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The influence of curricula content on English sociology students' transformations: the case of feminist knowledge.

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Abstract

Previous research identifies the importance of feminist knowledge for improving gender equity, economic prosperity and social justice for all. However, there are difficulties in embedding feminist knowledge in higher education curricula. Across England, undergraduate sociology is a key site for acquiring feminist knowledge. In a study of four English sociology departments Basil Bernstein's theoretical concepts and Madeleine Arnot's notion of gender codes frame an analysis indicating that sociology curricula in which feminist knowledge is strongly classified in separate modules is associated with more women being personally transformed. Men's engagement with feminist knowledge is low and it does not become more transformative when knowledge is strongly classified. Curriculum, pedagogy and gender codes are all possible contributors to these different relationships with feminist knowledge across the sample of 98 students.

Key words: gender codes, curriculum, pedagogy, qualitative analysis, academic disciplines.

Introduction

This paper explores the role that feminist knowledge, embedded in sociology curricula in four English universities, plays in enabling graduates to tackle gender inequality. Research into curricula explore what those attending universities are encouraged and enabled to think about and how this relates to making contributions to society (Coate, 2006; McLean, 2006; Young and Muller, 2016). Governments and policy makers have renewed interest in what curricula universities provide but their narrowly focused economic agendas are in danger of undermining those which enhance democracy and global well-being (Nussbaum, 1998, 2010; Small, 2013). There is little research internationally that interrogates the role that the curricula and pedagogic processes play in the “dynamics of (in)equalities” (Unterhalter and Carpentier, 2010, p.19). Some authors critique the effects of the economisation of higher education on the economic and social contributions of the arts and social sciences (e.g. Nussbaum, 2010; Small, 2013). However, less is understood about how specific curricula impact on (in)equality through student transformations (notable exceptions include Amsler, 2015; Langan, Sheese and Davidson 2009; Lather, 1991; Morley, 2007). Deeper understandings of what different university disciplines and their specific curricula can and do contribute to society are needed. This paper begins to engage with some of the challenges of this task.

Gender inequalities of wealth, status, recognition, power and participation remain intransigent globally including in England where this study is set (David, 2014; Leathwood and Read, 2009). Feminist authors and activists have long argued that gender inequities will not be addressed adequately until university curricula have been transformed (Harding, 1986, 1991; Minnich, 2005). The task is to counter malestream knowledge, which is represented as universal but provides partial perspectives on the world’s problems, creating and maintaining women’s disadvantages. For example, Burke (2012) discusses how labelling domestic violence as battered wives’ syndrome attributed the problem of male violence to the victim and misdirected efforts to tackle it. Such malestream framings of knowledge and social and economic solutions have undermined progress.

Gender research studies aspects of men and women’s experiences and behaviours that are shaped by society. The term feminist knowledge is distinctly linked to the feminist movement and draws in perspectives, relevant to the sociology of knowledge, that have challenged the distinction between sex and gender (Butler, 1990; Caplan and Caplan, 2016). The synergy between feminist activism and feminist knowledge sometimes raises concerns that it is a divisive form of knowledge that privileges the perspectives of white, western, middle-class women and marginalises other women (Gunew, 1990). However, we conceptualise feminist knowledge as legitimised knowledge that is created by people who are conscious of the effects of the iniquitous gendered material conditions under which they are producing it. And, they generate it with the intent of helping to overcome inequalities attributable to gender (masculinity and femininity) and, the intersecting factors, such as class, ethnicity and disability, which inextricably shape gendered inequalities (Harding, 1991; Sheridan, 1990).

Feminist perspectives suggest that diverse groups of women and excluded groups of men should be involved in creating knowledge and identifying and solving the world's problems; and, these perspectives should be represented in universities curricula (Leathwood and Read, 2009; Morley, 2007). Western social science has broadly accepted the notion that what counts as objective truth is shaped by individual subjectivities and the power relations that inform them (Leathwood and Read, 2009). And, the European Commission's website (2015) is clear, that in order to increase gender equity, feminist knowledge should be central to all higher learning. However, Morley (2007) noted that most low-income countries tackle gender inequality by solely focusing on women's access to universities: attempts to integrate feminist knowledge into university curricula are frustrated by a lack of resources, including insufficient expertise. The situation is often presumed to be considerably advanced in more developed countries.

This paper develops earlier research where Bernstein's (2000) theoretical framework was used to conceptualise findings regarding the quality of university undergraduate education in four sociology departments in English universities (UK Economic and Social Research Council RES-062-23-1438). We found that undergraduates' transformations were affected by the disciplinary knowledge they encountered, something commonly ignored in policy evaluations of the quality of degrees (Abbas, Ashwin and McLean, 2012; McLean, Abbas and Ashwin, 2013a, 2013b; Ashwin, Abbas and McLean, 2014, 2015.). We concluded that students in all four universities encountered knowledge which could give them access to pedagogic rights (Bernstein, 2000). There are three pedagogic rights operating at the individual, the social and the political levels. Individual pedagogic rights are gained by learning the discipline which gives confidence and the ability to envisage different possible futures, for example, a society that has greater gender equity (McLean, Abbas and Ashwin, 2015). The social element involves using disciplinary knowledge in a social role, for instance, one in which feminist analysis is helpful. The political aspect of pedagogic rights involves being able to intervene to change society. These are nested concepts; the first pedagogic right, (involving the acquisition of sociological knowledge) underpins the other two.

In Bernstein's (2000) terms, sociology is a collection code, meaning that there are competing theoretical perspectives claiming to explain the same phenomena. The selection and recontextualisation of these perspectives into curricula affects whether students gain access to pedagogic rights that are shaped by feminist knowledge. If graduates are to be able to address gender inequality curricula need to facilitate 'specialised disciplinary identities' (McLean, Abbas and Ashwin, 2013, 35-36) that incorporate feminist knowledge: three components make up the specialised disciplinary identity. Firstly, students need to understand feminist theoretical, conceptual and empirical knowledge. Secondly, students should be able to apply feminist knowledge to current or future events and circumstances to gain new insights. Thirdly, students need to gain specific skills and dispositions (being critical, writing skills, speaking skills and so forth). If students' specialised disciplinary identity incorporated feminist knowledge, they would be able to envisage the possibility of a world with greater gender equity and to identify factors that inhibit or promote it, thus transforming rather than reproducing the social order (Young, 2008).

This paper explores the degree to which the four universities enabled a specialised pedagogic identity which incorporated feminist knowledge. Additionally, sociology's current and potential contribution for ameliorating gender inequality across society and the facilitative and inhibitory factors are interrogated. Gender is interrelated with other forms of inequality that create intersecting and emergent advantages and disadvantages. However, in this gendered analysis, we draw upon on Arnot's (2002) adaptation of Bernstein's concepts to specifically understand how gender codes are embedded in curricula and the pedagogies. In other work we have analysed the emergent and intersecting effects of class, ethnicity and gender (McLean, Abbas and Ashwin, 2015).

Context

In England, sociology is one of the key disciplines through which undergraduate students encounter feminist knowledge. Only three undergraduate courses offered in the UK¹ in 2015\2016 overtly specialise in gender (UCAS, 2015). The extent to which sociology curricula serve the purpose of transmitting feminist knowledge is questionable because what is taught in departments varies. National sociology benchmarks provide broad guidelines and do not specify curricula content (QAA, 2007) and there are no detailed surveys of curricula content. Moreover, the effects of feminist knowledge on students' identities are not known nor how graduates use such knowledge beyond university. Graduates with specialised pedagogic identities that incorporate feminist knowledge would need to gain varied and pivotal positions globally to effect national and international changes.

