



Women Talking Politics

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Women Talking Politics

Editor's Note:

By Dr Valentina Cardo, University of Auckland

I am immensely privileged to be opening this first edition of *Women Talking Politics*, re-launched after a five-year break. Not only is the magazine a very important research outlet for women researching, teaching and practicing politics in New Zealand institutions. *Women Talking Politics* is also a testament to NZPSA's commitment to the 'other half': the 50% that is often underrepresented in academia (as in other walks of life). Myself and the colleagues, who write, edit, sit on the board, read, comment and discuss these issues, are committed to giving the other half a voice. *Women Talking Politics* allows us to do precisely this.

This first edition would not have been possible without the help and support of the Editorial Board of *Women Talking Politics*: AP Janine Hayward, Dr Bronwyn Hayward, Dr Carla Lam, AP Priya Kurian and AP Margie Comrie. A special thanks goes to the Associate Editor Lisa Kemp, the exceptional MA student without whom this issue would not have seen the light of day. Thank you also to NZPSA President Dr Vicki Spencer for patience and guidance, as well as a generous bi-annual grant for the first two issues of *Women Talking Politics*. A personal thank you goes to Dr Kathy Smits for giving me a chance. Finally, thank you to all the contributors to this first edition of *Women Talking Politics*: you have written and revised excellent work at the shortest of notice!

**Dr. Bronwyn
Hayward**

University of
Canterbury

A Word About the Origins of *Women Talking Politics*

NZPSA *Women and Politics Newsletter* began in 1987 as a collaboration, which was initially led by members based, at the time, at Lincoln University (Dr Bronwyn Hayward), Auckland University (Dr Heather Devere) and Victoria University (Dr Elizabeth McLeay). It was very quickly supported by Dr Therese Arseneau (University of Canterbury) and Dr Ann Sullivan (University of Wellington). The first issues were spurred on by the loss of a position of Gender and Politics taught at Canterbury University by Dell Small and a general feeling of unease that there were very few women in the discipline. