

**A Psycho-Political Study of Women's Responses to Women
Political Leaders in the United Kingdom**

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Abstract:

This thesis aims to gain insight into the thoughts, feelings, and emotions of women in the UK in response to women in positions of political leadership. Women remain underrepresented in political leadership and their representation requires a critical and in-depth understanding of the existing barriers. Present literature shows gender stereotypes and norms are long standing and highly resistant to change (Kittilson and Fridkin 2008, Heilman 2001, Powell 2011). Women are largely deemed incongruent with leadership; the perception being that they are violating gender norms when they achieve leadership roles (Eagly and Karau 2002). The research addressing women in political leadership has, to date, largely employed quantitative methodologies. This project uses qualitative methods to gain new insights into the feelings and thoughts that shape women's contemporary attitudes about other women in political leadership roles.

Women's voices have largely been absent from the discussions about women political leaders (WPL) and this thesis will address this absence by deploying a psycho-political approach that uses in-depth, life story interviews, focusing on narrative story telling (Anderson and Jack 1991). The research pays attention to what and how stories are expressed and how fantasies of leadership may present themselves in relation to the life histories of the participants. From a psychosocial perspective, subjectivities are shaped by the interaction of psychological, social, and political factors, and with that complexity in mind, the project takes an intersectional approach that includes women across a broad range of cultural, racial, and social backgrounds in order to understand women's differing responses and how they are informed by their socio-political and cultural experience and identities.

This thesis provides new contributions to knowledge as the first known qualitative research on this topic in the UK, drawing on a methodology that examines women's own experiences of gender. Themes of empathy are discussed, both for the women leaders but also responses to the display of empathetic leadership. New concepts of women's leadership are formulated, drawing on the insights from the participants into how they wish to see women leading. The thesis also examines the drivers behind the responses, exploring constructions of gender from the childhoods of the participants and from their experiences of gender in their lives, families, and workplaces. The thesis examines how women feel about women's representation in political leadership and provides insights into potential campaign strategies and leadership styles to help furthering women's role in politics.

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Author's Declaration

Portions of the findings in this thesis were presented at the following conferences:

March 2021 *Political Leadership in (a) crisis: Women Political Leaders Beyond Covid-19: A Call for More Empathetic Leadership*

Political Studies Association Annual International Conference

July 2021 *Women's Experiences of the Covid 19 Pandemic*

Britain on the Couch Seminar Event, Centre for the Study of Conflict, Emotion and Social Justice, Bournemouth University

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Women's roles in politics and political leadership have been changing; we have seen more women winning elections and holding leadership roles. However, the fact remains that politics is still dominated by men. Whilst the number of women in politics is increasing, this does not take into account the lack of women of colour, LGBTQ+ women and working-class women still present in politics today.

Gender and political leadership are topics that have garnered a lot of attention in society and this thesis is set against a backdrop of heightened discussion around the role of gender. In recent years, we have seen the #MeToo movement bring to the forefront the extent of sexual assault against women in society. In the UK, on which this thesis is focused, we have also seen heightened discussions around the role of gender in public spaces and the harm of gender stereotypes to people of all genders.

Women in political leadership remain a novelty. At present only 26 countries in the world have a head of state or head of government who is a woman (UN Women, 2021) and the global average of women in national legislatures is 25% (UN Women, 2021). Whilst it may be assumed in society that women are reaching parity in terms of political representation, such stark figures show the true picture is very different.

This thesis explores what and how women in the United Kingdom think and feel about women political leaders (WPL). It draws on a psychosocial methodology to understand the drivers behind the responses women have and provide new understandings of what women want to see from WPL. By providing new insights into women's responses to women in political

leadership. This thesis sets out findings about what women want from WPL and how their own experiences of gender inform their thoughts and feelings towards women leaders.

To increase the representation of women in political leadership, this requires more people to support and vote for women candidates, and for more women to run for elected office. To increase the support of women in politics the barriers that exist need to be understood and examined. It is also important that women are voting women into office. Substantive representation of women in politics allows for an increase in beneficial policies for women and allows women a voice within political institutions. The aim of this thesis is to understand how women feel about WPL, to explore the responses they have in seeing women in these roles. The thesis will also provide insights into the drivers behind these responses to provide new understandings of how women view their gender's role in society and what support they do, or do not, have for women holding positions of leadership.

The existing research on WPL has shown that they face barriers to elected office which are largely based on gender stereotypes and a perception of incongruity with such leadership roles (Fridkin 1996, Eagly and Karau 2002, Eagly and Carli 2007a, 2007b, Ryan and Haslam 2005, Dolan 2018, Diekman and Goodfriend 2006). Women face harsh penalties when defying expected gender norms (Parks-Stamm et al.. 2008) which include being ostracised in society, being excluded from leadership positions, garnering negative media coverage, and facing attacks both in person and online. The research conducted on WPL has largely employed quantitative research methods, focusing on the leaders themselves, media coverage of women leaders, or survey analysis of reactions to women candidates. This research provides important insights into how women in politics are viewed. However, there is a lack of insight into how women *feel* about WPL and especially when examining the emotions evoked when discussing gender and political leadership. This

thesis aims to provide the first known qualitative study of women's responses to WPL in the UK.

The aims of the thesis are as follows:

- Understand and explore how women in the United Kingdom respond to WPL
- Examine the drivers behind these responses through discussions on the participants own experiences of gender
- Using a psychosocial approach, explore how the participants' constructions of gender inform their responses to WPL
- Provide new insights into women's perceptions of WPL
- Provide analysis of responses to inform recommendations for increasing the participation of women in political leadership.

The scope of the thesis is an exploration of the responses of women in the United Kingdom to WPL. The aims above will be achieved through conducting interviews, the research includes 30 participants and provides a thematic analysis of their responses and the drivers behind them. The research is limited in scope in terms of participant numbers however, it does provide an in-depth analysis of the key themes that emerged from the data collection and shows new insights into this area of research.

Current political science literature on WPL discusses the gender barriers that women candidates face and contains evaluations of prominent WPL. Much has been written to analyse the campaign strategies of women candidates, most notably in the context of the United States. Kim Fridkin's (1993,1996) work in the 1990s regarding women in the United States Senate provides a basis for this thesis in that she discusses the barriers women face and the campaign strategies employed to overcome such barriers. In the UK context literature about women Members of Parliament has involved aspects of representation, discussing how women represent women constituents, the

difficulties they face in the male dominated environment of Parliament, and have shown how women's voices in Parliament are heard less than men's (Allen and Childs 2018, Celis and Lovenduski 2018, Harmer 2021, O'Brien and Piscopo 2019, O'Neill et al. 2016). However, there is a lack of qualitative research into how people feel about women in political leadership, especially when assessing how women feel. This thesis explores this aspect of women's political leadership in the UK and contributes to the literature by addressing the existing gap.

The methodology most prevalent in current literature, within political science, on this topic is that of a quantitative nature: surveys are employed or analysis of speeches or time in Parliament. This thesis will add new insights into this topic by using a qualitative approach to provide in-depth analysis of the responses to women leaders. The approach used is psycho-political, which brings together aspects of psychosocial and political studies in order to provide a new, interdisciplinary method. Psychosocial research explores the psychological and social elements of a topic. In this thesis the psychosocial method will allow the responses to be analysed in terms of the participants psychological underpinnings, exploring the construction of gender and understandings of their inner thoughts and feelings. At the same time, it will take into account the social and culture context in which they live, analysing how gender stereotypes and norms around them have informed their responses to WPL. This approach has not been used in a qualitative way to address women and political leadership before and therefore, is a key contribution to knowledge.

Media coverage of WPL have shown that there remains a gendered nature to the reporting, and it often reinforces gender tropes and stereotypes (Campus 2013, Harmer 2021, Williams 2017, 2020, 2021). However, the research is lacking in terms of women's responses to the coverage of women leaders, an aspect which this thesis aims to address.

Though this thesis new insights will be gained into the area of political leadership and gender. It will draw on first-hand experiences of women in the United Kingdom and contribute new knowledge through methodological process but also through providing one of the first known studies into women's responses to WPL. The contributions to knowledge that this thesis will put forward are:

The first known qualitative research into women's responses to WPL using interviews as a methodology. Whilst Childs et al. (2008,2009) used focus groups to explore how members of the Conservative Party in the UK felt about women candidates, and Brown and Lemi (2021) used a focus group to explore how Black women felt about Black women politicians and appearance in the United States, there is no known research exploring how women respond to women political leaders in the United Kingdom from a qualitative perspective. The use of narrative interviewing to explore the unconscious responses will also provide a new approach and provide new contributions to knowledge on the topic.

The thesis provides new understandings of women's feelings on gender and being a woman, based on the discussions around their own lived experience. This builds on theories of Role Congruity Theory and the Double Bind (Eagly and Karau 2002, Jamieson 1995). Through these understandings so have insights into the impact of gender on women been explored and strategies and tactics for navigating gendered terrains been discovered and explored. These findings have informed new understandings of how women in the UK respond to WPLs, of women's feelings on substantive representation in politics for women. It explores what they support and want to see, and what they do not like nor want to see from women in positions of political leadership. One key aspect to this is an empathy towards women in political leadership, based on an understanding of the shared experiences women face. A new contribution to political behaviour is that this empathy and support transcended the political ideology of the participants.

The thesis proposes a new theory of women's political leadership through an analysis of women's responses, this new leadership builds on MacGregor Burns' (1978) theory of transformation leadership, providing a gendered aspect of leadership that includes the empowerment of women and empowering of women followers. This builds on the findings of the use and co-option of gender stereotypes for the advantage of women in leadership and to take advantage of such stereotypes to change the types of leadership seen on the political stage

1.2 Methodology

The thesis uses a qualitative methodology of narrative interviews. Narrative interviews encourage the participant to share their experiences through stories and sharing incidents they deemed as relevant to the research topic (Anderson and Kirkpatrick 2016, Andrews 2007). The interviews are individual conversations with participants in which they are asked to discuss their experiences of gender. To allow for discussion on the drivers and emotions involved in women responding to WPL it is important to gain insight into the participants' lives; the narrative interviews allow for this as it allows the participant to share their experiences with the researcher. The data collection consisted of interviewing 30 women in the United Kingdom, the women were a range of ages, races, class, and sexualities. Each interview was conducted via the online platform Zoom due to the researching taking place during the Covid-19 global pandemic. A thematic analysis of the key themes was conducting, drawing out overarching themes that spanned the interviews and drew together the experiences of the participants.

The thesis explores the way in which women in the United Kingdom respond to WPL and discusses the drivers behind these responses. Through a

narrative methodology this thesis argues that women's experiences of gender are profound. There is a way that women experience the world which has key similarities. The respondents showed that they have conflicted responses to WPL: as there is a desire for WPL to succeed and to break down leadership barriers but there is also a sense of concern for the women stepping into these roles and a knowing about the difficulties they will experience. This knowing comes from women's own experiences of being treated differently because of their gender.

The participants felt that women leaders have different capacities than their male counterparts and that because of the way in which women are socialised and stereotyped women can bring a more empathetic and caring leadership to politics. Again, this is informed by the participants own experiences of being women in leadership or having encountered women displaying a more empathetic type of leadership.

A significant finding of the research is the participants desire to see women leaders embrace their gender to a greater degree, to use their gender as a way to transform political leadership and as a way to substantially represent their women constituents. This is an important finding in terms of leadership studies as it builds on the concept of transformation leadership (MacGregor Burns 1978), to include a gendered dynamic that focuses on empowerment for women both as leaders and as constituents.

This thesis will also explore women's own experiences of gender and how these experiences allow them to empathise with WPL. The role of women will be discussed, exploring the participants constructions of gender in their childhoods and the messages they have received regarding gender throughout their lives. Theories of idealisation of women leaders will be discussed as well as the conflict that is evoked when seeing women leaders transgress gender norms. The findings point to a complex relationship between the participants and the women leaders but one that speaks to a

desire for more substantial representation for women and a hopeful view of women's role in political leadership for the future.

1.3 Overview of Thesis Structure

The thesis is structured as follows.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the existing literature that informs this thesis. The review includes research on gender stereotypes and gender norms, and the impact they have on political leadership. It will provide an overview of the key research in political representation. It will then provide a review on key theories of leaders, focusing on theoretical aspects of women in leadership. A discussion on the cultural context of the research will then be provided, followed by a review of the literature of media representations of women in political leadership. The review will conclude with a discussion on the construction of gender and key psychological theories that underpin the psychosocial approach this thesis employs. The literature review will highlight the key gaps in research that this thesis will address.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter articulates the research questions and provides an in-depth explanation of the methodology employed in this thesis, discussing the rationale behind the chosen methodology. It will also discuss how the data collection was undertaken and the means of analysis used. This chapter will provide discussion on the ethical considerations of the research.

Chapter 4 – Thematic Analysis: Empathy – Responses and Displays

This chapter includes the analysis of the discussions on empathy and the expression of empathy from the participants, drawing on the data it explores the participants responses to displays of empathy by WPL. It also explores the

drivers behind those responses through an analysis of the empathy felt for WPL.

Chapter 5 – Thematic Analysis: Exploring Responses to Women and Emotion

This chapter includes analysis of the women’s responses to emotion in WPL and also their own experiences of displaying emotion. The chapter focuses on the responses to the former UK Prime Minister, Theresa May to explore the theme.

Chapter 6 – Thematic Analysis: Intergenerational Strength and Independence

This chapter includes analysis of the drivers behind responses to WPL, it draws on the literature of constructions of gender and examines how women view their gender and how they relate to women around them. It examines the importance of the relationship between mothers and daughters and the intergenerational constructions of gender.

Chapter 7 – Thematic Analysis: “Boys’ Club”: Reflections of Women’s Experiences of Gender

This chapters includes analysis of the participants experiences of being a woman and how their experiences are informed by their gender. It includes discussions on how the participants are treated and also how they feel they are excluded from certain aspects of society because of their gender. The changing nature of women leaders is explored. The impact of these experiences on their responses to WPL are examined.

Chapter 8 – Thematic Analysis: Responses to Women in Leadership – Discussions on Authority

This chapter includes analysis of the theme of leadership, it incorporates the participants’ experiences of being and working with women leaders and also their responses to seeing women in positions of political leadership. Gender

stereotypes are explored and examine as a way to bring forth new types of leadership.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

This chapter provides a discussion on the key findings of the research and examines the contributions to knowledge. An overview of the thesis is provided and areas for future research discussed.

The next chapter will outline the existing literature that informs this thesis. This thesis is interdisciplinary and thus the literature review will draw on research from political science, sociology, feminism, business studies and psychology. It will examine the methodological and theoretical approaches that exist in these fields in order to articulate the gaps in literature that this thesis will address.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The main questions addressed in this thesis are: *what are the responses of women in the United Kingdom to WPL, and what are the main drivers behind those responses?* These questions are further articulated in Chapter 3. To explore these questions, it is important to understand the existing literature and bodies of research. This is an interdisciplinary project and therefore the review of the literature requires a broad scope. The review will set out the key knowledge on gender stereotypes and norms to establish the societal context in which the participants of the research operate and to provide insight into potential drivers behind gender expectations. Literature relating to leadership within the business and political world will then be discussed, allowing for understandings of the types of leadership that are present but also exploring existing literature on responses to women in positions of leadership. Theories of representation will be discussed to provide insight into why the questions being asked within this thesis are relevant and important. The review will then examine media representations of WPL as it is unavoidable that the responses to WPL will be influenced by the mediatisation of the women being discussed. The review will then explore the social and culture aspects of gender and women, looking at issues of feminism and misogyny. Lastly, to explore the methodological aspects of the thesis a review of the literature on constructions of gender will be discussed and the influences on women to address the drivers behind potential responses to WPL.

Whilst examining the literature and theoretical underpinnings of the thesis the existing methodological approaches used will also be discussed to enable an articulation of the original contributions this research will make.

2.2 Gender Stereotypes and Leadership

When exploring the responses women in the UK have to WPL it is important to understand the societal expectations and norms placed upon women. As Zheng et al. (2018) write “leadership does not take place in a gender vacuum” (p.2). In this section I will outline the key aspects of gender stereotypes and norms to provide a grounding in the roles that women are perceived to play and thus understand how women are viewed in general.

Stereotypes are an automatic part of evaluating people and the actions and roles we associate with them. In order to assess the responses that women have when seeing other women in positions of political leadership it is important to understand the role that stereotypes can potentially be playing. Stereotypes are embedded associations or as Wade and Ferree (2019) write, they are “fixed, oversimplified, and distorted ideas about categories of people” (p.33). Eagly and Carli (2007b) write that, “stereotyping is not mysterious but follows from everyday observations and reflects ordinary psychological processes” (p.89). Stereotypes have been called an “energy-saving device” (Fridkin and Kenney 2009 p.304) which enable shortcuts about a person to be taken in order to process information regarding the social group they have been assigned to (Niven 1998). This information then becomes a part of “society’s shared knowledge” (Eagly and Carli 2007b p.84). Fridkin Kahn (1996) uses Lippman’s 1922 definition of stereotypes and argues that,

“by classifying an individual as a member of a particular group (e.g., a woman), people can draw inferences about the individual based on the individual’s membership in the group (e.g., she is a woman and therefore compassionate” (p.3)

Eagly and Carli (2007b) write that,

“we all mentally group people based on characteristics that they share, often by relying on observable attributes.... we then form expectations about how these groups will behave” (p.84)

The stereotypes that are attached to women include being more social and have greater social skills. They also include being nurturing and caring. These characteristics tend to be attributed to women because they underlie the main roles society sees women as succeeding in; motherhood (Eagly and Carli 2007a).

Women candidates for political leadership tend to be less well known than male candidates therefore, they are more susceptible to gender stereotypes. When we do not possess information on a person, we will use stereotypes to ‘fill in the blanks’ in information (Kropf and Boirley 2001, Fridkin Kahn and Goldenberg 1991, Eagly and Carli 2007a, 2007b). Niven (1998) writes that,

“members of the outgroup are frequently lumped together in a person’s mind, such that qualities associated with the group are associated with all individual members of that group” (p.61).

Stereotyping has the potential to have a large impact on women holding positions of political leadership, they become figure heads for the “outgroup” of women in leadership and thus are stereotyped without being assessed on individual merit or ability.

Bem (1981) used the theory of Gender Schema to argue that in society, roles are allocated based on sex and that we use the attributes we associated with gender to determine the ‘appropriate’ roles that will be played. Research has shown that sex is one of the strongest characteristics used to categorise people (Eagly and Karau 2002) and that the stereotypes associated with sex and gender are long standing and incredibly resistant to change (Kittilson and Fridkin 2008, Heilman 2001, Powell 2011). However, it has also been argued

that the gender stereotyping of women has displayed dynamic tendencies due to the changing role of women in society (Sczesny 2003). Stereotyping is often unconscious, and can be activated through campaign, media, and other influences (Higgle et al. 1997) and to overcome this people “must recognize that their stereotypes have been activated and must desire to counteract their influence” (Eagly and Carli 2007b p.85). When exploring women’s responses to women in positions of political leadership and the drivers behind them, stereotypes relating to women are a significant topic. The stereotyping that takes place for women and leadership will have an impact on how women respond. Stereotypes are essential in understanding the responses as they have a bearing on what is deemed acceptable for different genders to undertake and also the penalties that can be paid when these stereotypes are transgressed. The existing literature on stereotyping and women has largely employed quantitative methodologies and therefore there is a gap in the knowledge for qualitative research into women’s perspectives of stereotypes and also the impact they have on responses to WPL.

2.2.1 Gender Norms

Built into stereotypes is the concept of descriptive and prescriptive norms. Descriptive norms entail the beliefs of what *is* done, prescriptive what *should be* done. In terms of gender, descriptive norms cover what men and women do, whereas prescriptive norms cover what societal roles it is believed should be done by differing genders (Sczesny 2003, Gervais and Hillard 2011, Eagly and Carli 2007a, 2007b). Developing the concept of norms, Rudman et al. (2012) include the concept of proscriptive characteristics, those that men and women should not have, they argue “proscriptions serve to reinforce the gender hierarchy” (p.166). Violating such gender norms can have a detrimental effect on the ‘perpetrator’ (Parks-Stamm et al. 2008).

When assessing women in leadership, gender stereotypes are important when seeking to understand the persistent resistance to women in roles of

leadership in all areas of life, especially in business and political leadership (Ryan and Haslam 2005, Dolan 2018, Diekmann and Goodfriend 2006). Eagly and Carli (2007a, 2007b) say that as leadership roles have been so heavily male-orientated throughout history, it is difficult to separate the qualities expected in a man and those expected in a leadership role. Leadership stereotypes, it is argued, create a vision of a leader that is male not female (Aaldering and Van Der Pas 2018, Powell 2011). Beard (2017) argues that the power structure is coded as male and that, “we have no template for what a powerful human looks like, except that she looks rather like a man”. Huddy and Terkildsen (1993) also argue that women who hold stereotypically feminine characteristics are at a “considerable disadvantage” (p.141) when attempting to hold positions of leadership.

Krook and O’Brien (2012) argue that the increased presence of women in political leadership “may contribute to the breakdown of gender norms” (p.843). However, when there is a lack of information about a person, and particularly a political candidate, research has shown that people rely on stereotype information to make an assessment of that person (Fridkin Kahn 1993,1996). Sinclair et al. (2016) also argue that when gender identity, as typically understood, is threatened, people may “try to restore the gender status by acting in a more gender-typical manner” (p.427).

When women run for political leadership, they run the risk of violating the expected gender norms that stereotypes have placed on them (Gervais and Hillard 2011), through this perceived violation women can become the targets of anger and backlash (Eagly and Diekmann 2005, Diekmann and Goodfriend 2006). Falk (2010) goes so far as to assert that when women run for positions of political leadership it is perceived that they are “somehow against the natural human order” (p.34). Women in leadership are often perceived as gender role deviants and therefore receive negative responses and evaluations (Mavin 2006, Brooks 2011). The displaying of agentic qualities by women in leadership also evokes the backlash (Rudman et al. 2012) especially by those

who “promote the status quo of male-female relations” (Eagly and Carli 2007b p.89). Parks-Stamm et al. (2008) argue that

“people may reject women who violate normative stereotypes by succeeding in traditionally male contexts in order to preserve their beliefs about women” (p.238).

Research has shown that this can lead to women having to prove themselves to a much greater degree than their male counterparts to ensure that they allay fears that they do not possess the required qualities assumed for leadership (Tucker-McLaughlin and Campbell 2013). Sinclair (2014) argues that women “face a barrage of gendered assumptions and stereotypes” (p.21) and that, in political leadership, the higher the office being sought the less likely people were to vote for a woman (Okimoto and Brescoll 2010, Knuckey 2019).

The notion of the ‘backlash’ against women in, or seeking, positions of leadership highlights the deep-seated aversion to women transgressing gender norms and can take the form of “social and economic reprisals” (Rudman and Fairchild 2004 p.157). The backlash has been a useful tool to “defend the gender hierarchy” (Rudman et al. 2012 p.175). Faludi (1993) wrote on the backlash that it arises from their fear that equality is becoming more likely. As women have made advances throughout history, so is it followed by a wave of aggression and criticism towards them. Faludi (1993) argues that the backlash’s aim is to push women back into the roles deemed ‘acceptable for them’ and that was done in the 1990s by blaming the rise of unhappiness amongst women on their very emancipation from gendered roles. She also writes that the backlash,

“is most powerful when it goes private, when it lodges inside a woman’s brain and turns her vision inwards, until she imagines the pressure is all in her head, until she begins to enforce the backlash on herself” (Faludi 1993 p. 16).

The backlash can be triggered by the presence of women in political leadership but also by the notion of increasing women's presence in political leadership, for example through quotas (Allen and Dean 2008). In political leadership women can become the target of negative responses to their presence, both from voters but also from their male colleagues in legislatures (O'Brien and Rickne 2016). This backlash can also come from all genders, both for the very presence of women but also to the concept of promoting equality (Allen and Dean 2008, Childs et al. 2009). Rudman and Fairchild (2004) argue that it is most potent when the perceivers of the gender violation "feel that it is justified" (p,159). Childs et al. (2009) argue that members of the electorate, when faced with the concept of quotas or all women shortlists, can have an "instinctive aversion to anything that smacks of political correctness or positive discrimination" (p.211).

Women in political leadership can also become the target of backlash against the perceived violated of gender norms in the form of misogyny. Manne (2018) argues that women leaders can become symbolic targets for women violating patriarchal norms and so can receive negative responses and penalties for the perceived "sins of others" (p.53). This plays into the more wide-reaching issues of misogyny and patriarchal order which will be discussed in greater depth later in this chapter.

2.2.2 Role Congruity Theory

Developing the notion of gender stereotypes, Eagly and Karau (2002) propose Role Congruity Theory (RCT) to explore women in the arena of leadership. They posit that there are two types of personality attributes: agentic and communal. Agentic traits include those such as authority, aggression, and strength. Communal traits include those such as compassion, warmth, and kindness. RCT states that agentic traits are associated with men, communal with women; leadership traits are predominantly agentic therefore leadership is seen as a male preserve as men are assumed to possess the traits most

naturally associated with leadership. Therefore, women are naturally deemed incongruent with leadership. This perceived incongruence is especially strong in domains which are more masculine (Eagly and Carli 2007a, 2007b) therefore it can be seen as a real barrier for women entering political leadership, which remains a male domain. This incongruence creates a dilemma for women seeking leadership roles as they are required to display the expected agentic traits of leadership; however, they are also expected to display the communal traits expected of them as women. Eagly and Carli call this the “double bind” (2007a p.66) and argue that it is difficult for women in positions of leadership to reconcile these two conflicting expectations. Jamieson (1995) wrote of the ‘double bind’ in the 1990s and argued that a double bind is “a strategy perennially used by those with power against those without” (p.5). She argued that the double bind comes out of society’s tendency to think of gender as a dichotomy; male and female with the male being superior and the women being inferior (Jamieson 1995). Drawing on Judith Butler’s (1990) theory that gender is socialised and formed through structures enforced through societal norms, it could be argued that the double bind exists due to the expected norms society has placed on gender roles. Jamieson (1995) argues that “breaking those binds required that we recognize fundamental human similarities as well as differences between women and men” (p.37). Chemaly (2018) writes,

“managing a double bind that we face constantly: conform to traditional gender expectations, stay quiet and be liked, or violate those expectations and risk the penalty of being called puritanical, aggressive and ‘humourless’” (p.47).

When holding political leadership, women can also be caught in an extra double bind in that women are assumed to be emotional however an emotional leader tends to be deemed a failure, although if a woman is unemotional as would be expected of a leader, they are deemed as failing as a woman as unemotionality is not an expected trait of women (Harmer et al. 2017).

Benze and Declercq assert that women candidates for political office risk being perceived as “too tough and hence, “strident” and “bitchy”” (1985 p.283). Eagly argues that when women show qualities that are not congruent to those expected of their gender, they become more open to prejudice and that displaying agentic traits can be seen as “unfeminine” (2007 p.4). She argues that such attitudes limit women’s access to leadership roles and “foster discriminatory evaluations when they occupy such roles” (2007. p.8). Eagly and Karau explain the double bind further as,

“conforming to their gender role would produce a failure to meet the requirements of their leader role, and conforming to their leader role would produce a failure to meet the requirements of their gender role” (2002 p.576)

Fridkin Kahn (1996) reinforces this when she writes that women are expected to be less aggressive and negative and so when they display such qualities during a political campaign, they violate expectations and thus; “when women violate these expectations by initiating aggressive and forceful attacks they are viewed negatively” (p.33).

Brown and Banks (2014) wrote about the politics of Black women legislatures in Maryland, United States. They found that Black women’s bodies and appearance when they hold political office impacts the way in which constituents respond to them and also how they are viewed in terms of social signifiers. Brown and Lemi (2021) in their study on Black women political elites and appearance, found that Black women can have a tendency to police other Black women in terms of respectability politics. Higginbotham’s theory of respectability politics (1993) says that Black people in the United States must adhere to a code of respectability in order to counteract racist perceptions. Brown and Lemi (2021) conclude that there is a greater pressure placed on Black women political elites in terms of appearance and that they are judged by their style choices in a more in-depth way than non-Black women. This

finding is important when exploring the responses from participants of colour within this study. The research includes a focus group with Black women discussing their feelings towards Black political candidates with a focus on the expectations of appearance, and therefore, is one of the only qualitative methodologies present in the existing literature.

The act of self-promotion is largely seen as an agentic performance and thus for women wishing to obtain roles of leadership, particularly within the political sphere, self-promotion can be a difficult thing (Hall and Donaghue 2013, Eagly and Carli 2007a, 2007b). The concept of agentic leadership norms also discourages women to run for political leadership, as they tend to hold more communal goals as opposed to power goals that are associated with political leadership (Schneider et al. 2016).

Studies have found that in order to overcome the double bind issue, women seeking leadership have to balance the display of agentic and communal attributes. When women display agentic traits, the perception of their communal attributes is decreased (Zheng et al. 2018, Rudman and Glick 2001). To overcome the negativity created by displays of agentic behaviour, women in leadership need to ensure that they are displaying high levels of communality, it has also been found that displaying communal role information such as motherhood can also negate any adverse responses to agentic behaviour (Heilman and Okimoto 2007, Deason et al. 2015). Rudman and Glick write that displays of agency by women are seen as negative unless they “temper their agency with niceness” (p.743). Smith (2018) also found that women could overcome negative responses to agentic behaviour through displaying their motherhood and asserts that a “maternal mandate” could be at play in political leadership, in that the issue of whether a woman is a mother or not can play a part in their viability as a political leader in the eyes of the electorate. Smith writes of the politicized mother who can play on the idea of

mothers as “special different and powerful” (2018 p.197). O’Brien et al. (2015), argue that,

“female executives are thus required to develop strategies that demonstrate their strength, determination, and decisiveness...presenting a more masculine image, in turn, allows them to adhere to the “undeclared male rules of the game” (Shvedova 2002 44-45 in O’Brien et al. 2015 p.698).

Not only do character traits fall into the two categories of agentic and communal, but so do issues. Issues such as the economy, national security and defence are classed as agentic issues whereas issues such as education, healthcare and families are classed as communal issues (Fridkin Kahn 1993). Women in political leadership, therefore, tend to be more successful when campaigning on issues that fall within this communal sphere, Fridkin Kahn (1996) argues that if the salient issues of that election campaign fall within the communal issues boundaries, then women can be successful however, if the campaign is largely centred around agentic issues the woman will be penalised. When women are in leadership, they are also expected to take on issues relating to women and equality as well as the salient issues of the day and their constituent casework (Schmitt and Brant 2019). O’Brien (2015) argues that “cabinet assignments are not created equal” (p.691) and women leaders tend to hold lower prestige offices within the executive branches globally or that when they are leaders of countries, they tend to be more figure heads than executives. Within executive branches, in the UK for example, women tend to hold cabinet positions corresponding to education and families far more regularly than they hold posts corresponding to defence or the economy (Imray and Middleton 1986, Barnes and O’Brien 2018). The UK has in 2019 not had a woman hold the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer, and only recently in 2019 has the first woman Secretary of Defence been appointed. Barnes and O’Brien (2018) write that, “defence (along with finance) remains the last bastion of male control” (p.357).

2.2.3 Summary

The existing research on gender stereotypes and norms highlights the resilient nature of both, they are resistant to change and have an impact on how the different genders are viewed and the societal expectations placed upon them. With this in mind it is clear that gender stereotypes have the potential to have a significant impact on how women in the UK feel about WPL. There is a gap in the literature in terms of stereotypes and norms in relation to WPL in that the responses to them have not been explored and not through a qualitative methodology as is proposed for this thesis. By exploring the responses with in-depth interviewing this thesis will aim to contribute to a new understanding of how gender stereotypes impact women's responses and feelings towards WPL. There has been extensive research on RCT and the double bind in terms of women holding positions of leadership in business and politics however, this has not been discussed from the position of women seeing women in these roles. This thesis will provide original contributions to how women's own experiences of role congruity and the double bind impact how they respond to and feel about women holding leadership roles in politics. This will help to understand the potential drivers behind the responses given through an exploration of the participants own experiences of gender boundaries.

2.3 Representation

When discussing issues of representation and women's representation within political legislatures, it is important to establish why it matters. Establishing why representation of women matters is key to understanding the responses to WPL as how women feel about being represented is at the heart of the matter. Phillips (1995) argues that one group cannot always represent issues of another due to a lack of inherent experience of that life lived. She writes with regards to women's representation,

“There are particular needs, interests, and concerns that arise from women’s experience, and these will be inadequately addressed in a politics that is dominated by men. Equal rights to a vote have not proved strong enough to deal with this problem; there must also be equality among those elected to office” (p.66).

She also argues that women have interests that are different to that of men, and that the lack of representation for women is therefore “self-evidently wrong” (p.67). She writes (1991) the difference in representation between the genders is something that has been deliberately maintained and that “such a marked variance from the population as a whole could never be an accidental result” (p.63). Ryan Vickery and Everbach (2018) write that,

“if women are underrepresented and minimized, then they are accepted as less powerful than men; their status as second-class members of society persists” (p.7).

Childs (2004) writes that women are thought to practise politics differently to men; they are kinder and gentler, more honest, and approachable, this plays into the stereotypes of women discussed previously in this chapter. Cowley (2014) quotes the Speaker’s Conference on representation having noted,

“people are more likely to have faith in our democratic system if they see their own life experience is reflected in Parliament and bought to bear on the process of scrutiny” (House of Commons 2010, para 13-14 in Cowley 2014 p. 574).

Lovenduski and Norris (2003) write that for

“historically disadvantaged social groups, the entry of representatives into public office improves the quality of group deliberations, increase a sense of democratic legitimacy, and develops leadership capacity” (p.86).

Studies have also shown that when women are not represented within legislatures, they feel excluded from society. Instead of feeling like citizens with an active role in the country's direction, they feel inferior to their male counterparts (Braun et al. 2017, Atkeson 2003). As our political institutions act as social symbols which send signals to citizens on who and what is important (Kittilson and Schwindt-Bayer 2010). Reeves (2019), writes that having women in positions of political leadership has, "changed the perception of what women are capable of and how they should be treated" and has, "changed people's attitudes and assumptions about women and power" (p.6).

Atkeson (2003) argues that when women do not see other women in positions of leadership this sends cues that women citizens, "are more subjects than citizens" (p.1043), "fit to be led, but not the lead and better ruled than rulers" (p.1043). This echoes Phillips' (1995) assertion that when women are not represented, they are infantilised and "remain like children, to be cared for by those who know best" (p.39). Wängnerud (2009) found that when asked people tend to overestimate the number of women in political positions. Sorrentino et al. (2018) argue that "it is assumed that the issue (of gender inequality) has already been addressed" (p.3). In 1968, Imray and Middleton wrote, "the seats of power are everywhere a male preserve" (p8.). Despite over 30 years having passed since this was written, statistics would show that this still holds to be true and that the lack of gender equality in political legislatures endures, in spite of claims to the contrary. At present the average representation of women in legislatures globally is 25%, with only 13% of current world leaders being women (UN Women, 2021). Within the United Kingdom, gender disparity within politics and political leadership remains, there are currently 209 women sitting in the House of Commons, 32% of the legislature. This the highest number on record, however it could be argued this number increased largely due to the Labour party having enforced all-women shortlists in the campaign recruitment. Only 26% of the House of Lords are women currently.

Of the current Cabinet, women comprise only 22%. (Browning 2019). In UK history only eight women have held one of the Great Offices, Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Home Secretary. Only one woman of colour, Priti Patel, has held one of the Great Offices. Jacqui Smith became the first Home Secretary in 2007, Margaret Beckett served as Foreign Secretary for a year, the other women have included Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister, Theresa May as Home Secretary and Prime Minister and Amber Rudd as Home Secretary. As of 2021 there has still not been a female Chancellor of the Exchequer. Penny Mordant became Secretary of State in 2019 making her the first woman to hold the post in the United Kingdom. Lovenduski (2005) has argued that it will take another 100 years for women to reach parity within the House of Commons.

As the feminist political studies literature shows, representation of women, is also important in engaging women citizens with the political process (Dolan 1998, Philpot and Walton 2007, Dolan 2018). Dolan (2018) looks at the affinity effect, in that women can feel more likely to support women candidates although she does state that this effect can vary. Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007) writes of the expectation placed on women politicians, stating “female representatives also have been expected to spur engagement with politics among other women” (p.922). Philpot and Walton (2007) argue that if all else is equal in an election, then women will be more inclined to support women candidates however, they admit that “in most elections, however, all else is not equal” (p.51). Women are also not exempt from leadership stereotypes so will also fall victim to the expected norms of leadership as a male preserve (Sczeny 2003). Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007) did find that when there are more women Members of Parliament, young girls are more likely to discuss political and participate, Fridkin and Kenney (2014) also found that in the U.S “women Senators do empower women constituents” (p.1028).

2.3.1 Descriptive and Substantive Representation

When it comes to research on the topic of representation, two main forms of representation are present, descriptive, and substantive representation (Celis and Lovenduski 2018, O'Brien and Piscopo 2019, Lovenduski 2005). Descriptive representation, Lovenduski (2005) writes, argues that "women should represent women in proportion to their presence in the population" (p.17) and later defines it as "representation by representatives who belong to the same societal group" (Celis and Lovenduski 2018 p.150).

Much of the assumptions of representation is that when there are more women present in legislatures, so will women be better represented. However, many scholars have argued that in fact simply increasing the number of women, the levels of descriptive representation, is not enough to secure greater value is placed on women's issues and needs, but that substantive representation of women is required for this to equality to happen (Allen and Childs 2018, Celis and Lovenduski 2018, O'Brien and Piscopo 2019). Lovenduski (2005) writes that, "substantive representation of a group is most simply described as the representation of its interests" (p.18). Evidence has shown that it is women Members in Parliament who raise issues based on women (Bates and Sealey 2019, Reeves 2019) however Childs (2001) argues that it does not always follow that women will raise issues relating to women for fear of being ostracised in the male dominated environment of the House of Commons. She writes "women representatives lack the necessary safe spaces in which to substantively represent women" (p.181). Childs (2004) also writes that "women's bodies must not be confused with feminist minds" (p.25) and that purely having a woman in place does not guarantee that she will believe in or fight for feminist issues. However, she does conclude that the legislation shows that having women in Parliament increases legislation that benefits women. Reeves (2019), showed this historically when she writes,

“in the 12 years before women had the vote, only 5 pieces of legislation were passed on women’s issues. From 1918 to 1928, 20 pieces were passed” (p.35).

Harriet Harman, Labour Member of Parliament and only woman to have been leader of the Labour Party, albeit as a temporary stand-in only, noted that when she first entered Parliament she was,

“warned not to speak about women’s concerns in case I might get ‘pigeon-holed’. But if there are so few women, those who are there have to speak up for women’s concerns” (Ridge 2017 p.182).

Homola (2017) writes that,

“the combination of parties’ gate-keeping power, socialization effects and party discipline prevents women from behaving significantly differently from men once they are elected to parliament” (p.958).

Homola (2017) also points out that women are rarely found in the gate-keeper roles of political parties and so this position is unlikely to change soon. Lovenduski and Norris (2003) argue that gender inequality within political institutions will remain even if gender parity is achieved and the attitudes required to ensure equality are not changing.

2.3.2 Quotas

Gender quotas within political parties started in Norway during the 1970s (Caul 2001) and as of 2016, more than 100 countries have implemented the use of gender quotas to ensure greater representation of women in legislatures (O’Brien and Rickne 2016, Gwiazda 2017). The quotas can take two forms, “‘strong’ – codified in party rules – or ‘soft’ – non-written targets or recommendations” (Verge and Espírito-Santo 2016 p.416)

O'Brien and Piscopo (2018) argue that the requirement for gender quotas reflects the fact that there remain "formal and informal barriers" for women in politics (p.12). They also write that,

"it accepts that large leaps in women's representation are possible and necessary, but also that women's representation does not increase simply by allowing history to unfold" (p.12).

Krook et al. (2009) identify three main categories of gender quotas,

"reserved seats, which designate places for women in political assemblies that men are not eligible to contest; party quotas, which involve pledges by individual parties to nominate a specific percentage of women; and legislative quotas, which require that all parties put forward a certain proportion of women" (p.783).

Krook (2007) highlights four reasons to explain the adoption of gender quotas,

"women mobilize for quotas to increase women's representation; political elites recognize strategic advantages for pursuing quotas; quotas are consistent with existing or emerging notions of equality and representation; and quotas are supported by international norms and spread through transnational sharing" (p.369).

In the UK, party implementation of quotas has been taken up by some parties but avoided by others. The Labour party famously took up all female short lists and had such lists in 50% of all vacant and winnable seats; however, in 1996 all-women shortlists were declared illegal (Allen and Dean 2008). In 2002 the Sex Discrimination (Elections Candidates) Act was implemented that allows parties to adopt all-women short lists if they would like it (Nugent and Krook 2016). The Labour policy did result in a 10-percentage point increase in the number of Labour women MPs after the 1997 election (Caul 2001) and the party has continued to use them, steadily increasing the number of women

representing constituencies. Left-wing parties such as Labour in the UK are more inclined to implement quotas as they tend to be more closely aligned with the desire for gender equality (Gwiazda 2017).

Research has found that the implementation of quotas has produced a significant backlash against women (O'Brien and Rickne 2016, Lovenduski and Norris 2003, Beaman et al. 2009, Allen and Dean 2008) and therefore the cost of having quotas to increase women's representation may produce more negative effects than positive. O'Brien and Rickne 2016 write,

“these policies may thus produce a *trade-off effect* in which short-term gains in women's numeric representation result in longer-term exclusion from positions of authority” (p.112).

Beaman et al. (2009) argue that “voters may dislike quotas that restrict their choices, and therefore may dislike women leaders” (p.1498). Allen and Dean (2008) assert that the backlash will come from both men and women, “men who feel discriminated against and from women who object to be treated with charity” (p.216).

An aversion to quotas as a form of accelerating the representation of women in legislatures is widespread both outside and within said legislatures. Allen and Dean (2008) cite a 2001 survey of over 1000 parliamentary candidates and although 67.9% believed that there should be a greater number of women in Parliament, 92.4% ‘disapproved’ or ‘strongly disapproved’ of a proposal to establish ‘Reserved seats for women’, 78.4% disapproved or strongly disapproved of having ‘All women shortlists’. Caul (2001) writes that the electoral system within a legislature can influence the level of support for gender quotas within parties, those with proportional representation may be more in favour of quotas, however in the one member, first-past-the-post system such as in the United Kingdom, support for gender quotas may be less

due to the fact that their implementation may cause the incumbent Member of Parliament to lose their seat, especially if the incumbent is a man.

Kenny and Verge (2016) write that the implementation of quotas, “challenge the very core of the relationship between voters, parties and representatives...and force political parties to revise their selection practices in light of gender criteria” (p.352)

2.3.3 Summary

Representation in politics is important because research shows that when a group is represented, policies are more likely to reflect the best interests of that group. The politics of presences as Phillips (1995) calls it, allows different groups of people to have power of the legislation and governing of the society they live in. However, it must be understood that the presence of a particular group of people does not necessarily ensure substantive representation as the environment can lead to assimilation of dominant interests. When focusing on the representation of women in politics and the responses that other women have to this representation it is clear that there is a lack of qualitative research in this area. It is important to understand how women feel about being representing in politics so as to ascertain the best way to increase the substantive representation of women. Through this thesis discussions on women’s representation in politics will be explored using qualitative interviews. This will allow for new insights into women’s thoughts and feelings on representation but also an analysis of the drivers behind these responses.

2.4 Leadership

2.4.1 Women in Business Leadership

Women's leadership within the business sector is well-research area and can be a useful starting point for exploring the responses to women holding positions in which they have been thought incongruent. The research into women leaders in business highlights key areas of interest and theories which can be applied to political leadership. This section will outline the key theories that can be useful when exploring how women respond to women in position of political leadership.

At the time of writing women make up only 6% of the CEOs in the UK FTSE 100 (Cotton 2021). The lack of representation in the upper echelons of business appears to remain a global trend, as of May 2019 the percentage of Fortune 500 companies run by women has reached an all-time high of 33, that equates to 6.6% of all Fortune 500 companies being run by a woman (Zillman 2019). Whilst it should be acknowledged that the percentages have increased it is still evident that women in leadership within business are still not at parity with men.

A large amount of research has been conducted into women leaders in business and therefore it is useful to assess this research to garner transferrable information for women in political leadership. What has emerged from the research is a number of theories and metaphors to explain women in leadership in the business world.

Zheng et al. (2018) argue that women in leadership are "dancing on the razor's edge" (p.1) in that they must manage a fine balance in their positions of leadership. The "razor edge" speaks to the double bind discussed in the previous section and is useful to highlight the precarious nature of women in leadership positions. The metaphor most often used when discussing women in business leadership is that of the 'Glass Ceiling' (Carli and Eagly 2016). This

metaphor is used to imply that there is an invisible barrier for women to the highest levels of management within a company that prevents them from reaching said level. The metaphor evokes the image of a “rigid, impenetrable barrier” (Eagly and Carli 2007b) and use of the glass implies that,

“the obstacles women face are invisible and undetectable until the last moment when women bump into it and are denied further advancement” (Carli and Eagly (2016) p. 516.

The glass ceiling imagery is opposed to the metaphor used for men in business leadership, the ‘glass escalator’ which is used to describe the invisible ascent that men are put on when entering business and which takes them quickly and seamlessly to the upper echelons of business management (Ryan and Haslam 2007)

However, Eagly and Carli (2007b) argue that the Glass Ceiling metaphor does not reflect the situation for women in leadership anymore as it fails to appreciate a number of factors, these include: the barriers to women are not always invisible; and it implies that there is equal access for women in the lower levels of business which they argue there is not. It does not allow for women overcoming the barriers to higher leadership and it fails to recognise “the diverse strategies that women devise to become leaders” (p.7).

A second metaphor that has been used for women in business is that of the ‘sticky floor’, this relates to women have difficulty moving up from lower level jobs because of a lack of opportunities for women within companies but also for the outside factors that affect women’s advancement in the workplace, such as unequal pay, lack of flexibility regarding child care and even a lack of planning by women themselves to advance in their careers (Carli and Eagly 2016). The ‘sticky floor’ also implies,

“a weaker obstacle to women’s advancement and a greater possibility that some women might be able to pull themselves up from the floor to reach higher positions” (Carli and Eagly 2016).

In place of these metaphors, Carli and Eagly (2016) propose the use of the ‘labyrinth’ to explain women’s advancement within the business world, they argue that the barriers to women are complex and more subtle than the other metaphors imply. They argue that the labyrinth better describes the way that some women can find a way through to leadership, many will fail but it can be done. They also note that,

“some women will be unable to chart their way through and will get struck at dead ends. Some may advance by persisting after experiencing setbacks and wrong turns and others by following the crumbs of those who came before them” (Carli and Eagly 2016 p.518).