The potential influence of feminist knowledge is likely to be affected by the horizontal and vertical segregation, of men and women sociology graduates into different fields and ranks of employment (Leathwood and Read, 2009). Sociology-related social sciences are highly female in the UK. In 2012\13 there were 31,000 students registered on first degrees classified by HESA as sociology: 73% female and 27% male (HEIDI, 2014). However, these statistics do not reflect the true picture of the extent of feminist knowledge taught. For example, they do not include criminology, which recruits large numbers of students to sociology departments (Wakeling, 2009). Outside of sociology departments, sociology is embedded in programmes as diverse as education, health, management and media studies. Sociology is more prevalent in female dominated disciplines and linked to female dominated jobs in lower-ranking professions (Leathwood and Read, 2009) but it is taught to men and women across higher and lower ranking institutions and its influence on their transformation and contribution to society is largely unknown.

Methodology

The four English sociology departments studied were differently located in the UK league tables: 'Community' and 'Diversity' were post-1992 universities, consistently rated in the lower quartile, and 'Prestige' and 'Selective', pre-1992 universities regularly ranked in the top quartile. A longitudinal mixed methods approach over 3 years produced 11 different analysed data sets from each of the four universities. Here, we used curricula documents, 98 first year interviews from across the four universities, interviews with 31 case study students about the second and third year and, a gendered analysis of the videos of seminars in the first and second years.

The interviews with students lasted approximately one hour each. Most took place in students' universities or locality. A few interviews in the third year were by Skype. They were

all recorded, transcribed and open-coded by 4 researchers who worked to agree the following set of descriptive codes: current education; family; future identities; me now; previous education and employment; and, wider university. These became parent nodes in Nvivo and each had between 3 and 9 child-nodes or sub-codes. For this paper, we carried out a further analysis using a wide range of gender/feminist relevant terms in Nvivo to interrogate relevant themes in the interviews. For example, the sub-code 'relationship to discipline' which coded students' discussion of sociological theories, concepts or empirical examples was analysed for relevant content. Curricula content and structure were analysed similarly and 8 thematic codes were developed: disciplinary texts; assessment institutional and departmental; disciplinary know how; disciplinary knowledge; framing departmental; framing institutional; generic skills; and, pedagogical activity.

We drew upon coded qualitative descriptions of the first and second year videos which were validated by a similar process to that described above. Codes were designed to enable us to identify and re-analyse appropriate segments. We focused on gendered participation in the different pedagogical contexts that were represented in the videos (described below). Cross-researcher validation processes were used for all analytical processes. Analysis were of individual data sets and then across data-sets.

During the analysis of data, we kept 'the external language of description' (provided by the research data generated) separate from the 'internal language of description' (that of the theoretical conceptual model) for as long as possible (Bernstein, 2000). This allowed the data to shape the findings and modify the way we applied and understood the conceptual framework.

Conceptual framework

Arnot (2002) adapted Bernstein's (2000) concept of codes to develop a 'sociological theory of gender relations ...[that]is both critical and interpretative' which explores the way 'gender relationships work within the social order' (p.1). Gender codes operate similarly to Bernstein's class codes: they are the mechanisms through which unequal gender relationships are generated, maintained and challenged at all levels of society. Gender codes, which designate hierarchies between men and women, are present in conscious and unconscious values regarding gender differences. They are internalised and carried in thoughts, behaviours, things, institutional structures, media and so on. For example, at the macro level, the statistical patterns of students taking sociology constitute and convey gender codes and the gender order, informing male undergraduates that sociology degrees are feminine. Sociology departments have to overcome these gender codes to attract and engage men.

To develop undergraduates who are disposed to tackle unjust gender codes sociology departments need to provide opportunities for students initial gendered identities (learned through previous education, the home, the media and so forth) to be recontextualised via the overt and hidden curricula (Arnot, 2002). Hidden curricula constitute what is taught implicitly and learned unconsciously (Morley, 2007): for example, the absence of women authors in sociology curricula transmits the notion that women are not reputable sociologists. Gender-codes do not determine behaviour and individuals are agents who can reproduce unequal hierarchies or transform them. For example, in the statistics above there are still over 27% of students who are men who have acted against implicit gender codes.

