2. WHO SHOULD DO THE DISHES NOW? EXPLORING GENDER AND HOUSEWORK IN CONTEMPORARY URBAN SOUTH WALES

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ABSTRACT

This paper revisits Jane Pilcher's (1994) seminal chapter 'Who should do the dishes? Three generations of Welsh women talking about men and housework'. Two decades on from the original study, the paper explores this question in contemporary south Wales by drawing upon data generated in a study of mothers and daughters residing in a Welsh, marginalized, urban housing area. The paper argues that in contemporary Wales, the domestic sphere remains a site of inequality, where women are negotiating the impossibility of being both in full-time employment and meeting the ideology of the 'Welsh Mam'. Furthermore, the work of women and the accompanying expectations have moved from being peripheral to becoming central; this places women in a psychological impasse where they identify themselves as 'lazy' when they cannot simultaneously fulfil these roles to the unreachable standards of the new respectable working-class femininity.

INTRODUCTION

According to the historian, Beddoe (2000), the lives of Welsh women have been shaped by Nonconformity, religion, industrialization and a virulent strain of patriarchy, which have meant that in Wales, more than other parts of Britain, women have been denied access to the public sphere. However, today women are far more visible in the labour market and have seen a brief period of gender parity in the National Assembly for Wales, which engendered a Government responsive to the issues of women (Chaney et al., 2007). Such developments

suggest that, perhaps, gender roles in Wales are being challenged. However, examining demographic evidence provides a more conventional picture.

In 2006 women's average hourly pay was 10.9 per cent lower than that of their male counterparts, reinforcing the concept of the gendered pay gap (WAG, 2008). Additionally, women make up only 9 per cent of Welsh council leaders, 16 per cent of secondary head teachers and none of the chief executives of Wales's top 100 private companies; and these statistics suggest that 'progress towards getting more women into positions of power is far too slow' (EHRC, 2009, p. 3). If gender equality in public life is 'far too slow', then perhaps we need to examine the situation of Welsh women in their private lives.

The ideology of the women enclosed inside the assumed safe space of the home is the traditional legacy that most girls inherit and there is a significant divide between boys' and girls' use of space (Dodman, 2003; Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Griffin, 1985; Skelton, 2000; Tucker and Matthews, 2001). Accordingly, this paper examines the positioning of mothers and daughters within the confines of the home and the moral boundaries that lay out respectable and acceptable bench marks. Of course women are not cultural dopes without individual agency; however, as Butler (2004, p. 3) suggests, agency always exists within a paradox for it is opened by the fact that people are 'constituted by a social world' they never choose, which can act to police women and trap them in patriarchal relationships.

As Page and Jha (2009) maintain, gendered labour divisions within the home are a cross-cultural phenomenon and in each of the seven countries they researched, girls were given a larger proportion of family responsibilities and household chores than their male siblings: Wales is no exception. In her earlier study, Jane Pilcher (1994) explored housework across three generations of Welsh women and found that despite their greater rhetoric of egalitarianism women continued to have the main responsibility for housework, even when involved in paid employment.

Pilcher (1994) conducted interviews with families of Welsh women, mothers, daughters and adult-granddaughters between 1989 and 1990. She argued that the oldest generation of women, mothers, born around 1915, had been 'socialised to invest their female identities within the domestic sphere, as dictated by the cultural expectations of the time' (1994, p. 44); and that they claimed the responsibility of domestic work and resisted the idea of male participation; despite the fact that their husbands had retired. The second generation, the daughters, had grown up in a different socioeconomic climate and many had entered the workplace. For these women, Pilcher describes a pattern of continuity in that responsibility for the domestic sphere still fell to

women and significant participation in the domestic sphere by men was resisted; however, there was a realization that their situation was inequitable and the domestic arrangement could be a 'bone of contention' (1994, p. 45).

