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Achieving respectable motherhood? Exploring the impossibility of feminist and egalitarian ideologies against the everyday realities of lived Welsh working-class femininities

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SYNOPSIS

This paper explores the tension between post-feminist discourses of freedom and the everyday negotiation of feminised identities in private and public spaces, for mothers residing in a marginalised locale in urban south Wales, UK. Applying the lens of gender to examine and foreground the place of 'choice' in mothers' lives, the paper works with visual and narrative accounts of the negotiation of acceptable motherhood. The paper argues that despite a pervasive rhetoric of agency and equality, the practice and performance of motherhood continues to operate within asymmetrical gendered and classed spaces inside the confines of respectable femininity. Challenging the concept of new motherhood, where women are led to believe that they can maintain the status of breadwinner, domestic goddess and primary care giver, the paper theorises agency as operating within the impossibility of unachievable ideals.
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Introduction

As Jackson, Paechter, and Renold (2010) maintain the simplistic media discourse that women now 'have it all' disguises the realities of the everyday lives of women and girls who remain enclosed in discourses of acceptable and respectable working-class femininities. Women continue to operate within gendered spaces and are often denied access to places, which are defined as beyond the confines of respectable femininity; and such positionings reflect the sociocultural artefacts of class, nation and gender. These artefacts relate to historical and contemporary discourses about working-class acceptable femininities, access to public life and responsibilities in private spheres; and they are simultaneously national and local in nature.

For example, 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. The identities of working-class women in Wales were traditionally rooted in the idea of the 'Welsh Mam', an archetypal image of married women that emerged in 19th century; characterised as hardworking, pious, clean, a mother to her sons and responsible for the home. The moral imperative to adopt an English middle-class model of femininity put forward in the English 1847 Report of the Commissions of Inquiry, The State of Education in Wales, had a pervasive influence over the identities of generations of Welsh women; and was central in placing Welsh women as inferior, dirty and immoral (Aaron, Rees, Betts, & Vincentelli, 1994).

Discourses of colonisation often refer a homogeneous 'West' that takes a position of superiority and engages in processes of othering; where the other is conceptualised in terms of indigenous people; however, some colonised others become invisible (Smith, 1999). Historically, Wales is a colonised nation within nations, in terms of language, law and social policy; and such analogies can have a fervent and sustained influence over the lives of women. In this way, the branding of the Welsh woman as lawless and licentious in regard to their sexual conduct, and the consequent moral imperative of purity (Aaron, 1994), along with women's investment in maintaining

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working-class respectability (Skeggs, 1997) sets up a discourse in which respectability becomes central to acceptable motherhood.

The criticisms of Welsh life in the 1847 report centred on promiscuity and illegitimacy; and also acted to reinforce separate spheres for men and women. Dirt was associated not only with sexual impurity but with the cleanliness of the home, consequently, the 'Welsh Mam' waged an endless battle against dirt. The middle-class ideal of homemaker was impossible to achieve in industrialised working-class Wales, where in the Rhondda in the early 1900 the mortality rate for young women was higher than their male counterparts; they were killed and debilitated by the unremitting toil of childbirth and domestic labour (Jones, 1991).

The lack of ventilation, hot water, drainage and sanitation in working-class homes also contributed to a high mortality rate in infants. Nevertheless, rather than focusing on the obvious cause of poverty, the 1904 Committee on Physical Deterioration laid blame on 'the feckless and ignorance of working-class mothers in matters of nutrition and hygiene' (Beddoe, 2000: 21). The blame for infant mortality was placed on inadequate mothers; and the domestic ideology became central in the premise that working-class homes would become civilised by basic education (Delamont, 1978). These cultural artefacts and dominant discourses of lack remain pervasive in constructions of acceptable working-class femininities.

In contemporary Wales, 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; Wall, 2013). Discourses of dirt, promiscuity and shame form a symbolic nexus from which working-class women struggle to disassociate (Aaron, 1994; Mannay, 2014a,b; Davidoff, 1976; Evans, 2007); and consequently, investments in working-class respectable femininity have been built as a resistance to stories of working class 'lack' (Walkerdine, 1997).