Gender codes operate through the gendered classifications and gendered framings which

constitute them (Arnot, 2002). Gendered classifications carry power and they order things, people, concepts, ideas and practices hierarchically. For example, if Marx, Durkheim, Weber and Foucault are classified as the only key theorists in the first year this creates strong hierarchies between male and female theorists. Weakly classified gendered curricula would include equal numbers of text books written by men and women in core modules: renowned sociologists could be male and female. Gendered framings transmit control through pedagogical interactions and processes. An example of weak framing would be a feminist inspired pedagogy which aspires to be emotionally aware and inclusive, that promotes equality between students and tutors, who together create an agenda for learning (Barnett, 2011; Harlap, 2014; Leathwood and Hey, 2009). Strong framing is tutor driven.

The classification and framing of feminist knowledge in the curricula

First year curricula give students an overall map of what is considered important to the discipline. All four sociology degrees had first year core modules containing the readings, concepts and core knowledges that are considered essential to becoming graduates of the particular sociology-related social science degree(s) that are taught. Hence, first year curriculum documents were analysed for whether feminist knowledge was strongly or weakly classified and for whether different configurations of curricula affected students' descriptions of how sociological knowledge affected them. It is debateable whether feminist goals are best achieved by integrating feminist knowledge into disciplines or by having specialised curriculum (Minnich, 2005). All four departments saw feminist knowledge as core to sociological understanding but they had developed different models of integration. Prestige and Diversity had stronger classifications of feminist knowledge whereby Community and Selective had weaker classifications.

Prestige's one core sociological theory module in the first year had no texts about women theorists or even authored by women in the module guide. However, the nine available optional (but core) modules, included three which were strongly classified as containing feminist knowledge through their titles and content: feminist knowledge was signalled as an important option. Students might only encounter feminist knowledge that was strongly classified if they picked two feminist modules and a third module from outside of social sciences (e.g. a language). Prestige's other optional (but core) modules integrated feminist knowledge and students picking three of these would only encounter weakly framed feminist knowledge. The male dominated non-optional core module appeared to classify feminist knowledge less essential than male theorising.

Diversity's one first year feminist module class was optional. This was in addition to having feminist knowledge integrated into the other three compulsory core modules where it was brought into closer relationship with other theoretical material. It was both strongly and weakly classified through this configuration. Prestige and Diversity continued to provide opportunities to study feminist knowledge in specialised modules throughout the course of the degrees. At Prestige and Diversity, a higher proportion of staff teaching core sociology specialised in research that engaged with feminist knowledge than in Selective and Community and students were given access to feminist knowledge on its own terms.

In the first year at Community and Selective feminist knowledge was always integrated into other modules, producing a weak classification of it. Community's first year core modules focused on Sociological Theory, Politics and Identity and Social Policy and Crime. Each were organised thematically around issues relevant to the disciplines and pertinent theoretical perspectives were explored each week. For example, the social policy module had key theoretical perspectives organised around housing, welfare, education and so forth. Each module guide listed gender as something that would be considered. The readings overtly relating to gender or feminism were minimal, for example, the social policy module guide had readings with gender or references to feminism in the title concentrated into one week on gender (five out of seven readings for that week from a total of 177 for the module were overtly titled gender or feminism). However, there were text books that also included discussions of feminist knowledge in relation to the particular issue or the discipline. This is in line with the integrated style of the module.

The first year at Selective also offered an issues led curriculum, with theoretical knowledge being introduced relative to themes, across a number of key social science disciplines. No optional or core modules were dedicated to the study of feminist knowledge. It was a weakly framed curriculum in that the sociology module was the only compulsory module. However, students could access more overtly classified feminist knowledge through the reading lists. Approximately 25% the readings in the sociology module overtly related to gender. Selective also offered optional gender focused modules in later years.

