns knowledge, who's knowledge is right'. Amy finds 'talking' useful for reflection, arguing theoretically 'thinking time' should be 'built into the day'. She illustrates other pragmatic examples, such as using quieter times or 'training'; she did 'an Advanced Facilitation Skills course', which taught her to be more 'assertive'.

6.4 Challenges

Amy illustrates that 'social media' enables 'younger women' to talk about 'sexual assault'; highlighting a 'dodgy' sense 'of male entitlement'.

> I can see loads of guys, women as well, but a lot of guys rejecting it, because, women telling their stories and women talking about their experiences isn't legitimate knowledge ... ... there's an assumption that their being over sensitive ...

Amy indicates 'feminism is very similar to the anti-racism'; people naming 'lived experience' and its being 'devalued' or minimised. She advocates that 'education' should 'support people to articulate in a way', that validates 'lived experiences as real, worthwhile and meaningful' and links 'consciousness raising'. Additionally, she suggests there can be 'fluffy feminism', which is not 'political' or 'grounded'.

Amy speculates, 'a philosophy of new managerialism' and 'neo-liberalism', is behind 'funding restrictions'; providing several examples where there's no 'value' of 'process' or participants 'knowledge', 'experiences' or 'ideas'. Contrastingly, 'feminism' or any type 'of political education' is about 'societal change'. She suggests 'it's not very surprising' women's education 'gets cut' when it's not a 'process' valued in society. Amy advocates you have 'to create' spaces and 'pragmatic' structures'; which 'allow' 'feminist education' to 'flourish', emphasising 'really concrete things, rather than pedagogical practice'.

> I'd be thinking about where does the funding come from ... ... to have a variety of funding, so you're not accountable to somebody else's budgets, so you actually have the scope and freedom to do what you want to do ... ... it's compromised when you end up having to write reports and provide outcomes, that are separate to what your trying to do just to please some funders ...

Acknowledging you can 'do things with no money' she illustrates the complexities; 'if you start promoting that idea, that you should do things outside the system with no money, you're then supporting the idea, that women should not be paid'.

Amy indicates 'philosophies' are essential to setting up a 'space for feminist education'; advocating the 'Abortion Rights Campaign', purposefully set up in a way 'that people don't dominate' particularly 'in terms of decision making':

> ... not too hierarchical, and the power in the group, how it works, it's quite distributed, and there's a real mix between people who really identify as feminist and are there for a while, and new people coming in and they learn by watching and doing and a lot of the group work, again a lot of the structure in the group work and how it's set up, makes it works quite well, and it's probable a good example of a feminist organisation, and self care is kinda integrated into the group.

Amy highlights that during her 'late twenties', with no 'kids' she had a 'boundless energy that you don't have in later life'; nevertheless, exhausted trying to balance work and education, regardless of the potential for enhanced skills or benefits to service users, workplaces are not always accommodating.

CHAPTER SEVEN – DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, I discuss the main research findings from an analytical position, particularly emphasising correlations with hooks engaged pedagogy. The structured is reflective of the thematic headings throughout: influences, activism, feminist education and challenges; a conclusion and recommendations resulting from the overall research process is also provided.

7.1 Influences

It is clearly evident the lived experience of these four women massively influenced the development of their feminist viewpoints and evolving praxis. Like hooks (1994), they connect specific behaviours, gestures, attitudes, values, passions and ways of being; within the framework of their intergenerational families (Marie, Nora, Amy). Empirically they learned that women have a different approach and something of value to offer (Marie and Nora); developing awareness of the stark inequalities regarding gender roles and expectations (Nora, Amy). Likewise, Amy distinctly recalls negotiating uncomfortable social scenarios when friends from different class backgrounds were gathered; suggesting there was an underlying ethical difference, more so than class distinction. Moreover, there is evidence to support the influence of Freirean pedagogies, youth theatre was explicitly identified (Sheila); all four depict dialogue and conscientization, including conversations, comments by parents and other activists. From a young age all four developed individual passions, which became centrally significant in their praxis; including art & theatre (Sheila), community & education (Marie), human rights issues & equality, especially gender roles (Nora) and philosophy, arts & learning (Amy). Similarly, the passion for theory, hooks (1994) developed in childhood became central in her praxis. Encountering a diversity of cultures, women, places, political views and progressive education, through travel appears to be a common liberating influence (Nora, Marie & Amy); thereby, bringing realisation of the conservatism and lack of engagement in Ireland.

All four completed 3rd level education and have continued to develop their skills through a diverse range of formal and informal educational experiences; interestingly, both Nora and Amy trained in social work and moved into community development work. Coming to academic theory, provided a language to describe their lived experiences for Sheila and Amy; they emphasis insight, knowledge, ideas and historical significance. Furthermore, being in a class where an engaged feminist pedagogy was demonstrated, was inspiring (Sheila).

7.2 Activism

Comparable with hooks (1994), three of the women (Marie, Nora & Amy) were involved in community and volunteering from a young age, while Sheila became active by her late twenties. They all demonstrate the personal is very much political and vice-versa, with a blurring of their activism, passions, critical analysis, learning and feminist perspectives; furthermore, the confidence and practical skills developed are valued and identified as transferable, inspiring involvement in further activist projects and study (Marie, Nora & Amy). Strong emphasis on human connection, supporting other women and fulfilment when they felt they made a difference is evident, for instance volunteering at the women's aid helpline (Amy); thus, similar to hooks' (1994) caring of students soul and well-being. Curiously, men played a supportive role in the formation of their feminist viewpoints and activist involvement (Sheila & Marie); a lack of support was noted as equally damaging, whether it was disapproval from 'the guys' within radical initiatives (Amy) or women simply attempting to keep the peace, avoid conflict and hold onto their power in the kitchen - 'if it's the only power' they have (Nora).

The benefits of approaching activism through feminist principles are described, in the same way hooks (1994) talks about establishing community within the classroom and journeying with her students externally; including: shared learning, enjoyment, political responsiveness, exchanging skills & experiences and overall positive outcomes. Therein lays the divergence, hooks' (1994) primarily focuses on the political element of education within the classroom walls; while these four women are effectively bringing a

political feminist dimension to informal learning spaces and activism in the external community. Activism illuminated the broader significance of feminism, it's not just one aspect within politics or less significant (Marie & Amy); rather you can have a feminist analysis on anything (Sheila & Amy). The empowerment and inspiration of forming global feminist connections is common; for instance, networking with global women's groups on the issue of women's human rights (Nora), visiting projects in Tanzania and working in explicitly feminist organisation both in Ireland ('Banúlacht') and Australia (Amy). Working alongside different generations of radical grassroots feminists illustrated the power of WCE for Amy; subsequently, illuminating the disconnection between feminists from different backgrounds and experiences, she noticed how different the 'Rag' Magazine feminists were in comparison to those on the ground, the 'working class feminism'. The increasing presence of women in community leadership positions has reduced patronising attitudes, silencing and task confinement (Marie); however, the need to encourage more women into leadership, to cultivate further change was evident (Marie & Nora). There is also a recognition that community involvement impacts on family life (Marie); furthermore, participation varies depending on life-stage, whether it's boundless energy in youth (Amy) or for women in later life, when they often have less responsibilities (Marie).

7.3 Feminist Education

All four women proudly discuss their feminist position; yet display a sense of humbleness, regarding the label of feminist educator. Their approaches contain a blend of feminist and Freirean influences and learner centered methodologies; engaged pedagogy is largely evident in all accounts with reference to 'critical' thinking, engagement and active participation, two of the women reference hooks explicitly (Sheila & Nora). In order to provide a detailed analysis, this section is divided into sub-categories, reflecting the headings used for the theoretical discussion of an engaged pedagogy in chapter two, including: Space & movement, voice, knowledge, facilitation skills, and passion.

7.3.1 Space & Movement

All four women evidently appreciate the importance of utilising learning spaces fluidly, introducing movement and advocating a 'bottom up' approach, to dispel traditional hierarchy between teachers and students, like hooks (1994). However, it appears they go a little further than trusting learners to interact; by encouraging learners to identify current issues, needs, objectives, expectations, interests, learning plans and desirable outcomes, they expand the level of participation, sense of ownership and control of both the space and whole learning process. Sheila describes the importance of being able to step into a supportive role and facilitating learners; fitting with hooks' transgressed educator. Additionally, they highlight a significant issue overlooked by hooks (1994), actually having a designated learning venue and the importance of the environment (Marie & Nora). Moreover, there is evidence suggesting they are more creative regarding space, than necessary for hooks in a stable classroom; devising innovative ways to capture unlikely educational opportunities, such as on a bus (Nora). Sustainability is a common issue, particularly the lack of resources and increasing neo-liberalism practices; all four illustrate the lack of value on feminist or political education, process, lived experience, participant knowledge or ideas. Thereby, fitting with one of the key challenges self-identified by hooks (1994); the capacity to think critically is not encouraged by society. They highlight the importance of being reflexive regarding funding sources, requirements and inconsistencies, particularly where church and state intersect; alternatively, attracting multiple funders allows greater 'scope and freedom to do what you want' (Nora & Amy). The vast achievements of volunteer led women's groups is acknowledged (Marie, Nora & Amy); accompanied by the warning that 'promoting that idea, that you should do things outside the system with no money, you're then supporting the idea, that women should not be paid' (Amy). For holistic feminist education to flourish, they all emphasis pragmatic practices, as opposed to pedagogical practices, including: non-hierarchal structures, philosophies, core values, aspirations, diverse programmes, integrating self-care and ensuring a lasting impact on women's lives. Sheila and Amy, present the Abortion Rights Campaign as a good model. Conversely, Marie believes that while hierarchal structures largely underpin the success of the ICA; sustainability can be problematic, as it's often the same women in committee roles, a pattern replicated across similar women's groups

7.3.2 Voice

The approaches of all four women closely resemble hooks' (1994) engaged pedagogy, illustrating how they encourage learners to 'engage', 'participate', respectful listen to diverse contributions and emphasise both participant voices and projects should be celebrated; emphasising the transformational potential of stepping 'out of the shadow', becoming oneself and finding your voice (Marie). Real engagement with learners is necessary to genuinely reflect voices, if representing a group; they suggest starting from the current issues affecting women and explicitly voicing your values and position as educator, illustrating the connection between personal and political for learners (Marie & Nora). Their validation of lived experiences and use of accessible language largely disrupts potential class divides within the classroom; however, they place greater emphasis on the importance of validation, to ensure experiences are acknowledged as legitimate, rather than dismissed, rejected or silenced, as often happens in the patriarchal social media platform. They advocate that cultural movement towards dialogical participation, presents opportunities to bring a feminist methodology to conversations; thereby, expanding hooks' (1994) theory of using the oppressor's language as a rebellious tool for liberation, by also using the oppressor's spaces against themselves, to create alternative cultural and epistemological influences (Sheila & Amy). Furthermore, they are very aware of potential for exclusivity, through 'language' and 'approach' (Nora).

7.3.3 Knowledge

Like hooks (1994) they all place tremendous emphasis on the knowledge, insight and collective learning resource available through sharing lived experiences; the construction, perception, ownership and validation of knowledge is core (Amy). Through sharing confessional narratives, they fulfil the task of being role models for learners (Sheila & Nora); thereby, create an intimate 'space of emotional trust where intimacy and regard for one another can be nourished' (hooks, 1994).

