

Feminist Journeys: Travelling Through at 25 years of Feminism with the Journal of Gender Studies

Suzanne Clisby and Kathleen Lennon

Abstract

In this introductory article we provide a contextual theoretical framework of feminist debates and movements through the lens of the *Journal of Gender Studies* over the course of the past quarter of a century. Attention to the processes by which we become gendered, and the mechanisms and meanings within society whereby it maintains structures of gender inequality, requires attention to the lives of women and men. It also requires that we pay attention to the lives of people who cross such categories or fit uneasily within them. All this can and should be done while retaining a feminist sensibility and sensitivity to the workings of power and privilege in the individual and social articulations of gendered difference, and the putting of knowledge to work to achieve positive change. Here we review the ways in which the *Journal* has and continues to make critically important contributions to this ongoing project.

Keywords: gender, feminist theory, femininities, masculinities, trans, sexualities, intersexed bodies, body image

In putting together this anniversary special issue of the *Journal of Gender Studies* we are celebrating the contribution the Journal has made to feminist thought and praxis over the past quarter of a century. Clearly choosing a mere 25 articles from the hundreds published in the Journal since its inception has been a near impossible task, albeit a fascinating undertaking. Needless to say, there are so many other valuable contributions to feminist thought here that we would have liked to include. Our final selection has been made specifically to reflect key turns and debates in gender studies over these past 25 years, and in this we have been guided by several objectives. One has been to recognise the diversity of feminist theorizing and activism the Journal has reflected over this period in history and to signal its contributions to debates in highly significant areas. Another concern was to map key developments nationally and internationally on gender matters and other interrelated areas of difference and inequality. Looking back over the Journal also enabled us to notice important areas where we might work harder to solicit contributions into the future.

The Journal of Gender Studies was initially created through Hull's Centre for Gender Studies in 1991 - which at the time incorporated feminist scholars from both the University of Hull and the then Humberside Polytechnic - with an explicit aim to cover wide ranging issues of gender and to be interdisciplinary and international in scope. Notably, in the very first editorial we talked about how the idea of 'gender' could itself be a limiting concept, and this was the topic of the first article, by Oshadi Mangena entitled '*Against Fragmentation: The Need for Holism*' (Volume 1, Issue 1, 3-10). Here using the term *holism*, Mangena calls for what we would now more commonly refer to as an *intersectional* approach to our feminist understandings, drawing together recognition of our positionalities based on intersections of identities such as race, class, sexuality and so on. In her own words, Mangena argues for a gender analysis that considers;

'holistic patterns of enquiry in which all forms of experience are brought into analysis, if knowledge is not to be partial knowledge formulated upon the exclusive experiences of those who possess the scientific resources. While accepting the differences between male and female experiences, we must also recognize that male and female experience seen separately are not homogenous. Each encompasses many differently situated experiences [...] But if the situated character of human experience is to be emphasized, we must also ensure that all forms of situated experience be brought together so that we may have a more humanly representative knowledge' (1991, 4, emphasis in the original).

Mangena's article, opening the first issue of the Journal, raised what continue to be important concepts and debates a quarter of a century later. There may have been some shifts in gendered terminology, but the underlying concerns remain just as relevant now as they were then. Undoubtedly, there has been significant progress in relation to gender based inequalities over the decades since the early 1990s. Indeed, when the Journal was first published, rape within marriage was still perfectly legal; Section 28 of the Local Government Act was in force, making it illegal for government institutions to promote, or appear to support, homosexuality; part-time workers (mostly, of course, women) did not enjoy the same equality rights as other workers; refugee legislation did not recognize gender as basis for persecution; there was no legal protection for trans people from discrimination in the workplace; and civil partnerships were still a decade away from becoming a reality. We have reproduced an overview of some of these key changes in a

chart at the end of this article which marks some of these milestones in the UK (from Clisby and Holdsworth, 2016, 33-38).

So, yes, many things have improved for us in terms of gender and sexuality rights since we began the Journal in the early 1990s. However, despite the advances made by feminism, it continues to be the case that ‘deeply rooted socio-cultural factors in contemporary British Society continue to act to create significantly different life chances and experiences for men and women’ (Clisby and Holdsworth, 2016:1). And of course this is true internationally, which is why ‘it remains imperative that we also continue to analyse, debate and challenge these realities’ (Clisby and Holdsworth, 2016:1).