The third generation, the granddaughters, born in 1967 had grown up in a society influenced by feminist ideologies and in their interviews the participants took up an egalitarian vocabulary, based on fairness and sharing. However, at the point of interview most of this group were still living at home and had not experienced living independently with a male partner; in this way their discussions were anticipatory and philosophical. Those young women who had married and left home maintained an egalitarian discourse; however, despite this rhetoric, their reported domestic routines suggested that they were, in fact, largely responsible for housework, despite having outside employment. Leading Pilcher to conclude that although 'younger generations of Welsh women may no longer be investing their identities in the domestic sphere . . . they continue to invest their time and effort alongside paid employment' (1994, p. 45).

More recently, Warren (2003) argues that alongside a gender-based approach to the study of the domestic division of labour it is important to acknowledge the role of class. Analysing data from the British Household Panel Survey, Warren employs the categories of time-wealth and time-poverty to examine gendered and classed differentiations. Time wealth/poverty debates have largely been restricted to professional/managerial couples with little attention given to the experience of working-class families. Redressing this balance, Warren (2003) finds that working-class dual-waged couples were more likely to fall into the time-poverty category than their middle-class counterparts. Furthermore, women in these couples contributed a proportionally higher share of caring and domestic work than both their partners, and women in professional roles, who can often afford to contract out domestic tasks.

Alongside the disparity in the actual physical engagement with domestic labour, contemporary research also documents the pervasive rhetoric of a false equity highlighted by Pilcher (1994). For example, Miller (2011) studied parenthood, and in her interviews with both mothers and fathers she found that despite the presentation of egalitarian gender relations and social arrangements in their talk, the actuality was that every day practices were inflected by traditional gendered expectations, in which the woman was centralized as primary care giver. Similarly, Pahl (2005) conducted focus groups about patterns of money management within the household and found that participants' discourses offered a gloss of gender equality, but that beneath this rhetoric gender differences in spending responsibilities that discriminated against women were evident, particularly in relation to paying for children and childcare.

Again, exploring money management, Burgoyne et al. (2008) argue that while analyses of married couples have revealed gender-associated asymmetries in access to household resources, cohabitants are more likely to 'write their own scripts' according to their relational practices – with less emphasis on the traditional roles associated with marriage. Drawing on data from the International Social Survey Programme modules on Family and Changing Gender Roles, Vogler et al. (2008) also argue that cohabiting couples, particularly young childless and older post-marital partnerships, unlike married couples, keep money partly or completely separate. However, cohabiting parents tend to see their relationships as similar or equivalent to marriage and organize money in very similar ways to married parents.

This research, then, could suggest that gender issues are easily conflated with the ideological meanings of the institute of marriage, so that being a wife or a husband produces asymmetries, rather than simply gender. However, the splitting of finances can in itself reinforce gender inequalities where one partner earns significantly more than the other, and the data discussed earlier in relation to gendered pay gaps would suggest the higher earner is generally the man. Furthermore, Vogler et al. (2008) recognize the ways in which parenthood presents itself as a catalyst for returning to more traditional gendered role taking, and returning to Miller (2011), the taking-up of the role of mother retains a duty of active care that is not as explicit in commonplace understandings of the role of fatherhood.

Polarities have been institutionally rooted in the marriage contract and the labour market, and today household organization remains a crucial dimension of intimate relationships, where everyday practices sit at the interface between the couple and the wider society. In this way, relationships mediate the extent to which gender inequalities in the labour market are transposed into inequalities within the home, and in both spaces it is women who are disadvantaged, despite post-feminist discourses of 'girl power' (May, 2008; McRobbie, 2008; Walby, 2011). These findings are reflected in the qualitative accounts of the mothers in the following discussion. The research setting often informs the interview questions that the researcher would ask, and in this study the images of places that were produced visually by the participants kindled my interest in their domestic spaces.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Mackay (2010) argues that the distinctiveness of Wales, in terms of its political life and culture, has grown considerably over the last decade, nevertheless,

beneath the imagery of the definitive nation, Wales remains a complex and divided land. Wales is often presented as a country where locality, community and belonging are of particular importance, but the nation can also be viewed as 'existing in relations of a paradox or antagonism' (Massey, 1994, p. 3). Such variation is captured in Balsom's three-Wales model that distinguishes between 'Welsh Wales', 'British Wales' and 'Y Fro Gymraeg' (Balsom, 1985).