Gaining insight and knowledge, from colleagues, learners and other practitioners is common; for instance, the realisation that feminism is about 'the human side', 'connection' and 'care', 'not just about theory and ideas' (Amy). Demonstrating such openness to rethink their ideologies, flexibility in approach, adapting to new learning spaces and forming linkages with theory; illustrate their fit hooks' (1994) depiction of teachers transgressing to educators. Likewise, in order to shatter potential systems of domination, they evidently ensure their not a 'nauseating, all knowing expert in the room' (Sheila), admitting to a lack of knowledge or experience on specific topics; nevertheless, identifying the risk of being perceived as less credible. Perhaps more importantly, they demonstrate considerable empirical knowledge of engaged pedagogical practice; thus, informing their praxis through an empirical understanding of theoretical principles, as opposed to hooks' love affair with theory.

7.3.4 Facilitation skills

Like hooks (1994) all four emphasise the central importance of good facilitation skills, to ensure a holistic and non-hierarchical learning environment; the powerful dimension possible in learning through facilitation is highlighted (Amy) and two of the women suggest they get a 'buzz' out of organising and facilitating (Sheila & Nora). However, they place more emphasises on the skill necessary for effective facilitation, including the preparation involved and group work skills often subtle and invisible; particularly when using creative approaches or popular education methodologies (Nora). Hence, the expanded insight provided by Connolly (2008, p.92) is more fitting: 'it is highly organised, critically reflective, skill-based process that depends on the approach and expertise of the facilitators, and underpinning principles of respect, tolerance, trust and transparency'. Furthermore, they identify empathy as a an essential component, in watching, listening and learning from others, their lived experiences and unfamiliar cultures or issues (Amy), being able to challenge participants critical thinking (Sheila & Marie) and sensitively posing interrogating and provocative questions (Nora).

7.3.5 Passion

All four women talk about the pleasure and enjoyment of being creative with learning tools, including: visual arts (Sheila), international cafes (Marie), Crafts, native language, (Nora) & cultural interest (Amy). Thereby, establishing an engaged learning process and breaking away from the pursuit of perfection (Sheila); they illustrate creative projects are transformational, potentially bringing benefits to all parts of your life, not just within the learning space and often act as a stepping stone towards formal education (Marie). However, there appears to be a subtly yet extremely powerful difference to hooks (1994), where caring for their students souls is much more than an attempt to engage with the whole student; a coherence between their individual passions and strong ethical ethos with feminist principles, appears to be at the heart of their approaches, underpinning and guiding their praxis in everything. hooks (1994a) does discuss the importance of having a strong value system elsewhere in her writings, for instance in relation to poverty; however, it's not explicitly indicate as core within the practice of an engaged pedagogy. These educators also demonstrate their creativity of engaging with learners, utilising technology.

7.4 Challenges

All four interviewees testify the term feminism is thorny, illustrating various perceptions, such as the iconic bra-burning, man-hating image and perceptions that gender equality is achieved (Nora); despite indentifying a growing interest in feminist methodologies (Sheila). A distinction is made between 'fluffy feminism' and political grounded feminism (Amy & Nora); a 'click' mentality amongst some feminists is also identified (Nora). Nora highlights a problematic paradox, where many women operate from a feminist approach but don't identify as feminist; whilst there are self-identified feminists, who are far from empowering to other women. A similar scenario is identified regarding feminist education; practicing without the label is possible, but inevitably renders practice invisible and denies the history (Sheila & Nora). In order to attract, engage and meet the needs of women, Nora suggests taking a balanced approach regarding the label and being smart; subtly incorporating consciousness raising

exercises where possible. Additionally, Sheila highlights the importance of recognising when something stems from feminist principles and praxis.

A resurgence of feminism and increasing online presence is positively welcomed by three of the women, with each referenced it differently, as the 3rd, 4th or 5th wave; they explicitly identified a connection between the resurgence and 'intersectionality' (Sheila, Nora & Amy). All four demonstrate different ways in which they explore the connections between class, race and gender within the learning space; however, one of the key challenges raised, was establishing a diverse group of learners to begin with. Nora depicts the need to identify who's absent from the learning space; indicating the importance of reflexivity, exploring alternative practices to increase diversity and persistently voicing that it's not good enough to have participation that is 'white, middle-classed, middle-aged' women if that's the case (Nora). The complexities of achieving diverse participation are clearly demonstrated; they indicate practical obstacles such as suitable times, venues, transport, childcare, needs, resources, confidence, life-stage and cultural preferences (Marie, Nora & Amy). Like hooks (1994) they venture into the community, but not just to journey with their learners; more so, to gain insight to unfamiliar cultures and initiate engagement in order to increase diverse participation in the learning space. All four women attribute self-reflection as important in practice, providing a range of innovative examples; they highlight the necessity for organisations to both value and integrate reflexivity (Amy) and reduce the extensive focus on outcomes and targets (Sheila, Nora & Amy). Additionally, being highly invested in the educational process and innovative practices, can attract criticism (Sheila & Amy).

7.5 Conclusion

Given the sample size, it would be disingenuous and presumptuous to assume the conclusions drawn would reflect all feminist educators; however, the aim in this study was to capture detailed, individual lived experiences, in order to uncover subjugated knowledge. Undertaking the study has certainly not disappointed, the narratives of these four women clearly illustrates the diversity of insight, experience and wisdom

available through in-depth interviews; I was somewhat taken back and deeply appreciative of their generosity of time and willingness to share very personal information. I can only hope that the women involved benefit from having their experiences documented and shared; perhaps providing some insight to shared experiences, insights and differences. While they accept the potential power and responsibility they have with learners as educators; they don't appear to have the same air of confidence in their own abilities to stimulate change in learner's lives, as hooks (1994) demonstrates. I'm not sure if that is simply an Irish phenomenon, with our conservative nature or more generally associated with confidence; similar to the lack of, associated with women in leadership or politics (McGing, 2013). Thus, I hope by validating their individual lived experiences, knowledge, approaches and insights; it might afford some empowerment in their own practices. On a similar note, allow me to mention the perhaps obvious, but nonetheless strong parallels between all aspects of this feminist research, including: praxis, research, in-depth interviewing, theory, literature and the lived experiences.

The narratives strongly reflect the pedagogies associated Freirean principles; fundamentally, they demonstrate a particularly strong correlation with hook's (1994) engaged pedagogy and feminist praxis. Firmly, indicating the interconnections formed between their influences, activism, feminist education, work and approaches; each impacting on the other and often intensifying their feminist views. Each in their own way, demonstrate a holistic approach and provide pragmatic examples of how they engage the whole 'person' in the learning experience; highlighting the importance of how the learner feels coming out of the room is equally importance as what you learned. There is clear evidence to suggest these four women, recognise the potential for change and empowerment in the learning process; like hooks (1994) they confront reality collectively through 'an openness of mind and heart', emphasising the importance of enjoyment, emotions, well-being, self-actualisation and the educators self-care. Their practices confirm strong connections, between creating a positive experience of learners and positive outcomes, such as: empowerment, knowledge, skills, confidence and inspiration to advance educationally.

While the four women don't necessarily operate in the same manner, a diversity of skills, tools and techniques are used; they do all share a common emphasis on the importance of the overall learning process. Most strikingly, they illustrate an amalgamation of their passion, skills, learning, critical analysis, feminist perspectives, political awareness and radical activities; each benefitting from and nourishing the other. I believe their individual passions developed in childhood; coupled with a strong ethical set of values, intuitively inform their approach in everything; it appears to be an organic extension of their value system in everything, coherence between values and practice. There not putting a feminist hat on or singularly viewing issues through a feminist lens in the classroom; rather their feminist principles and approach is applied to everything. While they demonstrate immense insight to theoretical principles, particularly from an empirical understanding; they appear to be practicing from a combined collection of theories influencing feminist education, almost unconsciously, including: learning from the women's movement, WCE, Frierean principles, engaged pedagogy and feminist perceptions. They recognise the importance of theory and insight; nevertheless, illustrate that, it's not necessarily the primary driving passion for all feminist educators. Their individual passions seem to be the hinge by which their praxis and approach are orientated; entering the learning space as a whole being, rather than incorporating separate components of their mind, body and soul. I believe that subtle but powerful difference has enabled them to move beyond the boundaries towards freedom (hook, 1994); transcending the dichotomy of the worlds inside and outside the learning space. I think the combination of their passions and ethical ethos has enabled them to negotiate the space between informal and formal learning spaces; it seems to give explanation to the invisible practice within feminist education that can almost go unnoticed, invisible. Is it not the uncovering the apparently 'mystical' element Starhawk (1990) attributes to a magical occurance?

On that basis, I've formulated a hypothesis, firstly accepting that praxis based on feminist principles or engaged pedagogy is central, the core providing strength and stability like the tree trunk. Thus, we can align the individual passion and value system as the grounding principles or roots guiding everything. Similarly, certain ingredients are essential in order to bring that trunk and roots into the learning space, which the branches and leaves could symbolise. I've labelled the 'P's of feminist praxis: process (practical, pragmatic and emotional), passion (educators, learners & renewed passion

for learning), participation, political (personal linkages & activism), prioritising women's voices, personal engagement (of educator & learners), power (empowerment & shared ownership/outcomes), personal learning (about oneself, others and learning form others/shared). This concept may be a subtle difference to hooks (1994) engaged pedagogy and WCE, but really shares the same underlying principles; I feel it offers a more comprehensive description of an holistic engaged praxis and powerful potential for practitioners seeking insight. The primary recommendation is to conduct more research with contemporary feminist educators, in order to provide a more holistic picture. However, in the mean time, I hope the symbolic hypothesis I provided of the praxis tree above will be useful to other practitioners. However, given the variety of insights evolving from the process, I have also provided a list of practical recommendations in the following segment.

7.6 Recommendations

Practical recommendations for further research, feminist practice/approach and feminist educators:

- Promote, research & document the lived experiences of as many feminist educators as possible, in order to identify diversity of practice, insight, experience and wisdom.
- Identify, acknowledge & document – when other activities and practices are underpinned by feminist principles e.g. arts
- Document further, the infiltration of feminism within patriarchal spaces, such as social media platforms.
- Document recent, current and future feminist waves in detail to preserve the knowledge evolving and dispel confusion – where are we at now.
- Recognise and highlight the value of potential skills developed through community, voluntary and activist work; and their transferability into other projects, work etc.
- Create more online spaces and conversations based on feminist methodologies; perhaps create an electronic version of the old feminist 'Rag Magazine'.

- Raise awareness of women's rights as human rights, the CEDAW articles (Appendix G), conventions and shadow reports, as tools to hold government to account
- Integrate feminist principles with mainstream teaching courses
- Create apprentice style training, where students gain experience of working in various adult education style classrooms and groups including feminist.
- Work Experience – encouraging participation, dialogue, counsciousness raising, skills development, recognition of transferable skills, support & critical reflection.
- Seize opportunities to have female role models, across a diversity of positions.
- Promote the recognition of 'soft skills', the human element within organsisatons.
- Promote the increased benefits to participants if feminist educators/practicioners are supported by their workplaces to increase their skills – educationally and practically.
- Make adequate supports available to women's groups/spaces of feminist education.
- Recognising the wisdom women hold, create informal open forums to host discussions - particularly locally based for accessibility.
- Infiltrate patriarchal spaces and language, using the master's tool's against themselves (Lorde, 1981).
- Forge greater connections and interaction between feminist spaces formal or academic and informal or WCE/grassroots, which Amy refers to as 'working class feminism'.
- Start teaching feminist principles as young as possible, incorporated into mainstream topics
- Celebrate feminist educators
- Critically reflect on ourselves, our blind spots – adapt tools, like personal development techniques of examining oneself through the Johari window, used to examine our feminist perceptions/practices etc.
- Implement time and space for reflexive practice.
- Integrative self-care into work and into activist or learning spaces.
- Organisations to support feminist educators in fulfilling these needs.
- Encourage the use of learner center methodologies, creative techniques.

- Encourage educators to incorporate their own passion(s) e.g. art, poetry, literature, theatre etc.
- Creatively frame events, introducing conscious raising methodologies where possible; taking learners needs and starting positions into consideration.
- For educators to actually discuss their practice more with family and friends; in order to develop awareness.
- Encourage educators to incorporate more theory in their practice and vice versa.
- Incorporate cultural activities, learning and histories into education.
- Incorporate travel within education where possible.
- Recognise the skills involved in group facilitation, particularly from a radical perspective and provide training where possible and/or peer workshops.
- Critically reflect on who's missing from the learning space, how to increase diverse participation & the barriers facing those potential learners.
- Reflecting regularly on objectives
- Applying non-hierarchal structures

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Appendix A - Milestones

Milestones on the Journey towards Equality for Women (Ireland unless stated otherwise)

1792	Mary Wollstonecraft's, A Vindication of the Rights of Women, published in England.
1840	1st Wave of International Feminism
1848	Seneca Falls Convention
1851	Convention on Women's Rights, Ohio. Sojorner Truth speech 'Ain't I a Woman?'
1860s	Contagious Diseases Acts
1872-73	North of Ireland Women's Suffrage Society, founded by Isabella Tod.
1876	Dublin Women's Suffrage Association (DWSA), founded by Anna & Thomas Haslam.
1878	Intermediate Education Act extended to girls and women.
1879	University Act extended to girls and women.
1908	All Irish University courses & degrees open to women.
1911	1st Women County Councillors
1918	Vote given to women, over 30 years old.
1919	1st Woman appointed to Cabinet – Countess Markievicz
1922	The Constitution of the Irish Free State – vote & full citizenship for men/women over 21.
1927	Juries Act - women eligible for jury service
1929	Criminal Law Amendment Act places a ban on the importation of contraceptives
1935	Conditions of Employment Bill restricted the employment opportunities for women.
1937	The Irish Constitution, Article 41 - firmly situating women's place as in the home.
	Widows & Orphan's pension Introduced.
1939	1st Woman to serve as Lord Mayor of Dublin – Kathleen Clarke.
1942	The Irish Housewives Association, established.
1945	Establishment of the United Nations; which lead to: • The universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) • The International Convenant on Civil & Political Rights (ICCPR) • The International Convention on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights (ICESCR).
1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
1951	Mother & Child legislation fails – was intended to provide healthcare for pregnant women.
1956	Civil Service Act – women must resign upon marriage.
1960s	2nd Wave of feminism, US.
1966	The Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA) opened the Horticultural College for girls at An Crianan.
1968	An ad hoc committee was formed to examine discrimination against women, by 10 organisations including the ICA
1969	First Women's Studies programme started in San Diego University.
1970s	2nd Wave of feminism/Women's liberation Movement, Ireland.
1971	Contraceptive Train – Belfast to Dublin, women carrying illegal contraceptives
1972	Commission on the Status of Women Report – 49 recommendations, 17 related to equal pay & working conditions of women.
	Action, Information & Motivation (AIM) – established to lobby for family law reform.
	Women's Political Association formed.
1973	Council for the Status of Women established in Ireland.
	Marriage Bar abolished in the public sector.
	Ireland joined EEC
1974	Equal Pay Act adopted.
	Supreme Court upheld the right to privacy including the right of married couples to use contraceptions
1975	1st World Conference on Women, Mexico.
1975-1985	Un Decade of Women
1976	European Commission Directive on Equal Pay binding on Irish government
1977	Discrimination in employment on grounds of gender was made illegal.
	Dublin Rape Crisis Centre set up.

	The Employment Equality Agency was set up.
	Employment Equality Act – prohibited discrimination in employment on grounds of sex, marital status.
1979	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
	2st woman appointed to Cabinet since Countess Markievicz in 1919 - Mάrie Geoeghan Quinn.
	Health & Family Planning Act
	The Journal of Feminist Review is founded.
1980	2nd World Conference on Women, Copenhagen.
	1st woman appointed as a High Court Judge – Mella Carroll
1983	Referendum asserted the right to life of the unborn into the Constitution.
1984	Lexslip Women's Studies Courses established.
1985	3rd World Conference on Women, Nairobi. (Women's Issues firmly on agenda)
	Health (Family Planning) (Amendment) Act – legalising contraception's with prescriptions.
1985/86	Equality for men and women in social security.
1986	1st Woman appointed as chair of the Department of Experimental Physics in NUI Maynooth, one of her experiments sent into space aboard a NASA rocket – Susan McKenna Lalor.
1989	UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), ratified in Ireland.
	UN International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), ratified in Ireland.
	1st Woman President of the National Library of Ireland – Pat Donlan.
1990	1st Woman President of Ireland – Mary Robinson
1991	Marital rape specifically named in the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1990.
1992	Earth Summit, Rio. (Gender relations with environment)
	3rd Wave of Feminism, term coined by Rebecca Walker
	Appointment of Honourable Justice Susan Deneham to Supreme Court.
	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified in Ireland.
	Attorney General Vs X case in the Supreme Court – established the right to abortion of pregnant woman's life was at risk.
1993	2nd World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna.
	2nd Commission on the Status of Women.
	Health (Family Planning) (Amendment) Act – legalising contraception's without prescription.
	Women's rights recognised as human rights.
	Ministry for Equality and Law Reform given full cabinet status.
	Violence against women recognised as a violation of human rights.
	Military rape recognised as a crime of war.
	Recognition in the rise of fundamentalism.
	Recognition of trafficking of women.
	1st Woman appointed as Chair of the National Economic and Social Forum – Maureen Gafney
1994	Population & Development (Women's reproductive rights to fore)
	Publication of the Irish report to the United Nations Conference on Women, Beijing.
1995	4th World Conference on Women, Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)
	Divorce Referendum Passed in Ireland.
1996	WTO Meeting / Alternative Summit, Seattle.
	1st specific Domestic Violence Act, 1996 in Ireland.
1997	Election of Mary McAleese as President of Ireland.
	1st Woman appointed female Chancellor of an Irish University - Miriam Hederman O' Brien.
1998	National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) – 124 organisations, membership of 300,000.
	Employment Equality Act adopted.
	Mss. Hill & Stapleton take the 1st case from the Irish Labour Court to the European Court of Justice, regarding indirect discrimination and win 98% of clerical officers are women.
	Female air traffic controllers win their equal pay battle.
2000	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), ratified.
2002	Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), ratified in Ireland.
2012	The Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Bill, 2011 enacted – establishing gender quotas
2013	Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act.
2015	Marriage Equality Referendum passed in Ireland.

Appendix B- Feminist Tendencies

Positions	Questions				
	What's wrong?	Who benefits?	How do we fight?	How did our oppression begin?	What is your relation to men?
Socialist Feminists ('The system's the problem')					
Equal Rights	Women are held back by lack of education and self-confidence; and by prejudice	Nobody except a few hard reactionaries and corporate Big Business	By changing public attitudes	In old-fashioned ideas. (*Discrimination*, not *oppression*, please).	Women must be integrated at all levels of society
Traditional Marxist	The division of labour defines women by their home responsibilites and excludes them from productive labour	Capital – because women are a reserve army of cheap labour	Fighting within the Labour movement for full unionisation, equal pay, maternity leave etc.	With private property and women's exclusion from production	Women must fight with men, although some short-term separation may be necessary
Althusserian	The category of 'the feminine' assumes and perpetuates women's subordination	Capitalism operating through patriarchal ideology	By understanding our oppression 'scientifically' (via psychoanalysis, Marxism, linguistics) – theorizing *is* political practice	In ideology and cultural expectation internalized as femininity	'Theory is . . . not male or female'
Humanist	Men and women are both alienated from their human potential by being forced into masculine and feminine roles	'The system'	By educating people to want equality; living in communal groups; shortening work hours so men can share childcare	With industrialization and work/home split	Men are people too
Unaligned socialist – feminist	Oppression at work and generally limited 'feminine' role-expectations	Capitalism – by women's cheap labour and unpaid family-producing work: men – as 'bosses' in the family	By focusing on 7 demands of women's movement* and allying with other socialists where possible	It's different in different societies but women are everywhere oppressed	Organize separately from men, but our political insights important for rest of revolutionary movement
Wages for Housework	Not 'oppression' – exploitation in housework	Capital – from women's free labour and a divided working class	Autonomously – 'Power to the sisters is power to the class'	Does it matter?	Separately because housework puts us in a different class. (Male supporters at the back.)
Radical Feminists ('Men are the problem')					
Feministes Revolutionnaires	Oppression *and* exploitation through housework/childcare	Men – from women's free labour, and subordination in the world at large	Attack marriage and patriarchy generally	The question is suspicious because it is looking for a 'natural' explanation	Alliances with other workers can only be made if they are willing to overthrow patriarchy
Redstockings	Society is male-supremacist as well as capitalist and imperialist	Men as a class	By finding out in consciousness-raising that our personal experiences are shared and can be fought	Women have always been oppressed	There is no place for men in women's liberation movement; but personal engagement with men is the only way forward
Cultural Feminist	Women have been separated from each other and convinced of their inferiority	Men	By living as though men didn't exist (The Future is Female)	Millennia of peaceful matriarchal rule broken up by roving hordes of men	Women are the only alternative society; the lesbian is the only woman who can realize her full potential
Female Supremacist	Women are biologically and morally superior, but men hold power by force of arms	Men, Phallocrats	Take power by any means necessary	Women's biology has always made them vulnerable to male aggression	It's a war – no fraternizing with the other side

*Equal pay; equal education and job opportunities; free 24-hour nurseries; free contraception and abortion on demand; financial and legal independence; an end to discrimination against lesbians and a woman's right to define her own sexuality; freedom from intimidation by threat or use of violence/an end to male aggression and dominance.

(Oakley, 1981, pp336-337).

Appendix C

Simply ... a history of feminism

The term 'feminism' may belong to modern times – but the roots of feminism go back much further.

1 Rebels and thinkers

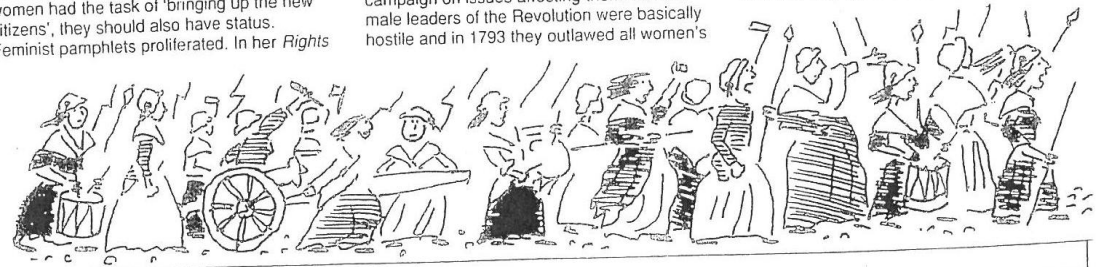
There have always been independent feminists. In sixth century BC Greece, Sappho wrote lesbian poetry and ran a girls' school. The fifteenth century French writer Christine de Pisan is now regarded as a feminist thinker. In the seventeenth century English adventurer and political activist Aphra Benn was getting embroiled in the West Indian slave rebellion – and writing 13 novels. The radical way in which some men were thinking during the Age of Reason incidentally changed attitudes towards women. Thinkers like Newton, Locke, Voltaire and Diderot believed that science and reason could explain the world. They began to analyse women in terms of what they deemed 'natural' rather than what was divinely ordained. This was not necessarily better for women.

3 Radical sparks

Meanwhile, in North America, women took part in the independence struggle and exercised their power as consumers to boycott British goods. Even in Britain there was a rash of radical – and reactionary – writing about women. Closely watching events in France was British journalist and translator Mary Wollstonecraft. She worked to support her family but in 1787 came to London to live by her writing. She joined a radical circle of intellectuals. A year after Thomas Paine wrote *The Rights of Man* (1791) Mary Wollstonecraft produced her *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. It was the first full-scale book favouring women's liberation and was widely read. She was dismissed by the male conservative press as 'a strumpet'.

2 Mothers of the revolution

Women played a major role in the 1789 French Revolution and the ideal of 'Republican Motherhood' took shape. But, some argued, if women had the task of 'bringing up the new citizens', they should also have status. Feminist pamphlets proliferated. In her *Rights of Woman*, Olympe de Gourges wrote: 'Woman is born free and her rights are the same as those of man... if women have the right to go to the scaffold, they must also have the right to go to Parliament.' Parisian women formed political clubs and associations to campaign on issues affecting them. But the male leaders of the Revolution were basically hostile and in 1793 they outlawed all women's clubs. A woman's place was in the home, they ruled. This hostility persisted through the nineteenth century. The Napoleonic Code gave all management of family funds to the husband. Not until 1909 did French women have control over their own earnings. Not until 1944 did they get the vote.



CARTOONS: ANGELA MARTIN

(New International Magazine, 1992)

4 Missions and manacles

For black women living in slavery in America the late eighteenth century was a turning point, as Protestant evangelism combined with the anti-slavery movement. Women made up a large part of revival congregations – both in white and black churches. Women were not supposed to preach but some – like the former slave Jarena Lee – ignored this. Black women realized that freedom from whites was not enough. They had to have freedom from men too. But uniting white and black women was not easy. When black feminist, Sojourner Truth, stood before the Second Annual Convention of Women's Rights in Akron Ohio in 1852 white racist women tried to stop her speaking. There were many black women activists but Sojourner Truth was the most outspoken, arguing publicly that black women should have the vote.

7 Suffering for suffrage

Women's call for the vote was echoing around the world. It was first answered in Aotearoa/ New Zealand in 1893. In Britain mass meetings organized by Emmeline Pankhurst and her two daughters Sylvia and Christabel drew crowds of up to 500,000. Determined militants chained themselves to railings and caused civil disturbances. In 1908 the Pankhursts were arrested and imprisoned. They went on hunger strike and were force-fed – causing public outcry. But only in 1918 did women (over the age of 30) get the vote in Britain. The US followed in 1920. In India Provincial Assemblies were allowed to enfranchise women in 1919. And in 1931 the Indian National Congress Party pledged itself to sexual as well as caste and religious equality in independence. The first Latin American country to give women the vote was Ecuador in 1929, followed by Brazil, Argentina, Cuba and Chile during the 1930s.

8 Reds and beds

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels saw women's liberation as part of the socialist revolution and Rosa Luxembourg, Clara Zetkin and Alexandra Kollantai became respected political leaders. In 1918 the first Women's Conference was held in Moscow and during the 1920s – under Lenin – the Soviet Government promoted equal rights. Marriage, divorce and contraception were made simple. But in the 1930s and 1940s Stalin turned the clock back. Divorce was made difficult, abortion banned, contraception restricted. In China the 1949 Revolution brought formal equality for women and men. But both here and in the USSR women did the housework as well as their jobs. In the West feminism lay dormant. Radicals were preoccupied with fighting unemployment, fascism, then McCarthyism.

5 Industry and protest

During the Industrial Revolution unmarried women were leaving home to work in the cities, often for low wages in appalling factory conditions. Meanwhile the idea of female education became firmly entrenched and middle class women were demanding access to a much wider range of occupations. On both sides of the Atlantic women started taking part in industrial action. During the 1808 Weavers Strike in Britain *The Times* singled out striking women weavers as 'more turbulent and insolent' than the men. In the US the first all-women strike took place in 1828 at Cocheco Mill, New Hampshire. In Britain in 1854 Barbara Leigh Smith drew together for the first time a group of women who called themselves feminists and campaigned to change laws. A strike by women in an East London match factory helped create the British trade union movement.

9 The Second Wav

But during the 1960s feminism burst into life again in the US as part of a radical culture that included Civil Rights and sexual liberation. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was a bestseller in 1963. Feminist groups campaigned on issues such as childcare, health, welfare, education, abortion. Consciousness-raising groups proliferated. In Europe, Canada and Australasia too, new ideas and laws were changing society. Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* was an eye-opener. And in 1975 the United Nations announced an International Decade for Women. Revolutionary movements in Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique and Nicaragua were including women's liberation in their ideology. In Europe the peace movement became the focus for feminist activism – especially at the US air base at Greenham Common, UK. And feminism boomed in Latin America after the restoration of democracy during the 1980s.

6 Invasion and rebellion

In Asia and Africa women were resisting both traditional and colonial oppression. Chinese feminists who joined the Taiping Rebellion of 1850-1864 called for an end to foot-binding and demanded communal ownership of property and equal rights for women and men. Colonizing Europeans made alliances with groups that were the most conservative and often most oppressive of women. So the British in India encouraged the dowry system, arranged marriages and education for men only. But by 1905 Indian women were participating in the Swadeshi movement to boycott foreign goods and in 1917 the Women's Indian Association was set up with links to the British movement for women's suffrage. In parts of Africa women were banned from entering the cities and their traditional access to land – as Africa's principle farmers – was also denied. But in 1923 the Egyptian Women's Federation was formed and in 1924 it got the age of marriage for girls raised to 16.

(New International Magazine, 1992)

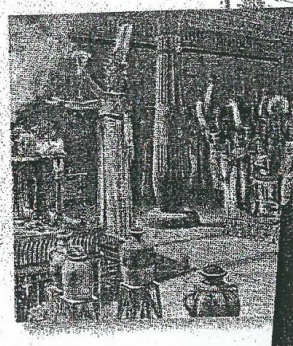
Appendix D

A long and winding road

A snapshot of history as far back as 900 BCE (Before Common Era) shows that women have always struggled for their rights – and that progress is not a straight line. Many societies where women are most repressed today were the most enlightened in the past. History shows us that what has been won can also be taken away. These are some landmarks in the rights that women have struggled for through the ages.

900 BCE In ancient Sumer (Iraq), Egypt and Japan, adult women can own property, buy and sell in the marketplace and even be clerics. In the Andes, death in childbirth is seen to be as honourable as death in battle.

In the **1400**s, trade brings new status to women in some countries. In Nigeria, Yoruba women elect their own female representatives to protect their trading interests.



1789 Working women march on Versailles to demand bread. In **1791** French playwright Olympe de Gouges issues the 'Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen'. She is executed by guillotine when the French Revolution rejects demands for women's rights.

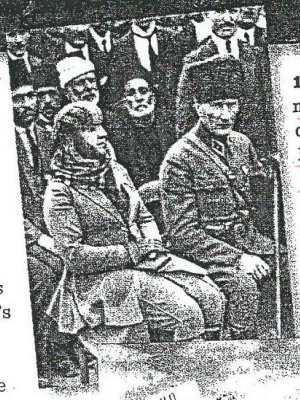
1759 - 97 In Britain, Mary Wollstonecraft writes *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which becomes a catalyst for much later feminist thinking.

1848 The world's first women's rights convention (attended by men as well) is held in Seneca Falls, New York, setting the agenda for the women's rights movement.

1850s In Brazil, women's urban newspapers like *O Jornal das Senhoras (Ladies' Journal)* complain that marriage is 'an unbearable tyranny' and women deserve 'a just enjoyment of their rights'.

1861 In Russia, the emancipation of serfs raises women's expectations of equality.

1880 - 90 The Japanese Women's Movement is founded. Kishida Toshiko is jailed for a week after calling for women's horizons to be 'as large and free as the world itself'.



1893 New Zealand/Aotearoa becomes the first country to give women the vote.

1896 In the US, the National Association of Colored Women, founded by Margaret Murray Washington, unites Black women's organizations.

1890 - 1923 In the late 1800s Islam is used to justify the education of women. In 1923 Huda Shar'awawi founds the Egyptian Feminist Union. Women are at the forefront of the battle for independence from the British.

1911 Socialists observe 8 March as a day to honour the women who had organized strikes for better working conditions in the 19th and 20th centuries. In Mexico, La Liga Femenil Mexicanista (League of Mexican Feminists) is formed.

1913 In South Africa, traditional women's organizations such as Manyano act as savings clubs for poor women. They are also at the forefront of the fight against apartheid.

1926 In Turkey, as part of his programme for modernization, Kemal Ataturk abolishes polygamy, makes schools and universities coeducational, gives women the vote and recognizes their equal rights in divorce, custody, and inheritance.

1947 Gandhi expresses strong opposition to male domination of women, and India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, calls for equal educational and work opportunities for women and men. The 1947 Constitution guarantees equality between the sexes.

1948 In Egypt, Doria Shafik forms the Daughters of the Nile Union. In **1951** she organizes an invasion of the Egyptian parliament by women and in **1953** creates a women's political party that is then suppressed by the Government.

1959 In eastern Nigeria 2,000 women protest their declining status by occupying and setting fire to a market.

1977 Argentinean women whose children disappeared under the junta constitute themselves into the 'Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo' and become a radical force for change.

1975 - 2001 The growth of the modern feminist movement. The first international women's conference is held in Mexico, launching the United Nations Decade for Women and the formation of women's groups all over the world, including feminist newspapers, student organizations, professional women and lesbian feminists. Followed by conferences in Copenhagen (**1980**), Nairobi (**1985**) and Beijing (**1995**). **1990**s Women's rights become enshrined in law in many countries.

SAMI SALLINEN / PANOS PICTURES

Pictures, top to bottom: husband and wife in Nigeria, 1700; Queen Nefertiti, Egypt; Mary Wollstonecraft; Women of Paris march to Versailles, 5 October 1789 Kemal Ataturk and his wife Latifa Hanum; International Women's Day celebrations, Asmara, Eritrea.

Appendix E

Waves of Feminism

Formation & 1st Wave of Feminism

Thucydides (460-400BC) and Aristotle (384-322BC) were amongst the first to suggest that the apparent lack of certain masculine traits (logic, rational, aggressive & assertive) in women, deeming them inferior with *feminine* traits (gentleness, intuitiveness & sensitivity); distinguishing between the genders based on biological differences in this way was known as essentialism. The term *feminist* was not coined until 1895, with the 'first wave of feminism' recognized as taking place approximately from 1770-1918, primarily in America and Britain (Appendix A); it was primarily concerned with injustices middle class women experienced, such as access to education, equal employment & unjust marriage laws. Nevertheless, the women of the 1500's were raising awareness regarding the suppression of their gender, within a strong patriarchal culture (Jenainati & Groves, 2010, pp.3-5). Juliet Mitchell (1976, pp.390-393) argues that feminists in the 1660s were generally not movements of a political nature and were blinkered to the needs for liberation of all women including those from lower classes; however, she highlights the similarities between them establishing groups for friendship and self educational purposes and the desired sisterhood of the 1970s. Furthermore, she stresses that these bourgeois feminists did create a universal language for all oppressed groups:

> "In demanding entry into a male world, the end of men's social oppression of women and equality between the sexes, the women were truly revolutionary. They had explanations but they did not have a theory of how women came to be an oppressed social group, but still today we lack any such full analysis" (Mitchell, 1976, p.391).

