TITLE: Norbert Elias, the Politics of ‘Ideals’ and Interdependent Expression

BA (Hons) Sociology
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Abstract
The research utilises Norbert Elias’s (2000) work on figurations to illustrate his potential for understanding the power of ‘ideals’ and corresponding increasing levels of shame in relation to and as a part of the current expression of interdependent relations (primarily neoliberal economic, political and social relations). For this, Venezuela has been utilised as a case study to explore the effects of figurational diversification, and its relation to constructing ‘ideals’; with ‘beauty’ being the ‘ideal’ focused upon throughout the research. The research intends to begin a process of strategic construction regarding a politics of resistance to help formulate diversified, non-hierarchical and cooperative expressions of interdependence to undermine ‘ideals’, whilst recognising shame’s resistance potential. Alongside a comprehensive literature review, the research utilised a survey, a focus group and follow-up interviews.
Introduction

Sociological research needs to have a meaning/vision central to its creation. My research promotes the conception of a different type of society, where dominant neoliberal political, economic and social relations are fundamentally challenged to allow for a diversification of expression and fairer power/knowledge distribution. The research encourages the continual construction of a political strategy on organisational resistance, to challenge the current expressions of interdependence and their negative effects through their production of restrictive ‘ideals’ (such as ‘beauty’) and the utilisation of high shame thresholds.

To illustrate the effects of different interdependent expressions upon ‘ideals’, Venezuela was chosen as a case study. The research looked into whether Hugo Chávez government’s anti-neoliberalism/capitalism rhetoric is a façade and the effects this has upon ‘beauty’ constructions. Essentially, the research illustrates the effects neoliberal global political relations still have within Venezuela and how this and Venezuela’s colonial history have damaging influences upon women’s societal and subjective position/experience.

Chapter 1 provides a summation of the central theoretical argument. Norbert Elias’s (2000) work has been wrongly neglected by theorists who critique the current political, economic and social relations (what I term the expression of interdependence). To illustrate, the research will demonstrate parallels with Murray Bookchin’s ecoanarchist analysis (1982; 1986; 1991; 1994; 1995a; 1995b; 2002; 2004). Together, these theorists hold the potential for influencing the formation of a political strategy that can work towards a fairer, diversified and
non-hierachal ‘actualised’ reality. Also included within Chapter 1 is an outline of Venezuela’s political development.

Chapter 2 analyses the research methods. Alongside a literature review, I used vignettes within a survey and a focus group. The questionnaire aimed to understand respondents’ views regarding public sexuality and whether political strategies, and if so which types, are needed to challenge current interdependent expressions. The focus group considered the creation of an alternative world where the current gender relations were reversed; respondents were able to comment upon the current construction alongside their potential utopian visions. Follow-up interviews were conducted because of a technical fault during the focus group.

Chapter 3 focuses upon (borrowing Elias’s terminology) the psychogenetic factors central to constructing ‘beauty’ ‘ideals’. Included, is an analysis of the Venezuelan ‘beauty’ constructions. Whilst Chapter 4 focuses upon political and economic factors, Chapter 3 also considers sociogenetic factors central to ‘ideal’ constructions. Essentially, the chapter discusses the similarity, whilst acknowledging differences, of Venezuelan ‘beauty’ constructions in relation to Western ‘ideals’. Also included is a redefinition of objectification, which is often dismissed as agency reductive.

Chapter 4, as mentioned, considers the sociogenetic relations’ effects upon ‘ideal’ constructions, specifically neoliberal relations. Whilst Venezuela has challenged such relations, the chapter will concentrate on the disjuncture between Venezuelan rhetoric and reality and the effects this has upon the construction of ‘ideals’. There is a discussion of women’s political organisational development in
Venezuela in preparation for Chapter 5’s consideration of alternative political strategies to counteract the dominant neoliberal expression of interdependence.

Central to the research is the emphasis upon resistance, a theme developed especially through Chapter 5. Essentially, it illustrates the research’s respect for agency and women’s right to meet current ‘ideals’, whilst demonstrating the need for a diversity of expression to reduce the pressure of these ‘ideals’.

The research argues for radical political activists/theorists to embrace Elias to help move towards a new expression of interdependence. Specifically, the research advocates a new expression of interdependence to undermine damaging ‘ideal’ constructions that work through high shame thresholds and currently, neoliberal relations.

**Chapter 1: Background**

Norbert Elias’s (2000) figurational analysis of what he terms the civilizing process was the theoretical perspective that, alongside communal-anarchism (to be discussed), guided the research. After reading Fontaine’s (1978) interview with Elias, I began to see Elias’s potential for feministic and anarchistic framing. For instance, Elias responds to Fontaine’s question of whether the return of nudity is evidence of the civilization process reversing, by arguing: “[in the past] nudity did not provoke reactions of shame” (p.247). This simple response is crucial when illustrating the centrality of Elias for the theoretical perspective developed. It is indicative of Elias’s argument that the civilization process has produced a new level of shame, one that, I wish to argue, is constructed through the help of ‘ideals’ that limit expression and require new forms of interdependent relations.
for diversification. Firstly, Elias’s theory of civilization requires more explanation.

**Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Civilization**

The backbone to Elias’s theory is *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations* (2000), where he looked at the interrelation between sociogenetic processes (changes in society’s relations) and the psychogenetic processes (changes in people’s behaviour/emotions). Concentrating on the West, specifically France, Elias traces the development of states and related psychological changes. Elias emphasises the civilizing process is a process, with no beginning and no end.

The progression of the concept *courtoisie* to *civilité* was a central stage of the civilization process. The former’s conception relates to Erasmus of Rotterdam’s book, *De Civilitate Morum Puerilium Libellus* (1530), which provided boys instructions on improving their manners and behaviour. The book was a bridge between the middle ages and the modern era, as *courtoisie* was replaced with *civilité* by the sixteenth century.

Central to this was psychogenetic changes as people became more detached/self-restrained. The upper class constantly refined their classification of ‘manners’ to maintain the ‘distinction’ between themselves and the masses that was being challenged by the increasing public consumption of manner books and the development of interdependent relations. The eighteenth century saw *civilité* replaced by civilization, reflecting the increasing interdependence between social actors.
Elias used France as an ‘ideal’ country to illustrate the connections between these psychogenetic processes and the (to be explained) sociogenetic changes.

Essentially, in the medieval period the Kings’ distributed the defence of their land to knights; however, as the estate ruler’s power increased, tensions between this ruler and the central authority occurred, often resulting in the King replacing the feudal lord. Twelve century France was therefore fractured, as the Kings’ central authority was weak - with the feudal phase of central authority considerably more unstable and inconsistent than the period that followed.

Gradually, the courts’ differentiation became more associated with culture, resulting in a rise of the shame threshold and the arrival of courtoise. The King eventually gained power over the other great feudal lords/courts, as his court became the central absolutist court. This had an effect on state formation and the replacement of courtoise by civilité. These conflicts between decentralisation and centralisation only reduced once money replaced land as the dominant form of property.

This occurred by the end of the middle ages, as the money economy replaced the barter economy; seeing inflation rise as more money entered the economy, particularly damaging the feudal lords because of their estates’ fixed rents. On the other hand, the King benefited from the increased taxation, assisting with the centralisation of military power. This monopolisation mechanism was central to the pacification of society and the formation of a ‘state’.

The nobility suffered from these changes, with the bourgeoisies overtaking the nobility’s social power. The tension that occurred between these two social groups was essential to the centralisation process, and the development of self-restraint.
However, the French Revolution signalled the eventual demise of the conflict, with the bourgeoisies presiding over the nobility.

Elias refers to the development of the shame threshold with public nudity becoming more of a taboo. People did once share naked public baths; but over time, public nudity became more restricted. However, Elias believes the recent relaxation of public nudity is an expression of higher levels of self-restraint:

This change was not, as is sometimes supposed, simply a retrogressive movement, a recession of the feelings of shame or delicacy, or a release and decontrolling of drives, but the development of a form that fits both our advanced standard of shame and the specific situation in which present-day social life places individuals (p.140).

I intend to demonstrate this new level of shame intertwines with ‘beauty’ ‘ideals’, as the psychogenetic processes place excessive restraint upon self-expression. Through an analysis of the sociogenetic processes, I will illustrate that restriction is related to the paralleling expression of interdependence; i.e. currently neoliberalism/capitalism. Therefore, through a change in the way interdependence is expressed, this shame felt by many women, whilst never disappearing (as Elias states, “the person without restrictions is a phantom” (p.181)); can be diluted to allow more women to feel unashamed of living outside and within ‘beauty’ ‘ideals’. Nevertheless, shame will never disappear and as Munt (2007) illustrates, recognising shame’s paradoxical nature, shame has a radical, liberating and unpredictable political/self potential through the search for reattachment:
Shame has a contradictory latency: on the one hand it can reinforce shrinking conformity, and on the other hand it can proudly bring into being new and expansive grammars of gender (p.94).

**Venezuela’s Historical Interdependent Trajectory**

An historical perspective of Venezuela’s political development is essential when understanding why the country is relevant to the study. What follows is an overview of Tarver and Frederick’s (2005) work into Venezuela’s history.

The Spanish colonisation of Venezuela undermined the country’s cultural diversity. For instance, 96% of the population are Catholic (strong within Spain), resulting in an emphasis upon the family and male dominance. The movement towards independence took place between 1810-1830, after two failed republics, with Venezuela eventually breaking from Gran Columbia. For the rest of the century, caudillos (political-military leadership) and dictatorships prevailed, with conflicts resulting in a civil war. The Venezuelan development strongly parallels Elias’s focus upon the centrality of the tensions between centralisation and decentralisation of the civilization process (Guerrero 2007; Brewer-Carías 2004).

The discovery of oil in 1918 was central to Venezuela’s development/modernisation, with exchange advancing from a colonial barter economy. Again, Elias’s theory is relevant, considering Elias’s emphasis upon the development of money. In 1945, Acción Democrática (AD), and members of the junior military, overthrew the political leadership; whilst it ended in 1948, this period - called the Trienio - is associated with wide-scale democratisation, having a strong influence on Venezuela’s modern political system. Some of these reforms were reversed through the 1948 military coup, but democracy soon returned in
1958 with Venezuela’s increasing interdependence reflected by democracy’s survival despite guerrilla warfare.

The oil crisis (1973) initiated a boom and bust in oil prices (and the economy), with President Carlos Andrés Pérez spending more money than all the 143 previous governments put together. The oil prices eventually dramatically dropped; with foreign debt mounting, Venezuela devalued their currency, as living standards plummeted. Pérez was re-elected in 1988, adopting a neoliberal ‘rescue’ package from the IMF, tied with damaging conditions for the mass. Political fragmentation occurred. In 1989, there was a popular rebellion, Caracazo, with hundreds of demonstrators killed. There were two attempted coups in 1992, with Hugo Chávez’s involvement in the first notable. Pérez was impeached in 1993, and Chávez took office in 1998 to begin his Bolivarian Revolution. Chávez’s revolution has mainly attracted the support of the poor and specific ethnic groups (especially given his indigenous roots), with the opposition utilising racist discourses in response (Cannon 2008).

There are a number of controversies surrounding the Chávez government. For instance, Chávez attempted to change the board of directors at Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA), the oil company, resulting in strikes where people were injured and even killed. Oil has been an extremely corruptible force, politically and economically (Burbach and Piñeiro 2007; Red Oil 2009). There are ecological/sustainable concerns regarding Venezuela’s reliance upon oil; however, ecosocialist Wall (2010) argues that despite oil being cheaper than water, there are movements towards sustainable policies. Nevertheless, there are rightful reservations regarding the revolution’s - and the related missions’ funded by the oil that target areas such as education, and social welfare - longevity.
There are notable weaknesses in the opposition’s ability to organise against Chávez, despite the opposition being comprised of powerful economic actors/groups (Gott 2000). However, things are beginning to change. The Economist (2010), reporting on the recent National Assembly elections, highlighted more voted against, than for, Chávez and his allies. Nevertheless, Chávez utilised the time he had left within the Assembly to initiate radical changes that has made the opposition’s success largely irrelevant. Ruling by decree, he has undermined the power of the Assembly, enhancing the government’s. With presidential elections set for 2012, it will be interesting to follow the developments.

**The ‘Beauty’ and the Wolf**

Central to the research is The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women by Naomi Wolf (1991), who analyses the politics of ‘beauty’ and related ‘ideals’. Wolf argues the Beauty Myth is a political tool, conceived from 1830 onwards, central to the backlash against feminism and increasing women’s rights (an argument alluded to by several questionnaire respondents):

> The modern arsenal of the myth is a dissemination of millions of images of the current ideal; although this barrage is generally seen as a collective sexual fantasy, there is in fact little that is sexual about it. It is summoned out of political fear on the part of male-dominated institutions threatened by women’s freedom, and it exploits female guilt and apprehension about our own liberation – latent fears that we might be going too far (p.16).
The connection to my theoretical argument is clear; the political, social and economic relations are central to constructing ‘ideals’ that create high levels of shame; whilst shame will never be eradicated – through counter-power institutions – a different expression of interdependence may reduce it. ‘Beauty’ has developed as a dampener to the counter-power institutions (such as feminism) that challenge the hegemonic constructions of power relations. Furthermore, as Wolf argues, women’s sexual expression is restricted, illustrating the need for new expressions of interdependence.

Wolf advocates collective, unionised (literally) action by women to counteract these relations, outlining problems of working through existing structures/markets (such as advertising) that are essential for enforcing the capitalist obsession with ‘beauty’. Crucially, Wolf never denies women’s rights to obtain these ‘ideals’, rather arguing for more choice so women can look and act the way they want to, without pressure.