The 98 first-year interviews were analysed to explore whether the students' descriptions of how sociological knowledge had affected them was influenced by the way feminist knowledge was integrated into the curriculum. There was a contrast between students who were offered weakly classified feminist knowledge in the first year and those who had been offered specialised (strongly classified) feminist modules. These findings, presented in Table 1, indicate a relationship between strongly classified feminist knowledge and the proportion of the 98 first year students that mentioned gender or feminism as significant to their learning and/or the way they felt they had changed as a result of the knowledge they had studied. The proportion of students who described this association with feminist knowledge is low (25 out of 98). Table 1 excludes students who mentioned gender/feminism or associated concepts only to name a module or label its content (3 at Community, 1 at Diversity, 9 at Prestige and 2 at Selective) although these figures confirm the trend described here. The numbers are small but there are proportionally more students from Diversity (11) and Prestige (8), compared to Community (3) and Selective (3) who refer to feminist knowledge. Yet, the number of male students mentioning feminist knowledge was reasonably stable across all four universities.

Community and Selective's integrated curricula and criminological focus attracted more male students. The differences in relationships to feminist knowledge between institutions and between men and women could relate to gender differences in recruitment, staff's interests or disciplinary differences. In order to explore these (dis)connections between the strong and weak classification of feminist knowledge we analysed case study students interview data.

Insert Table 1 here.

Case study students' gendered transformations

The case study students' interviews indicated that the persistence or transformation of the gender codes that shaped students prior to university, varied by gender. Students were not directed to specific theories during the interviews; rather we asked them to describe any aspects of sociological knowledge that had changed them. Numerically and proportionally fewer case study men (5\10) mentioned feminist knowledge than women (14\21). This case study sample was too small for departmental comparisons (Community 3 females and 3 males; Diversity 6 females and 2 males; Prestige 6 females and 2 males; and, Selective 4 females and 3 males). However, across all four institutions women students' questioned their own and others' gender codes. For example, Fleur from Prestige discussed the artificial classification of men and women and Leena emphasised the discourses about women's bodies in her brother's magazine:

I'd rather just focus on masculinities in relation to gender as opposed to masculinities compared to women ... in my mind I think it's not a ... case of the binary opposites of men and women. I think it's a spectrum because ... I probably know more about cars than the average male and most of my friends say I'm more of a man than they are, ... and so I'm looking now at [...] the work of Morton, Nixon, Edwards ... the way they've talked about men, like portrayed in magazines. (Fleur, Prestige, Year 3)

[E]ven like my little brother he's got like a kids' magazine you know the ones with the little toys and stuff like that... looking through it every image of a girl is the same, she's always skinny, she's always skinny, and whenever they show a bigger girl they always make a point about oh this is a bigger girl, that's the only reason they're showing her. (Leena, Diversity Year 2)

These students interrogated their ways of thinking and being, and this type of learning is associated with transforming the classifications that constitute gender codes and with acquiring a specialised pedagogic identity which incorporates feminist knowledge (McLean et al, 2015). Esther from Selective demonstrated this in describing the effect of feminist knowledge on her:

It's kind of made me uncomfortable with certain ways of how I act because I know from, you know, what's been said and I've done lots of reading ... I'm realising how gender is so constructed and how what I'm doing is really constructed and I see how my actions before doing this module and how I act now, it's very different. (Esther, Selective, Year 2)

Lauren from Diversity reflected on her insights into polycystic ovarian syndrome, a condition she has herself:

I'm trying to investigate in terms of gender, using Butler's Theory and Queer Theory, how ...people experience that because there's a lot of women being affected and the symptoms are very non-feminine ... you don't want to have hair all over your body or

your face 'cos that's a male thing. (Lauren, Diversity, Year 3)

Not all women were transformed by feminist knowledge but the potential for accessing knowledge, for recontextualising and altering their gender codes, and for producing new or different classifications existed (Arnot, 2002).