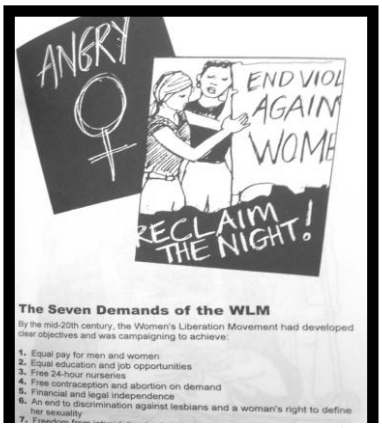
The French Revoloution of 1789, played an important part in the quest for liberation of oppressed groups; one of the leaders, Marquis de Condorcet advocated for a liberal economy and equal rights for all races and women. A new perspective came four years later, in the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's revolutionary, A Vindication of the Rights of Women (1792); agreed by many feminist writers as the first great feminist statement, such as: Walters (1976), Oakley (1981) & Mitchell (1976). Wollstonecraft brought a new political perspective through promoting the immense damage both to society and to individual women by classing them as inferior beings (Mitchell, 1976, pp.390-393). She could see that access to equal education on its own was not enough, stressing that a very small minority of women had any access to formal education; she challenged upper-class women who readily used their class positions to advance (Walters, 1976). Oakley (1981, p.5) suggests the most radical insight, was that femininity is not necessarily the natural phenomena it is perceived to be, but rather artificially created through embedded patriarchal structures in other words formed through socialisation. She suggests Wollstonecraft was way ahead of her time, as thinking of this variety was not accepted until the later part of the twentieth century. Equal access to education for women has been a fundamental element within feminism throughout its history; little education outside of the home was available to school girls up until the late nineteenth century, even then the options largely consisted of *teaching the art of husband catching* or skills for *housewifery.* Those from working-class backgrounds generally missed out, with the exception of some part-time alternatives run

by charities or religious affiliations; ironically, a study in 1902 indicated that 42 percent of females admitted to insane asylums were recorded as being well-educated (Oakley, 1981, pp.113-121).

2nd Wave of Feminism

There was significant decline women's status between the early part of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Oakley (1981, p.5) stipulates there were four main reasons: annihilation of nunneries; growth of parliament, with candidates being appointed to office via selection; growth of professions & universities and the relocation of production to the factory, from the home. It is widely expressed that the second wave evolved in the 1960's due to an increase in feminist activity, primarily in America, Britain and Europe; the global revolts of the time and new left politics were all catalytic elements (Nilsen & Cox, 2014; Wainwright, 2013; with Rowbothan & Segal, 1976). I would suggest there is an argument for placing more recognition on the connection of such movements and the establishment of the United Nations; one which is often either assumed or overlooked I suspect. The relationship between women's rights, as human rights and the UN influence are explored further in Appendix G. Various influences were instrumental in the resurgence; the work of Betty Friedan, Simone De Beauvoir and two political movements: Women's Rights Movement (WRM) & Women's Liberation Movement (WLM). On the footing of Friedan's work, women's position in the home was challenged; likewise, women's social position identified as 'other' to men by de Beauvoir was extremely influential. However, it is important to note that this wave was initially largely concerned with middle class women, overlooking issues faced by working class women and factors such as race or sexuality. The WLM established theoretical literature and solutions to the oppression of women; while the WRM was more focused on social structures and how make practical changes.

The 2nd wave is probable most famous from the slogan, *'the personal is political'*, implying that all aspects of women private lives are not just affected by but can also in turn affect the political situation (Jenainati & Groves, 2010, p.89). Education was viewed as a tool for liberating women from the *prison* of *'ideological femininity'*. Students, parents and the minority of women along with other minorities may well have viewed education as a means of personal accomplishment and libratory; employers on the other hand perceived education as the producer of efficient workers (Oakley, 1981, pp.113-121). A strong presence of working-class socialism was evident at the time, with actions such as the strike for equal pay, at the Ford car plant by women workers; thus, it is perhaps no surprise that the issues of working-class women were incorporated to the wider movement, which was particularly evident in the WLM campaign and their seven demands, illustrated in the diagram opposite. Oakley (1981, pp.114-115) illustrates how the reliance of growing capitalist economies on producing commodities of goods and efficient employees has a direct impact on women; she indicates that other systems play a fundamental role in sustaining such economies, namely the institutions of the family and education. Thus, the system is largely reliant on the unpaid work women contribute in their roles as *wives*,



(Jenainati & Groves, 2010, p.89)

mothers and *housekeepers*; on that basis she challenges traditional Marxist theory, as the unwaged cannot challenge their exploitation on the basis of nonexistent pay. Thus, women could neither be solely defined through the family or were recognised as a class of their own; the relationship between men and women to class structure is unequal to begin with, social class cannot hold the same meaning for them. Blackstone (1976, p.214) suggests it is only when men break free of stereotypical masculine behaviour, that real change will occur within the family; which she indicates will spill over into access to education and work fitting their qualifications for women. Furthermore, the challenge to traditional gender/family roles, work opportunities and access to education all contributed to demands for women to have control over their own bodies and access to contraception. Attempts to increase awareness resulted in radical actions in the Irish context, such as the contraceptive train in 1971 (Appendix A & E).

A swarm of women's studies courses was set up, starting in 1969 in the US, Leixlip was the first in Ireland in 1984; these were mostly informal at first, but laid the ground work for academic feminist courses. This alongside a new interest from governments spurred increased enquiry into the relationship between women and social class (Oakley, 1981, p.278-291). Mitchell (1976, p.397) argues for a just society based on collective ownership and equal distribution, where those in need could be supported more by those in a position to give more; such existence would be based on individual humanity and embracing differences which will always exists between men and women. According to Greer (2000), women learned a great deal about challenging their oppressed state, from the *black people*; a colonised people who demonstrated *'Black Power'*. They embraced an atmosphere of celebrating what made them different, their blackness, in the case of women it was their womanhood and slavery to their bodies/gender roles; however, there was uncertainty initially of how to celebrate, should "... they learn to be as competitive, aggressive, lecherous and cruel as men?" (Greer, 2000, p.420). A swarm of women's studies courses was set up, starting in 1969 in the US, Leixlip was the first in Ireland in 1984; these were mostly informal at first, but laid the ground work for academic feminist courses. Solidarity found in women's groups or the 'sisterhood' was always a central component in feminism, particularly so during this wave; however, it did not or still does not necessarily mean the development of feminist consciousness. Oakley (1981, p.278) illustrates how women surrounded by other females are less likely to recognise their common oppression; likewise, she specifies how true solidarity is eliminated, when any one category is marginalised, as was the case between the wider feminist movement and 'a bunch of dykes' at that time. Building a Sisterhood was essential to establishing an existence separate and outside the control of men and male dominated systems; allowing women to develop an organising system and enlightenment in recognising that value of listening to each other's experiences (Carden, 1974, pp.14-15). The importance and power associated with having knowledge and developing shared knowledge, was a fundamental mantra of the wave (Oakley, 1981, p.279). Many different strands of feminism evolved (Appendix B), each viewing the primary rationale underlying women's oppression differently, for example class with Marxist Feminists or patriarchy with Radical Feminists. The main achievements of the 2nd wave, included: domestic violence supports, public acknowledgement of rape, increased access to contraception, measures to reduce workplace sexual harassment, increased childcare options and educational programs such as women's studies.

3rd Wave of Feminism

The 3rd wave began in the early 1900s, due to the diverging opinions amongst feminists also influenced the change, particularly in relation to issues such as: sex work, prostitution & pornography – otherwise known as the sex wars (Lamb, 2009). Furthermore, the backlash was also influential, with feminists being labelled as 'man haters' or a 'bunch of old dykes'; also events such as the *Year of the Woman* in *1992* and women gaining various legal and institutional rights were transformative. The term *'third-wave feminism'* was coined by Rebecca Walker, a daughter of Alice Walker the African American author of the famous text, *The Color Purple* (Tong, 2009, pp.284-285). The 3rd wave really began in the 80s, with feminist scholars, such as bell hooks, Audre Lorde & Rebecca Walker; bringing attention to the lack of black feminist voices, as early as 1997 (Heywood & Drake) and later by Gillis, Howie & Munford (2007). Cherrie Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa published their writings ontological writings in 1981, called *This Bridge Called My Back*, which highlighted the political positions of white women only and associated problems; other writings soon followed such as *Black Women's Studies in 1982*, which emphasised the need to create a space within feminism for race related subjects (Aenerud, 2002, p.71). The horizon's of feminist has broadened towards recognising women are not a homogenous group, but rather derive from various colours, nationalities, religions, sexualities, ethnicities, cultural backgrounds (Oakley, 1981, p.290); for instance in Ireland there has been new focus on the needs and rights of women from the traveller culture. One arm of 3rd wavers, argue for further challenges to media portrayals of women and language used to define women; post-structuralists for instance view binaries such as male/female, as artificially constructed to ensure power remains with the dominant group. Greer (2000, pp.405-424) illustrates how feminist guerrilla desk-top publishing and bands, such as *girl riot* in the early 1900s tackled a whole host of issues relevant to women; despite the low circulation level, these pro-girl feminist activities were particularly important in the midst of a backlash. Furthermore, she suggests that the personal is still very much political, with fear being the real enemy; as the millennial feminist must be aware of oppressions within her most intimate relationship, that with her body due to increased focus on shape, size, weight, hair, muscle tone and ageing. Other prominent issues include, workplace glass ceiling, gendered violence, welfare, affordable childcare, support for women parenting alone (Munden, 2003), reproductive rights, access to abortion, derogatory terms and actions like *Slutwalks*, which aims to raise awareness of the incongruent images portrayed of many sexual abuse victims (feministpizza, 2011). Activities on an international level are also relevant, for example the establishment the *Tahirih Justice Center* in 1997, as a result of a well documented asylum case; it has been instrumental in raising awareness and legal changes regarding various issues facing women and children, such as: female genital mutilation, mail-order brides & violence against women (humantrafficing.org, 2006).

One complex issue, has been the dismissal of all opinions, including both patriarchal and feminist, regarding how girls dress and express themselves; thus, the evolution of 'lipstick' or 'girly' feminists. These feminists suggest that have choice in self-expression is liberating and not oppression internalised as suggested by many scholars, such as Newman & White (2012, pp.246-247). The jury is still out, debates continue to examine whether empowerment if best calculated through 'internal feeling of power and agency' or external calculations of 'power and control'. There is an argument to suggest that the 'model of free will and choice' is misleading in a marketplace bursting

with identities and ideas; particularly as these 'lipstick' feminists continue to showcase their multiple selves while entering dialogue regarding identity and femininity in the contemporary society. The associated labels are seen as limiting by some feminists; who advocate that the diverse roles women inhabit should be embraced. Furthermore, the politicization of women's clothing has been evident; conflicting dress codes including items such as the *hijab* and *belly shirt*, have caused massive controversy, despite both being accepted as valid self-expression. The first can be perceived as a symbolic resistance of Western attitudes towards the Islamic identity; with the second symbolising resistance of the constricted images of female sexuality accepted within patriarchal society (Newman & White, 2012). Advocates of the 3rd Wave, suggest it is advantageous for women, giving them choice and the freedom to define feminism for themselves in line with their individual belief system and perspective; the topic is no longer confined to arenas such as women's studies. There is also an argument that feminists don't necessarily have to follow those who went before; this is symbolic of any movement evolving with various generations (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). However, there are many challenges within the wave, for instance the resistance to the *label* feminist, particularly by younger women; Walker (1995) states:

> "Whether the young women who refuse the feminist label realize it or not, on some level they recognize that an ideal woman born of prevalent notions of how empowered women look, another scripted role to perform in the name of biology and virtue."