Ryan and Haslam (2005) develop the concept of the glass ceiling in their research in what they call the “glass cliff”, the posit that the glass cliff can be used to explain how women are given positions of leadership in businesses when the business itself is in a difficult situation or the environment it is operating in is in a difficult situation. They argue that “a company’s poor performance could be a trigger for the appointment of women to the board” and that

“women may be being preferentially placed in leadership roles that are associated with an increased risk of negative consequences” (Ryan and Haslam 2005 p.83).

Ryan and Haslam (2007) also argue, in later research, that by placing women in these ‘glass cliff’ positions means that they are put into situations which are highly stressful and negative, and this has an adverse effect on the women. They then receive negative evaluations of their work due to the situation in which they have been placed. This can be,

“taken as evidence that they are unsuited to leadership positions and, hence, can be ‘legitimately’ denied opportunities for higher office” (Ryan and Haslam 2007 p.555).

Within business leadership the theory has been consistently “think-male-think manager” (Braun et al. 2017, Sczesny 2003), developed from Schein (1973) who found that the characteristics expected within a leader are more closely aligned to those it is assumed a man will possess. However, Ryan and Haslam (2007) develop the theory, proposing “think-crisis-think-female”, they argue that when companies are in crisis the attributes many feel are required are more strongly associated with women not men, these included “being understanding, helpful, sophisticated, aware of the feelings of others, intuitive and cheerful” (p.553).

2.4.2 Queen Bee Phenomenon

The Queen Bee Phenomenon (QBP) was proposed by Staines et al. (1974) to describe women in positions of leadership who displayed qualities stereotypically perceived as masculine. These women were also thought to perpetuate gender inequalities, distance themselves from other women and contribute to the negative gender stereotyping of other women within the organisation (Derks et al. 2011). Whilst the initial research on this topic was conducted in the 1970s more recent research has explored the QBP to provide a deeper analysis of women’s leadership and women holding non-stereotypical positions. The more recent research has also brought to light the potentially gendered nature of the theory as whole. However, it is important when looking at responses to WPL that this theory is discussed as it is a core part of the literature in terms of evaluations of women and leadership.

Staines et al. (1974) posit that when women held positions of leadership in environments that are predominantly inhabited by men, they exhibit behaviour

that sets them apart from the other women in the organisation. This could be by taking on stereotypical male qualities and shunning those qualities that are thought to be more feminine, these include empathy and care. Derks et al. (2015) set out three main aspects of the QBP: masculine self-presentation; underlining dissimilarities and distance for other women; a legitimising of gender hierarchy.

Presenting masculine traits is a key aspect of the QBP and is used by women in leadership to assimilate into the dominant culture of the organisation. As women need to overcome the perceived incongruence with positions of leadership, the QBP theory asserts that women will aim to do this through emphasising more masculine qualities so as to not trigger a backlash against their perceived femininity (Arvate et al. 2018). The distancing from other women when holding positions of leadership is argued to be a way to avoid being punished for being a woman. Derks et al. (2015) review the research that has been conducted on this topic and highlight how women in positions of leadership are often perceived to remove themselves from more junior women. Arvate et al. (2018) through their study of women mayors in Brazil discuss this distancing and that they focus on their own individual success rather than the collective success of women in the organisation. Lastly, the legitimising of gender hierarchy which Derks et al. (2015) posit is “perhaps the most harmful” aspect (p.457) is a way in which women in leadership reinforce the status quo. This can be in the form of “turning against other women, ignoring derogatory remarks about them and contributing to the derogation” of other women (Arvate et al. 2018 p.535). By exhibiting these traits, the women who behave as Queen Bees become a barrier for other women reaching positions of leadership, they make exhibiting communal traits more of an anomaly, they shun other women and also reinforce harmful gender stereotypes or at least do not challenge them. (Derks et al. 2011). Derks et al. (2015) argue that the behaviour that women in leadership positions display in terms of distancing can also be seen in other marginalised groups.

Cooper (1997) conducted a group experiment with women in order to understand their responses to women leaders and in that study, they established that the responses were dependent on the women being either “traditional” or “non-traditional” women. The latter informed how positively or negatively they responded to “traditional” and “non-traditional” models of leadership.

The QBP is an important theory regarding women in positions of leadership but the research that has been conducted in recent years argues that it is a flawed perception of women leaders’ behaviour. Mavin (2005) writes that women are often expected to be allies to each other and this is based on the notion of solidarity behaviour. She argues that “solidarity behaviour may set expectations of senior women in management which cannot be fulfilled” (p.265). In her later work Mavin (2008) also sets out the differences that men and women face when in leadership, the fact that men are expected to compete with each other however women are expected to support one another.

In a quantitative project with 94 women leaders in The Netherlands, Derks et al. (2011) found that women who displayed Queen Bee behaviour were responding to their environment and had, in the first instance, a low gender identification but had also been subjected to gender discrimination within the workplace. Therefore, this was not a reaction to other women but more a response to the environment they were operating in and a defence mechanism to counteract the negative responses they had received. They argue,

“women who show evidence of the Queen Bee phenomenon do not do so because of their inherent predisposition to compete with other women, but because they see this as a way to pursue their ambitions in sexist organizational cultures” (p. 530)

In later work Derks et al. (2015) argue that women who identify less strongly with being a woman will respond to the negatively gendered environment, not with solidarity, but with distance and through promoting their own individual opportunities and not a collective advancement of women. Mavin (2005) argues that the blame should not be placed on the individual women but that it is more important to understand the environments in which women leaders are operating and understand their responses in relation to those environments. She argues that we set women up in a binary, they are either 'good' or 'bad', she writes that these assumptions,

“polarize individual senior women as either 'good', as a woman who is actively involved in supporting other women, or as 'bad', as a woman who has achieved a senior management position by 'selling out' other women” (Mavin 2008 p. 82).

Arvate et al. (2018) used quantitative analysis of women in mayoral positions on Brazil to explore the impact that women in leadership can have on the representation of women in junior positions, they found that once a woman had entered her second term of office, she had a greater impact on the numbers of junior women in their organisation. They also argue that the Queen Bee phenomenon could be seen as a myth and in their findings women leaders exhibited benevolent behaviour towards other women, they argue that their results,

“speak for a top-level female leader acting like a powerful, but stately and distinguished leader; more like a “Regal Leader” than a Queen Bee” (p.547).

Derks et al. (2015) argue that the behaviour that women in leadership positions display in terms of distancing can also be seen in other marginalised groups. One aspect of the research on women and leadership in relation to the QBP is a lack of intersectionality in the analysis of women's behaviours. The studies do not take into account the differing identities of the women in question and address issues of race discrimination, ageism, and homophobia for example.

It is important within the exploration of women's responses to remember that women are not one homogenous group, and the differing aspects of their identity will impact how they respond in work settings but also how they are responded to by other women.

For this thesis, the QBP is an important part of the literature as it speaks to how women in leadership are viewed and the response that can be levelled at women who are in positions of leadership. When exploring the responses to women in political leadership the potential for behaviour to be viewed as exhibiting Queen Bee characteristics is high. When applying the narrative, life story interview methodology, bringing in women's own life experiences so too is there a potential to for the women to have been women in leadership but also to have experienced women leaders in their work life. Therefore, this thesis will use the QBP to help explore responses to WPL through a qualitative methodology which will be contributing new knowledge to this field of women in leadership.

2.4.3 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a concept created by MacGregor Burns (1978), he argues that transformational leaders "look for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower" (p.4). The transforming leader is able to identify needs within followers and exploit them in order to maximise output or outcomes. Bass (1985) develops the definition of transformational leadership to include the leader's ability to change the culture of the organisation or body that is being led and the reorganisation of the vision for said organisation or body. Bass and Avolio (1993) write,

"such leaders facilitate and teach followers. They foster a culture of creative change and growth rather than one which maintains the status quo. They take personal responsibility for

the development of their followers. Their followers operate under the assumption that all organizational members should be developed to their full potential” (p.113)

Leadership scholars have developed the concept of transformational leadership since its conception in the 1970s, including the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) which allows for a means to measure leaders transforming qualities (Bass and Riggio 2008). Avolio et al. (1991) proposed four distinct characteristics of transformational leadership and called the Four Is. These were: individualised consideration; intellectual stimulation; inspirational motivation, and idealised influence. Importantly these four characteristics include the notion of understanding the individual needs of people being led and also having the ability to inspire and empower. They note that,

“by showing respect for others and by building their confidence and trust in the overall mission, transformational leaders are able to develop much referent power and influence over followers” (Avolio et al. 1991 p.15).

Carless et al. (2000) in their study of transformational leadership in Australia propose six behaviours which are: communicating vision; developing staff; providing support; empowering staff; innovation; leading by example; and charisma.

When examining transformational leadership in relation to gender the research shows that there are many similarities between the characteristics of transformational leadership and those expected of women (Bass and Riggio 2008). There is also a strong link between the ability to display transforming leadership qualities and emotional intelligence. Bass and Riggio (2008) argue that as women tend to be more emotionally intelligent, they also tend to be more likely to employ this type of leadership. However, they do make an important observation when they write that this correlation between women

and transformational leadership is heavily based on gender stereotypes and the assumptions made about women's personalities and attributes. Mandell and Pherwani (2003) in their study into gender comparisons and transformation leadership found that overall women tended to have a higher emotional intelligence which led to them displaying transformational leadership qualities more often than men. They argue this could be a unique positive aspect of women's leadership. Campus (2013) notes how the theory of transformational leadership has become synonymous with women's leadership although this was not the intention of McGregor Burn's original theorising.

2.4.4 Charismatic Leadership

Transformational leadership literature overlaps with that of charismatic leadership. The research largely originates from the business and organisational world however, much like other leadership research, it can be useful when exploring political leadership and responses to it. Originally proposed by Max Weber, charismatic leadership focused on exceptional leaders. Eatwell (2006) summarised Weber's argument for charismatic leadership by writing,

“Weber believed that such charismatics could attract an affective community of supporters, largely unconcerned with rational economic affairs” (p.141).

Conger et al. in their 2000 empirical study found that there is a strong relationship between “follower reverence and charismatic leadership” (p.747). This reverence and attribution of it, leads to a leader being deemed charismatic. In his 1990 study on charisma Charles Lindholm explores the nature of charisma in leaders and the responses of followers. He writes,

“this magnetic quality that is the essence of charisma is one that a few people are thought to “have” as a part of their basic

character; charisma is not learned – it exists, just as height or eye color exist” (Lindholm 1990 p.7).

Charismatic leadership places a greater emphasis on the way in which followers view the leader (Conger and Kanungo 1987, Shamir et al. 1993, Conger et al. 2000). The charismatic attribute is placed on the leader by the followers and accounts for the feelings that are evoked by that leader (Conger and Kanungo 1987, Yuki 1999). Shamir et al. (1993) argue that charismatic leaders can link the goals of themselves and their followers and are able to harness “the motivational forces of self-expression, self-consistency, self-esteem and self-worth” (p.584). Fuller et al. (1996) in their systematic review of the research on charismatic leadership argue that there is a strong identification between leader and follower when this type of leadership is present. Lindham (1990) calls it a “mutual mingling of the inner selves of leader and follower” (p.7).

Whilst there is a lack of research directly exploring women’s leadership and charismatic leadership it is an important aspect to consider when examining the responses in this thesis. It could be argued that as followers attribute charisma to leaders it could be present with the participants in this study, however when assessing the boundaries that women leaders face in terms of stereotyping and perception of incongruity, that for women leaders’ charisma is not possible or is a reach. Women leaders have to overcome different barriers to male leaders and so they may not be afforded the luxury of being extraordinary in their leadership skills as they are already deemed extraordinary for being in a position of leadership.

2.4.5 Summary

Transformation leadership research is important in terms of this thesis as it is most closely linked to women’s leadership. Much of the existing research

focuses on business and organisational leadership however the theory has also been applied to political leadership. When exploring the responses to WPL and discussing the participants own experiences of leadership it will be important to understand how women have displayed leadership traits. Transformational leadership, one that centres connection and inspiration will be relevant in understanding how the participants view leadership and the value they place on certain leaders' characteristics. This thesis will help provide new insights into women's leadership and potentially examine how women respond to transformational leaders in political leaders but also in their own lives where and when they encounter it. Similarly, this thesis will explore charismatic leadership and gender and provide understandings of how women feel about WPL and whether they deploy and exhibit charisma and charismatic forms of leadership.

2.5 WPL and Media Representation

Existing research on the topic of WPL tends to focus heavily on the media representations of the women and the coverage of them in the news. Campaign coverage has also been researched extensively, particularly in the United States spearheaded by Kim Fridkin and her analysis of senatorial campaigns of women candidates (1991,1996, 1996). The literature on the media representation of WPL is an important aspect of this project as the responses participants have to the leaders will be based on the media coverage that they have seen. The mediated nature of politics means that the framing of the women, the language used when reporting on them and the images that are shown of the women will influence the way in which the participants respond to them. Much of the research into media coverage of WPL focuses on one specific leader however, there is little research into audience responses to this coverage. Although the media coverage is not the main focus of this thesis it is important to

acknowledge the power of the media and the importance of the media influence on the responses of the participants.

2.5.1 Media Coverage and Themes

Campus (2013) provides an extensive overview of the way in which women leaders are covered in the media but also explores the possible impacts of this coverage and recommendations for moving forward with media representation. Campus (2013) explains that WPL are subjected to certain framing from the media, these frames include nurturing, maternal and outsider. The nurturing frame fits with the stereotypical traits expected of women, that they will be thoughtful and caring as per Role Congruity Theory discussed earlier in this chapter. The nurturing frame allows women leaders to remain with the accepted roles of women in society and places the onus on women to display such characteristics when leading so as not to be perceived as “unfeminine”. The maternal frame encourages the perception of the woman political leaders as the mother figure for the country she is leading, Campus writes the media tends to,

“emphasize women being maternal protectors of their people...if the female leader comes to power after a period of authoritarianism, violence, and corruption, she may be portrayed as someone who can heal the country and bring peace and reconciliation” (2013 p. 44).

Again, the maternal frame allows for WPL to remain within the expected gender norms of women, the leadership revolves around women as mothers to those who have elected to her to power. Lastly, Campus (2013) discusses the outsider frame, this highlights that the women are not part of the elite and operate outside of the insider world that men dominate. Campus writes that whereas for many male leaders their path to leadership is laid out for them, with WPL the media narratives suggest that there is “an element of unpredictability and good luck” around their emergence as a leader. (2013 p.

45). Harmer (2021), through an extensive analysis of media coverage in Britain, finds that media coverage “others” women politicians (p.39). She argues they tend to be “portrayed as women first and politicians second”. Harmer (2021) also found this focus on their gender was linked to “their ability to represent other women politically”, thus emphasising the burden placed upon women politicians in terms of representation (p.56). In the analysis of media coverage of WPL, Harmer (2021) explores the role that candidates’ families play in media coverage. She discusses how, for male politicians, the media coverage of their spouses, when those spouses are women, can help to reinforce for the voters his role as a man. The reminder that he is head of his family helps reassure voters that he “embodies the position of the patriarch in his private life” (p. 93). For women politicians, they do not have this same mechanism to reinforce gender role norms, in fact they have the opposite and coverage of their families reinforces their challenging of expected gender norms. This has consequences for the women running for, or holding, political leadership as it is another way in which they can be seen to be transgressing gender norms, and risking paying penalties for it.

Media coverage of WPL focuses heavily on appearance (Campus 2013, Harmer 2021). There is an emphasis placed on the women’s hair, clothes, make up and general appearance to a level not mirrored in the coverage of men in positions of political leaders. WPL face greater scrutiny of their physical appearance and are criticised for their appearance too. Campus (2013) says, “women politicians should be aware that their clothes are not neutral but instead have an impact on how voters perceive the coherence of their message” (p.86). This places a large burden on WPL as they cannot don the customary suit in the same way that their male counterparts can, but instead have to take into consideration how their chosen outfit and hairstyle could be perceived by voters and the potential messages they could be projecting through their choices.

Williams (2017, 2020, 2021) has produced extensive research into the coverage of WPL and the frames that are used primarily in newsprint media. Williams' research has focused on WPL in Australia and New Zealand and contribute to the body of work on the media coverage of Australia's first woman prime minister Julia Gillard. In Williams' 2017 article on Gillard, she uses content analysis to analyse the media coverage of Gillard finding that her gender is used as a weapon against her, especially when she subverted expected gender norms. Williams writes,

“Gillard's treatment therefore reveals that when women politicians are attacked, by opponents or the media, gendered stereotypes, myths, and critiques are almost always central. Revealing the multiple ways in which gender is used as a political weapon.”

Williams' research finding is important to hold in mind when discussing responses to WPL as the weaponisation of gender against the leaders has the possibility of portraying negative coverage to the participants and influencing the way they feel about women in political leadership. Williams, in her 2020 article the media coverage of New Zealand's first elected woman Prime Minister Helen Clark and Julia Gillard identified three “gendered tropes” that are used. She identifies them as a gender trope, femininity trope and an appearance trope. She argues that the use of these tropes to shape the coverage of the women leaders reinforce societal gender stereotypes and focus on the expected norms of women within society. This has a potential impact on responses to women leaders as the reinforcing of gender stereotypes also reinforces the acceptable roles for women or the acceptable ways in which women leaders should be behaving. In 2021, Williams conducted a media analysis of newspaper coverage of Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May. Williams found that the media coverage of May, although 40 years after that of Thatcher, was more heavily gendered and gender features more frequently. Again, she identifies key tropes that are used which include

that of schoolgirl and headmistress. Appearance is also another prevalent trope used. These findings have implications for this thesis as the participants are all based within the UK and therefore have a greater chance of having witnessed such gendered coverage of May. The gendered focus of May as a either a schoolgirl or headmistress have the potential to either infantilise her or create a picture of May as a strict schoolteacher, neither trope provides the empowered leader ideals that would be preferable for a person in political leadership.

Research has also shown that when women are running for political office the coverage, they receive from the media is not only different but holds them to a different standard (O'Neill and Savigny 2014, Falk 2010). In their 2016 study of coverage of women MPs in the United Kingdom O'Neill et al. found not only that the coverage lent itself to infantilising the women politicians, but also tended to frame them as "weak and emotional" (p.301). Perhaps more importantly they found that the trends in coverage were less overt than sexist coverage but as they write were "arguably more pernicious" as it is harder to highlight and therefore, challenge (p.303). The study also found that not only were there troubling trends in the coverage but that women MPs voices were heard far less than their male counterparts, even when taking into account the difference in numbers of MPs. Women were less likely to be quoted directly and therefore constituents were not having the opportunity to hear what they had to say in their own words. They conclude,

"the findings demonstrate that the coverage of MPs in the press amounts to a media construct that appears to reinforce the notion that the "serious business" of politics is primarily male, and which favours the reporting of achievements and news of the male politician." (p.303).

In relation to this thesis, the analysis from O'Neill et al. (2016) highlights how the participants may not be used to hearing directly from WPL but rather they

engage with a mediated version of the leader. One that is subject to tropes and stereotypical framing and one that also silences the words being spoken by the women, this has the potential to portray the leaders in a very different light for the participants and thus could influence their responses accordingly. O'Neill and Savigny (2014) analysed the way in which women MPs are represented in the British press. They found that there is a tendency to portray women politicians as "different from the 'male norm'" (p.6). They go on to argue that this coverage can have an alienating effect on women politicians and potentially dissuade future possible candidates from becoming involved in politics. In the wider context, they argue, this coverage could also have a negative impact on democracy due to the possibility that, "women voters feel unrepresented in Parliament and turn away from political engagement" (p.7). The coverage of WPL is important as it has the potential to reinforce and recreate the gender stereotypes that women are subjected to in society (Garcia Blanco and Wahl-Jorgensen 2012).

Following Hillary Rodham Clinton's campaigns for president in 2008 and especially in 2016 much has been written about the way in which the media covered and framed her. An analysis of the media coverage of the 2016 presidential election found that Clinton's negative press outweighed her positive press 64% to 36% (Patterson 2016). Harp's (2019) research into the role that gender played in the 2016 presidential election argues that the discourse around Clinton "often ignored her experience and public service and instead focused almost exclusively on her gender" (p 51). Harp (2019) also argued that women politicians, when covered by the media, are framed as Other and are subjected to a "gender-focused critique" (p. 94).

For Clinton this often involved the focus on her husband, former President Bill Clinton, and his infidelities during their marriage. Harp (2019) later in her analysis, argues that women's voices remain marginalised in media discourse

and that even when they are given a voice, such as Clinton was during the election, they are then critiqued for how they use their voice and what it sounds like. Clinton was heavily criticised in the media for her voice, she was called shrill and often touted as 'angry'. Harp (2019) states,

“an analysis of the campaign discourse offers examples of other ways that women – most particularly Clinton – were called out and verbally marginalised for not performing this appropriate femininity” (p.132).

In her analysis of nine campaigns for president in the United States by women Erika Falk (2010) found that women candidates were more likely to receive greater horse-race focus and less reporting on substantive issues. She writes,

“The press proclivity to skip issues in its coverage of women candidates is troublesome and may originate in their belief that women are not serious contenders and therefore their stances on issues are not important” (p.121).

Falk (2010) also found that coverage for women candidates tended to focus more heavily on personal traits and biographies. She argues that as the women who run for president tend to be perceived as unusual and therefore are more likely to have interesting and engaging biographical histories. Falk (2010) concludes by arguing that gender stereotyping drives the difference in coverage for women candidates and make topics such as family and spouses seem more relevant for women running for office. This gendered coverage perpetuates and solidifies gender stereotypes within the viewers minds and thus places women candidates at a disadvantage in terms of winning the office for which they are running.

2.5.2 Summary

When exploring the responses women have to women political leader, understanding the way in which the media covers women politicians is unavoidable. Existing research shows that women politicians receive less airtime than their male colleagues and that there is little opportunity for them

to speak to voters directly. Therefore, the way in which the media mediates the WPL will undoubtedly impact the responses. Media coverage of politicians remains gendered with women leaders being subjected to clear tropes that focus on their femininity, appearance, and personal lives. This gendered media coverage reinforces societal gender norms and perpetuates stereotypes. The existing research focused heavily on the coverage of media but there is limited research into how women respond to the coverage. Although this will not be directly answered within this thesis, it will provide qualitative insights in participants responses and understandings of media coverage of WPL.

2.6 Women in Society

When exploring the responses women have to women in political leadership the societal climate in which the women are operating needs to be understood. This thesis is situated within a time of gender based social movements and a move towards a greater understanding of the intersectional space that women occupy in public life. In this section current social movements will be explored and the nature of gendered discussions in contemporary culture.

2.6.1 #MeToo Movement

The #MeToo movement has had a profound effect on the discussions around women and gender inequality. The movement began in 2017 following the revelations that Hollywood movie producer Harvey Weinstein has systematically abused and assaulted women. Quickly the topic of sexual harassment and assault of women became one of the most talked about topics. The movement gained ground when actress Alyssa Milano tweeted asking women who have experienced sexual assault to reply using the hashtag MeToo so as to show solidarity with one another and to highlight the widespread harassment and assault of women. Her tweet had millions of

responses worldwide and is largely seen as the catalyst for the very public #MeToo movement (Hindes and Fileborn 2019).

Although the #MeToo movement is seen to have started in October 2017, it finds its roots with Bronx activist, Tarana Burke who, in 2006, created a community program for women to speak out about their experiences of sexual assault. Burke has called it “empowerment through empathy” (Ohlheiser 2017). Burke wrote that the movement started when she encountered a young girl who had been assaulted repeatedly and how she appeared so alone, Burke writes, “I couldn’t even bring myself to whisper....me too” (quoted in Chemaly 2018 p.198)

The #MeToo movement continued to spread and led to many revelations and accusations levelled as actors, producers, comedians, broadcasters, and CEOs. Tambe (2018) argues that #MeToo movement in its current form is a consequence, in part, of the 2016 United States presidential elections which saw Donald Trump beat the first female candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton, despite on-going accusations from women that he had assaulted them. Tambe (2018) writes,

“#MeToo’s impact may seem sudden, but it is a part of a groundswell in women’s activism since the November 2016 elections” (p.198).

Indeed, the day after Donald Trump’s November 2016 victory, Washington DC saw one of the largest protests in history when the Women’s March took place, within thousands of women taking to the streets to protest him and the widespread male dominance he has come to represent for many. Pellegrini (2018) goes as far as to argue,

“the pitch of justified outrage over the sexualized harassments and slights women have to endure on a daily basis...is a kind

of “facilitative displacement” over our inability to take Trump himself down” (p.263).

Hindes and Fielborn (2019) write that the #MeToo movement “propelled the issue of sexual violence into public consciousness” (p.1). Orgad and Gill (2019) are that the #MeToo era shows that “female rage is “having a moment” (p.1).

However, the movement provoked criticism for its lack of due process regarding those accused, Tambe (2018) writes that “due process has been reversed – with accusers’ words taken more seriously than those of the accused” (p.200). It has been seen as an elitist movement which appears to centre the experiences of white women, whilst excluding Black women, despite it having been started by Burke, herself a Black woman. (Tambe 2018, Zarkov and Davis 2018). The notion of whether the movement can enact real change is also one which garners criticism, can it be more than a social media hashtag and help substantially change the power balance in diverse areas of women’s lives and employment (Zarkov and Davis 2018). Zarkov states in her conversation with Davis (2018),

“we should not assume that what is happening among the political and culture elites will automatically ‘trickle down’ to the streets” (p.6).

De Benedictis et al. (2019) echo this when they write that,

“today’s large-scale feminist mobilizing, however, is not only a reaction to particular social or political events but also inextricably linked to the wider context of social media” (p.3).

Starkey et al. (2019) argue that,

“because of the impact of social media on collective action, the notion of collective identity becomes a central concept to understand the impact of #MeToo” (p.2).

Therefore, whether the #MeToo movement will be the catalyst for real, institutional change for women and for the way in which men treat women remains to be seen, however the fear is that this online movement will remain just that, a hashtag not a start of changing women's experiences with sexual assault.

2.6.2 Gender and the Backlash

When researching the way in which people respond to women in positions of political leadership it is important to consider the social context in which those responses are occurring. Through understanding the social context and through applying a psychosocial approach to the study thus responses can be more deeply understood and explored. Holding that in mind it is important to examine the issue of the 'backlash'. The backlash is a phenomenon that occurs against women when it is perceived that women are gaining more equality or overcoming structural barriers to equality that have thus far denied them access to a specific area or position (Faludi 1993, Rudman et al. 2012, Banet-Weiser 2018).

Faludi (1993) writes that the backlash has been present in history repeatedly, at times when women have been perceived to be advancing in status and power, she writes,

“we find such flare-ups are hardly random; they have always been triggered by the perception-accurate or not – that women are making great strides” (p.13).

She explains it as,

“not a conspiracy, with a council dispatching agents from some central control room, nor are the people who serve its ends often aware of their role; some even consider themselves feminists. For the most part, its workings are encoded and internalized, diffuse and chameleonic” (Faludi 1993 p.16).

Faludi (1993) argues that the backlash is not only present in men but also in women as both are subject to the same stereotyping and social norms. She also argues the backlash infiltrates a woman's mind and has been used as a way to explain why women may be more unhappy since gaining more status in society. That in fact, the very freedom they and their forbearers were fighting for was the reason so many women in the 1980s and early 1990s were feeling unhappy with their lives. The concept of women 'having it all' and the pressure this can bring was in fact the reason for feelings of unfulfillment or overwork.

It has been argued that the backlash has grown in today's current climate due to the greater prominence of women and greater strides towards equality. Banet-Weiser (2018) argues that popular feminism is rife within today's society, popular feminism being the visibility of feminism ideals without the required solidarity behind it of the move for changing structural inequalities such as was seen during second wave feminism. Banet-Weiser (2018) argues that as popular feminism is so visible within the media, amongst celebrities and also politicians that this has evoked the backlash from many who wish to maintain the gender status quo. She writes,

“when feminism is ‘in the water’ so to speak, as it is in popular culture today, it is not surprising to witness backlash from patriarchal culture” (p.2)

Savigny (2020) defines the patriarchy in terms of power structures, she argues these power structures in society are “premised on masculine dominance and feminine subordination” (p.33). The backlash links into the concept of misogyny and is used as a misogynistic tool in which to protect the patriarchy. Jane (2016) writes that, “‘misogynistic backlash’ is so virulent it constitutes a form of terrorism” (p.284).

Rudman and Fairchild (2004) found that the backlash against women is strongest when the actor feels they are justified in their behaviour, thus when a person feels that the strides women are making, or the perception is that they have violated a gender norm they will then feel that to attack such a movement, or an individual woman is justified. As Banet-Weiser (2018) writes that feminism in the form of popular feminism is so vocal and prominent into day's popular culture then it could be argued that this triggers a more intense backlash against women's advancements.

The backlash is also present at an individual level when women defy the gender norms that are entrenched in society. Women are expected to display certain attributes, namely those that fall into the communal category (Eagly and Karau 2002, Jamieson 1995). When a woman displays more agentic qualities, that are perceived to be 'more appropriate' for men, they can evoke a backlash against them personally (Rudman et al. 2012, Rudman and Fairchild 2004. Brescoll 2016, Rudman and Glick 2001). Rudman et al. (2012) write, "agentic male leaders support the gender hierarchy, whereas agentic female leaders subvert it" (p.167).

In an early paper Rudman and Glick (2001) argue that when women fail to soften their agentic behaviour, they evoke the backlash for transgressing the gender norms expected of them. Brescoll (2016) also finds that when women show pride in their achievements as leaders, they can be subject to the backlash, this ties into the notion that women should not engage in self-promotion as this is not seen as a communal, acceptable way for woman to behave (Fridkin Kahn 1996).

It has been argued that the explosion of the #MeToo movement has been a catalyst for the return of the backlash in recent years. Following the 2017

beginning of the movement to uncover widespread sexual harassment in Hollywood, especially with regards to disgraced movie producer Harvey Weinstein, the movement became a rallying cry for women across the world and in all walks of life to open up about sexual harassment and assault and as a way to show the abuse that women face on a day-to-day basis. McDermott (2019) argues that there is evidence to show that people in the United States are turning against the movement, she writes that,

“a recent NPR poll showed that 40% of Americans now say that the #MeToo movement has “gone too far”” (p.149)

and that,

“a recent VOX poll shows that 60% of women are very or somewhat concerned that the #MeToo movement is causing women to be denied professional opportunities because men are reluctant to work with them” (p.149).

Monroe (2019) also writes that,

“recent polls and the behaviour of the Senate Judiciary Committee during the 2018 Kavanaugh hearings suggest backlash against the #MeToo movement is a serious concern” (p.131).

Kavanaugh was nominated by President Trump for a seat on the Supreme Court, during his confirmation proceedings a number of women, most notably Dr Blasey-Ford, came forward to detail how they had been sexually assaulted by the nominee. Dr Blasey-Ford’s testimony was heard by the Senate Judiciary Committee and televised around the world. Her testimony was seen by many as an extension of the #MeToo movement and she became a symbol for women telling their experiences of sexual assault. The reaction to her cause deep division and she received a lot of negative press and reactions and was seen by many as a liar and opportunist. It has been argued that this response can be seen as an embodiment of the backlash against women

sharing their stories of abuse by men and through the #MeToo movement the backlash is evoked to silence women and to restore the patriarchal order (Banet-Weiser 2018).

2.6.3 Misogyny

Misogyny is described simply in the dictionary as a “hatred for women” including and “entrenched prejudice against women” (Goldsworthy 2013 p. 1). When examined closed misogyny is usually comprised of three factors, acts of violence, a negative take on a woman’s appearance and the “reminder of the fundamental shame of her sex” (Goldsworthy 2013 p.1). Tileagă (2019) writes that,

“misogyny is a special class of prejudice that harms the dignity of women by calling into question women’s (human) rights to participation in public life, freedom of expression and personal safety” (p.1)

Tileagă (2019) argues that

“misogyny is not simply the expression of ideological cleavages – quite the contrary; it crosses ideological lines and manifests itself in unexpected and pernicious ways” (p.5).

Chemaly (2028) writes that,

“Sexism is usually discreet, in that a person can act in sexist ways or experience incidents of sexism. Misogyny is systematic. Sexism is interpersonal, misogyny is structural. Sexism might alter your day, but misogyny and the power behind it will alter your life outcomes and shape the world around you at every level” (p.215)

Manne (2018) explores the concept of misogyny and argues that misogyny can be seen as the policing arm of patriarchy, which “enforce women’s

subordination and to uphold male dominance” (p.33). Through this policing, the patriarchy can be maintained, and women are kept within the expected norms of society (Manne 2018). Banet-Weiser (2018) echoes this by writing that misogyny is, “relatively invisible as a politics, existing rather as common sense, the ‘way things are’” (p.3)

The theme of misogyny being used to ensure that women do not enter a ‘man’s world’ is echoed by Ryan Vickery and Everbach (2018) when they argue that hatred towards women, in verbal, physical and online contexts is,

“intended to remind women of their proper patriarchal place, one that is subservient to the interests of men; a place that is not powerful, public, nor political” (p.13).

Manne (2018) also proposes that,

“misogyny primarily targets women because they are women in a man’s world rather than because they are women in a man’s mind, where that man is a misogynist” (p.64).

Scholars have argued that misogyny is a tool used to keep current and enduring gender boundaries in place (Filipovic 2007, Mantilla 2013) and to ensure that women are kept in a more subservient role within society (Mantilla 2013, Ryan Vickery and Everbach 2018). Misogyny is also entrenched within western culture specifically and has become “naturalized” (Banet-Weiser and Miltner 2016 p.171). Through this “patrolling” (Mantilla 2013) of gender boundaries. Through fear, intimidation and belittling the status quo within society is maintained and women’s progress towards equality is kept at bay. Violations of gender boundaries evoke a misogynistic backlash (Faludi 1993, Banet-Weiser 2018), Jane (2016) explains this by writing, “those females who overstep the mark should be put ‘back in their place’ or otherwise punished” (p.287).

Manne (2018) calls this “punching down” (p.54) and is used to ensure that those women who are speaking out or violating the expected gender norms are violently, either literally or figuratively returned within the expected perimeters of their gender. Goldsworthy (2013) writes that, “violence is the last resort of the disenfranchised man; if trumped by a woman, he can still fall back on brute strength” (p.6).

Banet-Weiser (2018) puts forward the theory of popular misogyny. She argues that in response to popular feminism, that is, the visibility of feminist rhetoric but not necessarily backed up with the beliefs and aims of feminism; popular misogyny is on the rise. She argues that it is “networked” and that “there is an overt claim that masculinity, and more generally, patriarchy, are under threat” (p.34). She argues that it is about reclaiming something that has been taken, “such as the patriarchy – from the greedy hand of women and feminists” (p.34). In a previous article, it is argued,

“we are in a new era of the gender wars, an era that is marked by alarming amounts of vitriol and violence directed toward women in online spaces” (Banet-Weiser and Miltner 2016 p.171).

It is important to note that misogyny is not only a male act (Manne 2018), women too can use misogyny as a weapon, Millett (1971) writes that women can also be misogynists as,

“these traditional beliefs still invade our [women's] consciousness and affect our thinking to an extent few of us would be willing to admit” (p.46).

Misogyny is also employed to ensure women do not enter into the public sphere (Jane 2016, Mantilla 2013, Tileagă 2019) both in public life and in the online space. Online misogyny has been on the rise with the proliferation of online forums and social media sites (Mantilla 2013, Ryan Vickery and

Everbach 2018). Mantilla (2013) has labelled the misogynistic abuse targeted at women online “gendertrolling” (p.563) and argues that it usually takes place in response to women “speaking out about some form of sexism” (p.565). Jane (2016) calls it “e-bile”. When looking at online misogyny Ging and Siapera (2018) write that, “makes the internet a less equal, less safe, or less inclusive space for women and girls” (p.516). Manitlla (2013) echoes this by arguing gendertrolling is, “a strategy to keep women from full participation on the internet” (p.569).

Women politicians have become targets of misogyny that has become more overt in recent years. Manne (2018) argues that one woman can become a symbol of other women for misogynists, and they therefore become the target of the vitriol against their gender. Also, by being within the mostly male dominated sphere of politics, WPL are transgressing gender norms and thus are evoking the misogynistic backlash discussed previously. Filipovic (2007) argues that women politicians are often “characterized as shrill, bitchy, ball-busting, or hysterical and branded as ‘mannish’ or accused of lesbianism” (p.302). She argues these are used in order to undermine and dismiss the women and to put them “in their place” (p.302). In the UK, Amnesty International claims that “no female MP on Twitter has been free from online intimidation” (Tileagă 2019). Although it has been argued that online forums provide a safe space for women to discuss issues (Sorrentino et al. 2018) or a place for women to confront misogyny (Chen et al. 2018) it is undoubtedly a hostile environment for women in political office.

During the 2016 presidential election in the United States, the public level of misogynistic vitriol levelled at the Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton, was exceptionally high. This was displayed both by the Republican candidate Donald Trump, and his supporters (Harp 2019). The misogyny against Clinton took the form of signs, t-shirts, campaign slogans and chants and pin badges

to name a few. Harp (2019) writes, “together these clear signs of misogyny offer a disturbing take of hatred toward women in American culture” (p.195).

Clinton herself said,

“a lot of the sexism and the misogyny was in service of these attitudes, like, ‘You know, we really don’t want a woman Commander” in Chief’ (Knuckey 2019 p.342).

Donald Trump’s personal behaviour prior to, during and since the 2016 campaign has shown repeated and overt forms of misogyny, in his use of the term “nasty woman” to describe Clinton, his “locker room talk” of sexual harassment of women and more recently his attacks on House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Congresswomen Ocasio Cortez, Omar, Pressley and Tlaib. Chen et al. (2018) write, of Trump’s ‘nasty woman’ comment at the third presidential debate of 2016,

“in a campaign season that stood out in American politics for its vitriol, the misogynistic statement marked a new low in political discourse” (p.371).

Obama also used this unlikeable trope with Hillary during the 2008 presidential campaign when he stated, “you’re likeable enough Hillary” (Burrell 2008 p. 750).

Research has also shown that former Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard was subject to misogyny during her premiership in press coverage and opposition politicians (Sinclair et al. 2016, Hall and Donaghue 2013, Goldsworthy 2013). Gillard said of the opposition leader,

“Because if he wants to know what misogyny looks like in modern Australia, [Tony Abbott] doesn’t need a motion in the House of Representatives, he needs a mirror. That’s what he needs...Misogyny, sexism, every day from this Leader of the Opposition” (Goldsworthy 2013 p.1).

Words such as 'bitch', 'witch' and 'tramp' were common in the misogyny aimed at both Clinton and Gillard (Goldsworthy 2013, Harp 2019) all of which tie into the women's sexuality and thus their inferiority in the eyes of many. Their relationship status was also fodder for detractors, with those in the 2016 election using Clinton's husband's infidelity against her with such a sign as, "Hillary couldn't satisfy her husband can't satisfy us" (Harp 2019 p.195). Gillard's opponents also made mention to her not having made an "honest woman of herself" (Goldsworthy 2013 p.5) with reference to her not being married to her long-term partner.

It is not hard to see that misogyny remains a powerful force within contemporary Western societies and that through the proliferation of the internet, it has also found a new breeding ground for misogynistic rhetoric and attacks. It could be argued that the further advancement of feminism and of women's equalities has also caused a rise in misogyny. This misogyny is a form of backlash against these perceived gender violations and women taking up more public roles, away from the traditional domestic roles. This makes the environment that women in political leadership enter especially turbulent and makes them targets for misogyny on all fronts. Such misogyny is deeply ingrained in Western societies through the socialisation of both men and women. It is, therefore, hard to imagine that this negativity and backlash against women will not influence how the electorate respond to women in political leadership. Following the presidency of Donald Trump in the United States, popular misogyny remains ubiquitous and has to an extent become normalised which has only helped to further promote misogyny against women both in public spaces and online spaces.

2.6.4 Post feminism, Neoliberal Feminism and Popular Feminism

Banet-Weiser (2018) writes that feminism,

“threatens conventional performances of heteronormative femininity, particularly in ways that femininity functions to reassure men of their dominant position” (p.3).

Post-feminism has proved a term and a concept difficult to define and is widely contested (Gill 2011). It has largely taken on two differing schools of thought; the first that it is an evolution of feminism and a move forward from feminism in that society has moved past the initial goals of feminism. The second is that it is a backlash against feminism and is almost anti-feminism.

The main elements of post-feminism as an evolution of feminism are its focus on the individual, the choice of the individual and empowerment (Lewis et al. 2017, Gill 2016, Gill and Toms 2019), however it also has the notion that the needs for collective activism in order to overcome structural, societal inequalities has passed (Bryson 1999, Gill, 2016, Rottenberg 2018).

Lewis et al. (2017) write that post-feminism encompasses the,

“feminist values such as choice, equality of opportunity and agentic self-determination alongside the rearticulation of traditional expectations and traditional gender stereotypes around motherhood, beauty and female sexuality” (p.214).

Gill (2016) writes that post-feminism includes “the disappearance – or at least muting – of vocabularies for talking about both structural inequalities and cultural influence” (p.613). Bryson (1999) echoes this when she says,

“in many countries of the world today, young women see legal, economic, political social, sexual and reproductive rights and freedoms as obvious entitlements rather than feminist demands” (p.1).

The notion that those gains feminists of previous generations had fought so hard for have been accomplished and the fight for them is no longer required is implied for many when using the term ‘post-feminism’ and for some can be

seen as a hinderance to gender equality, Bryson (1999) states that some post-feminist theories would argue,

“feminism can be seen at best out-dated and at worse a threat to loving relationships between men and women or an anti-male obstacle to genuine gender-equality” (p.1).

Gill (2007) also argues that the ‘post’ can sometimes be used to suggest a stance that is against feminism. McRobbie (2009) writes that it is “a process by which feminist gains of the 1970s and 1980s are actively and relentlessly undermined” (p.11). In Gill’s analysis of the differing types of post-feminism, she discusses the backlash and post-feminism, arguing, in actuality, women cannot ‘have it all’ but that the pressure resulting from the feminist movement has caused women to be unhappy and created more issues for them in the post-feminist era (Gill 2007). Gill (2007) continues by arguing that post-feminism is understood best when it is thought of as sensibility.

However, for many scholars the notion that the structural inequalities that women faced during the first, second and third eaves of feminism have been overcome is pure fiction, shown by the continues lack of equality in most all areas of society (Bryson 1999, Gill 2011, Ahmed 2010). Lewis et al. (2017) argue that post-feminism is closely linked with neo-liberal feminism, both focus on the individual and argue that it is the individual who is responsible for their role within society. They write,

“it is women who are required to self-transform and self-reinvent to a greater extent than men, and as this process of recurrent ‘make-over’ must be presented as freely chosen, women are therefore the ideal subjects of neoliberalism” (p.215).

Neoliberal feminism again links with the notion of the individual and away from collective action, it holds the concept that societal groups and restrictions are no longer in place and that women can, through hard work and perseverance,

overcome any barriers that may have been in their way due to their gender (Rottenberg 2018, Yates 2015). A part of neoliberal feminism is also the concept that women cannot 'have it all', they can have their career and be on par with their male colleagues and they can also have a happy homelife, which would take the form of a partner, children, and a home, Rottenberg (2018) writes,

“A ‘happy work-family balance’, in other words is currently being (re)presented as a progressive *feminist ideal*” (p.14).

Rottenberg (2018) also argues that women are, through neoliberal feminism, being made to feel that their lack of equality with men is not due to structural inequalities, as these have been overcome, but are a problem with and for them as an individual. She writes, “there is no orientation beyond the self, which makes this form of feminism distinct” (p.68).

Popular feminism has developed over the last decade and has been linked with the increased visibility of feminism in popular culture, with the word 'feminist' becoming a regular label given to themselves by musicians, sports stars, politicians, and many others. (Banet-Weiser 2018, De Benedictis et al. 2019, Gill and Toms 2019). “Feminism has become ‘sexy’” writes Gill and Toms (2019). Banet-Weiser (2018) argues that popular feminism has,

“allowed us to imagine a culture in which feminism, in every form, doesn't have to be defended; it is to be admired” (p.1).

Rottenberg (2014) uses the case study of Facebook executive Sheryl Sandberg and her advice to women to “Lean in” to get ahead in all areas of life, to explain neoliberalism and the pressure it places on women. Rottenberg (2014) describes the neoliberal feminist,

“Individuated in the extreme, this subject is feminist in the sense that she is distinctly aware of current inequalities between men and women. This same subject is, however, simultaneously

neoliberal, not only because she disavows the social, cultural and economic forces producing this inequality, but also because she accepts full responsibility for her own well-being and self-care, which is increasingly predicated on crafting a felicitous work–family balance based on a cost-benefit calculus” (p.420).

Popular feminism, like neoliberal feminism, focuses on the idea of empowerment and a woman’s ability to make her own choices and again, if a woman works hard enough and wants it enough they can ‘have it all’, however there remains an empty sense to the movement, logos are emblazoned on t-shirts, mugs, badges, comments are made by celebrities and politicians however campaigns and movements have not followed such declarations (Banet-Weiser 2018, De Benedictis et al. 2019). Gill and Toms (2019) also argue that such feminism has little room for minority representation and may also prove to be short-lived and with little impact to show for it.

There are also concerns about which kinds of feminism achieve visibility in news media- who and what becomes feminism’s public face – besides young, beautiful celebrities from the world of film and music (eminently click-able) or heavyweight ‘power feminists’ for ‘think pieces’. (Gill and Toms 2019 p.4).

2.6.5 Summary

The social movements and theories surrounding women’s experiences provide context and understanding of the responses the participants in this research have to WPL. Societal norms and expectations are derived from the way in which society operates and therefore they will influence the way in which the participants view women and their roles. Such culture shifting movements as #MeToo have the potential to impact women greatly, never before had there been such vocal and widespread conversations about the treatment of women and sexual assault. At the same time there are underlying

sociological aspects to women's experiences, that of misogyny and backlash against gender advancements. Misogyny is a powerful silencing tool for women but also one that women can employ themselves as weapon for self-harm or to inflict harm on other women. Misogyny can become internalised and thus has the power to inform the way in which the women in this study respond to WPL. And lastly feminism and the differing strands of feminism have the potential to greatly impact responses to WPL. How women view feminism and how they view empowerment and equality for different genders will impact on how they view women in positions of political leadership. In this thesis, applying a psychosocial methodology of understanding the drivers of the responses, the social aspects are important to that understanding. How do the views of the participants and their experiences as women impact and inform their feelings towards WPL? This thesis will provide new insights into the sociological drivers and the women's responses and feelings towards these social aspects of being a woman.

2.7 Gender Performance and Construction of Gender

The thesis will employ a psychosocial approach to enable an in-depth exploration of the drivers behind the responses to WPL. This will be discussed further in the methodology chapter; however, it is important to understand the construction of gender from a psychosocial perspective. Implementing a psychosocial approach involves examining the interaction of the social, cultural, and psychological aspects of a person's lived experience (Day Sclater et al. 2009, Thompson and Hoggett 2012, Yates 2015). Regarding the exploring and understanding the drivers behind the participants responses to women in political leadership, knowing about their own lives will inform the psychosocial influences.

2.7.1 Gender Performance

In 1929, British psychoanalyst Joan Riviere wrote *Womanliness as a Masquerade* to explain the performance of gender by women as a means of defence both psychologically and possibly physically too. Riviere argued that when women wish to display characteristics that are assumed to be masculine and thus inappropriate for women to be displaying, they can put on a “mask of womanliness to avert anxiety and retribution feared from men” (Riviere 1991 p.91). Riviere argued that when a woman shows her intelligence, anger or power, these overt displays would be deemed as out of character, especially (as we can see in hindsight) given the stereotypical thinking of the time about women and gender difference. She said that by showing such so-called ‘masculine’ characteristics, such women would be assumed to be more naturally identified with men and masculine characteristics and thus would be seen as transgressing gender boundaries and expected norms. Through this perceived violation of gender norms women are felt to be placing themselves in a vulnerable position as they could be attacked for displaying such characteristics and seen as threatening the expected superiority of their male counterparts. Rivière posits that to avoid this threat woman often neutralise their position by adopting overt displays of their femininity, through displaying expected stereotypical traits for women thus reconfirming their gender status and warding off threats and anxiety. The masquerade can take the form of flirting or making light jokes in which to ease any uncomfortable anxieties that have arisen (Hughes 2004). As Riviere writes,

“womanliness therefore can be assumed and worn as a mask, both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it” (Riviere 1991 p.94).

Riviere also argues that the woman must be sure when displaying these assumed masculine traits that she does not appear to take herself too

seriously in the sense that she must not believe that her abilities are of equal to her male counterparts and that it must appear a playful and game-like:

“She cannot treat herself and her subject seriously, cannot seriously contemplate herself as on equal terms with men; moreover, the flippant attitude enables some of her sadism to escape, hence the offence it causes” (Riviere 1991 p.96).

Riviere argues that when women show their masculine abilities, they are creating anxieties not because they are without a penis, but because they are showing that they have the same abilities as those that do have a penis and so are threatening and disrupting the expected norms (Hughes 1997). Hughes (1997) also noted Riviere’s mentions in other works and correspondence of the “mask of compliance” that can be donned in analysis in order for the patient to be left alone (p.908). Riviere’s theory of the mask of femininity can be seen as another example of this compliance, by women putting on the masquerade of femininity and complying with expected gender norms, women are able to ward off any aggression and be left alone. Shingler (1995) use Riviere’s theory of the masquerade when analysing contemporary portrayals of gender in film and argues that Riviere’s use of differing scenarios in which women deploy the masquerade could be applied to argue that it is “undoubtedly a common feature of many (or even most) women’s lives” (p.180).

Judith Butler has made a very important contribution to the theory of gender as a performance. Butler discusses the theme at length in her seminal 1990 book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. In her study of Butler, Maya Lloyd (2007) argues that Butler’s work on gender was highly significant in “shifting the terms of that debate away from a unified conception of women towards an alternative understanding of subjectivity” (p.7) and that she “contests the viability of women as a unitary category” (p.25). Butler (1990) writes,

“If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from sex in any one way” (p.9).

Butler (1990) argues that the notion of binary genders based on the differing sexes cannot hold true as,

“when the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one” (p.9).

Butler argues that gender is “not a noun; it is, in contrast, ‘always a doing’” (Lloyd 2007 p.42) and thus gender is not what someone is but how one performs and acts within that gender and how they perceive it should be performed through societal norms and expectations. Butler argues that gender is being recreated and reinforced through language and action, thus the construction of genders are perpetuated (Butler 1990). The notion of performances of gender highlights the different aspects that gender can encompass and that this is a fluid concept which can change, evolve, or adapt based on cultural, circumstances, experiences, and reactions. Butler draws heavily on Simone de Beauvoir’s work *The Second Sex* (1949) in which she suggests that “gender is an aspect of identity gradually acquired” (Butler 1986 p. 35) and that gender is “an historical situation rather than a natural fact” (Butler 1986b p 520). Butler (1986b) discusses de Beauvoir’s work and writes,

“to be a woman is to have become a woman, to compel the body to conform to an historical idea of ‘woman’, to induce the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize oneself in obedience to an historically delimited possibility” (p.522).

De Beauvoir (1949/1972) also argues that women are the ‘Other’ – that they are defined by what they lack with regards to men;

“she is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other” (p.15).

When discussing aspects of women as “other” Jacques Lacan’s work is important. In his 1972 Seminar entitled ‘Encore’ he stated that the woman,

“becomes the little other object [a-utre], other of being, other of the phallic function; thus, woman enters the Symbolic Other as a ‘not whole’, a part object serving the sub-existence of the so-called whole phallus” (Benvenuto and Kennedy 1986 p.186).

For Lacan, then, women are seen in the light of what they do not have in relation to men, they lack the power which is signified through the ownership of the phantasy phallus and thus they are deemed as lacking and as being a ‘not whole’. Lacan also develops Riviere’s concept of the masquerade, arguing that women adopt an appearance of normative femininity, and they perform that femininity in order to hide the fact that they are fundamentally lacking something which is signified by the phallus in both the literal and figurative sense (Mitchell and Rose 1985).

Thus, both de Beauvoir and Butler argue that to be a woman is to perform the gender expected in society through historical norms and to portray that gender which has been assigned through societal expectations. The performance of gender is one that has been performed many times before and is predetermined for an actor by the cultural norms in which they are born and to defy such gender expectations and perform gender differently is to risk the incursion of penalties and punishment from others (Butler 1986b). Critics of Butler have argued that in her theory of performative gender she is “denying ‘something’ pre-cultural – the individual, an essence, ‘the body’” (Cadwallader 2009 p.290).

Butler's performativity of gender theory is important to this thesis as the participants will discuss their own gender identity and reflect on how they view seeing WPL, and the impact their gender has on how they feel about them. The notion that gender norms are reinforced through performance can be used to explore how gender norms influence the responses to WPL.

2.7.2 Construction of Gender

Psychoanalytic feminist writer Nancy Chodorow echoes Butler's theories by writing,

“Each person's sense of gender is an individual creation, and there are thus many masculinities and femininities” (Chodorow 1999a p.69).

Chodorow (1999a) argues that that each individual creates their own gender in response to their own cultural and psychological environment and experiences. She argues that this creation confirms the notion that gender is dependent on cultural norms and expectations. Chodorow (1999a) also argues that the creation of gender is dependent on the environment in which an individual lives and grows up, she writes,

“it is certainly the case that aspects of gender identity and unconscious gender fantasy draw on language, cultural stories, and interpersonally transmitted emotional responses, themselves conveyed by people (in the first instance parents and other caretakers) with their own personal-cultural sense of gender” (p.72).

Through applying Chodorow's theory of gender as construct created by the cultural and psychological experiences of each individual so can each person's sense of gender be explored through discussions on their lives. It would also follow that these experiences and subsequent development of gender identity will have a bearing on how they view gender in others, and

what expected norms they would have in regard to the performances of gender by others, and the roles in which they would expect differing genders to play. Through the application of this idea of gender creation so can the psychopolitical approach for this project be seen, Chodorow (1999a) writes,

“each person’s sense of gender fuses personal meaning created psychodynamically and idiosyncratically from within and cultural meanings presented from without” (p.126).

In an earlier article, Chodorow (1995) argues that many modern feminist theories forget to incorporate the psychological into their understandings of gender and thus tend to make broad, universal claims about women and gender which at times can be useful but also means that differences between individuals are excluded. She writes,

“part of the tenacity of gender is its personal individuality: to understand and address fully any individual’s gender identity requires investigation of a unique confluence of personal and cultural meaning” (Chodorow 1995 p.524).

2.7.3 Maternal Phantasy and the Return to Mother

The work of eminent psychoanalyst Melanie Klein is also important when understanding response to women in positions of power from a psychopolitical approach. Klein’s work has proved popular with feminists (Rose 2018, Yates 2019) because of the way that she foregrounds the importance of the mother and the primary psychic phantasies which are experienced in relation to her. Klein developed Freud’s ideas of the unconscious further to focus more on the powerful symbolism of the maternal body which arguably represents a move towards a less male centric form of analysis (Gadt 1994). Yates (2015) writes,

“Klein’s ideas can be put to work in the current context in order to explore the ambivalence that men and women experience

towards women in power and the envious projections that such women in the public eye attract as a consequence” (p.60).

In Klein’s ‘A Study of Envy and Gratitude’ written in 1956, she posits that envy begins with the infant feeling envious of the life-giving breast. She writes,

“he feels that the gratification he was deprived of has been kept for itself by the breast which frustrated him” (Klein in Minsky 1996 p.237)

The infant feels that as they are not in possession of the ‘good’ breast, it must be being kept from them either for others or for the mother themselves (Minsky 1996, Segal 1989). Such feelings evoke envy from the infant and also fear that the nourishing breast has been taken away from them, Klein argues, that as the envy is a defence it can also take the form of idealisation:

“idealization is the corollary to persecutory anxiety – a defense against it – and the ideal breast is the counterpart of the devouring breast” (Klein in Minsky 1996 p.242).

Klein argues that this envy and idealisation as a defence can be returned to throughout a person’s life especially at times of uncertainty, trauma, or anxiety. She also argues that this envy of the breast “is like to extend to all forms of female attributes” (Klein in Minsky 1996 p.244). Minsky discusses this concept in her 1998 work *Psychoanalysis and Culture* where she argues that this envy and idealisation can be seen in the way that women in society are often deemed to be either “‘Madonna’ and ‘goddess’ or ‘witch’ and ‘whore’” (p.46). These extreme categorisations link to Klein’s theory of splitting as a key psychological defence mechanism in the development of the child. Klein placed such defences at the heart of her theory of subjectivity and she includes projection, projective identification as idealisation further defences deployed as means to defend against the helplessness and dependence upon the mother in early life.

Klein argues that there are two developmental stages such defences are put into action which include the paranoid-schizoid position and the depressive position. The paranoid-schizoid position occurs in the first months of life when the infant, to defend against anxieties that arise when they are left by the primary caregiver, splits the object of the caregiver in two; the good breast that provides nourishment and comfort, and the bad breast that leaves them alone. Initially, the infant is unable to see the caregiver as being good and bad and cannot integrate both objects and thus splits them to avoid the anxiety felt when left alone. The depressive position, Klein argues, occurs when the infant is able to integrate both good and bad objects (Klein 1946). Klein says that these positions represent states of mind that are returned to throughout life, and one may defend against anxiety through the adoption of paranoid schizoid defence, such as projection or splitting the other into good or bad. The categorising of women into the differing categories set out by Minsky (1998) in which women are placed to defend against anxieties evoked by women behaving or being perceived to behave in certain ways. When analysing Klein's theory of idealisation, it is important to remember that the idealised object is created through fantasy and thus,

“is unstable, and liable to collapse into its opposite. Strong envy will in any case eventually threaten the ideal object too” (Spillis et al 2011 p.173)

This is an important point to hold in mind when exploring responses to women in political leadership, if the leader is idealised but idealised as a defence to the envy their position evokes then such positive feelings of idealisation will be fragile and likely to collapse and be replaced by the envy that first created the idealisation. Segal (1989) writes that,

“since excessive idealization increases the envy, thus establishing a vicious circle, the idealized object can quickly turn into an object of hatred and persecution” (p.144).

Minsky (1996), when discussing Klein's Envy and Gratitude paper, also argues that in some cases the idealisation of an individual can become so great and can elevate the idealised object to such an extent that comparison is no longer possible and through this extreme elevation so can anxiety and envy be allayed.

Marie Maguire in her 1997 work *Psychotherapy with Women* writes that Klein "describes envy as being an attack on love and creativity" and that the object of these feelings is "damaged and destroyed, in fantasy, if not reality" (p.76). Maguire (1997) also writes on envy that should it be present in the household between women, envy towards the mother and envy in the relationship between the mother and daughter, so will this often "be accompanied by intense devaluation and contempt for their own sex" (p.86). Thus, envy within the developmental stages of the daughter can have a long-lasting effect on how women see each other in later life and could therefore have an impact on how women feel about other women in their world, be it in their social circle or their greater environment.

2.7.4 Mothers and Daughters

When exploring the construction of gender and woman's understanding of the role of women it is important to take into consideration the first relationship she has with another woman, that of the mother daughter relationship. Onayli and Erdur-Baker (2013) argue that this relationship "carries a determining role in the life of the daughters in their social and psychological well-beings and self-esteem" p.327). Marianne Hirsch (1981) writes,

"there can be no systematic and theoretical study of women in patriarchal culture, there can be no theory of women's oppression, that does not take into account woman's role as a mother of daughters and as a daughter of mothers, that does not study female identity in relation to previous and subsequent

generations of women, and that does not study that relationship in the wider context in which it take place: the emotional, political, economic, and symbolic structures of family and society” (p.202).

The relationship between mother and daughter take place within a patriarchal society and one in which women are not equal to men. Existing in such a societal environment has an impact of women and thus has an impact on mothers (Flax 1978, Chodorow 1999b). Flax (1978) says there is a different bond between mother and daughter than between mother and son because of the sameness that is present between the two women. She writes that there is a lack of boundaries between the two women and the identification between mother and daughter is strong. Through this identification comes a knowledge that life as woman will be different for them and thus, they must be prepared and ready for it. Flax (1978) writes,

“some mothers consciously encourage their daughters to succeed. However, even they are likely to convey another covert message: to be a woman means to make compromises, to fail, to give up one’s dreams, to settle for less than one wishes” (p.181)

This passing of knowledge between mother and daughter takes on further dimensions when placed in the context of Black women, Bernard and Bernard (1998) argue that for Black women motherhood is “very political” (p47). They argue that Black women are guardians for the women that have come before them and they must prepare their daughters for “a life of over-imposed disempowerment, and the vision and courage to resist and overcome such oppression” (p.47).

When exploring how women respond to WPL using a psychosocial approach it will be important to understand how that woman views gender roles. Chodorow (1999b) argues that beliefs about women come from the most

involved encounters with other women, in most cases this will be with the mother-figure in that woman's life. Chodorow (1999b) writes,

“she learns what it is like to be womanlike in the context of this personal identification with her mother and often with other female models...Feminine identification, then, can be based on the gradual learning of a way of being familiar with everyday life” (p.175).

Eichenbaum and Orbach (1982) echo this when they discuss the way in which a women learn how to be a woman. They argue that a woman takes in all the images and movements she sees of other women and from them “consciously and subconsciously” forms an image of “herself as a woman” (p.4). She also learns the rules of being a woman and how to operate within the home but also in the public sphere of society too. This learning of roles and rules is an important aspect of understanding how a woman sees gender roles and what she views as appropriate or not for other women in society. For this thesis the role of mothers and daughters has the potential to provide new insights into how women respond to WPL based on what they have observed and learned in their own lives.

2.7.5 Summary

Women's understandings of gender and the role that women play in society are established through their experiences with other women but also their experiences in society. The play between their inner, psychological words and their outer, societal words constructs ideas of how women should behaviour and the way in which they should operate in the world. These constructions of gender are based on their own lived experiences but there are overarching themes that link different women together. When exploring the responses to WPL it is crucial to take into account these constructions of gender and the participants beliefs about women and the roles they play. The existing

literature on WPL does not use psychosocial theories and therefore, there is a gap in the literature in terms of this different approach to explore the topic. Through this thesis it will provide new insights into women's understandings of gender and their feelings towards the roles that women play. The psychosocial approach will allow for deeper insights into these responses and for the development of theoretical understandings of women's thoughts on women in political leadership.

The next chapter will outline the research questions for this thesis and explain the methodology being used. It will outline in detail the methodological approach and justify the use of qualitative interviews. The ethical considerations will be discussed as will the limitations of the project. The chapter will also explore the analysis of the data collected.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the methodological approach of this research project to explain how the field work was conducted and what method used. It outlines the fundamental research paradigm for the project and the philosophical underpinnings of the doctoral research undertaken. The method used was interviews with women living in the United Kingdom, the interviews draw on the research traditions of narrative interviewing and life stories. Within this chapter these differing traditions will be outlined along with their contribution to the aims of the research project. The methodological reasoning that informed this chosen method will also be discussed, highlighting why this methodology was selected and the rationale behind them. This chapter will also explore the ethical considerations that needed to be acknowledged and held in mind during the data collection process, the analysis of the data and beyond to ensure that the research is upholding rigorous ethical standards and not cause harm or exploitation to the participants taking part in the project. The limitations of the methods utilised will also be discussed in order to outline how this project is adding to the current literature but that it is by no means a definitive answer to the questions posed but more a development of ongoing discussions.

3.2 Research Questions

Through the discussion of the existing literature on this topic, as set out in the previous chapter, key gaps in research have emerged. The gaps identified formed the research questions for this thesis. This thesis will aim to provide new insights into this topic by addressing the following research questions;

1. What are women's responses to women in political leadership?
(RQ1)
2. What thoughts, feelings, and emotions are evoked for women by women in political leadership? (RQ2)
3. Do women's responses to women in political leadership overcome or reinforce barriers for women to political leadership? (RQ3)
4. What are the drivers behind these responses and where do these responses come from psychosocially? (RQ4)

This chapter will set out the methodology used to obtain answers to these questions.

3.3 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm follows the interpretive model in that an ontological position of relativism is applied, the research is focused on the individual participants and their experiences and setting this against the large cultural and social setting of their stories therefore the "reality is subjective and differs from person to person" (Scotland 2012 p.11). Blair (2015) describes the interpretivist paradigm in terms of "where a person's relationship with the world creates meaning and understanding" (p.15). This paradigm can be seen in this thesis as it explores the lived experiences of the participants to understanding how this informs their responses to WPL. The epistemology will also follow that of subjectivism and the belief that meaning will be constructed in different ways by different participants (Scotland 2012, Ryan 2018). The methodology implemented also leans heavily on the concept that understanding will be achieved through the individual perspectives of the participant and the method is again driven by the notion that the project is participant led and not dictated by the research. (Scotland 2012).

3.4 Psychosocial Approach

The psychosocial discipline draws on insights from the psychoanalysis field and the sociological, cultural field, bringing together the areas of research in order to better understand and interpret behaviour and responses. This bringing together of the inner and outer worlds allows for insights into the subjectivity of issues such as women in political leadership and provides insights into how this subjectivity is informed and influenced by the psychology and sociology of a person (Yates 2015). A psychosocial approach places in the foreground the emotional and experiential dimensions of subjectivity that includes the interaction of social, cultural, and psychological levels of experience (Day Sclater et al., 2009; Thompson and Hoggett, 2012, Yates, 2015). Within this research project the psychosocial is being developed to use a psycho-political approach. The psycho-political brings together aspects of psychosocial and political studies in order to provide a new, interdisciplinary method in response to the area of women in political leadership. This research project aims to understand the drivers behind women's responses to women in political leadership, by applying a psychosocial approach to the analysis of the data collecting so it is possible to consider how the psychological experiences of the respondent are informing their responses but also the social and cultural norms of the environment in which they live. The application of the psychosocial approach also assists the research project in providing innovative findings as this is an underutilised approach in the political science field.

The application of a psychosocial approach also allows the analysis of the data collected to include insights into the affective responses and participants' unconscious responses to women in political leadership. Frosh (2014) calls it a "transdisciplinary space" in that,

“that most authors will come from a specific disciplinary base (for instance, sociology or media studies) but will be using ideas from other disciplines (hence ‘interdisciplinary’) in order to produce forms of knowledge that have no disciplinary location (‘transdisciplinary’)” (p. 164).

Through the application of the psychosocial approach, insights into unconscious approached from participants can be gained, this includes unconscious vocalised thoughts but also the embodiment of affective responses. Crociana-Windland and Hoggett (2012) write,

“understandings from psychoanalytic theory can be usefully employed to outline a spectrum of connectivity between bodily affect and more qualified and relatively more conscious emotions” (p.162).

It is important to take note of the embodied affective responses, through analysis of the physical reaction’s participants have, be it facial expressions, blushes, silences or pauses. Stamenova and Hinshelwood (2018) write “if you ask a conscious question, you get a conscious answer” (p.1). Therefore, by employing a methodology that allows for going beyond the spoken word this helps to explore the responses in more depth, working towards an exploration of the drivers behind the responses.

When discussing the topic of gender with women participants, Nancy Chodorow’s work on gender also explains the rich possibilities of the narrative, storytelling methodology. As discussed in the literature review, Chodorow (1999a) argues that each individual creates their own gender in response to their own cultural and psychological environment and experiences. She argues that this creation confirms the notion that gender is dependent on cultural norms and expectations. Chodorow (1999a) also argues that the creation of gender is dependent on the environment in which an individual lives and develops;

“it is certainly the case that aspects of gender identity and unconscious fantasy draw on language, cultural stories, and interpersonally transmitted emotional responses, themselves conveyed by people (in the first instance parents and other caretakers) with their own personal-cultural sense of gender” (p.72).

I apply Chodorow’s theory of gender as a psychosocial construct which is also part of an ongoing dynamic process which is shaped by socio-cultural and psychological experience; each person’s sense of gender can be explored through discussions on their lives using the life history narrative method. Following Chodorow, one can say that the experiences and processes of gendered subjectivity have a bearing on how individuals view the performance of gender in others the gendered roles which men and women are expected to conform to and play. Through the application of this idea of gender creation in the field of political leadership, so can the psycho-political approach for this project be seen, Chodorow (1999a) writes,

“each person’s sense of gender fuses personal meaning created psychodynamically and idiosyncratically from within and cultural meanings presented from without” (p.126).

3.5 Feminist Approach

This research is situated in the feminist tradition of consciousness raising and elevating women’s voices. Within the second wave feminism movement the notion of consciousness raising was pivotal, that through conversations and sharing so could the world and women’s place within it be better understood and thus change and evolve. This project leans heavily on this tradition in the sense that this is a part of politics in which women’s voices and opinions have not played a large role and the current research on women in political leadership is lacking in real responses from women, especially in a qualitative,

in-depth way. Women's own personal stories are often lacking from the public sphere and "women often mute their own thoughts and feelings" (Anderson and Jack 1991 p.11) and thus through having participants tell their own stories and experiences allows for original, rich data to be gained on this topic. Women in the United Kingdom and in many other Western democracies operate within a male dominated sphere, often largely assimilating their opinions and thoughts to align with such a sphere; listening to women's individual stories and experiences allows for the opportunity for their own thoughts to be heard. In their seminal work on feminist oral histories *Women's Words*, Gluck and Patai (1991) write that,

"Anthropologists have observed how the expression of women's unique experience as women is often muted, particularly in any situation where women's interests and experiences are at variance with those of men" (p.11).

Phipps (2020) writes,

"sexism produces silence, so speech has been associated with breaking free; shearing experiences of oppression can foster understanding and resistance" (p.36)

It is important to ensure that through the project the potential pitfalls of feminist research are not replicated, that is the raising of only white, middle-class voices. Much criticism has been levelled at "white feminism", that is the feminism that perpetuates the supremacy of the white female voice to the detriment of women of colour, trans women, queer women and many more.

Alison Phipps (2020) writes,

"whiteness is wily; white supremacy is so embedded in our psyches that we end up doing it even when we claim (and believe) that it is what we oppose" (p.4).

Mikki Kendall (2020) critiques white feminists' exclusion of women of colour and explores the nuances of Black feminism. She argues white women often

speak on issues and how they impact white women without acknowledging or engaging with how they may impact women of colour. She writes,

“white feminism tends to forget that a movement that claims to be for all women has to engage with the obstacles women who are not white face” (p.2).

In order to address and avoid perpetuating white feminism this project takes an intersectional approach to the exploration of women’s responses to women in political leadership. It must be recognised that women are not a homogenous group and women do not experience life in the same way, therefore it follows that not all women will feel the same about women in positions of leadership nor will one response apply to all women. Kendall (2020) writes,

“A one-size-fits-all approach to feminism is damaging, because it alienates the very people it is supposed to serve, without ever managing to support them” (p.3).

In order to hear and raise the voices of women this project needs to listen to all voices, and to garner responses from as wide a group of women as is possible within the scope of the research.

This project draws on Crenshaw’s (1989, 1991) definitive work on intersectionality to help understand and analyse the responses from an intersectional perspective, taking into account the differing identity intersects of a woman’s life and the disparities in power between women of difference races, religions, sexualities, class and ages and understanding how these different experiences inform and influence responses to women in political leadership. Crenshaw (1989) uses the example of how the law did not allow a Black woman to bring a claim of discrimination since she was both a woman

and Black and that the claimant would have to pick which characteristic they wanted to cite as the basis for the discrimination. As Crenshaw (1989) writes,

“Because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated” (p.140)

Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010) write,

“An intersectional approach does not treat race, class, gender, ability, and sexuality as autonomous categories but seeks to examine their interaction in understanding leadership identity, behaviour, and effectiveness” (p.176).

An intersectional approach is used with the intent of discovering how women’s own lived experiences influence their responses to women in positions of political leadership. As Lewis (2013) writes, intersectionality allows experience to be “the ground of theory making” (p.873) in that it uses and builds upon the experiences of people to apply a wider lens to social phenomenon and power dynamics. There is a danger that intent for intersectional understandings can lead to the analysis becoming “additive” as discussed by Lewis (2009). She argues,

“The key point here is the need to address the *political* and this requires paying attention to which set of categories are brought into alliance and with what political agenda in mind” (Lewis 2009 p.205).

This project aims to go beyond an additive nature and use an intersectional approach to explore the interplay of identity intersects in women’s lives and the power dynamics that are at play through these intersects.

3.6 Reflexive Diary

An important part of the psychosocial approach is understanding the role the researcher plays in the data collection, the impact and influence that the researcher has on, and over, the interview and the direction it takes. In order to explore and understand this a reflexive diary was kept through the duration of the field work in which observations were made but also noting emotions evoked and feelings that arose. Clarke and Hoggett (2018) call this the “reflexive practitioner” (p.7) and note that a reflexive practitioner is aware and cognisant of the influence and “emotional involvement in the project” (p.7). The reflexive diary is also in keeping with the feminist research tradition of recognising that a researcher is not a neutral observer in this process but an active participant in the research and data collection (Stanley and Wise 1983 in Clarke and Hoggett 2018). Acknowledging and embracing the researcher’s role in the research also has a democratising effect on the research process and removes the hierarchical barriers that could be present between the researcher and participant (Stacey 1988). The reflexive notes will be included within the analysis of the data to provide insight into the feelings evoked through the researcher and to explore the tensions present in the findings.

3.7 Methodology

The methodology for the project, that of in-depth interviews, best serves the aims of the research in that it allows women’s responses to be heard. Les Back (2013) writes, “sociology is best envisaged as a listener’s art” (p.26) and argues that the most important tool a researcher has is that of listening, through listening so can the researcher make “the familiar strange or to evidence the self-evident” (p.25). Therefore, by listening to individual women and encouraging an uninterrupted discussion from them on the topic of WPL, but also on their own lives, and how they have viewed, constructed, and experienced gender so will it be possible to “evidence the self-evident” (Back

2013 p.25). The lives of the women participants may bring forth data on the subject that highlights the way in which women perceived and respond to women in position of leadership but also how they respond to themselves as women in this society and how their own lives and experiences impact how they respond when seeing other women step out of gender boundaries roles and transgress gender norms.

The methodology is also in keeping with the psychosocial approach, as Minsky (1996) writes,

“in using psychoanalytic theory as an analytical tool with which we can explore the unconscious dimensions of cultural phenomena such as gender, there is always the possibility that we will make contact with our own inner world” (p.14)

Through exploring both the responses to women in political leadership and the emotions evoked but also linking these with the individual life experiences and stories from the participants' lives so may the connection be made between the psychological drivers informing the responses and also the cultural, societal norms and expectations in which the participant exists.

3.8 Method

In-depth interviews are the method employed for this research project, the interviews incorporate a mixed of the traditions of narrative and life story interviewing in order to gain insights into how women respond to WPL and the emotions and feelings that are evoked in seeing women in positions of political leadership (See Appendix 5 for Interview Guide). In order to explore this method, techniques of these interview methods must be understood. Interviews within qualitative research are essential tools to detailed and personalised discussions on feelings, thoughts, and emotions. They allow for space and privacy in an exchange between researcher and participant and allow for a deeper connection between the two people (Denscombe 2017,

Adams et al. 2014). Edley and Litosseliti (2018) talk of interviews as “social interactions” in which two people can exchange information on topics and events. For this research project the use of interviews allows for intimate knowledge on responses to women in political leadership to be gained through one-on-one discussions in the form of interviews but taking on the more interactive nature of a mutual, free association discussion (Holloway and Jefferson 2000).

3.8.1 Narrative Interviewing

Anderson and Kirkpatrick (2016) argue that “a narrative is not just a listing of events, but an attempt by the narrator to link them both in time and meaning” (p.632). The narrative interview involves the participant telling a “story” or narrative about certain events to the researcher, it requires the participant to create their own narrative of a particular phenomenon or life event. The narrative approach allows the interview to take on a form that goes beyond the structured, question and answers interview technique but instead gives the agency to the participant and allows them to determine what is important and how it will be divulged to the researcher (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000). The narrative interview allows the participant to impart their perceptions, and feelings, of an experience to the researcher as opposed to relaying the chronology of the experience (Ashencaen Crabtree and Parker 2015). Andrews (2007) explores her use of narrative interviewing on the Berlin Wall, Apartheid, and patriotism in the United States of America. She argues that narrative interviewing is a device that can be used to understand social and political responses on a wider scale, she writes,

“when we relate stories of our lives, we implicitly communicate to others something of our political worldviews” (p.2).

Andrews (2007) also argues that the stories that participants chose to tell a researcher are influenced by the community in which they live and the norms that are present within those communities, thus allowing the researcher a

glimpse into the wider social norms of a particular issues or event. Narrative interviewing also has no fixed structure in terms of beginning or end points, therefore it can be useful in helping to uncover previously undisclosed findings, the participant led nature of the method allows for perspectives to be heard and therefore for a wider, more diverse picture of responses to a particular issue to be uncovered (Andrews et al. 2008). Narrative interviewing works in connection to the aims of the research project to uncover the affective responses of participants as well as the more conscious responses. Existing research has shown that when a participant tells stories as opposed to a structured question and answer format, they are more likely to stay closer to the truth and to discuss in a more honest way (Holloway and Jefferson 2000, Stamenova and Hinshelwood 2018). Squire (2008) writes that when employing a narrative interview technique, it is important to look at,

“hard-to-translate fragments, contradictions, and gaps within narratives, as well as the words themselves; or at the paralanguage of for instance tone, pauses and laughter ‘around’ words” (p.43).

The narrative interview for this research project is used on order to help understand how women respond to WPL, through the use of explaining life events or social phenomenon such as particular WPL or specific events in which a woman political leader was prominent will allow for insights and exploration into the responses and their drivers.

3.8.2 Life Stories

The life story interview technique involves the researcher listening to the participant’s life story, the participant is asked to relay, explore, and discuss their own life story in order to create a biography which can shed light on specific people, groups of people or people involved in specific events and

phenomenon. The life story interview can be used to explore social contexts and cultural norms and expectations. Coslett et al. (2000) in their discussion of feminist autobiographies as a research method argue that,

“the autobiographical process uses not only facts and events, but also social representations and cultural values” (p.61).

The life story method, similarly, to the narrative method, allows for a more in-depth and insightful interview in which the participant is more likely to disclose information that is real for them, as opposed to saying what they feel the researcher wants to hear (Holloway and Jefferson 2000, Atkinson 1998). Atkinson (1998) argues that when conducting a story-telling interview the interviewer needs to encourage a stream of consciousness from their participants, allowing a free-flowing dialogue that is not constrained by a structured interview approach, this will

“allow the person to hold the floor without interruption for as long as he or she can or wants to on a given topic of period in his or her life. This can lead to more of a free association of thoughts and therefore, deeper responses” (p.9).

The use of stories allows the researcher to access the more unconscious drivers and affective responses. Atkinson (1998) writes,

“people telling their own stories reveal more about their own inner lives than any other approach could. Historical reconstruction may not be the primary concern in a life story; what is, is how people see themselves at this point in their lives and want others to see them” (p.3)

Through using influences from the life story method and having participants tell their own life stories so would be it be possible to understand more fully how the lives and experiences of the participants have informed the way in which they respond to women in political leadership and also the emotions and

feelings that have evoked when witnessing women in the roles of political leaders.

3.8.3 Elicitation Techniques

Elicitation techniques involve the use of stimuli in an interview in order to begin a conversation on a specific topic or event. They can take the form of photographs, videos, and audio clips. Barton (2015) argues that elicitation tools can be used in interviews to encourage participation from the individual being interviewed and can also help with levelling any power discrepancies between researcher and participant. Employing such a technique in the interviews for this research project helps elicit participants personal responses to women in political leadership as Barton (2015) writes stimuli, “can enhance participants’ ability to elaborate on their own conceptions of the world” (p.179)

For this project the elicitation techniques consist of video clips of WPL. The leaders shown to the participants were Diane Abbott, Hillary Clinton, Theresa May, Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib, Ayanna Pressley, and Jacinda Ardern (See Appendix 1). Including a wide spectrum of women leaders was consistent with the aim of the project to be intersectional and to encourage discussions on how women may respond to women with differing identity characteristics.

A summary of the women in the video clips was told to the participants to ensure they were aware of who they were watching. If the participant had prior knowledge of the woman political leader, then this was brought into the discussion however if they did not have prior knowledge the elicitation technique was still relevant as it helped provoke discussions on first impression or feelings evoked by the physical appearance of the political leader thus mimicking real life encounters with the subject. Barton (2015) also

found that elicitation techniques can be useful in allowing participants to discuss topics that may not be easily accessed through the traditional structured interview, he writes that stimuli can be,

“useful alternatives to direct questions about participants’ thinking, particularly when social, cultural, or psychological barriers make it difficult to talk about a topic” (p.180).

3.9 Sampling

The sampling will not provide responses from every woman and cover all aspects of women’s lives as this would not be possible within the scope of the project nor does that concept fit with the research paradigm of this project. However, as Jolly (2019) argued in justification for her sampling her oral history collections from the Women’s Liberation Movement, it provided “a good representation of the pattern of the movement in the United Kingdom” (p.47) so too will this project aim to provide a “good representation” of the patterns of responses to women in political leadership.

The sampling includes 30 women from a diverse background and who live in the United Kingdom. In order for the project to be truly intersectional, the participants will be from differing social, racial and religious groups. This was achieved by targeting women from differing areas within the UK for example the Stratford area of North London, Manchester and Brighton which all have diverse populations. The project also targeted groups of women that are not specifically involved in feminist organisations in order to gain a wider perspective on the subject matter. Recruitment was done through approaching individuals and gate keepers in different communities. The method of snow-ball sampling (Small 2009) was also used to find participants, asking participants if they have other people they could suggest for the interviews. Recruitment also happened through participants talking to their friends who

then made contact with me to offer to take part in the research. Although there is a criticism of snowballing as a participant recruitment technique, in that it creates social network responses as participants are likely to know each other (Small 2009) this proved a benefit to the project as our emotions and responses do not form in a vacuum but are informed by our social environments which includes our friends and acquaintances.

The project does not aim to be representative of all women and their responses to women in political leadership as this would undermine the principle of the research that each woman's psychosocial surrounding informs responses. Instead, as a mode of qualitative study, the research constitutes a study of the people involved, and through which general thematic links may emerge in the responses that will be analysed in order to address the research questions.

The project does not set out to provide universal claims but instead will create a new base from which to develop the emerging field of psycho-political studies and gender, through the deployment of psychosocial insights and research methods.

3.10 Covid-19 Implications on Methodology

The Covid-19 global pandemic occurred at the beginning of 2020 and from March 2020 the British government placed the population in lockdown, allowing people to leave their place of residence for essential travel only. The lockdown continued for a number of months and enforced strict social distancing rules. With these new social guidelines in place, it was necessary to research remote interview methods so as not to disrupt the data collection for the project too significantly. The use of online communication platforms on

which to undertake the interviews was researched and the platform Zoom was decided upon due to its proliferation of usage during the lockdown and the general public's increased knowledge on how the platform works. There was a concern that the remote nature of an online interview would hinder my ability to build a rapport with the participant, as Atkinson (1998) notes, the more "interest, empathy, caring, warmth and acceptance that can be shown, the deeper the response level" (p.3) and so without the face-to-face interaction this level on communication may have not be achievable. However, Lo lacono et al. (2016) in their research into remote interviewing via Skype found that there are benefits to conducting research in this way as it allows for the participant to remain in their own setting which may prove comforting but also if the researcher is confident and empathetic and the participant is open to the research process then the environment under which the interview is being conducted has little bearing on the level of rapport reached. Their research also argued for the fact that the extra level of remoteness for more shy participants may be beneficial in allowing them to "open up" (Lo lacono et al. 2016 p. 12). Recent research on interviewing using Zoom has indicated that it provides a good substitute for in-person data collection, with one study's findings indicating that participants preferred Zoom to other methods, including in person interviewing (Archibald et al. 2019).

In her paper discussing the use of Skype in the psychoanalytic process Bayles (2012) argues that there are transferences that occur between participants in psychoanalysis sessions that go beyond the sharing of words, she writes

"without words, and even without full access to the face, bodies relate powerful messages" (p.16)

Therefore, by using an online platform in which only the head and shoulders of a participant can be seen it could be that noteworthy affective responses such as shifting in seats, crossing of arms and legs in defence, hand gestures and movements could be missed from the analysis. Within this research

project in order to access the more unconscious, unknown responses it was imperative to assess subtle affective responses and changes in demeanour and body language that may not be perceptible via a computer screen and virtual discussion. However, the data collection did take place via the online platform Zoom and interviews were recording for analysis, this allowed an in-depth analysis of facial expressions, affective responses and body language as the screen did capture more than head and shoulders of the participants.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

It is important to take into consideration the ethical implications of the research project but also the potential impact taking part in the research could have on participants involved. (See Appendices 2, 3 and 4 for Ethics Documents)

Utilising a psychosocial methodology, with the aim of understanding the social and psychological drivers behind the responses of participants requires a level of sensitivity and care as there is a very real potential for discussing highly personal aspects of a participant's life. As Clarke and Hoggett (2018) write,

“those concerns are also about guilt, a duty of care and the fact that our respondents have trusted us with their thoughts on some very contentious issues” (p.20).

Within the psychosocial method it is important to remember the potential for projection from the researcher on to the participant and vice versa (Clarke and Hoggett 2018) and thus the potential for incorrect assumptions to be made or inferred from the interactions between the two. This is also present in the feminist research tradition, the concept that the researcher can, and will, have an impact on the data being collected, as Schrock (2013) writes,

“feminist ethnographers do not assume they can perform research without affecting it in some way” (p.54).

For this project a primary way to help mitigate this potential interference from the researcher is to acknowledge it and use it as a data source in itself, this was achieved through the keeping of a reflexive diary, as discussed previously in this chapter. Developing the concept of field notes a diary were kept to document feelings in myself that were present before, during and after interviews with participants as a way to track any potential projection of transference and also to help note how such feelings many have influenced the discussions and the analysis.

The use of the life story, narrative methodologies also require an awareness of the potential to co-opt others voices. Gilmour (2009) in her discussion on her first field work using a psychosocial methodology, notes that it is paramount to respect the wellbeing of the participant in the collection of data, but this must be balanced with the knowledge that through informed consent the participant has agreed to take part in the process.

A key aspect of employing the feminist methodology is of raising voices, and for this project the role of raising women voices on an issue not often discussed in a public forum then it must be ensured that the stories and opinions heard are treated with respect and presented in a way that represents the intentions of the participants. Atkinson (1998) argues that the ethical concerns of employing a life story method are primarily about being “fair, honest, clear and straightforward” (p.36). He argues that by using the methodology of life story interviews the researcher is privileged to gain access to a participant’s story and the potentially intimate details of their lives. Such privilege brings a responsibility to treat the story with respect and sensitivity. He writes,

“it is the interviewer’s job to protect the rights of the storyteller. This is why a life story interview is truly a collaborative partnership in every sense”

Through the use of this methodology, there was a potential that participants disclosed information that upon reflection they are not comfortable with sharing for the project, therefore should a participant request certain information they have shared be removed from the transcripts this will be agreed and the information in question removed from the data collection prior to the point of publication. As the collector of data, the responsibility to “safeguard the storytellers’ rights” (Atkinson 1998 p.37) will be paramount and the stories shared will not be used in an exploitative way but to highlight key findings within the project. Jolly (2019) writes of the difficulty this methodology can pose during the data analysis phase of research due to the level of intimacy involved in hearing a participant’s personal stories. She writes,

“it is not easy to treat them as “data” after accepting tea in someone’s home and exploring personal information” (p.50).

Part of the ethical considerations for this project include the analysis of potentially personal and intimate stories and to take those stories shared in close moments and turn them into data for others to digest.

3.12 Limitations

The limitations of the project involve the nature of the methodology being used will result in individual stories and experiences being shared and thus it could be argued that this does not allow for overall themes to emerge however, as Gail Lewis speculated during Jolly’s project *Sisterhood and After* (2019), the project will,

“pick up ‘patterns’ flowing across ‘our individual biographies with their specificity and uniqueness’ and show ‘what was possible in terms of subjectivity...in this time and place’” (p.51).

Also, Schrock (2013) makes an important observation in terms of sampling and making generalisations,

“This attention to specificity is an important contribution of feminist ethnography, which examines women’s lives in the local contexts in which they live and therefore does not yield overarching theories but culturally situated analyses that are grounded in the concerns of the women who are being studied” (p.57).

A limitation of the project is also the lack of social discussions between women on the topic of WPL, in the first development stages of the project focus groups were included in the methodology with the aim of the reflected the publics discussions and responses held by women. Hennick, Hutter and Bailey (2011) write that focus discussions “produce information on the norms and values that exist with the community more broadly” (p.111), thus providing a picture of the responses to women in political leadership within the community. Järviluoma, Moisala and Vikko (2003) write that “the micro-veins of power traverse all fields of life” and that through focus groups it can be studied how “power is negotiated between participants” (p.27), therefore focus groups were considered in order to explore the societal responses. This methodology was not chosen for the project due to the fact that the aim of the project developed to employ a traditional feminist methodology of voice raising and also of bringing forth individual stories of women. Through further development of the project, it would be hoped that the focus group methodology could be used to gather different perspectives and insights.

3.13 Analysis

The analysis of the interviews involves undertaking close readings of the interview transcripts in order to identify prevalent themes that link the women’s

responses. This will be done by undertaking a thematic analysis. Guest et al. (2012) write, thematic analyses, “moves beyond counting explicit words and phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within data” (p.9). Following the interpretivist approach the analysis will explore the themes that are present across the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) write

“A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (p.82)

The thematic analysis draws on aspects of Grounded Theory in order to analyse the data. Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Strauss and Corbin 1998) allows for themes to be drawn from the data and for theories on the research to be discovered as opposed to using theory to analyse the data. Walker and Myrick (2006) explain that when using a grounded theory approach the researcher makes notes of themes as they emerge during the data collection process. For this thesis the use of field notes allowed me to create thematic “memos” in which emergent themes were noted and explored throughout the remaining interviews. The coding of the transcripts was based on these emergent themes and explored in more depth through the thematic analysis. An open coding approach was applied to help develop and narrow the themes that were present in the data. The use of open coding allows for “participant-generated ‘theory’” to emerge from the data (Blair 2015 p.17). The transcripts were then coded to highlight relevant quotes for each theme and to draw together the data to evidence them. (See Appendix 6). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that extracts from the thematic analysis are “illustrative” and go “beyond the specific content”, instead they are used to make sense of the themes running across the data set (p.94). To understand the meanings behind the participants words, discourse analysis was applied to the transcripts as it allows the conversations to be “deconstructed to reveal the hidden messages” (Denscombe 2017 p.317).

3.14 Summary

The chosen methodology for this thesis project allows for new insights into how women in the United Kingdom respond to WPL. Through the qualitative interviewing method, which will incorporate narrative techniques and life stories so will conversations about the lived experiences of women being explored and through this an analysis of the drivers behind the responses. Understanding what informs the way that women respond to WPL will provide new contributions to knowledge. These understandings can also provide a way for future WPL to understand how to communicate with women and to provide more substantive representation when holding political office for their women constituents.

The next chapters will explore the findings from the data collection, examining the responses the participants had and examining the drivers behind those responses. Examples of specific women leaders will be used to apply the findings in more depth and to give a clearer insight into the responses evoked in the participants.

Chapter 4: Thematic Analysis: Understanding Empathy – Responses and Displays

4.1 Introduction

One of the most prominent themes in the responses that the women participants had to WPL was that of empathy. Conversations around women displaying empathy, and feeling empathetic, arose repeatedly with the participants. This chapter will explore this in depth, looking at how the participants responded to empathetic displays, their own experiences with empathy, and also the empathy they felt for the women leaders. Examples of women leaders will be used to explore the responses in greater depth.

4.2 Defining Empathy

Empathy is a word that is often used both in the context of leadership and women. Political leaders are expected to be empathetic in the way they interact with citizens and also in their management of crisis's, policy creation and foreign policy. Empathy has become an oft cited word and one that is contested in terms of a singular definition (Elliott et al. 2011). Brown (2015) defines empathy as “the most powerful tool of compassion”, writing,

“empathy is the ability to understand what someone is experiencing and to reflect back that understanding.” (p.155).

Brown (2015) clarifies that to feel empathy does not require a person to feel the actual emotions of another but more to “reach back into our own experiences...so we can understand and connect” (p.156). Pedwell (2016) defines it as

“the affective act of seeing from another’s perspective and imaginatively experiencing their thoughts, emotions and predicaments” (p.32).

Decety and Jackson (2004) argue that empathy is made up of two sub-components; affective, which is the “ability to share the emotional experiences of the other person” and cognitive, “an understanding of the other person’s experiences” (p. 73). Sympathy, in contrast, does not require the same level of connection, Brown (2015) argues that sympathy is more removed. Pedwell (2012) writes that empathy can be transformative in that it allows a person to “open oneself up to different ways of knowing”, which can lead to more meaningful action and social change (p.164). She posits that feeling empathy on an affective level allows people to “feel, realise and act” upon social injustices (p.166).

It is important to note that empathy is a contested concept and is not always seen as a positive driving force. Bloom (2017) defines empathy as “the act of coming to experience the world as you think someone else does” (p.16). He argues that empathy has the potential to become patronising and it can mean making assumptions on another person’s experience based more on one’s own feelings. Bloom says that empathy can be displayed as “unmitigated communion” and that this is often associated with women to a detrimental effect both physically and psychologically (p.134). Empathy can be seen as a gendered trait that women are expected to display which could impact WPL and the responses to them if they are not deemed to be displaying the expected empathetic behaviour for their gender. Lévinas (1998) challenges a person’s ability to overcome their *otherness* and truly understand another person’s experience. This is important when placing empathy in the context of political leadership as it questions a leaders’ ability to empathise with others in a truly authentic way.

Empathy has been an important part of feminist research and allows for a deeper exploration into the shared experiences of women (Pedwell and Whitehead 2012), therefore, the importance of empathy within the responses

from the participants speaks to the methodology used in this thesis. The ability for the participants to empathise provides new understandings of the women's shared experiences with the women political leader with whom they are empathising.

4.3 Reflexive Diary

I knew that empathy would come up in the discussions with women purely because of the use of the word in relation to the stereotypes around women and the increase in coverage of women leaders either possessing or not possessing this communal trait. The empathy that was displayed during the interviews and felt by the women participants was not a sentimental empathy or an empty response, it was a deeper, more substantial empathy. The empathy for the WPL was for them as women in this world, empathy for them stepping outside of gender boundaries and being brave, very much focusing on strength and independence. Interestingly, this empathy transcends political affiliations and goes to the heart of women understanding each other's struggles and how difficult being a woman can be, this felt like consciousness raising in the feminist tradition. Women appreciated how hard it is for women to succeed and what a lonely place being a woman at the top can be. There was some scorn for specific leaders and a level of sympathy as opposed to empathy, but this felt more fearful than angry, a fear of the attacks women get or fear of the perception of the WPL being passed on to them as a woman.

I had been wary of empathy as a theme, worried that it would play into stereotypes of women as caregivers or as emotionally literate, but I had underestimated the importance of empathy. Empathy as a researcher had also been something I struggled with throughout the data collection. As a naturally empathetic person I felt very connected to the participants and worried for them during the process, it was something that I had to balance to allow me to have the conversations I needed to for the research. The empathy the

participants displayed was much more robust than I thought, I was misunderstanding what empathy is and what a powerful tool it is for identification with WPL. Empathy also came through as a connecting force for women and something that allowed women to support each other. Empathy, as discussed by the women participants, was a strength and a force for connecting women.

4.4. Responses: Empathy as a Leadership Trait

A theme throughout the responses was the importance placed on a leader's ability to empathise, whether that was in a specific situation or crisis, or the ability to empathise when making decisions that would impact citizens. For many of the women empathy was a very important trait that WPL could access as they felt that women were more prone to empathy or at least were allowed to display it more readily than men. The impact of empathy as a leadership trait will be discussed in the leadership analysis chapter in more depth.

Dayna spoke of empathy in her interview in terms of a way for leaders to connect more fully and more authentically with people. When speaking specifically of women leaders after times of crisis she said

“if you try to justify it or explain yourself, instead of just letting yourself feel and be a part of a community and just go there and grieve with them, just go and grieve with them and hug you know (pause) it says a lot more than words can.”

Danni also spoke of her desire to see more empathy on display by leaders, saying,

“I'd like to see more of that really caring (pause) considerate nature, the kindness (pause) and the fact that you want to do good for your people, I want to see that and it's not just about power and about status um so more of it (laughs).”

There was also evidence of conflict in responses about empathy, the fear of falling into stereotypes in terms of what women can, and do, display. Ebele articulated this conflict saying,

“there’s something about empathy and warmth and, and connecting with people that makes people endear to you, on the flip side, part of me is fighting that, part of me is saying why do you have to be (pause) soft and warm and emotional in order to be an acceptable female leader.”

Liz vocalised the fear of women leaders being perceived as weak. She said, “you can’t be soft and um gentle and kind. You’ve got to know what you are going for”, this was a recurring theme with Liz, the fear that women would be perceived as too soft, she spoke of this in the context of WPL but also when talking about women she has worked with. Ebele’s concern here speaks to the double bind that women in leadership face, the constant battle between appearing authoritative in an agentic leadership role but also the expectation of women holding more communal traits such as emotional intelligence (Jamieson 1995). Although Ebele talks of empathy and then the idea of “soft and warm”, for most of the participants empathy was not always linked with the concept of softness, it was seen by many as a strength, this will be discussed later in this chapter through the case study of New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

A number of the participants were conflicted in their feelings about empathy being a trait that is more innate in women. They were aware of this stereotype but felt that empathy was a strength of many women. When Jane spoke of leaders she said,

“You’ve got to be able to put yourself in somebody else’s situation I think and, and maybe I am being a bit stereotypical here, but I do think females find that a bit easier than males

perhaps um (pause) or most, most males, most males, I'm being a bit unfair there."

Liz spoke of how she felt women naturally had more empathy but again she felt conflicted when she elaborated on her thoughts,

"I, I just don't know how much men, (pause) not having been a man, know how much they can empathise with, certain men do have that emotional side."

She concluded by saying "a woman probably bends more". Claire echoed this idea when she spoke of her own experiences as a woman on her team at work, she spoke of how she felt there were differences between men and women and that this allowed for different team dynamics. She said, "so I think I brought a lot more kind of like empathy and emotional intelligence to the, to the team". Sally also spoke of an observed difference in the way in which men and women deal with situations saying,

"I do think women read the room in a more, in a more speedy way um I think they can read the individuals quite quickly, as well as to needs and pressures so I do think from that I've observed in both areas, there is a difference."

Whilst the participants responses did include gendered ideas of what women can offer in public life the underlying response was that women's abilities are often underrated. Many of the participants felt that empathy and emotional intelligence were powerful traits that women display, and they were often under-valued. There was a real sense that when these traits are present the situation is improved.

4.5 Drivers: Empathy and Role Models

During my conversations with the participants, I asked them to talk about women in their lives who they thought of as role model, women who they had

looked up to or aspired to be like. Andrews (2007), when talking of narrative interviewing says that “when we relate stories of our lives, we implicitly communicate to others something of our political world views” (p.2). Therefore, by asking the participants to talk about women they admired in their lives so could it provide insight into the same traits they would admire in WPL. When many of the participants told stories about their own women role models the theme of empathy was present. The women that they aspired to be like were women who displayed empathy to others, whether they were personal relationships or women in their workplaces. Sally told me about the previous manager of the organisation she works for and how she had epitomised an empathetic leader and had inspired many women. Sally became visibly emotional when she spoke of this person with tears coming to her eyes. She had to take a moment to compose herself and then explained that the woman had recently left, and it had changed the ethos of the organisation not having her there. The impact the woman had had on Sally was evident and spoke to the power that empathy in a leader can have and how important it can be to many people working with them. Beryl also recounted a previous manager who, when during a difficult time in the organisation, had “drew alongside” the team and supported them and worked with them. Beryl repeated the phrase “drew alongside” twice during the story highlighting the importance of the analogy that the manager was with them through this time. For Beryl, this understanding of the stress the team was under and the emotional toll it was taking made the woman manager “a pleasure to work with”. Beryl spoke extensively in her interview about the need she had always felt to be strong and yet when asked to elaborate on this strength she focused heavily on the idea of empathy and the ability to show and understand emotion.

Sharon spoke of a group of women she had met who were going through a similar life changing situation to her, they were an organised group of single women who supported each other in raising their children. Sharon explained how meeting these women and joining them for activities had shown her how

to navigate her own life through a difficult transition phase. She explained that seeing them having overcome the difficult time and speaking with them allowed her to see her way through, she said, "I found, I found them as a group quite inspirational you know, how they were getting on you know, on their own". As Brown (2015) defined empathy as a way to access emotions felt previously and recognise them in another, the women could recognise the experience Sharon was having and support her by drawing on their own past feelings. Their empathy resonated with Sharon and gave her strength.

Wanda talked of her friend who displayed empathy to others but also to herself. She explained how this friend was self-reflective and worked hard to understand her emotions and this in turned helped Wanda to understand her own emotions. She told me that this friend has taught her "we should be open about the hurts of our past and how it affects us now and just going through all of those processes".

In the discussions on role models, it appeared that empathy was a strength that was greatly admired but one that also had transformational properties. Women displaying empathy to each other, in personal or work life, can allow other women to feel stronger, more supported, and more engaged in a situation. By seeing other women showing emotion or being prepared to discuss emotion it allows a woman to display her own emotions too and work through them accordingly. Empathy displayed by woman managers allows women in the workplace to feel valued and understood. It is a tool to build connections amongst women and by sharing experiences it allowed women to develop and explore their own emotions and lives. The discussions on role models with the participants allowed for a deeper understanding of the power of empathy and it's transforming capabilities. These feelings on empathy can be informative when exploring how women respond to WPL as the same feelings and admiration of empathy can be present. It highlights the importance of empathy and also, it's potential as a tool for WPL.

4.6 Exploring Through Example: Displaying Empathy - Jacinda Ardern

At the time of writing, Jacinda Ardern, was Prime Minister of New Zealand and has held this executive office since 2017. She has been heralded globally as a compassionate, empathetic leader. The focus on Ardern's empathy trait has been present since she became a Member of Parliament and when she took over as deputy leader of the Labour Party in March 2017, Fountaine (2017) spoke of the media commentary that has seen her "likeability" centred and "expressed as a track record of 'empathy over effectiveness'" (p.233). Not only is Ardern well known for her leadership skills she is also widely recognised across the world as only the second woman to give birth whilst in office. In June 2018 Ardern gave birth to a daughter and has since become a role model for working mothers and a constant source of discussion in terms of women leaders and motherhood (Chapman 2020). Ardern's management of the Covid-19 pandemic has also been widely discussed in the media and in academic research. She took decisive action to lockdown New Zealand in the early stages of the spread of the virus and has kept the number of infections and deaths to a comparatively low number. McGuire et al. (2020) in their thematic analysis of Ardern's communications during the crisis argue the initial tone of her interactions with the citizens of New Zealand was one of decisiveness and took an "evidence-based approach" however as the crisis developed, she took on a tone of "shared experience" and positioned herself "on a common level with the public" (p.374). They find that her approach increased in empathy and through this empathetic leadership style she was able to evoke "solidarity" amongst the population to work towards a common goal (p.374).

4.6.1 Introduction of Jacinda Ardern to Participants

In March 2019, New Zealand suffered a brutal terrorist attack on its Muslim population when a gunman opened fire on two Mosques in Christchurch killing 51 people and injuring 49 others. Ardern's response to this was to visit the Mosques and comfort the grieving community, she wore a black hijab to the Mosques and was seen hugging, touching and consoling people. The images and videos of her at these visits became symbols of her empathy and her ability to display emotion and compassion. In their analysis of Ardern's response to the terrorist attacks, Daghigh and Rahim (2020) found that she created a sense of togetherness between the Muslim and non-Muslim populations of New Zealand. They argue that her respectful rhetoric and actions promoted a "society in which everybody is welcome, irrespective of differences" (p.190). A video of her visiting one of the Mosques and comforting a grieving woman and also two children was shown to the participants at the beginning of each interview. Ardern does not speak in the video and the only sound is that of the community singing and voicing their grief (See Appendix 1).

4.6.2 Responses to Jacinda Ardern

The word empathy was used repeatedly to describe Jacinda Ardern in the clip shown to participants, she was the one leader to whom the word was linked by the majority of women. Beryl spoke of Ardern's ability to deal with the victims' families and said,

"she always seems to come across very empathetic with the people she's (pause) dealing with you, you see that when she's with that family um and what went on there. She comes across as to have that sort of empathy or tries to have that empathy."

Jane reflected the findings of Daghigh and Rahim (2020) who argued that Ardern after the terrorist attacks in Christchurch, Ardern used her leadership to bring the country together. Jane said,

“sometimes there can be seen to be a divide between (pause) cultures, then I think that’s really important that she’s kind of crossed that line and she’s (pause) encompassed everybody, that everybody’s going through that.”

Ebele spoke at length about Ardern and felt that she conveys a “real sense of warmth and compassion”, she went on to explain how Ardern’s behaviour and her movements exude empathy, she said,

“there’s more a kind of sense that she is equal, she is (pause) um you know right down to her being physically touching the, the families affected by the terrorist attack...we’ve seen many leaders um you know covering their hair in a mosque or whatever but this really felt (pause) there’s something authentic about her that I think always, I think always um (pause) always cuts through um (pause) and always makes her feel like she is more accessible and (pause) less threatening, less scary”

Marian said that her behaviour and mannerisms in the clip “showed she was one of the people” and that it wasn’t “mawkish” but a genuine display of empathy. Sally felt that Ardern’s reactions showed her strength as a leader and also echoed this genuine feeling, saying,

“she epitomises every I, I feel (pause) in a leader um a person um that can show emotion but doesn’t do it by, by rote you know, you can see the compassion, you can see the empathy, you also see fairness and firmness.”

Participants also spoke of Ardern’s leadership style in other aspects of her role as Prime Minister and how these again highlighted her empathetic nature with citizens. Sharon brought up Ardern’s announcement during the Covid-19

pandemic which reassured children that the Easter Bunny was a key worker and so would still be able to deliver Easter eggs and presents. Sharon said,

“it just brings the political argument right down it (pause) something that (pause) you know really means something to everyday people um (pause) and I think that (pause) that sort of attitude, I think makes her in my view, anyway, come up, come across very positively.”

Sharon’s stilted speech pattern when speaking about Ardern reflects the feelings that many participants expressed when talking about Ardern. Maggie also struggled to articulate her response saying,

“It’s so powerful to watch something like that um it’s you know it’s, it’s, it is really incredible (pause) um (pause).”

There was a sense that the reason they warmed to her so deeply and felt that she was so empathetic was hard to articulate and describe, that the feeling was present but not necessarily with a rationale attached to it. Claire said, “she was just acting like a human...not like a leader of a country but just like a human”. Pattie explained her response to Ardern saying,

“She’s the sort of woman that you’d want to be or to be your friend and because you want to be her (pause) then you want to be like her”

Wanda called her “inspirational”, Sarah spoke of how her empathy was clear and her “inclusivity”, Chris was emphatic with her praise saying,

“I love Jacinda, she works stuff out so well like, she just kind of (pause) you know sends all the right signals to all the right people to show that she really was paying attention and really cared.”

Pattie also spoke of Ardern’s ability to inspire younger women, she said

“you know she’s likable, she’s the sort of person you’d want to hang out with, but she’s still powerful so (pause) that’s what I hope is going to happen, that, that women see these powerful (pause) or younger women see these powerful women and want to become more like them.”

Of all the participants there was only one who responded to Ardern without the overt praise for her empathy. She has worked with the political sphere herself and spoke of the planning that would have gone into Ardern’s visit to the mosques and the orchestration that would have occurred behind the scenes when she was meeting the victims’ families. She noted

“the sad fact is that Jacinda Ardern hasn’t actually shown that much emotion, she hugged but she didn’t cry.”

Kelly also noted that as a woman if Ardern hadn’t shown such empathy at the time of the terrorist attacks she may have been criticised, she said,

“obviously, the politics are quite good but that, those images of, are of like, almost like has she not done something like that it would be quite a way from the expectations of what a woman should, you know empathy and things that with what a woman, you know, meant to have more of.”

However, this more practical response to Ardern was only present in one participant who had direct experience of working with high profile politicians. There were no negative responses to Ardern, and she was highly praised for her empathetic, personable leadership style, this will be discussed further in the chapter on leadership.

4.6.3 Drivers: Idealisation and Jacinda Ardern

Idealisation of Jacinda Ardern is present in many of the response that the participants had. Melanie Klein (1997), in *Notes on Some Schizoid*

Mechanisms used object relations to explore idealisation. She argued that idealisation starts with the first object, the breast. The breast takes the shape of the “good” object which becomes an idealised object. Klein developed her theory in that at times of high anxiety the idealisation of the “good” object can become excessive. Idealisation can also become a means of escape from perceived persecution of the “bad” object, she explains, “the infants relative security is based on turning the good object into an ideal one as protection against the dangerous and persecuting object” (Klein 1997 p. 49). In the responses to Jacinda Ardern, excessive idealisation is present for a number of the participants. There was no discussion of her faults or an expectation that she might make a wrong decision in her leadership. Participants spoke of her with reverence and were often unable to articulate how they felt about her, but it was a highly personal and deep feeling. In 1960 Klein wrote in *On Mental Health*

“the corollary of persecutory anxiety is idealisation, for the greater the persecutory anxiety the stronger the need to idealise. The idealised mother thus becomes a help against the persecutory one” (Klein 1997 p. 274).

In the responses to Ardern Klein’s theory can be seen in the fact that Ardern, amongst a large number of male political leaders and also WPL who may not have reached the potential dreamed of by women supporters, can be seen as the antidote. She can be held up as the object that can ward off such anxieties evoked by the hyper-masculine leadership exemplified by leaders such as Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, and Vladimir Putin. She is also an idealised figure whereas other WPL such as Theresa May and Hillary Clinton have been perceived as “letting women down”.

This idealisation of Ardern did not show evidence of integration of “good” and “bad” objects within her, which Klein would argue is imperative for a stable connection. Only Tamsin appeared to show a more integrated response to

her when she explained the mechanics that would have gone into the political performance Ardern gave when visiting the Mosques in Christchurch. For WPL it is important to avoid this idealised state as it is an unstable one. Klein argues that the idealised state is liable to break down as it is an impossible state to maintain. Ardern and the idealisation of her could prove unstable and runs the risk of breaking down should she be perceived to have failed or made a wrong decision. For Ardern and all leaders the idealised position is a difficult one to navigate. For the women idealising her it is also an unstable position to hold for they could be easily disappointed.

4.7 Responses: Empathy for WPL

There was an empathy for WPL present for a number of the participants. Empathy for them in the positions that they hold and how difficult it must be for them as women who are political leaders. Beryl admired their ability and recognised the strength that would be required from the saying,

“Oh it’s a difficult role being a woman in leadership and is, well I think for anybody who takes on being a prime minister or, you know, and that sort of thing. It’s never an easy role, is it? (laughs) you know, I wouldn’t want to be faced with the you know, running a country or whatever, but you do have to be strong.”

Valerie also spoke of the understanding she has when seeing a woman in political leadership and that she is automatically aware of how hard it must have been for her to get to that position, she said,

“I understand that you’ve taken a lot of nonsense to get where you are so obviously, I have an admiration and a, and a (pause) respect straight away.”

Kelly also spoke of the imagined difficulty women leaders would have faced when she said,

“Oh, I mean, I think it’s, it’s I think it’s; they must be extraordinary women to get into those positions because um (pause) because of all the barriers that they um kind of face of course from within their own parties, society generally, just their lives.”

The participant’s acknowledgement of the difficulties that the WPL would have overcome to get where they were was universal regardless of the political leader’s political affiliation. The empathy of the nature of being a woman in a male dominated environment overcame participants’ political ideology and spoke more to their experiences as a woman. This empathy for the WPL can be seen as an example of consciousness raising. By having the women participants talk about their own experiences of their gender and how it impacts their life, so have they been able to think about WPL and that there may be similarities in their lives and experiences. Although the participants did not speak to each other about their experience their identification with the women leaders allowed for them to see parallels and shared experiences with each other. This area of the responses highlighted the methodological approach of the research in that it allowed for a connection to be made between the individual women and the WPL. The fact that the empathy, on the whole, transcended political ideology speaks to the feminist approach in which women’s experiences can overcome differences.

4.8 Exploring Through Example: Empathy for Theresa May

In 2016 Theresa May became Britain’s second woman Prime Minister, she entered office following the UK referendum on leaving the EU. May’s tenure was heavily entrenched with the Brexit negotiations which saw her face losses within Parliament and revolts from within her own party. She narrowly won the 2017 election but required an expensive voting deal with Northern Ireland’s

DUP in order to have a majority in the House of Commons. In July 2019 May announced her resignation as Prime Minister and returned to the back benches as MP for her constituency. Theresa May is married to Philip May; she became an MP in 1997 and took the role of Home Secretary in 2010 under the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition.

The participants were shown a clip of Theresa May's resignation speech (See Appendix 1), this video is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. The most prevalent response to Theresa May from the participants was that of empathy for her. It was empathy for the position that she had been in as Prime Minister and also empathy for being a woman in that position. When asked for her initial responses to the clips shown Peggy firstly spoke about May,

“um I think that the Theresa May one still makes tears come to my eyes when I listen to that and I've seen it a lot of times, but it still makes my eyes prickle.”

When pressed on why she felt such a physical response to May and her position Peggy explained that she could feel May's disappointment and frustration “because she couldn't do the job she really wanted to do” and that it felt like “so many people were working against her”. Ann echoes this empathy for the position May was in at the time, she articulated her responses in terms of shame, she said May “was just cast out with such shame”. Izzy also confessed to feeling “quite sorry” for her even though she has been quite derisive of her display of emotion when the video was played. Marian called her “poor old Theresa May” and although she was very clear that she did not like or admire May she did almost begrudgingly admit to a level of empathy for her, the admission is stilted and interspersed with a lot of pauses which could highlight the conflict Marian feels but yet she does admit, “I think I (pause) I felt a (pause) tiny bit of sorrow for her (pause)”. Her use of the word sorrow is an interesting one, the definition of sorrow includes the notion of pain and distress, grief, and lamentation. The use of this word gives an insight into how

Marian may be feeling about seeing a woman in obvious sadness and how despite her continue protestations that she is a not a fan of May or her politics the emotional response to her overrides this political stance.

The empathy for Theresa May, for many of the participants, transcended their political affiliations or feelings on May's policies and stances. The empathy often went beyond that to a more human level, to a level in which it was one woman feeling empathy for another woman. Sarah explained her feelings for May as a woman by saying,

“so even Theresa who for loads of reasons politically I don't like, I don't like Tory politics at all um I felt I warmed to her more because she's a woman of a generation, trying to lead the country and um (pause) I respect her for that.”

Pattie reiterates this and brings up notions of solidarity with May, she says, “even though I didn't, I didn't like her, I didn't warm to her, I wouldn't have voted for her, but I still felt a kind of solidarity”. Pattie is very clear in the fact that she has no affinity with May as a politician or as a leader but that there is an overriding sense of solidarity because she is a woman in a very difficult situation. Later on, in our discussion on May she appears more resolved in her feelings towards her when she concludes,

“I didn't, I didn't hugely rate her, I didn't think she was the most capable person to lead the country but (pause) I did feel for her as a woman.”

Wanda stated clearly “I don't like Theresa May. I don't agree with her politics” but also was adamant that the treatment of May and the reaction to her displaying emotion was wrong, she said “even if you don't agree with someone politically, or the work that they do (pause) you shouldn't be denigrating somebody”. And Zara again spoke of her dislike of May but that this went

beyond that, she said, “I am not politically a fan of Theresa May, but you know (pause) that was raw emotion that she was showing”.

Gwen also felt sorry for May and the situation she was in as Prime Minister, but again displayed this conflict between disagreeing with someone’s politics but feeling for them as a human being. Her conflict can be seen through the stilted speech pattern when talking about May, she said,

“Theresa May (pause) um (pause) I, it made me feel uncomfortable watching her, but that was because I actually felt sorry for her (pause) even though I haven’t, I didn’t think she was, I don’t think she should have be in in power, I think she was right to step down and I think she was (laughs) she made a bit of a hash of everything, I just felt sorry for her.”

Danni speaks of her surprise at her feelings of empathy towards Theresa May at the point of resignation, she said,

“and then seeing her kind of crumble a little bit...you kind of go ‘ooh’ like ‘where did that come from, I don’t even like you’ (laughs) ‘but I feel sorry for you all of a sudden’.”

Her surprise at the feelings reiterates this automatic response to May, one that goes beyond the person’s political ideology and speaks to a more personal, human level and one that is potentially a reaction of solidarity with a woman in pain. Sally speaks to this, albeit from a distance when she says in reaction to May’s display of emotion “I’m sure I did feel, a lot of women were emotional with her”. Marsha also displayed empathy for May on a personal level, for what she was going through in that moment, she said,

“I mean it’s like jeez, you’ve been leader of the country, something that you’ve probably wanted to do for a very substantial part of your life, it felt really good when you got in and now it’s terrible, it’s like who wouldn’t cry!”

The responses show affinity for women, affinity for Theresa May not because they have voted for her or support her politically; most participants did not support her politically. But the responses show that if a woman can connect with the woman political leader on a human, emotional level, and in female solidarity then this can and does transcend political ideology. This is a key finding in this research as it shows that there are links between women that have the ability to transcend political affiliation but speak to a more connective bond between women based on their shared experiences of gender.

4.9 Drivers: Projective Identification

Melanie Klein did not write about empathy directly however she did write about projective identification as an explanation of empathy (Klein 1955). She argued that we project aspects of ourselves on to other people, these can be 'good' or 'bad' aspects. She further clarified in a paper entitled *Our Adult World and its Roots in Infancy* in 1959 writing,

“We are inclined to attribute to other people – in a sense to put into them – some of our own emotions and thoughts...By attributing part of our feelings to the other person, we understand their feelings, needs and satisfactions; in other words, we are putting ourselves in the other person’s shoes.”
(p.295)

Klein’s projective identification can be used to further understand the responses women had to Theresa May. On numerous occasions the women spoke of how they felt for her, that they felt empathetic towards May in that moment regardless of their political beliefs and values. Using Klein’s theory of projective identification, it could be argued that at this moment the participants are projecting on to May their own experiences and their own feelings when they have felt themselves in a similar position. This identification has varying

strength depending on the women and their own experiences but is evident among many of the women. Klein (1959) also writes “the identification is based on attributing to the other person some of one’s own qualities” (p.295).

The driver behind women’s empathy for May regardless of their feelings for her as a politician could be due to them seeing part of themselves in her. As a woman operating within a predominantly male domain, the women can understand how they would feel in their position or how they have felt when faced with similar situations in their own lives. The methodology for the data collection was based on women discussing their own experiences of gender and therefore the participants were in a space where they were being asked to think about their own lives. It would follow, therefore, that for many of them the environment was set for projective identification with the WPL we were discussing. This felt particularly true for May and the discussion of her resignation, it felt that it resonated with the participants more so than most of the other clips shown and the discussions on May were deep and forthcoming.

Klein (1959) writes that “if projection is predominantly hostile, real empathy and understanding of others is impaired” (p.295). There were a very small number of participants who did not feel empathy for May, notably Valerie was very short in her discussion of May and dismissed forcefully any notion of feeling empathy for her in that position. Valerie displayed quite aggressive responses to some of the WPL and therefore it could suggest the hostility that Klein writes of and also explain the absence of any empathy or understanding

4.10 Conclusion

The value and importance of empathy has been contested in literature (Bloom 2018) and can be seen as a gendered trait when placed as an expectation on

WPL. For the participants empathy is a very important trait for political leaders to display and one that allows them to connect with citizens. For the participants empathy is an important aspect of good leadership and one that for WPL, holds extra weight. The empathy that participants want to see displayed by WPL is one in which they are shown to be human and to understand the difficult situations other people may be going through. For the majority of the participants this ability to empathise was a sign of real strength and highlighted the different aspects of leadership that women can bring to a situation. This was mirrored in the women's own experiences of displaying empathy in their workplaces. The topic of empathy and WPL was not without some conflict as it strays into stereotyping of women and how they are expected to behave. There was also evidence of the participants being stereotypical themselves in what they felt the different genders possessed. This is an interesting issue that shows how women too are subject to stereotyping, but it also highlights the positive aspects of a different kind of leadership, one that is less based in ideas of machismo but more about emotional intelligence. This will be discussed further in Chapter 8.

One of the overriding responses was that of empathy *for* WPL, most notably for Theresa May. This empathy transcended political beliefs, in fact most of the participants expressed how they had not voted for her, nor did they agree with her policies or the Conservative Party as a whole. Yet empathy was the main responses as many participants felt that May had been treated in certain way by the media, her male colleagues, and the electorate because she was a woman. Many participants empathised with her as a fellow woman, they were imagining how she must have felt in that position and felt empathy for her going through that experience. It could be seen that although most of the women did not agree with May nor like her a politician or leader, almost all felt for her as a woman and for the position that she had been put in.

This transcending of political affiliation and ability of women to empathise with other women in difficult leadership positions speaks to the nature of female solidarity and that seeing a woman in a difficult position can remind other

women of their own struggles and experiences and can therefore elicit more empathy and understanding.

Chapter 5: Thematic Analysis – Exploring Responses to Women and Emotion

An Exploration of Women and Emotion: Theresa May

5.1 Introduction to Emotion

Richards (2007) wrote of the emotionalisation of politics and argued an ‘emotional turn’ had allowed for emotions and emotional displays by political leaders to play a more prevalent part in political discourse. This emotional turn focused on “an intensification of interest” in emotions and feelings, and their impact (Pedwell and Whitehead 2012.) Yates (2019) explored the relationship between WPL and displays of emotion and argues that women leaders must be aware of the responses to their emotion. She argues that although there has been an emotionalisation of politics this does not always extend to WPL as it can trigger stereotypical notions of women’s roles and thus spark anxiety of a woman in that leadership role. This chapter will explore the participants’ responses around women and emotion. The analysis focuses heavily on former UK Prime Minister Theresa May as she was the example that was returned to most often when discuss the topic of emotion for the participants. The clip of Theresa May that was shown to the participants was her resignation speech in which she cried at the end. With this fresh in the participants minds it led to discussions around how women display emotions, in politics or otherwise and it allowed the participants to draw on their own experiences of displaying emotion. Through this example the responses to displays of emotion will be explored and the conflict that arises from seeing open emotion from women in political leadership.

5.2 Reflexive Diary

The discussions on emotion and displaying emotion was a topic of much discussion by the participants and this largely centred around Theresa May. I

knew that the way in which women express themselves would be a topic of discussion but the way in which it drew out the participants own experiences was unexpected. I had not articulated in my own mind the way in which women police their emotions and feelings in work environments and the power of emotions to either build connection or be a cause for alarm. The discussions around emotion helped highlight the methodology in this project as it showed how women in all environments feel they have to behave in a way that does not incur penalties for being a woman and that the rules around women displaying emotion are different than those for men. The discussions focus heavily on May, and she is used as a way to explore the theme extensively in this chapter. She was a source of a lot of conversation across the data collection and so it is important to use that data to examine the responses from women in the UK to the most recent UK woman Prime Minister.

5.3 Responses: Emotion and WPL

The participants believed there is a double standard in terms of political leaders displaying emotion. The discussions that followed largely centred on the reaction of Theresa May showing emotion during her resignation speech in 2019 which will be explored in depth during this chapter.

Dayna felt that the often-negative reaction to WPL in terms of emotion was highly gendered and spoke of her own experiences in interactions with people she encounters, she explained,

“I still hear it in this day and age, at the place I work and friends of friends parents and (pause) the whole concept of well ‘someone who menstruates might want to blow up the world once a month’ and I’m like ‘well that’s happening any way menstruation or not’ (laughs).”

Maggie felt that WPL were treated differently than men when they showed emotion, she compared May and Tony Blair saying,

“I think what’s interesting is if (pause) if a man had, I’m trying to think of a situation, wasn’t there a situation where (pause) was it Tony Blair (pause) had a (pause) he didn’t quite cry but he definitely, I think he had a voice crack ,moment, wasn’t it something to do with (pause) the Iraq War, I can’t quite remember what it was and people’s perception was wholly different.”

Maggie highlights Tony Blair and his display of emotion which has been widely seen as the point at which the emotionalisation of politics in the United Kingdom began (Yates 2019). Blair has been seen as the first Prime Minister to openly display emotion and yet as Maggie says the reaction to his display of emotion and May’s are “wholly different”.

Marian spoke of how it is a cultural aspect of Britishness to not show emotion and to go against this evokes uncomfortable responses in the British people, she said,

“we can’t show our feelings, we’re not allowed to show our emotions, we’re the, particularly if you’re the leader in Britain you know, you have to keep it, certainly um buttoned down but I suppose that’ because, that’s also the British way isn’t it, we have a stiff upper lip, we don’t um (pause) we don’t show our emotions.”

5.4 Drivers: Women’s Own Experiences of Emotion

When discussing Theresa May’s display of emotion during her resignation speech many of the participants chose to tell me stories about their own displays of emotion within their work environments and the reactions that colleagues have had both negative and positive. A number of the participants also spoke about their own tactics in terms of their emotions in the workplace.

May's resignation speech was widely discussed because of the emotion that she displayed at the end of the speech. Maggie is an executive in a global company, she has been with the company for over twenty years. She recounted a time when she had been in a meeting with male clients and had been treated in a way that was incredibly upsetting. She felt, as she stated several times during the story, "bullied". She explains that upon leaving the meeting she was confronted by her colleagues on what had occurred and that she

"just burst into tears um and I said to them 'right, we were in a hotel, and I said, 'look I'm just going to go for a walk round the garden and I'll come back, and I'll tell you what's happened."

In Maggie's telling of the story although she cried, she also described someone who knew they were emotionally fragile and so gave themselves some space in order to compose themselves. She continued by saying,

"but that was (pause) adversely career defining for me for quite a long time, yeah, probably a good couple of years, um and I was quite shocked because I had quite a good rapport, I felt, with these two male colleagues um but I don't think they could handle a woman in tears."

Maggie's experience reflects that of May in the sense that they were both operating in largely agentic environments, executive positions that are predominantly male and therefore they were incongruent as women in these positions. The agentic environment is also one in which displays of emotions such as crying may be seen as incongruent or uncomfortable. When I asked if this event adversely affected her at work, she is emphatic,

"Oh definitely (voice goes higher) yeah, no, definitely, yeah, yeah, yeah I got kind of moved sideways very quickly after that."

Tamsin works for a media production company and explained that her field is very male dominated. She explained that she is very careful at work when it comes to displaying emotions for this very reason, she said

“I don’t cry, I don’t shout, I don’t get emotional you know, I try to remain quite like neutral...but I think when you’re in a very male dominated world and you are a woman then you are trying to, and you are in a position of authority it takes some managing.”

When Chris talked of the emotion that May showed at the time of her resignation she offered an interesting insight, she highlighted how although this was heralded as an emotional outpouring from May it was in fact a very controlled display of emotion. She voiced confusion at the reactions to it when she said,

“it seems a little strange that it got turned into like ‘oh she was making a whole weeping, blithering, bloopety-blah’ because no, she wasn’t, not really, I know what it feels like to be a weeping, blubbering mess and that wasn’t it, it doesn’t look like that.”

Chris reaction highlights the responses that media have to women and emotion and how the playing up of May’s resignation speech was an exaggeration of the emotion that was displayed. It can be seen as an example of the expectations placed on WPL in terms of gender stereotyping. May is a woman therefore she is stereotypically expected to be more emotional, when she displayed emotion, it was covered extensively as a way to highlight the fact that she is a woman. Chris highlighted the media coverage’s focus on the emotional part and how it had managed to skew the way in which May’s resignation was viewed by many. She said,

“I don’t know it just struck me as kind of straight forward and what might be expected of a kind of standard resignation speech and kind of like, you know (pause) it’s weird that it became a whole big thing because it seems kind of run of the mill in a way....so yeah I don’t know why it became a big thing.”

A number of the participants welcomed Theresa May's display of emotion and shared stories about how they actively embraced showing emotion in their work environments. Lavinia shared that as a Head Teacher of a large, inner city primary school she felt it was important to model displaying emotion to her young students. She explained that at school assemblies her students expect her to cry when they show them their work or when they perform for her. She said,

“they know that Mrs Turner only cries when she's happy (laughs) and they know that that is an expression that there is nothing wrong with um so we've got a little disabled boy, he managed to balance for the first me, everybody was crying because they felt they could because the leader wasn't afraid or did not look down on that expression of emotion.”

Beryl, a retired community nurse, said that she did not find it off putting to see a woman political leader displaying such emotions as she felt it was important, she had done this in her own work, she explained, “I've also cried with patients so it never worries me that, political leaders of anybody else might (pause) cry or have a moment”.

Billy, a social worker, when asked about how she felt when seeing Theresa May being emotional took it in her stride, she said, “God knows I've cried in my job because it just (pause) happens”. She explains when you see difficult things in a job, or you experience difficult times it is understandable to feel and display emotions. She explained how it does not have to be a big event but just one part of being human. She said after a cry,

“you just get on with it brush yourself down and get on with it. But it's not weakness (pause) in my opinion. Makes you stronger if you show your emotions.”

It is important to note that the jobs in which both Billy and Beryl work are predominantly inhabited by women and thus are perceived as more communal roles in which displaying emotions such as sadness or despair may be more acceptable than in a more agentic environment. This will be discussed in more detail Chapter 7 of this thesis.

Sally also spoke of the power of leaders showing emotion in the working environment, she related a story of when she returned to work following a family bereavement. She said that her Chief Executive came into the office in which she was sitting and gave her a “big hug”. Sally explains the important of this emotional gesture and how much meant to her to see this emotional strength from her woman boss, she said,

“so you have the ability of a woman who is like iron, rock solid but can make a, somebody who worked for her feel really cherished and valued.”

Sally’s eyes became full of tears at the point and the impact this has had on her was profound and clear to see, as the interviewer I felt emotional listening to this story and what a difference it had made to a grieving person returning to work. Zara explains the impact that displaying emotion can have on others and the way in which it can be perceived in a positive light, she said,

“I think that’s another thing that just needs to get out is the fact that women get a hard time for showing emotion. It’s like emotion is passion, emotion is power, emotion is strength.”

Marsha echoed this positive reaction to emotion and spoke of the benefits of people being able to cry during sad or difficult events. She said that not displaying emotions has a negative impact,

“it’s not doing anybody any favours to say, you know, if you’re a strong person you can’t cry, actually, what, I mean, what I want to say to kids is like, actually crying is very good for you

and a good cry will enable you to clear your head, it'll make you feel better, able to get on with things.”

Lavinia, as a head teacher at a primary school, also spoke about how in their school they encourage children to explore their emotions and understand how they feel during times of difficulty, anger, or sadness. She argued that teaching children about their emotions was essential in ensuring they were able to manage through life.

5.5 Exploring through Example: Theresa May

5.5.1 Introduction of Theresa May to Participants

As previously discussed, May was forefront of most participants' minds when coming to the interview however they were also shown a video of her (See Appendix 1). The video shown was a 30 second clip of her resignation speech on the steps of 10 Downing Street in July 2019. In the speech Theresa May finished by saying,

“I will shortly leave the job that it has been the honour of my life to hold – the second female Prime Minister but certainly not the last. I do so with no ill-will, but with enormous and enduring gratitude to have had the opportunity to serve the country I love.”

Upon saying the words “the opportunity to serve the country I love” May is visibly emotional and upset. Her voice turns into a sob and her face becomes contorted. One of the key areas of criticism for May during her tenure as Prime Minister was that she did not display emotion and empathy, most notably after the Grenfell Tower fire in which 72 people lost their lives, many more were injured, and all made homeless. Harmer (2021) analysed the media coverage of May and the focus on her being labelled “Maybot”, she writes, “presenting May as robotic also suggests that she is emotionless and unempathetic”

(p.146). She argues that this is problematic for May as a leader as it calls “her entire femininity into question” (p.146). May was widely condemned for her lack of empathy and it is a charge that stayed with her throughout her time as Prime Minister. Her display of emotion at her resignation speech sparked a large amount of media coverage and debate about the showing of emotion by politicians and WPL. The video for participants sparked more varied responses than I had anticipated and brought up fascinating insights into emotion. One important aspect of the responses were discussions on included how such emotions could impact the perception of women leaders and also the way in which the coverage of her speech highlighted the difference rules by which men and WPL have to play.

A number of participants also expressed how they felt May has been given an unenviable task that was given to her as a woman because it was untenable. That she was used as a scapegoat or that she was given the opportunity because it was widely agreed that anyone holding the position of Prime Minister during Brexit negotiations would fail. The responses chime heavily with Ryan and Haslam’s (2005, 2007) theory of the Glass Cliff. This section will explore in more depth the responses women had to Theresa May, to her speech and the relationship between women and emotion. It will also examine how the Glass Cliff theory was at play for Theresa May.

5.5.2 Reactions to Clip

More than any of the other videos the clip of Theresa May when she broke down at the end of her resignation speech provoked immediate reactions when the video played. These reactions were both visible and audible and happened so quickly that they appeared involuntary, bodily reactions to seeing her on screen and witnesses her actions. The main response to the video was that of sympathy, when Ann watched the video at the moment when May’s voice

breaks, she said “Oh. I really like her.” In my own notes I have written how her “oh” was said in a sympathetic way and occurred at the moment that May cried. When I asked Ann about her reaction later in our discussion she explained “I kind of felt moved by her”. Maggie echoed this sympathetic reaction when I told her the next video was going to be May’s resignation speech, she immediately responded with “Oh gosh yes, crying on the steps of Number 10 bless her” and once the video began playing, she said, “Ooh poor Theresa.” She was very open with her reaction of sympathy for the position in which May was and had already established her view on the clip and how she felt about Theresa May at that moment. Peggy also displayed open sadness when the clip of May finished. Her expression was one of genuine sadness for what she had seen.

When I told Danni that I would be playing the clip of May’s resignation speech she responded with “Oh good” and laughed loudly. The laugh was very sudden but felt uncomfortable. When we discussed May later on in the interview, she had felt surprised at the feelings evoked from the video and had felt surprisingly sympathetic towards May. However, her initial reaction was more of discomfort. Izzy echoed this feeling of discomfort during the clip of May. When the clip reaches the point that May cries I have noted that Izzy laughed and “*looks uncomfortable*”, when I asked why she had laughed at the clip she explained that she had felt sympathy for May but also there was a sense of derision there, she said, “I don’t know, I think I laughed because (pause) I don’t know, I just kind of find it a bit funny that (pause) people love their country that much (laughs)”.

The women in this study were very much aware of the different standards in media coverage of WPL and for many May stood out as a clear example of this. This translated into the clip of her becoming emotional during her resignation speech, many of the participants commented on how they had

seen the clip a number of times and that they were not always aware of what she had said but they knew that she had cried. May's speech included a lot more than the 30 second end of her speech in which she became openly upset on the last line spoken. However, the fact that many of the participants had seen this part of the speech only can be an indicator into the way in which the speech was covered by the media.

The reactions to the video clips give a snapshot into the responses to May, the fact that this overt display of emotion from a woman who was famous for not showing emotion caused conflict within and among the participants reflects the wider conflicted responses around WPL showing emotion but also women in all walks of life expressing emotions. It also begins to highlight the penalties that women may have to pay for showing such emotions and how this may differ from men.

5.5.3 Perceptions of Weakness

Although the majority of the participants did feel that May's emotion was a sign of strength, an understandable reaction to her situation and not something that she should have received criticism for, a number of participants felt that this played into her general demeanour of weakness. Ann identified how she felt about May and the way she held herself during her tenure by saying, "I almost felt like Theresa May was slightly like, almost like an apologist female Prime Minister". Karoline called her "weak and flaky" and felt that she was not a "strong character". Liz said that she was "too nice, too gentle, too (pause) wanting to please everybody". Zara also felt that although May's emotion was genuine it was a very selfish act, she argued that although she was crying, she was "just crying because she lost her own job, and it was all about herself". Valerie was particularly scathing of Theresa May and felt no empathy for the position she was in, when asked for her responses to May she said,

“Theresa May (pause) I don’t have any feelings for her either, as far as I’m concerned, you know, it’s, it’s a big boys’ club that you’ve managed to get your foot in the door for a little period of time (pause) no I didn’t feel sorry for her.”

Claire echoed these feelings on May, she felt that the display of emotion that was shown during her resignation did not appear genuine, she said,

“I remember watching that speech at the time and it didn’t feel genuine to me at all, it felt quite hollow and shallow, and I know that she did kind of choke at the end but (pause) it didn’t, it just didn’t feel genuine.”

Claire felt that May had not been genuine throughout her time as Prime Minister and even went as far as to say that she hadn’t been “truthful”. This was not a prevalent feeling amongst most of the participants in the study however it is an interesting response to May who was often accused of a lack of emotion or of being cold. Therefore, this overt display of emotion had caused a large amount of media coverage at the time. There was also a considerable amount of speculation as to whether it was genuine. Claire’s response does echo feelings held by many at the time of May’s resignation. I asked a number of the participants if they felt May was genuine in her emotion as this has been a prevalent discussion when it occurred, most felt that it was genuine, and a number expressed horror at my suggestion that it was not. Marsha took a long time to think about what I had asked; she even went back to a photo from the time to examine it again. She concluded,

“No (whispered). No, no, I just don’t see that as fake, I don’t see that as fake at all I really don’t. And I don’t think, I don’t think it fits with the situation, I don’t think it fits with what we know of her. I think, I think, I think she, I think she was feeling legitimate emotion. Well, that’s how I saw it anyway (spoken more quickly). (Laughs) I believed it.”

Dayna also expressed anger at her perception that May was thanking the nation for 'allowing' a woman to be Prime Minister, she said,

“I just felt really angry for her in that moment, like it shouldn't have been (pause) ‘thank you for the opportunity as a *female* to lead’ and it's like arrgh, what a shame.”

Dayna felt that May was displaying gratitude as a woman being allowed into the position of leadership that is usually inhabited by a man, this plays into Ann's “apologist” Prime Minister.

Importantly, most of the women held a more balanced view about Theresa May, they could acknowledge both positive and negative aspects of her both as a politician and a person. She did not elicit strong feelings at all. The overriding responses were of empathy, sadness, and disappointment. She did not spark passion in the participants, nor was she seen as a rallying figure who was inspiring other women.

5.5.4 The Implications of Theresa May's Emotional Display

For many of the participants May crying on the steps of Downing Street was more than a one-off episode of a person displaying sadness at having to resign from a much-desired position. Her display of emotion felt that it had wider implications both good and bad for other WPL but also for women more generally.

Dayna explained how she got “scared” when she saw May showing emotion during her resignation speech as she felt that it could have negative repercussions for how women were seen. She feared it would play into the stereotype of women being emotionally unstable. She repeatedly used the words “scared” and “afraid” and felt that it could have a negative impact on other women trying to hold positions of leadership. She also felt that it could

have repercussions for all women, she said “I’m like ‘oh no’ (whispers) ‘don’t cry they’ll use it against us all’ (laughs)”. Although Dayna did end her point with a laugh, the laugh did not negate the real sense of fear that she portrayed when talking about women showing emotions, she said that when she sees a woman cry in a public forum, she knows they are going to be “ripped apart for it” and that it will be used as further justification to keep women out of leadership. Claire was also concerned as to the impact of May’s emotion on women in general, she was very clear in her assessment saying, “I honestly don’t think Theresa May (laughs) did us any favours”, this was again interspersed with a laugh, perhaps at an attempt to ward off the negative response she was giving but she was very clear throughout the interview that she held no affinity with May nor did she feel that she had helped the cause of women in leadership both political and otherwise.

Ann explained that in her family the perceived failures of women prime ministers have been legacies that impact the way they feel about current women leaders. She explained how as a family they had been largely impacted by Margaret Thatcher’s economic policies. This had led to many male members of her household having an unfavourable opinion of May. She also explained how May’s decisions have compounded those male members of her family’s beliefs of women’s incompatibility with the role of Prime Minister. She explained, that when May “was mentioned in our household it was like ‘urgh, look what happened last time’ kind of thing”.

Kelly felt that because May was resigning it gave her more leniency in the way that her emotional display was dealt with. She argued that had May not been leaving it would have garnered even more criticism and also been a chance for people to question her ability to lead, question if she had the right attributes to lead. She felt that it would have been a chance for people to say, “she’s not got any inner steel”. Peggy felt that May suffered from being surrounded by

male colleagues, she said, “maybe she didn’t have enough strong women around her to support her in her Cabinet, she could have done with, I think, a few more”. Peggy felt that as a woman standing on her own, she was left without the support that other women who have brought her. Sian also felt that she didn’t have enough “strong” women around her. It could be argued that May’s isolation and lack of visible female colleagues can be seen as a lesson to future WPL.

5.6 The Glass Cliff

A key theme that emerged throughout the interviews and amongst many participants was that May had been given an impossible task as Prime Minister, it was a period of time directly after the divisive referendum on Britain’s membership of the European Union, the result had been very close and the polarisation in the nation high. May had to begin the negotiations from Britain’s withdrawal from the EU and produce a deal on which the negotiations would occur. When participants were shown the clip of May at her resignation and asked for their responses to her it became evident that many women could empathise with her situation but also felt that she had been placed into the position that was almost doomed to fail. Sarah spoke of the difficult position May was in and that she questioned if her treatment was different because of her gender,

“yeah I think like, I feel, I think people like Theresa were given a really hard time because she was doing something so unpleasant or controversial around Brexit um (pause) and trying to make tough decisions and having to make tough decisions that weren’t always, that were always gonna divide people’s opinions and I don’t know whether the fact that she was a woman (pause) made it harder for her and made her scrutinised more.”

Pattie spoke of her feelings that May had taken a job that no one else wanted, when asked about how she felt following the May clip she was thoughtful and then said,

“(long pause) I felt that she was only elected Prime Minister because nobody else wanted the job, I felt that it was a real poisoned chalice at the time, and I felt that she knew that and accepted it on those terms.”

Pattie felt that no male candidates had wanted to the job because of the circumstances and so it was given to a woman, she felt May had been “handed a very poor hand”. Maggie echoed this when she said, “she’d been put in an impossible situation with a load of blokes who were never going to back her, it was a lone voice”. Sian called it a “thankless task”. Peggy spoke of May’s situation saying, “I don’t think she got the breaks really, everybody was against her”. She also felt the men within May’s party were against her. Izzy felt that May had been used as a “scape goat”.

As discussed in the literature review Michelle Ryan and Alexander Haslam (2005) developed the theory of the Glass Cliff. They argue that in businesswomen are given positions of leadership during times of difficulty or when the prevailing environment is problematic. They also argue that at times of difficulty this can trigger the placement of a woman in a position of leadership, and that this may be a position that is not normally open to women. They posit that when there is a potential for a negative outcome, women are placed in leadership roles,

“women may be being preferentially placed in leadership roles that are associated with an increased risk of negative consequences” (Ryan and Haslam 2005 p.83).

The Glass Cliff theory can be seen in the election of May as leader of the Conservative Party in 2016 and subsequently to the role of Prime Minister.

When David Cameron announced his resignation the two front runner candidates for his replacement were women: Theresa May and Angela Leadsom. Following a campaign race that ended when Leadsom questioned May's leadership based on her not having had children, May took office as the second woman Prime Minister in British history. Ryan and Haslam (2007) also argue that women will take more precarious leadership positions because of the fear that such an opportunity may not arise again for them. This could help to explain why two women became the front runners for the position in 2016. The responses to May from the participants clearly follow Ryan and Haslam's argument that women are picked from leadership roles when the environments are not conducive to success. Two participants referenced the Glass Cliff directly when speaking about May and their responses to her. Dayna identified that theory herself when discussing how she felt about May and WPL, she said,

“and seeing things that I'd read about come to life so spectacularly, like the whole concept of the glass cliff, happening again, and again and again (laughs whilst speaking). (Laughs) that was par/particularly with Theresa May like (pause) this mess she's been handling, and everyone is just ripping into her.”

Kelly also spoke directly of the glass cliff when discussing May and her entering office at a time of national crisis. She said,

“women would quite often pick up leadership positions in times of um (pause) real problems and then they get, they get rid of them as soon as (laughs)...it' quite often the case that they get given kind of positions when you know there's a crisis in an authority or an organisation and they get the jobs to try and see people through a crisis.”

Glass and Cook (2015) undertook a study of the Glass Cliff amongst women in Fortune 500 companies, importantly they found that there was a level of

agency amongst the women taking the precarious positions of leadership. Although it is often thought that these positions are foisted on to women, the women themselves often took the positions knowing there was a gamble involved due to the difficult situations. This is echoed in a number of the participants' perceptions of May when she took the role of Prime Minister, there is a repeated idea that she took the role with good expectations and that she wanted it and wanted to be successful. Although many of the participants felt that her demise was inevitable there is a sense from a number of the women that they didn't feel *she* felt that way.

In later research on the Glass Cliff Ryan and Haslam (2007) found that not only were women chosen for leadership roles in times of difficulty but that the placing of women in leadership roles in which it was very difficult to succeed so was it being used as a way to confirm the stereotype that women are not congruent with leadership. They write that poor evaluations of their performance was,

“taken as evidence that they are unsuited to leadership positions and, hence can be ‘legitimately’ denied opportunities for higher office” (Ryan and Haslam 2007 p.555).

Their developed theory was seen within the responses from participants, for example Kelly spoke of the implications of women holding position during times of crisis or through difficult periods. She said, “it may or may not work but also if it goes wrong, they always won't, it's much less likely that they'll get a second chance”.

She articulates Ryan and Haslam (2007) theory perfectly by explaining how she has witnessed this in her own employment in local authorities and organisations. The harsher penalty that women in leadership have to pay for perceived 'failure' can be seen in the responses to May, Jane spoke of the possibly negative impact May's leadership could have on how WPL are viewed. She said,

“she came into a very difficult point. That whoever was going to be Prime Minister at that point was going to find it extremely difficult and I think it’s unfortunate that we had a, a female politician because that will just (pause) we had a female Prime Minister, sorry, at that point because then it just, that the only, only models we’ve not got are Margaret Thatcher and Theresa May and (pause) it’s shame. I think in a different time she, she would have essentially been, been seen as a lot better that she was.”

Ebele also felt that the legacy of the two WPL the UK had were perhaps not the most favourable, she explained how although the UK has had some representation of women in political leadership it has not for her, “been associated with positive (pause) outcomes um in terms of (pause) if you’re talking about Thatcher, if you’re talking Theresa May”.

Pattie also identified parts of the glass cliff theory in May when she explained how she felt May had taken on a traditionally female role of “cleaning up the mess that other people had made”, she said,

“I felt for her because I thought this is the role that women always have to have had and, and that she’s just playing a different version of it and a more, at least a higher position in that, it’s not a woman behind the scenes, a wife or whatever but (pause)...I thought she’d stepped forward to take a role that it felt to me men clearly weren’t stepping forward to do.”

5.7 Conclusion

The discussions around emotion focused on women showing sadness or being visibly upset. This discussion centred on Theresa May and through these discussions so were insights gained into the participant’s own experiences of emotion in the workplace. Despite the empathy felt by the

participants for May, as discussed in Chapter 4, there was still an element of criticism for her displaying emotion in that the participants were concerned with the consequences. Some participants expressed fear that this was negatively impact how people felt about WPL and that it would play into harmful gender stereotypes regarding women being overly emotional. The fear of emotion in WPL is interesting when set against the emotionalisation of politics (Richards 2007) and how emotion has become expected in political leader. This speaks to the different rules that women are subjected to in terms of gender stereotypes and norms.

The responses to May and emotion also led to discussion around the unenviable position she was placed in in terms of the political context. Discussions around the Glass Cliff (Ryan and Haslam (2007) explored the way in which women often feel other women are not given a fair chance at leadership, this was embodied by May and her tenure as Prime Minister.

Although the participants did not feel showing emotion was a negative thing, in fact they praised women's abilities to be emotionally intelligent, there was still evidence of a discomfort and fear around emotional displays for the fear of the negative consequences it could have on perceptions of women in leadership.

Chapter 6. Thematic Analysis: Intergenerational Strength and Independence: Reflections on Mothers and Daughters

6.1 Introduction

The chapter will explore the participants' reflections on the intergenerational relationships they have with women. In order to explore the drivers behind the responses to WPL (RQ4) it is important to examine how the participants felt about gender and where those feelings were coming from. A key theme that emerged in the interviews was the influence of mothers and grandmothers but how being a daughter shapes women's perceptions of women's roles and abilities. Many participants were also mothers to daughters and their sense of responsibility came up repeatedly in discussions about women's representation and the role of gender. The relationship between mother and daughter has been widely researched in many different fields of study and remains fertile ground for current future discussions. Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* (1999b) highlights the influence of mothers on their daughters' perceptions of gender and women's roles but also women throughout their lives, she writes,

“she learns what it is like to be womanlike in the context of this personal identification with her mother and often with other female models...Feminine identification, then, can be based on the gradual learning of a way of being familiar in everyday life, exemplified by the relationship with the person with whom a girl has been most involved” (p.175)

. Onayli and Erdur-Baker (2013) in their research into the relationship in the context of Turkish culture write,

“the nature of the mother and daughter relationship carries a determining role in the life of the daughter in their social and psychological well-beings and self-esteem” (p.237).

Hirsch (1981) explains the importance of discussing the mother-daughter relationship when researching women's lives when she writes,

“There can be no systematic and theoretical study of women in patriarchal culture, there can be no theory of women's oppression, that does not take into account woman's role as mother of daughters and as a daughter of mothers, that does not study female identity in relation to previous and subsequent generations of women, and that does not study that relationship in the wider context in which it takes place” (p.202).

In this chapter the psychosocial methodology employed in this research will explore the impact of these relationship on the participants. These discussions will be analysed and used to help inform how women respond to WPL and where the motivators for those responses may lie. Through the discussions with women on this subject so will new insights into women's responses be uncovered.

6.2 Reflexive Diary

One aspect of the conversations that kept striking me throughout the data collection process was the relationships between mothers and daughters. These relationships flowed through the generations and had a defining impact of many of the participants. This felt like a very key part of the data and one that was not obvious in the transcripts but came from the affective responses' women had when we talked. When I asked women about the role models in their lives so many spoke of their mothers, whether that was a source of inspiration or a cautionary tale the impact was clear to see. They also spoke about what their mothers wanted for them in life and there was a sense that the mothers knew they had to prepare their daughters to operate as women in this world. Many of the participants were mothers to daughters too and many spoke of the responsibility they felt they had to prepare their daughters and

the hopes they had for them. As a daughter of a courageous mother and the sister of three other women this theme felt very close to home, I have grown up with a mother who was determined to instil strength and independence in myself and my sisters and hearing this from other women made me feel connected to them. This theme has a very personal element to it, and it brought up many personal stories with the participants. It's link to the overall topic of the thesis may feel at times unclear but it feels like an important aspect of women's lived experiences and an important influence on the way they view women's roles in society. Much of my own story is tied up with this chapter and I don't pretend otherwise, it is an exploration of my own relationship with my mother and a celebration of mothers everywhere who are guiding their daughters through the gendered world.

6.3 Responses: Mothering and Responses to WPL

When discussing mothering in relation to WPL there were varied responses from the participants. A number of the political leaders that featured in the videos shown to participants were mothers or had had high profile incidents related to motherhood, namely Jacinda Ardern who became the second woman to give birth to a child whilst being the leader of a nation, and Theresa May who was widely discussed for not having had children. These two very different experiences elicited discussions about motherhood and leadership amongst participants which highlight the different standards to which a woman political leader is held but also abilities that are admired by women in other women.

When discussing WPL as mothers Marsha spoke of Theresa May and the criticism, she received for not having had children, she said,

“I think she also came under criticism for not be a mother, y’know, it’s like “as a woman, y’know, if you were a mother, you’d really understand things a lot more wouldn’t you”, and it’s like “ooh, not quite done the whole woman thing have you”, y’know. And finding reasons to undermine women for, y’know, for being a *whole* woman.”

Marsha’s observation that May was not seen as a “whole woman” because she did not have children echoes the questions May received when running for the Conservative Party leadership. May was running against Andrea Leadsom who questioned May’s investment in the future of the country as she did not have children and stated that as she was a mother she had “a very real stake” in it. Leadsom subsequently left the race and May became leader and Prime Minister (Smith 2018). Marsha returned to the concept of women who are not mothers being perceived as “not actually proper” women later on in the interview.

6.4 Drivers: Responses: Strength and Independence

A key aspect of the discussions on mothers and daughters centred around the desire that women had for their daughters to be independent and to possess strength. This striving for these qualities spanned the different generations of the participants and also across the differing intersects of identity. When discussions turned towards close familial relationships with other women there was an echoing through the interviews of this hope the women would possess the ability to be independent from men and that they would have a strength that was perceived to be crucial to allow women to succeed. In my field notes the role of mothers appears frequently. I also wrote,

“It seems that resilience is a gift being handed down from mother to daughter, even if the mother doesn’t appear to have the strength themselves.”

For a number of the participants this need for independence came from a mother's desire to prepare her daughter for what could go wrong for them. Ann shared that her mother had experienced being left by her husband, Ann's father, and did not want this to happen to Ann. She has, throughout Ann's life, stressed the importance of being independent and financially able to provide for oneself. Ann explained how her mother constantly talks about Ann having her own means saying,

“she [Ann's mother] was like “because you need to need to be able to leave and then so if he leaves you suddenly and you need to be able to book yourself into a hotel and fly home...just always have some money separate. Because she, my Dad was the sole provider when they were married and when he left her, she literally had nothing.”

Ann went on to explain further that her Mum was only ever “pushy” when it came to her being independent, she said it was important that she was “an independent woman with a career, you can look after yourself”. Ann reflected on these discussions with her Mum whilst she relayed them to me and then went on to say,

“She never expressed it in this way, but I think that was what it was getting at, just the idea that you have a life separate to him, you have friends and interests and a career that is separate to him so that if you and him are no longer together, your world hasn't imploded.”

Harriet also talked at length about her relationship with her mother, she said that her mother had held a very traditional role within their family and her father was the dominant figure in their relationship. Harriet recounted a story about how she had been re-reading her adolescent diaries and had found that her teenage self felt that her mother saw her as “stupid” however she then went on to relay a conversation she had had with her mother prior to her death, she said,

“I asked her what in your life Mum, looking back you know, over your 80 years, is there anything you wished you’d done or been, like, that you haven’t done? And she said, “the only thing I wish is I’d been more like you”. And I was kind of like “oh that wasn’t what I was expecting” ...she said, “you’ve done all the things you wanted to do and I never, I didn’t kind of face up to the stuff and do stuff that I wanted to do”.”

Harriet went on to explain how she felt her mother’s lack of expectations for her had acted as a “counter challenge” that spurred her on to achieve, she also felt that her mother “saw her life as less than it might have been because of the way she was treated as a woman”. Marian, when speaking about her mother, also appeared to use her mother’s role in the family as a counter challenge or a way to show her what she did not want for herself, she said,

“I get really cross with my Mum because my Mum said, you know, “we are made differently” and you know, “women, women should stay at home” my mother, once upon a time, was for equality but changed her mind (laughs) as she’s got older and just sat back in her chair (laughs).”

Danni spoke at length about her relationship with her mother and the inspiration that she had been to her, she said,

“I’ve never seen anyone with her strength and determination it’s (pause) she is the epitome of “I can do it myself, I don’t need, I don’t need a man, I don’t need a husband, I don’t need my sons, I don’t need my son in law, I don’t need anyone to it, it I want to do it I’ll do it””

Danni went on to talk about how her mother and grandmother had protected her as a child and allowed her to express herself, she explained that at times she irritated the male members of her family but that,

“Mum was very much like “no I’m not going to suppress her personality, she’s inquisitive, she wants to chat, she wants to get involved, like, I want her to do that, I want her to develop and be who she is”...my Nan was very much the same...she was very much like “no, no, no if, that’s Danni, that’s just the way she is, I’m not going to tell her to be quiet, she’s not being naughty, she’s just being heard...and I liked that because then I grew up to be always kind of, voice my opinion one way or another (laughs).”

Beryl was very clear about the impact her mother had had on her life and how her mother had been the driving force in making her the woman she is, she said,

“I had a very strong role model in my Mum, my Mum was a very strong person. You know, so I and you know I was always, one of my Mum’s things which she always said, I just want you to have confidence, have confidence, she instilled that. And I think if you’ve got confidence, you *need* confidence in yourself, so I never (pause) found um I always had the confidence if I needed to, I’d stand up for myself. Definitely.”

Beryl returns to her mother and her strength throughout the interview repeatedly and was emphatic in the impact that she had on her.

Sarah talked about the influence her mother had had on her and her sister, she said,

“My Mum always worked very hard, always had a career so my role models either at home or at school growing up were very positive around women and what women can achieve rather than a woman’s place is at home, looking after the family you know, and I, my Mum obviously was very caring as a Mum but it was, we had that sort of (pause) visible role model.”

Pattie spoke about her mother in a very reflective way, she was clearly articulating her thoughts on her mother in a way she had not done previously which can be seen in the stilted way in which she speaks, she said,

“I’d say I would see her as a leader and you know (pause) I, I definitely don’t want to be exactly like her at all (smiles) I think, I re/feel a, a lot of admiration for her and, and especially her, she you know, she’s done some incredible things, so (pause) she, she has me at 18 at the time, unmarried, at a time when that was absolutely against the status quo and, and fought everybody to make that happen (pause) and you know that’s an incredible, obviously the older I get the more incredible I think that was.”

Valerie also spoke of the responsibility she felt she had to educate her daughter, she explained how this education centred on showing her the world as it was, she focused on a trip she had taken her daughter on to Jamaica where her family are from, she said,

“I showed her everything, so that she could make her own informed decision and I’m pretty much, that’s my, that’s my, my, the education that I give her, I want her to see how other people you know, good, bad, and the ugly and for her to make her own decisions.”

Valerie explained how her own mother had passed down the same teachings and that she has focused on the need to be aware of other people’s motives, she explained how her mother “told me to protect myself, that was, the main kind of like, thing that she had to get through”. Valerie’s experiences of intergenerational relationships echo the findings of mother and daughter researchers Thomas Bernard and Bernard (1998) wrote specifically about the mother/daughter relationship for Black women. They argue Black women have a very specific need to prepare their daughters for life because of the oppression they and the women before them have endured. They write,

“Black motherhood can serve as a site where Black women express and learn the power of self-definition, the importance of valuing and respecting ourselves, the necessity of self-reliance and independence” (p.47)

Valerie, in her discussions with her mother and her daughter, are living out this importance of self-reliance and independence and the knowledge is being shared through the generations of women.

Chodorow (1999a) argues that each person's gender is individually constructed through their own experiences and through the discussions with the participants the impact of mother's one women's understandings of gender is evident. The way in which mother influence daughters and shape the way they view the role of women or the way they are prepared for being a woman in this world differs but remains a strong force. As Hirsch (1981) states, mother and daughter relationships are “the most personal and at the same time the most universal” (p.204). Therefore, the themes can be seen across the participants regardless of their differing life experiences and identities. Whether mothers provide guidance on how to be a strong and independent woman or, as discussed previously, provide a picture of how not to perform their gender the influence is clear to see. This early shaping of gender sets up women for the way in which they will be a woman and how they will interact as women. When placing this in the wider context of women's responses to women in political leadership, the relationship between mother and daughter and lessons being imparted through the relationship has the potential to influence how women perceive women in leadership roles, their ability to do the job and the importance of seeing women represented. The fundamental beliefs women have on the role of women in society begins in the home with the role of the mother, be that positive or negative. Applying a Kleinian perspective highlights the importance of the role of the mother in setting up interactions between women and responses to them.

6.5 Drivers: Daughters

For the participants who had daughters there emerged a sense of needing to education and prepare their daughters for the world. This took the form of discussions about hopes for the world in which their daughters would operate but also a conscious decision around how they spoke to their daughters. Jane is a mother of both a son and a daughter and she reflected on their temperaments when she said,

“My daughter right from the get-go, has been extremely independent, wants to do everything herself which is, which is, I think it is good that it’s that way round, I think, because Nathan [her son], I think, growing up he will find it easier, whereas Lacey [her daughter] will have to be assert, be more assertive than, than (pause) just purely by being female than Nathan would.”

Peggy, a mother to four adult daughters, echoed Ann’s mother’s wishes, discussed in the previous section, when she explained how she had wanted to ensure her daughters maintained their independence. She said,

“I wanted them to be able to um, have a good education, good qualifications, the means to earn their own money, support themselves but be able to get married and have children in they wanted or, but still be able to maintain their independence if they needed to and that was very (pause) for me, I felt that was what was needed.”

Peggy spoke of how, when she had her first child in the late 1970s, she was forced to leave her job to become a mother. She spoke of how this had hindered her ability to have a career and that she had had to wait until she was in her forties to pursue her own career path. Peggy exhibited a desire to provide more for her daughters than they had and the importance of them not

experiencing the same barriers she has experienced was paramount. This wish to eliminate barriers for daughters was present in a number of the participant discussions. Sarah recounted a time where she had been running and had been shouted at by a man and comments were made about her body, she explained how her first thought has been for her daughter, she said she thought “I’ve got a daughter, and this is the world that she’s going to have to confront and live in”.

Pattie displayed genuine concern for her daughters and the way in which they viewed gender. She talked about how she had hoped they would inherit her feminist views but that in truth they did not feel gender was an important factor in their lives. Later, in our discussion she reflected on this further and said,

“I feel it doesn’t matter how many times I talk to my girls about feminism, it’s only when they’ve lived it, you know, when they’ve gone out, like you said, when you go out in the world and see it happen for yourself (pause) that’s when you change and that’s why having women in positions of power is so important.”

Pattie felt that for her daughters the experience of being a woman would show them how important feminism is and that only when they were out of the shelter of being a child would they understand the differences in the way women are treated in society. Valerie explained that she felt it was important for her daughter to spend time with her relatives who were women as this would enable her to gain insights and learn from experiences, she said,

“I want her to be aware and kind of like looking for things for herself and seeing how, how as she’s growing up how she’s going to forge her way.”

Valerie also has a son, but she spoke extensively about her daughter and preparing her for life through showing and teaching her about the women in her life and their experiences. Sian spoke about her wish for there to be a greater representation of decision making from women leaders as she felt this was important for her daughters to be seeing as they were growing up and

that she wanted things to be different for them when they were adults, she said,

“I hope that by the time my girls are, you know, I want them, you know, to be strong, to be independent and you know to be happy with their choices in life and you try and tell them at sixteen that’s really not what you want to do for life but they’re making decisions now and so it’s kind of, it if what it is really.”

Ebele has a daughter and she spoke at length about her role as her mother and the way she balances motherhood and working full time. She explained that during the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown her daughter had seen her at work for the first time and had told her how proud she was of her hearing her at work. Ebele recounted how she often did not go to school activities because of work but that she was grateful her daughter had had the chance to see her in a professional capacity and that she hoped this would provide a positive view of women in the workplace.

6.6 Drivers: Mothers as Role Models

To provide a deeper understanding of the drivers behind women’s responses to WPL it was important during the interviews to understand what women admired about other women and what aspects they found inspiring. Therefore, I encouraged discussions on women role models in order to gain insight. For many of the participants they immediately spoke about their mothers as role models and as the most important role models for them. Sarah spoke of how her mother was a “visible role model” for her and her sister because she went out to work but also provided a very nurturing space for family. She explained how her mother’s choices had shown her a different gender dynamic, she said,

“My Mum going to University was like (pause) major (pause) in her family, her Mum had left school at you know (pause) 12 or 14 or you know whatever and been a traditional housewife so

um (pause) but I think yeah, certainly when I was younger she, there was much more expectation that she would take on the predominant childcare role, she did part time jobs to fit around school whereas my Dad had the “career” but then that has really switched to a more, later in life, certainly my Mum has had the prominent career and has, you know, sort of had (pause) yeah much more of the sort of (pause) responsibility in that way and we’ve obviously, my sister and I, have watched.”

Marsha also talks about the “grief” her mother was given for going back to work but that this has been a positive experience for her as it had shown her, her mother’s capabilities, and transgressed gender norms. Dayna spoke about her mother with great admiration and explained that she had been a pioneer for women’s rights in her field and had taken prominent roles in which she was the first woman. The backlash she received had a profound impact on Dayna, but she concludes by saying,

“I watched my Mum suffer through a lot of (pause) a lot of grief and a lot of injustice and a lot of pain (pause) by being as open, but I was (pause) I’ve always admired her.”

Valerie’s admiration for her mother is very evident throughout the interview and she returned to her on numerous occasions, she summarised the influence of her mother when she said,

“most of what I do is centred around making sure she’s ok because for me she is (pause) yeah, she is wisdom, she is knowledge, she’s feminism, she’s power, she’s healing, she’s like, she’s all of those things to me and she’s helped me to be a better and a stronger woman.”

Sian emotions became visible during our conversation about role models, and she began to cry when discussing her recently deceased mother-in-law. She explained that she had been a role model for Sian but also for Sian’s daughters, she said,

“she was a great role model and also for our girls...she was a great role model for them but also for my, my girls um because they’d seen it and she was independent, she earned her own money and you know, she suffered all her life with various illnesses and um (wipes away tears)... but lived her life to the full, never complained, she just got up and got on with it.”

Ebele also mentioned her mother-in-law when talking about role models and again she was very aware of her being a role model for her daughter too. She explained that her mother-in-law was a prominent lawyer in her country, and she had given Ebele advice on how to manage being a mother who was also in full time employment. Ebele explained,

“I’ve always made it work but I think also having support within my family as well and also having my mother-in-law who just kind of kicks ass (laughs) and doesn’t have any of the cultural or other stereotypes around what (pause) what a woman should or shouldn’t be doing.”

Billy named her mother and mother-in-law as her role models, she said,

“I think they fact that they could hold down a job and also bring us up because both of them have worked all the way through and (pause) yeah, they both, they’re just strong, strong females.”

Billy is a mother to two boys and works, she mentioned the balance of work and motherhood extensively throughout our discussion and therefore it is noteworthy that the reason she holds these two women in such high esteem is because they were able to find a balance between working and being present mothers to their children. This modelling has clearly impacted Billy as she moves through her own journey of motherhood.

Izzy talked about her mother and how she, only now she is an adult, can recognise how difficult it would have been for her mother bringing her and her brother up alone. She said,

“I think when I was, I think, when I was at school a lot of my friends’ parents, maybe sort of had gone back to work part time once the kids were a bit older, but you know they essentially were sort of the main sort of, you know, their role was still kind of a ish stay at home Mum slash sort of you know did the school run and that sort of stuff and my Mum did sort of everything so it’s just, it’s one of those things where you’re conditioned by your environment so um (pause) I didn’t really realise that the fact that my Mum went and did nursing shifts was, was unusual where actually I think it was possibly, slightly.”

Danni also felt her mother was a role model to her, saying,

“I’ve seen her [go] through the worst of times and I honestly can’t (pause) I honestly haven’t seen anyone come out of those situations as good as her um and it’s, it’s a fantastic role model to have in your life when you can look up to your Mum like that.”

Beryl felt that her mother was the only role model in the life, she said,

“so, the only woman in my life who I’d class as a strong woman, and I didn’t really fully understand that until later on in my life is my Mum (pause) because when I looked back at what she had to deal with, and did deal with, and how she brought us up in the circumstances they were in, now she’s my strong person.”

The speech patterns during the conversations about mothers often became more stilted with greater frequency of pauses and unfinished thoughts. This reflected the deep emotions that were being accessed and also showed how for many of the women these were thoughts that had not been articulated often and so there was evidence of them working through them as they spoke. Pattie highlighted the reflective nature of the discussions when she said,

“just talking about it now has made me think (pause) that she’s been a much bigger influence on me that I’ve probably ever realised before (pause) in, in seeing things like that (pauses and looks down).”

After our discussion Pattie emailed to say how she had enjoyed our discussion and that it was “like feminist therapy”. Danni used humour to break the sense of emotion that came over her when she spoke of her mother and the admiration she has for her, she said,

“I’m so glad she’s not around to hear it (laughs) she would never let me hear, like hear the end of it as well (laughs).”

For many women mothers are the first role model and set up an expectation for the role that women play in society. For many of the participants the impact of their mother was evident and at the forefront of their mind when discussing gender and women’s roles and therefore highlights the importance influence a mother has on a daughter’s outlook on gender. This outlook sets up the expected role of women into adult hood and therefore has the potential to influence what women think other women can and should achieve. When placing this in the context of WPL a woman’s mother is a driving force behind women’s responses to women in these roles as the expectations have been set within us at an early age

6.7 Exploring through Example – WPL Inspiring Strength and Independence

For a number of the participants former UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was an important part of their formative years and became a part of their understanding of the role of women. Thatcher was the UK first woman Prime Minister and held office from 1979-1990. Thatcher has widely been denounced for her lack of solidarity amongst other women politicians or women as a whole

and distanced herself from the concept of feminism at every opportunity (Swift 2019, Berthezène and Gottlieb 2019). Campbell (2015) writes,

“she did not create a new womanly public. She did not engage women as her peers, and she did not noticeably intervene on behalf of women” (p.41).

In spite of this lack of solidarity from Thatcher, a number of participants spoke about the positive impact of seeing her as Prime Minister during their childhood. Importantly, they expressed that it had a galvanising effect on them. Seeing a woman in this position from their early age showed them the possibilities that were available to them as women. Maggie spoke of the impact seeing Thatcher in power had on her,

“I grew up when Margaret Thatcher as the leader of the country, it’s like yeah ok, I can do, I’m just gonna crack on then, it was never a question for me, and I think it’s really important.”

Sarah also spoke of the impact of attending an all-girls school at the time of Thatcher being Prime Minister and the messaging that they received there, she said we were,

“brought up to be like ‘the sky’s the limit’, ‘whatever career you want to do, you do it’, you know, ‘you’ll be lawyers, doctors’ you know, ‘there’s no, no barriers.’”

Marsha explained that when she was child, and Thatcher was in power, her mother did not like her and was openly hostile to her when she appeared on television. Martha relayed although her mother referred to Thatcher as “a man”, because of her leadership style, she herself felt that it had had a positive impact on her, seeing a woman as Prime Minister. She said,

“that was really, really powerful and we shouldn’t, we shouldn’t let her politics get in the way of an incredible achievement for women, that, that said *much* earlier than a lot of other countries, that this is a country where a woman can get in to power”

An important part of understanding the participants' responses to WPL is the exploration of the construction of gender for the individual women and the way in which they view women's roles in society. For a number of the participants, seeing a woman in office as a young girl was inspirational and opened up the possibilities they felt they had as a woman. This inspiration has potential to change the gender norms for women, seeing more women in political leadership can have a positive impact in how women feel about women's abilities. Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007) found that seeing women in politics had an impact on the political involvement of young women and these responses from participants speak to this.

6.8 Conclusion

The relationship between mother and daughter has the potential to be the first relationship a woman encounters. Seeing the way in which a mother performs her gender and her womanliness set the foundations for daughter in their understandings of what a woman is and how she moves through the world. Therefore, when looking at the drivers behind the participants responses to WPL it became clear that their mothers were key to understanding this. The construction of gender psychosocially is informed by the way in which we see gender being performed and reacted to and therefore this earliest display of gender is clearly important when looking at how the participants feel about being a woman but also about seeing women in positions that defy expected gender norms. The participants spoke often and deeply about their own mothers and portrayed a sense of inherited learning from them. The messages given to daughters by their mothers was that life as a woman required a certain amount of strength and that being an independent woman was vitally important to survive through life. This building up of women was passed through generations whether the mother was a symbol of inspiration or a cautionary tale. The impact of seeing women in political leadership at a young age has also emerged as an important inspiration for women. Seeing women hold such

office shows young girls that they can achieve whatever role they want to and has a positive impact of their perception of women's roles within society.

The themes in this chapter will be explored further in Chapter 7 in that it highlights how life for women requires different skills and a different outlook. Women know this and attempt to arm their daughters with the knowledge they have learned in order to provide them with a gentler passage through life. Mother and daughter relationships are one of the first and most important lessons for women to help them to navigate the gendered terrain of society. It also sets up a woman's ideals of other women, what is acceptable and what may not be. Therefore, when exploring reactions to WPL these first lessons in gendered are key to understanding where the reactions stem from.

Chapter 7. Thematic Analysis: “Boys’ Club”: Reflections of Women’s Experiences of Gender

7.1 Introduction

One key area of discussion during the data collection was the topic of women’s experiences of their gender and how it impacts their daily lives. Understanding the participants’ experiences of gender was key to gaining meaningful insights into the drivers behind their responses to WPL, helping to answer RQ4. One of the first questions I asked each participant was to tell me stories about times in their life when they had been aware of, or treated differently, due to them identifying as a woman. The initial responses to the question by a number of the women spoke volumes about how they felt about being a woman. One participant laughed and said, “that’s a fully loaded question Amy”, her response was echoed by many of the women. For many of the participants this felt like an obvious question with an obvious answer: the impact of their gender was clearly evident in their life. The level of laughter that accompanied these interactions displayed a level of discomfort on the subject but more than that, it was often accompanied by a resigned manner, an affective response, that displayed the idea that gender was a big influencer in their life, and that they were exhausted by it. In this chapter I will discuss the answers to this main question of how the participants have felt their gender has impacted them and explore the notion of the world being a “boys’ club” and women having to operate within it. The discussion on women’s experiences will be used to examine the impact these have on how they respond to WPL. This chapter will analyse the changes that the participants felt have been and are occurring for women being in a man’s world both in their own experiences and in political leadership, drawing on examples highlighted by the interviews to explore this in more depth.

7.2 Reflexive Diary

From the literature I knew that women in leadership experience barriers due to their gender however one of the most interesting and important areas of discussion I had with the participants was when we discussed their own experiences of gender in their workplaces or in their everyday interactions. I found this was when the women were most forthcoming and spoke from the heart, it was also the time when there was the most connection between me and the participants. The discussions felt reminiscent of what I have read about the consciousness raising sessions during second wave feminism. There was a shared experience despite differing backgrounds, I felt at times like the conduit for the women's shared experiences as they were not sharing with each other but through me. It became evident that the women find the world a very gendered place and one in which there are clear gender expectations despite apparent moves towards. I found this area of the interviews incredibly moving and it made me feel connected to the participants and feel a sense of solidarity with women.

7.3 Responses: Boys' Club

The first question I asked participants once they had viewed the videos of the WPL and given their responses to the videos directly was to ask them if they could tell me about their own experiences of their gender. If there were times that they were more aware of being a woman or if they had been treated differently because they are a woman. The initial responses to this question varied but one theme that was present was that in the world in which they operated; men were in charge. Three participants used the words "male dominated world" to explain the world as a whole and their own working environments. There were also clear feelings that gender stereotypes have

caused barriers for women in their own lives. Tamsin answers “when hasn’t it”. Ann answered, “Yeah, Sexism a Memoir? I could definitely write that”. Dayna elaborated on her experiences of gender stereotypes being barrier saying,

“I’ve come head-to-head with them in any work I’ve ever done myself, I’m a very, I’ve been told by managers and many men that I’m an outspoken ah, I’ve been given the word uppity before, I’ve been “challenging”, “difficult, “too direct” ...these are all bundled into the same thing, I’m, you know, I’m a difficult, a difficult woman””

Harriet recounted two experiences, one at work and one in her personal life, in which she has been in meetings with men and had been advised she was “one of the boys” and that “we don’t think of you as a woman”. Harriet explained that on both occasions this was meant as a compliment and something that they thought would make her feel good because she had been included in their group. She said,

“they thought that it was a good thing that they were all boys and that I would feel somehow elevated if I felt more like boy.”

When I asked Harriet if she did feel “elevated”, she smiled and said “I did not. No. I did not”, she then laughs and says, “not in the slightest”. Harriet explained that as a child she had learned how to interact with men through watching her older brother and his friends. She said,

“I could watch (pause) what was happening and what was done so I knew how men’s mind’s worked and how male peers worked.”

She explained how this had allowed her to successfully operate in male dominated working environments throughout her career.

The concept of behaving like a man in order to survive the male dominance is echoed by other participants when they discuss their experiences of operating in male environments at work. One aspect of women's feelings that the world is a boys' club was the way in which they were spoken to by men in their workplace. The way in which they have been spoken to in order to mark them out as different from the men in the room, this often took the tone of sexual comments or exclusion from the conversations. Sally explained how when she worked in the corporate sector for a telecommunications company, she was often the only woman in meetings. She said that she would often receive comments such as "run along and make us a cup of tea" or "ah, run us a bath". She explained that this happened as she moved up the ranks within the company and found herself surrounded by fewer women. For Sally this felt like a test to see how she would react in the situation. She said it was "this special little ceremony or induction I had to go through, um, to be accepted". In order to be "accepted" Sally explained that she behaved "more masculine than I would normally". She went into more depth by outlining her strategy for surviving these experiences, she said

"I would find myself being much more, banging of the table, maybe talking a bit lower um (pause) having lots of data, men seem to respond to the data rather than the spoken word so I, yes I would say um very different, but once you've settled in, no I think I could then revert back to type but I felt I had to just push that little more to get that respect"

Tamsin echoed this when she spoke of the way male colleagues responded to her as a disabled woman and a wheelchair user. She explained how the phrase often used by men was "while you're down there, love", implying that as she was at a lower level, she could perform sexual acts for them. Tamsin explained that her coping mechanism was again to mimic masculinity, she said,

"I'm pretty lucky because I'm actually (pause) a bit, I feel like at work, I very much (pause) talk like a man in order to you know,

I don't cry, I don't shout, I don't get emotional you know, I try to remain quiet, like, neutral, and also quite approachable."

Assimilation is used by women in order to avoid standing out in the male dominated environment and avoiding the risk of being treated differently due to being a woman. There is a feeling amongst the men that women will feel privileged to be a part of their group and to not be seen as a woman, as Other, but to be accepted and thus no longer threatening or arousing any threat or propositions. This echoed the Queen Bee Phenomenon (Staines et al. 1974) discussed in the literature as it speaks to women assimilating into behaviour that is more masculine. Where this research differs is that it provides an explanation as to why women may feel or have felt, they needed to assimilate and distance from other women. This was not in order to be the "queen" as might be suggested, but as a survival tactic as an outsider in a male space.

A theme that came through in the interviews was that women are treated differently at times when they work in environments where men are in the majority, this leads to the women being treated as Other by their male work colleagues and can have a negative impact on work progression. Pattie articulated this Othering when she discussed how she felt in her working environment and how she felt the men excluded the women on a daily basis. She is a teacher and she explained that at work the male teachers tended to congregate together and had an extra level of comradery because they played on the same football team. She said that this feeling of exclusion was not overt but showed itself in interactions between the men and women, she explained that in staff meetings,

"they will come in and stand sort of physically block another woman and seem completely unconscious of that, it's in quite a small space...and it's really evident the sort of male stance and the, the women sort of get physically side lined."

Tamsin spoke of the relationship between men and women in the workplace and felt that men tend to think of their women colleagues as possessions, she explained,

“I feel like some men especially the more powerful they become (pause) become like that and they don't necessarily notice but it's very much (pause) *my* secretary, *my* team, *my* office, not this is blah-die-blah she works in our office, or this is blah-die-blah she's part of my team, not it's this *my* secretary.”

This Othering done to, and felt by, the participants can be explained through De Beauvoir's (1949/1972) assertion that women are the other to men's absolute. In the women's experiences they are made to feel that they do not belong, that they are trespassing in some way into worlds in which they are not suited or welcome. This is evident in the more overt and often sexualised language that is used to women but also through covert discussions or interactions that place women on the outside of the men's world. Drawing on Lacanian theory as discussed in the literature review (Benvenuto and Kennedy 1986, Mitchell and Rose 1985), this sense of women being on the outside of the “boys' club” could be seen as an example of women lacking the power, lacking the phallus in that they do not have the ‘required’ attributes to be a real part of the boys' club. They are reminded of this lack through words and actions and despite their attempts to assimilate they can never be the ‘whole’ as they do not have the phallus and the power that comes with that in order to make the equal in these interactions. The unspoken nature of the exclusion makes it difficult to articulate in order to bring around change however with this theme being overarching in most of the interview participants it can be insightful into how gender impacts women and how they move through a patriarchal society. The participants' experiences can be used to explain how they gain the empathy for WPL discussed in Chapter 4, helping to explore RQ4. They can put themselves in the place of the leaders as they have experienced similar things as women. This shared experience can form a

connection between women and women running for, or holding, political office and has the potential to be a powerful bonding tool.

7.4 Responses: Solidarity

A key aspect of navigating the boys' club was the idea of solidarity amongst women. For the participants who had undertaken women leadership training in their workplaces they were encouraged to display a type of leadership that did not involve mimicking men. For many of the participants they took their role as a woman in leadership seriously in terms of how they could help other women in similar positions to them. Maggie explained her strategy for helping other women in her work, she said,

“I’m also trying to be quite genuine and say things like, you know, using feeling vocabulary as in things like (pause)...when something similar has happened to me, I felt da, da, da, da (pause) so that they know it’s ok, that I’m kind of a safe space, that it’s ok to share that type of (pause) feedback.”

Harriet explained that, for her, it is important to look after other women and also to create networks in which women can assist each other. She relayed a story about how she had set up her niece, a senior accountant, with her trainer who was in need of an accountant. The trainer told her that when she had called Harriet’s niece, she has said to her “are you one of Harriet’s adopted women?”. Sian also spoke about the importance of mentoring other women in her workplace and the passing on of her own experiences to them. She explained,

“I do have some people that I , and I mentor the women at the wisdom circle every year um and you know, some of those have come to me and said will you be a mentor outside of this, absolutely yes, I will you know, I have told, well I try to educate

people on the simple things that you can do in life to (pause and exhales) make your life a little bit easier.”

Claire was very aware of being supportive to other women she worked with, to the point where she said she had to be careful to not have too much of a “female bias”. She felt that not having this support could lead to women competing with each other, she said,

“I think we can maybe judge each other too harshly sometimes as women um (pause) because as a, as a (pause) a group we’re used to being judged anyway (pause) for what you look like, how you behave, what you wear, you know, you kind of get used to it and (pause) if you’re not careful you can start judging each other and (pause) pulling each other down.”

As discussed in the literature review, Faludi (1993) wrote of the dangers of the backlash against women’s advancement and how this can take root in women’s own heads. Manne (2018) also argues that women can be misogynistic towards each other. Claire’s worries speak to both of these concerns, and she highlights the fact that women have to be conscious not to allow this judgement and criticism to take root. The participants desire to help other women who are in similar positions to them or who are reporting to them is an important tool in getting more women into positions of leadership. As discussed in the literature review women in business can face a labyrinth to leadership (Carli and Eagly 2016), the path is not clear and changes for each woman. However, with the mentoring and “adoption” that is taking place with women this can be a way of helping other women to come through the labyrinth.

Tamsin talked of the important of women supporting each other, she said “I think brilliant women are real allies to other women”. Peggy felt that the Squad, the four US Representatives (See Appendix 1) encapsulated this sense of

solidarity and that this was the way that women were going to achieve greater equality, to support one another. She said,

“they’re just the ones at the top of the pyramid, there are lots more underneath aren’t there, hopefully all (pause) supporting them you know and even it’s just a little pyramid at the moment, but it will get bigger and bigger.”

She went on to say that women needed that support from one another and that it allowed women to be more able to stand up for each other; “I might be one person speaking but I’m speaking for (pause) quite a lot more”. Mavin (2006) called women supporting each other in the workplace “sisterhood and solidarity behaviour” (p.265). For the participants this solidarity was required to help women navigate the boys’ club and also for the advancement of women. This solidarity and working together speaks to the barriers that women face when seeking positions of leadership and also provides a potential answer for overcoming them. Eagly and Carli (2007a, 2007b, 2016) write that women face a “labyrinth” when seeking leadership in that the path is not linear and is every changing, this is discussed in more depth in the literature review. The way in which the participants speak of solidarity amongst women provides a possible answer for women overcoming such a path to leadership. Instead of women working alone to navigate the “boys’ club” they can work together, forming alliances such as shown with The Squad, and allowing for a greater combined power.

7.5 Drivers: Women in Communal Roles

When I asked participants if they had experienced gender stereotypes as barriers a number of them told me that they had not. This was largely due to the fact that they had held what would be classed as communal roles in their working life. Those meaning roles in which they were utilising and displaying attributes that are stereotypically thought of to be more feminine and thus they

were staying within the gendered boundaries set out for them as women. The women who had held these communal roles included nurses, teachers, and carers and when they told me that they had not experienced gender stereotypes barriers they were quick to acknowledge that they had held positions in environments that were predominantly held by women. Wanda explained that she had fallen in to more “stereotypically female” roles after University as that was all that she felt was available to her, she felt that her being from a lower social class impeded her from gaining different employment, but she did feel that gender played a part in this too. Wanda explained that she is now a nurse so remains within a communal working environment and so does not experience being treated differently because of her gender but that the role of nurse which is held largely by women means that often she is treated as inferior, she explained,

I do find that sometimes (pause) there’s quite a stereotype, someone won’t listen to you because you’re a nurse and they don’t realise your educational potential.

Jane works as a carer and felt that she was “much more accepted as being a carer because of being a woman”, she found that there was not the same stigma attached to her being in the caring profession as there was for her male colleagues. Liz also explained how as a teacher she had never experienced gender related issues as she always had women superiors. Billy, a social worker, explained that in her career most people were women and also, she could see women progressing in that field, she said

So, I guess I’ve probably chosen a career knowing that I’ll be able to progress (pause) and not have my gender impact it.