One key debate we had when the Journal began was whether, in utilising the term *Gender Studies* rather than *Women’s Studies* or *Feminist Studies*, we were diluting the political impact of academic areas which had explicitly foregrounded the voices and lives of women previously absent from study. It was certainly neither our intent nor desire to undermine hard fought women-only spaces or dilute the political focus of Women’s Studies. Rather, in our decision to refer to ourselves as Gender Studies we were making a feminist political statement, pointing to the critical need to consider constructions of femininities, masculinities and ‘othered’ bodies in the continued experiences of gender-based inequalities. For us, men and masculinities, sex and sexualities, all required greater critical scrutiny, dialogue and debate within a feminist framework. As has become clear, attention to the processes by which we become gendered and the mechanisms and meanings within society whereby it maintains structures of gender inequality requires attention to the lives of women and men. It also requires that we pay attention to the lives of people who cross such categories or fit uneasily within them. All this can and should be done while retaining a feminist sensibility. For us this requires sensitivity to the workings of power and privilege in the individual and social articulations of gendered difference, and the putting of knowledge to work to achieve positive change. The Journal of Gender Studies has and continues to make critically important contributions to this ongoing project.

The Journal was, for example, pioneering in paying attention to the experiences of trans people. A special issue on *Transgendering* , (Volume 7, Issue 3, 1998), was edited by (now) Professor Stephen Whittle, who has been so influential in fighting for and gaining trans rights, not least through the drafting and nursing through parliament of the Gender Recognition Act (2004). In the article from that issue included here, *‘The Pregnant Man-*

An Oxy Moran?, Sam Dylan More drew attention to the possibility of ‘pregnant men’, something which has gained widespread media attention much more recently. In this article Dylan More focuses on the experiences of ‘female to male transsexuals (FTMs) who chose to bear a child, while being conscious of their transsexual male identity’ (1998:7:3, 319). This prescient article was at the forefront of gender identity and trans debates, raising issues that remain as current today as they were ahead of their time almost two decades ago. It speaks, for example, to issues of identity, belonging, acceptance and exclusion within a socio-legal framework that fails to understand or cope with non-hegemonic gender binaries, with bodies that do not fit the presumed hegemonic norm.

Many articles also drew attention to the diversity extant within the trans community and the multiple ways in which desires for different kinds of transitioning can be inflected and intersected by other social differences, both nationally and internationally. Katrina Roen’s article, *‘Transgender Theory and Embodiment: The risk of racial marginalisation’* (2001: 10:3, 253-263, reprinted here) was selected for the important questions she poses. She asks, for example, ‘[h]ow might queer and transgender theorizing inform and be informed by the discursive pathways being carved out by people for whom medicalized understandings of gender may be deemed culturally inappropriate?’ (2001, 253), and,

‘how might transgender theorizing come to ‘look’ different? If we think of colonization as a process of rendering racialised bodies monstrous, how might we approach differently the reclaiming of transsexual bodies as monstrous? [and] How can transgender theorizing be critical of its own racialised politics in a way that is productive for those who place race first and gender second?’ (Roen, 2001, 261).

Here focusing on the experiences of ‘gender liminal people (that is, people who live between genders, live as a third gender, or are undergoing a transgenering process) who live in New Zealand and who belong to cultures indigenous to the South Pacific’ (2001, 254), Roen’s aim was to ‘inspire more critical thinking about the racialized aspects of transgender bodies and gender liminal ways of being’ (2001, 262). In so doing, Roen presents a compelling critique of the way ‘perspectives of whiteness echo, largely unacknowledged, through transgender (and queer) theorising’(2001,262).

We also published important work on bodies that were intersex, as groups began to campaign for recognition of the biological diversity that underlay a binary gender system.

Illustrative of these debates we have included J. David Hester's article (Vol 13, Issue 3, 2004) '*Intersexes and the end of gender: Corporeal ethics and post gender bodies*'. Here Hester raises important issues concerning the medical treatment of intersexed bodies and the ways in which medicine and society at large impose a 'binary gender imperative upon the bodies of intersexed people' (2004, 2015). As with Roen above, Hester poses a series of critical questions, including, 'why must we have a sex? What happens when we have hundreds of sexes? What are the consequences for research, for theorizing, for activism? What are the consequences for medical treatment, for biogenetic technology, for legal systems, for sexual ethics and gender constructs?' (2004, 223). As this article clearly elucidates, intersexed bodies show us that bodies are

'not the passive means nor the performative 'ends' of gender, instead they raise a threat to gender altogether. As bodies without a place, bodies without identities or agency, bodies that live in a state of liminality, they do not signal the exception to the rule: they expose the limits that thereby disrupt the rule' (2004,223).