**Anarchism and an ‘Actualised’ Reality**

It is useful to separate individualistic and collective anarchism; the latter of which, the theory of interdependent expression utilises. Bookchin, as a collective/communal eco-anarchist, until 2002 when he revoked his anarchist legacy, is essential. For Bookchin (1995a), anarchism has always had a tension between individual autonomy and collective freedom, but recently we have seen the former prevail in accordance with the rise of individual anarchism.

Bookchin’s earlier work places much more emphasis upon self-liberation and creative orientation, whereas his later analysis focuses upon counter-power structures. Illustrating stark connections between Bookchin and Elias, Bookchin
(2004) argues there are psychological processes central to maintaining social order, but unlike Elias, focuses on overcoming such processes:

Freed from an oppressive routine, from paralyzing repressions and insecurities, from the burdens of toil and false needs, from the trammels of authority and irrational compulsion, individuals will finally, for the first time in history, be in a position to realize their potentialities as members of the human community and the natural world (p.40).

Bookchin (1982) has an invaluable historical perspective, despite being criticised anthropologically (see Rudy 1998), outlining the development of hierarchy and the damaging psychological effects such interrelations/interdependent expressions have upon people and the natural world. Bookchin’s (1994) work on civilization shows notable areas of similarity to Elias’s, focusing upon freedom (like Elias’s democratisation – see Chapter 5), self-development (a psychogenetic similarity) and rationality (to be discussed).

For Bookchin (1995b), dialectical naturalism is central to the civilization process, especially its potential to solve the problems of hierarchy. Whilst dialectical naturalism promotes an ‘ethics of complementary’ approach towards the environment, his analysis has merit for understanding a future society where gender relations are of ethical complement, instead of hierarchical. For Bookchin, dialectical naturalism is essential for constructing an ‘actualised’ reality, where rationality has fulfilled its role in constructing social, economic and political relations in line with ethical constructions. This is in contrast to ‘present’ reality, where the fulfilment of a rational process has failed to materialise.
Elias’s analysis of growing interdependence considers the importance of rationality; however, Bookchin places more emphasis upon rationality in relation to sociogenetic and psychogenetic processes. Bauman (1989) criticises this view of civilization, proclaiming the Nazis were a product, not a mere deviation, of civilization. Regardless, both Elias and Bookchin argue society does not develop in a unilinear form. Furthermore, Elias never claims our society is ‘better’ (Burkitt 1991). Bookchin (1994) also argues that if we do not see society in accordance with its rational potential then we may be dangerously close to accepting capitalism, thus, its restricting interdependent relations. Ethical judgments are therefore essential to reconstructing rationality. This can assist with the development of a feminist oriented theory of interdependence, with Wolf (1991) recognising the need for a feminist construction of rationality.

Judith Butler’s conception of ethics (see Carline 2009) can help construct a potential ‘actualised’ reality with a diversified, fairer expression of interdependence. Butler argues that people are interrelated (so interdependence is shaped) by everyone being vulnerable to some degree. However, when someone’s life is considered ‘unliveable’ they are not viewed within an ethical framework, as their vulnerability is neglected. Only when society views all life as ‘liveable’ will we have ethically conceptualised interdependence.

However, there are differences between Elias and Bookchin. For one, Bookchin (2004) has a more simplistic account of power, arguing it can be dissolved through counter-power institutions. Furthermore, in contrast to Bookchin, Elias (1987) ties positive associations to the state. Nevertheless, considering Elias’s concession that revolutionary changes can occur if a class/group becomes isolated
from the democratisation process, Bookchin’s broader civic analysis may help overcome some difficulties.

Bookchin’s civic-based politics is mobilised through communalism where ethical space through its grass-root, non-party-political, non-hierarchical, tendencies that counteracts dominant power relations, is constructed (Bookchin 1991). These counteracting power structures are face-to-face polis style public assemblies, linked through confederations, enabling a coordination/administration of the policy designed by the communities/neighbourhoods.

**Theory to Practice**

After considering the complex theories underlying the research, it is imperative to consider the primary research methods adopted to gather practical, alongside theoretical, insights that can assist with the construction of new expressions of interdependence. The aim of re-conceptualising space for diversified, non-hierarchal expression, as well as being a broader theoretical goal, was central to the design of the methodological apparatuses.

**Chapter 2: Methodology**

**Aims and Objectives**

The dissertation is concerned with understanding the relationship between sociogenetic and psychogenetic changes in relation to ‘beauty’ ‘ideals’. Norbert Elias’s (2000) work is paramount, with the research advancing and applying Elias’s figurational analysis, specifically to Venezuela, to understand women’s position in society and a possible ethical alternative expression of
interdependence. Central, is a consideration of how ‘beauty’ ‘ideals’ and shame thresholds relate together and with the paralleling figurational structures.

**Research Questions**

There were four central research questions, informed by Bryman’s (2004) research question analysis:

1. Has sexualised public nudity become an expression of a higher level of shame, an ‘ideal’, or both?

2. How does the structure of society influence the construction of ‘ideals’ (specifically considering ‘beauty’ ‘ideals’)?

3. Is there an alternative way, to the currently dominant neoliberal system, of expressing the increasing interdependent structures?

4. How does sexualised public nudity and the expression of interdependence relate?

**Research Design**

Given the unique topic area, resources proved hard to find with many being in Spanish (Venezuela’s first language). This created complications when exchanging emails with Venezuelan recipients of whom I had gained access to through my UK political friend, Derek Wall, who has extensive ties within Latin America (the emails have been omitted for ethical reasons). The foundation of my research was a detailed literature review. This can be likened to theoretical sampling (Coyne 1997) with my theory developing throughout the research. I also
used questionnaires and a focus group (with follow-up individual interviews). All participant names were made anonymous for ethical reasons.

**Research Methods**

Whilst the questionnaire was not ‘typical’ (Oppenheim 1992), the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods draws interesting parallels to feminist research debates. Responding to this debate, as a feminist researcher, I support Westmarland’s (2001) assertion that quantitative methods’ history of ‘hiding’ women will not be corrected through feminists aborting quantitative research. Instead, feminists need to produce counter-knowledge to the hegemonic masculine constructions associated with quantitative methods (Madriz 2003).

Regardless, feedback I received from the questionnaires reflected feminists’ critique of quantitative methods being too simplistic through ignoring context and power relations. On reflection, actions such as allowing respondents to have picked their own pseudo names, as Westmarland (2001) (and others such as Ribbens (1989)) suggest, would have helped undermine this valid criticism. This is important given respondents’ frustration when criticising the simplicity of the method:

...[I] am a bit worried that your questions pose only a right or wrong answer... There is no right or wrong answer, and to suggest there is unhelpfully perpetuates the frustrating and UNTRUE myth that feminists try to tell people what to think, and what they can and can’t do. Feminists are not bullies, they are not man-haters. Feminists seek equality for both genders (Mira, 32, magazine editor).
This illustrates answers’ context dependence, undermining the comparability and representative nature of the data (Finch 1987). Nevertheless, it is important to move from focusing upon the type of research towards how the power/personal relations intertwine and influence the researching process (Ribbens 1989). Furthermore, whilst qualitative research may not enable empirical generalisations, it can allow for theoretical generalisations (Sim 1998).

**John Rawls and Vignettes**

The questionnaires consisted of four vignettes with related structured closed and open questions; whereas, the focus group had a longer, more detailed sole vignette outlining an alternative world that was intended to contrast with the UK gender/power relations. A vignette:

> ...essentially is a very short story that, when carefully constructed and pretested, simulates real life experiences (Schoenberg and Ravdal 2000:63-64).

A vignette helps with understanding attitudes and behaviour, especially sensitive topics, as the fictional scenarios enable respondents to distance themselves from their own situations/experiences (Schoenberg and Ravdal 2000; Finch 1987; Bryman 2004). However, as Schoenberg and Ravdal (2000) add, participants may doubt their ability to give advice, with advice given – as it is a hypothetical situation – not reflecting what the participants would do in reality. Sensitive questions can result in social desirability bias, with respondents answering in accordance to believed expectations (Oppenheim 1992). Regardless, vignettes helped the survey method, in
particular, become more flexible, complex and efficient - especially through the contextualisation of questions/answers (Finch 1987; Bryman 2004).

The idea of using vignettes was influenced by John Rawls’s theory of justice, which Pogge (2007) competently outlines. In trying to construct a morally just social order Rawls advocates a ‘justice of fairness’, where operating behind a ‘veil of ignorance’, representatives of citizens take part in an ‘original position’ (thought experiment) to construct a social contract where fairness/equality prevails as the representatives are unaware of the specific characteristics of those they represent. Two essential principles guide Rawls’s theory; firstly, the principle that everyone should have maximum liberty without impeding upon others’; and secondly, social and economic goods are easily accessed and to the advantage of everyone. However, Rawls puts the first (justice) before the second (equality). Central to Rawls’s theory is the conception of moral and political spheres, with ‘comprehensive doctrines’ (philosophical views for instance) existing within the moral sphere, whereas an ‘overlapping consensus’ of political conceptions of justice formulates within the political sphere with respect for ‘reasonable comprehensive doctrines’ (those that are compatible with the two principles of justice) (Saenz 2006).

Rawls’s ‘idea’ theory assisted with the development of vignettes as thought experiments, placing participants within the ‘original position’. However, the outlining of power relations within the vignettes undermined the validity of the ‘veil of ignorance’; regardless, the participants’ seeming dislike of reversing gender dynamics (see Chapter 5), illustrates the power such praxis can have for constructing a fair social contract. However, many feminists
have criticised liberalism and Rawls’s theory, but as Saenz (2006) argues; most feminists’ antagonisms rely upon liberal assumptions and are therefore internal, rather than opposed, critiques of liberalism.

**Sampling Strategy**

As a political activist, with an online presence, I utilised my small but substantial political network alongside my friends and family to construct a snowball sample to distribute my survey. The snowball sample was built up through emailing a selection of those within my social network, asking respondents to pass on the questionnaire where possible, with consent achieved through the email (see Appendix 1). Snowball sampling can provide excluded groups ethical space for their arguments to be considered, especially when discussing sensitive topics such as sexuality (Browne 2005).

However, snowball sampling is criticised for being biased but such bias can assist with rapport building. Regardless, my public feminist/‘left’-wing political perspective made my job as a researcher sometimes considerably harder. Ribbens’s (1989) warning that feminists can feel oppressed through their researching role is relevant considering the ignorance I required when confronting some comments from research participants that could be taken as an indirect reflection of my public political perspective. Consider one questionnaire respondent’s comment that took place through email exchange: “I hope I haven’t come across too sexist” (Walter, 41, Journalist).
**Questionnaire**

Before distributing the survey, I conducted a pilot study (Schoenberg and Ravdal 2000); but my own resources and time restricted the method (see Appendix 3). The questionnaire design centred upon my analysis of vignettes. I received 44 responses, with a fortunate 50:50 split regarding female/male responses. The respondents’ age varied from 18-71; the respondents’ occupations were also diverse, including students, public/private sector workers and benefit claimants. Whilst I designed the questionnaire to collect the respondents’ political perspective, such data played little part in the overall analysis.

A specific weakness of the questionnaire design was the inability to define certain terms, especially those loaded with stereotypical meaning (Oppenheim 1992). For example, the use of ‘feminist’ and ‘sexualised’ may have shaped respondents’ perceptions. Nevertheless, respondents have their own subjective interpretation of concepts and defining them beforehand would have been restrictive (Westmarland 2001). Appendix 4 has a lengthy discussion of specific design weaknesses; for instance, my wording was criticised by respondents:

> Your use of the word ‘should’ is interesting. I don’t feel it is remiss of a woman to not do this, so I don’t feel I can say that anyone ‘should’ do it (Alice, 31, community development administrator).

**Focus Group**

Due to time and resources, I only ran one focus group with five respondents utilising a semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix 2 for the focus group consent form). Two participants were female, three were male, and the age of
participants ranged from 20-48 years old. During the focus group, reacting to respondents’ confusion, I threatened my role as a ‘neutral’ researcher. The respondents initially found the vignette hard to understand, which I addressed through repeating the vignette at a slower pace with more elaboration. Nevertheless, considering quotes, such as the one below illustrating this attempted explanation, it is clear my own values about the power relations within the UK undermined the aim of understanding participants’ own views:

So you know in our culture, women are more kind of sexualised and stuff; men are more sexualised over there. And there has been a history of oppression towards men over there. So for example, religion has created the men as the ‘other’, as women have been over here.

Ribbens (1989) argues that as a researcher you should be prepared to respond to direct questions and the benefits of allowing researcher’s values to influence the research needs to be investigated further. Therefore, whilst my value conceptions may have undermined the relative ‘objectivity’ of the research, employing a sense of auto-ethnographic reflection, where vignettes reflect the experiences of the researcher, can assist the respondents’ reflexivity and identification with the researcher (Humphreys 2005).

Theoretical sampling would have been advanced if the questionnaire data had fed into the focus group (Sim 1998). Nevertheless, focus groups provide excluded groups, such as women, ethical space to influence social change (Madriz 2003; Sim 1998). Madriz (2003) emphasises the importance of collective methods for feminist research when challenging uneven power relations, as interaction analysis coincides with an analysis of what is said (Sim 1998; Morgan 2010).
Nevertheless, given my focus group participants already knew each other before the research, specific power dynamics can negatively affect the researching process (Tonkiss 2004; Sim 1998). These power relations interact with discourses respondents use and inadvertently reinforce the status quo through morally constrained dialect (Lee 2009). However, Browne’s (2005) research demonstrates the potential advantages for research when participants have pre-existing relations. The related tendency to lose control and direction within qualitative methods (Ribbens 1989) did create problems however, with participants often speaking over each other. All but one participant felt they had learnt from the focus group (Appendix 6), illustrating qualitative methods’ potential for conscious-raising (Madriz 2003) and the complementary relationship between individual interviews and focus groups (Lambert and Loiselle 2008).