Marian, a retired Sister, also felt that her role as a nurse, because it was predominately women holding the positions, allowed her to not be the exception and be the Other, she said that

It was men who are unusual you know, I had, I had a male staff nurse once on my team but in the main, on the whole it was women, and women were expected to be the managers as well.

Beryl, a retired nurse, explained that she had never worked with a man and never had a male manager so for her she had not experienced being treated differently because of gender stereotypes as she was firmly within a communal environment that was surrounded by other women. Beryl did understand that her experience was not necessarily the norm when she said

I've been blessed, I've never come across um (pause) you know any sort of prejudice, you know or, or been put down or anything.

Her use of the word "blessed" shows how fortunate she feels she is to have not faced this and also speaks to how prevalent being treated badly for being a woman is in her mind.

Peggy, a retired Sister explained that although her working environment predominantly consisted of women, when men were nurses or working within the nursing sector there were assumption made about the men and their level of knowledge. She recounted a time when they had a male student nurse of the way, she said,

the doctors don't really, you know they would talk to the male nurses more than they would talk to you, you know, if there was a male nurse and they would automatically assume that someone (pause) that the male nurse is senior to the female nurse and we had an incident once where we had a male nurse but he was a student, but the doctor came in and was talking to him whereas he was a student nurse, we were all qualified nurses but he automatically took, yeah, that he was in charge of the ward, not us.

Izzy echoed this when she spoke of the team, she is a part of in her role as an archivist. Her manager is a woman and yet on a regular basis when people approach the team, they will assume that the male colleague on the team is the manager.

Within the participants who worked in communal roles there was a theme of the few men in the organisations being treated differently in terms of career progression. Even though the men in the roles were far fewer the women witnessed their ascent to management as much quicker than the women in the organisations. Marsha, who works in primary education talked about this at length, she said there is

a real understanding, I think, amongst more experienced teachers, teachers who have been in it for longer, it's like "oh here we go, here's the good looking young man, number one they're going to get put in Year 6, y'know, or they're going to run the football club, and then they're going to become a deputy and then they're going to become a head" and it is *literally* nothing to do with competence.

Marsha felt that the hiring committees were

actively thinking that, that a man will automatically do a better job because, because they're automatically going to be better at sports, they're automatically going to be just better at leadership

The women who held communal roles in their working lives on the whole felt that they had not been held back by gender stereotypes or been treated negatively because of their gender. These women are not transgressing gender norms and expectations and so do not face the overt penalties that women working in more agentic roles may do (Mavin 2006, Brooks 2011). This did not mean that the women could not understand penalties that other women would face but that they had not been subject to them because they had stayed within acceptable roles for women. A number of the women did still experience gendered issues within their work in that they would find the few

men they worked with would be singled out and assumed to be the managers or they would be more likely to be promoted. This elevation can be explained by the glass escalator theory (Ryan and Haslam 2007) in that men have an almost invisible ascent to leadership positions within companies and organisations. Whilst women are the majority in these communal roles when it comes to promotions or leadership roles men have a quicker progression and one that means they then outnumber women in the upper echelons of the company or organisation. This speaks to the feeling that it is a boys' club in which men succeed and have the power. The experiences of women in communal roles are important in understanding the drivers behind their responses to WPL as although they do not experience gender barriers, they are aware that this is *because* of the job role they have. They understand that this would not be the case if they were in different roles and therefore, they can empathise and sympathise with WPL for the roles they have to play in more agentic environments.

7.6 Drivers: Women in Agentic Roles

The participants who are employed in industries that are stereotypically dominated by men overwhelmingly felt that they were treated differently because they were women. When I asked if they could think of times in their lives in which they had been aware of gender boundaries and stereotypes these women found telling me stories of their experiences came easily. The women who held agentic roles spanned many different industries but there were similarities to their experiences.

Marsha works as a hospital porter with a group of around 40 and she explained that they were predominantly men. She relayed a story when she was moving around one of the large containers in the hospital, she said,

“I was pulling one of the bins and I, and I was attaching it to the tug the other day and he came over and he said, “oh I’ll give

you a hand, always happy to help a damsel in distress” and I thought “I’m not even struggling”.”

Marsha explained how she felt his reaction was due to the stereotype that women cannot operate machines and that this was a gendered issue because she was a woman in the role.

Dayna explained that as a musician she was often the only woman in a recording studio or in the performance setting. She explained how she has had to change the way she behaves when in this male dominated environment for her own good but also for the good of other women coming into it too. She said,

“I would go into situations and feel like I didn’t know what I was going (pause) well enough, a lot of imposter syndrome, I would sit back and watch the guys buzz around and do it and it would get done...and then I realised how damaging that was to my own self-esteem.”

Chris also worked in the music industry as a technician, and she felt very emphatically that her being a woman had had a negative impact on her holding the position. She explained how she had been treated differently by her male colleagues but also that she was an unpaid intern and the hope of gaining a paid position was minimal due to her gender. She concluded by saying “that whole industry, you can’t be a techie and be a woman yet, maybe at some point that’ll change”.

When I asked Tamsin if she had been aware of any times in her life that she had encountered boundaries due to her gender she responded, “yeah all the time”. When I asked her to tell me about it, she explained first by laughing and then said,

“I think ah (pause), so I work in film and TV which is an industry that is, traditionally, quite sexist, and misogynistic, I’m not gonna lie.”

Zara echoed these experiences in the film industry when she explained how the women working the production office were referred to as the “girls” and that she was also often hired to be the assistant for the women actors but not for assistant to the producer or director when they were men.

Karoline talked about her time as a PhD student in the sciences, she said,

“I’m a scientist and when I started my career it was a male dominated career (pause) um so I’ve had sexist comments made at various points (pause) and that obviously men can, men should be there, and women have to work harder to be there.”

Both Ann and Beatrice work within the field of law and they both spoke of the experiences that they have had being women in this male dominated field. Beatrice is now in her seventies, but she spoke about a time when she was younger in which there was only her and another woman in the office. She explained how they used the ladies’ bathrooms as their place to talk to each other and provide advice if the other one needed it. Although Beatrice was keen to say that she felt she had not faced many gender barriers when she spoke of this solidarity in the male dominated law firm she spoke with real warmth. She expressed how important this ally had been to her and was very clear in her affective response to the memory. She was animated and warm and also remembered this past memory very clearly which highlights the significance to her. Ann also spoke of her time working in the legal sector and how she had felt significantly that she was treated differently due to her gender. She recounted a situation which she explained was not a one-off occurrence, she said,

“I’d go into meetings where I’d written all of the contracts, I’d done all of the prep you know, I’ve been the one running the

business transfer agreement...we'd get into the meeting, I'd put the contract down and then client would say to me "oh thanks love, a coffee for me" (pause) because he assumes I'm the receptionist."

There was a clear difference in the experiences of women who work or have worked in more agentic roles than those who did not. They were much more definite in their response to the idea that they had encountered gender boundaries and been subjected to gender stereotypes. These women are defying prescriptive gender norms, they occupy roles that society does not believe they should be holding (Sczesny 2003, Gervais and Hillard 2011, Eagly and Carli 2007a, 2007b). This defying, as discussed in the literature review, can be seen as a violation and thus the women become perpetrators of this violation (Parks-Stamm et al. 2008). These perpetrators can be punished through being made to feel out of place or being belittled or excluded from the environment. A number of the participants spoke to this punishment in the way they were spoken to by men or the assumptions that were made by them. When assessing how these women's experiences in agentic roles will influence their responses to WPL, the psychosocial approach is key. The women are experiencing what happens to them in society when they hold such roles and therefore, they have a greater empathetic understanding of how the women who hold political office could be treated. Their experiences inform their responses to women in political leadership (RQ4). As discussed in Chapter 4, empathy requires us to "reach back into our own experiences...so we can understand and connect" (Brown 2015 p156) which the women are doing in order to empathise with WPL.

7.7 Drivers: Women's Experiences of the Double Bind

The double bind as discussed in the literature review describes the difficulty women in positions of leadership face when having to balance displaying the agentic traits expected of leaders with the communal traits expected of women (Jamieson 1995, Eagly and Carli 2007b). This double bind was discussed with

a number of the participants when they spoke about their own experiences of leadership and gender but also when they were discussing the role of women in leadership more generally.

Kelly was very aware of the difficulties women face when she said,

“if you’re a woman there are, there’s a certain contradiction so that they’re carrying this kind of um double bias I think where you can’t be, you can’t be both sane and be a woman kind of like you know, displaying attributes that are not kind of associated with being (pause) a woman those sorts of things.”

Danni also questioned the parameters that are placed on women when she said,

“why are you boxed into one thing, you can be anything you want to be across the spectrum, and I just feel like (pause) I don’t really like that, that’s like saying anyone in my workplace or in leadership positions of power they, they can’t be a mother, or they can’t be a sister.”

This questioning of the expectations of women was present across the interviews with the participants with many of them wanting to challenge them or even challenge their own comments of women and leadership. Marsha, who works in the field of gender stereotypes talked at length about the expected norms of women and said,

“I think there is a *huge* pressure on women/girls to be that warm, y’know, nurturing “that’s what girls do, that’s what women do”, “she doesn’t have that therefore she’s not a woman”, y’know it’s like actually there is *no* obligation on you to be nurturing, caring, warm, a good listener, just because you’re a woman.”

Beatrice spoke of the double bind that WPL face when she said, “women can’t win in all these roles you know, it’s just a fact of life”, she laughed after saying

this however this did not feel like she found the “fact” funny but that she was resigned to the idea that women have to play by different rules than men when in positions of leadership. Pattie also felt empathy for WPL when it came to navigating the expectations placed upon them, she said,

“it’s like we want our WPL to be everything that a woman stereotypically should be and warm and touchy feely and so on but also to have all the male traditional leadership qualities and I feel like that’s a *huge* ask for anybody.”

The women’s experiences and understandings of the double bind show how difficult navigating gendered terrain can be in all walks of life for women. There is an uncertainty about the role that women should be expected to play and the parameters in which they should be operating. When thinking about women’s responses to WPL this uncertainty is important because if women feel this way about their own lives, they could also feel this way about those women running for political leadership. The questioning of women’s roles could influence their level of support for WPL or at least create questions of compatibility with the role.

7.8 Exploring through Example: Hillary Clinton – Playing by Different Rules

The discussions around how the participants felt the world operated as “boys’ club” in which they had to play by different rules can provide new insights into how they view women in politics and the way in which they are treated. One prominent woman in politics who elicited impassioned discussion on this topic was Hillary Rodham Clinton. The participants were shown a clip of Clinton during her 2016 presidential campaign (See Appendix 1). The responses to Clinton, above all other WPL discussed, was forceful and conflicting however there was an agreement from most of the participants that as woman in politics she had had to play by different rules. Ebele, a black woman who works in

communication took on a tone of hysterical exasperation when she laughed out loud and stated, “it, it, it kind of makes you wonder like what does a woman have to do”. Ann, a young woman who works in academia spoke of how although Hillary was not a perfect person somehow her indiscretions were scrutinised to such a deeper degree that her opposition during 2016. She says,

“Hillary Clinton, like the email scandal with Hillary Clinton, yeah sure that wasn’t good but the stuff that was coming out about Trump at the same time was, in my view, way, way worse (laughs) but yeah everyone’s like, everyone *personally* blames Hillary for that, whereas anything that Trump’s every said you’re like “yeah but you’ve got to take in the context of what was ok to say at the time””.

Dayna a young woman who is American but lives in the UK echoed this when talking of her dislike of Hillary, she acknowledged that she didn’t like her often as a person but that,

“it’s a different stratosphere of dislike for Donald Trump but it was so, it’s so abstract, he’s like a character in a book whereas like she was a real person, like people looked at her like a real human being that they could criticise, and he was like a story book villain that it seems so unreal”

Pattie also talks how Hillary Clinton, and WPL in general, suffer from a high level of scrutiny than men do. She says,

“it was like she was attacked on both sides, that she was a woman so people were suspicious and also she wasn’t quite the woman that people wanted and so I felt that she was judged on very unfair terms”

Pattie makes the point that Clinton wasn’t the woman that people wanted, this idea that because she was not “perfect” in many people’s eyes that she was therefore not electable to the office of the president. As discussed in relation

to Jacinda Ardern in Chapter 4, the expectation of women to be “perfect” can be explained using Klein’s theory of idealisation. The notion that the woman political leader has to possess all the qualities expected of the “perfect” candidate in order for them to be acceptable and if they fail at this then they will be denigrated, there is no middle ground, no depressive state response to a woman political leader as there may be to a male political leaders. The participants understood this pressure but also added to it in the way many of them responded to, and criticised, Clinton.

The responses to Clinton, this inability to win can be seen as an embodiment of the double bind theory (Jamieson 1995, Eagly and Karau 2002), the seemingly impossible balance between displaying agentic traits assumed to be required for leadership and the communal traits stereotypically expected of women. The balancing act of gender only sharpens as the level of power a position has increased and as this happens so are voters less inclined to vote for women (Okimoto and Brescoll 2010, Knuckey 2019). Clinton, when running for presidential office was running for the most agentic office in the nation, the head of the Executive branch, Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, and the head of foreign and domestic policy. In order to win this office, it was imperative that she show she had the experience and leadership skills required but also not create a negative response to her being “too masculine”. Kelly articulated this balancing act and also finds Clinton lacking when she states Clinton is,

“obviously probably more knowledgeable and probably has more, much higher level of knowledge about a much wider range of things and much more experience than virtually (pause) well most politicians (laughs) currently in America and the world, she’s been around a long time and she’s got a brain that kind of forensic and legal and those sorts of things and but obviously it was a different context but the thing that she

suffered from is, this idea that she doesn't show enough of her womanly features”

Ebele notes how Clinton's appearance of strength when running for office may have been a hinderance to her. She said,

“and you know (pause) there's something about her strength um (pause) and her overt strength and kind of you almost wonder are women allowed to be (pause) so overtly strong”

Clinton having to face a harsher penalty for her mistakes or perceived bad decisions can also be seen in the research on women in leadership which shows that women often have to prove themselves to a much greater extent compared with their male counterparts, this need to prove helps to allay fears that others may have about their abilities to assume position of leadership (Tucker-McLaughlin and Campbell 2013). The attacks on Clinton can also be seen as example of Manne's (2018) theory that WPL can become representations of women as a whole and this have to answer not only for their own 'sins' but also for the 'sins' of all women.

Jane also speaks of how Clinton feels like a symbol of women standing up for themselves,

“But also, I like how, how she's (pause) because it's so patriarchal, particularly in, in America. I like that she's standing up for that or standing up against it, I should say. And her and Chelsea as well and kind of just I don't know I think they just bring a bit more humanity to (pause) to politics and yeah.”

7.9 Responses: “New Guard” and “Old Guard”

It emerged through the interviews that the participants felt there were two types of women leaders. The two types of leaders were present for them in their own lives but also, they felt they could be seen in WPL. The two types of women

leaders constitute what I have called an “Old Guard” and a “New Guard”. The “old guard” of women leaders are those who were often the first woman in the position they are holding. They assimilate into the male dominated environment in which they operate and ensure that they behave in a way that displays largely agentic traits. This agentic leadership includes showing minimal emotional response and focusing on authority. When participants spoke about their own experiences of women leaders there was a clear theme that ran through the interviews in which the older women leaders, they have encountered displayed this more aggressive, authoritative leadership style. As discussed in the literature review, women leaders who assimilate into male dominated environments have been labelled as Queen Bees, this “Old Guard” can be seen to be embodying the Queen Bee theory (Staines et al. 1974).

When Harriet discussed the idea of women leaders adopting more agentic, masculine traits she felt that this was an unconscious decision, she said

“There’s just sort of an adoption of male characteristics in senior positions, can sometimes be so internalised you don’t even know you’re doing it, so your intellect is saying “I’m for women” but your behaviours are saying “but I know that men are more likely to do a good job”.”

Claire felt that this adoption of male characteristics was also present in her workplace, she said,

“I think the women that are more successful in leadership in my company are the women who tend to behave more like men.”

When I asked her to elaborate on what she meant by this she explained it was the women who,

“behave sort of like, in a quite aggressive (pause) manner, like if you’re, if you’re more softly spoken or you’re trying to put a case across in a more reasoned, balanced way you get shouted down.”

Much of the discussion on the “Old Guard” focused on these women leaders not wanting to help other women to reach leadership positions too. Harriet said

“I have met women who are like that who you’re in their club because you’re already at their level, but they have no intentions of (pause) er helping any of, anybody else take their place, because they see places as limited.”

Karoline felt that when she had first entered the world of science as a PhD student, the women she worked with were in the minority. She explained that although the numbers are getting better in terms of women in science there was still a lack of solidarity amongst some women, she said,

“I see it as well (pause) like some women who have (pause) made it to the top of their careers in science um (pause) are quite hard on other women.”

When I asked her why she thought this was she explained it was

“because they’ve had to fight too hard to get to where they are...um it’s like they almost resent (pauses) women coming in who haven’t had that same battle.”

As discussed in the literature review, this adoption of stereotypical male characteristics can be used as a device by women in leadership to avert aggression from being the only women in that environment. The aim is to avoid displaying stereotypically female traits so as to avoid any discussion on the women not being equipped for leadership. When the participants discussed WPL many felt that there was an “Old Guard” who had used this same device when in political leadership. Many also felt that the “Old Guard” did not help other women in advancing in political leadership. Most notably amongst this list were Margaret Thatcher, Hillary Clinton, and Theresa May.

Tamsin explained her thoughts on Thatcher, she said,

“She was not an ally to other women, Margaret Thatcher is the female equivalent of OJ Simpson but of femininity rather than

skin colour, like OJ Simpson was described as the whitest black man in America right...but I think Margaret Thatcher did this thing where she would surround herself with men and controlled, and was very power and very cont/controlled in a good way but she didn't want other women, she wanted to be the only one there (pause) and she wanted to be the only one calling the shots, and the only one with any attention and power."

Karoline felt that Thatcher was a woman who "didn't take any nonsense" and that she was described as "the woman who had balls". She explained how she felt Thatcher wasn't afraid to push boundaries and show her more agentic side. For Karoline this was a very good thing and something that made her admire Thatcher.

Gwen felt that Clinton was attempting to emulate male politicians, she said she was,

"trying too much to be like all, like, like male presidents have been, that sort of shouty, you know, we are America and all that and that doesn't do anything for me at all, so I think I want to see women (pause) looking and behaving (pause) in, not the same as men, they need to behave in a way that is natural to a woman."

Pattie was more sympathetic when discussing Clinton and her leadership style, she said,

"I think for Hillary, she came from a generation where that wasn't possible and so she sort of (pause) modelled her political campaign on what would have worked for a man."

Pattie encapsulated the feeling of the "Old Guard" having to operate in a different environment when she said,

“Hillary and Theresa have always been really shot down, I don’t know if it is a generational thing like in their, their sort of um, the people that they’ve been competing against (pause) and at the time that they’ve been trying to compete (pause) was just very different (pause) and um (pause) perhaps less respectful of women and um our ability to be leaders.”

The “New Guard” was characterised as women who were able to display more communal traits and to behave as they would as women in their personal lives without having to adopt the more masculine traits, they saw male leaders displaying. For a number of the participants this leadership was being cultivated through their work and special programmes designed to encourage women into leadership roles. For others this came from a feeling that women have different characteristics and skills that are encouraged through societal norms but can bring a difference type of leadership to a situation, as discussed in Chapter 8.

Marian felt that women in the “New Guard” were able to show traits that the “Old Guard” had not had the freedom to do, she felt the “New Guard” leaders both in politics and other spheres were good because

“they’re not led by testosterone, the fact that they’re ah (pause) probably it sounds um (pause) what’s the word, a cliché, but, but women leaders like Jacinda Ardern are not trying to be men (pause) um I just always felt Maggie, I mean poor old Maggie she had (pause) she had to be more man, more man than the men in her Cabinet because she was the first woman, and she wasn’t, would never have been allowed to have shown (pause) a female side to her.”

Marian’s summation displays sympathy for Thatcher, Maggie as she calls her, sympathy for her not being able to show more feminine traits because she was

the first woman in the position of Prime Minister in the UK, she called her “poor old Maggie”. This understanding of the situation of the “Old Guard” was present in other interviews, the women understood that the women that had come before them had had a more difficult situation and had to do whatever they needed to in order to get and retain their leadership position.

Claire mentioned Ardern when discussing how important it is for women leaders to move away from mimicking men in leadership. She said

“I think that if (pause) they are maybe more like themselves, like maybe the President of New Zealand (pause) then maybe they would be more successful because they don’t have to, you shouldn’t have to behave like a man to be successful, you should be able to behave like a, like yourself actually.”

When discussing how she felt about seeing more women in positions of political leadership Danni was keen to caveat what type of women she wanted to see more of, she said “I don’t mean the Theresa Mays of the world”, she went on to explain,

“I mean new generational women who are relative, who have a bit more empathy, who have been in, not so much an ivory tower (laughs) um (pause) but are smart women who can speak, who can have a positive impact.”

Maggie felt that having the “New Guard” leaders in politics has the potential to increase the support for women leaders in society, she said,

“there’s quite a few young women who are leaders now and I think that’s brilliant because they’ll bring their children up to respect women and their children will see their mothers as role models and so will all the other children in that country and I think that can’t be a bad thing.”

Zara felt that British politics was missing these “New Guard” leaders, she explained that she wanted to see women who,

“have that balance of when I’m working, I’m working but you can also see the other side of me where I am a woman chilling out, I think it’s important for people to be able to see that (pause) you can still be a happy, well-rounded person at the same time as being a frickin’ ninja in the office.”

There was a clear distinction for the participants between the “old” and “new” guard and the theme emerged that women leaders have the opportunity now to show a different type of leadership to their predecessors. There is an understanding of why the “old” guard behaved as they do but that this was not necessary so much in the present day. There was a desire to see more leadership that did not mimic men but that displayed and encouraged communal traits that are stereotypically attributed to women. The “New Guard” builds on the theory of transformational leadership, as discussed in the literature review. It takes on a more gendered aspect in that the “New Guard” not only empowers followers, but they specifically empower women followers. They speak out on issues relating to women and encourage a celebration of women and their differences. The leaders themselves are empowered but they are also aiming to empower the women they are leading. This type of leadership is in direct contrast to the leadership displayed by the “Old Guard” or by those women discussed in the QBP (Staines et al. 1974). There is not an assimilation but a desire to be recognised as women and for the skills and attributes they can bring to the table through their own experiences. The “New Guard” brings in the important aspects of empathy, as discussed in the earlier chapter, and uses this empathy to build connections. The transformational aspect of the “New Guard” can be seen through the way in which they connect with followers but also seek to bring in more women to leadership and to raise the voices of women in the political sphere. The participants wanted to see more of the “New Guard” leaders, they felt it was time that women had a place in political leadership and did not have to play by the rules set out for them by

men. They wanted to see the leaders going further in representing and empowering women. There was a real desire to see more of these women in politics but also to see more of these women leading in all aspects of life. This is a key finding of this thesis as it speaks to women's want for empowering and empowered women leaders, ones who speak out for women, display empathy and emotion and use the stereotypes placed on women to their advantage to enable them to change the leadership styles in politics. This thesis would propose calling this development of the "New Guard" of leadership Empowered/Empowering Leadership as this speaks to the participants desire to not only see women leaders speaking about being women and their own experience of this but embracing the difference women can bring to leadership. The empowering aspect of the title speaks to the participants praise for women leaders who speak up for other women, who encourage solidarity between women in order to overcome the gendered terrain that so often works against them.

7.10 Exploring Through Examples: "New Guard" Jess Phillips MP

Part of the discussions with the participants involved my asking if there were any WPL they admired or if they had any examples of women they admired. One woman who was mentioned on a number of occasions without prompting was Jess Phillips. Phillips is a Member of Parliament in the United Kingdom for the Labour Party. She was elected in 2015 by the constituency Birmingham, Yardley (UK Parliament 2021). Phillips is a vocal advocate for women's rights, most notably campaigning for reform of Domestic Abuse laws and policies. Phillips elicited strong responses from a number of the participants most notably in Ann who called her a "motherfucking boss", she said of Phillips,

"She is incredible and even, I don't always agree with her on things, I pretty much always do but even when I don't I respect

the hell out of her for the way she views it, she views it in a balanced way, she puts across her point of view...I think she's incredibly and I think she's done so much."

Ann also felt that Phillips would embrace the fact she is a woman, in keeping with the "new guard" of women leaders, there would be no assimilating into the male domain. She said,

"Jess Phillips would be an out and proud female Prime Minister (smiles whilst talking) she would be like "yes I have a uterus" (pause) "I have periods, if you don't like that I don't care"."

A number of the participants could not remember Phillips' name but knew that they admired her leadership style. Gwen, for example, did not name Phillips but asked me who the woman who had run for the Labour leadership had been, when I ventured Phillips' name, she said that was who she had been thinking off, she went on to explain why she admired her saying,

"I do feel she seems to be representative of ordinary women, she doesn't power dress, she doesn't, she doesn't look slobby, she actually looks really presentable, but she doesn't, she doesn't try and be something she's not, she seems very genuine to me, so I'm not talking about the politics, I'm talking about the way she presents herself."

Lavinia could also not remember Phillips' name but noted she had run for the Labour leadership and that "she's got a northern accent". When we confirmed it was Phillips she was discussing, she said she was "so down to Earth and (pause) I mean, she obviously didn't fit the part at the time...but I like listening to her because she takes no prisoners". Lavinia went on to say. "she doesn't have all the airs and graces and the received English...what she is saying makes me sit up and listen". Izzy also admired Phillips' ability to speak out on issues, she said, "she's not afraid to (pause) challenge where she sees (pause) either government policy or circumstances". Zara felt that Phillips was

“very genuine”, and she could relate to her due to her being vocal about not being part of the Westminster elite.

The responses to Phillips show a real affinity to her as a person due to her ability to appear as an “ordinary” woman, the participants who spoke about her felt that she was a genuine person and was also not afraid to challenge when she felt things needed to be challenged. There was also a notable reaction to her appearance and the fact that she did not conform to the conventional political standards, the phrases used such as “down to Earth” or not having “air and graces” speak to her being more of an ordinary woman who was not deemed threatening by the participants. The participants did not mention social class in these discussions, but it is alluded to in their choice of words. Phillips was seen to be less elite than other politicians and this was seen as a positive thing for the women. The responses included an admiration for this element of her leadership style and was one that the women were vocal in admiring. The responses to Phillips highlight a desire in the participants to see more WPL who look, and sound like them. Women who are not afraid to be vocal but who are also not afraid to stand up for women’s rights, this speaks to the participants desire for substantive representation from their WPL. The responses to Phillips speak to the participants admiration for the “new guard” of WPL and can be useful when exploring what women want to see in WPL.

7.11 Conclusion

Discussing women’s experiences of their gender provided a very clear insight into how women move through society and the ways in which they are treated differently for being women. These experiences spanned different working environments and backgrounds but shared similarities in the language that is used but also the feelings that are evoked. There was a strong sense amongst the participants that this is a man’s world and women are Other within it. This

feeling was present whether the women worked in environments dominated by men or women. If women were operating in a highly masculine environment, they were Other and needed to ensure that they either assimilated into the male domain or they were women who adhered to the expected gender norms.

The experiences that women shared help to understand how they respond to WPL. The participants could empathise with women operating in the patriarchal society but even more so when they were operating in a male dominated environment such as politics. There was an affinity, a solidarity, that was present as the participants could understand and imagine what the women in position of political leadership must encounter. This solidarity is important when exploring women's responses to women in political leadership as it is a key connection point which has potential to create bonds between them. When analysing the concept of the "new guard" of women leaders the ability to acknowledge being a woman and discussing everything being a woman entails was something of which the participants wanted to see more. It could be an important aspect of women's political leadership moving forward, the willingness to discuss what being a woman means and not to assimilate into behaving in a more masculine way as if to avoid being seen as a woman. The participants understood the world as a place that is more receptive to men and that there is a "boys' club" to which they are not invited but there was a sense that this could change if women supported one another and created a sense of solidarity and togetherness.

Chapter 8 Thematic Analysis: Responses to Women in Leadership – Discussions on Authority

8.1 Introduction

The topic of leadership was one that created a lot of interesting and nuanced discussions with participants. In this chapter women's responses to leadership will be explored including their feelings on women's leadership abilities, women's leadership in times of crisis during the Covid pandemic, and on the representation of women by women leaders. The discussions highlighted the differing ways in which the participants see women leading and the use of stereotypes as a way to display alternative ways of leading. This chapter will also explore the intersectional nature of responses to women leaders bringing in discussions on race, class, and sexual orientation. Specific women leaders will be used to explore these differing intersections and the responses to them.

8.2 Reflexive Diary

The main topic of this thesis is that of leadership and yet this has been the area of the research that I have found most difficult to analyse and work through. The discussions of leadership with the participants were fascinating in terms of their thoughts on women as leaders and the positive way in which they viewed women's abilities to lead. But I was incredibly conscious of falling into stereotypical language and assumptions. Thinking that women should and can hold these different, more communal traits just because they are women. This felt like it played into the gender stereotyping this project was hoping to add to overcoming. The participants were clear that they felt that women had more to offer than was being shown and that it was time for these traits to be more acceptable on the political stage. This did not, on the whole, come from an essentialist position in terms of gender but felt more like an opportunity to co-opt the often-negative stereotypes of women as more gentle, more caring,

and compassionate and use them to advantage women and to bring a different type of leadership on to the world stage. I will continue to grapple with this section and be forever trying to strike the balance between the words said by the participants and their overall view on WPL but for now I will let the women's voices tell their story. It is my role to show what they said and not try to make it more palatable to myself or the readers of this work.

8.3 Responses: Participants Introduction to WPL

The participants in this research were diverse in their knowledge and interest in politics. Three of the participants have experience of working with the political arena as campaign aides and policy advisors, one participant had held political office. However, the majority of participants were not from the political world with many expressing no interest in politics. It was therefore important to give participants a starting point in terms of our discussions as many expressed apprehensions that they would lack the required knowledge of the topic.

Although I had reassured them that no prior knowledge was required, I wanted to ensure they felt comfortable to speak with me on the topic of WPL. Therefore, I started each interview by showing clips of WPL as an elicitation technique, to give the participants some information on which to begin our discussions, as discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis. Despite some technical difficulties for some of the participants all were able to see a variety of the videos (See Appendix 1.)

Initial responses to the videos showed a level of surprise from a number of the participants. Many of the women commented on how impressed they were with the women they had seen and that they got a real sense of inclusivity from

them. The clips were chosen in order to show case a range of women in terms of age, race, and ethnicity and only provided a very small snapshot of the WPL in the public sphere at present. But the participants still exhibited a sense of surprise that the women were so competent, eloquent, and well equipped. This spoke to the fact that WPL are not as commonly seen as men leaders but also a number of the participants commented on how they had very rarely, if ever, seen unmediated speeches from the women shown. They explained how they had seen elements of the women but through newspapers or clips on television but having been given the opportunity to hear their words unfiltered gave them a different perspective. This reflects the discussion in the literature review chapter which highlights that lack of unmediated content from women in politics and also the lack of hearing women's voices in politics directly (O'Neill and Savigny 2014, O'Neill et al. 2016, Harmer 2021). Chris, one of the women who had experience working within politics and campaigns said,

“and it occurred to me that I think a lot of (pause) very little of the media attention given to female leaders is actually their voiced, it's like most of what we hear is about them or you know discussion about them and how much um of what they have to say do we actually hear.”

The reaction to the clips shown to participants highlighted the lack of engagement many women have with WPL. By showing the clips at the beginning of each interview is opened up discussions on the topic and allowed them to respond to these particular WPL as a way start conversations that developed into more general responses to women in leadership and also encouraged them to draw on their own experiences with women leaders.

8.4 Responses: Women and a “New” Type of Leadership

A dominant theme that emerged in the data and through the conversations with participants was that women have the ability to bring a “new” type of

leadership to politics and to other areas of life. Many of the women participants are or have held leadership positions, this included within corporate business, nursing, teaching and the charity sector. Many of the participants spoke of the way in which they lead their teams and how they felt more and more that using the attributes they had as women gave them the ability to lead in a different way to their male counterparts. In our discussions the participants also spoke of specific WPL who they felt also exemplified this “new” type of leadership and the difference they felt it did and could make to situations.

The participants who held positions of leadership within corporate businesses spoke extensively on their own experiences with leadership and a number also spoke of how their company had invested a lot of resources into encouraging the women leaders. It became evident that holding positions of leadership as women was a very important topic and that the women spent a lot of energy on improving their leadership skills. There was a trend of ensuring that they as women leaders were developing a style that worked for them and that, in their minds, highlighted their abilities as a woman, as opposed to assimilated into a more traditional style. There was a resistance to assimilated into a “male” style of leadership, as discussed in the Chapter 7. For now, the “new” type of leadership will be explored through the women’s own reflections on their leadership and the leadership of women in politics.

Maggie, who holds a leadership position in a corporate business explained how she felt her being a woman gave her a specific ability to lead, she said,

“I tend to lead through (pause) connection with people and um empowering and I think one of the things I learnt through women in leadership was the power of story-telling and being authentic and being able to connect in a more profound way by really telling your own story and to do that means that all the emotions that um you know, I’m not saying kind of crying at

work every day, that's not what I mean but that kind of, it has to come from a genuine place.”

Sally in a previous role had been in a position of leadership in a national corporate business and she spoke of how she felt that in her experience women displayed different qualities that allowed them to work in a more communal way, she said,

“I, I feel from my heart, the difference in, and of course you can't generalise, but in the main women will see the room (pause) they will, and men do this as well. But I do think women read the room in a more, in a more speedy way um I think they can read the individuals quite quickly, as well as to needs and pressures, so I do think from what I've observed in both areas, there is a difference.”

Sally's desire to not fall into stereotypical assumptions is clear in her inclusions of caveats and the phrase “of course you can't generalise” but she is clear to explain that this is her experience of being a woman in leadership and also working with other women leaders. Sally continued by explaining how she felt that this ability to “read the room” and change accordingly was displayed by Jacinda Ardern when she was meeting families after the Christchurch terrorist attacks. Sally felt that Ardern was displaying this type of leadership, that allowed her to behave in a very empathetic and caring way and that brought a different level of comfort to the families she spoke with.

Many of the women who were in the corporate world also felt that the way in which women make decisions offered an alternative to the typical model of leadership. Claire spoke of a “female approach” to decision making which, in her experience, was a slower decision process that took into account the long-term impacts of a decision. Much of the way in which the participants spoke about this leadership echoed the literature on transformational leadership, the leader's ability to transform the environment they were operating in and instil

a sense of belief in their followers. Campus (2013) writes of the links made between women in leadership and transformational leadership. The participants responses reflect this link and build on it, as discussed in Chapter 7. Sian, a leader in her role in corporate business spoke of what she felt was a difference between how men and women making decisions, she said,

“I also think that men are much better at (pause) um I’m kind of making a decision about something at the moment but I’m ‘well do I , don’t I, I’ll just wait and see if that happened and then I’ll decide’ so it take me a long time but I feel like I man an informed decision at the end because I’ve thought through what if this happens, what if that happens.”

Marsha spoke of how she was always aware that women do not have “physical power” as men do and that this meant that as a woman, she had to navigate situations differently. She said,

“I’m hyper conscious of the fact that as women we don’t have physical power, I’m *incredibly* conscious of that, that I am always aware of my inferior physical power and that therefore I’m always having to think more deeply about how can I use my brain to make sure this situation goes the way that we want.”

Lavinia also spoke of using her “smarts” when I asked her how she navigates being a leader in her role, she said that as Black woman she has to use her “smarts” in order to over come gender and race prejudice. She said,

“just show them you’re smart (pause) they think that you’re, I’m not saying you have to be smart to get your way just don’t let them manoeuvre and manipulate because they think, you know, their sex is um dominant.”

Lavinia and Marsha’s words speak to this idea of women leaders having to be more conscious of the way in which they operate. As discussed in the literature review, existing research in WPL clearly shows that women are perceived as

being incongruent or unequipped for leadership when leadership is thought of in the traditional, masculine terms (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993, Aldering and Van Der Pas 2018, Powell 2011). Therefore, women who hold positions of leadership need to navigate this terrain or the “labyrinth” as Carli and Eagly (2016) call it. The participants who spoke of their tactics when faced with the labyrinth highlight how difficult it can be to be a woman in leadership, especially when you are a woman of colour in leadership. It requires conscious thought and decision -making on how best to operate in the environment. Dayna felt overwhelmed when thinking about how WPL navigate the gendered environments they inhabit, she empathised with them in how they must be

“juggling ‘how much do I want to be a hard ass, how much do I want to be, to let my emotions show and what does all that have to do with me being a woman’, you’re constantly, you must be constantly cycling around and round in your head about how to behave in this space where there have not been many other women around you in that space.”

Kelly felt that women in positions of leadership are held to different standards to men but that this did in fact mean that they were better when they reached leadership roles. She said that in her own experience men could make a pitch or speak in an interview without evidence to back up their experiences whereas women had to do the opposite; women had to show that they were overqualified for the position, she said, “men can do the talk, but women have to do the talk and do the walk, they have to do that really”.

For the vast majority of the participants Jacinda Ardern encompassed this new type of leadership. A leadership that focuses on empathy as a strength and women’s stereotypical traits as an advantage not a disadvantage. Sian summed up Ardern’s style by saying,

“I think she just does a grand, great job, she’s got gravitas, she’s got empathy, she’s got that executive presence, she’s just got everything going for her.”

Danni spoke of Jacinda Ardern in terms of her decision making and said,

“I kind of find myself looking at how expressive she is, like, not that she’s over expressive but it’s kind of with conviction, with passion...when she’s comforting families it’s (pause) it’s just apparent she loves her country, and she cares about her people um and it made me a bit teary (laughs) watching her um (pause).”

The Squad also received a lot of praise from the participants in terms of their leadership style. Izzy explained how she felt their press conference in which they reacted to President Trump’s racist tweets about them displayed a different type of leadership for women. She said,

“I think sometimes as women you’re expected to kind of, you know, you’re expected to, there’s an idea that women are emotional, and you’re expected to *not* be emotional because how else can you (laughs) achieve anything (said with sarcasm) um so actually um I think to see women be, not necessarily comfortable but women being comfortable expressing emotion um (pause) is a good thing.”

Peggy spoke of The Squad and how their being four WPL standing together was an example of how important it is that women support one another, she said,

“I’m glad that there’s the four of them there because they’ve got support, I think on your own I think you would be hard press to, to keep going but perhaps the four of them might support each other and gain confidence and support.”

She continued by saying how important it is for women to stand together,

“I think you need that support and I, I (pause) I think it’s like everything isn’t it, if you feel like people are behind you um, you’re more willing to stand up for people.”

Danni felt that The Squad represented a new type of leadership, she said

“I like that they’re kind of like (pause) a new generation, kind of giving a new perspective on things and, and standing up for what they believe in and calling people out because it’s, it’s (pause) you look at them and you think you’re very brave doing this.”

When Tamsin talked about Jacinda Ardern and her leadership style, she articulated an idea that felt as if it could have spoken for all the participants, she explained how Ardern’s leadership has had the potential to take her from beyond being an example of the “new” type of leadership that WPL can bring to the world stage but that this could be a way to lead that went beyond gender. She said,

“I feel like she’s one of those politicians who’s managed to almost (pause) um transcend her gender a bit because she’s very well respected in, from my perspective any way by people from both genders, and I feel like for women, women automatically related to women, men automatically related to men as a general rule, a horrible but general rule and I feel like Jacinda is one of those leaders who (pause)...has really shown strong leadership and (pause) but she’s managed to do it in a very clever way ... so I think it’s really interesting (pause) yeah, I think it’s really interesting how well, she’s gone across both genders.”

The leadership displayed by women, as discussed by the participants, lends itself to a building on the transformational leadership literature. This will be discussed in Chapter 7 in which a model for leadership building on the notion of transformational leaders will be laid out.

8.5 Responses: WPL and Covid-19

The Covid-10 pandemic began at the start of the data collection point for this research and many of the interviews were conducted during the various stages of lockdown in the United Kingdom. Therefore, the topic of leadership during the crisis was present in many of the participants minds and came through in our conversations. The coverage of WPL during the Covid-19 pandemic has also been largely focused on the way in which countries with women leaders have managed the crisis more effectively. This has largely been centred on Jacinda Ardern in New Zealand but has also extended to Taiwan's Tsai Ing-wen, Nicola Sturgeon in Scotland and to a lesser extent Angela Merkel in Germany.

Research conducted on the handling of the pandemic by WPL has largely indicated that the praise being given to them is misleading. Piscopo (2020) in her analysis of countries with women leaders argued that it the ability to handle the pandemic was influenced more by the "capacity" of the state rather than the leadership skills of the office holder. Piscopo (2020) laid out 6 factors that influence "capacity", she lists them as

"transparent laws with predictable enforcement, impartial public administrations, trust in government, perceived corruption, social spending, and overall life satisfaction." (p.954)

Regardless of the data to suggest a good handling of the pandemic, the perception from the participants was that the women leaders they had witness during the crisis had shown excellent leadership skills and provided a good leader for their people.

When Claire spoke of WPL and Covid-19 she likened it to the way in which she and women colleague at her work are treated. She said that they are often criticised for not making a hasty decision and that this often leads to them being labelled as "indecisive" but as Claire explained,

“You can get criticised for being, like not being decisive or not being able to make a decision. It’s like “well no, my decision is to (pause) do the right thing, you know do the right quality of work, that doesn’t mean I’m not decisive, I’m not able to make a decision.”

Claire felt that the way in which women leaders were handling the pandemic differently spoke to this more thoughtful process, the desire to “do the right thing”. Lavinia also felt that women leaders during Covid have been “clearer in their decision making” and have owned their decision more than, in her mind, Prime Minister Boris Johnson had in the UK. She felt that the women leaders were standing up as individuals and taking the lead.

Sarah felt that a lack of WPL in the UK, in England especially during the pandemic has had a detrimental effect on women’s experiences during it. She said,

“Well look at things, even the decisions around, you know, the easing of lockdown and the decision that have been made around priorities which have been economically drive rather than so on, enabling like aspects of life that are important to the family or are important to women, it’s just been, yeah made by a group of men around the table (pause) we don’t really have a clue (laughs) how life really works.”

Sarah’s perspective touches on the importance of representation of women in leadership during such a time as the global pandemic, she highlights what happens when women are perceived to be shut out of the decision making. This theme of representation will be explored in more depth later in this chapter.

Sally spoke of Jacinda Ardern’s leadership during the pandemic calling it “phenomenal” and stated that she has shown “great leadership”. Sharon said Ardern has approached the pandemic in a “thoughtful way”. Sarah called her handling of the pandemic “socially responsible”

Sian viewed Ardern in a different way to many of the other participants, she said,

“I think she rules New Zealand with an iron rod and, and we’ve seen that through the whole Covid thing where she has brought in rules and said right this is it, this is what’s happening.”

Through Sian’s response to Ardern a different view of women leaders can be explored, the idea that women leaders can be strong, assertive, and authoritative. Gender stereotypes keep women from displaying such traits and the repercussions for showing such traits have often been accusations of being “unfeminine” or being too angry and “masculine”. Ardern through the Covid pandemic has displayed strong, agentic leadership traits in her implementation of strict lockdowns which contained the virus in her country. Through the lens of the crisis the rules for WPL may alter to allow for these more agentic traits to be displayed without incurring the usual penalties a women leader would face. Johnson and Williams (2020) argue that WPL have been able to display “female protectionism” and draw on the more stereotypical attributes associated with women, particularly in terms of motherly traits (p.943). They argue that the pandemic has given women leaders the space to be able to show caring leadership which they liken to a mother taking care of a sick child.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also given WPL an opportunity to be seen in a different light. Liz spoke of Nicola Sturgeon and how her opinion of her has changed through the crisis, she said,

“I never liked Nicola Sturgeon but (pause) my goodness, she has certainly shown her, she has been brilliant, I, I applaud her with what she’s done there um and my whole opinion of her has changed because she has, she has shown how strong she is and how sensible she’s been with all this.”

Danni echoes Liz's perspective when she said,

"I like, I like how strong and authoritative she is, but she always does have that empathy, but it just doesn't (pause) whirlwind around her, she thinks before she speaks, she's very careful and very practical."

Danni also spoke of how she had not always agreed with Sturgeon in the past but that through her handling of the Covid-19 crisis she had found this new respect for her. Sturgeon can be seen as an example of a women leader who has evolved during a crisis, and how through the extra demands placed upon her as a leader so has she been able to display different leadership skills which have proved popular with women watching her.

Harriet, who has worked within the political arena felt that the positive coverage that women leaders have been receiving during the pandemic had the potential to be positive for women in all areas of life. She said,

"the women, as we've seen with Corona Virus are, are doing a much better job of leading in crisis than the men are doing ah, and I would like to see that translated into other, more ordinary ways of living than having to have a crisis like Corona virus to trigger the awareness of that and it should be beyond politics."

Maggie shared a story of how she had seen a social media post about a number of WPL and their responses to Covid-19. She explained how it was praising them for their leadership. When she finished this story Maggie shrugged her shoulders, laughed, and said, "it didn't even need to say anything right". She was implying that she did not think it was a surprise that the women had done well, women being good leaders was not a new piece of information for her. A number of the participants echoed this sentiment, that it was not a surprise to them to see women excelling in leadership at difficult times. As Peggy said of having women in positions of leadership,

“we’ve managed our households haven’t we, all these years so we can certainly manage a country and balance the books and things like that, you know, cause you, we’ve done it, we’ve done it all our lives.”

Fridkin (1996) argues there are communal and agentic issues and that it is more acceptable by the electorate for women in politics to campaign on communal issues. O’Brien (2015) found that this preference for women to handle communal issues was also true in the context of Cabinet positions and that women were chosen for portfolios that concerned communal issues like Education and Healthcare. Women are not chosen in great number for Cabinet portfolios that manage agentic issues such as Finance, Foreign Policy and Defence. With this in mind it is important to note that the Covid-19 pandemic can be seen as a ‘communal crisis’ in that it impacts health, families, and society. It could therefore be argued that women leaders are viewed more favourably in handling the Covid-19 pandemic as it fits within the acceptable boundaries of the communal issues. If the crisis has been related to war or national security, it may have been that the women leaders were not held in such high regard as they would have been seen as incongruent with the issues requiring leadership.