Ultimately Hester calls for a new model beyond the 'dichotomy of essentialism vs. constructionism' (2004,223), a call that remains just as topical over a decade later. The Gender Recognition Act (2004) in the UK, and parallel legislation in some other countries, together with the high visibility of trans men and women in the media, including film and television, is certainly one of the progressive elements in gender relations over the last 25 years, in at least some countries. We have a long way to go, of course, before this is commonplace, mundane even, and is removed from the realm of the exotic and the freakish. Indeed throughout the world violence and discrimination against trans people continues to be the norm, whether State sanctioned or not.

The Journal was also pioneering in publishing work on masculinity, an important area of gender analysis which has become increasingly pervasive. This work reflected the range of debates on hegemonic masculinity and its critique (see, for example the special issue 'Men and Masculinities' edited by Victoria Robinson and Angela Meah, Volume 18, Issue 4, 2009). While recognising the problematic nature of dominant strands of masculinity for women and men, we also published work which drew attention to hidden aspects of male experience, such as male rape (see Aliraza Javaid's article '*Feminism, Masculinity and Male Rape: bringing male rape 'out of the closet'*' (Vol 25, Issue 3, 2016, reprinted here).

Where are we with masculinity now? Clearly, cross-culturally and historically, there are models of gendered positionality which, in different ways, offer a greater range of possibilities of both masculinity and femininity. The public acknowledgment, and in many cases celebration, of gay masculinity is also in many countries a signal of change. But it is also clear that problematic models of masculinity, which are damaging often both to the men themselves and to those around them, particularly women, are still in play, and many men constitute themselves in relation to these negative scripts. Grayson Perry's recent television series, *All Man* (Channel 4, 2016), book *The Descent of Man* (Perry, 2016) and many of his artworks offer insight into this in both working class and middle class communities in the UK. The most damaging modes of masculinity are those which are sexually predatory and incorporate sexual violence against women. Recent examples include the sexist remarks and behaviour of US President elect Donald Trump (Cohen, 2016), the conduct and outcome of the UK footballer's Ched Evans' rape case (Morris, 2016), the rising number of rapes reported in the UK (ONS, 2016) with persistently low rates of convictions, and the recent studies of widespread sexual harassment and assault on university campuses in the UK and USA (NUS, 2014; AAU, 2015; UUK, 2016).

Particularly horrific, though no less complex as a social process, is the trafficking of women and children from war torn countries, and the use of rape as a weapon of war (Enloe, 2016). These all rest on patterns of masculinity in which being a man is constituted in part by sexual violence against women. This is not to deny that women ever take part in sexual violence. They do, though far more rarely, and - critically - in so doing they are not instantiating a widespread model of femininity. To reflect theoretical debates and key issues pertaining to rape and sexual violence in conflict here we include two more recent articles: Stacy Banwell's '*Rape and Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo: a case study of gender based violence*' (Volume 23, Issue 1, 45-58, 2014) and Amy Russell's '*The boundaries of belonging: gender, human trafficking and embodied citizenship*' (Volume 25, Issue 3, 318-334, 2016). Banwell provides an important overview of the use of rape as a weapon of war in contemporary context and some of the legal responses of the international community, before focusing on the specific context of the DRC. Emphasising the complex and multi-level structural framework that facilitates and perpetuates gender-based violence, she calls for greater attention to be paid to the 'complex relationship between globalization, hegemonic masculinity, hyper-capitalism, and the sexual violence being committed in the Congo' (2014, 46). Through an analysis of the experiences of women from the former Soviet Union trafficked to Israel as forced sex

workers, Russell's focus is on identity constructs of 'victims of trafficking'. Russell explores the narratives and discourses employed by these women as they simultaneously transgress and reassert normative gendered boundaries in their attempts to secure citizenship in a contested landscape. As Russell concludes, 'the essentialised identity of the trafficked woman 'enables' the state to be actor in her rescue, but also 'disables' women's agency and self-determination [...] [T]he process to gain citizenship (however temporary) enacts moral and gender boundaries for those who seek it. As trafficking is a process that transgresses borders, the application for citizenship is a process that reasserts them' (2014, 330).