**Interviews**

Due to technological difficulties during the focus group, as the tape recorder failed to pick up all of the discussion, I conducted one-to-one interviews with focus group respondents. Krueger (1994, cited in Sim 1998) makes the valid point that alongside a tape recorder, notes should be taken to offset such potential difficulties. The follow-up interviews provided the quieter participants a better chance to express their views, encouraging positive reflection of my inability to include all participants fairly within the focus group. This is important given the need for a researcher to maintain an inclusive environment (Tonkiss 2004; Sim 1998).
Ethical Considerations

Initially, I had problems with the questionnaire response rate. Whilst seeking a reply from those who had not responded, I received an interesting answer from someone who felt unable to complete the questionnaire:

I do have an opinion about this but am a bit nervous in doing this for someone I know when it won’t be anonymous to you (male).

The sensitivity of the topic strongly reflected the intrusion I personally felt when analysing the respondents’ answers; illustrating the ethical dilemmas embedded within social research. Gregory’s (2003) caution that maintaining ethics within research involves safeguarding against harming those involved, through ensuring responsibility and respect, limited this moral quandary. It is essential for a researcher to recognise the vulnerability of a respondent, and the need for consistent ethical consideration (Ribbens 1989).

Practice to Theory

After a critical assessment of the methods utilised, the next chapter undertakes an advanced analysis regarding the connections between interdependent relations, ‘ideals’ and shame. Furthermore, the next chapter will utilise some of the findings from the primary methods, but focus upon secondary sources – specifically in relation to objectification and Venezuelan ‘beauty’ constructions.
Chapter 3: Idealised Shame

Redefining Objectification

A redefinition of objectification can help with understanding the relationship between ‘ideals’ and shame. Here, objectification is not a dismissal of agency - an association many radical feminists, in particular, have constructed. Most radical feminist analyses adopt an essentialist perspective (Kesler 2002), alongside a reductive analysis of power where women not engaged in ‘caring’, ‘monogamous’ political lesbianism (Rich 1980) are considered to be objectified and duped by patriarchal relations (Jeffreys 1990). Instead, here, objectification refers to how sexual expression is constrained through the proliferation of ‘ideals’. Challenging objectification should be about diversification. A new expression of interdependence can allow for new expressions of sexuality and gender. There are problems with promoting alternative ‘ideals’, as many in the third wave do, as they are often objectified (Pitts 2003). By the third wave, I am referring to the ideas associated with theorists such as Rubin (1989) who have challenged the sexual repression reinforced by radical feminists, in favour of sexual liberation for all.

The third wave movement, Riots Grrls, is a good example of how resistance to ‘ideals’ can become an ‘ideal’ in itself. For instance, Jacques (2001) refers to how the Riot Grrls’, forming against a male dominated punk scene, resistance to mainstream media cooption failed. This illustrates the effects neoliberal relations, especially the market, have in undermining resistance to ‘ideals’. Whilst Butler's (1990) analysis of working within the heterosexual matrix (where gender, sex and sexuality are constructed as ‘naturally’ linking) to challenge such restrictive
relations is crucial to destabilising ‘ideals’, consideration of material restraints and broader power relations in relation to the current expression of interdependence is essential to diversifying expression.

There is recognition that the term ‘woman’ (and ‘man’) is prone to subjective construction by feminists through restrictive discourses (Butler 1990). Thus, for Butler, feminism needs to challenge what being a ‘woman’ means. My research can help diversify the construction of a ‘woman’ through its consideration of the relation between expressions of interdependence and ‘ideals’ that effect women’s expression. Expressions of interdependence are central to the process of abjection where “the “abject” designates that which has been expelled from the body, discharged as excrement, literally rendered “Other”” (Butler 1990:133). The expressions of interdependence influence ‘ideals’ which in turn constructs abjects that define the subject’s boundaries. The terms ‘woman’ and ‘man’ are still utilised, as the potential for identity resistance is acknowledged, but alongside a critical analysis of what the terms connate/exclude. This is why a definition of ‘ideal’ is resisted, in respect of its fluid socio-historical nature.

Many respondents felt pornography and lap-dancing objectify women. However, participants attributed various meanings to objectification, illustrating the importance of redefining/reconceptualising objectification for this research (as done above). However, it should be noted, I used the word objectification within the introductory paragraph to the questionnaire, which may have influenced respondents’ answers.

Objectification’s meaning is a double-edged sword. Whilst the fluidity of the word helps with redefining the concept, its meaning is open to abuse through its
ambiguity. Whilst I would not want to undermine the flexibility of such concepts for subjective definition, a redefinition of objectification can assist with reasserting central meaning. Nevertheless, it is important to engage with queer theory/readings where any fixed notion of identity/categories is challenged, as “those gestures or analytical models which dramatise incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire” (Jagose 1996; no page number) are encouraged. Therefore, such flexibility can assist with challenging reductive notions of sexuality and gender.

**Venezuela and the Politics of Shame**

Email correspondence with Diana L. Raby confirmed that Venezuela is party to objectification within the same mediums as the UK, such as private companies’ (usually anti-Chávez) advertising often using ‘stereotypical’ images of women. Chávez has used black women on billboards to promote social progress and challenge constructions of the ‘ideal’ woman (Fernandes 2007). However, as discussed, using market mechanisms such as advertising to counteract ‘ideals’ can paradoxically construct new ‘ideals’.

**Venezuela and the Beauty Myth**

Roche (2007) discusses “women’s obsession with beauty standards in Venezuela” (p.64), arguing the importation of Western values and Venezuela’s general modernisation process has been essential to constructing such ‘standards’/‘ideals’. It also reflects Venezuela’s colonised history and the neoliberal apparatus, which is still concurrent within Venezuela’s political economy. Roche (2007) outlines the Beauty Myth’s influence upon Venezuela. In Spanish colonial times, women were ‘beautiful’ if they looked like Virgin Mary. As Venezuelan democracy
developed in the nineteen hundreds, the idea of ‘beauty’ and liberation became increasingly related, which Roche argues is central to the modern day success of ‘beauty’ commercialisation. The following discussion illustrates the centrality of the Beauty Myth (Wolf 1991) within Venezuela. It is important to respect Venezuelan ‘beauty’ ‘ideals’ cultural differences, as globalisation can often promote the appearance of homogeneity (Altman 2003).

The Politics of Venezuelan ‘Beauty’ Pageants

Plastic surgery is the most profitable sector in South America (Becker 2006), as “Venezuela is the world’s largest consumer of cosmetics per capita” (Roche 2007:68). Furthermore, private banks often loan women money to obtain aesthetic surgery, with cosmetic surgery going up by 60% between 2005 and 2007 (Roche 2007). Venezuela, as a country, has won the most ‘beauty’ pageants in the world. Miss Venezuela has been taking place since 1952, advancing alongside the advent of democracy (Roche 2007) and is broadcasted by Venevisión, which is owned by Gustavo Cisneros - Latin Americas’ Rupert Murdoch (Gott 2006). As mentioned, private companies are often anti-Chávez, as illustrated by Venevisión’s support for the 2002 coup - alongside helping defeat the coup attempts in 1992. Taking control of his family’s business, Cisneros Group, Cisneros moved his wealth outside of Venezuela during the 1980s economic crisis in order to compete with USA (Gott 2006). The political-economic relations behind the broadcasting of Miss Venezuela, illustrates the connections between constructions of ‘ideals’ and the expressions of interdependence.

Hoad (2004) provides an analysis of the relations between ‘beauty’ pageants and the global political economy, arguing ‘beauty’ pageants provide a symbolical
balance of power between countries, rather than an economic reality. For instance, feminist/religious protests - sporting slogans such as “Miss Poverty” alongside notable ‘moral’ objections - surrounded India, Bangalore’s hosting of Miss World in 1996, as it was accused of masking the abject poverty people, especially women, faced. Cultural diversity is undermined through the globalised pageants, with Western ‘beauty’ values paramount. ‘Beauty’ pageants export ‘beauty’ into new markets within the developing countries, as developing countries hold pageants to obtain Western contracts and enhance economic development (King-O’Riain 2008).

The documentary, Beauty Obsession (journeymanpictures 2002), explores the Venezuelan national obsession with ‘beauty’, tracing a seventh month period of Osmel Sousa, the president of the Miss Venezuela Organisation, ‘shaping’ women into pageant contenders. This often involves cosmetic surgery; as the surgery is free, many women enter the competition to obtain the so-called ‘Miss Venezuela nose’. In fact, many women enter due to the rampant poverty within Venezuela (Hoad 2004; King-O’Riain 2008).

The ‘beauty’ pageants are neoliberal institutions, with private companies investing thousands into each contestant so they meet the ‘ideal’. Whilst there are movements of resistance within the ‘beauty’ pageants, they will never undermine ‘ideals’ alone (King-O’Riain 2008). For instance, Carroll (2009a/2009b) discusses the creation of ‘Miss Fat Gay Venezuela’, where cross-dressed, ‘overweight’ homosexuals take part in a counter-culture against the dominant Venezuelan ‘beauty’ pageants; this is rather radical given the prevailing Catholicism associated homophobia within the country (Lancaster 1998).
‘Beauty’ Telenovelas

Telenovelas are central productions of culture within Venezuela. Acosta-Alzuru (2010), using *El País de las Mujeres*, produced by *Venevisión*, refers to how the head writer, Leonardo Padrón, wanted the telenovela to highlight the double-standards towards women and men through irony and humour. However, most of the characters are ‘beautiful’ ex-‘beauty’ pageant contestants/winners, undermining Padrón’s desire to subvert ‘beauty’ ‘ideals’ (economic factors, such as advertising, are central here).

Acosta-Alzuru (2010) focuses upon the potential telenovela’s have for understanding the current Venezuelan political economy, analysing telenovela *Cosita Rica* (2003). The telenovela included a Miss Venezuela pageant alongside *Venevisión* producing/broadcasting *Cosita Rica*. However, the telenovela criticised Miss Venezuela through irony. For instance, one contestant had an allergic reaction a day before the contest; her twin sister replaced her and won - undermining the rigid ‘ideal’ life promoted by the pageant. Originally, the Miss Venezuela Organisation and Sousa had been supportive of the plot, but as it progressed, they backtracked.

**Neoliberal ‘Ideals’**

The chapter has illustrated the need to move beyond reductive notions of objectification, whilst respecting the ‘queer’ ‘nature’ of the term. Furthermore, the parallels between Western ‘ideals’ and Venezuelan notions of ‘beauty’ have been detailed; the sociogenetic reasons for why will be developed in the next chapter. Primarily, it is important to illustrate the influence interdependent global neoliberal relations have upon ‘ideal’ constructions, and the need for a new
expression of interdependence. The chapter will illustrate that despite rhetoric, Venezuela is still rooted in neoliberal expressions of interdependence and such relations, alongside Venezuela’s colonial history, have a marked influence upon constructions of ‘beauty’ and women’s political development.

Chapter 4: Political Economy and Objectification

Neo Meets Anti-Neoliberalism

Political economy, as an approach, can assist with understanding the expressions of interdependence; like most theoretical traditions, it has a plurality of meanings - but it is essentially concerned with the connections between politics, the economy and culture (Anisimov 2011; Altman 2003). However, mainstream economics (essentially, neoliberal) has distanced itself from political economy because of political economy’s broader context and consideration of socio-economic alternatives (Anisimov 2011).

Eisenstein (2009) argues that left feminists need to develop strategies to counteract neoliberal structures, essentially through the construction of a political economy of gender. For Eisenstein, the links between feminism, anti-imperialism and anti-neoliberalism need enhancing through illustrating the relations between the feminist movement and “the larger political and economic structures governing the world economy” (p.27).

The connections between political economy and ‘beauty’ are typified through Wolf’s (1991) analysis of the market mechanisms that encourage women to blame themselves for the system’s problems:
The transformer’s middle link is the aspirational ideology of the
women’s magazines. In providing a dream language of meritocracy
(“get the body you deserve”; “a gorgeous figure doesn’t come without
effort”), entrepreneurial spirit (“make the most of your natural
assets”), absolute personal liability for body size and aging (“you can
totally reshape your body”; “your facial lines are now within your
control”), and even open admissions (“at last you too can know the
secret beautiful women have kept for years”), they keep women
consuming their advertisers’ products in pursuit of the total personal
transformation in status that the consumer society offers men in the
form of money” (p.29).

Another example of the connections between neoliberalism and ‘beauty’ is
Lee’s (2008) utilisation of race, technology and (geo) politics to analyse
Oprah’s (a famous talk show host) “Around the World with Oprah”, where
Oprah travelled around the world ‘learning’ about women’s lives. Lee
argues that Oprah is a product of neoliberalism where ‘freedom’ constrains
women through the construction of ‘ideals’ and the related social, political
and economic relations. For instance, cosmetic surgery is racialised and
gendered reflecting colonised power relations - with many women opting in
to get by within the existing interdependent expressions.

Neoliberalism is closely related to globalisation (Vargas 2003). The anti-
globalisation movement is a proliferation of social movements that, whilst
advancing differing arguments, are coordinated through platforms such as
the World Social Forum (Vargas 2003). This coordination helps feminism
develop and become more receptive to the effects interdependent relations have upon women’s position in society, challenging the ‘unified’ ‘woman’.

Despite USA buying around half of Venezuela’s oil (Red Oil 2009), Chávez has distanced himself from neoliberal organisations/practices. For example, Chávez broke off relations with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) through repaying Venezuela’s debts off early (Tran 2007). Petras and Brill (1986) argue that institutions such as the IMF pass on the North’s economic problems to the South, with immobilising conditions attached to the loans. There is an illusion of choice, as the IMF’s requirements are so strict countries are often indirectly forced to comply. Instead, Chávez helped set up the Bank of the South, promoting Latin American integration (Mallen 2007).