The five case study men whose views or learning were changed by feminist knowledge didn't mention personal transformation. Instead they claimed they had had access to new interesting knowledge about women, for example, Maurice (Community) and Frank (Prestige) focused on the sex industry and female circumcision. The categories of women are far removed from their daily lives:

Well, I was speaking with my tutor and I'd seen a report beforehand on prostitution and it interested me, sort of shocked me at the same time. So I said to her, 'I'd like to do something in the area'. (Maurice, Community, Year 3)

I did a course on arts and culture in Africa ... it was the most interesting course I've ever done [Right]. I did very, very well; I got 65% and ... I'm thinking about doing my dissertation on female circumcision tribes in Africa ... it's very, very sociology but at the same time I'm feeling it got my interest. (Frank, Prestige, Year 3)

Male students were interested in some feminist knowledge but they did not question gender codes as they experience them: women and inequality were objects of study. Frank expressed a positive initial interest in gender inequality and feminism:

[L]ast year I wrote an essay on the suffragette movement ... that was quite an interesting essay. I learnt a lot of history ... and protesting and rights and I really found that very engaging, very fascinating, read over 20 books for that, that's the most I've ever, ever done for an assignment [Yeah] I did very well as well I got 72 ... I was very, very proud of it. (Frank, Prestige, Year 3)

However, it is unclear whether Frank's gender codes have been transformed because he focuses on his interest in the topic and his marks. Elliot from Selective discusses the important transformation of his own class codes, and whilst the unfairness of judging young mothers is discussed, it was the class codes involved that he related to his transforming self:

And I find that really interesting, people's attitudes towards girls that choose to have a baby from a young age, but how we sort of demonise people based on their class. ... The way that, I find middle class people really interesting, being, you know, middle class myself as well and the way that they all look down on working class people and not really realising that they're doing it. They'll just think that, you know, "How can they behave like that?" and I find it fascinating that middle class people put themselves on such a pedestal, that they think that everything should be done like they do. (Elliott, Selective, Year 3).

There are readings around masculinity scattered throughout the different optional modules in the four universities but men don't describe their gender codes as recontextualised or their

experience of masculinity as transformed. Several women have engaged with notions of masculinity. Faith is looking at black boys' education in her dissertation is finding the literature challenging her previous perceptions of boys in her neighbourhood. Faziah reflects on her uncle's role in her family and culture vis a vis masculinity and Elmira talks about gendered assumptions regarding men being victims of violence.

Discussion

Although the patterns that have been identified are based on small qualitative samples, they might indicate larger trends. The percentage of first year students (just over 25%) who discussed feminist knowledge in relation to their learning and transformation suggests that the sociology curricula we investigated were not engaging many students at this level to think about the impact of gender codes on their lives. Yet, in the second and third year, 21 of the 31 case students engaged with feminist knowledge in discussing their experience of university learning: 3 out of the 7 case study students who attended Selective, 3 out of 6 at Community, 7 out of the 9 at Prestige and 8 out of the 9 who attended Diversity. The small numbers and the uneven gender breakdown of our case study samples does not allow a comparison of institutional patterns, but differences between men and women were apparent across the sample. The discussion that follows draws upon the videos of teaching in the first two years and the interviews with students to first consider the possible influence of curricula and pedagogy.

Curricula

Men's lack of engagement with feminist knowledge might have been attributable to an interaction between curricula and the gender codes that they embody prior to coming to university (feminism is for women). Students could avoid studying feminism by missing the weeks and topics involving feminist knowledge and/or by not selecting modules with a substantive focus on feminist knowledge. The women's greater engagement might, as a corollary, be explained by the curricula interacting positively with the gender codes that women possess when they arrive at university (feminist knowledge is for them).

Diversity and Prestige were more successful in engaging women with feminist knowledge in the first year, suggesting that strongly classified curricula of explicit knowledge might be more effective. Prestige students, however, had to actively choose a module with gender content to experience strong classification. Nevertheless, a direct and simple causal relationship is unlikely and patterns may be explained by secondary factors, for example, having more staff with research and teaching specialisms in the area of gender.