Another key contribution to theoretical analysis and debate provided through the Journal is our focus on sexuality. Here contributions reveal a changing picture. Earlier contributions challenge the hegemony of heterosexuality and the importance of gay and lesbian perspectives. Here we have included Sue Wilkinson's and Celia Kitzinger's seminal article '*The social construction of heterosexuality*' (Volume 3, Issue 3, 307-316, 1994), and Renée Hoogland's '*Perverted knowledge: Lesbian sexuality and theoretical practice*' (Volume 3, Issue 1, 15-29, 1994) as key illustrations of a postmodern turn in the deconstruction and disruption of identity categories. Here again, in both national and global contexts, there have been important successes in gaining greater gender and sexual rights and recognitions. Following years of feminist and LGBT campaigning, the Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act was finally passed in 2013 in the UK and in The Republic of Ireland same-sex marriage was legalized in 2015 following a popular vote. In the same year the US Supreme Court ruled that same-sex marriage bans were unconstitutional (Fenton, 2016). Today many people in public life now feel able to be open and unapologetic about their choices of sexual partner, but we still have many hurdles to overcome in challenging homophobia and gender-based discrimination at every level of society. The persistently high rates of mental health issues amongst the gay community are but one manifestation of the effects of homophobia (Russell and Fish, 2016). Indeed homophobia and sexuality-based discrimination continue to be everyday lived experiences in every part of the world, to the extent that admitting to same sex desire continues to be life-threatening. In some parts of the world this threat to life is still sanctioned by the State (Fenton, 2016).

Sexuality has also remained a focus of discussion in another way, because policing the sexuality of women remains a key issue. In the context of sexual assault the sexual behaviour of women is still brought into play and sexual double standards are pervasive, not least within youth culture. On this front, there have also been important activist

interventions, both virtually and physically, on social media, through demonstrations and other activities. Young women in particular are insisting on their rights to be sexual beings and free of sexual assault. This dynamism among younger feminist activists has contributed to trends in readership of particular articles published in the Journal. As a reflection of these trends we include here one of our most searched for articles, Feona Attwood's *'Sluts and Riot Grrls; Female Identity and Sexual Agency'* (Volume 16, Issue 3, 2007). Here Attwood examines the history of the term 'slut' and its appropriation by popular culture, new media and 21st century forms of feminist activism. She takes us on a journey through contemporary, often digital communities of feminists and considers the contradictory functions of 'slut'. For some, for example, it reproduces 'hate speak' against women, while for others, often for a younger generation of feminists, the term can be re-appropriated as a space of resistance.

Another thematic area in which contributions to the Journal have been strong and have reflected key theoretical turns is in foregrounding the body as a key arena for feminist theory and praxis. One issue is the recognition of the distinctiveness of bodily experiences, without making this an essentialising ground of gendered identity categories. Reflecting this we have included here Alison Easton's article, *'The body as history and 'writing the body': The example of Grace Nichols'* (Volume 3, Issue 1, 55-67, 1994). Here, through an exploration of the ways Nichols is able to 'write the black female body of slaves and their African-Caribbean descendents', Easton provides a materialist critique of 'some French feminist's individualistic and dehistoricized notions of the body and of the semiotic as the female body's only authentic language'(1994, 55). Our other selection reflecting a bodily focus is a fascinating article drawing our attention to Fanny Burney's account of her 1811 mastectomy: Heidi Kaye's *"This breast-it's me': Fanny Burney's mastectomy and the defining gaze'* (Volume 6, Issue 1, 43-53,1997). Kaye takes this very early personal account of a mastectomy and explores the power of Burney's gaze as represented through her letter to her sister. As Kaye argues, Burney is able to consciously reject the objectification and control of the medical profession and fight to regain her sense of self as subject and critic of patriarchal society. While the Journal published this piece in 1997, the subject remains of current interest, as illustrated by a recent discussion of the Fanny Burney's account by Women's Hour's Jenni Murray in *The Guardian* (Murray, 2016).

Finally, in our focus on the body, possibly the most dominant body issue, and one where we can see an escalating problem, is around body image. Most women, including

teenagers, children and older women, are unhappy with the look of their bodies (Girlguiding UK 2016; Russell et al. 2016; Simonis, Manocha and Ong, 2016). This is also true of a smaller, but increasing percentage of men. In the UK, the number of aesthetic surgery operations continues to rise, in line with trends elsewhere in the developed world, indeed in 2015 ‘over 51,000 people in the UK had cosmetic surgery procedures in clinics registered with the British Association of Aesthetic and Plastic Surgeons alone’ (Alsop and Lennon fc.2017). The normalisation of cosmetic surgery and the ease of photo-shopping images have produced ever more restrictive norms of what counts as an attractive body, and is not unconnected to the rise in lack of confidence and even more severe mental health problems amongst young women (Russell et al, 2016; Girlguiding UK, 2016). This is a crisis for young women, infecting the lives of children, staying with women throughout their life, and leading to older women increasingly resorting to procedures in an attempt to look younger. Here there are no progressive interventions we can report. Despite some attempts to use less thin models, myths of bodily perfection are haunting women, girls and, increasingly, men and boy’s lives, leading to acute lack of confidence in and alienation from the bodies which constitute ourselves. This concern with body image, self-monitoring of and attempts to change our bodies due to bodily dissatisfaction cuts across age and ethnic bounds, as Reel, Soohoo, Franklin Summerhays & Gill’s article, ‘*Age before beauty; an exploration of body image in African-American and Caucasian adult women*’ (Volume 17, Issue 4, 321-330, 2008, reprinted here) elucidates. Here the authors provide a valuable exploration of these issues through interviews with African-American and Caucasian women across the life span. They found that ‘women across age and race categories are vulnerable to body dissatisfaction and disordered eating behaviors. Regardless of race, even mature women recognize and respond to societal expectations of beauty and femininity’ (2008, 321).

A further area of significance for us is the Journal’s international perspective. From its inception the Journal has stressed internationalism as one of its founding principles, and this has been retained throughout its 25 years. The Journal was launched just as apartheid in South Africa was ending and the first issue contained contributions from two women whose lives had been marked by this fight. The changing position of women in the Soviet block was marked as soon as perestroika became prevalent and very different priorities emerged for Russian and British gender activists. Here we have selected Norma Noonan’s article ‘*Does consciousness lead to action? Exploring the impact of Perestroika and post Perstroika on Women in Russia*’ (Volume 3, Issue 1, 47-54, 1994, reprinted here), in which

she focuses on the tumultuous changes in the region post 1985 onwards, and the impacts of these for Soviet/Russian women.

The role of gender within nationalist struggles was the focus of an earlier special issue on *Gender and Nationalism*, (Volume 1, Issue 4, 1992). See here Simona Sharoni, ‘*Every Woman is an Occupied Territory: The politics of militarism and Sexism and the Israeli Palestinian conflict*’ (1992, 447-462 reprinted here). Sharoni poses a series of critical questions that have by no means become any less pertinent now than they were in the quarter of a century since she initially raised them. In her focus on the relationship between militarism and sexism through the lens of the impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in women’s lives, Sharoni asked ‘[w]hat happens to women in regions and periods of intense political conflict? How do women cope with the daily ramifications of conflicts and wars?’ (1992, 448). In 1991 we also reported on a conference held at Hull Centre for Gender Studies on *Gender, Islamic Fundamentalism and Human Rights* (Cullen, Volume 1, Issue 1, 1991, 118-122) and again in 2000 we reported on a key conference highlighting the plight of women refugees (*Hull Millennium Refugee Women Conference Report*, Volume 9 Issue 1, reprinted here). We both remember this event well. It was amazing to see and listen to over one hundred refugee women gathered together from across the UK speaking passionately about their experiences, challenges and desires in a women-only space. The concerns of those women gathered in Hull in 2000, and of the issues raised at the conference on *Gender and Islamic Fundamentalism and Human Rights* in Hull in 1991 are of course now, in 2016, the key issues of the day.

A challenge for feminists worldwide is to respect the differences which come with culture and religion while supporting the struggles of women who are being treated as the carriers of cultural practices which harm and disempower them. As an illustration of articles published in the Journal exploring issues of harmful cultural practices we have included here Hague, Gill and Begikhani’s article, ‘*Honour’-based violence and Kurdish Communities: Moving towards action and change in Iraqi Kurdistan and the UK* (Volume 22, Issue 4, 383-396, 2013). With movements of people now possibly the most urgent social and political challenge we face, support and respect for migrant peoples becomes ever more important. An international perspective is also imperative in challenging simplistic narratives of progress on LGBT issues. We need to sound warnings about the way in which the position of women and sexual minorities is cynically (in)appropriated as a ground to justify military adventures by western powers, narratives

that can be subverted from emancipatory goals and deployed as an extension of Orientalist, neocolonial projects to control and 'civilise' developing economies (Clisby and Enderstein, *fc.2017*).

A focus on internationalism at the Journal's inception was part of a desire to find space for voices that might otherwise not get heard. The Journal was launched when there was a theoretical concern across disciplines with questions of standpoint epistemologies (see Kathleen Lennon's article, '*Gender and Knowledge*', Volume 4, Issue 2, 133-144, 1995, reprinted here). For the sake of the legitimacy of knowledge as well as of social justice marginal perspectives needed to be attended to. This is not just a matter of international voices but of marginalised voices, within, for example, the UK. Here the record of the Journal has been more patchy.