‘Beauty’ Currency

As discussed in Chapter 1, for Elias (2000), money has replaced manners’ importance in determining social differentiation, with money relating to the construction of ‘ideals’. As Wolf (1991) argues, the economy relies upon these ‘ideals’ to justify the disproportionate economic hardship women experience. ‘Beauty’ is no longer a symbol of money, it is money! As Wolf argues, “the beauty myth generates low self-esteem for women and high profits for corporations as a result” (p.49).

Importantly, this is not a pure economic analysis attributing ‘beauty’ ‘ideals’ as a mere product of neoliberalism. Some form of ‘ideal’ regarding ‘beauty’ has always existed; the study is rather an attempt to illustrate the damages the current neoliberal expressions of interdependence have upon expression. As Barrett
(1988) argues, it is important not to conflate women’s oppression and the role of capital/capitalism. The construction of ‘ideals’ is even a form of ideology.

**Venezuelan Women’s Organisational Development**

Friedman (2000) has a sophisticated account of Venezuelan women’s political development, as outlined below. Friedman takes a critical view of political parties and the state, arguing political opportunities and institutions are profoundly gendered.

Venezuela’s colonisation era had a significant impact upon women’s position, with Catholicism placing a strong emphasis upon motherhood/the private sphere. Latin American women have an antagonistic history with the UK/USA feminists, choosing to focus upon difference between women and men rather than equality. The first Venezuelan women’s rights group was the Women’s Cultural Association (*Agrupación Cultural Femenina*/ACF). Whilst the ACF focused upon maternal issues, it was considerably more critical of gender difference than the Venezuelan Association of Women (*Asociación Venezolana de Mujeres*/AVM), which primarily consisted of middle/upper class women.

The suffrage movement fractured the women’s movement. ACF were hesitant in adopting a women’s suffrage campaign, but started the national campaign in 1943, qualifying they were not challenging gender difference. As of then, only ‘literate’ men had the vote, so women asked for the same. The AVM split over women’s suffrage, with those pro-suffrage forming Women’s Action (*Acción Femenina*) with the ACF. In 1945, there was a breakthrough with municipal suffrage given to ‘literate’ women; but the campaign continued until the *Trienio*, where AD implemented universal suffrage for those over 18 regardless of gender.
and ‘literacy’. For the first time, women were able to obtain national office with 12 women elected to the 1946 assembly.

Political parties strengthened during the Trienio, undermining women’s mobilisation as many women entered political parties where women’s issues were sidelined. However, with the return of dictatorial rule (1948-1958), women’s organisation, as it had done in previous repressive eras, paradoxically positively developed. Friedman (1998) argues the gendered political relations, structures and opportunities of democracy undermined the organisations/institutions developed by women within the repressive eras. Men are considered public actors and women as private, thus during oppressive regimes women are able to act as political agents without raising suspicion. Therefore, with the return of democracy in 1958, women were again isolated within the private sphere. Only in the later stages of democracy, as civil society grew stronger, did women’s organisation become more independent.

Women’s campaigning put pressure on Pérez to form the Presidential Women’s Advisory Commission (Comisión Femenina Asesora de la Presidencia/COFEAPRE) in 1974, whilst not amounting to change per se (it only proposed, not implemented, policy (Friedman 2001)), had a positive impact upon women’s organisation. The women’s movement had campaigned for Civil Code reform from the 1940s, as the Code allowed husbands to file for injunctions preventing their wives from leaving their home, for example. With weak 1942 reform, it was not until the 1982 reform women had the same legal rights as men within the family. Whilst, the campaign failed to construct a mass based women’s movement it gave impetus to such mobilisation (Rakowski 2003).
One of the first feminist groups, Women’s League (Liga de Mujeres), was founded in 1972; even campaigning against Miss Venezuela as capitalist exploitation. Splitting in 1974, after the Socialist League (Liga Socialista) infiltrated the group, politically independent Towards a New Woman (Hacia la Nueva Mujer) formed. Towards a New Woman influenced other feminist organisations to focus upon conscious-raising; but the organisation was closely related to middle/upper class women. In contrast, a working class women’s group formed within a Barrio of Caracas in the 1970s, called the Popular Women’s Circles (Círculos Femeninos Populares/CFP) that would later become the largest autonomous women’s organisation.

President Campins replaced COFEAPRE with the Ministry for the Participation of Women in Development (Ministerio Para la Participación de la Mujer en el Desarrollo/MPWD). It had limited resources and autonomy but a better leadership with Mercedes Pulido de Briceño, whose focus upon the democratisation of the family, rather than women’s rights per se, worked in her favour. President Lusinchi shut the MPWD down, but minister Virginia Olivo de Celli utilised the international context to form the National Women’s Office (Oficina Nacional de la Mujer/ONM) in 1984. The national women’s agency allowed for more outside influence through advisory commissions. In 1987, Celli converted the agency into a department – Directorate for Women’s Advancement (Dirección General Sectorial de Promoción a la Mujer/DWA). This was an important advancement as women’s policy suggestions were often implemented, reflecting the successful integration of the Women’s NGO network through the development of the Coordinating Committee of Women’s Nongovernmental

In 1989, Pérez reinstated COFEAPRE but whilst it was only (again) established through Presidential decree, it was more powerful than before (Friedman 2001). The economic crisis and corresponding decentralisation strengthened women’s institutions as they gained more resources, but traditional hierarchical structures developed through ‘instrumental feminism’ (see Rakowski (2003)). The CFP disconnected from CONG as CONG found it harder to unify classes because of the changing economic circumstances. CONG’s problems intensified through divisions and its eventual reliance upon state funding.

Under pressure from CONG and others, Pérez set up the National Women’s Council (*Consejo Nacional de la Mujer/CONAMU*) as an autonomous institution, with the policies designed by the agency considered for implementation (Friedman 2001). However, the decentralisation employed by the state resulted in many of the women/feminist agencies being co-opted by the state, especially by the mayors. Chávez replaced the CONAMU with the National Women’s Institute (*Instituto Nacional de la Mujer/IMAMU*) (Wagner 2005a), again by presidential decree (Rakowski 2003). The IMAMU holds workshops for poorer women to help them form groups/movements outside of the established institutions (Rakowski (2003); Friedman (2009)).

Chávez has claimed, “true socialism is feminist” (Osava 2009; no page number) – however, Márquez (2009) illustrates Chávez’s conflicting relationship with feminism. Wagner (2005a) outlines the praise many women accord Chávez, despite his poor start (Rakowski 2003); as demonstrated by the centrality of
women’s mobilisation to the campaign against the 2002 coup (Eisenstein 2009; Rakowski 2003). Wagner (2005a) refers to how women formed the Constitutional Front of Women of the Fifth Republic Movement (FCMMUR) to inform and encourage women to send suggestions for the consultation stage of the Constitution drafting. The Constitution (1999) was an important step for women’s rights, with Article 88 providing a government pension to those who undertake household labour (for at least 15 hours a week), for example. Furthermore, the non-sexist language used within the Constitution, as both masculine and feminine forms (Spanish) are utilised, has been widely praised. Despite problems with women’s representation within politics, Rakowski (2003) argues that many see the Constitution as meeting most of the demands women have been campaigning for since the 1970s.

The introduction of the Women’s Development Bank (Banmujer) in 2001 has been essential to reducing inequality between men and women (Friedman 2009). The bank provides women who are often isolated from economic resources, financial and non-financial opportunities (Spronk and Webber 2010a). Wagner (2005b) provides a detailed outline of the bank’s structure. The bank has a network of promoters that visit poor and overpopulated communities each week to provide personal services that certain women could not otherwise reach. The group needs between 5-10 people to start its own business, and those who cannot read and write are provided a business partner to help whilst the bank promotes the Mission Robinson (government’s literacy campaign). The promoters help pick suitable projects to fit with the bank’s vision. Men can take part, but are unable to access loans. The bank also provides workshops on personal development and
gender rights. However, there have been problems with loan defaults, with the follow-up system requiring reform (Cannon 2008).

**Complementary Politics**

It is therefore essential for women to build ‘outside’ traditional political forces/movements to counteract the detrimental gender/power relations that have been prevalent throughout Venezuela’s history. However, whilst there are damaging negative relations that constrict ‘inside’ traditional gender political organisation, this can still help advance women’s rights and challenge the existing interdependent relations. What is required is a complementary ethic of ‘outside’ and ‘inside’ traditional political movements to challenge the interdependent relations. Essentially, the discussion illustrates the importance of a strong civil society for progressive political change (Friedman 2000). The alternative forms of political protest required, alongside the more restricted forms outlined above, will be the focus of Chapter 5. Whilst global power relations have a significant impact upon local/regional practices, this should not deny the latter ability to resist.

**Chapter 5: The Politics of Interdependence**

**A Politics of Resistance**

Power is not only repressive, as Elias (1984) acknowledged, it can be a site of resistance through mobilising power exchanges (also see Foucault 1979). As illustrated, shame can allow for subjective self-empowerment. However, alongside psychogenetic resistance, sociogenetic changes are paramount to challenging the expressions of interdependence.
Susan vs. Juliet

It is interesting to compare the different tactics used by the two female political activists referred to in the questionnaires/survey. Susan utilised blanket banning because of her dislike of pornographic magazines, a tactic 66% of respondents supported (whilst not necessarily agreeing with the reasoning). Several respondents cited the pressure such magazines place upon women, whereas others believed such methods would help protect the ‘vulnerable’. The latter is concerning, considering there is a history of regressive politics based on protecting the ‘vulnerable’.

Furthermore, rather disconcertingly, some respondents who supported the method also voiced objections to the realistic nature of the method, for instance:

Yes, and lucky her! I was involved in a group that tried to do just that at Smiths 30 years ago, we got no other support apart from people who supported Mary Whitehouse...we gave up (Ellie, 54, bookseller).

In contrast to Susan, Juliet advocated the construction of alternative images of women through a magazine; paralleling discussions regarding whether working within existing relations such as the magazine industry, where neoliberal advertising and capital excess pressurise magazines into constructing ‘ideals’, would only result in the creation of new ‘ideals’. As several respondents argued, Juliet would find it hard to challenge hegemonic discourses. Interestingly, only 35% of respondents believed that alternative images would make a difference, whilst 23% disagreed, 26% stated ‘other’ and 16% said they ‘don’t know’. Even most of the respondents who
answered ‘yes’ argued the effects would be limited to those who already shared Juliet’s values:

I think it definitely can be; alternative representations and criticism are vital to pointing out the current wrongs. I guess ultimately though, it depends on who the audience is and how the magazine engages with that audience. It’s no use preaching to the converted, it has to be considered in the context of the wider feminist movement (Leo, 23, web consultant).

It is interesting to compare respondents’ first impressions of Susan and Juliet when understanding how the political tactics adopted by the activists’ affected the respondents’ views of Susan and Juliet. It is important to note, however - especially when referring to Susan - there are other factors involved in the respondents’ perceptions of Susan and Juliet aside from their political methods. Regardless, respondents tended to have a much more negative perception of Susan, with the word ‘prude’ used several times. Alongside this, many respondents believed Susan was insecure and controlling. However, notably, several respondents who raised these objections still accounted for Susan’s right to object. Whilst considerably fewer, several respondents argued that Susan’s attitude was a demonstration of passion and principled action. In contrast, respondents tended to have a much more positive view of Juliet. Nevertheless, similarly to Susan, passion and principles were sometimes seen as a negative attribute; but in contrast to Susan, negative analyses of Juliet were limited.
Consider the contrasting analysis by one respondent, Isabelle (45, not working - disabled), of Susan and Juliet:

Uptight, arrogant, unrealistic, in a relationship with the wrong person - Isabelle’s analysis of Susan.

Feisty, proactive, intelligent, ambitious – Isabelle’s analysis of Juliet.

This interestingly corresponds to Isabelle’s views of the methods employed by Susan and Juliet, with Isabelle having a much more positive conception of Juliet’s method:

Susan is unelected & should not be the arbiter of the morals & tastes of her neighbours – Isabelle’s analysis of blanket banning.

Depends if the mag is any good & gets a reasonable circulation – Isabelle’s analysis of alternative images.

Whilst blanket banning may make an important political point through short-term reform, it will do little to undermine the relations with companies likely to manipulate their way around any ban (see Coulmont and Hubbard 2010). Furthermore, there are legitimate reservations regarding Juliet’s method, with the possibility of new ‘ideals’ being produced. Therefore, the methods may be iconic political tactics, but a politics of resistance needs to be much more compelling to undermine the underlying restrictive interdependent relations, given the methods rely upon these relations themselves.
‘Poles of Oppression’

The focus group (Appendix 5) explored a country, Ested, with inverted (to the UK) gender relations, as women were the hegemonic gender. Regarding the desirability of Ested, respondents’ views varied with some changing their opinions throughout the focus group. For instance, when discussing the gender reversal, participant 3 (female, 20) felt that participant 2’s (male, 34) response was due to Ested threatening the current (UK) power relations between men and women:

Participant 2: On the planet, women are more powerful.

Interviewer: Would you say that’s a good thing?

Participant 3: It’s about bloody time, I’d say.

Laughter.

Participant 2: I think it’s a bad thing.

Participant 3: He would say that, because he’s a man aint he?

Rhetorical question.

However, shortly after, participant 3 changed her view:

Participant 3: Yeah, but it (Ested) isn’t right. It would be better if it didn’t matter if you were a man or a woman. They’re both extremes.

Interestingly, participant 3 said this after the following interchange between participant 1 (male, 29) and participant 2:
Participant 1: Because it’s like an inversion of when the other gender is oppressed; there’s no equality. It just reverses the polls of oppression.

Participant 2: The thing that struck me is all I see is one gender having power over the other one. I don’t identify with genders personally... I disagree with the world I live in but I wouldn’t want to live in that one either.

It is important to note that once ‘outing’ herself as a lesbian, participant 3 again contradicted both of the above statements as she argued she would prefer the existing relations, where women are predominantly objectified, to Ested’s. The development of ideas illustrates the potential for focus groups to collectively engage respondents (see Chapter 2).