Feminist knowledge in the core first year curricula was largely framed as being about women's experiences and issues. There were few readings about masculinity in Diversity, Community or Prestige: students had to want to study material about women to access feminist knowledge. Selective's first year module was an exception as there were five readings that specifically focused on masculinity in the extended reading list of 170 academic

texts. Any covert inclusion of masculinity that is embedded in non-specialist text books does not strongly classify it as a core component of sociological theorising. Reading lists convey strong messages about legitimate knowledge in their classifications of theory and theorists.

Perhaps the focus on women positioned men in ways that encouraged their more abstract relationships with feminist knowledge. Frank at Prestige engaged with feminist knowledge considerably more than any other men interviewed. However, he struggled with how men were represented in seminar discussions:

[W]hen I started reading feminism itself I actually engaged with the text and from a lot of my coursesⁱⁱ the things we do I believe in the course and I think it's a very good perspective ... however, every single sociology course I have done has been changed at some point into a discussion about gender and about female subordination and about men being oppressors... (Frank, Year 3).

It is not possible to conclude that curricula cause different levels of engagement with feminist knowledge by men and women. However, these issues resonate with a wider literature which suggests that curricula construction should consider how diverse students can engage with it (Amsler, 2015; Freire, 1996; Hooks, 1994).

Pedagogy

Feminist curricula content is transmitted via the framings of pedagogies. Pedagogic processes mediate the potential of feminist knowledge to transform gender codes (Lather, 1991; Leathwood and Read, 2009). In all four institutions pedagogical approaches could either enable or constrain students' engagement with content (McLean, Abbas and Ashwin, 2013c). Fay at Prestige believed that tutors' attitudes undermined her ability to read and learn:

(The module) could be so good because ... the reading is quite good but ... she just kind of makes it boring, so I don't like going to things and I don't like ... writing the essays... Last week we had a lecture on the erm (.) international sex industry and you think that would be such an interesting subject because everyone has an opinion on it [... she just wants to tell you the information like (.) that she feels you ought to know, she doesn't express her own opinions and that just makes it quite boring (Fay, Prestige, Year 1)

Students also described pedagogical framing that did engage them with feminist knowledge, for example:

I've always enjoyed ... decoding things ... it was like a magazine advert and comparing them ... it's like searching for the hidden meaning ... it's not just a picture of a woman you know it's from a feminist perspective. (Fiona, Prestige, Year 2)

Indeed, seminars were found to be particularly important in gaining a specialised pedagogic identity that incorporated feminist knowledge. They provide the opportunity to gain the prospective aspects of the pedagogic identity. However, the analysis of the videos of seminars across the first two years identified implicit gender codes of behaviour that might reinforce the wider gender order and differentiate male and female engagement with sociological knowledge.

The eight first and second year seminars we analysed for gendered interactions and engagements had numbers varying from two students and a tutor, to approximately 50 students with 3 tutors. At the extreme ends of size, they provide different learning opportunities. Overall, though, three styles of teaching predominate in seminars, large-scale tutor led discussion, small group work in which students talk to one other around pre-set tasks, activities or themes and, student-led presentations in groups or as individuals. The style did not necessarily reflect pedagogical quality and seminars often included two or more styles. In all seminars (with the exception of the 2-student seminar where there were, one male and one female on a snowy day) women outnumber men. In one seminar there were only women and in most there were approximately 20% male students.

Across the eight videos there was a distinct tendency for male students to respond disproportionately to tutor-led large discussions, particularly when they involved theoretical concepts. This might indicate that women were theoretically under-confident, or that they lacked the instrumental aspects of the specialised pedagogic identity and the confidence to speak out. However, to see silence as indicating ignorance or a lack of skills or engagement oversimplifies the issue (Guest, 2008). Silence is a powerful communicator, perhaps a rejection of a pedagogy, or a different type of engagement. Women were confident speakers in student presentations and they participated in group work. Women more often offered experiences and illustrative empirical examples and on a few occasions women challenged their tutor's theoretical knowledge.