As Gillies (2007) has reported working-class motherhood is often a source of pride and respect marking an important transition to adulthood. However, this pride and respect, becomes contaminated by discourses of the poor, working-class, lone mother and the threat her reproduction engenders to the social order (Atkinson, Oerton, & Burns, 1998; Gillies, 2007; Skeggs, 1997; Tyler, 2008; Walkerdine & Jimenez, 2012). Scapegoating tends to be directed at the least powerful groups in society (Gadd & Jefferson, 2007); and these demonising discourses constrain the agency of working-class mothers. As Sennett (2003:3) argues 'lack of respect, though less aggressive than outright insult, can take an equally wounding form'; and to avoid such wounding many women feel that they must chose to act as a protective force for not only their own sense of respect but for the respect of their family unit.

This paper explores the cost of maintaining respectable working-class femininity by drawing on the accounts of two mothers, Nina and Melanie[1]. Aaron et al. (1994) argue that a full picture of women's lives can only be gained by breaking up the conventional, arbitrary divisions of academic disciplines; and this can be important not only in modes of data production but also in the way that we analyse (Frost et al., 2010) and disseminate participants accounts. For this reason, findings should be presented in ways that not only contribute to policy debates, offer innovative methodological techniques and further theoretical dialogue, but also connect with readers at an affective level (Mannay, 2011, 2013a; Pease, 2012). Accordingly, I have engaged with alternative and experimental forms of dissemination in this paper including a poem that embeds words from participants' transcripts and a drawing produced in the ethnographic fieldwork.

The study

The data presented in this paper was drawn from a wider research project that employed visual and narrative methods of data production to explore the experiences of mothers and daughters, residing on a marginalised housing estate. The research focussed on the ways in which the boundaries of the immediate culture and memories of the past mediate their educational and employment histories and futures.

Research was conducted in Hystryd[2], a predominately white urban area, which ranks as one of the most deprived communities in Wales (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2008); and an area burdened by past and present stigmatizing representations of poverty, criminality, worklessness and lack; in common with many social housing areas in the UK (Lomax, 2012). Nine mothers and their daughters participated in the project. I previously lived in Hystryd and this shared sense of geography positioned me as 'experience near' (Anderson, 2002:23). 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 (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995).

Participant-directed visual data production techniques of photo-elicitation, mapping and collage[3] were selected to limit the propensity for participants' accounts to be overshadowed by the enclosed, self-contained world of common understanding (see Mannay, 2010, 2013b). Participants were asked to illustrate what they felt was important in their everyday lives both within the home and in their local area. In response, mothers and daughters took photographs of, drew maps of, and/or made collages depicting, meaningful places, spaces and activities. Drawing on auteur theory, which takes the meaning intended by the creator as the central point of interest (Rose, 2001), we discussed these creative projects in individual tape-recorded interviews.

Everyday life represents a constant and continual state of fluidity in an ever changing landscape of who we might have been and who we might still become, consequently, 'possible selves' (Markus & Nurius, 1986) narratives were also elicited, where participants were asked to produce narratives describing who they wanted to become (positive possible self) and who they feared becoming (negative possible self). This activity was engaged with from the perspective of the present for both mothers and their daughters; who responded by making visual representations, detailed written narratives or a series of bullet pointed themes around their ideas, hopes and fears for the future.

More recent qualitative work around possible selves has demonstrated how orientation to the future occurs within a certain social, geographical, cultural and historical context that acts as a 'straightjacket' on our ability to envision and realise future possibilities (Casey, 2008; Fletcher, 2007; King & Hicks, 2007; Lobenstine et al., 2004; Susinos, Calvo, & Rojas, 2009).

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Therefore, in addition to this future orientated activity, mothers were also asked to reflect on their possible selves from the retrospective perspective of their childhood self; thinking back to when they were their daughter's ages and producing accounts of their memories about who they wanted to become and who they feared becoming.

The data produced in the study was analysed thematically and in relation to psychosocial and narrative approaches. One of the central premises of the psychosocial approach is that the question of who we are is tied to the memory of who we have been and the imagination of what we might become (Henriques, Holloway, Urwin, Venn, & Walkerdine, 1998). The approach draws on biographical evidence and suggests that the choices we make as adults are often related to our disidentifications and identifications with the central figures of our childhood (Holloway & Jefferson, 2005).

McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten, and Bowman (2001) contend that the psychology of life stories is well situated to play an important integrative role in the scientific study of human behaviour and experience; and this form of narrative inquiry resonated with the possible selves created by the participants and the subsequent interviews, which were based upon these narratives. Analysing participants' stories revealed the ways in which they provide a narrative for human intentions and interpersonal events, helping the narrator to organise their thoughts and offering the listener an insight to another's subjective understanding of the world.

For this paper, I have selected data produced with two mothers, Nina and Melanie, drawing on their pictures, photographs and possible narratives and interviews, to explore the centrality of 'choice' in family life and the ways in which agency becomes constrained within ideologies of acceptable working-class femininity and motherhood. Nina was forty-two at the time of the study and lived in a reconstituted family with her three children; her oldest child was twenty-one. Melanie was thirty-one and also lived in a reconstituted family with her two children aged ten and two.

Nina — patriarchy, respectability and wedlock

The category of lone mother often engenders a configuration of the reading of 'shame' as it contradicts the historical ideology of sexual purity in Welsh women (Aaron, 1994). More widely, it can be a position on the 'social ladder of motherhood', which defines perceptions of the 'bad' mother (Neiterman, 2012: 372). In the early 1990s, where Nina's account of acceptable femininity is temporally located, there was a vehement political demonization of single mothers, who were held responsible for tearing apart the moral fabric of society in the media (Atkinson et al., 1998). In this way, Nina's pregnancy, and subsequent marriage, can be located both within historical legacies within Wales, national discourses of lone parenthood, and her immediate locality within Hystryd and the family.

In discussing her retrospective possible selves narrative, Nina described how her father was disappointed when she became pregnant out of wedlock and pressured her to marry. For Nina's father, the space of marriage was where Nina needed to be to achieve working-class feminine respectability as a mother; however, marriage was not a space of Nina's choosing. When she told her father about the pregnancy, the perceived problem of a pregnancy out of wedlock was negotiated between the two men; her father and her partner, Simon; Nina was not given an opportunity to voice her feelings: her agency was closed down.

Nina miscarried her child and hoped to terminate the contract of the unwanted marriage but when she spoke to her father he responded by complaining that he had paid the deposit for the wedding reception; one hundred pounds. In the interview I agreed with Nina, that this was lot of money, especially in a situation where money is already limited but I also said '*it's really crazy*'. Nina was in a vulnerable position both in her pregnancy and after the loss of her baby; and at both times she faced pressure to enter a marriage that she did not want. For these reasons, she was particularly defenceless against the coercion of her father's will.

When we think about 'forced marriage', we often look for exotic others for our examples: it is something that happens in other remote countries and cultures (Barrera, 2011), not here in urbanised south Wales. There is an understanding that we are advanced in terms of human rights and gender equality, and these dominant discourses make me think and say, '*it's really crazy*'. The trouble is that there are other competing discourses that hold power. It is not only the hundred pounds spent that ensures Nina's compliance but systems of patriarchy, discourses of working-class feminine respectability (Aaron, 1994; Mannay, 2014b; Gillies, 2007), and the idea that her father, and family will be able to maintain a public face (Goffman, 1959) within the community of Hystryd.

For Goffman (1959: 32), maintaining face is achieved through a performance that acts 'to define the situation for those who observe the performance'. Nina's pregnancy is a threat to the performance of acceptable femininity, family respectability and ultimately her father's enactment of hegemonic masculinity. As Ward (2014) argues, being a proper Welsh man, engenders complying with an archetype of masculinity associated with a world of industrial work; outwardly performed through masculine affirming practices and ideas of male embodiment such as 'head of the household'. A position that is often maintained at the expense of women; as Walkerdine and Jimenez (2012) note, Welsh women continue to employ the term 'breadwinner' for men who no longer win bread and these practices of femininity keep a sense of masculinity intact, at great cost to the women involved.

Consequently, this is not '*really crazy*'; it is an example of the everyday ubiquitous confinement of women and girls both spatially and psychologically. A confinement in which ideas about maintaining the sexual purity of women and girls defines the spaces, and relational identities that can be held to maintain public face (Goffman, 1959). This recollection has travelled two decades but Nina's paralanguage communicates the associated sadness, disappointment and anger. In the interview, Nina's daughter, Roxanne, who is present, interjects, '*Never mind you got me*', to support her mother, employing humour, and her own existence as a product of the unwanted marriage, to bring some relief from the pain of the memory; however, the emotion is palpable and the pain of the past retains its power in the present.

The poem below, drawn from this conversation, conveys some of the emotion communicated by Nina; and the feelings of being both trapped and silenced by the men that she has loved. The poem has been constructed long after the interview and was not a collaborative activity. Rather,

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it is a poem that hopes to communicate the ways in which Nina's geographical, cultural and historical context acted as a 'straightjacket' (Fletcher, 2007) and cast a shadow across future possibilities and ongoing familial relationships.