The discussion between participant 2 and 3 took place (indirectly and directly) throughout the focus group, constructing a very interesting analysis of the current and Ested expressions of interdependence. Their analysis illustrated that a new expression of interdependence cannot operate through constructing a society where the ‘poles of oppression’ are reversed. By this, groups currently oppressed (women, for instance), should not become the new oppressors within new interdependent expressions. This may seem simple, but working class analyses that Bookchin (1986) has criticised, for instance, operate on this premise. We must challenge the existing oppression, but for a fairer less constricting expression of interdependence, we need to create a fluid, less oppressive, set of relations for all.
However, it is important to focus upon the resistance discourse (Foucault 1979) that the two women within the focus group sometimes adopted:

Participant 5: I think what participant 3 said (earlier, when the tape did not pick up all of the conversation, but was when the respondents were discussing whether there is anything they would take from Ested for the UK) if it was like that (Ested) then you could say; now you know what it feels like...

Participant 3: It’s probably the only way they are going to realise it needs to be equal is having a taste of how it feels...

This provides further evidence of the contradictions within participant 3’s discourse, but participant 5 (female, 48) was much more firm with her analysis, which is supported through the follow-up interviews conducted with respondents (Appendix 6). However, participant 1 and 2’s objections to Ested, discussed above, have an interesting ethical dimension; drawing parallels to debates on ethically reclaiming space to counteract current restrictive interdependent expressions. Therefore, in line with Bookchin’s (1995b) analysis of reality, an actualisation of Ested’s relations for people such as participant 1 and 2 would not be an ethical advancement from the current expressions of interdependence. However, it is essential to provide serious thought to the frustration women, such as participant 5, have felt for many years.

Elias and Utopian Interdependence?

Elias concedes that revolutionary change can occur if a group/class is excluded from the democratisation process. Given the current figuration of interdependence
works through restrictive ‘ideals’, the democratisation process is in need of a radical overturning of the current interdependent expressions. Functional democratisation, for Elias (1984), is a product of increasing interdependence where knowledge has dispersed throughout society, increasing the masses’ power in relation to the state. However, there are attempts to monopolise knowledge. For instance, since 2002, every organised community in Venezuela can obtain a local broadcasting license but political broadcasts are prohibited (Tayler et al 2003).

Furthermore, in this vein, ‘ideal’ constructions of ‘beauty’ are a form of knowledge controlled primarily by neoliberal institutions and value systems. Elias’s (1984) utopian tale, ‘The Great Struggle of the Intellectuals’, can be viewed as a construction of a new expression of interdependence to undermine the tendencies towards centralised control of knowledge and power. In the utopian society, inequalities have decreased, issuing in a fairer power balance. However, a political battle between the Traditionalists and the Innovators, two groups of intellectuals, is ongoing as the Innovators fight for a fairer society. Central to this utopian governance are public debates where at least two representatives of the Traditionalists and Innovators discuss key issues. 60-90% of the population listens/watches the debates, asking follow-up questions and voting to influence governmental decisions. Elias’s utopia is similar to Bookchin’s communalism and face-to-face public assemblies, with a focus upon complementarily, as opposed to hierarchical, arrangements. Although Elias’s utopia involves a state, the governance involved in Bookchin’s communalism is similar - as it also entails a radical new expression of interdependence.
Communal Councils: Outside or Inside the State?

Communal councils within Venezuela are a good example of an ‘outside’ (with ‘inside’ tendencies) political challenge to interdependent relations – they also share similarities with Bookchin’s communalism. Ellner (2009) refers to the Law of Communal Councils (2006), which created the communal councils with neighbourhoods receiving funding to form a council, with at least 150-400 urban families, 20 rural families or 10 indigenous families needed. The regulation is more efficient than the cooperatives’; however, the government often ignores corruption (see Burbach and Piñeiro (2007) and Pearson (2009) for a further analysis of communal councils, especially regarding the recent reforms).

There are contentions regarding whether communal councils are to replace or exist alongside local government given they were created as a response to the problems of the latter (Ellner 2009). Ellner (2009) argues that whilst the communal councils are an alternative power structure, their power is limited. The communal councils are, in a sense, a state induced civil society - creating longevity problems (Fuentes 2006), given they are often funded directly through the state (Lerner 2007). Therefore, there are fundamental questions regarding the ability for such schemes to occur without state involvement when there is a historically weak civil society (Malleson 2010). Furthermore, many argue communal councils’ undertake jobs that the state should be doing instead, especially as the work is largely unpaid (Lerner 2007).

Cooperatives often work in relation to communal councils. Despite having an internationally recognised cooperative movement (Mayo and Tizard 2010), there are issues regarding the movement’s sustainability, as they are funded through oil
Chávez, however, has recently started to promote local sustainability through mechanisms such as the Endogenous Development Zones, where cooperatives join to construct and carry out projects (Harnecker 2005). Regardless, there are problems with lax criteria enforcement before cooperatives are formed (Harnecker 2005).

Venezuelan anarchist groups criticise the bureaucratic tendencies of the Chávez regime (Jones 2010). *El Libertario* (2009) - a Venezuelan anarchist newspaper - condemns the dependence of civil society upon the state, arguing communal councils are divisive, with pro-government councils shutting out the anti-government dissent and vice-versa. They criticise the reliance upon oil, arguing, cooperatives should be formed from below - as private companies are transforming into cooperatives to receive governmental contracts, for example (alongside avoiding certain taxes (Harnecker 2005)). Specifically, they refer to the cooption of women’s organisation by the state, acknowledging the problems traditional politics has caused regarding women’s equality. However, anarchism is weaker in Venezuela in comparison to other Latin American countries (*El Libertario* 2008), furthermore:

...while some of the best anarchist organizers in Venezuela are women, there isn’t much specifically feminist work being done (*El Libertario* N.D.: no page number).

Hildyard *et al* (1995) discusses the existence of commons (communal councils being a form) around the world, recognising the damaging relations the states have imposed upon the commons, forcing enclosure. In this sense, it could be argued the Venezuelan state is enclosing the communal councils; but as
mentioned, the ability for the councils to operate otherwise is questionable.

Regardless, there is notable resistance to enclosure (see Jeppesen (2010)).

**Elias and Industrial Organisation**

Despite problems with women’s participation in trade unions (Parker 2003), unions can be productive forms of protest for women to utilise when constructing counter-forces to the prevailing expressions (Eisenstein 2009). However, there are problems with the independence of Venezuelan trade unions (*El Libertario* 2009) and the trade unions’ weak association with movements such as the communal councils (Spronk and Webber 2010b). Some trade unions are critical of Chávez’s reliance upon oil and his view of independent unions being ‘counter-revolutionary’ (Chirino 2007). Trade unionists are sometimes murdered; for example, Suggett (2010) refers to the murder of two trade unionists, with the National Workers’ Union of Venezuela (*Unión Nacional de Trabajadores de Venezuela* /UNT) calling for better state protection of union members/leaders. The UNT formed in opposition to the Confederation of Workers of Venezuela (*Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela* /CTV) (Spronk and Webber 2010b), with many leaving CTV as they believed it was too close to big business (Gindin 2005). However, there are conflicts within UNT over how to support Chávez whilst remaining independent (Spronk and Webber 2010a; Gindin 2005). Interestingly, Newton (1999) argues Elias’s work could assist with organisational and industrial solidarity.

**Potentiality Vs. Reality**

Essentially, this chapter has illustrated the potential for political action to challenge and reformulate the interdependent relations. Whilst acknowledging the
suggestions are falling short of a complex political strategy, the discussion has offered ideas on ways to change the expressions of interdependence.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, it is useful to revert to the four central research questions that guided the research (consult Chapter 2). Firstly, sexualised public nudity is both an expression of a high level of shame alongside being constrained through the creation of ‘ideals’. By this, the research has intended to illustrate the connections between shame and ‘ideals’, as interdependence has developed, ‘ideals’ have formed that people try increasingly harder to meet in order to escape shame. The research has argued, however, that such shame-‘ideal’ relations can be undermined through a new expression of interdependence, especially through challenging the current neoliberal/capitalist hegemonic social, political and economic relations. With a cooperative, non-hierarchical and diversified expression, ‘ideals’ and correspondingly high levels of shame can be reduced, but not eradicated. After all, shame can provide a powerful politics of resistance.

Secondly, the structure of a society profoundly effects the construction of ‘ideals’, as demonstrated throughout the research in relation to ‘beauty’ ‘ideals’. Venezuela is a useful example, as whilst there have been movements away from neoliberal relations; Venezuela is still integrated within the increasingly globalised neoliberal relations, especially through oil. This, and Venezuela’s colonial past, has had a marked influence upon the construction of ‘beauty’ ‘ideals’. The narrow expressions of interdependence are not only damaging through the pressure placed on many to meet unobtainable ‘ideals’ but also regarding the social position such ‘failure’ can create.
Thirdly, Chapter 5 specifically addressed the need for alternative political
figurations, but the entire research has highlighted the need for a new expression
of interdependence. How to achieve such an expression requires more research;
hopefully, the suggestions from this research can aid such analysis. Venezuela,
whilst having democratic and progressive tendencies, still suffers from corruption
and the detrimental effects of global capitalistic structures.

Fourthly, this relates to the central analysis of the relations between ‘ideals’,
shame and political economy. Political, economic and social relations are essential
to influencing the expression of interdependence and the corresponding
construction of ‘ideals’ and shame. With a new expression, ‘ideals’ can hopefully
be undermined, allowing for a diversification of expression.

Alongside the development of new political strategies, there are several other
suggestions for further research. A development of the definition of
objectification utilised in this research is one suggestion, specifically considering
the effects of sexual orientation. Whilst there is notable research into the radical
potential of shame within the current social relations, understanding shame’s
potential in a society with a different expression of interdependence may prove
interesting. Whilst not mentioned, research into Venezuelan sex work was very
limited, specifically regarding the different markets and legal status; this therefore
requires consideration. Other research includes investigating the benefits and
drawbacks of state induced civil society movements. Furthermore, an analysis of
whether a high level of interdependence is required before a fairer expression of
interdependence can take place - whilst making sure to distance oneself from a
colonial/elitist attitude - alongside a study into the possibilities of a World
Government would provide fruitful research.
Essentially, the theoretical perspective constructed is not only useful for understanding ‘beauty’ ‘ideals’. Rather, the theory can be employed to understand the effects the current expressions of interdependence have upon the construction of ‘ideals’ in relation to other areas such as work/occupation and the effects this has upon the people’s social and psychological experiences. This is something I hope, personally, to build upon.

The research has helped illustrate the possibilities political/theoretical activists have tended to ignore within Elias, and the potential such thought has for understanding the power of ‘ideals’. It is hoped the research can assist with a politics of resistance, especially in a time of economic illogicality where so often we are told ‘there is no alternative’; such fallacies illustrate the need to fight back against enclosure through a new expression of interdependence.

Word Count: 11,971
Bibliography


Appendices

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- Appendix 2 – Focus Group Consent Form
- Appendix 3 – Pilot Study
- Appendix 4 – Questionnaire Analysis
- Appendix 5 – Focus Group Transcript
- Appendix 6 – Follow-Up Interviews Analysis
Appendix 1 – Questionnaire Consent Form

I contacted potential questionnaire respondents through email; included within the email (as shown below) was a disclaimer (bolded) making it clear that by responding, respondents consented to their information being utilised within the dissertation.

Hi,

I am currently undertaking dissertation research and I am writing to ask whether you would be willing to take part in a survey which will form part of the research data used within my research. The questionnaires are specifically intended to address the part of my research where I am looking into attitudes regarding sexualised public nudity, specifically women’s objectification, to explore whether it has become an ‘ideal’, an expression of a new level of shame, or a combination of both.

I would really appreciate your time in answering a questionnaire. If you do so, I will take this as accepted consent, as for ethical reasons this is required.
I would also appreciate it if you could pass on the questionnaire to anyone you think would also like to take part in the research.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to ask.

Thank you,

Jane Watkinson

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**Appendix 2 – Focus Group Consent Form**

*Focus Group - Sheffield, 18th of December 2010*

By signing this, you consent to taking part in my focus group for my dissertation and understand that what you say is being tape recorded and may be used within my research.

Print Name: DONELLA GODFREY
Signature: __________________________

Print Name: CLAIRE WATKINSON
Signature: __________________________

Print Name: ALISON DAWSEY
Signature: __________________________

Print Name: JAY BAKER
Signature: __________________________

Print Name: WILLEM JASCOIGNE
Signature: __________________________
Appendix 3 – Pilot Study

Below is the pilot study, with the respondent’s suggested changes highlighted:

Thank you for taking part in my research. My name is Jane Watkinson and I am a third year student studying Sociology at the University of Leeds, and the results of this aspect of the research will be included within my dissertation. These vignettes * are specifically intended to address the part of my research where I am researching into attitudes regarding sexualised public nudity, specifically women’s objectification, to explore whether it has become an ‘ideal’, an expression of a new level of shame, or a combination of both.

*Vignettes are short fictional stories, which for mine, will be followed up with structured/semi-structured questions.

Firstly, can you please provide the following details:

Name: Preston
Age: 29
Occupation: Unemployed

Do you belong to any political organisation/groups? (Please specific which one/ones if so): The Labour Party. Compass.

Vignette 1a

Susan and Paul are in a long-term relationship. Susan has decided to raise her objections to Paul’s frequent interest in, use and watching of pornography. Paul refuses to stop his use and watching, and states in his objection that Susan was fine with him doing it before they went out.

Question 1a) Is Susan right to have an objection to Paul watching and using pornography? Please highlight one.

a) Yes
b) No
c) Other – please specify .................................................................
d) Don’t know
Question 1b) Please explain your answer to question 1b. Please write your answer below. (to 1a).