Paradoxically, the fundamental tool of consciousness raising, utilised throughout feminist history, has been cited as being needed more than ever by some younger feminists, such as Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards (2000); they argue that feminist thinking is unconsciously build into their and is essential in recognising that male domination does in fact still exist. Feminists, such as Shira Tarrant (2006, p.222) highlight the blindness to progress between waves and the inconsistent evolvement of feminism in different parts of the globe. Perhaps most frighteningly there is an apparent acceptance by many women that feminism has served its purpose, as they believe gender equality has been achieved; some believe that challenging women's position further, might actually lead to advantaging women over men (Newman & White, 2012). This has largely evolved as a result of an anti-feminist movement, particularly in the West, which Amy Friedman called 'radical fanaticism' (Tremblay, 1993). Of course, popular media has played a role, as it does in relation to the representation of all oppressed groups and issues of inequality and injustice.

4th Wave of Feminism

There are conflicting accounts, as some depict we are still in the 3rd wave; while others suggest our contemporary feminism is entering or has entered the 4th. While it is still a little premature to speculate, the increased use of modern technology, particular social media sites, e-mags and blogs used to advance the women's movement and increase the feminist audience, seems to be central to this latest new shift; referred to as cyberfeminism (Wilding, 1997). This new form of communication, with the exception of its online residence; silently, bears a striking resemblance to the traditional organising and consciousness raising techniques of the women's movement. Kira Cochrane (2013) discusses this apparent 4th wave, suggesting that the majority of young feminists today identify as intersectional feminists, a term first coined in 1989 by

Kimberlé Crenshaw. This perspective acknowledges how oppressions intersect and the construction of hierarchical power; Cochrane suggests this perspective has lead to attempts by today's feminists to carve out online spaces for marginalised voices. Her article highlights various campaigns, such the *'No more Page 3'* with 128,000 supporters and a campaign challenging against everyday sexism; started in 2012 by 27 year old Laura Bates. Cochrane (2013) concludes that there is strong emphasis on how inequality affects women personally, acknowledging the importance of the old slogan 'the personal is political'. She suggests that while many of these campaigns started off, focused on a specific issue; there is growing consciousness raising encouraging women to recognise that inequalities affect them collectively. While differences of opinion are a regular feature, Cochrane (2013, p.5) suggests that a movement capable of tackling structural and systemic problems is building momentum. She asks 'How could there not be [differences], in a movement that represents half the population, and aims for liberation for all?'. Wainwright (2013, p.131), a leading socialist feminist pays tribute to the use of social media as a tool in advancing the movement; advocating social media activists as being able to provide alternative narratives. However, she equally reminds us that the cultural roots being played out in today's social media, stem from similar global revolts and new left mentalities of 1968 onwards. Wainwright (2013, p.132) states:

> " ... the spread of peer-to-peer collaborative forms of cultural and material production, which have had a dynamic independent of the uprisings themselves but which have similar roots in values of sharing and co-operation, as well as a desire to live usefully and with autonomy from both corporation and the state."

While modern technology is often accredited with creating this new sharing across the web or horizontal sharing as a means of challenging hierarchy. Wainwright (2013, pp.131-132) quickly reminds us that profound challenges existed pre-internet; ironically, one such example is the creation of the web itself, with the intention of making information available to everyone. However, the potential power of social media must not be underestimated, as it does offer an opportunity to turn Gramsci's 'cultural hegemony' on its head; in the sense that it is no longer the ruler who has *full* control over their main weapon: what is being said or how it is being said (George, 2004). If utilised efficiently, social media could play a large part in enabling activists to build the kind of 'counter-hegemony' revolution Nilsen & Cox (2013) speak of. Social Movement actors are beginning to see the value of viewing activism through a lens of intersectionality similar to contemporary feminists; I think that is what Cox (2015) is reiterating when he states:

> "We need, ... to break out from the politics of opinion as a substitute for action, and rather than awarding each other stars or black marks for being more or less like "us", start having the kinds of conversations – between different local and national contexts and between different political and intellectual traditions. Movement diversity is strength, not a weakness – it represents our ability to work together across ... ... "different realities", different fields of struggle and the different-but-linked world we hope to see".

On a personally level, I critically reflected on the various 'feminisms' in an attempt to locate myself in one, in the end I found taking appealing elements from each and recognising their limitations was more rewarding. As early as 1981, Oakley (pp.339-340) suggests that it is difficult to see how any one alignment can overcome women's oppression; as the position of women varies depending on their culture, place in society

and history. She reminds us that the two most important questions are 'are women oppressed' and 'how are women oppressed'. hooks (2004, pp.108-109) suggests there have been many male radical thinkers historically, advocating for social justice, such as standing up for workers rights or racial injustices but few speaking out against gender injustices; however, illustrates that enlightened feminists could see that the real problem was the patriarchal system they were born into and socialised to accept. She argues that most men are not misogynists or have not consciously chosen patriarchy as the ideology they want to govern their lives, beliefs, and actions; in fact many have resisted on an individual basis but have not embraced activism to challenge patriarchy. Many younger men have aligned to a world based on equality; which she attributes to both feminist mothers and their entrance to fatherhood, where the inequalities and sexism facing their daughters are enraging. She argues for a visionary feminism, built on wise and loving politics, which she states:

> "... is rooted in the love of male and female being, refusing to privilege one over the other. The soul of feminist politics is the commitment to ending patriarchal domination of women and men, girls and boys" (hooks, 2004, pp.123-124).

Appendix F

you know you're a **feminist** when...

- You get cross with men who prefer you not to speak your mind.
- You realise that while motherhood is praised to the skies, real-life mothers get little help from society.
- You wonder why you're constantly interrupted by men at meetings.
- You don't mind if you are earning more than your boyfriend/husband.
- You wanted to play football at school but felt cheated when you were stopped because you were a girl.
- You're irritated when you're having a drink with a girlfriend and men assume you want to be picked up.
- You ask yourself why unattractive men over 40 and attractive women under 40 land all the best jobs on television.
- You drag a pram up yet another steep flight of stairs and realise that the world was designed by men with no children.
- It annoys you to think that women are paid 25 per cent less than men.
- You clean the bathroom for the 51st weekend in a row and your partner still doesn't understand why you're so angry.
- You wish people would mind their own business when everyone assumes, rightly or wrongly, that you're going to have children.
- You're fed up with the thought that some day you will have to choose between children and your career.
- If you see one more helpless woman in a film trying (and not succeeding) to escape from a predatory man, you'll *scream*.
- You recognise the ghetto you are in when you look around your office and see most of the typist/secretarial roles are occupied by women.
- You are accused loudly of being a feminist and agree – wholeheartedly.

- You just cannot comprehend how judges can blame young girls for being raped while letting their older male offenders go free.
- You can't help noticing how women at work are either "girls" or "career women" while their male counterparts are never "boys" or "career men".
- You realise it is easier for men to take a day off work for a corporate jolly than it is for women to take a day off to look after a sick child.
- You consider complaining to national newspapers, radio stations, *anybody*, when yet another Hollywood film company portrays violence against women as a sure-fire means of winning their affection.
- You have discovered the feminist's catch-22: that while trying to point out the unfairness in society (e.g. how single parents need more support), women end up getting blamed for society's ills (i.e. single *mothers* breed delinquent children).
- You would like to see men's violence being taken more seriously by a society which increasingly curbs women's freedom in the name of safety.
- You are stunned to learn that the penalty for sexual abuse of a male minor is twice that for abuse of a female minor.
- You're concerned when you hear that single women tend to live longer than married women, whereas married men tend to live longer than single men.
- You lobby your MP on issues to improve life for women and men whenever you can.
- You cheered loudly when the General Synod voted in favour of the ordination of women priests.
- You understand how a man's gender *allows* him to do things (i.e. walk alone at night, be aggressive) whereas a woman's limits hers.
- Despite all the inequalities, you're glad that you're a woman.

Appendix G

United Nations, CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action & Ireland

Note: *please refer to Appendix A, to view the timeline associated with each event/law etc.*

The United Nations (UN) was established, reflecting a post 2nd World War need to put in place supra-national human rights mechanisms to protect individuals from violations of their human rights by the state. The enforced declarations and convenants apply to both genders; however, conceptualised from a privileged male standpoint and are therefore not gender neutral and lacking of women's voices. Furthermore, they reflect a traditional divide between public and private spheres, where only the public sphere was regarded as the arena for international law; thus, meaning that many UN instruments do not address the fact that women often fear an intimate partner, employer or individual, more than they do the state. There are two human rights treaties or convenant's which expand upon the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); the first has traditionally perceived as greater importance and prioritised. The *International Convenant on Civil & Political Rights (ICCPR)* acknowledges that individuals rights were being violated by state operated army or police forces; it deals with rights, such as not being tortured, enslaved or imprisoned without trial. The *International Convention on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights (ICESCR)* focuses on economic, social and cultural rights, such as: education, health & employment. States are obliged to assign resources in order to provide a health system, schools & housing for its population. Women cannot hope to avail of true equality until such time as these rights are given equal consideration and credence (Gaynor, 2002, 6-13).

In the 1970s, women's rights emerged as an increasingly common issue; the UN human rights system was viewed as inadequate, particularly in protecting women against violation based on culture, religion and the overwhelming weakness to promote and protect women's rights. Along with the two points mentioned previously: the lack of women's voices in their definition and the traditional dichotomy between public and private spheres in international law (Gaynor, 2002, 6-13). The United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985) encouraged campaigns for women rights globally; resulting in a surge in women's non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The need to establish linkages among women from a variety of positions, including: class, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation; through activism, on local, national and international levels was increasingly argued for.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was introduced in 1979; which lead to women's groups focusing on and working within the human rights framework, particularly in relation to gender based violence and the interconnections between various issues. Adoption of CEDAW (Articles 1-16 in Appendix H) was an important step in introducing the gender dimension to human rights instruments; it aimed to change the systematic violation. It acknowledges the changes to roles traditionally associated with men and women, particularly in the case of the family. It is a legal framework which should be incorporated into government law as a legal document; it was signed and ratified in 1985 in Ireland, but to date has not been adopted in domestic law, which would need to be approved by the Oireachtas. In practical terms, lawyers can make reference to it, but it is not legally binding in court; unfortunately, this dualist tradition is quite common in Ireland and according to Mary Robinson, is 'unnecessarily restrictive' (Gaynor, 2002, p13).