Research inquiry is always a moral enterprise, but when we apply qualitative methods ethical issues can be amplified not least because the researcher is delving into people's private lives with the intention of placing a version of these accounts in a public arena (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Furthermore, Nina created photographs in her accounts; and visual images are particularly problematic in relation to the ethics of representation (Mannay, 2014b; Brady & Brown, 2013). In this way, the poem acts to disseminate Nina's story, as part of a decolonizing methodology (Smith, 1999), in an ethical form that retains her anonymity; whilst also retaining the affective power of the account: moving beyond the dense, dry, flat prose that form a 'linguistic armour' in much academic writing (Lerum, 2001).

The problem happened
When I met Simon, I was eighteen
When I met Simon, I got pregnant
And then I had pressure
I had to get married
My father had got angry, and he sat me and Simon down
He said what's going on, I'm so disappointed
We were sat there and he said to Simon
What are you going to do?
You gonna marry her?
Simon, said yeah
I just coughed
Is that, like for me, I didn't want that
No, I mean I was having a baby but,
I didn't expect the marriage thing
I thought that was another commitment, again
I lost the baby, and I was only a couple of months pregnant and, and I lost the baby
I just didn't want to marry him
I just felt
It's too soon
The baby was gone
We were only doing it to please my father
I lost the baby, and I can remember being on the phone to my Dad
He said well I've put the hundred pound on the reception
I can remember feeling gutted
I thought I can't let him down for hundred quid
I married him
I got Roxanne out of it, that's right,
But I can always remember thinking
I was so upset
Thinking well my Dad's put hundred pound down
Hundred pounds in those days was a lot of money
Hundred pounds
Well really he should never have said it
And I could have made my own choice
My Dad could have hid it from me
And I think that's what he should have done
But as it was he made an issue of it
And I felt,
And I was emotional,
After losing the baby
I couldn't make my own choice

Personal history, subjectivity and practices are formed in social relations and the affective routines of everyday family life (Wetherell, 2012); and Nina's account demonstrates the ways in which her 'choice' was confined and constrained by her father's will and a need to please her father. Friedan's (1963) ground breaking book '*The Feminine Mystique*' urged women to stop feeling selfish for wanting goals of her own. However, anti-feminist critiques cite this premise as an immoral challenge to woman's natural, God-given role as self-denying wives and mothers; constructing the 'selfish feminist' (Tyler, 2007); and Nina's 'choice' becomes trapped between these competing discourses.

The account is full of pain, it penetrates the ethnographic space (Mannay & Morgan, 2014), but it is interwoven with discourses of love and respect. Love becomes a sign of respectable femininity, and of maternal qualities (Ahmed, 2003). Nina stands for love by standing alongside her father but in doing so she stands against the positive possible self that she envisaged. Nina's father stands for love and protection, even if this is experienced as resentment and incarceration; but these actions are not simply familial, they are about maintaining public face: and wider discourses of class, motherhood and respectability that we will explore in relation to Melanie.

Melanie — class, motherhood and respectability

Hystryd cannot be viewed simplistically and homogenously, there is a complexity which refuses a simplistic notion of a 'type of place'. However, socially excluded neighbourhoods are homogenised and defined by what they are lacking morally, educationally and economically, and that these definitions are projected on to residents; in this way representations of the working-classes are always spatialised (Haylett, 2003; Skeggs, 2004).

Thrift (1997:160) contends that '*places form a reservoir of meanings which people can draw upon to tell stories about and therefore define themselves*', and in the present study participants' accounts illustrate that they are acutely aware of how others view them and also how they are stigmatised. The readings of families relate to who they are in regard of their postcode, so that they are never allowed to forget where they live. In this way conceptions of place not only lay structural obstacles, such as not being considered for employment vacancies, in the paths of Hystryd's residents, but also engender the psychological burden of being labelled as 'types of people' (Haylett, 2003); and also types of mothers.

A mother of two young children, Melanie, recognises the way in which her local area is stigmatised and she charts a route to acceptable motherhood through her children's education. Melanie managed to secure a place for her daughter, Louise at a small church based primary school outside of Hystryd, in an affluent area with a predominantly middle class intake. Melanie has taken this decision in the hope that her daughter, Louise, will receive a higher standard of education and mix predominantly with middle-class children; an expectation held by many parents applying for places for their children at faith schools (Schagen, Davies, Rudd, & Schagen, 2002). However, it is difficult for Melanie to enjoy any parity with other pupils and parents; and when she creates her map of her everyday world the following image is centralised.