One key issue is class, which in feminist writing more widely, became somewhat eclipsed with the postmodern turn of early the 1990s. This was a time when the material experience of economic poverty and structural marginalisation became partially obscured by the concern with cultural meanings. In the late 1980s and 1990s the interests of working class women were tied up with the trade union movement and the struggle of women to get their voices and issues taken seriously there. This was tough work (see Sheila Cunnison's article, '*Gender Class and Equal Opportunities Policies: A Grass-roots Case Study from the Trade Union movement*', Volume 11. Issue 2, 167-181, 2002, reprinted here). Although we now have a female General Secretary of the TUC, the continuing masculinist culture within many trade unions makes it unsurprising that women in some unions still report routine harassment much of it from their own colleagues (Syal, 2016). But the change of economic and political climate nationally and internationally in the period of Austerity since the banking scandal of 2008 has resulted in weakening of unions, low pay, zero hours contracts and the proliferation of part-time, low paid, low status work. The increasing dependency of those in and out of work on benefits or food banks has shifted the economic and social position of the working class and resulted in a culture of scapegoating. For an early discussion of this phenomena we have included here Kirk Mann and Sasha Roseneil's article 'Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em': backlash and the gender politics of the underclass debate' (Volume 3, Issue 3, 317-332, 1994).

The voices of those caught up in these cycles are difficult to capture except mediated through the studies of those luckier academics who publish papers in journals. However,

something that we have noted as editors has been that, as the Journal has grown increasingly more successful and academic life has moved to requiring publications satisfying certain criteria, administered through elaborate systems of anonymous review, the possibility of working with less polished submissions has become increasingly less feasible for us. Our responsibility as academics to ensure that the voices and experiences of gendered perspectives across the social spectrum are reflected in our writing therefore remains urgent, in a way that respects the ability of subjects to articulate 'how processes of gendering can and do have an impact on their sense of self, and on the lived realities of their everyday lives' (Clisby and Holdsworth, 2016, 4). By way of reminder of our own situated positionalities as feminists, activists, workers and women, we include an obituary of a friend, colleague, and one of the founding editors of the Journal, Annette Fitzsimons, whose work, activism and academic research was particularly tied up with the empowerment of just such economically marginalised groups (August 2013, Volume 22, Issue 4, 364-366, 2013.)

Class is not the only area which requires additional attention. The Journal has not managed to solicit or publish as many contributions as we would like from Black and Asian British writers or work from writers from within the disabled community and disability studies. For an exception see Griet Roets, Rosa Reinaart and Geert Van Hove's article, '*Living between borderlands: discovering a sense of nomadic subjectivity throughout Rosa's life story*' (Volume 17, Issue 2, 99-115, 2008, reprinted here). Here the authors have intersected gender studies and disability studies in their critical (and in part Deleuzian) analysis of ways in which women with 'learning disabilities' can be objectified through taken-for-granted discourses with allusions to eugenic and biological determinism. These groups of theorists and activists working on issues of class, race, disability, have provided pivotal insights into each of the thematic areas outlined above. For example, the work of disability theorists on conceptions of impairment and disability (Mairs 1997 and Inahara 2009) has forced re-conceptualisations of the interweaving of the material and the cultural; and the writings of Black British writers and post-colonial feminists have enabled the crucial theorizing of intersectionality, now at the forefront of social theory (Mirza 1997, Tate 2005). Our continued efforts towards more widespread inclusion of such voices forms part of our goals for the future.

During the years in which this Journal has been published there has been a shift in feminist theory from an anchorage in broadly historical materialist writings, foregrounding

materialist structures of dominance, (Kuhn and Wolpe, 1978) to a utilization of poststructuralist theory, emphasising the construction of gendered positionality and gendered subjectivity at the level of cultural meaning and performative practice (Butler, 1990). There has then been a countershift, with the emergence of the new materialism (Alamo and Hekman, 2008). These changes have, of course, been reflected in the material published over the last 25 years. Nonetheless the original focus of the Journal, with a commitment to an anchorage in gendered life experience, has ensured that the significance of material, economic and social realities was never lost, while acknowledging that these emerge in relation to the cultural meanings which shape them. Indeed the Journal has always endeavoured ‘never to lose sight of the materialities of women’s and men’s embodied realities’ (Clisby and Holdsworth, 2016, 1.), and, looking back over all the issues since 1991, we can see that we have been successful this aim.