Yes because not only is porn degrading in general but its especially degrading to Susan to think that somebody you love is fantasising about others. Paul is damaging the feelings of someone he cares about and ‘not having a problem with it before’ isn’t a valid defence. This is especially true if he was aware of Susan’s feelings beforehand; if she knew beforehand and didn’t object that is slightly inconsistent; the degree of the inconsistency would depend on what was known and what was said however, ultimately Paul’s attitude is inconsiderate and shows a certain lack of respect for Susan’s feelings.

Vignette 1b)

In fact, Susan feels so passionately about this, she manages to successfully campaign to impose a blanket ban (place covers over the magazines, they will still be sold however) on pornographic magazines in the local newsagent.

Question 2a) Was Susan right to campaign to blanket ban the pornographic magazines? Please highlight one.

a) Yes
b) No
c) Other – please specific.................................................................
d) Don’t know

Question 2b) Please explain your answer to question 2a. Please write your answer below.

It's not restricting freedom of choice because the option to buy still exists; its limiting the harmful effects on Susan and others so that is right I think.

Vignette 1c)

Susan then finds out that Paul went to a lap dancing club with a few of his friends for one of their birthdays. Susan raises this with Paul, who in turn doesn’t feel that it is a problem.

Question 3a) Should Susan object to Paul’s visit to the lap dancing club? Please highlight one.

a) Yes
b) No
c) Other – please specify..............................................................................................
d) Don’t know

**Question 3b)** Please explain your answer to question 3a. Please write your answer below.

I can’t really add much to my response to 1b); it’s pretty much the same issues at stake so my response is the same.

**Question 4)** What are your first impressions of Susan? Please write your answer below.

She seems pretty self-confident and assertive and that is a good thing.

**Question 5)** What are your first impressions of Paul? Please write your answer below.

A bit inconsiderate, a stereotypical lad.

**Vignette 2**

*Juliet is a very prolific feminist activist, and she has decided to start up, with the help of a few friends, a feminist oriented magazine that focuses on promoting an alternative view of women, as opposed to what she feels is a very sexualised view of women promoted by existing mainstream magazines. Feminists such as Juliet see women working in cooperation to produce alternative views of women’s sexuality and identity as key to fighting what they see as a very objectifying culture.*

**Question 7a)** Do you think Juliet is right to characterise the current mainstream construction by magazines of women as “sexualised”, and campaign for alternatives? Please highlight one.

a) **Yes**

b) No

c) Other – please specify.................................................................

d) Don’t know

**Question 7b)** Please explain your answer to question 7a. Please write your answer below.

I don’t think it’s just magazines; it’s a broad issue that effects the entire media. Especially advertising media.
Question 8a) Do you think working on a feminist magazine to promote alternative images of women will make any difference? Please highlight one.

a) Yes
b) No
c) Other – please specify..................................................................................................................
d) Don’t know

Question 9b) Please explain your answers to question 8a. Please write your answers below. (to 8b)

It’s a positive and empowering step however, I answered don’t know because cultural hegemony is hard to change and left in isolation it probably would not make a difference. In time it probably would because it would encourage others and encourage a new discourse to emerge. However, it would be very much an long term measure.

Question 10) What are your first impressions of Juliet? (to 9)

Obviously an activist and self-confident.

Question 11) Any further comments? If so, please write your answer below. (to 10).

...........................................................................................................................................................
...........................................................................................................................................................

Thank you

Fortunately, there were no major problems when understanding and answering the questions. However, there were several technical/typing errors that required amending, illustrating the value of a pilot study.

Below are the changes I initiated after conducting the pilot study:

• Question 1b asked about question 1b), when it should have asked about 1a) – thus, this was amended.

• The last three questions were numbered incorrectly, so this was adjusted accordingly.
Additional changes I personally felt were required:

- I changed the introduction paragraph so it was better phrased.

- I changed the political organisation/demographic questions so they were better phrased. Furthermore, I amended a spelling mistake, as ‘specific’ should have read as ‘specify’.

- I changed question 1b), as I had missed the ‘r’ off ‘your’ (so it read ‘you’) within the question.

- Vignette 1b) was re-written so that it was easier to understand.

- I changed ‘specific’ for ‘specify’ in question 2a) – next to the option ‘other’.

- Vignette 1c) was re-written so that it was easier to understand.

- Question 3a) was re-written so that it was easier to understand.

- Question 7a) was re-written, as there were two questions within one question (double-barrelled).

- Question 8a) was re-written so that it was easier to understand.

- Question 10) was re-written so that it was better phrased.
Below is an example of the final questionnaire sent to respondents:

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my research. My name is Jane Watkinson and I am a third year student studying Sociology at the University of Leeds, and your answers to this questionnaire will form part of my dissertation research and study. These vignettes * are specifically intended to address the part of my research where I am looking into attitudes regarding sexualised public nudity, specifically women’s objectification, to explore whether it has become an ‘ideal’, an expression of a new level of shame, or a combination of both.

*Vignettes are short fictional stories, which for mine, will be followed up with structured/semi-structured questions.

Firstly, can you please provide the following details:

Name: Oliver

Age: 34

Occupation: MD of social enterprise

Do you belong to any political organisation/s/group/s? (Please specify which one/ones if so):

Labour Party

Vignette 1a

Susan and Paul are in a long-term relationship. Susan has decided to raise her objections to Paul’s frequent interest in, use and watching of pornography. Paul refuses to stop his use and watching, and states in his objection that Susan was fine with him doing it before they went out.

Question 1a) Is Susan right to have an objection to Paul watching and using pornography? Please highlight one.
Question 1b) Please explain your answer to question 1a. Please write your answer below.

People have different expectations of people as partners in monogamous relationships, particularly in a sexual context as this is essentially what defines a relationship and differentiates it from friendship.

**Vignette 1b)**

*In fact, Susan feels so passionately about this, she manages to successfully campaign to impose a blanket ban (placing covers over the magazines, so they are still sold but regulated) on pornographic magazines in the local newsagent.*

Question 2a) Was Susan right to campaign to blanket ban the pornographic magazines? Please highlight one.

e) Yes
f) No
g) Other – please specify........................................................................................................
h) Don’t know

Question 2b) Please explain your answer to question 2a. Please write your answer below.

The ban only extends towards public displays of pornographic material; people can still choose to participate in the pornographic industry but in public places where minors are around it may not be parents’ choosing to explain the imagery on display to their children.

**Vignette 1c)**

*Susan then finds out that Paul went to a lap-dancing club with a few friends for one of their birthdays. Susan raises this with Paul, who in turn doesn’t feel there is a problem.*
Question 3a) Should Susan object to Paul visiting a lap dancing club? Please highlight one.

  e) Yes
  f) No
  g) Other – please specify
  h) Don’t know

Question 3b) Please explain your answer to question 3a. Please write your answer below.

Based on Susan’s apparent sense of ethics, it seems understandable that she would object to Paul’s frequenting of a lap-dancing club. Her issue seems to be partly about his personal behaviour within the relationship and partly political reasons around the perceived exploitation of women through objectification and sexualisation.

Question 4) What are your first impressions of Susan? Please write your answer below.

Susan, it seems, is a passionate person with quite strong moral codes of appropriateness, and has expectations of Paul that he cannot seem to meet.

Question 5) What are your first impressions of Paul? Please write your answer below.

Paul seems to be either oblivious to the harm he is doing to his relationship with Susan, or simply dismissive because he perceives his behaviour as “normal.”

Vignette 2

Juliet is a very prolific feminist activist, and she has decided to start up, with the help of a few friends, a feminist oriented magazine that focuses on promoting an alternative view of women, as opposed to what she feels is a very sexualised view of women promoted by existing mainstream magazines. Feminists such as Juliet see women working in cooperation to produce alternative views of women’s sexuality and identity as key to fighting what they see as a very objectifying culture.

Question 7a) Do you think that Juliet is right to characterise the mainstream construction of women by magazines as “sexualised”? Please highlight one.

  e) Yes
  f) No
g) Other – please specify.................................................................

h) Don’t know

Question 7b) Please explain your answer to question 7a. Please write your answer below.

Juliet is challenging what has become an increasingly exploitative and damaging culture towards women, which is absolutely admirable.

Question 8a) Do you think working on a feminist magazine to promote alternative images of women will make a difference? Please highlight one.

e) Yes

f) No

g) Other – please specify.................................................................

h) Don’t know

Question 8b) Please explain your answers to question 8a. Please write your answer below.

Alternative media is the first step in educating and challenging misconceptions. The perpetuation of alternative (actually mainstream; everyday; commonplace) imagery of women of all kinds, shapes and sizes would alter expectations that many consumers have developed through profit-driven commercialised media.

Question 9) What are your first impressions of Juliet?

My first impression of Juliet is of someone I admire for her ability to recognise these systemic slaws and her ambition to change things in a positive way. (Unlike Susan) Juliet is pro-active rather than re-active and has a real opportunity, through her ambition, of making a difference.

Question 10) Any further comments? If so, please write them below.

These are very interesting and intriguing vignettes, with thought-provoking questions raised from them; they require considered responses, which is enjoyable. The issues are ones that should be raised, and debated further. Thank you!

Thank you!
Appendix 4 – Questionnaire Analysis

Below is a list of various questionnaire design weaknesses I spotted when analysing the questionnaire responses, illustrating the limitations of the pilot study.

- I assumed the sex of the respondent from their name – this has the potential problem of ignoring individual’s own personal identification regarding their sex/gender, which reduces personal subjectivity. However, the fact I knew most of the respondents helped.

- One respondent, Isabelle, stated: “I don't know how to highlight, so will bracket to mark responses.” This illustrates potential problems with my questionnaire design instructions/layout.

- One respondent, Shaun, highlighted ‘yes’ and ‘no’ – illustrating the possible restrictions respondents may have felt when answering the closed questions.

- Where respondents wrote their responses to the open questions varied; Fay wrote her answers next to the closed answers, whereas Hazel didn’t highlight the answers - doing it the opposite way to Fay by answering both the closed and open questions in the open question section. This again illustrates potential weaknesses of the questionnaire design.
• One respondent, Cassandra, left several questions blank – illustrating problems with the questionnaires’ reliability.

• I realised I had numbered the questions wrongly; whilst it does not seem to have caused any immediate problems with the respondents’ answers, it weakens the questionnaire design.

Appendix 5 – Focus Group Transcript

Focus Group Transcript, 18th of December 2010, Sheffield.

Interviewer – me.

Participant 1 – 29 year old, male.

Participant 2 – 34 year old, male.

Participant 3 – 20 year old, female.

Participant 4 – 20 year old, male.

Participant 5 – 48 year old, female.

NB: The tape sometimes failed to pick up all of the conversation, undermining the reliability of the transcription. Therefore, please note that some of the transcription may not be completely accurate; hence my conduction of follow-up interviews to confirm the reliability of the data. Also, following Morgan’s (2010) advice, I have included annotations (in italics) of the interaction that took place to provide a contextual understanding of the researching process. However, as mentioned in Chapter 2, I could have taken
more detailed notes regarding the interaction – as these annotations were made in hindsight.

Interviewer: A new world has just been found, called planet Stratum. It has a similar composition to the Earth in terms of water and land, thus, it has been very habitual to the humans whom have lived there, similar to us on planet Earth, for millions of years. Researchers of all kinds have been eager to research the new planet, which has already resulted in some very interesting discoveries. Specifically, there has been research into country Ested, which has been central to many of the new and interesting discoveries.

For one, in Ested, it has been found that men are much more likely to be culturally sexualised. There has been a history of oppression towards men with historical traditions...

Participant 3: Jane, I don’t understand.

A general agreement with participant 3.

Participant 3: I got all the world and stuff, but I didn’t get all about the investigation.

A general agreement that I needed to slow down.

Participant 5: Start from the beginning, if anyone has any queries I think they should put their hand up.

Participant 3: No, you don’t need to start from the beginning. It’s because you are rushing it.
A new world has just been found, called planet Stratum, ok? This is a new world that has been found with a similar composition to Earth, so like, it has water and land. So it is very habitual for humans, right? So there is a human species, and it has lived there for millions of years like us here. Ok? So it has developed differently. And basically, there has been loads of research about the planet, looking into that planet, ok? And it has found a lot of interesting discoveries in terms of the differences with our country (UK) and a country called Ested in planet Stratum. And the key to what I am talking about is that it has a different type of culture. So you know in our culture, women are more kind of sexualised and stuff; men are more sexualised over there. And there has been a history of oppression towards men over there. So for example, religion has created the men as the ‘other’, as women have been over here. For example, there are many adult magazines where heterosexual women are the target, which are very sexualised.

Participant 3: So have they got massive dicks and stuff? I’m not being gross.

Interviewer: I am not going to go into specifics.

Participant 3: *Joking.* I don’t really want to talk about dicks to be honest.

Interviewer: Anyway, another finding is that several newspapers, mainstream newspapers, within the country have ‘Page 3’ males and there is a lot of advertising and billboards and male models in suggestive poses, selling general products too. Also, there is a strong beauty industry, such as cosmetic surgery, primary used by men. Women are less concerned by what they look like, in general, in comparison to men. In the sex industry, there are a lot of men in prostitution and lap dancing...
Participant 3: Eughhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

Interviewer:... *Carrying on with laughter in the background.* And in the sex industry in general. Primarily for heterosexual women. And heterosexual women when they work in the sex industry are mainly for lesbians.

Participant 3: You what?

Interviewer: When women work in the sex industry their main clients are lesbians.

Participant 3: So the ‘prosies’...

*Laughter.*

Participant 3: No it’s the prostitute, or the sex worker? They’re not the men anymore?

Interviewer: No, they are primarily for lesbians, when women. But the men are mainly for women. And basically homosexuality, erm the male sexuality is eroticised.

Participant 3: It is what, sorry?