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When Melanie discusses her map, she talks about how the family attends church outside of Hystryd, in a wealthy area, in a bid to secure Louise's and her brother's places in faith based education. Fig. 1 presents an image of the church and her family, performing acceptability. Melanie describes sitting in the church amongst other families with young children.

Melanie: *And I'm not the type to sit in a room full of Mums with babies, and (sighs) sort of, I don't want to, I'm there for the wrong reasons really*

Interviewer: *Mmm*

Melanie: *To sit there amongst them, and make conversation*

Interviewer: *Mmm*

Melanie: *Is just, my worst nightmare*

Interviewer: (laughs)

Melanie: *So I, even though we know we need to get him christened, and Louise, in all fairness*

Interviewer: *Mmm*

Melanie: *It's just something that we don't want to do*

Attending the church associated with the school, and situated in an affluent area outside of Hystryd, is something Melanie describes as her '*worst nightmare*', not least because she is there for all the '*wrong reasons*'. This incongruity is problematic for Melanie on two levels, firstly her incredulity in regard to her lack of religious belief and secondly that her family are 'out of place'. Melanie's remark about having to 'sit there *amongst them*' demonstrate the discourse of 'them and us' central to class divisions (Southerton, 2002) and although, as Melanie explains '*It's just something that we don't want to do*', the family continue the charade of middle-class respectability and morality demonstrated in the image taken from Melanie's 'place and space' map.

The picture depicts a smiling, hetero-normative, nuclear family doing respectability and morality on their way to church but this surface interpretation is in conflict with Melanie's talk about the space this image represents, as the next excerpt demonstrates.

Melanie: *It's like going to have a tooth pulled in the dentist, and knowing you've got to go, and having to make small talk with everybody … After the service, you know when you're all plodding out, like hello*

Interviewer: *Mmm, is it very, sort of, posh up there*

Melanie: *Yeah it is a lot, like the women go in hats, and the men, like go in leather gloves and clip-o-clopity shoes, and they all you know, they're all perfect, they got their Sunday best on (laughs) and then there's me and (partner) in our jeans and (laughs) thinking oh no agrh*

Interviewer: (laughs) (both laugh)

Melanie: *We can't we we, we just can't (pause) you know and you know then, I mean we're we're respectable people, you know we're hard working and that*

Interviewer: *Mmm*

Melanie: *But*

Interviewer: *Mmm*

Melanie: *We're not, ever gonna be at a level where, I think some of them in there are*

Interviewer: *Yeah*

Melanie: *And even though they're nice enough, you know you're never gonna be, welcomed as much as anyone else*

Interviewer: *Mmm*

Melanie: *But then sometimes I'm quite hard, and I think F you, it's for my kids, I'll sit here and suffer*

Interviewer: (laughs)

Melanie: *Yeah* (laughs) (both laugh)

Interviewer: *Whether you want me here or not* (laughs) (both laugh)

Melanie: *It's tough* (laughs) (both laugh)

In this account Melanie appears to recognise that in the space of the church she becomes what Bauman (1998) refers to as a 'defective consumer' illustrated by the material choices of consumption with her and her partner '*in our jeans*', whilst the rest of the congregation '*go in hats,…in leather gloves and clip-o-clopity shoes*'. The outward differences of apparel are accompanied by an affective realisation of the depth of class division, for although the church constitutionally is open to all, it is as if there is an invisible 'No Entry' sign that mediates the classed nature of this spiritual, religious and social space. The church is situated not in Hystryd but in an affluent parish; and for Melanie this affluence is apparent in the parishioners, and she feels that she does not fit in terms of residence, religion or socio-economic status.

Fig. 1. Religion and social mobility.

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The tension within the space is palpable and Melanie has to negotiate and retain a respectable sense of identity whilst acknowledging a level of rejection as she tells me '*we're respectable people, you know we're hard working … but …you know you're never gonna be, welcomed as much as anyone else*'. In this way, Melanie is negotiating a fragile 'working-consensus' (Goffman, 1959), a veneer of accord that surrounds her family's presence in this place. This consensus avoids open conflict, but the family whose presentation has been discredited may feel ashamed, whilst members of the congregation perhaps come to feel ill at ease, resentful and perplexed as they draw from a 'vicarious imagination of the other' (Rock, 2007: 29).