It is arguable whether or not Balsom's neat three-way geographical split is workable, but there are distinctions drawn between urban and rural, Welsh speaking and English speaking, south and north and even the neighbouring town. As Day (2010, p. 33) comments: 'it is striking how important geographical differences of place seem to be organising these perceptions of social difference. They imply that the individuals concerned possess a map of social variations, arranged according to the compass.' Place, then, even within one nation, can be divided linguistically, culturally and economically.

Divisions of class are both powerful and pervasive, and one way of examining this class divide is through geographical distribution. Morrison and Wilkinson (1995) argue that polarization has a spatial dimension that is illustrated in the creation of new ghettos of prosperity and poverty that now dominate the Welsh socioeconomic terrain; they term these divisions within Wales's towns and cities the 'Los Angelization' of socioeconomic terrain to draw parallels with the inequalities found in American cities, epitomized by the growth of gated communities, which insulate the wealthy from the poor (Low, 2003). Morrison and Wilkinson's (1995) ghettos are evident across Wales, and, as Evans (2010) comments, this separation means that poverty can easily be overlooked by those with more resources who will rarely encounter those on low incomes.

In contemporary Wales, then, areas of deprivation become stigmatized and those of low socioeconomic status become coded by their residence in the 'next-door yet foreign place where the other neighbours live' (Toynbee, 2003, p. 19). The research site, Hystryd[1] forms what Day (2010, p. 37) would refer to as a 'distinct urban village', in some ways mirroring the key features of place and belonging associated with the rural village, illustrating a detailed familiarity, with sets of relatives living nearby. However, Hystryd is not imagined as a rural idyll: it is an area of deprivation (WAG, 2008), especially in terms of employment, and here the loss of localized heavy industry has meant that – borrowing from Trezise (2005, p. 17) – the area could be remembered as a place 'where poverty surrounded you like a neck brace'.

Place is both an heuristic mechanism, a quick fix, for placing ourselves and others and a 'social construct arising out of our interactions with others around

us' (Scourfield et al., 2006, p. 15); but examining the coordinates of mothers' and daughters' social worlds in this study complicates the idea of a single Hystryd. For within Hystryd there are further complexities and a relational reconceptualization of identity. It is this multiplicity of place within a stigmatized ideal of singularity that I will explore in the paper, examining the gendered distinctions that continue to define a woman's place. Focusing on the private space of the home, the paper draws on discourses of acceptable working-class femininity (Davidoff, 1976; Skeggs, 2004), neoliberal notions of 'new motherhood' (May, 2008) and the pervasive disparity between the ideology of gender equality and the everyday engagement with domestic labour.

METHODOLOGY

The participants in this study were nine mothers and their nine daughters. Daughters were in one of three groups, the last year of primary school, the last year of compulsory education and post-compulsory education. Mothers of daughters in the two eldest groups tended to be born in the late sixties, in line with Pilcher's youngest generation of interviewees, adult-granddaughters, born in 1967 (1994). The mothers of daughters in primary school were born in the late seventies and are part of a younger generation than the participants in Pilcher's study.

The relationship between researcher and researched is key to the collection of reliable data (Pole, 2007). I previously lived in Hystryd, engendering a shared sense of geography, which positioned me as 'researcher near' and influenced the design of the study. Consequently, it was important to address my position as an indigenous researcher and make a deliberate cognitive effort to question my taken for granted assumptions of that which I had thought familiar (Mannay, 2010). In combination with earlier strategies (Delamont and Atkinson, 1995), I was influenced by research that employed participants' visual data to render the familiar setting more perceptible (Kaomea, 2003). Participants in this paper used the data production technique of photo-elicitation, collage, mapping and narratives[2] to express their perceptions of their social and physical environments, their everyday lives, reflections of their pasts, and aspirations and fears for the future.