Interviewer: Eroticised. Where it is on magazines and stuff. Whereas lesbians are stigmatised and very rarely featured on magazines and stuff.

Participant 3: So it is really backwards then?

Participant 5: So it is like the opposite.

Interviewer: This is for the you to decide, I am not putting words into your mouth. So that is what the discussion is kind of about.

*The tape didn’t pick up the discussion, so missed this part.*
Interviewer: Does anybody else feel a bit disgusted at lap-dancers being men? Anybody, or not?

*Laughter.*

Participant 3: No, I mean the actual tie between lap-dancing and men.

Participant 1: No, I don’t think you commonly associate lap-dancing with men, or sex workers in general.

Interviewer: What, lap-dancing with men? Do you mean consumers?

Participant 1: No, I mean here, the suppliers. If somebody says there is a lap-dancer, you wouldn’t assume it was a male, as you wouldn’t for a sex worker in general.

Participant 3: They are though, aren’t they? I don’t know any sex workers, but look at Pretty Woman; which glamorises the sex trade.

Interviewer: Well that’s the problem.

*Laughter.*

Interviewer: In the international context, there are a lot of men who are sex workers due to racial power for example, as a lot of women go to other countries to have sex.

Participant 5: Is that when they think they have a woman but it turns out to be a man?
Interviewer: Anyway, this is a different issue. No one else has got anything else to say? So we have basically covered what was the first question. *Note – participants became more engaged as the focus group developed.*

*Tape recording bad.*

Interviewer: So you are all right with it being on a magazine, but not a newspaper?

Participant 3: I am fine with magazines like that (lad mags etc), I don’t personally use them, but its fine if people want to do it if that’s what they are interested in I wouldn’t stop them from doing that. But newspapers, if you want to read a story. Like I bought this newspaper for *X-Factor* right. And then I opened this page, and this bloody woman was there and all the people on the bus thought I bought it to stare at her boobs.

Interviewer: So is everyone on the consensus, or does anyone think differently? Does anyone think that newspapers should be allowed to have ‘Page 3’?

Participant 1: I think there is an interesting point that participant 3 makes about the boundaries how they blur between popular culture with things such as *X-Factor* and pornography.

Participant 3: It was on the front page about Cher and *X-Factor*, and then you opened it and you saw this naked woman.

*Laughter.*

Participant 3: You could, you know, have a twelve-year old buying it who likes Cher.
Participant 5: But it’s been like that since the 70s, and Samantha Fox.

Participant 3: She’s a lesbian, isn’t she?

Participant 5: Yeah.

*Some general talk about Samantha Fox.*

Interviewer: Does anybody else have any objections to pictures of naked women being in newspapers?

Participant 5: There should be separate magazines on the top shelf with blank covering.

Interviewer: No I meant, should it be in a newspaper?

*Talking over each other.*

Participant 4: If you want to look at that sort of stuff you should be able to, but it doesn’t have to be in every magazine.

Participant 3: You just have to google boobs.

Participant 1: It’s not news is it? *Rhetorical question.*

Participant 3: Not like I’ve done it.

Participant 1: That’s what I was saying though, there is a line...

Interviewer: You mean it blurs?

Participant 1: Yeah, it kind of bleeds into, that’s what I was trying to say.

*General talking – tape poor, but conversation moves onto talking about sex in films.*
Participant 4: If it goes with the story.

Participant 3: If it was a nice romantic film, a bit like Titanic.

Participant 1: Yeah, if it is justified within the context of the story.

Participant 5: In the olden days, there was just the suggestion and it left more to the imagination. It is far more embarrassing now.

*People talking over each other.*

Participant 5: The annoying thing is that a lot of these pictures is that they are all airbrushed, aren’t they? *Rhetorical, seeking reassurance.* You can have someone who is very insecure, thinking I’ll never look like that, but they never look like that anyway.

*Tape poor again.*

Interviewer: I will go onto the next question. What do people think about the specific gender roles in this like alternative planet?

Participant 2: On the planet, women are more powerful.

Interviewer: Would you say that’s a good thing?

Participant 3: It’s about bloody time, I’d say.

*Laughter.*

Participant 2: I think it’s a bad thing.

Participant 3: He would say that, because he’s a man aint he? *Rhetorical question.* But I’d say it’s good because that’s different to how it is today.
Participant 1: But that’s not equality, there is a similar issue in regards to positive discrimination.

*Confusion regarding what positive discrimination is – participant 3 signals that it has gone over her head.*

Interviewer: Wait, participant 3. Positive discrimination is like quotas in politics, where there is a specific number of women positions regardless of their ability. So you are discriminating in their favour. You see what I am on about?

*Blank stare.*

Interviewer: Say for example...

Participant 3: I don’t know what you are on about.

Interviewer: For example, say there’s a quota in politics and 10% of MPs have to be women, regardless of their ability, just because they’re women they get the job. That’s positive discrimination.

Participant 3: What does that have to do with it?

Interviewer: Well we were talking about... *Then I signalled to participant 1 to continue what he was saying.*

Participant 1: Because it’s like an inversion of when the other gender is oppressed; there’s no equality. It just reverses the polls of oppression.

Participant 2: The thing that struck me is all I see is one gender having power over the other one. I don’t identify with genders personally. *The tape went quiet...* I disagree with the world I live in but I wouldn’t want to live in that one either.
Participant 3: I only said I liked it, erm...

Participant 2: It’s a reaction...

Interviewer: Do you feel oppressed now?

Participant 3: Yeah, but it (Ested) isn’t right. It would be better if it didn’t matter if you were a man or a woman. They’re both extremes.

Participant 5: There are strong people in both male and female...

Participant 3: Why can’t they just have male lap-dancers?..

Interviewer: You were against that earlier?

Participant 3: Only because I am not used to it.

Interviewer: Fair enough.

People talking over each other. A general talk about lap-dancing.

Participant 3: You go in there (lap-dancing clubs) purposely for a lap-dance... I think that’s fine. I think it’s a bit seedy if you just walk into a bar and do a lap-dance, but when you walk into a lap-dancing bar and know it’s a lap-dancing bar, you can’t really complain.

Interviewer: So it’s your knowledge that it is one?

Participant 4: It’s like earlier when you were saying about ‘Page 3’ girls, it shouldn’t be in there as if you wanted to look at it you can go to certain places to find it, it’s the same with lap-dancing.

Tape went poor again.
Participant 1: Well it comes down to the harm principle.

Others look bemused, whilst laughing.

Participant 1: Well the principle is, liberty is justifiable to the point where it does no harm to another.

Interviewer: Like Beetham?

Participant 1: Yeah, I think it’s a liberal thing.

Laughter, due to confusion.

Participant 3: Have you seen our faces?

Laughter.

Participant 5: If you go to like the shops and you’re looking and it’s not high up (lads mags etc) and it’s not covered up, you think “oh shit I’m looking at boobs.”

A general agreement.

Participant 3: Yeah, it’s quite embarrassing.

Interviewer: But say if it was covered up, would it be better to work in a newsagents?

Participant 3: I wouldn’t mind working there anyway.

Interviewer: No, I mean you said you feel embarrassed.

Participant 3: I think also, its different for straight women. I don’t have any personal objections as in lesbian relationships you have the same insecurities;
whereas, for straight women you have to live up to the man’s expectations of what he views perfect, whereas lesbians you are both not going to be perfect.

Participant 5: I don’t have any insecurities.

Interviewer: I think that’s a fair point actually.

Participant 3: It doesn’t bother me because whoever I go out with, they will have the same insecurities as me.

Interviewer: So in this other country, do you think men have...

Participant 3: ...men have them insecurities.

A general talk.

Interviewer: Right, anyway; I need to track back. Does Ested, the country, sound more desirable than the UK?

Participant 3: Yes... Actually, what am I on about; no I wouldn’t. Men lap-dancers and men ‘Page 3’s’, no.

Interviewer: So you prefer women to do it than men?

Participant 3: Bloody hell. Ironically.

Interviewer: Well you said you weren’t into it earlier?

Participant 3: I’m not, but if I had to choose which one I’d watch.

General laughter.

Interviewer: What about you (directed towards participant 1)?
Participant 1: An oppressive social construct oppresses both genders in some way.
The dominant culture will have its own expectations, like, it’s like lad culture here. So females in that culture will also have expectations to behave in a certain way.

Interviewer: So like masculinity?

Participant 1: Yeah.

Participant 2: So like us not being real men then?

General laughter.

Participant 1: Yeah.

Participant 2: So let’s just come out as not real men that is it. The expectation of you or I (addressing participant 1) are not as oppressive (people pointing at participant 4 and wondering if he is a ‘real’ man), but... I don’t know you (addressing participant 4) well and I don’t know whether you feel that way but from what you are saying that is kind of what it is.

Participant 3: No, I disagree there. You like football, you like women..

Participant 4: Yeah but...

Participant 3: You like beer, you like films, you like action films.

Interviewer: But to be honest participant 3, participant 1 and 2 like football and women.

Talking over each other.

Participant 4: I’m not like a builder...
Participant 3: I suppose you are quite feminine (addressing participant 4).

Interviewer: So you wouldn’t say you were a traditional man?

Participant 4: Yeah.

General talk.

Participant 1: But in terms of like men as well they feel like if they talk about their emotions... in the sense that women would have that same pressure in the sense that if they were expected to behave in a certain way and they deviated from that norm that is a oppressive social structure, but it is a different form of oppression but it is still a form of oppression.

Participant 2: That is what interests me about what you said about the harm principle...

Participant 1: Yeah...

Participant 2: That ok, that existing on a top shelf doesn’t harm me directly as I don’t see it but I feel harmed by the fact that we live in a society that thrives on that kind of oppression. I might be a radical or an extremist but I don’t want to live in a world like this.

Interviewer: Would you want it outlawed? Would you say the solution is that?

Participant 2: Err. Education, perhaps to do with different gender expectations.

Interviewer: Would you want regulation like for that that existed whilst education was happening or would you get rid of it?
Participant 2: No, I think as my mother said you need to tackle the cause of the gender expectations.

Participant 5: Why can’t you sell it in adult shops? That what’s I was thinking. So the person buying it has to walk into the shop.

Participant 3: In agreement. So the person gets ID’d.

Interviewer: What about blanket banning?

Participant 3: There doesn’t need to be blanket banning.

Interviewer: In a newsagents?

Participant 3: No, you get rid of it out of a newsagents and put them in an adult shop.

Interviewer: So you would prefer that to blanket banning in newsagents?

Participant 3: Yeah, you would have to be a legal age of 18 before going in there.

Interviewer: That is an interesting point.

Tape recorder poor again.

Participant 2: It’s not news is it? It’s like the ten o’clock news getting their kit off; that’s the television equivalent.

Laughing and general talk.

Participant 5: On one of those channels, is it ITV or whatever? When it gets to like midnight and then there’s all these adverts for chat lines and you have all these girls there snogging each other in bikinis saying ‘call me’. And you’re not talking to them, you are talking to some...
Talked over.

Interviewer: Would you say outlaw that then?

Participant 5: Well the only blokes they have on are gay blokes, they don’t have sexy George Clooney’s asking...

Interviewer: Would you be all right if it was equality then in terms of...

Participant 5: No, because you are still going to be there exploiting people.

Interviewer: Would you want it in magazines and stuff that could be found in sex shops?

Talking over each other.

Interviewer: If you got it off the television would you be alright with it being in specially tailored sex shops? Or would you want it completely gone?

Participant 5: At the end of the day, the women who do it don’t respect themselves do they? And the men that buy it don’t respect them.

Participant 3: It’s easy cash.


Participant 1: I think they have got self-esteem issues.

Interviewer: Do you think they have got self-respect or not? Directed towards participant 4.

Participant 4: Not really, it’s just an option for them really.
Participant 3: No, I don’t put them down. I think if you had the confidence, if I had the confidence, to do things that get hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of pounds an hour I would do it.

Interviewer: You think that they get hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of pounds?

Participant 3: They get loads.

Interviewer: Would you say that sex workers’ on the streets would get that?

Participant 3: No.

Participant 1: I think it’s hard to generalise.

Participant 3: It’s more like mainstream getting your tits out, if you had the confidence to do it you would get so much money for that. If you were good looking and you had the confidence… If you were a stereotypical woman who has massive tits and you can flash your tits out for a few minutes and get a few hundred quid.

Interviewer: Do you think the main reason is money then?

Participant 3: I think the most reason is money (participant 4 in the background going “yeah, yeah”.) I don’t know what else they are getting from it.

Interviewer: Can I just go on a diversion here? Would you say it’s the actual system we live in money wise? Would you say that’s the capitalist system?

Participant 3: Why would you let anyone shag you that you didn’t know? They get money don’t they?
Interviewer: So do you think that money is the key factor?

Participant 3: Yeah, because if there was no money why would they do it?

Interviewer: What do you think the solution to that is?

Participant 3: There is no solution.

Participant 2: One solution.

Interviewer: Revolution.

Laughter.

Participant 1: I think it kind of goes back to what I said, I think it’s hard to
generalise because there will always be exceptions to the rule. So it’s interesting
that that is the knee jerk reaction so it’s kind of like, you know what I mean, it
assumes that...

Interviewer: What, that it’s loads of money?

Participant 1: Yeah, I think that’s true in the bulk of cases but then there’s always
exceptions to the rule.

Interviewer: Do you think that there is no solution?

Participant 1: Well, I think the solution is material economic changes at the end of
the day, isn’t it? At the end of the day, money is, we all need money to live. But
that’s because of the system and the structure of system we live under.

Participant 3: Well come on like...

People talking over each other.
Interviewer: Say, the system where everything was equally distributed, would you say...

Participant 3: I wouldn’t want that.

Interviewer: But, say if it did; do you still think people would do things like pornography for money?

Participant 3: No, I don’t think, well there are probably some people who get off on being confident and getting all the attention and they get people saying “you’re amazing and you look gorgeous”.