Bourdieu (1984) maintains that children learn the class-based cultural orientations of their parents, which shape their class-trajectory. In this way class is far more than a structural position; rather, it is constituted from the different types of capital – social, economic and cultural – that individuals possess. Drawing on the work of Bourdieu, Skeggs (1997) argues that at birth we are allocated into socio-cultural spaces, and develop durable dispositions in response to the determining structures of heterosexuality, the family and the racial and sexual and class division of labour. These structures pre-exist our agency, forming our habitus and informing our access not only to institutional settings such as education and employment but also to 'discourses and positions of conceivability, what we can envisage and what we perceive possible' (Skeggs, 1997:18).

Although the adoption of a new culture throughout the life-course may occur, later acquisition is often neither a convincing nor a legitimate substitute for actual origin (Silva, 2005). Consequently lack of 'fit' can lead to outsiders remaining outsiders and being confronted by discourses of working-class lack in their attempts to become socially mobile. Any projected definition of a situation and of those within the situation has a distinctive moral character (Goffman, 1959). However, as May (2008: 470) maintains, individuals with a 'spoiled identity' endeavour to manage a moral presentation of the self and Melanie actively challenges her positioning.

At the end of the extract Melanie tells me, '*sometimes I'm quite hard, and I think F you, it's for my kids, I'll sit here and suffer*', and here there is a moral justification for being in this middle-class space, for attending engenders a respectable form of motherhood. As long as Melanie is prepared to leave Hystryd, to enter this affluent parish and to '*sit here and suffer*' she is able to display a normative femininity characterised by her 'capacity to care' (Holloway, 2006); she is able to choose acceptable motherhood.

However, the term '*suffer*' reinforces Melanie's assertion that she does not want to be in this place and sufferance also affords a form of self-protection for rejection is more palatable if you can reject the other. Thus as Bennett et al. (2008) suggest, detachment is a better notion than exclusion, but, despite Melanie's bravado, entering and re-entering this space is emotionally wearing, '*It's tough*'. In this way the choice of doing motherhood entails a performance; and the smiles and the picture are smiles that disguise the pain of continual perceptions, assumptions and judgements that question the legitimacy of the family marked by their Hystryd postcode as defective (Rogaly & Taylor, 2009; Skeggs, 2009).

Melanie has secured Louise a place at the school linked with this church but this is negotiated by a continual cycle of outward religious and social deference where Melanie feels out of place. However, Melanie is determined to equip Louise with the educational advantages associated with middle-class cohorts. Melanie then seeks a form of social mobility where her family can be accepted as '*respectable people*' but this is seen as untenable because as Melanie states '*we're hard working and that …but…we're not, ever gonna be at a level where, I think some of them in there are*'. Aspirations of social mobility require a willingness to exist in this borderland and the determination to enter and re-enter a different cultural milieu '*whether you want me here or not*'. In this way, arguably Melanie demonstrates maternal choice-making but these choices are conflicted as they sit within cultural, social and interpersonal contexts that are not of her choosing; and are illustrative of a continual battle at the level of affect.

Summary

This article employed images, interview data and poetic writing; utilising these multi-modal forms to communicate a sense of the emotional cost of maintaining acceptable forms of motherhood and working-class respectability; and the disempowering force of marginalisation in relation to patriarchy and the stigma of place. The article demonstrated how women's agency can be constrained and silenced by gendered norms, local culture and poverty: and how even when choices are enabled and actualised they are accompanied by costs that are disempowering, shaming and difficult to bear. In exploring the everyday realities of lived Welsh working-class femininities and focusing on the concept of motherhood, despite evidence of agency, the impossibility of achieving feminist and egalitarian ideologies persists for mothers and daughter on the margins of contemporary Wales.

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Endnotes

[1] All the names in this article are fictitious and were chosen by the participants to maintain their anonymity.

[2] The place name Hystryd is fictitious and was chosen to maintain anonymity.

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[3] Self-directed photography and photo-elicitation, or 'photo-voice' as it is sometimes called, have been used successfully in a range of research studies, where images are generated with camera equipment. Collaging is a method where images are collected from magazines, packaging materials, online sources and other cultural artefacts; and presented together on a single sheet of card or similar framing material. The technique of mapping is an activity where participants are asked to draw a representation of a specific geographical space or journey. In this study participants were each provided with a camera and/or art materials and asked to make a series of visual images depicting meaningful places, spaces and activities. The photographs, collages and maps then formed the basis of an interview where I engaged in a tape-recorded discussion with each participant. Further discussion of these techniques can be found in Mannay (2010).

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