The practice of asking participants to explain the visual images that they create has become a common feature of social science research and the visual and narrative data produced were discussed in elicitation interviews, privileging

the interpretative model of auteur theory (Rose, 2001). The notion that the most salient aspect in understanding a visual image is what the maker intended to show is often referred to auteur theory (Rose, 2001), and in this study auteur theory was required on a practical level because the interpretation of the audience is not necessarily the same as the narrative the image maker wanted to communicate, indeed it can often be markedly different (see Mannay, 2010).

These techniques proved useful within a participatory methodology and illustrated a potential for making the familiar strange (Mannay, 2010, 2013a); they also engendered in-depth qualitative accounts (Mannay, 2011; Mannay and Morgan 2013). Data presented were drawn from the wider research project that explored the everyday experiences of mothers and their daughters, residing in Hystryd; and the analysis of visual, narrative and interview data drew from a psychoanalytically informed psychosocial approach.[3] In this paper the analysis specifically applies the lens of gender to examine and foreground the 'place' of mothers and daughters in Hystryd, and explores the tension between the post-feminist discourses of equality (McRobbie, 2008; Walby, 2011) and the every-day negotiation of feminized identities in private space.

A WOMAN'S PLACE . . .

When I asked participants to create maps, collages and photographs for the 'place and space' data production, many images focused on the domestic sphere and featured paraphernalia of the domestic. Images included irons, vacuum cleaners and cleaning products, and such material culture was central to many of the mothers' interviews. Focusing on 'inside' and 'outside' of the home allowed an insight into the gendered space of everyday life within the home, and provided an opportunity to explore identity within domestic spaces.

It was apparent from the data produced that I could not consider place without thinking about gender divisions. In this paper, I am not arguing that gender is important particularly in Hystryd, or that such gender divisions are necessarily place specific. Rather, I argue that gender divisions are particularly important in the everyday lives of the participants. The paper demonstrates how individual experiences are intimately related to dominant and systemic features of social life within and outside of Hystryd, and that despite the rhetoric of egalitarianism expressed by younger generations (Pilcher, 1994); women con-tinue to operate within gendered spaces inside the confines of respectable femininity.

Housework – the busy mam

Many of the mothers constructed their ideas of 'place and space' with images of housework. Seven of the nine mothers interviewed created visual images for their 'place and space' data production and five of these mothers included images of household cleaning products or appliances with a total of thirteen such images across their collective visual data. Ironing seemed to hold a special position within the realm of housework and three mothers created images of irons for the visual data production and described working their way through great piles of clothes. Caroline[4] described ironing as her 'pet hate' but explained that she does not cut any corners, ironing sheets, pillows and quilt covers as well as clothes for five people. Caroline told me, 'it's not too bad with these irons they got now' and joked 'I'm not there all day like I used to be, just half a day'.

All of the mothers in the study, apart from one, Nina, took complete responsibility for ironing. Where husbands, partners and children took part in housework activities ironing was not part of their remit. Only Nina breaks ranks by only ironing her own clothes and nothing else, and explained 'I've got *too much* to do'. Nina's nineteen-year-old daughter, Roxanne, is the only daughter in the sample to feature images of housework in her visual data and this reflects the delegation by Nina, meaning that she is responsible for cleaning her own bedroom and doing her own laundry. However, overall there seemed to be only minimal engagement with housework by the daughters in the study. Where mothers reported this assistance from their daughters or husbands it was often coached in terms of 'helping' and being 'as good as gold'. This help then was appreciated but not expected, unlike their work, and contrasted with the complete absence of support from their sons, a point discussed in the following section.