Ryan and Haslam (2007) also found that when companies are in crisis the attributes that are most valuable are those that are strongly associated with women. They propose that there is a “think-crisis-think-female” mentality and that the attributes that are needed when there is a crisis include “being understanding, helpful, sophisticated, aware of feelings of others, initiative and cheerful” (p,553). The response to WPL during Covid by the participants did include praise for these attributes. Gwen felt very strongly that Ardern’s ability to be positive during her Covid announcements, especially when she spoke to the children at Easter showed what a good and kind leader she was. A number of participants felt that Nicola Sturgeon’s ability to think about others and to understand the impact of the crisis on families showed her in a different way

that prior to the crisis. And, importantly, the WPL who showed empathy during the crisis were praised by the participants. It could be argued that the women leaders were able to display these attributes because of their gender and that there is a greater space for them to do so in society. It is more acceptable societally for a woman to speak in empathetic terms and to embrace the communal aspects of the crisis.

8.6 Responses: Stereotypes of Women as an Advantage

A key theme that emerged over the course of data collection was of a trepidation from the participants of falling into stereotyping women in the same way that they had expressed annoyance at being stereotyped in their own lives. When talking about WPL participants used a lot of caveats and qualifying statements to ensure that they were not seen to be stereotyping women and the expectations of how they would behave. This became a very interesting part of the research and one that has required a lot of analysis and consideration. What became clear from speaking with the participants was the fact that women have been socialised in a certain way, especially in Western societies and thus it is undeniable that expectations exist for the attributes and qualities that women in positions of political leadership will have. However, the participants were keen to suggest that in fact these stereotypical ideas of women could be used as an advantage for women leaders, it could allow them to exhibit characteristics and behaviours that are not typically seen in political leadership. As women have a greater allowance for showing such attributes it could bring a different, more empathetic, and thoughtful leadership to the political arena.

Claire felt that women do have different abilities to men, that they have a fundamentally different way of handling situations, she said when speaking of her own experiences in a male dominated workspace,

“I think just by virtue of the fact that men and women are different, we think differently about things um I think in general sometimes men can be quite competitive with each other um they have a different type of emotional intelligence and (pause) sometimes don't have the patience to deal with certain situations that, that women (pause) have more of a natural instinct for.”

When Chris talked about stereotypes of women she spoke of the more spiritual aspects of women's beings and that she felt this was a key power that women had. She also expressed that she felt this was a something that could be harnessed for women's benefit, she said,

“there's a really powerful form of femininity which I think a lot of the reason the patriarchy started is that it's so powerful that men are terrified shitless of it like (pause) I'll go on the record and say that and it's the kind of compassionate um (pause) gentle kind of like not afraid to talk about feelings and dig in and get into the deep stuff and go like you know, god the world is challenging and it hurts, let's be vulnerable here but stand in that and go and work together and reach across to each other and there's a shortage of that kind of energy.”

Chris spoke of an “energy” and whilst she is clear during the interview that she does not feel that femininity is the sole domain of women she acknowledges that women have a great capacity within society to show such energy. She also argues that there should be more of this in political leadership and more of an embrace of this type of leadership. Ann echoed this when she explained her wish for WPL to embrace their gender more openly saying,

“we need a female leader that's like ‘I am proud (claps for emphasis) to be a woman and I and proud (claps for emphasis) to be the Prime Minister and I am proud to be capable of doing my job and all of those things can co-exist.”

Gwen also spoke of this desire to see WPL not shying away from their gender, she said of the leaders,

“they need to behave in way that is natural to a woman, for a woman to behave I suppose that’s what I’m saying, I don’t know what that is, I hope I’m not being sexist there.”

Gwen speaks to an unknowing of what being woman is but that she felt that women should be allowed to behave in a way that did not emulate male leadership. She is mindful of being “sexist” and this came up in a lot of the conversations with participants. Valerie also echoed this thought when she said

“I’m not saying all of us but the majority of us have a natural ability to nurture and to care and to you know, and I think that our society is lacking that, absolutely lacking that, so think that there is definitely a place for female in politics.”

The theme of women having specific attributes such as nurturing behaviours or empathy, was present with many of the participants. There was also a desire to remember that women are not one homogenous group but that there are many different types of women. This being said it was clear from the themes present in the interviews that the participants did believe women as a whole, regardless of the differing intersects of identity had different abilities to men.

Beatrice, a woman who has held positions of leadership and who spoke extensively on how she felt that women were in a much better position at present and that this need to be capitalised on my companies and organisations explained how she felt this moment in time was one that could be used to women’s advantages. She said,

“it’s kind of good to be a woman I mean men can do this too (pause) ah but, but women (pause) have (pause) got a , there’s

a stereotype that women are empathetic and men aren't which is a nonsense really, I know some very strong women (laughs) and some (pause) very empathetic men on way and another so I'm not up for stereotypes but um I think, I think, I think there is, I think there is a moment now to be captured."

8.7 Responses: Women of Colour in Political Leadership.

Whilst there were clear, overarching themes that linked the responses the participants had that encompassed differing ages, classes, races, and lived experiences it is an important aspect of the research that there are also differences in the experiences of the participants. There are differences in the responses to women of colour and an acknowledgement from a lot of the participants that there are differing factors in place for WPL of colour. In this section women of colour in positions of leadership will be discussed. The experiences and responses from participants who were women of colour will also be foregrounded. Feminist discourse has a deep history of elevating the experience of white, privileged, cis women. As Valerie Bryson (2021) writes,

"there is still a tendency for women who are highly placed in terms of class-based and race-based inequalities to be more readily heard and to treat their experiences as central" (p.31).

Holding this in mind it is important to address the fact that WPL of colour face differing challenges to women and meet at the intersect of race and gender. At the same time, I as the researcher am a white woman and so it is important that instead of speaking for the women participants of colour, their words are centred and paramount in this discussion. In the elicitation videos that were used at the beginning of each interview a clip of *The Squad* was shown in which the four women of colour members of the House of Representatives in the United States spoke about their experiences of racism from the then President Donald Trump. The participants were also shown a video of Diane

Abbott MP, the first Black woman to become a Member of the UK Parliament (See Appendix 1). The responses to WPL of colour will now be explored, drawing on the participants words, focusing heavily on the experiences of the women of colour who took part in the research.

Lavinia, a Black woman in her early 60s, holds a position of leadership. When I asked her if she had ever experienced the impact of gender stereotypes, she explained that for her gender was a secondary barrier and that race was the predominant issue she faced. She said,

“mine is more racial (pause) so um that trumps being a woman (pause) my experience of negativity of men and women has been to do with race and um (pause) and so, and unconscious bias, where people are bias about who you are and doubt that you can do it because of your colour.”

She told me how when she and a white colleague were often greeted by member of the public her white colleague was assumed to be the more senior member of staff. She explained how they had developed a “little act” to perform when this mistake was made in order to show the person that she, the Black woman, was the person in charge.

Ebele, a Black woman in her thirties explained how isolating it can be as woman of colour in organisations where there is a lack of representation. She reflected on her own career history and how she had always been aware of being one of very few women of colour in the places she worked. She said

“I think when you’re always the only person like yourself in the room (pause) it can be challenging I guess, to navigate (pause) like or to feel like you have (pause) allies who understand you.”

Ebele also explained how not seeing other Black women in positions of leadership or on the executive boards made her question whether she would be welcomed as a leader there.

8.8 Exploring Through Example: Diane Abbott

Diane Abbott became the first Black woman to be elected as a Member of Parliament in the United Kingdom in 1987. She has held the positions in the Labour Cabinet of Shadow Secretary for International Development, Shadow Secretary of Health and most recently as Shadow Home Secretary. She has faced an unprecedented level of media scrutiny and also received a third of all abuse that is levelled at Members of the UK Parliament (Palmer 2020) Abbott has become one of the most prominent WPL in the United Kingdom.

Gabriel (2017) argues that Abbott is often “othered” due to her race in media coverage and in discussion on her. For this work it is not the intention of the researcher to other Abbott but to acknowledge that the challenges faced by Abbott as a Black women in politics are due to her race and her gender. The responses to her are therefore influenced by the fact that she is a Black woman in an environment that is predominantly inhabited by white men. Through this discussion the research will highlight the responses to Abbott and explore how her gender and race influence the way in which participants respond to her. This will help explore the way in which women respond to women of colour in positions of political leadership.

The responses that were exhibited by the participants who were women of colour differed widely, for example for one of the participants she was likened to a family member whereas for others she was not mentioned and for another her name prompted the participants to hide from the researcher behind her hands. As the first Black woman MP Abbott has become an important symbol to many people but she has also become the most prominent Black women politician in the United Kingdom. This has led to her becoming a figure head for Black women and subject to the idealisation and denigration that goes

along with being such a prominent figure. However, the feelings expressed by the participants of colour highlighted some fascinating aspects of Abbott and the role she plays for many women.

Valerie, is a Black woman in her forties, and she was very expressive when discussing Diane Abbott;

“I have a (pause) just a type of (pause) I respect her, I love her, I’ve seen her (pause) put in where there’s not a lot of women of colour, like she has (pause) she’s been strong.”

She went on to say

“I feel like she’s a member of my family and that she’s trying her hardest and that she deserves to be supported and that she’s always being attacked and I don’t like that because she’s an elder, she’s older than me, she’s like my aunt, great-aunt even and you know she’s doing the best that she can with what she has and that’s not been a lot of support, especially from the Black community.”

Valerie displayed powerful identification with Abbott and was very expressive when she spoke about her. She also displayed a protective element in her response and that she felt that Black community should be supporting her more. During Valerie’s interview she spoke extensively about how important connections with women were and specifically how important the older women in her family were to her. Her feelings towards Abbott during the interview mirrored the way she felt about her the older women in her own family. She told me “the women in my life have a huge [influence]”. She also spoke of how important having older women in her life was, she said

“I didn’t have an older sister so for me I’ve, you know, I felt that loss so I, as I’ve grown older I’ve created sister circle to have

many different friendship groups as that was necessary to have an older sister because I longed to have an older sister.”

Valerie’s longing to have an older sister and her desire to have women she can look up to can help to understand her love for Abbott. Abbott is an older Black woman who has the wisdom and experience that Valerie hold as so important.

Kelly, a Black woman in her sixties, was surprised by seeing Abbott speaking in Parliament in the clip that was shown at the beginning of the interviews, she said, “I was more positively inclined towards Diane Abbott than I normally am (laughs)”.

When asked if she was not normally a supporter of Abbott Kelly replied

“No, not really, I haven’t been for quite a long time, I think it’s more (pause) well, (pause), yeah I just find (pause) she’s terribly regal (laughs).”

Kelly’s conflict in her response to Abbott is evident here in her speech pattern, she pauses a number of times and don’t not finish her sentences before moving on. She uses laughter at times of apparent discomfort throughout her interview and laughed when speaking of Abbott. This discomfort was also present with Lavinia. When Lavinia discussed her feelings toward Abbott, she expressed a real reluctance to do so. When I asked why she didn’t want to talk about her she held her head in her hands and asked me to confirm again that her words would be made confidential. After assurances that they would be she spoke about how she did not like Abbott’s style of dress and felt that she could present herself in way that would help her to be criticised less. Lavinia’s response echoes Brown and Lemi’s (2021) findings that appearance for Black women politicians has a greater significance and can be a cause for greater scrutiny and criticism. She went on to explain why she felt that way saying,

“she’s, you’re being judged on all fronts, first thing, if you and I walked in a room people would notice me first (pause) and so she’s being judged on race, she’s being judged on gender, she’s being judged on appearance, she’s being judged on intellectual ability um her political allegiance, there’s a whole load of things, you’ve got to make it as perfect as you can because we’ve got a lot of challenges.”

Both Lavinia and Kelly when asked to elaborate on their initial responses to Abbott spoke about her appearance, Kelly called her “regal” whereas Lavinia spoke of her fashion styles. This response is consistent with research into Black women’s responses to Black women politicians in that there is a focus on appearance and style choices (Brown and Banks 2014, Brown and Lemi 2021). Lavinia, therefore, may have responded with concern for Abbott’s appearance because she highlights the awareness of the extra pressures placed on Black women politicians. As she said, “you’ve got to make it as perfect as you can”. She expresses a desire to help Abbott with her style, this echoes Valerie’s desire to look after Abbott and her assertion that she “deserves our support”.

Two of the younger participants who are women of colour did not feel the same strong responses to Abbott as the older participants did. Wanda, a Black woman in her thirties was almost dismissive of Abbott when asked how she felt about her, she kept it to the video she was shown and said, “she’s talking to her peers, I know, she knows it’s going to be broadcast”. Wanda expressed the feeling here that Abbott is being a politician and that she knows she is going to be broadcast and so is behaving how a politician would be expected to. She does not comment on her any further than this throughout the rest of the interview. Ebele again did not mention Abbott in our discussions showing that she had not registered with her as a person who has elicited a strong response.

The media influence on the perceptions of Diane Abbott were very clear throughout discussion with all participants. The clip that was shown to participants was of Abbott in the House of Commons in the UK Parliament. She was talking at the dispatch box as the then Shadow Home Secretary. One key theme in the responses to Abbott was that the participants were aware of the negative press she receives and how she is not normally shown in the media talking about policy in the setting in which she was in the clip they saw. Sarah articulated this media coverage and the damaging impact it has had when she said,

“she’s had so much assassinations publicly um when actually (pause) she’s got, her, her, her career, her CV and what she’s done politically is (pause) really important but I don’t know whether she’s, she’s been unlucky because of her um, she’s a woman of colour, her age (pause) and she’s female in a white, male dominated political environment in the UK, she’s (pause) and she’s Labour (laughs) you know, she really, you know, she ticks all the boxes for them to be really (pause) awful and derogatory to her.”

Danni also spoke of the difficult position Abbott is in, she said

“she’s a complex one for me to kind of (pause) feel about because (pause) on one hand I know she is an intelligent woman, she went to Cambridge and in a time when very few Black women attended Cambridge so she’s smart, we know that but I feel like sometimes (pause) she either doesn’t think before she speaks or she (pause) makes mistakes which is human nature but then everyone just jumps on and penalises her for it...they’re using her mistake as combat.”

The impact of the media was shown in the fact that a number of participants made reference to a number of stories that had been written in the UK on

Abbott's behaviour, one being her having been seen drinking alcohol on the Underground and also having been seen in public wearing two different shows. These two news stories were raised by a number of the participants without prompting. It showed how she was thought of in the first instance by a number of the women interviewed. Karoline said on the matter it was like she "couldn't dress herself" and this has the potential to have a negative impact on all other women and be used as an example of why they were not fit for public office. Tamsin articulated the almost impossible situation Abbott is in saying

"I feel really sorry for her and (pause) and I feel like she has been judged, however empassionately she, she speaks about things, she cannot escape (pause) the awful like (pause) swirl and rumour mill that came up around her and, and it's like a stigma that she can't really get rid of."

There was also an element of surprise by some of the participants about how they responded to her given that they do not usually hear her speaking in Parliament. Seeing her speak in this setting gave some participants a different perception of Abbott. Gwen said,

"Abbott is ridiculed in the press, particularly recently she has been ridiculed, was wearing odd shoes one day and you know people really mock her, but that clip made me feel, I thought she was very measured, she seems quite sincere, she was, she wasn't ranting, it was just a measured, asking the question."

Maggie said

"I have to say that I'm not normally a big fan of Diane Abbott but um (pause) but I did think there that she was actually quite coherent."

She went on to say that she felt the treatment of Abbott was different in nature because she was woman. She talked about an incident that had occurred when Abbott was Shadow Home Secretary and had mis-spoke when

discussing data numbers. Maggie said people “were pretty mean” to her when this happened and went on to say, “I think if a guy had done it, they probably wouldn’t have pilloried him quite as much”. Maggie highlights the different treatment that women face from the media when they hold political office. She did not mention Abbott’s race in this, nor did many of the other white participants who spoke about Abbott. This could highlight the lack of awareness that many white women have of the different treatment women in colour receive.

Zara also felt that seeing Abbott speaking in Parliament highlighted how different the coverage of her normally is, she said

“It’s interesting as well hearing Diane Abbott talk like that and then she gets (pause) thinking about the wider way she’s spoken about in the media, she gets (pause) vilified.”

Zara went on to express why she felt the media coverage of Abbott was usually different to her speech in the House of Commons, she explained,

“I’ve never even seen that bit of her speech before but I had seen photos of her outside a polling station wearing two shoes that didn’t match so (pause) I mean that tells you about what the media wants to promote, they don’t want to promote helping people, they want to promote (pause) “look at this woman she’s stupid”, it’s like actually she says really good things when she’s actually doing her job.”

Marsha was vocal in her belief that the media responses to Abbott were due to her race, she said Abbott may,

“say some things that you’re like ‘ok maybe that wasn’t the best way that you could say that’ but you think, she gets targeted, and I think that she gets disproportionality targeted for saying dumb, for saying things that are, that come across as silly because she’s a Black woman.”

The responses to Diane Abbott show how, on the whole, the participants are aware of the fact that she receives different coverage by the media than other WPL. Whether directly or indirectly many of the participants are also aware that this is because she is a Black woman and so the rules for her are different to those applied to white WPL. Abbott has been a pioneer for Black women in the United Kingdom and has been a trailblazer for women of colour however with this has come an enormous level of scrutiny and negativity. The participants on the whole were aware of this and could also see that their opinions of Abbott have been influenced by the media and having a chance to see her in a less mediated frame and in her role as MP gave them an opportunity to see her in a different, more positive light.

8.9 Drivers: Women's Own Experiences as Women Leaders

A key narrative that ran through many of the discussions with participants was that of exploring their responses to women leaders in their lives. I asked them to talk to me about women role models or their own experiences of women leaders and this provoked many in depth stories about women leaders they have been led by. The stories brought forth displays of emotion with a number of the participants and allowed them to express their depth of feeling towards some of the women leaders in their own lives. To explore the responses to women leaders and the drivers behind them understanding women's personal experiences with women leaders can be an important part of this exploration (RQ1, RQ2, RQ4). The narratives on leadership also incorporated participants stories of their experiences of leading as women too. From a psychosocial point of view the experiences of the participants are informing how they feel about women in leadership.

When the participants talked about the women leaders in their lives a key area in which they felt the leaders stood out was in their ability to connect with

people, show empathy to the people they lead and also display and practise emotion as a strength. The admiration mirrors many of the feelings the participants felt WPL possessed and showed and also the way in which the WPL were different from their male counterparts.

Ann talked about her department manager in the academic institution in which she works. She explained that the woman was a very experienced academic and had recently come to role. Ann called her a “really, really strong woman” and relayed a story of being in a meeting in which this woman was being challenged by male colleagues in a way that Ann felt would not have been levelled at a man. The admiration for the leader came in seeing how she dealt with this confrontation and questioning, Ann said,

“I’ve seen her have difficulties in meetings with a man, if she’s disagreeing with him and again I’ve never, ever seen a male member of staff say ‘I’m a man so I know more than you’ but sometimes there’s an undercurrent of ‘well I just don’t agree’ and she’s like well ‘oh’, she’s so lovely, she’s like ‘well I take that on board, I listen to what you’re saying.’”

Ann admired the leader because of the way she navigated the challenges from men, which Ann felt were gendered challenges. This proved to be inspirational for Ann and showed her a way to navigate such situations should she find herself in a similar one.

Billy explained that her women managers had “been more supportive”. She felt that her current manager was the best one she had worked for saying,

“she’s so, she’s really maternal, she’s really caring. She cares about you, not only as a person, but also the job, it’s, it’s nice that if I have an issue, I can go to her if I need to.”

Izzy also felt that her woman manager was “approachable” and so this helped her in her working environment, she did explain that it might just be a personality issue but then explained that she felt “woman to woman” she would be more able to discuss issues with her. Sharon explained how during her career she had found working for women leaders had allowed for more of a friendship to build than with her male leaders. She did question whether, had she been a man, she would have been closer with her male bosses. Billy, Izzy, and Sharon all expressed a slight conflict when talking about how they felt about their own women leaders. Their speech patterns became more broken, and they left more sentences unfinished signally this conflict and a possible policing of the statement they made. This appeared to be because they did not want to make gendered assumptions and also wanted to appear fair. Sharon caveated her thoughts with telling me that she didn’t think women bosses were better than men, Izzy also said it “a difficult one to know for sure” when discussing whether women in leaders were able to display caring attributes more than men. Billy also questioned her assertion that she had had more supportive experiences with her woman bosses, she even went through the male bosses she had had to confirm her feelings. This conflict showed how the participants wanted to be fair in their assertions and also how they were at times policing their responses to ensure that they were not being stereotypical. At the end of each other internal struggles Izzy, Billy, and Sharon did conclude that they had had better experiences when they had had women managers.

Sally felt that she had had experiences of inspirational women leaders in her role within the corporate world and also in the charity sector. Speaking of a women leader in her corporate role she said,

“you felt you would follow them to the ends of the Earth, you trusted them, they were dynamic, they were respected by the outside world, there’s something about that as well, about a leader being, you know, they’re respected by other organisations and customers in the outside world as well.”

Danni spoke about this feeling on inspiration for women leaders in her corporate organisation, she spoke of one specifically. She said, “you almost have aspiration goals written and look at her”. Danni explained how the leader was inspirational through her ability to motivate and help Danni navigate her career. She said of the leader,

“she’s an incredibly intelligent and smart woman um (pause) she’s not actually that emotional, she’s very matter of fact, let’s, how can we through a solution at things, let’s talk through this, you know, let’s devise a plan and a strategy and I quite like that because I can get caught up in emotion.”

Danni and Ann’s responses to their women leaders shows that when they talk about emotion this includes displaying calmness and strength in order to inspire others. This echoes some of the participants discussions of Jacinda Ardern especially in relation to the Christchurch terrorist attacks. As Tamsin pointed out Ardern did not display emotion in the form of tears but more focused on displaying calmness and strength in order to empower those people grieving around her and to show them that she was in charge. This calming effect is seen in Danni’s description of how the woman leader in her life calms her when she feels she is in a “whirlwind” and the leader helps her to remain calm and find solutions. Claire and Sian also speak of this calmness at a time of high tension or emotion and how they feel this is a strength that women can bring to leadership that may not always be present in the more agentic, traditionally masculine form of leadership.

The theme of using connection and displaying emotion was key to the positive experiences the participants recounted when talking about their own experiences of leadership. Maggie talked at length about her experiences as a leader in the corporate world. She explained that she felt her ability to connect with the people she led gave her a better way to lead, she explained

“I am a relatively high EQ [emotional intelligence] person um I’m dyslexic um and I think I um, you know, one of my dyslexic strengths if you like it, is a relatively high EQ so I tend to lead through (pause) connection with people and um empowering and I think one of the things I learnt through women in leadership was the power of storytelling and being authentic and being able to connect in a more profound way by really telling your own story.”

The way that Maggie uses connection as a way to lead, also mirrors the praise that participants had for the WPL who show empathy and connection in their leadership. This is particularly true of the way that participants spoke of Jacinda Ardern and her ability to connect with people at difficult times. This form of leadership uses empathy in order to connect with people and thus provide a more emotional intelligent form of leaders. This links to the theory of Empowered/Empowering Leadership proposed in Chapter 7 in that it incorporates connection and strength between women.

Karoline also spoke of how she leads her team in her role as a leader, she said

“I want to be inspiring more than I want to be a role model if that makes sense (pause) um and I think I (pause) am aware of um (pause) it’s basically giving feedback to people and making sure you do it in the right way so that they’re encouraged and feel empowered.”

Peggy echoed this type of leadership when she explained how she had led her team as a Sister in the NHS. She said of her leadership style,

“I didn’t want to be just the person at the top who signed everything. I wanted, if they said can you come and help me do a canular I could go and show them how to do a canular, so I wanted to lead from the top I guess...it was also very important

to me that I could everything I asked of my staff because I don't feel it's right if you can't do those things.”

Claire works in the corporate sector and leads teams in her company, she explained how when she joined a team, she “brought a different kind of dynamic to the team” in that she was ready to look behind the problems and speak to the team members about why they were not working at the fullest potential. She said she told her manager,

“most people don't come to work to deliberately do a bad job, there's usually a reason why and we should try and find out about that first before we just punish them.”

Claire felt that this ability to bring the different dynamic was due to her being a woman and that women have a more “natural instinct” for dealing with situations in a more empathic way. She said, “I think I brought a lot more, kind of like, empathy and emotional intelligence to the, to the team”.

Sian works in the corporate sector, and she explained how she encourages the women that she leads to set clear boundaries at work in order to maintain their home/work life balance. More importantly for her was that she tells the women she line manages that when they have to set such boundaries, they do not need to explain in detail why they are doing this. She used the example of a woman she leads who needed to leave the office at 3pm to in order to collect her children from school. Sian explained how she had told the woman that she did not need to justify why she was doing this but just to tell people this was her “hard stop”, Sian said that the male colleagues did not feel the need to justify their movements, so it was important that the women did not do this either.

Discussions with participants who hold or have held leadership positions showed a trend of behaving in a more empathetic, connective way with the

people they lead. This links with the theory of transformational leadership however, it builds on this with a gendered element to the style. This is a transformational leadership that is specific to women and further adds to the proposed Empowered/Empowering leadership discussed in Chapter 7. The participants also felt that as women they had different skills to offer the role and could help their teams through using more emotional intelligence and empowering the teams to reach their full potential. This leadership style echoes the style most participants admired in WPL and also echoes the attributes the participants felt women could bring to political leadership. It speaks to using the more communal attributes that are stereotypically thought of being more closely linked to traditional roles of women but using them in a different setting and in order to get the best out of team members.

8.10 Drivers: WPL Representing Women

A key theme within the conversations with the participants was that of women in positions of political leaders representing women and how important this was. As discussed in the review of the literature of representation Phillips (1995) argues that representation matters as one group cannot adequately represent another due to a lack of understanding and experience of that life lived. This section will explore the feelings the participants had on women representing them in Parliament in the United Kingdom and also where they feel this could be improved. Namely, in that there needs to be more intersectional representation of women in politics in order to better understand and represent the heterogenous nature of the women the Parliament represents.

Marsha articulated this desire for diverse representation of women when she said,

“I think a gender balance is really important because not all women *think* the same but because people have different experiences and different perspectives and the more, we get a more diverse range of perspectives the more likely we are to create laws that are going to work everybody.”

Marian spoke to Phillip’s (1995) assertion that representation for a community you do not belong to does not result in real representation when she said,

“so you’re legislating for over half the population and if you don’t have an idea, any clue what’s going on you just cannot, you cannot run a society equally (pause) fairly.”

Pattie developed this idea by thinking of the way in which men will have unconscious biases towards women which impact their decision making in legislative proceedings, she also said

“Even if they (men) want to represent women I just think they can’t, they haven’t lived that experience (pause) and so it’s got to be a good thing even women who I don’t politically agree with, I think well at least you’ve come from a place where you know this stuff exists, whereas a man however well meaning, doesn’t.”

Ann echoed this need for a more diverse representation of women when she said of greater representation of women,

“that needs to be intersectional women like, it’s, it’s really great to see more women but it can’t just be white, straight women, or you know it’s got to be, of not just women from a particular class because we all have different experiences.”

Sarah shared this view when she said,

“we do need to be more represented, when um, because it does definitely, brings a different viewpoint but from all angles.”

She went on to say

“I’m strongly (pause) advocating for women because I think it’s something that we have to do but beyond that, there’s a much bigger, broader debate from so many angles because it still is really a white person’s [world].”

Ebele also spoke of the importance of diversity in representation. She spoke of a “diversity of thought” and said,

“there’s something about the different, the different experiences and understanding and sentiment that different people bring to the table, and I think there needs to be um (pause) as much different mindsets, experiences, backgrounds, gender, different genders, and races in, in any room where decisions are being made and (pause) and (pause) I think when you don’t have that you do the difference.”

Beatrice was keen to explain how she felt that there were the women in the pipeline to bring in more representation but that there were still barriers to women seeking the higher levels of leadership. She explained that she now felt the more pressing issue was to see a greater diversity of women in leaders saying,

“what I do worry about more is that we, we, we lack Black women in senior positions or gay women, openly gay women in senior positions or openly gay people generally or (pause) single parents in senior positions or people who’ve come from nothing um in senior positions. I think social mobility is the ultimate issue to crack actually now.”

Karoline also felt that diversity was important but interestingly she didn’t feel it was important for her, she said

“I think it is important to see women in (pause) leadership, I don’t necessarily need to have a woman representing me but

(pause) we need to show that we're um (pause) we're equal to men and can do the job... the way we're represented in Parliament should be representative of the people (pause) so it should be the same with like (pause) the number of Black people, the number of gay people, that's how we should be represented."

Beryl agreed that representation of women was important saying "I think it is nice if you've got a bit of a mix" but she was also concerned that gender roles still determine that women will be the primary care givers if they have children. She felt that women holding leadership positions would be difficult should they wish to have children as if you're in this position you've "got to work out your priorities".

Harriet, when discussing how she felt about seeing greater representation of women in politics, spoke from a different angle, arguing that men needed to be allowed to have different experiences too. She said

"I think men need better opportunities not to have to go up the greasy pole, it works both ways, I think they should have more opportunities, they should have to lose so much financially or socially in order to become house husbands or (pause) um have lives which are nurses and carers and all those things."

There was a feeling of it being past the time when we should still be talking about women representation in politics and that it was time to change the conversation, Dayna felt that it was important to have more women representing women but that she was also "tired of this discussion" and that she felt if we had more women in positions of representation then it would mean the discussion on women could end. She also explained,

"I want more women, not just for the sake of like a numbers of a check list but only because I want more on a control group."

Dayna, throughout her interview, spoke of the rage she felt on this subject and her desire to see more women in positions of representation mirrors this rage as she explains she wants the representation so the conversation can move on. Chris also spoke of it being a topic that she did not want to have to keep returning to. She said,

“I find I’m getting to the point where I’m getting used to women in leadership but where I don’t see them it hurts, it’s, it’s like you know every time you see a room full of like old white dudes, it’s just like, again? Make it stop (laughs).”

Chris uses humour to make her point but the point itself suggests that this is a difficult subject, she said it “hurts” to see places where women aren’t represented. Kelly also spoke of frustration that the representation of women was still an unresolved issue, she said,

“I know we’ve got more but honestly it’s taken so long and (pause) yeah and, and different (pause) from different backgrounds, women from different background really, to bring um, they’re supposed to be representing the whole country and um not just, and also they day I will rejoice is when it is women not for women’s issues.”

Izzy also spoke to this idea of seeing WPL as more the norm, she said

“I think at the moment they are still very much sort of like a novelty (pause) about it and I think we need that; I think that novelty needs to disappear.”

Many of the participants spoke of the importance of representation not only for legislative purposes but also for greater representation of women in politics showing young women what they can achieve and being inspirational to other, younger women. Billy spoke of the importance of seeing women in position of political leadership saying

“I think also kids growing up, girls growing up that actually women can achieve whatever they want to achieve and if they see a female in (pause) um a role or a position of power where they can make decisions that is going to help them see that they’re, they’re equal.”

As discussed in the literature review, research shows that when young women see women in positions of political leadership it increases civic engagement and has a positive impact on how they feel about what they can achieve (Wolbrecht and Campbell 2007).

8.11 Exploring Through Example: Priti Patel

One women political leader who was mentioned by a number of participants without prompting was Priti Patel MP. Patel has been a Member of Parliament in the United Kingdom since 2010, she has held the position of Secretary of State for International Development and at the time of the interviews for this research Patel was the Home Secretary for the United Kingdom. Patel was discussed by the participants as an example of a woman who does not substantively represent women as discussed in the literature review. As Childs (2004) writes “women’s bodies must not be confused with feminist minds” (p.25). The responses to Patel resonated with this sentiment for many of the participants. Zara spoke of Patel in regard to the male dominated Cabinet that was in power at the time of her interview, she said,

“they’re all pretty much men and then one woman who I’m pretty sure is the most heartless human being on Earth.”

When pressed to confirm who she was talking about Zara confirmed it was Patel and that she felt Patel was someone who did not recognise their own position and the impact they could have on helping other people, other women, who are in the same position as her, she said,

“she does absolutely nothing, in fact she hinders, she seems to be hindering people from being able, from, people who have come from the same heritage as her, to be able to do what she’s done and she’s putting barriers up for them.”

Chris also brought up Patel and felt similarly to Zara that she did not help others who are experiencing the same barriers than she would have, Chris said,

“she wants to prove so hard that she deserves to be there that she’s kicking down she’s locking every door behind her as she goes through it. She’s um, she’s like (pause) actively sympathetic to people who are struggling with the same thing she’s struggling with and then if people point out that these are struggles, she is like “do you think I don’t know that, I struggle with that” (shouted).”

Chris also felt that Patel’s mentality was that if she had had to struggle so should they, she liked it to being hazed. Liz had a very personal response to Patel and explained how she felt being friends with Patel would make her insecure. She explained that she felt Patel was “one of those nasty people” and that she is the “sort of person who couldn’t understand other people very well”. Liz went on to imagine knowing Patel and said,

“I just think she’s that sort of person who I wouldn’t have as a friend, because I would feel continually (pause) belittled until I, I have no personality at all (pause) because she’d taken it all away and I just agree with everything she said in the end.”

Liz’s very intense response speaks to the power of the response to Patel and was much more personal than the other responses and yet they all speak to the same issue. The participants felt that Patel lacked empathy, she lacked a sense of caring about other people’s experiences and lives. The very strong reactions to Patel and the negative way in which many of the participants reacted to her could point to the fact that as woman the expectations of Patel

to display and practice empathy are not being met. Peggy talked about her lack of sincerity saying

“I probably think it’s more so that (pause) a woman should sound more sincere, I don’t know if that’s just me but um if you understand what I mean, But when she talks, I don’t necessarily see the sincerity in her (pause) in, in the way she’s talking, she’s saying all the right words, but I don’t necessarily get, I don’t feel, that they’re said sincerely.”

Danni also felt that Patel was held to a different standard to men because of her gender. She recounted a conversation she had had with a friend over the accusations of bullying that had been levelled at Patel and explained how her friend said, “we don’t like her, she’s a bully”. Danni caveated her response on Patel by saying “I’m not a fan of hers at all” but went on to explain how she felt Patel was being treated unfairly because she was a woman. She said,

“I was like right but how many male politicians are bullies you know, how many of them have had the light on them for you know being mean to their assistants and secretaries and what not like it just, it just seems like if it’s a female it’s ever so much more worse because they’re not expected in any way to behave that way.”

Childs (2001) argues that women representatives can struggle to speak about women and to substantively represent women when they are in male dominated spaces. Patel as Home Secretary is the most prominent woman in the Cabinet in which she serves, she is also the most prominent woman of colour. Therefore, it may be that she feels unable to substantially represent women in this male dominated environment. Patel is also a member of the Conservative Party, one that has struggled to have women represented throughout Parliament and one in which more traditional gender roles may still remain. Therefore, due to her Party and her position in a male dominated

Cabinet Patel may have to play by different rules that do not allow space for the substantive representation of women and people of colour.

8.12 Conclusion

Leadership for women is very important aspect of navigating the gendered terrain. The participants spoke at length about their own experiences of leadership and how they felt they were treated differently as women leaders. But notably there was a positive stance on the difference that women could bring to position of leadership in their own lives, this was then projected on to women leaders with an understanding that they had the capacity to bring a different leadership style to their roles. There is a co-opting of the stereotypes that are placed on women, the expectations for them to be more caring, emotional, and empathetic that their male counterparts and to use it in order to bring different leadership styles into environments. This different leadership styles focuses on connections between people and providing a leadership style that links more closely with transformational leadership. Bringing in a different way to lead gives women the ability to show that there are alternatives to the male, agentic leadership style that is entrenched in so many organisations. The participants do not dismiss the barriers that women leaders face but want to bring the stereotypical expectations placed on women into leadership for positive ends. The insight into women's responses to WPL but also to their own experiences of leadership brings new and innovative findings into the field of leadership as it shows how women feel about women leaders but also the potential they feel women have to create different environments in which to lead. This speaks to positive aspects of women's leadership that can be built upon by women seeking political leadership and shows a potential of support that can be tapped into when campaigning for political office.

Chapter 9. Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The aim of this thesis has been to explore how women in the United Kingdom respond to and feel about women in positions of political leadership. Whilst it is known that women are becoming more common in occupying positions of political leadership, they still have not reached parity with men. Therefore, there is still an issue of a lack of representation for women, especially at the highest levels of political office. Understanding how people feel about seeing women in hold these offices is crucial in moving toward greater representation for women. The understanding provides insight into the feelings and emotions that are evoked and thus the possible barriers that women running for, or holding office, will face. This thesis set out to answer questions on how women respond to WPL (RQ1), what are the thoughts and feelings evoked by WPL (RQ2), do the responses overcome or reinforce barriers for WPL (RQ3) and what are the drivers behind the responses (RQ4). To focus on the responses of women only in this thesis allowed for a greater understanding of how women feel about seeing similar people to them run for, and hold, political office. The aim of the thesis was to contribute to feminist political research and to explore the connections purely from women's perspectives. By exploring the responses from women only, so have new insights into women's opinions on gender and leadership been explored and analysed with the aim of providing new knowledge on how to navigate women voters for potential WPL. This chapter will explore the insights established in the previous chapters, highlighting the contributions to knowledge that this thesis provides.

9.2 Emotion and Empathy

RQ1 of the thesis was to explore how women respond to WPL and RQ 3 was to understand if responses were reinforcing or overcoming barriers for women

to political leadership. In answering these questions one key aspect of how women responded to WPL was the emphasis placed on the importance of them showing empathy. For the participants the displaying of empathy was seen as a strength that women leaders had greater access to than men due to the way in which women are socialised. Assuming women have a great propensity for empathy does play into the stereotypical gender traits within society, however, for the participants in this study this stereotype could be used to give women a different route to leading and provide them with a more successful leadership style. The emphasis on the power of empathy was present in relation to the participants both in how they responded directly to women leaders but also when they discussed their own experiences of having worked with and been leaders themselves. When the participants spoke of their role model leaders the conversations centred around those leaders being empathetic, understanding the women they were leading and showing genuine care for them and their progression and place with the company. For the participants who held positions of leadership there was also a conscious decision to show empathy to the people they were leading, regardless of the gender. Through this practice of empathy, the participants felt greater connections would be forged and thus a better working environment would be created. When speaking of empathetic WPL, Jacinda Ardern was, for them, a shining beacon in that respect. The idea that she became someone they both wanted to be and be around showed the power of the display of empathy for the participants. When thinking about how this can impact WPL, this thesis would propose that women leaders need to move towards showing greater empathy, to not be afraid to show that they care for those people they are leading but to be bold and make connections with people in an overt way. Use the stereotypical communal attributes that women are assumed to possess to the advantage and forge open connections with the people being led.

Empathy *for* the WPL was also an important aspect of the responses shown by the participants. When discussing WPL many of the participants felt

empathy for them being in those positions. They felt empathy for them in the way that they were treated by the media and for the fact that they were operating in male dominated environments which the participants assumed, must have been hard of them. This response, for many of the women involved in this study, came from their own experiences of being a woman. They knew how difficult it must be for the WPL, the barriers that they would be coming up against and the hostility, so they had a very real sense of empathy for what they would be going through. A number of the participants also felt that as women who had or may have children juggling being in such a high-powered position would place incredible strain on the woman and there was empathy for them for this. Empathy for WPL was foregrounded through discussions about Theresa May. In particular there was empathy for her position as a woman working in an environment with men who were not supportive and who seemed to want her to fail. The empathy expressed by the participants was not dependent on their own employment experience. Empathy was felt by participants from a wide variety of job roles and was not only expressed by the participants who worked in similarly agentic environments. Importantly, this empathy for May transcended political ideology as it was expressed by participants who openly confirmed they did not vote for the party May lead. All the participants were keen to explain how they either did not like May, nor did they agree with her politics. However, the response of empathy towards the situation she was in transcended this dislike or disagreement and spoke to their affinity with her as a woman in that position. This overcoming of the political ideology is an important finding from this research as it shows the power of connection between women and the understanding that can occur between women when faced with a gendered situation or environment. This is interesting when seeking to understand how, and why, women respond to WPL as it sheds light on the drivers behind these responses (RQ2). My research indicates that women understand what other women have to experience when navigating the gendered terrain of politics and workplaces, and therefore feel a connection with each other based on a shared experience.

Displaying emotions as women in positions of political leadership was an area of discussion for many of the participants that led to conflicting responses. Whilst a number of the participants praised the women for being able to show emotion and encouraged the displaying of emotion, there was also an understanding that this can come at a price. The participants were very aware of the stereotypical assertion that women are more emotional and therefore can be deemed as too emotional for certain positions but many of the discussions focused on the power of showing emotion. For those participants in communal jobs, they explained how they encouraged emotion or spoke of times where showing emotion has allowed them to form greater connections with other people. However, a number of the participants who worked in more agentic environments spoke of the penalties they had had to pay for showing emotion, most notably the participant who had cried in a meeting, she felt this has hindered her career for the proceeding years.

In addition, there was also an acknowledgement that the WPL have the potential to influence how women, in wider society, were perceived. There were discussions around the fact that if a woman political leader was seen to cry this could reinforce the notion that women were *overly* emotion and ill-suited for such a role. The burden placed on the WPL by women was evident in these discussions and it is important part of the responses. WPL are seen as figure heads of women in society and there is a real sense that their actions can impact the way that women are viewed and the way in which they are treated. Kate Manne (2018) calls women in politics “lightning rods” for misogyny and for negative feeling about women and it is evident from the responses in this research that women can understand this concept and also feel that WPL take on the embodiment of all women. These findings show the consequences of the double bind in practice, they show how women navigating situations are faced with a greater sense of conflict in how they react and that there will be penalties for women showing emotion. The

participants knew and empathised with the situations the women leaders would be in, but they still passed judgement on those leaders for showing emotion or at least expressed conflict in their responses. Women are socialised in the same way as other genders and as Faludi (1993) states, the backlash can be present in women's minds as well as men, these conflicted responses to women showing emotion emphasise this potential backlash and a potential to penalise women leaders for showing these traits. Addressing RQ3 this thesis finds that the terrain of political leadership will remain difficult for women leaders to navigate whilst they are still seen as incongruent with leadership. However, there is a possibility that through displaying an open style of leadership that discusses the barriers women face this could build connections with women voters due to a sense of shared experience. These insights provide new contribution to knowledge in that there is a lack of research into how women feel about seeing WPL and the burden of representation placed upon them. The methodology used allows for a new and deeper understanding of the relationship between WPL and women voters in the UK.

9.3 Drivers – Mothers and Daughters

Although the literature on women and psychology had spoken about the importance of mothers in a woman's understanding of gender, the significance of that relationship was nonetheless an unexpected narrative theme of the discussions with the participants (Eichenbaum and Orbach 1982, Chodorow 1995, 1999b, Onayli and Erdur-Baker 2013). Using the life story methodology and asking the participants to be open about their own lives and experiences meant they shared many personal stories and helped answer RQ4 by highlighting key drivers behind responses. These personal stories often centred around their mothers and the influences they had had on their lives. Mothers were mentioned when speaking of role models but also when speaking of the advice they had been given in terms of being a woman. A theme emerged of mothers wanting more for their daughters than they had

experienced. This also took the form of passing down advice and strength through the generations and preparing the daughters for the world they would encounter as a woman and the challenges they would face. It also became clear that the participants who were mothers to daughters were aware of the responsibility they had to pass on advice and information and to prepare their daughters. One participant spoke of how she needed her young daughter to be more resilient than her young son as she would need this quality of resilience to survive as a woman in a patriarchal society. This intergenerational passing of information and fortifying the next generation of women is an interesting finding in terms of the drivers behind responses as it highlights how gender is being constructed by women and the way in which women view the world in which they live. These messages of requiring strength and wanting independence for the next generation of women can speak to the slow and gradual move forward of gender rights. This can play out in the way that women respond to WPL as they can become embodiments of this strength if they display the type of leadership the participants found empowering, as discussed previously. When understanding how women respond to WPL (RQ1), understanding that first formative relationship between two women, that of mother and daughter is key. This has the potential to set up the basis of a woman's understandings of womanhood and what this can and should entail. This thesis provides new contributions to knowledge in terms of the methodology used, by applying a psychosocial approach and exploring women's experiences so have new understandings of how and why women respond to WPL been discovered. These findings can be used to further understand the barriers women face to political leadership but also provide insights in to how to overcome them, in terms of understanding constructions of gender and the impact of them.

9.4 Leadership – “New Guard” and Empowered/Empowering Leadership

When exploring the responses to WPL (RQ1) it emerged that there has been an evolution of women’s leadership. The participants spoke of how they had experienced women leaders who were older, who had taken on very masculine qualities, and who had assimilated into the masculine, male dominated upper echelons of leadership. This type of leadership is incorporated in the Queen Bee Phenomenon Theory of women’s leadership (Staines et al. 1974). For many of the participants, their experience of this kind of leadership from senior women spoke to how there had not been a space for a more empathetic, connective style of leadership as women were so often not present in those environments. However, through our discussions it became evident that the participants felt there was a new kind of leadership emerging amongst women. One that focused more on accentuating the stereotypical traits women are expected to have but using these as an advantage and a way to bring about a different style of leadership.

This new style of leadership was also discussed in terms of WPL, most notably for the participants, embodied by those such as New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and UK Labour Party’s Member of Parliament Jess Phillips. This new leadership style, that I have termed the “New Guard”, focuses on emphasising being a woman and embracing the aspects of womanhood that might be stereotypically attributed. This “New Guard” does not focus on assimilating into agentic, masculine forms of leadership. Instead, the “New Guard” focuses on the empowerment of women and encouraging the advancement of women around them. Examples of this mode of “New Guard” leadership style, could be within the structure of placing other women in positions of leadership or through empowering policies and language. The “New Guard” aims to acknowledge gender barriers persist and aims to break down and overcome them. This differs from the “Old Guard” who would not

have done this for fear of highlighting that they are transgressing gender boundaries.

Through the discussions with the participants, it became clear that not only did they appreciate seeing the “New Guard” in politics but that they wanted to see more women leaders embracing this style. The “New Guard” builds on the notion of transformational leadership, the concept that the leader can work with the followers in order to change the ethos and environment (MacGregor Burns 1978). Where the “New Guard” builds on this is that there is a gendered aspect involved, an embracing of the feminine and an embracing and reworking of the stereotyping of women to an advantage. It aims to take those expected communal traits and use them to create a more connective leadership that empowers other women to do the same. It builds on the connections women feel between each other based on shared experiences and uses that alliance to form bonds that can over gender boundaries and provide substantive representation for women in politics. The concept of empowerment is important both for the “New Guard” leader and the followers. Such a leader is empowered as a woman who deserves to be within the role she holds, but she also empowers the followers to embrace the same abilities and to overcome boundaries. The followers themselves feel empowered and connected to the woman leader.