There is no discipline and no area of life which is untouched by gendered perspectives, and we have included in the Journal, and this anniversary special issue, pieces which illustrate this. They include reflections on the gendered city in Tovi Fenster’s, *‘The Right to the Gendered City: Different Formations of Belonging in Everyday Life’* (Volume 14, Issue 3, 217-231, 2005) in which we find a feminist analysis of ‘new forms of citizenship in globalized cities’ that argues convincingly that insufficient attention has been paid in urban studies to ‘patriarchal power relations that are ethnic, cultural and gender-related’ (2005, 217). They also include a piece from the special issue on Princess Diana (Gill Valentine and Ruth Butler’s article, *‘The Alternative Fairy Story: Diana and the Sexual Dissidents’* (Volume 8, Issue 3, 295-302, 1999); and finally, to cheer us all up, we have included an interview with Jo Brand (*‘Laughter and the Medusa: An interview with Jo Brand’*, conducted by Gaele Sobott-Mogwe and Donna Cox, Volume 8, Issue 2, 133-140, 1999).

In conclusion, conducting this analysis of the past 25 years of feminism through the lens of Journal has been a thought provoking and fascinating journey, one that has brought back many memories for us both. It has also been a valuable reminder of why the Journal was worth creating, the critical contributions it has and continues to make at the cutting edge of feminist theory and praxis, and the ways in which it continues to provide a feminist space to speak. We must be mindful of our continued internationalism and inclusivity, and vigilant to fill some of the gaps we have identified in those voices we need to listen to. We hope you enjoy our selections and look forward to the next quarter of a century of feminism in the Journal of Gender Studies.

Timeline of in/equality in the UK: 1970–2010

The 1970s

1970 Working women are refused mortgages in their own right as few women work continuously. They are only granted mortgages if they can secure the signature of a male guarantor.

1970 Britain's first national Women's Liberation Conference is held at Ruskin College. This is the first time that women's groups from across Britain have met in a single place. The Women's Liberation Movement (WLM), influential throughout the 1970s, develops from the conference.

1970

The Equal Pay Act makes it illegal to pay women lower rates than men for the same work. The act covers indirect as well as direct sex discrimination. It is a direct result of women's strike action over equal pay at a Ford car plant in Dagenham in 1968 and continued pressure from the women's movement.

1970 The Miss World competition is interrupted by feminist protestors claiming that the contest is a cattle market. They throw flour and smoke bombs, inaugurating the first protest event organised by the women's movement.

1971 Over 4,000 women take part in the first women's liberation march in London. **1972** Erin Pizzey sets up the first women's refuge in Chiswick, London.

1974 The National Women's Aid Federation is set up to bring together nearly 40 refuge services across the country.

1974 Contraception becomes available through the NHS. **1975** The Sex Discrimination Act makes it illegal to discriminate against women in work, education and training.

1975 The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) is set up under the Sex Discrimination Act and has statutory powers to enforce this Act.

1975 The Employment Protection Act introduces statutory maternity provision and makes it illegal to sack a woman because she is pregnant.

1976 The EOC comes into effect to oversee the Equal Pay Act and Sex Discrimination Act.

1976 Lobbying by women's organisations ushers in the Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act to protect women and children from domestic violence. The Act gives new rights to those at risk of violence through civil protection orders.

1977 Mainly Asian women workers mount a year-long strike at Grunwick's in London for equal pay and conditions.

1977 International Women's Day is formalised as an annual event by the UN General Assembly.

1977 The first Rape Crisis Centre opens in London.

1978 The Women's Aid Federation of Northern Ireland is established.

1978 The Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent is set up. It is the first black women's organisation in Britain to organise at a national level, drawing black women from across the country to form an umbrella group for black women's organisations.

1979 The feminist journal Feminist Review is founded. It goes on to play a crucial role in promoting contemporary feminist debate in the UK.

1979 Margaret Thatcher becomes Britain's first female prime minister.

The 1980s

1980 Lesley Abdela forms the 300 Group to push for equal representation of women in the House of Commons.

1980 Women working at Hoover, Merthyr Tydfil, take strike action against 'women out first' redundancy plans.

1980 Women can apply for a loan or credit in their own names.

1981 Baroness Young becomes the first woman leader of the House of Lords.

1982 30,000 women gather at Greenham Common Peace Camp. The camp remained open for 19 years during which time thousands of female protesters visited and lived in the camp.

1982 The Court of Appeal decides that bars and pubs are no longer able to refuse to serve women at the bar as this constitutes sex discrimination.