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) evolved as a ten year action plan, comprising of 12 critical areas specifically affecting women; one of the main actions is the implementation of CEDAW. In recent years the National Plan for Women in Ireland, derives from these commitments - which is apparently drawn up following a public consultation process. In order to fully recognize women's human rights, combined political, legal and awareness raising measures are necessary. It is important to note that states are obliged to submit Periodic or monitoring reports regularly to the various UN committees; stating their progress in implementing the relevant treaties. However,

alternative or shadow reports are also welcome and are often conducted by non-governmental groups. Hence, providing non-government groups the opportunity to illustrate the situation, indentify where government actions are inadequate and make policy suggestions. BPfA was drafted after the Vienna Conference on Human Rights which classed violence against women as a violation, a whole section on this issue was included; thereby, illustrating the influence of the women's movement on critical consciousness, in the eighteen years since CEDAW, where there was no mention of the issue. BPfA allowed for active participation, for instance 30,000 women from various locations attended the *4th World Conference on Women*. Unlike CEDAW, BPfA theoretically became obsolete in 2005, as it should have been fully implemented at that stage (Gaynor, 2002, 6-13). However, review conferences have taken place, for instance the Beijing +5, in New York 2000; which "... resulted in a political and further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing commitments" (UN Women, 2015). Beijing +10 took place in 2005, were a "...a declaration emphasizing that the full and effective implementation of ... [BPfA] ... is essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration", was adopted. Likewise, a 15 year review took place in 2010, where "... progress towards achieving gender equality..." was celebrated and continued action was agreed (UN Women, 2015). The following piece highlights Beijing +20 taking place this year:

> ... the Commission will highlight the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a historic roadmap signed by 189 governments 20 years ago that is still considered the most comprehensive blueprint on women's rights. While there has been progress over the last two decades, the blueprint still remains only partially fulfilled ... ... the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women where leaders will formulate concrete actions to step up their efforts, and accelerate gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide. Here's a look at how the world galvanized around the issue of gender equality and women's rights in the lead-up to Beijing+20 (UN Women, 2015a).

Reilly (2008, p.216-217) argues that the United Nations Decade for Women and global campaigning of the 1970s, lead to a surge in women's non-governmental groups being established; they demanded that women's lives and experiences be given real consideration, in turn leading to very effective campaigning for women's rights as human rights in the 1990s. Drawing from the experience of activists in Ireland, she states "... the global mobilisation of women's movements around UN forums has become an important dimension of national-level feminist organising ... ... in the current global political climate, arguably, the imperative of strengthening such local-global feminist links under the banner of human rights is more urgent than ever". Furthermore, she indicates the links between growing neo-liberal globalisation and the intensification of socio-economic inequalities for women. She suggests organisations including Women's Human Rights Alliance (WHRA), Women's Aid (WA/Waves), Pavee Point & Banúlacht took an activist approach to tackling women's rights under six main categories: i) *Human rights facilitating collective action, local-global solidarity and transformation; ii) Human rights as modes of (quasi) legal accountability; iii) Women's political participation as a human rights issue; iv) Human rights as social, economic and gender justice; v) Human rights as a challenge to gendered racism & vi) Women's bodily integrity as a human rights issue (p.219).* The approaches varied amongst activists and organisations, for instance, Banúlacht's original mission was to deliver an integrated *development education* and *community development* approach; thereby committing to a practice which was transformative, local democracy and empowering communities towards transformation. However, organisations such as the WHRA & WA had visions for alternative approaches. WHRA expressed concerns regarding the link often assumed between community development approaches and being perceived as 'begging' for government assistance; stating that activists working from community development principles often neglected to frame their requirements in terms of human rights & entitlements. Similarly, Women's Aid highlighted the diversity within community development in Ireland; initiatives are generally portrayed under 'anti-poverty, social inclusion or equality' terms but not linked to human rights agreements (Reilly, 2008, 232).

The necessity on the Irish Government to report to CEDAW provide opportunities for Irish Women's Groups, networks, and organisations to mobilise and present their experience/analyse. In order to 'bridge the gap' between international rights and the experiences of real women on the ground; an innovative training project, entitled Women's rights as Human Right Project (WHRP) was set up to provide training in the run up to the 2003 report due by the Irish government. The project ran 5 workshops across Ireland in both to provide information on international laws to women on the ground and provide women with an opportunity to have an input at international level (Gaynor, 2002, p.26). A report was published on their work, including how they utilised CEDAW & BPfA as educational tools; it clearly illustrates the potential effectiveness of such projects. According to the report editor, Niamh Gaynor (2002, p.26):

> Despite advances in international mechanism for the protection of women's rights, violations of these rights, both in Ireland and worldwide, continue to occur. It is important to monitor the frequency and severity of these violations and to apply political pressure to ensure these levels decrease. CEDAW, with its inbuilt reporting procedure proves a useful tool in this regard.

Reilly (2008, p.242) argues that regardless of the setbacks, particularly in relation to the backlash of the 1990s and neo-liberal practices, 'local feminist engagement with global feminist politics in unlikely to recede'. She goes on to suggest, that the framework of women's human rights will continue to play a critical role in making connections between local and global issues for women going forward. Since then it is unfortunate to report that the four leading organisations in such radical initiatives have either had their funding significantly cut or completely withdrawn and no longer exist, in the case of: Banúlacht & Women's Human Rights Alliance (WHRA), which was funded under the *Equality for Women Measure* was not continued.

Appendix H

CEDAW Articles

Article 1	Defines discrimination against women
Article 2	States to condemn and legally protect against discrimination
Article 3	States to take special temporary measures to accelerate equality
Article 4	States to take action to guarantee women's rights
Article 5	Cultural practices, common responsibility for childrearing
Article 6	Trafficking of women
Article 7	End to discrimination in political life
Article 8	Right of women to represent governments
Article 9	Equality with regard to nationality on marriage/nationality of children
Article 10	Equality in education
Article 11	Equality in employment
Article 12	Health – limited free health care
Article 13	Family benefits, bank loans, recreational activities
Article 14	Rural women
Article 15	Equality before the law
Article 16	Equality re marriage rights

Appendix I

Interview Checklist

Subject	***Details***	***Organised***	***Complete***
Sampling Identified			
Pilot Interview			
Review Pilot Interview & changes			
Interviews Organised			
Consent Form's Prepared			
Research Questions Prepared			
Travel Schedule organised			
Dictaphone (spare batteries)			
Transcriptions			
Send Transcripts to Interviewees			
Feedback/consent from Interviewees			
Final Consent			
Send final copy of thesis to interview's			
Thank You Card			

Appendix J

Interview Details

Subject	***Details***	***Organised***	***Complete***
Interviewee's Name			
Number			
Email			
Address			
Institute/Organisation/Group			
Experience (Years, formal/informal ed etc)			
Interview Location			
Interview Date			
Interview Time			
Additional requirements / requests by Interviewee			
Researcher Train / Travel Schedule			
Transcript Review			
Final Consent/withdrawal Deadline			

Appendix K

Schedule Phase 1

Dates	Task	Status	Notes
Mon 24th Feb – 8th Mar	Draft Research Questions		
	Sampling – identify Who / What – focus area / Why		
	Interview Consent Forms		
	Draft Schedule		
	Interview checklist & Interviewees Details Form		
	Draft Thesis Structure / checklist		
	Resource Room – Borrow Dictaphone		
Tues, 17th March	Conduct Pilot Interview		
17th – 19th March	Pilot Interview - Write transcript & send to Fergal		
11th -25th March	Reading & Writing of Feminist Research & Approach to Interviewing		
18th – 25th March	Organise Interviews		
19th – 31st March	Conduct Interviews		
27th March	Send Methodologies Chapter to Fergal for Critique		
29th Mar– 2nd April	***Manchester Conference***		
25th Mar – 10th April	Transcribe Interviews & Send for approval		
10th – 17th April	Draft Literature Review		
17th April	Send Lit Review to Fergal for Critique		
20th April	Final Withdrawal Date for Interviewees		

Mon 20th – 26th April	Draft Research Findings & Analysis – Chapter 4 & Implications – Chapter 5		
Mon 27th April	Send Chapter 4 & 5 to Fergal for Critique		
Mon 4th May	Send Intro Chapter to Fergal for Critique		
4th – 7th May	Presentation Preparation		
Thurs, 7th May	Research Module Presentations		
Mon 7th-11th May	Editing Intro chapter		
Mon, 11th May	Send Final Copy to Fergal for Critique		

Schedule Phase 2

Dates	**Task**	**Status**	**Notes**
Mon, 11th May	Send Final Copy to Fergal for Critique		
11th-25th May	Time for Fergal to Review		
25th – 15th June	Editing, Additions etc		
Mon, 15th June	Send Final Copy to Fergal for Approval		
29th – 6th July	Final Edits		
Mon 6 – 10th July	Thesis Printing/Binding etc		
Wed 15th July	**Paula' s Submission**		
17th July	Final Submission Date 1 Hardcopy & 1 electronic copy, to Rose Gallagher Rose: 01-708 3784 / rose.gallagher@nuim.ie **New email Check: rose.gallagher@mumail.ie**		
17th July – 5th Sept	Internal / External Exam Board		
5th Sept	University Exam Board Decision		
10th Sept	**Module & Thesis Results**		

Appendix L

Research Consent Form

As part of the Masters in Community Education, Equality & Social Activism

Researcher:
Paula O' Connor
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Email: paulaoconnor2@yahoo.ie

Supervisor:
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Part 1 - Research Introduction

Why I'd like to interview you?

I am inviting you to take part in this research because of your experience as a feminist educator. I believe due to your experience, you have a wealth of valuable insight, knowledge and learning to share. Thus, I feel you can contribute to my overall understanding and knowledge of feminist education, from your personal perspective and motivations. Your participation is entirely voluntary, should you choose to withdraw at any stage that will be completely respected.

What my research focus is?

As part of the requirements to successfully complete my Masters in Community Education, Equality & Social Activism at Maynooth University, I am conducting research for my thesis. I am focusing on the experiences of feminist educators, as it is an area which particularly interests me and one of significant change since its inception in Ireland. I am particularly interested in hearing the views of a mixture of generations of feminist educators across informal/formal education; regarding the changes/challenges within the sector, there causes, implications and potential solutions/alternative practices. On that basis, I hope that my final thesis will enable me to make a contribution to the sector.

How will the data be stored?

The interview recordings will be held by the researcher (only) on a personal laptop and will be destroyed once the final thesis is complete.

How will the data be used?

Quotations may be taken from your interview for inclusion in the final thesis, in a way that ensures your anonymity and may be used in any subsequent publication/research which follows on from the thesis.

Part 2 – Interviewee's Consent Form

What is involved in the Interview?

This research will involve your participation in one to one interview, which will take approximately 1 hour duration; if you wish to withdraw at any time from the interview your wishes will be fully respected. Providing you are in agreement, the interview will be recorded on a mobile device, in order to fully document your valuable insight. A full transcript will be send to you, giving you the opportunity to review; if you are unhappy with any section of the transcript you are fully entitled to request amendments and/or its removal. A follow up interview may be requested with your permission/availability as part of the process.

How your confidentiality will be assured?

Your confidentiality will be maintained throughout the process and anonymity will be ensured; everything that could identify you will be removed or disguised to protect your anonymity, for example a pseudonym will be used. Your identity will not be shared with anyone else; the only exception to this is my supervisor at NUIM, Fergal Finnegan. Transcripts of the interview recording may also be viewed by him, but if you wish specific parts of the interview to remain confidential between you and I please let me know and this can be facilitated.

Right to withdraw

If you wish to withdraw at any time from the research process, you are fully entitled to do so (before, during or after the interview) and your wishes will be fully respected. In addition, you are entitled to withdraw after reviewing the transcript until the 30th April 2015. As this stage, the researcher will be writing final thesis. If you have any concerns please feel free to discuss them with me. If you do choose to withdraw you can email me on or before the 20th April 2015.