This model of “New Guard” woman leader aligns with my proposed theory of “Empowered/Empowering Leadership”. It encompasses the desire to see women leaders being empowered by their gender, embracing it, and acknowledging it. Using the stereotypes of women as more communal, empathetic, and understanding to the advantage of the woman but also to the advantage of the situation, bringing in a more connective form of leadership. The term “empowering” speaks to the desire of the participants to see women leaders bringing up other women, working together for the advancement of

women and understanding the power of solidarity amongst women. The Empowered/Empowering Leadership theory provides a new contribution to knowledge in that it provides a research-based leadership model for WPL. It builds on the participants experiences and desire for substantive representation from future WPL.

9.5 Drivers – Boys’ Club/ Man’s World

A key objective of this thesis was to understand what was influencing and informing the responses women had to WPL. RQ4 asks what are the drivers behind participants responses to WPLs. By employing the narrative methodology, participants were encouraged to share stories about their experiences of gender. Through this sharing the participants could highlight key areas that informed the way they felt when seeing women hold positions of political leadership. It became clear that an overarching theme that spanned all the interviews was that the women are operating within a male dominated world. The participants expressed the feeling that men hold the power and are dominant within society, this power and dominance was key to the participants experience of being woman. The word patriarchy was used very rarely by the participants, but it was this concept that they were feeling and experiencing. This lack of power of equality informed so much of the discussions we had about WPL. It came through when watching the videos of the WPL, the feelings of empathy towards them being women operating in male dominated environments but also when discussing media coverage, interactions with other politicians and elections.

When using the psychosocial approach this part of the discussions was key to understanding what was informing the responses (RQ4). It explored how the participants experienced their gender and thus allowed for connection between their own experiences and their responses to become clear. The

weaving of their understandings of gender based on their own constructions and how these constructions informed their responses. A key theme was that the participants live in a society in which they are not equal and one in which they are playing by different rules than the men in their lives. These rules dictate what they chose to do or not but also how they will be treated as they move through their lives. The other facets of the participants' identity also attributed to their experiences for example the participants of colour talked of the rules around race that also dictated their lives, but an overarching theme of gendered power dynamics was present for all participants. Through these experiences of being women they could form bonds with the WPL by understanding what their lives must be like and the difficulties they must face being in those positions. This builds on what Mavin (2006) calls the Sisterhood and Solidarity, a sisterhood between women voters and WPL. A sense of solidarity for the mutual experience's women go through when navigating life. It is important to understand that there was no evidence that this solidarity would lend itself to voting for the WPL but that it did, much like the empathy previously discussed, transcend political ideology. There were also harsh penalties for those women leaders who did not seem to be standing up for other women or acknowledging the difficulties women face due to their gender. This could be seen in the harsh criticism levelled at UK Home Secretary Priti Patel.

When the participants were asked about feminism and whether they identified as feminists, the vast majority of them stated that they did not identify as feminists and yet when they spoke of the solidarity between women and WPL it had a second wave feminist ideology at the heart of the connection. It is an interesting finding from this research project that there is not a feminist stance taken by the women in terms of articulating an identification with feminist ideals however the responses were driven by a sense of solidarity and a desire for gender equality and empowerment. This identification is in contradiction with the literature on neoliberal and popular feminism, as discussed in Chapter 2,

as it focuses beyond the individual and more towards women's shared experience (Rottenberg 2018, Banet-Weiser 2018). This speaks to a deeper connection amongst women that goes beyond political movements or ideologies but to a sense of shared experience and shared difficulties of women navigating a male dominated society. When answering RQ3 and understanding how women's responses may overcome barriers, this connection could be a powerful tool for WPL if they were able to harness and articulate such a connection without triggering a gender backlash.

9.6 Support for Representation

The purpose of this thesis was to explore how women respond to WPL with the aim of understanding more clearly how support for WPL can be increased so as to work towards greater representation of women in politics. Though the discussions with the participants it became clear that representation matters to women, representation of women's rights and voices is important to women in the United Kingdom. The participants felt that women could represent them in a more meaningful way and that it was vital that women's voices were heard in the political sphere and in decision making bodies. This is an important contribution to knowledge of the thesis as it is an area of representation literature that has not been explored using qualitative methodologies. This thesis shows that there is a real desire from women to see themselves represented in politics and in political leadership. Importantly there was a call for intersectional representation of women, it was important to the participants that the women leaders reflected the many differing, and intersecting identities, of the people they were representing. Quotas were not seen as the answer to this problem as many participants felt that quotas did not allow for women to be and show their best but that they put women in positions that they had not earned. Many of the participants felt that seeing good examples of women leaders would lead to greater representation and that also it was a matter of time and allowing the younger generations to come through. The

participants felt hopeful that younger generations would be better at giving women equal representation. This could link to how the women were speaking to the young women in their lives and the hope that these conversations around women being strong and independent would allow for advancements in gender equality.

9.7 Further Research

This thesis has brought new understandings of women's responses to WPL and has also analysed some of the prevalent drivers behind those responses. It has explored how women experience gender stereotypes and norms and the impact that these have on their everyday existence. By reflecting on that process, I discussed how their experiences create empathy with women in positions of leadership and that my participants indicated that whilst acknowledging the complexities and structural differences of intersectionality, there is often a shared understanding of moving through the world as a woman. This research project is the start of this conversation but has posed many more questions to be answered. For further research I would develop the scope of the study, bringing in more responses from a larger group of women to understand more fully the experiences. The intersectional approach this thesis employed has highlighted key findings in terms of race and age however, it is important to explore this in more depth and bringing in aspects of class which were not explicitly present in this data. I would also include a larger demographic to allow for a further breakdown of the analysis for example, a greater sample of younger women to explore if the way in which women are experiencing gender norms is evolving.

Further research would also include speaking to people of different genders to see if there are different responses and to examine if those responses have different drivers based on that person's lived experiences. It would be important to include insights from men on their responses to women in political

leadership to allow for insights into men's ideas of gender roles and the possible tensions that they experience in relation to women in leadership.

9.8 Implications

To conclude, this thesis has found that women's responses to women in political leadership centre on empathy for the difficulties they may face when holding such office. There is an understanding between women of the barriers that may be encountered and the pressures that are felt. There was also an appreciation for WPL holding such difficult positions in that the participants valued the strength the WPLs would need and admired them for it. This empathy between the participants and the leaders is something that could be harnessed by women politicians in the future for campaign purposes, not being afraid to discuss how women experience the world could allow for a greater connection between women constituents and women leaders.

This thesis has set out a new type of leadership, that of Empowered/Empowering leadership. This centred around women leaders embracing their gender, speaking about women in a positive way and bringing forth more women into the political field. By understanding what women in the UK want to see from their women political leaders so can this new type of leadership be discussed with women in or seeking office. The aim would be to disseminate this information to political parties and women seeking office to help encourage more Empowered/Empowering Leadership in campaign communication and when holding positions of political leadership.

Substantive representation of women was what the participants wanted to see, this was driven by an understanding that women have different needs and face different difficulties that need addressing. This thesis hopes to add to the

understanding of why greater representation of women in political leadership is imperative. This study also provides concrete insights into how these responses can be used to galvanise support for women leaders thereby leading to greater numbers of women obtaining positions of political leadership and maintaining support once they have it.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – List of Videos

The following videos were shown to interview participants as elicitation techniques.

Video 1 – Diane Abbot in Parliament

This video shows Diane Abbott MP in the House of Commons discussing the immigration status of Grenfell Tower survivors. Abbott is at the dispatch box.

Available here: [Diane in Parliament | Immigration status of Grenfell Tower residents - YouTube](#)

Video 2 – Hillary Clinton 2016

This video shows Hillary Clinton during the 2016 US presidential election accepting the nomination for the Democratic Party. Available here: [Hillary Clinton accepts the Democratic Party's nomination for president | Hillary Clinton - YouTube](#)

Video 3 - Theresa May 2019

This video shows UK Prime Minister Theresa May announces her resignation. Towards the end of the clip May becomes upset and begins to cry. Available here: [Theresa May in tears as she announces resignation - YouTube](#)

Video 4 – The Squad 2019

This video shows Ayanna Pressley, Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib, four members of the House of Representatives in the United States, responding to President Trump's comments on them

Available here: ['We will not be silenced': squad Democrats decry Trump attacks - YouTube](#)

Video 5 - Jacinda Ardern 2019

In this video New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern visits a mosque after a terrorist attack. She meets families of the victims and comforts them.

Available here: [Jacinda Ardern lays wreath and meets families of Christchurch shooting victims - YouTube](#)

Appendix 2 – Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

The title of the research project

A Psycho-Political Study of the Responses to Women as Political Leaders in the United Kingdom

Invitation to take part

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the project?

The project is a PhD research project conducted by Amy Tatum with aim of gaining information on people's feelings towards women in political leadership.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been invited to take part in the project because you live in the United Kingdom, there are no other inclusion or exclusion criteria. The project is looking for participants to take part in both focus groups and one-on-one interviews.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a participant agreement form. You can withdraw from participation during the focus group or interview at any time and without giving a reason. If you decide to withdraw we will usually remove any data collected about you from the study. Once the focus group and interview have finished you can may still be able to withdraw your data up to the point where the data is analysed and incorporated into the research findings or outputs. At this point your data will usually become anonymous, so your identity cannot be determined, and it may not be possible to identify your data within the anonymous dataset. Withdrawing your data at this point may also adversely affect the validity and integrity of the research. Deciding to take part or not will not impact upon you adversely in any way.

What would taking part involve?

Taking part would involved being in a focus group with other people, the focus group will be videoed and audio recorded for data collection purposes only and will only be viewed by the researcher. It will also involve a one-on-one interview with the researcher which will be audio recorded.

What are the advantages and possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will add to the body of research on women in political leadership and gender and politics as a whole.

What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?

You will be asked about women in political leadership both in the United Kingdom and the world, you may be shown videos of women in political

leadership or shown news coverage both on screen and in print. Discussions may occur regarding political opinions however it is not required that you disclose your political affiliations or opinions.

Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?

The audio and video recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis and the transcription of the recordings for illustration in conference presentations and lectures. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

How will my information be kept?

All the information we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly in accordance with current data protection legislation. Research is a task that we perform in the public interest, as part of our core function as a university. Bournemouth University (BU) is a Data Controller of your information which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it appropriately. BU's Research Participant Privacy Notice sets out more information about how we fulfil our responsibilities as a data controller and about your rights as an individual under the data protection legislation. We ask you to read this [Notice](#) so that you can fully understand the basis on which we will process your information.

Publication

You will not be able to be identified in any external reports or publications about the research without your specific consent. Otherwise your information will only be included in these materials in an anonymous form, i.e. you will not be identifiable.

Research results will be published in the final PhD thesis and may be used for subsequent academic articles.

Security and access controls

BU will hold the information we collect about you in hard copy in a secure location and on a BU password protected secure network where held electronically.

Except where it has been anonymised your personal information will be accessed and used only by appropriate, authorised individuals and when this is necessary for the purposes of the research or another purpose identified in the Privacy Notice. This may include giving access to BU staff or others responsible for monitoring and/or audit of the study, who need to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations.

Sharing and further use of your personal information

The information collected about you may be used in an anonymous form to support other research projects in the future and access to it in this form will not be restricted. It will not be possible for you to be identified from this data. Anonymised data will be added to BU's [Data Repository](#) (a central location where data is stored) and which will be publicly available.

Retention of your data

All personal data collected for the purposes of this study will be held for 5 years after the award of the degree. Although published research outputs are anonymised, we need to retain underlying data collected for the study in a non-anonymised form for a certain period to enable the research to be audited and/or to enable the research findings to be verified.

Contact for further information

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact PhD Researcher, Amy Tatum Faculty of Media and Communication, or Lead Supervisor, Professor Candida Yates Faculty of Media and Communication

In case of complaints

Any concerns about the study should be directed to Deputy Dean for Research & Professional Practice, Dr Einar Thorsen Faculty of Media and Communication, Bournemouth University by email to researchgovernance@bournemouth.ac.uk.

Finally

If you decide to take part, you will be given a copy of the information sheet and a signed participant agreement form to keep.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research project.

Appendix 3 – Participant Agreement Form

Ref & Version:
Ethics ID number:
Date:



Participant Agreement Form

Full title of project: (“the Project”) A Psycho-Political Study of Responses to Women as Political Leaders in the United Kingdom

Name, position and contact details of researcher: Amy Tatum, PhD Researcher, atatum@bournemouth.ac.uk

Name, position and contact details of supervisor: Professor Candidate Yates, Lead Supervisor, cyates@bournemouth.ac.uk

To be completed prior to data collection activity

Section A: Agreement to participate in the study

| |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet and have been given access to the BU Research Participant Privacy Notice which sets out how we collect and use personal information (https://www1.bournemouth.ac.uk/about/governance/access-information/data-protection-privacy). |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| |
|---------------------------------------------|
| I have had an opportunity to ask questions. |
|---------------------------------------------|

| |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop participating in research activities at any time without giving a reason and I am free to decline to answer any particular question(s). |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I understand that taking part in the research will include the following activity/activities as part of the research: |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| |
|---------------------------------|
| being filmed during the project |
|---------------------------------|

| |
|-----------------------------------------|
| being audio recorded during the project |
|-----------------------------------------|

| |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| my words will be quoted in publications, reports, web pages and other research outputs without using my real name. |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

I understand that, if I withdraw from the study, I will also be able to withdraw my data from further use in the study except where my data has been anonymised (as I cannot be identified) or it will be harmful to the project to have my data removed.

I understand that my data may be included in an anonymised form within a dataset to be archived at BU's Online Research Data Repository.

I understand that my data may be used in an anonymised form by the research team to support other research projects in the future, including future publications, reports or presentations.

You should only agree to participate in the study if you agree with all of the statements in this table and accept that participating will involve the listed activities.

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| | Initial box to agree |
| I consent to take part in the project on the basis set out above (Section A) | |

Section B: The following parts of the study are optional

You can decide about each of these activities separately. Even if you do not agree to any of these activities you can still take part in the study. If you do not wish to give permission for an activity, do not initial the box next to it.

| | | |
|--|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| | | Initial boxes to agree |
| | I agree to being filmed during the Project for data collection only | |
| | I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages and other research outputs. Please choose one of the following two options: I agree that my real name can be used in the above. I do not agree that my real name can be used in the above. | |

I confirm my agreement to take part in the project on the basis set out above.

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| _____ Name of participant (BLOCK CAPITALS) | _____ Date (dd/mm/yyyy) | _____ Signature |
| _____ Name of researcher (BLOCK CAPITALS) | _____ Date (dd/mm/yyyy) | _____ Signature |

Once a Participant has signed, please sign 1 copy and take 2 photocopies:
Original kept in the local investigator's file
1 copy to be kept by the participant (including a copy of PI Sheet)

Appendix 4 – Ethics Checklist

About Your Checklist

| | |
|----------------|---------------------|
| Ethics ID | 28398 |
| Date Created | 24/10/2019 10:44:18 |
| Status | Approved |
| Date Approved | 10/12/2019 11:46:43 |
| Date Submitted | 21/11/2019 17:14:38 |
| Risk | Low |

Researcher Details

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Name | Amy Tatum |
| Faculty | Faculty of Media & Communication |
| Status | Postgraduate Research (MRes, MPhil, PhD, DProf, EngD, EdD) |
| Course | Postgraduate Research - FMC |
| Have you received funding to support this research project? | No |

Project Details

| | |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Title | A Psycho-Political Study of the Responses to Women as Political Leaders in the United Kingdom |
| Start Date of Project | 20/01/2019 |
| End Date of Project | 21/01/2022 |
| Proposed Start Date of Data Collection | 01/01/2020 |
| Original Supervisor | Candida Yates |
| Approver | Sue Sudbury |

Summary - no more than 500 words (including detail on background methodology, sample, outcomes, etc.)

This study will apply a psycho-political approach to exploring and understanding the responses to women political leaders (WPL). The study will assess how UK citizens respond to WPL and will apply methods and theories taken from psychosocial and feminist political studies [in order to](#) examine the nature of those responses and their gendered underpinning.

[In order to](#) capture a full picture of the dilemmas and tensions surrounding the experience of women leadership in the Western political scene, this study will provide a contextual analysis of the psycho-political, campaigning, media and cultural landscape in which WPL in the UK operate. The concept of intersectionality will be held in mind during the project with the understanding that other social factors will be at play within both the contextual element of the project and the responses received.

Through a sustained study of the responses to WPL, this project will contribute to new understandings of the barriers to greater gender

parity in political leadership through a greater understanding of the affect and the emotional responses that are evoked for citizens in relation to women in positions of political leadership.

The project will look at both the affect and emotion present [in order to](#) assess both the conscious and unconscious responses. The methodology used will be focus groups and narrative interviews mirroring both public and private settings to investigate the difference in responses depending on environment. The methods of narrative one on one interviews will be used [in order to](#) explore unconscious responses to WPL from participants.

The study will take place against a socio-cultural and political backdrop in which feminist rhetoric and activism is on the rise, including 2017's #MeToo campaign and 2018's #TimesUp campaign, and that feminist context adds to the timeliness and relevance of the proposed work.

Against that backdrop, which foregrounds the need for change, this study aims to contribute to wider feminist debates about women and political leadership by examining the feelings, thoughts and attitudes that often lie behind what is argued to be an apparent aversion to women as political leaders.

The project will research and thus create new psychosocial understandings about the barriers faced by women in senior political positions because of the prejudices they may encounter. The proposed study will assist such women by enabling an enhanced understanding of those potentially negative attitudes and feelings on the part of the electorate, thereby leading to new campaigning methods and strategies.

Filter Question: Does your study involve Human Participants?

| Participants | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Describe the number of participants and specify any inclusion/exclusion criteria to be used | |
| The study will aim to include 6-8 focus groups of 5-8 participants each. In-depth interviews will be undertaken with each person who attends the focus groups. The criteria for the participants is that they are resident in the United Kingdom and that they are over the age of 18. | |
| Do your participants include minors (under 16)? | No |
| Are your participants considered adults who are competent to give consent but considered vulnerable? | No |
| Is a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check required for the research activity? | No |

| Recruitment | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Please provide details on intended recruitment methods, include copies of any advertisements. | |
| Recruitment will take place via advertising on social media, the placement of flyers in public buildings and through this the snowball approach will be used to gather more participants from those already engaged with the study. | |
| Do you need a Gatekeeper to access your participants? | No |

| Data Collection Activity | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Will the research involve questionnaire/online survey? If yes, don't forget to attach a copy of the questionnaire/survey or sample of questions. | No |
| Will the research involve interviews? If yes, don't forget to attach a copy of the interview questions or sample of questions | |
| Will the research involve a focus group? If yes, don't forget to attach a copy of the focus group questions or sample of questions. | Yes |
| Please provide details e.g. where will the focus group take place. Will you be leading the focus group or someone else? | |
| Will the research involve the collection of audio materials? | Yes |
| Will your research involve the collection of photographic materials? | No |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Will your research involve the collection of video materials/film? | Yes |
| Will any photographs, video recordings or film identify an individual? | No |
| Will any audio recordings (or non-anonymised transcript), photographs, video recordings or film be used in any outputs or otherwise made publicly available? | No |
| Will the study involve discussions of sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, criminal activity)? | No |
| Will any drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) be administered to the participants? | No |
| Will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potential harmful procedures of any kind? | No |
| Could your research induce psychological stress or anxiety, cause harm or have negative consequences for the participants or researchers (beyond the risks encountered in normal life)? | No |
| Will your research involve prolonged or repetitive testing? | No |

Consent

Describe the process that you will be using to obtain valid consent for participation in the research activities. If consent is not to be obtained explain why.

The project will be explained to participants and they will be given a participant information sheet and a participant agreement form for them to sign before they take part in the study.

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Do your participants include adults who lack/may lack capacity to give consent (at any point in the study)? | No |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Will it be necessary for participants to take part in your study without their knowledge and consent? | No |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|

Participant Withdrawal

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| At what point and how will it be possible for participants to exercise their rights to withdraw from the study? | Participants can withdraw from the study at any point and without reason up until the data collected is anonymised. This can be advised to the researcher in person or by email. |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| If a participant withdraws from the study, what will be done with their data? | Before the point of anonymisation the data will be destroyed. |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|

Participant Compensation

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Will participants receive financial compensation (or course credits) for their participation? | No |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Will financial or other inducements (other than reasonable expenses) be offered to participants? | No |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|

Research Data

| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Will identifiable personal information be collected, i.e. at an individualised level in a form that identifies or could enable identification of the participant? | No |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Will research outputs include any identifiable personal information i.e. data at an individualised level in a form which identifies or could enable identification of the individual? | No |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|

Storage, Access and Disposal of Research Data

Where will your research data be stored and who will have access during and after the study has finished.

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Once your project completes, will any anonymised research data be stored on BU's Online Research Data Repository "BORDaR"? | Yes |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|

Dissemination Plans

| | |
|----------------------------------------------|--|
| Will you inform participants of the results? | |
|----------------------------------------------|--|

Final Review

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Are there any other ethical considerations relating to your project which have not been covered above? | No |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|

Risk Assessment

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Have you undertaken an appropriate Risk Assessment? | Yes |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----|

Attached documents

| |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Interview Questions.docx - attached on 24/10/2019 11:12:27 |
| Focus Group Questions.docx - attached on 24/10/2019 11:12:30 |
| Recruitment Advert.pdf - attached on 24/10/2019 11:25:13 |
| Participant Agreement Form - ATatum.docx - attached on 21/11/2019 17:14:12 |
| Participant Information Sheet Template - ATatum.docx - attached on 21/11/2019 17:14:24 |

Appendix 5 – Interview Guide

Can you start by telling me a little about yourself?

(Show videos: Diane Abbott, Hillary Clinton, Theresa May, The Squad, Jacinda Ardern)

Any initial thoughts or feelings about the videos you saw?

How do you feel about gender stereotypes, have there been times in your life when you have faced barriers due to your gender?

Would you describe yourself as a feminist?

Are there any women leaders in your life?

Can you tell me about any women role models in your life?

Would you like to see more women political leaders?

Do you think we will see more women political leaders?

Appendix 6 – Example Transcript.

The following anonymised transcript has been coded for themes of leadership.

Transcription Participant 7 Interview 1

3rd August 2020 19:00

Claire is white woman, 41, she works in the pharmaceutical industry, she is a British citizen but lives in Switzerland at present. She is single and does not have children.

Amy (A): Ok, so thank you for joining me this evening to have a chat um if we could just start of first of all with you letting me know a little bit about yourself?

Claire (C): Ok, yeah alright, I'm Claire, I'm 41 I think, yep 41 sadly um, British citizen um, currently living in Switzerland, been here for 4 and a half years (pause) ah I work in the pharmaceutical, bio-tech industry um and I am a senior director um which probably sounds more, more senior than it is, I'm not in our site leadership team and work but I'm in a kind of like functional leadership team so um (pause) so yeah um I'm single, I have two cats (laughs)

A: What are their names?

C: Poppy and Cleo, they might make a guest appearance

A: I hope so. I always want Carson my dog to sort of come in but he never does, I try and entice him in for a great zoom shot but he's not interested.

C: Yeah mine, yeah are not reliable in that sense, they pop in to videos when I don't want them there (laughs) but when I do want to show them off they just go an hide.

A: (laughs) ok, well I will go and start the videos, I'll show you a couple of clips of women leaders, if there are any problems just let me know and we can just skip that ok. So I'll just share my screen with you. (Amy shares screen) so just let me know when you can see, it should be inside the House of Commons.

C: Yeah I can see it.

A: I'll press play so the first clip is of the then Home Secretary Diane Abbott and she was talking about the Grenfell Tower tragedy and what happened there.

(Diane Abbot clip plays)

A: The next clip is Hillary Clinton um, and this was after she became the nominee for the Democratic Party in 2016.

C: Ok

(Hillary clip plays)

A: OK the next one I'm going to show is Theresa May when she resigned as Prime Minister of the UK last year.

(Theresa May clip plays)

A: And the next one is gonna be, they are women who are Members of the House of Representatives in the United States, they are, they're called the Squad, they are four women of colour and they were talking after President Trump tweeted that if they didn't like the US then they should go back to where they came from so this is them responding – it's three of them we'll see.

(Squad clips plays)

A: OK and the last one is of Jacinda Ardern and she is the Prime Minister of New Zealand and this is after the um terrorist attacks on the Mosques in Christchurch.

(Jacinda Ardern clips plays)

A: Ok, so I'll just stop sharing here and we'll go back to just us. OK so just thinking about those four or women in general are there any responses from the clips we just saw?

C: Mmmm (looks up and away) so maybe I'll go through them one by one from what I can remember so I think um (pause) Diane Abbot, so I think (pause) (exhales) I almost have like um she's a very intelligent woman, a very intelligent woman and she gets a lot of bad press and I don't really understand why because I think, I almost find that she generally speaks really well, she speaks with a lot of gravitas you know it seems that she really understands the topic that she's speaking about, she's very factual and I quite you know, I like her a lot and I don't really understand why she gets kind of like so much bad press (pause) um (pause) I think (pause) Hillary Clinton, in that clip she was definitely seeming to get people on her side, you know, I could imagine being in that room when she's talking and sort of like really being able to get (pause) behind her um so I think you know she's definitely kind of like able to (pause) bring people along with her, she has that ability to kind to influence a large number, a large number of people um (pause) whether or not she really believes in what she's saying I don't know or whether or not the things she was promising in that speech were realistic I don't know but sometimes that doesn't matter, if you can, if you have the ability to convince people just by the way you, you know deliver something in

that way then um (pause) I can really imagine being really caught up in that, in that kind of, in the moment, just going “yeah I really believe it, yeah she’s really awesome” that kind of thing, that kind of thing um (pause) Theresa May? I remember watching that speech at the time and it didn’t feel genuine to me, at all, it felt quite hollow and shallow and I know that she did kind of choke at the end but (pause) it didn’t, it just didn’t feel genuine / A: mmhmm / C: She never seems (pause) she never seemed to deliver anything with (pause) what felt like genuine kind of like passion almost, all the way through her, her time as Prime Minister um (pause) so (pause) yeah, I, I didn’t feel that she was being kind of like truthful there um (pause) for the Squad, they were, they came across as really strong, really factual, (pause) it must have been very hard I think for them to have spoken out like that, in such a controlled, factual (pause) way, there was, it was just, it was just pure fact, no speculation just really (pause) kind of (pause) you know genuine, I felt like I could, I really believed them and that they would be people that I could trust I think um (pause) and then for the last one um, for the President of New Zealand I think that she was just acting like a human (pause) you know, not like a, not like a leader of a country but just like a human, like a mother and I don’t know if you would ever see like a male um leader (pause) respond in that way to that kind of, that kind of situation.

A: Do you think she has, do you think it’s more acceptable for her to do it as she’s a woman or that it just appears more natural?

C: Um, I think it could be both (pause) I think it’s, it’s a natural reaction um (pause) and I think (pause) that can be, that’s sort of where women can be really powerful in leadership because they will react sort of more instinctively in that situation whereas I think (pause) men are always kind of thinking about like the male stereotype almost and maybe they can’t show that kind of, kind of emotion.

A: How do you feel, like when you see women in position of political leadership, do you have any feelings about that at all, do you find it, do you notice when it’s a woman?

C: Um (pause) I think maybe I’d notice more if there were more of them (laughs) um one of the things that I’ve noticed recently, I’ve seen it um online um in social media quite a lot recently um related to the Covid-19 situation and um a general theme being that the countries that have dealt the best with the pandemic have been those with women leaders / A: Yeah, Yeah / C: rather than me so (nods).

A: yeah it does seem, there seems to have been a real buzz about that.

C: Yeah, yeah.

A: Definitely, and um do you find seeing women political leaders inspiring at all, does it have any impact on how you feel about gender stereotypes and boundaries?

C: I mean it's definitely in general, it's a positive thing (pause) I think um (pause) I'm just trying to think, I honestly don't think Theresa May (laughs) did us any favours, when she was, when she was in charge I think um (pause) I mean it's, it's, it's a difficult job for sure, it's not a job I'd put myself forward but I just (pause) I think it depends on how they approach it and I think sometimes (pause) women in leadership, just in general, and maybe in political leadership as well feel like they have to, in order to succeed they have to behave like a man / A: Yep / C: and I don't think that's true. I think that if (pause) they are maybe more like themselves, like maybe the President of New Zealand (pause) then maybe they would be more successful because you don't have to, you shouldn't have to behave like a man to be successful you should be able to behave like a, like yourself actually um (pause) because then you come across, then you're being genuine (pause) transparent, I think any leader as soon as you start to try and do it like anyone else would do it then it's really obvious because you're not being authentic and not, then you're not as successful because you're not being you.

A: mmhmm and so, have you found in your own experiences, in your own position at work, how do you find you approach being a leader and being a woman who is a leader?

C: mmm, yeah that's a difficult one, it was a lot easier in the UK actually to be in a leadership position, I think in the UK in general there are more women in senior positions, it's more accepted and more respected. Um (pause) and I definitely found that um (pause) in my previous job my last job in the UK (pause) in the leadership for our function I was the only female (pause) um and I brought different dynamic to the team um I think (pause) that (pause).

A: In what way? How was it different?

C: I think um (pause) I think just by virtue of the fact that men and women are different, we think differently about things um I think in general sometimes men can be quite competitive with each other um they have a different type of emotional intelligence and (pause) sometimes don't have the patience to deal with certain situations that, that women (pause) have more of a natural instinct for so I think I brought a lot more kind of like empathy and emotional intelligence to the, to the team um.

A: Did they react well to that?

C: mm yeah definitely, my, my manage was always (pause) really appreciative of the different, the different dynamic that I would, that I would bring to the team, I'm trying to think of examples but (pause) um (pause) I think because sometimes I would just think about (pause) think, think about things in a different way, particularly with like managing people and (pause) and things like that (pause) if somebody wasn't performing well the guys would have more of a tendency to be like "right well, you know, we need to put them on an improvement plan" and I'd be thinking "but have you thought about why they might not be performing well?" because most people don't come to work to deliberately do a bad job, there's usually a reason why and we should maybe try and find out about that first before we just punish them / A: Yeah, yeah / C: So I brought a different kind of dynamic to the team whereas in Switzerland it's a little bit different, our senior management is like middle aged, white guys um (pause) almost seem to have sort of like an inbuilt, sort of like cultural (pause) view of women which is more reminiscing of Britain in the fifties and sixties um (pause) it's, it's very different and it can be, I find it to be quite difficult to be heard as a (pause) as a woman (pause) um (long pause) and I think the women that are more successful in leadership in my company are the women who tend to behave more like men (nods).

A: Oh right.

C: Who behave sort of like in quite an aggressive (pause) manner, like if you're, if you're more softly spoken or you're trying to put a case across in a more reasoned, balanced way you get shouted down.

A: Right

C: Culturally it's quite different and I don't think they're quite there yet in understanding how, if you have the right balance on your leadership team in terms of (pause) male and females how um (pause) it can make things work better, sometimes being too male dominated can have a detrimental effect and they don't yet maybe quite understand sort of like the softer side of leadership that women can bring, that can actually increase the success of the team.

A: How do people who you or who report to you do they respond differently to you being a woman do you think?

C: Mmmn I don't think so um (pause) certainly so my, most of my direct reports are men, in fact they're all guys at the moment apart from one um (pause) I don't feel like (exhales) um (pause) they respond differently to me because, because I'm a woman (pause) um they're, a lot of them they're previous boss was also a woman but we're very, we're very different in our management style, so she's one of the more kind of like aggressive kind of um you know managers where as I'm kind of a little bit more kind of like laid

back um which I think they appreciate um (pause) I don't think they hold anything back from me but I don't feel, from my direct reports I don't feel like I'm treated any differently because I'm a (pause) female.

A: And so would you um, would you describe yourself as a feminist, is feminism something that you link with or identify with?

C: Mmmm that's a good question. (pause) I think it depends and I think there are probably quite a lot of different definitions of feminism (pause) um (pause) and I (exhales) ah I don't know (pause) I think (exhales) (pause) I don't know, I think (pause) I'm probably more a fan of equality (pause) and (pause) I think to me feminism means (pause) just sort of like understanding and accepting that men and women are different, women are different to men, they have different approaches you know (pause) and being recognised as that being equally important as (pause) as what a male leader will bring to a team or a situation but for me feminism doesn't mean be like a man (pause) or be treated like man, it's more about let's be equal, let's be fair um (pause) (nods).

A: and so do you have any women in your life, any women leaders either through your life or now who have been sort of influential or people that you have looked up to or aspired to be like?

A: (pause) um this a good question (long pause) that's a good question (long pause) I mean I do admire my boss for how (pause) successful she is um (pause) definitely, you know she's sixty years old, she's a senior VP, she's a mother of three (pause) /A: mmhmm . C: Um (pause) single as well sort of like without her husband because he's passed away so, just intelligent um (pause) she's very influential um (pause) so I admire her for how (pause) for the position that she's, the position that she's in but I wouldn't want to be like her.

A: Why not?

C: So, because, I find I do find her quite aggressive sometimes in the way that she deals with people um she's a bit of a control freak so she doesn't let things go so she doesn't delegate very well to (pause) people in her, in her team um (pause) and (pause) yeah and I don't, I get on fine with her, we have a really good relationship but I think, in general I don't like her style of leadership, I wouldn't, I admire for where she's got to with her style (pause) but we're very different.

A: Is she, is she conscious of bringing in other women in to leadership do you know? Is that something on her radar?

C: mmmm (pause) I think, I think it is, I would, I mean all of her direct reports bar one are female um she promoted me, she got a promotion and promoted me to her old job so (pause) um (pause) she definitely, I don't think she does

have a problem with (long pause) um (pause) women in leadership in general but um I do think she wants to be the alpha female (pause) so um (pause) she doesn't react so well if I challenge her or (pause) if I disagree with her on something I do sometimes feel that she reacts um (pause) in a more negative way to a challenge from a female that she would do from a male so.

A: right, there is a theory the Queen Bee Theory / C: (nods) mmhmm / A: And it's sort of that when some women get to the higher tiers of leadership that they quite enjoy being that, that woman in charge you know, maybe that's present for her.

C: (nods) yeah I mean, that, that sounds yeah, it does sound a little bit (pause) like her for sure (nods).

A: Are you aware of promoting or bringing up or supporting other women in your industry, is that something that's part of how you operate or is it you know is that an element of the way that you operate in your company?

C: Yeah defin(itely) well I'd like to think so, I'd like to think so um (pause) it's (pause) (exhales) I think, I mean my style of leadership is to empower everybody I think not just women, I'm sometimes conscious of not maybe even not having too much of a female kind of bias where you then almost end up you know because you're so busy promoting women that you end up discriminating against your (pause) against your male colleagues or your direct reports so um (pause) I mean, I mean my team at the moment it more male dominated but I had, I had the reverse when I was in the UK, the management team where all (pause) were all female um so.

A: Do you feel that outside of work, do you find that gender stereotypes are an issue or something that you see in your friendship groups, is it something you're away of there being gender boundaries or expectations?

C: Definitely in Switzerland, it's quite an old fashioned country in that sense so um, its, the whole of the society is still very much geared up to women not working and being at home, looking after children so if I think about schools for example, it's quite unusual for children to be able to stay at school and have lunch, they're typically expected to go home and Mum be home for lunch um a lot of um the shops and things here close quite early so it's very difficult to even get there if you're working, to the supermarket after work they close at about 6 o'clock.

A: that's not something I've ever thought about but obviously that would have a huge impact, yeah.

C: mm, and it just, it's just, it's just not geared up for (pause) um single, working women or actually, working women in general actually, childcare is

really expensive, it is still very much um based around that the fact that there will be somebody based around the home not working.

A: Because didn't women only get the vote in Switzerland in 1972 or something.

C: I think in some Cantons it might have been even later than that, I've got a feeling that the last one to give women the vote was (pause) either in the late seventies or in the early eighties.

A: Wow!

C: It's unbelievable isn't it, it's unbelievable.

A: It is, but then you can obviously still see the hangover from that in society now, even the relatively short periods of time, but it hasn't, they're still lagging behind in that as well, wow that's amazing when you think about it.

C: Yeah and some of my, some of my friends here feel that they um (pause) get judged for being single, working women as well.

A: Judged by other people there men and women?

C: Mmm Yeah I think so yeah, somebody said it to be the other day but I can't remember (pause) I can't remember what it was we were talking about it was something, um (pause) and they said "Oh you know, because I'm, you know, they just look down on me because I'm a single, working woman" even when it comes to filling out forms um the option that you have as a woman is Mrs.

A: oooh oh wow / C: yeah (nods) so on all of my Swiss stuff I'm Mrs even though I'm not married because there's no other option.

A: wow!

C: Yeah (nods)

A: Ok, gosh I would never have, yeah / C: I know, that's weird isn't it?

A: It is because, what's it telling you each and every time you fill in a form

C: I should be married.

A: Yeah oh that's awful.

C: Isn't yeah, I don't like it. /A : No. / C: I don't like it at all but that's quite specific to Switzerland um and I have a really interesting friend actually um (pause) who, so she's from Ireland, she's from Southern Ireland, her partner, her boyfriend is from Northern Ireland, they've been together for , I don't know, 15 years and when you talk to her about certain things she's sort of very feminist, very um (pause) you know (pause) um (pause) pro kind of like

women's rights and all this kind of stuff but then she says things like um (pause) "I can't dye my hair because my boyfriend won't like it" A: Right / C: "he won't let me" um (pause) she wants to, we want to go kayaking um on the lake this summer but she's not a very strong swimmer but she wants to give it a try and she's like "but we can't tell my boyfriend because he doesn't want me to do it" and it's so funny because (pause) like outwardly, in all other circumstances she'll be like you know, you know women should have the freedom to you know choose, do whatever they want um (pause) we went to Marrakesh on holiday a couple of years ago and she really didn't like it because you don't see women kind of like working you feel like they're still (pause) you know quite oppressed / A: Yeah / C: and she wants to dye her hair blue but she won't do it because her boyfriend won't like it.

A: I always find it so interesting because we often as women from the UK will look at other countries and be like "goodness they're so repressed" but we never really look at the way that we are but it's just that it's maybe more subtle?

C: Yeah (nods) it's really funny, it's really, really funny.

A: One of those things that once you start noticing it you probably notice it all the time.

C: Yeah and I did say to her the other day I was like "Sian come on you know, it's your hair" and she's just like "yeah but I have to listen to him going on about how much he hates it and it's not worth it" so it's like "ok" (shrugs).

A: Yeah alright! Is it ok if I show you one more video?

C: mmm, yeah.

A: This one is, it's um Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, we say her earlier, she's a Member of the House of Representatives and the week before last she was um (pause) she was spoken to by a male member of the house and this is just her explaining what happened and she's talking about the treatment of women by men, so I'll just share my screen. Is that coming up for you?

C: Not yet I can see the blue screen, I think it's coming.

(AOC clips plays)

A: OK. So, that was her speaking in the House and I just wondered if you had any thoughts about her speaking about that /C: mm/ and how she spoke about it or and just in general /C: mm/ the way that men sometimes do speak to women in this way?

C: Yeah I mean, she speaks very well again, you know very clear, very factual and it's true, I think, you know I think we've all experienced it so greater or lesser degrees (pause) in our lives and I guess (pause) it's

probably so normal, maybe you don't even notice it and you wouldn't even, necessarily think to um call someone out on it necessarily, you can think it's something you, you can just get really, really used to I think um (pause).

A: And one of the things you said, she's very clear she's very factual, do you think without sort of the overt displays of emotion, do you find that a good thing, you know for a woman to speak in that way so she's giving all the facts do you think that's a positive thing?

C: I think on that particular topic, yes and I think also she was, she was also very smart, very clever but thanking him for doing it because it kind of (pause) you know by doing this you've shown you know yourself up, you've highlighted a real issue um and highlighted the fact that you can, that you can, you can be married, you can have daughters but you can still be a pig, it doesn't mean that um because you're in a relationship with a woman and because you have your own daughters that doesn't my default mean that you are respectful of woman and I think what she did there was very smart, very clever (pause) um I think, I think and I hate to say it but if she'd have been emotional about it um she would have been dismissed as being as silly, emotional woman overacting to something that was nothing so I think the way that she delivered that message was very good and very smart actually (nods).

A: And so do you think do you feel for you it's important to see women in positions of political leadership?

C: Yeah definitely (pause) definitely.

A: Why do you feel that that's important?

C: (Exhales) because we're fifty percent of the population, we should be represented um but people have to except that, that women are different from men but it doesn't mean that they're gonna be a bad leader because women have different qualities than men it just needs to be recognised that (pause) female qualities are just as valuable as male qualities (nods).

A: OK and currently only 9% of world leaders are women and for legislatures it's just under 25%, do you, how do you feel about those kind of numbers?

C: It doesn't sound like enough does it?

A: No, not to me (laughs)

C: It doesn't sound like enough (pause) it makes me, it makes me wonder why that is (pause) and what is preventing (pause) more women from becoming involved in, in politics and (pause) um reaching (pause) you know leadership positions in politics, it makes me wonder why that, why that is (pause) I don't have any answer (laughs)

A: No, me neither (laughs) it's interesting because I spoke to someone this morning and they said "oh 9% is a positive number" and I was quite surprised by that because I was like "oh" / C: Oh (looks confused) / A: "it's nearly 1 in 10" and it's a positive outlook I guess / C: Yeah / A: but not where my mind initially went with that figure (laughs) C: No (laughs).

A: but yeah, um ok, so I think that's all of my questions I don't know if there's anything else that you wanted to add or anything that you felt was important.

C: Ah no I don't think so um (pause) no I mean we definitely need to see more women in, well in all kinds of leadership I guess um (pause) but (pause) I mean there's still quite a long way to go um in terms of (pause) you know breaking down stereotypes um (pause) understand(ing) you know understanding that women have generally different leadership styles to men but that doesn't mean that they're better or worse they're just different and if you get the balance right you know um (pause) then you can, that's how you get the most, the most success I guess um.

A: Do you think we're good at supporting each other as women?

C: Not always (shakes head) no not always.

A: What makes you say that?

C: Um (pause) I think just, I think it can be, I think women tend to be competitive within themselves, I think maybe it's back to the Queen Bee with some women um (pause) I think we can maybe judge each other too harshly sometimes as women um (pause) because as a, as a (pause) as a group we're so used to being judged anyway (pause) / A: Mmhm / C: for what you look like, how you behave, what you wear, you know you kind of get used to it and (pause) if you're not careful you can start judging each other and (pause) pulling each other down.

A: That's true, that's true, I've never thought about it like that but yeah that makes sense.

C: But I think that just comes from you know we're so judged anyway that you start doing it to each other um and I think it can sometimes take a real conscious effort to not do that and (pause) to support each other.

A: Yeo

C: I think that takes more con/more conscious effort (pause) I think.

A: I would agree, I would agree, that's really interesting. Well I'll stop recording and then we can just say goodbye.

(Recording stops then restarts as interesting points were raised in the end discussion)

C: Yeah so um I was trying to think, so I work on a project at work where we're always compared to another, another project and (pause) the one that I work with is quite negatively perceived, they think that um you know we don't achieve as much as the other project and the one that I work on is mainly led by women and we're always compared to another project that was ah led by mainly men and both projects have had similar, quite demanding, quite unrealistic timelines and my project is, we're always told "well for project A, you know they did it, they delivered, there were no complaints and you know they just got on and did it why can't you" and we're like "because that team was led by men, who are competitive, they saw it as a competitive to (pause) get like meet the deadline get the deadline, regardless of the quality of what they were doing, they just wanted to meet the deadline", where it's, on the project that I'm on which is predominantly led by women, we're like, we challenge we're like "no, that's not right, we're not doing it the right way, we're not being driven by the quality" and then we get criticised and it's just like (pause)

A: You can really see the difference there/ C: Really see the difference in terms of what motivates the predominant female team which is quality, getting it right, doing the right thing whereas (pause) the team that was mostly men was just like "yeah we're gonna meet the deadline, we're gonna meet the deadline" but no they're having loads of problems because actually the quality of what they did wasn't very good, yes they met the deadline (pause) but the quality wasn't very good, not saying that men are rubbish it's just that women and men have different motivators and in an all-male team vs an all-female team you'll get very different (pause) outputs. Whereas maybe if there'd just been more women on the other team they'd have had a bit of balance, they probably still would have met the deadline because the men would have driven it but maybe the quality, the output might have been better.

A: I feel like that's a really good explanation for what's been happening with Covid / C: mmhmm / A: because I feel like looking at how the male leaders have been like "yeah we're just going to kill this thing" / C: mmmm / A: and then you've had the women leaders who have been like explaining, we need, this is the process, this is what we need to do, we need the longer time. It's like the perfect analogy for what's been happening .

C: Yeah, it's kind of true isn't it but I think sometimes the female approach (pause) that you can, you can get criticised for being, like not being decisive or not being able to make a decision. It's like "well no, my decision is to (pause) do the right thing, you know do the right quality of work, that doesn't mean I'm not decisive, I'm not able to make a decision / A: Yeah / C: um and in the end our project was, it was three months late (pause) I think, but we got it in with the right level of quality but I do still wonder whether people look

at us and think “ah because it was you know, they couldn’t make a decision you know” so very interesting.

A: It is, it’s interesting about how people, colleagues talk about groups of women working together because I have three colleagues, we’re all doing our PhDs, we’re also part time lecturers, whenever the four of us are in a group and man will walk past and say “ooh gossiping are we” or “a mother’s meeting” / C: Oh yeah! / A: is often what we’re called / C: yeah that’s a good one./ A: And you think I don’t feel like this would happen if we were four guys.

C: Yeah, it wouldn’t would it?

A: No and it’s always so, it’s exhausting that sort of thing but yeah there seems to be a lot of these sort of this, it’s so inbuilt.

C: Yeah, men are assertive, women are pushy.

A: Yeah absolutely.

C: I get that a lot “oh yeah he’s really great, he’s really assertive he gets things done” “Oh she’s really pushy, watch out for her she’s a real ball-buster”.

A: Ball-buster is the worst

C: It’s just like (holds up hands in confusion) Well my behaviours the same actually so why is he assertive and that’s positive, I’m pushy and it’s, it’s negative you know.

A: and when someone says it, it does make you, it is a negative thing / C: It is yeah / A: And you feel it when someone says that I lose count of if you do say things or you do stand up it’s like “ooh Mrs Bossy Boots” and it’s so weird. It’s endlessly fascinating / C: It is / A: And also despairing / C: It is (laughs).

C: But we could maybe do follow up in a few months’ time because my project is, I think in the middle of September is going to hit an equivalent milestone like the one that went before and it will be really interesting to see how, just how the projects are comparing at the, when they’re at the milestone vs milestone and see whether the quality of ours is better even thought we were later.

A: I would love to hear that.

C: Yeah

A: Keep me updated

C: Mmm.

A: OK

(Recording ends)