1983 Lady Mary Donaldson becomes the first woman Lord Mayor of London.

1984 During the miners' strike, wives of picketing miners organise themselves into a powerful women's group. The movement eventually becomes national and leaves a legacy of a common class struggle against sexism, women's oppression and against capitalism itself.

1985 The Equal Pay (Amendment) Act allows women to be paid the same as men for work of equal value.

1985 Campaigning against female genital mutilation by the Foundation for Women's Health, Research and Development leads to the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act. The Act is further strengthened with the introduction of the Female Genital Mutilation Act in 2003.

1986 The Sex Discrimination (Amendment) Act enables women to retire at the same age as men. It also lifts the legal restrictions which prevent women from working night shifts in factories.

1987 Diane Abbot becomes the first black woman member of the Westminster Parliament.

1988 Julie Hayward, a canteen cook at a shipyard in Liverpool, is the first woman to win a case under the amended Equal Pay Act.

1988 Section 28 of the Local Government Act was introduced, making it illegal for any council or government body to ‘intentionally promote homosexuality, or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality’.

1988 Elizabeth Butler-Sloss becomes the first woman Law Lord when she is appointed an Appeal Court Judge.

The 1990s

1990 Independent taxation for women is introduced. For the first time, married women are taxed separately from their husbands.

1992 Betty Boothroyd becomes the first female Speaker of the House of Commons.

1993 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women affirms that violence against women violates their human rights.

1994 Rape in marriage is made a crime after 15 years of serious campaigning by women’s organisations.

1994 Equal rights of part-time workers is granted in a ruling by the House of Lords.

1997 Increase in women MPs: the general election sees 101 Labour women MPs elected as a result of the controversial (and subsequently declared illegal) introduction of all-women shortlists in 1993.

1998 The Human Rights Act is passed by the European Union.

1999 Refugee law is extended to gender persecution: the House of Lords delivers a historic judgement in the Shah and Islam case that women who fear gender persecution should be recognised as refugees.

1999 Maternity and Parental Leave Regulations are extended to enable both men and women to take up to 13 weeks off to care for children under the age of five years.

1999 Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations is introduced, this makes it illegal for employers to discriminate against trans people.

The 2000s

2000 Asylum Gender Guidelines are introduced by the UK's Immigration Appellate Authority (the immigration and asylum tribunal) for use in the determination of asylum appeals. The guidelines note that the dominant view of what constitutes a 'real refugee' has been of a man and this has meant that women asylum seekers in the UK may not benefit equitably from the protection offered by the Refugee Convention.

2001 London Partnerships Register is launched by Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, allowing lesbians, gay men and unmarried heterosexual couples to register their partnerships.

2002 Adoption law changes. Parliament passes measures allowing lesbian and unmarried couples to adopt children.

2003 Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations are introduced to protect people against discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

2003 Section 28 is repealed following a prolonged campaign and lobbying by voluntary and community organisations, particularly lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organisations.

2004 Civil Partnerships Act comes into force giving same sex couples the same rights and responsibilities as married heterosexual couples. In the same year the historical crimes of 'buggery' and 'gross indecency' are abolished.

2004 Gender Recognition Act is introduced which allows trans people who have taken decisive steps to live fully and permanently in their acquired gender to gain legal recognition in that gender.

2007 Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is established. This involves the closure and merger of the EOC, Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) into a single Commission. There have been criticisms of the loss

of focus on and resources concerning women's and gender equality/inequality as a result of the closure of the EOC.

2007 Gender Equality Duty (GED) comes into force which requires all public bodies in the UK to consider gender equality in all areas of policy making. The duty requires more than simply equal treatment for men and women. Public bodies should promote and take action to bring about gender equality, which involves looking at issues for men and women; understanding why inequalities exist and how to overcome them; creating effective service provision for all, so that everyone can access services that meet their needs. All local authorities, public institutions and private and voluntary organisations carrying out public functions are required to produce a Gender Equality Scheme (GES) which details how their institution effectively implements gender equality measures and takes action to bring about gender equality in their organisation.

2010 Equality Act is introduced which replaces previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act covering nine protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; sex; religion or belief; sexual orientation. The Act established the range of unlawful treatment on grounds of protected characteristics, including direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, victimisation and failing to make a reasonable adjustment for a disabled person. The Act applies to 'unfair treatment in the workplace, when providing goods, facilities and services, when exercising public 37Gendering women functions, in the disposal and management of premises, in education and by associations (such as private clubs)' (Home Office, 2012).

From: Clisby and Holdsworth (2016, 33-38)

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