Participant 4: Yeah, erm, there’s always some regularly on Big Brother.

Participant 3: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you think that’s to do with the system then?

Talking over each other.

Participant 4: There are some bad idols like Katy Price.

Participant 3: There are lot of girls that follow her. You are not going to get rid of that. Like if you did all that Communist crap, you going to start having issues that doctors won’t train. Why would you train up to be a doctor if you could get the same for being a cleaner? Why?

Laughing.

Participant 3: What’s wrong with that?

Interviewer: Nothing. I understand your reasoning.

General talk about the merits of Communism etc.
Interviewer: Do you think that Ested sounds too much like a made up country?

*Tape too quiet.*

Interviewer: Does that country that I have just explained sound realistic?

Participant 5: Yeah, it sounds possible.

*Tape too quiet.*

Participant 4: Men have always been leaders. *Note the start of this conversation was too quiet.*

Interviewer: So is it too hard to culturally shift, is that what you mean? *Directed towards participant 4.*

Participant 4: Yeah.

Participant 3: I don’t know, as Queen Victoria was a good leader.

Participant 1: But they were masculinised in many ways.

Interviewer: Like Thatcher?

Participant 1: They were given masculine qualities to make them acceptable as women.

Interviewer: Like Thatcher, feminists hate her. They thought it undermined the cause.

Participant 3: But I don’t like Thatcher.

*Laughter.*

Interviewer: But I mean she was like a powerful leader.
Participant 1: But precisely one of the criticisms of Thatcher was that she didn’t
care that she was atypical. She didn’t care what she was doing to the mining
community. So she was atypical in that sense so an atypical woman.

Interviewer: Not meeting her gender?

Participant 1: Yeah, the gender binaries still operated on her and they operated in
a different way. Do you know what I mean? The fact that she didn’t care made her
not a woman.

Interviewer: I will ask another question now. Is there anything that you would
take for that country for your own?

Quiet tape again.

Participant 4: There kind of needs to be an in-between version.

Interviewer: So take a bit from that?

Participant 4: Yeah, yeah.

Participant 3: Take a bit of everything.

Tape quiet.

Participant 3: If you want it, you can find it.

Interviewer: So would it be like you would be able to find everything equally, do
you know what I mean, so it wouldn’t be hard to find a heterosexual man (sex
worker)?

People talking over each other.
Participant 5: You’re not finding a relationship are you? You are just finding sex.

That’s why you don’t really want it on the adverts.

Interviewer: Where would you be happy with the adverts being?

Participant 5: Just not on the telly. There’s sex channels on telly already and stuff.

Quiet tape again.

Interviewer: Do you agree with sex channels?

Participant 5: Erm, I think there is probably too many and I think you should have to pay a bigger subscription.

Interviewer: Higher?

Participant 5: Yeah.

Tape quiet.

Participant 3: When I was bored, I was looking at them and I was watching how sad they were and there was this gay chat and people texting in to these women and it was really funny...

Participant 5:....and they are getting loads of money for it...

Participant 3: Yeah, it’s just pathetic. And then people were texting each other saying, “hey wonderful, you’re hot”. It’s just fun to watch.

Tape quiet.

Participant 5: I think what participant 3 said (earlier, when the tape did not pick up all of the conversation, but was when the respondents were discussing whether
there is anything they would take from Ested for the UK) if it was like that (Ested) then you could say; now you know what it feels like...

Participant 3: It’s probably the only way they are going to realise it needs to be equal is having a taste of how it feels...

Participant 5: It’s quite comical how you have interpreted it. You have made it look farcical.

Participant 3: Yeah, like quite comical that we looking and going “oh my God, men lap-dancing.”

Interviewer: Well that’s interesting in itself, isn’t it?

*Tape goes quiet again.*

Interviewer: Is there anything you would like to change about Ested?

*People talking over each other.*

Participant 1: I think we covered most of it already. Yes, Ested reverses the polls of oppression. I think it’s interesting what participant 5 said about whether that is what is needed...

*General laugh and talk.*

Participant 1: What would be interesting would be if you were to take the survey out the street and see how men reacted; would it make them more likely to be in favour of equality, you know what I mean?

Interviewer: If they experienced it?

Participant 1: Yeah, or were forced to think about it in that way.
Interviewer: Do you mean like an alternative?

Participant 1: Yeah.

*General talk.*

Interviewer: Do you think men would joke about this? Do you think it would work as utopia? If you took it to a man, if you took this construction and you went down the street...

Participant 3: Yeah, my driving instructor is like that...he’d be like, men are much better than this, men can do anything better and what he’d say to that is that like “well if you did that participant 3 you’d probably have a really bad messed up world because men can do everything better and women would fuck up the world and it be a really shitty world.”

Interviewer: Do you think you would get a lot of jokes from it?

*People talking over each other.*

Participant 1: *Drowned out a bit by others speaking.* Yeah but I mean, you got people who will always think that way... people like that you are never going to change because they’re always going to be like that.

Interviewer: What would you do to the people you wouldn’t change?

Participant 1: Well no, I think it be interesting for the people in the middle. But you can’t imprison somebody for having a view. Thought police, innit? Then you get into things like pre-crime and things like that, and the theoretical problems of that kind of thing and attacks on liberty and things like that.

*General talk.*
Participant 1: But it might force people into thinking about it, like people like your driving instructor participant 3 they are never gonna, they will be...

Participant 3: Be like that...

Participant 1: They will, because they are just like that, as some people are engrained like that.

*People talking over each other agreeing that the driving instructor wouldn’t change.*

Interviewer: Say if you changed the material structures, would it change him?

Participant 1: If you changed the material structure then I think you would change people like participant 3’s driving instructor.

Interviewer: You think you would?

Participant 1: Well yeah. But that’s the only thing that can, that’s the whole point. I don’t think that participant 3’s driving instructor is mainstream, I think there is a middle that’s not really thought about it.

*Participant 3 talking about driving instructor in the background to others drowning out participant 1.*

Participant 1: Well I think there are men who don’t really think about the issue, you know what I mean. I think participant 3’s driving instructor has already thought about the issues and made up his mind so it wouldn’t challenge them. But as a tool for making people think, that’s what I am saying.

Interviewer: Right ok. I get you. Anyone want to add anything?
Participant 2: I think there’s something err sinister and dangerous about the idea that we basically have to oppress a people so that they have to understand oppression. You know what I mean? I see your point... (tape goes quiet)... there is something ethical or moral (laughs), I have issues with that morally, I hate to think that we would have to endure something when we have empathy anyway...

Participant 1: I think this is more like a catalyst for thinking...

Participant 2: Yeah, yeah.

Participant 3: It’s not the ideal way.

General agreement.

Participant 1: I think people in the middle don’t think about these things. It’s changing them that’s the key.

Participant 2: Yeah, yeah.

Participant 1: There’s no point trying to change Participant 1’s driving instructor because they’ve made up their mind.

Laughter.

Participant 2: But that scenario would probably provoke his, get his cogs turning...

Participant 1: Yeah. That’s it, gets people sort of like brains moving...

General talk, laughter.

Participant 5: Men are mentally different to women,... Quiet tape...they go out and hunter-gather and have an urge to mate so that’s their excuse.

Interviewer: Would you say that’s right though?
Participant 5: No. That’s what their excuse is. *Tape quiet again.*

Interviewer: Would you say there is a biological truth in that?

Participant 5: It’s a good excuse.

Interviewer: So it’s not real?

Participant 5:... I don’t think it’s real.

Interviewer: So you are saying that it’s constructed to make men better?

Participant 4: Yeah.

*Finished.*

**Appendix 6 – Follow-Up Interviews Analysis**

Below is the semi-structured interview schedule I used when interviewing respondents:

Question 1) There were comments that the country, Ested, was ‘backwards’ and I just wanted to ask whether you have any further comments regarding this analysis?

Question 2) Something I picked up from the focus group was that context appeared to be key when discussing sexualised images, as participants objected to such images being included within a newspaper but did not seem to mind if found
within a ‘romantic’ film, for instance. I was wondering if you have any related, further comments?

Question 3) What did you think of the discussion on the effects of people’s sexual orientation upon sexualised imagery?

Question 4) Did you learn anything from the focus group?

Question 5) Do you have any additional comments regarding how realistic Ested is?

Question 6) There were comments that the country seemed rather comical and I was wondering whether you would like to comment upon this observation?

Below are summary notes regarding the interviews I conducted with the respondents in line with the above questions; note these interviews were short and so diversions from the central questions were restricted. Also note that I did have to explain the questions in different ways for different participants.

**Participant 1**

*Question 1*

He believed that whether you saw the country as being backwards or not, depended on what you meant by backwards. He said that it was not backwards in a derogative sense but rather it was backwards because it was an inversion of here/the UK.

*Question 2*

He stated that context always matters, as you cannot judge things in abstract.
Question 3

He argued that people’s experiences/values are influenced by their sexuality.

Question 4

He stated he had learnt about different perspectives – which he saw as a positive, as it helped him understand other people’s views and experiences.

Question 5

He believed that Ested was realistic in its inversion of the current reality. He likened it to Star Trek, arguing the parallel universe (Ested) is realistic, despite the striking differences.

Question 6

He did not believe the world was comical, as for him, humour is about exaggerating current reality and making it seem absurd and he did not think Ested did this.

Participant 2

Question 1

He thinks he knew why people said that the country was backwards because, in his opinion, it is the same as the world we live in now.

Question 2

Citing Foucault’s “context is everything”, he states that context is important as, for example, nudity can have artistic merit within a specific context.

Question 3
He argued that the very existence of these images has an impact upon everyone regardless of their sexuality. For instance, he argued it would have an effect on ‘masculinised’ women, as there will be difficulties in engaging with other women due to other people’s expectations regarding women.

**Question 4**

He believed the focus group had been a learning process, as he had developed his opinions throughout the dialogue.

**Question 5**

He felt the country was very realistic and reliable, because of our country being so similar. He stated that the country is the same if you remove the identification of gender and instead see it as one gender oppressing another gender.

**Question 6**

He argued it is interesting that something can be seen as absurd when adapted into a different context.

**Participant 3**

**Question 1**

She said that the word backwards was employed because of the gender-roles typically associated with women being done by men in Ested. She stated that
whilst it would be nice to have Ested to make men suffer and see how it feels as a “ha ha”; we need a bit of both – so Ested and the UK.

**Question 2**

She argued that it is about appealing to the right target audience; as if you go into a sex shop then you are wanting to buy that material but if you go into a newsagents you do not necessarily want to see such material.

**Question 3**

As a lesbian, she stated sexualised imagery does not bother her personally, as she feels both people in the relationship will go through the same insecurities. This is in contrast to a heterosexual relationship, where men have different expectations. But if it was the other way around, as in Ested, men would be insecure.

**Question 4**

She said she had learnt something from the focus group, as she had not expected men to agree with certain things they did, as she associated them with activities such as watching pornography.

**Question 5**

She stated that Ested was realistic in the sense that it is like it is now but the other way around (gender wise), but that there is no point switching it around (except for “ha ha”) in the long-term; it is better to combine.

**Question 6**
She said that it was comical, as it makes fun out of serious situations; which helps us realise the real ways in which women are exploited – so the vignettes were a good technique to use to expose the seriousness of the situation.

**Participant 4**

**Question 1**

He did not agree with the analysis of it being backwards, as he says it is basically what this country is, but with the genders swapped around.

**Question 2**

He stated that putting ‘Page 3’ in newspapers is wrong, as if you are wanting to look at/watch pornography, you can find it on the internet.

**Question 3**

He did not believe sexual orientation made much of a difference, as if a lesbian saw a model, for example, he said this would still effect lesbian’s views.

**Question 4**

He said he had not learnt anything from the focus group but the focus group had helped him learn about other people’s opinions.

**Question 5**

He did not believe Ested was realistic because it is basically like here/the UK but with the genders swapped around.

**Question 6**
He felt that in some ways it was comical; for instance, he could not imagine male lap-dancing happening. But in other ways no, as it is basically the same but with the genders switched.

**Participant 5**

*Question 1*

She felt that the word backwards makes out that it is some sort of unsophisticated colony and therefore it is disrespectful to women, as it casts negative associations with women being in charge. She believed that this is because people are conditioned into relying on men, and that the current situation is created by an undeveloped mentality, which she associated with men. She contemplated whether the men in Ested would have more respect for women as they are a lot stronger (relating this to biological traits such as child bearing and the body).

*Question 2*

She stated that it was a surprise if you open ‘Page 3’, say in a waiting room, as you think – (this is a direct quote):

> It shouldn’t be called a newspaper, as its not news, women’s breasts have been around for years.

In relation to this, the issue of airbrushing and the pressures on women to live up to unrealistic ‘ideals’ were commented upon. She believed it was an excuse for men to have a ‘cheap thrill’ from something that is not real.

*Question 3*
She stated that you could get two women feeling insecure in a relationship if it was not stable, for instance. She believed it is related to the type of relationship, as equal relationships - for her - would not result in insecurity. She said this was true for all sexual orientated relationships. She therefore argued the answer is very complex.

*Question 4*

She felt she had learnt that people are no longer willing to accept the status quo, comparing it to her experiences of growing up; she felt that women are now demanding more respect and acceptance.

*Question 5*

She argued that if Ested was not realistic then the UK is not either. She believed that Ested acted as a sounding board that we can use to challenge men’s views. She believed it would be funny to see the effects such a world would have upon men for a limited period of time.

*Question 6*

She argued many men live behind manmade structures/newspapers (a fantasy world). She stated that if they were to have this taken away from them they would have to show people whom they really are. For her, the humiliation would allow women to release tension that has built up for many years because of the consistent degrading portrayal of women meaning they are not valued as people. Whilst admitting she is generalising, she argues such a release would allow women to say, “now let’s see how you feel”.