Legitimate 'wifework'

Social and moral identities are intricately bound up with parenting and keeping the home clean are still essential elements, even in the prescribed ideal notion of 'new motherhood', depicting a woman who also holds down a full-time job (May, 2008). Pilcher (1994), exploring housework across three generations of Welsh women, found that the youngest women interviewed, who, like Patricia, was born in 1967, had been influenced by a society characterized by egalitarian and feminist ideologies. Despite their greater rhetoric of egalitarianism these women continued to have the main responsibility for housework, even when involved in paid employment, and this was seen as a source of tension within intimate relationships. However, despite having a part-time job and caring for

her grandchildren, Patricia did not exhibit any overt tension in her talk around housework:

> Patricia: *I don't mind housework, Dawn.*
> Interviewer: *You don't mind it.*
> Patricia: *No. I don't, no. I don't mind housework, like what stops me mostly is like time and things, you know.*
> Interviewer: *Yeah.*
> Patricia: *No, I don't mind housework; I like a nice clean house.*

Patricia invests her identity in the domestic sphere and the idea of cleanliness. The concept of cleanliness is intrinsically linked to the notion of maintaining a respectable working-class femininity (Davidoff, 1976; Skeggs, 2004). As Evans (2007) contends, dirt assumes a heightened importance when the metaphorical stereotypes of your class are muck, filth, dirt and waste products. In Wales, a country that many see as a colonized nation, such analogies can have a fervent and more sustained influence over the lives of women (see Aaron (1991) for a full discussion of the moral imperative to adopt an English middle-class model of femininity put forward in the 1847 Report of the Commissions of Inquiry, which she argues had a pervasive influence over the identities of generations of Welsh women). When I ask about who is seen as responsible for cleaning, Patricia also described the designation of housework as if it had no gender distinctions:

> Patricia: *I don't think he thinks it's like women's work as such, but* [pause] *the fact that I've always been home, I've always done it, Dawn.*

Interestingly, Patricia talked about what she thinks her husband 'thinks' and the point that she has always been home and her husband has always worked is a situation presented as an equitable split between working inside and outside of the home. In the last few years Patricia has worked part-time and acted as a childminder for her grandchildren, while her husband has remained in full-time employment, and this change has been met with some support from her husband and daughter. The adjective 'good' is used in Patricia's accounts to describe her husband's and daughter's housework.

> Patricia: *No he's pretty good, I got to be fair he's pretty good, like if I've got to work if I'm go to work in the morning and* [my husband is] *at home it's clean when I come home . . . You know like* [my husband] *wouldn't put the washing machine on and he wouldn't iron . . . He's good like that and you know he wouldn't expect me to clean the bath out after him.*

The housework of Patricia's husband is selective and seen as 'helping' Patricia, rather than as him having a direct responsibility for household chores, which is in keeping with previous research, where women were more likely to gain help with tasks, rather than for husbands to agree to accept ongoing accountability (Dempsey, 2000). Importantly, the peripheral activity of helping places the overall responsibility of domestic labour with the woman, and represents a condescending arrangement, whereby ownership of housework is ideologically and practically naturalized as a feminized activity.

In the same way, Patricia's twenty-year-old daughter, Carla, helps. For Patricia, Carla is 'good as gold' and she will wash dishes and vacuum; a contrast to her younger brother who Patricia laughingly describes as a 'dirty Bertie'. The use of 'good' is interesting as it suggests that Carla and her father's engagement is both voluntary and appreciated; Patricia does not describe her own cleaning activities as 'good' and Carla does not attend to the subject of housework in her narrative data production or interview. Additionally, unlike the images of place produced by some of the mothers in the study, there are no images of cleaning utensils in Carla's photographs. For Carla housework is not something that she feels she needs to represent in either photographic, narrative or oral data. On the contrary, for Patricia, housework is a cyclic inevitability that threads through the account of her everyday life.

> Patricia: *'Cause <u>whatever</u> you do <u>today</u>, tomorrow you got to do it again* [Patricia's emphasis].

Although Patricia acknowledged the repetitive nature of housework, she maintained that this is part of the life she envisaged: an expected role of wifehood, motherhood and respectable working-class femininity, and a visible demonstration of her culturally presumed, innate capacity to care (Hollway, 2006).