I..... consent to voluntarily participate in this research. I have had the opportunity to read the foregoing information, ask questions and I fully understand my rights as outlined.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

If during your participation in this study you feel the information and guidelines that you were given have been neglected or disregarded in any way, or if you are unhappy about the process, please contact the Secretary of the National University of Ireland Maynooth Ethics Committee at research.ethics@nuim.ie or +353 (0)1 708 6019. Please be assured that your concerns will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Appendix M

Research Questions

1. Can you tell me about yourself and your own experience of education?

2. How has your own perception of feminism and feminist education evolved?

3. How would you explain the differences between feminist & traditional teaching? Are there particular tools/techniques you find useful?

4. How do you feel feminist education has developed and changed, since you came to the area?

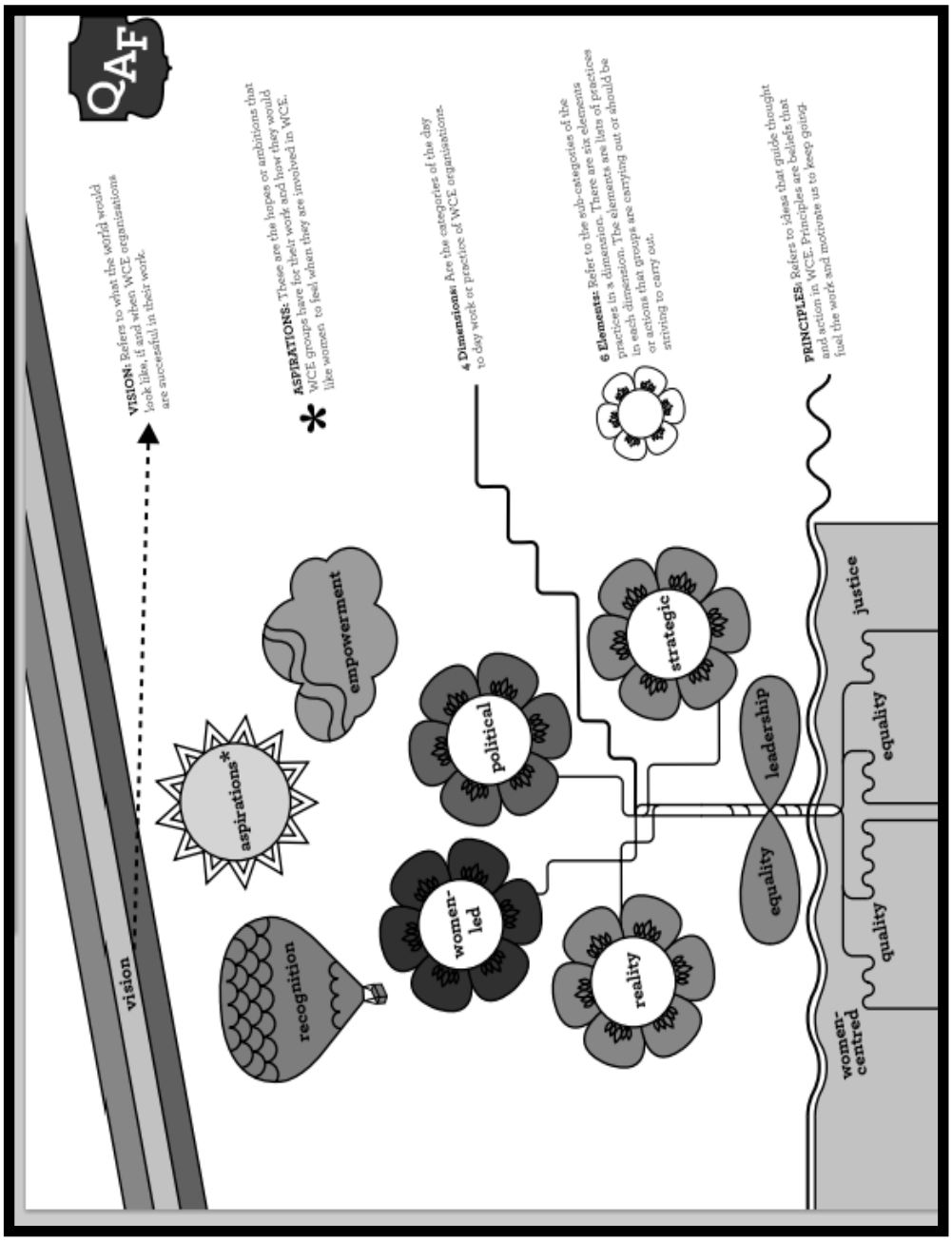
5. Are there ways in which you think the sector can be sustained going forward and what changes/alternative practices would you like to see?

6. Is there anything else you feel is important to add/discuss?

Appendix N

Flower Power Diagram

The overall principles of *Women-centred, quality, equality & justice*, are represented by the plant roots. Two leaves on the stem represent the central components of *equality* and *leadership*. The individual petals are symbolic of the sub-elements that should be present in the practice of WCE; *women-led, political, reality & strategic*.

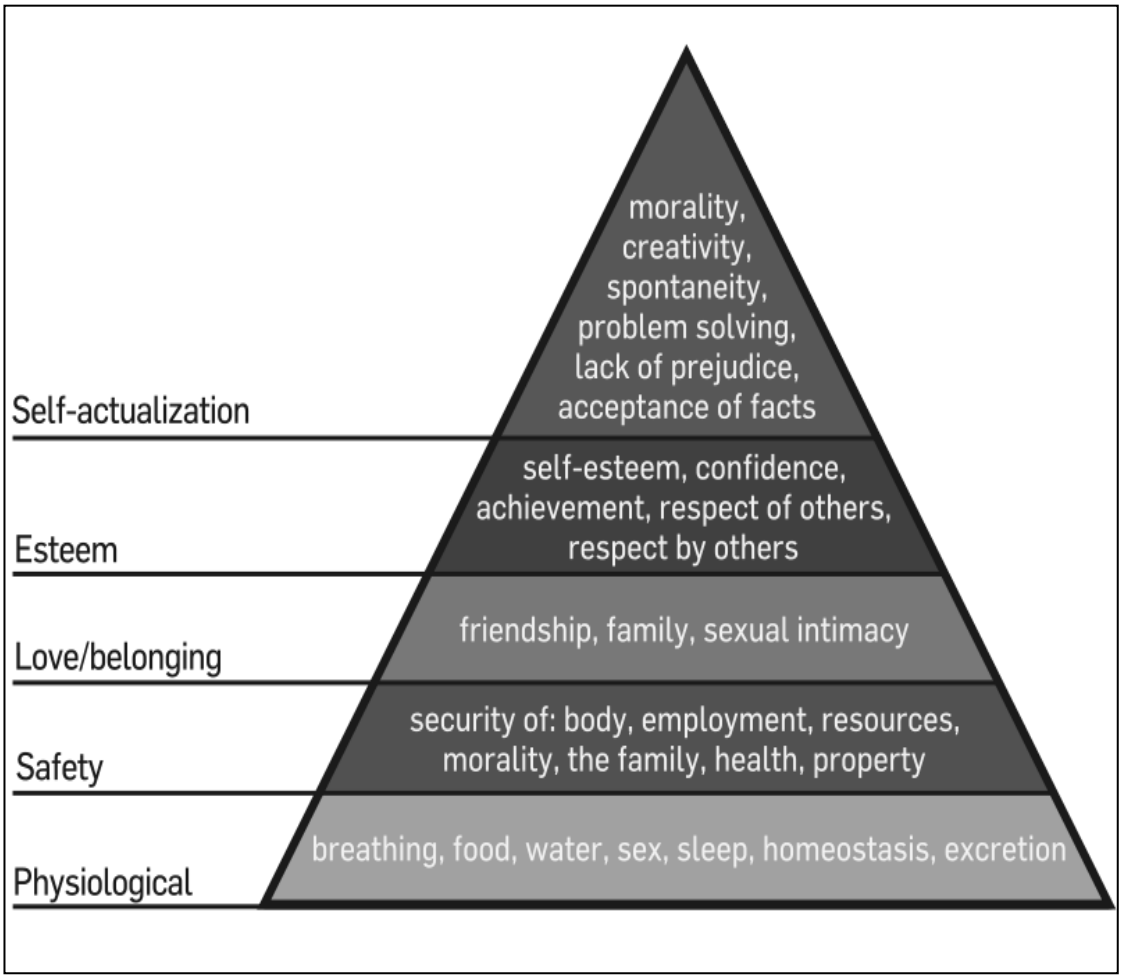


(Aontas, 2009)

Appendix O

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow believed that individual's fundamental needs drive their behavior. He suggests that *"Once one need has been filled, then individuals are motivated to act to fill the next higher unfilled need. Individuals are not interested in satisfying higher order needs until lower order needs have been fulfilled"* (AIT, 2011, p.6). Furthermore, he developed a chart to demonstrate the series of needs which individuals seek to satisfy, in a hierarchical order, as illustrated below.



(Binksternet, 2009)

Appendix P

Shared-understanding Aim: provide rich & descriptive material	*Discourse (active interviewing)*	METHODS OF COLLECTING DATA
• **Ontology/Epistemology** – Gain understanding of how they view themselves, their life; world; other people; structures etc. & how thinking / development influenced their praxis • **Recognition:** that my responses / comments could affect what is said; approach interviews open-minded • **Insights** put forward by interviewee, but also potential for generation during interview. • **Techniques** used (similar to PC counselling skills/group wk): asking questions to clarify/check info etc.; paraphrasing • **Analysis** – should allow me to extra central themes and/or core narratives; allow me to apply theoretical framework/alternative understandings • **Potential Limits:** assumes real version/experience will emerge due to sympathetic style.	Some common characteristic, differences here. **Main Dif:** Meaning & experience are formed through the process, not just expressed. **Conversational Mode:** Research expresses opinion & responds to interviewee – not really in my case, one or two small exceptions, where really pertinent! Can also provoke responses or switch positions **Cross-connections** – one participant says something, which can be used in subsequent interviews, my example 'Reflexivity'; Creative Techniques / Tools; Family Influence **Power:** Try to re-arrange balance, my example: allow interviewee to led; adapting q's to follow conversation; pick venue, time etc; offering opportunity to pick name.	

(O' Connor, 2015)

Appendix Q – Women in Politics

The representation of women in politics in Ireland has increasingly been brought into the spotlight, particularly in recent times. For instance, the emergences of groups set up specifically to support and encourage more women into the arena, such as: women4election, 50:50 and various local groups. Significant changes within legislation have occurred, primarily the introduction of gender quotas in 2011.

Claire McGing (2013) highlights the longstanding barriers facing women interested in going forward, are still very much the reality, with fewer women going forward during 1992-2007 than previously; namely the 5 C' - cash, culture, confidence, childcare & candidate selection. For instance, the culture of dominant masculine behaviours and pub based meetings a regular occurrence, is off-putting. Likewise, the following issues are seriously impact on confidence: women are less likely to put themselves forward; adversarial nature of politics; less familiar with political world; lack visible role models and media role. She indicates the interaction between the 'supply' of interested women and the 'demand' from parties for female candidates is an issue. Nonetheless, she indicates certain actions would drastically improve the situation:

- Mandatory gender quotas, benefitted by larger constituencies (5+ seats)
- Recruitment beyond traditional spheres
- Family friendly reforms
- Encourage women's leadership at branch level
- Mentoring programmes
- Develop a 'data bank' of aspiring
- Earmark state funding for women candidates

[i] Freire's Theoretical Influences include: Marx, Lukάcs, Fromm, Gramsci, Fanon, Memmi, Sartre, Kosik, Agnes Heller, M. Ponty, Simone Weill, Arendt, Marcuse ..." (de Figueiredo-Cowen & Gastaldo, 1995)