It is women who engage most effectively with feminist knowledge so pedagogic approaches, which involve either applying ideas to empirical, practical or personal examples, might be important missed opportunities for some male students. Opportunities for this are present in all pedagogical styles but less-so in tutor led-discussions when the tutor usually talked for the majority of the time. The issue with men's relationship with feminist knowledge may relate to how they work in small groups and in the types of seminar presentations they do. The pedagogical challenge may involve developing strategies that overcome masculine gender codes of remaining personally distant from theory in group contexts. In this vein Felix from Prestige articulates why he has not been changed personally by the theories he has encountered:

I suppose the way I interact with what I study is quite from an outside perspective and I think I've learned to do that whilst I've been at university because when you're studying gender inequality and stuff like that, you get down to like the really dark side, like crime and deviance, domestic violence, you have to study it from an outside perspective 'cos otherwise you get too emotionally involved. So I suppose actually,

no, I don't think it has really 'cos I've kind of treated it as theoretical? (Felix, Prestige, Year 3).

Comments like these, bring out the importance of pedagogy in enabling students to gain a specialised disciplinary identity.

A first year video in Diversity featured students discussing feminist knowledge throughout. This seminar emotionally engaged students and at times felt chaotic, but a mixed-gender group of ethnically diverse students were articulating their views about sex crimes and domestic violence. Whole group work was minimal and students were directed back to small group discussions when plenaries were not producing answers to questions. The tutor claimed to use the dynamics of the group and students' different experiences to give students access to diverse perspectives. The sociology department Diversity explicitly pursues pedagogic style that supports the integration of the horizontal knowledges of students' lives and perspectives with vertical (theoretical) knowledge (Bernstein, 2000). Our sample of first year students from Diversity had the most students engaging with feminist knowledge.

Conclusions

It is widely accepted that feminist knowledge should appear in curricula globally and across disciplines for a more gender equal, socially rich and sustainable world. (European Commission, 2015; Morley, 2007; Unterhalter, 1999). As stated earlier, gender codes are inextricably intersected with other forms of diversity and inequality. In an analysis of four sociology-related departments' curricula and pedagogies, we showed male students and first year students, in particular, are not receiving sufficient opportunity to acquire a specialised pedagogic identity that is informed by feminist knowledge. This is an important finding, which could inform the investigation of other educational sites responsible for transmitting feminist knowledge.

UK sociology should be one of the most generative sites for increasing knowledge and students' engagement with issues of gender and other inequities: it is a site for the production of feminist knowledge. However, insights developed from exploring the classifications of feminist knowledge, students' engagement with this knowledge and their disparate transformations and identities suggest we need to explore more deeply the content of curricula *and* their impacts: curricula legitimate knowledge that develops the first aspect of the specialised disciplinary identity. Pedagogical framings that engage students relate to the second aspect of the specialised disciplinary identity and we need to further understand how diverse students and diverse knowledges interact with students in universities so that we can overcome the pedagogic difficulties with propagating valuable and powerful knowledges. The macro-level analysis of sociology students suggests we need to understand the use and influence of these knowledges once graduates leave universities. For example, does horizontal and vertical segregation of women in the workforce mean that even those female graduates that do integrate feminist knowledge are only affecting a limited professions and that their level of influence is curtailed by the glass ceiling. It is important to contextualise disciplines broadly in this way. **(6009 excluding abstract and bibliography)**

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Table 1: Students from the first year interviews significantly mentioning feminist knowledge.

	Main Disciplines	% Female	Overt gender modules (titles and content)	No of students significantly mentioning feminist knowledge
Community	Sociology Criminology	63%	0	3/27 (2)
Diversity	Sociology Social sciences Psychology Criminology	82%	8/24	11/23 (2)
Prestige	Sociology (Dual honours e.g. with Law)	82%	9/21	8/23(3)
Selective	Sociology Criminology Social Policy	74%	3/24	3/25(2)

*Numbers in brackets refer to the no. of males mentioning gender or feminist theory.

ⁱ Statistical data for England is largely produced as part of a wider data-set for the UK which includes universities in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

ⁱⁱ Frank is using the term course to refer to what would usually be called a module in the UK context.