Housework – the 'lazy' mam

As Warren (2003) maintains, even though women are contributing to the household income, the expectations within the household have not changed accordingly. When Juliet, also born in 1967, reflected back on her life she described it in terms of 'constant constant constant same old, all the time' referring to completing housework and looking after her partner and children. Although, she has become the sole, full-time worker, working long hours, nothing has changed both in terms of the expectations of the rest of the family, and her expectations of herself as illustrated in the following extract:

Juliet: *Yeah, but you know my ideal would be to have a spotless house, you know, have it clean, have things put in its place, that is my ideal way of life* [pause] *and for some reason, I just can't seem to accomplish it.*

Juliet takes responsibility for what she sees as domestic failure, it is only 'I' who 'can't seem to accomplish it' not the three children, all over 16 years of age, or her partner, who although being too ill to carry on working in the building trade could complete light domestic work in the home. This theme of domestic responsibility is extended in the next quote:

Juliet: *I come home from work, do everything and then I'm sat on the settee for two, three hours* [pause] *in the evening being lazy.*

When Juliet comes home from work she does 'everything', which here refers to the immediate everyday needs of preparing a meal, doing dishes and sorting out laundry, before she sits 'on the settee for two three hours [pause] in the evening being lazy'. In this statement we are offered a reason for the failure to achieve 'a spotless house', that is Juliet's personal failure of 'laziness'. This disavowal of the importance and time-restraints of becoming the financial provider and Juliet's continued subservience to the ideology that cleanliness is her sole responsibility leads me to challenge the fraught position that Juliet endeavours to negotiate. I asked about the responsibility of the rest of the family:

Juliet: *I suppose it's my own fault for doing it and not making them do it because, yeah, I think they don't think that it is their job so, so yeah.*

Again, self-blame is employed as a form of explanation and Juliet presented her family's lack of activity in the domestic sphere as a personal failing, 'it's my own fault for doing it and not making them do it'. Juliet is clearly not happy with the situation; her sadness and frustration was palpable and her collage is dominated by the paraphernalia of domestic bliss. In a central position in her collage is a timer or hourglass. It represents not only the daily struggle of trying to achieve an impossible ideal but also, as discussed earlier in the section, the reflection that her life has been and continues to be 'constant constant constant same old, all the time'.

Turgo (2010) conducted research in a fishing community in the Philippines where many women have taken on the role of breadwinner in response to changes in the wider economy. Turgo argues that while these women are extracting feminine dividends from the ongoing economic restructuring in the

community, they are also complicit with their own subordination within the home. Like Juliet, these women have become the provider but continue to take ownership of the domestic sphere. According to Turgo, this is necessary for them to be 'active players in maintaining the façade of "normalcy", the preservation of the structure of hegemonic masculinity, in their everyday lives' (2010, p. 165).

For Turgo, this act of subordination is a conscious one, a role they have to play given the societal structures that construct and constrain their lives, and he suggests that in this way it is a feigned subordination. The Philippines may seem a geographical leap, but in Wales research has also been interested in the ways in which women endeavour to keep forms of lost masculinity alive. Walkerdine and Jimenez (2012) suggest that in the south Wales valleys the community reaction to loss of industry has often been one that demonstrates a commitment to keep everything going 'no matter what'.

Walkerdine and Jimenez (2012) describe interviews with women, in these marginalized communities, who talk about 'soldiering on' and describe how they will take any type of work, while their partners refuse employment they categorize as feminine. Walkerdine and Jimenez (2012) note that women continue to employ the term 'breadwinner' for men who no longer win bread. For Walkerdine, these practices of femininity keep a sense of masculinity intact, at great cost to the women involved. However, the alternative, beyond the safety of these traditional, highly gendered roles, would be something new and therefore even more frightening.

Housework – the 'selfish' mam

This idea of subordination to wider, traditional and perhaps outdated structures that determine the requirements of acceptable femininity and motherhood is demonstrated in the account of one of the other mothers. Bethan, again, works full-time and, like Juliet, she is frustrated by the hours she needs to spend undertaking housework. This is illustrated in the following extract:

Bethan: *You feel like you're throwing your life away just to make it look clean.*

However, Bethan, a mother of a younger generation born in 1976, then went on to tell me how important it is to perform domestic work. This defence of domesticity is not a rationale-cognitive model based on the avoidance of bacteria or a strategy to improve day-to-day organization, but rather a psychological defence against the stigma of being an inadequate partner and mother, as shown in the next conversation where I ask Bethan whether she finds her share of responsibilities problematic:

Interviewer: *Yeah, mm, and you don't <u>mind </u>with the <u>hoovering</u> and <u>washing</u>, you, or is it like a bone of contention?*
Bethan: <u>*No,* </u>*it's not a bone of contention, because I'm working full-time that little bit that I'm doing* [pause] *makes me feel like I'm still a Mum.*
Interviewer: *The cooking.*
Bethan: *Yeah.*
Interviewer: *Mm.*
Bethan: *And the <u>washing up</u> and the <u>hoovering</u>, I like to do it sometimes* [pause] *because I still feel like I'm <u>doing something</u> for my <u>children</u>, I'm—*
Interviewer: *Mm.*
Bethan: *For where <u>they live.</u>* [pause] *Does that <u>make sense?</u>*
Interviewer: *Yeah.*
Bethan: *I'm not just going out to work and being a <u>selfish</u> Mum, and earning the money and sitting on my arse and doing <u>nothing.</u>*
Interviewer: *Yeah.*
Bethan: *I suppose it's <u>pride</u> for myself really, just to be able to say, look I can work full-time and look after <u>my kids</u>, and sort of maintain a <u>home</u>.*

As Menjivar observes, while 'women may experience the empowerment of earning a wage and deciding how to spend it . . . they also face the disempowerment of recreating conditions of gender inequality in the home so as to maintain an idealized (class-specific) union' (2006, p. 93). For Bethan, who was living as a single mother before meeting her current partner, there is a need to manage a moral presentation of the self (May, 2008). The ideology of the 'good wife' can replace the stigma of the 'single mum' and, more importantly, taking on domestic tasks offers an opportunity to display a normative femininity characterized by her 'capacity to care' for her children (Hollway, 2006).

As Bethan told me, she wants to 'still feel like I'm *doing something* for my *children*'. The role of financial provider is not enough, as illustrated by Bethan's portrayal of 'being a *selfish* Mum, and earning the money and sitting on my arse and doing *nothing*', a point that is not made as a contradiction in terms. This mirrors Juliet's account where resting after work is seen as lazy and again not being able to perform the ideology of the mythical and untenable goal of single-handedly combining full-time work and being a domestic goddess.

In order to attain this form of idealized femininity, there may then be a need to guard against the involvement of partners in the domestic sphere, acting as a 'gate keeper' (Maushart, 2001) to maintain the adage that 'a woman's place is in the home'. In a post-feminist society that offers the illusion of choice: women can supposedly 'have it all' (McRobbie, 2008; Walby, 2011); however, the discourses that promote employability and equality have not erased the

physical and psychological work of more traditional positioning so that women feel they are obliged to 'do it all'.

Even where husbands and partners took on a domestic role that was well received by mothers in the study, their cleaning was still seen to impinge on their own role and the way that their standard of cleaning was perceived by others.

> Tina: *Yeah, he does help, I'll probably come across as a <u>lazy bitch</u> now* [laughs] [both laugh]

Tina, born in 1977, is happy that her partner will share the domestic responsibilities, but the idea that such equitable arrangements position her as a 'lazy bitch' has to be defended against and explained. Therefore, even if an even-handed engagement with housework can be sustained in the home, it can still have social and psychological consequences for those involved. In this way, in Hystryd, the accounts of these mothers indicate that although women may have 'time off' to be 'a *selfish* Mum' in the labour market, their 'place', where they belong, concretely and ideologically, is firmly at the kitchen sink.

CONCLUSION

Writing in the 1980s, Morris (1987, p. 64) argued that Welsh women's role in the domestic sphere was their traditional one and that the domestic role has proved enduring despite their entry into employment. For Morris (1987), the very nature of part-time work meant that women's role in the domestic division remained undisturbed. In contemporary Wales, for women working full-time, these inequalities often remain undisturbed, and crystallized as the pathway to legitimate wifehood and motherhood.

The traditional roles of domestic division of labour is not challenged by women's employment and the reality is the double-shift, where the myth of the 'Welsh mam' (Rees, 1988), alongside the breadwinning mam, have become the dual expectations of acceptable working-class femininity. In the late eighties there was an argument that women's traditional role in Wales would appear to be little different to twenty years ago: 'in so far as it has been changed it has been added to' (Winckler, 1987 p. 66). Data presented here suggest that contemporary Wales is resonant of both continuity and addition.

In Pilcher's study (1994), women born in 1967 demonstrated the rhetoric of egalitarianism but in everyday life these women continued to have the main

responsibility for housework. Data in this study have illustrated the ways in which women born in the 1960s and later in 1970s retain this responsibility for the domestic sphere. However, while Pilcher (1994) reported that younger generations of women were, at least ideologically, less likely than their mothers and grandmothers to invest their identities in the domestic sphere, in the present study we see women reinvesting their identities in the domestic sphere.

Different identities and roles are assumed according to their time and place, and in a local and global climate where working-class male employment has become destabilized, then perhaps this has engendered a return to traditions as a way of stabilizing the home within wider destabilization: the sacrifice of new femininities to protect traditional masculinities (Turgo, 2010; Walkerdine and Jimenez, 2012). In the accounts in this paper, the rhetoric of egalitarianism and equality has been silenced and replaced with a discourse of inadequacy, where when the impossibilities of new femininity – full-time job, perfect mother, domestic goddess (May, 2008) – are not achieved, women are blaming them-selves, and identifying themselves incongruously as the 'lazy but breadwinning Welsh mam'.

If we ask 'Who should do the dishes now?', the answer from many women may be 'We should', an answer with a conviction that was absent in earlier times. In Pilcher's study the hope for equality was visible, if not in the physical tasks of domestic work, in the possibilities of the adult-granddaughters' talk. This discourse was influenced by feminist and egalitarian ideologies; however, the power of this message seems to have weakened, perhaps because the ideology was not met with the participation, time and effort of the elusive sharer. In public life there has been a shift in the visibility of women in Wales, but behind closed doors many women remain physically, psychologically and symbolically embedded in a never-ending stack of dirty dishes.

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NOTES

[1] The name Hystryd is fictitious and it was chosen to maintain the anonymity of the area.
[2] The technique of mapping is an activity where participants are asked to draw a representation of a specific geographical space of journey; collage allows participants to make a visual representation of their lives from a collection of images; photo-elicitation techniques allows participants to take a series of photographs that form the basis of an interview discussion. In this study, participants were each provided with art materials and/or cameras and asked to make a series of visual productions depicting meaningful places, spaces and activities. Data produced then formed the basis of an interview where I engaged in a tape-recorded discussion with each participant. Further discussion of the technique can be found in Mannay (2010). In narrative approaches, stories provide an analytical frame for the study of mental life as well as the study of social conditions. In this study participants were asked to write narratives from the retrospective perspective of their childhood self, describing who they wanted to become, their positive possible self, and who they feared becoming, their negative possible self. This activity was repeated from the perspective of the present and participants again wrote a narrative of possible positive and negative selves.
[3] Psychosocial approaches are concerned with psychological development in, and in interaction with, a social environment. A seminal text for exploring psychosocial inquiry is Henriques, J. et al. (1998). *Changing the Subject*, London: Routledge, and its application in my own writing can be seen in Mannay (2013b).
[4] Women's names employed in the paper are pseudonyms chosen to maintain participants' anonymity.

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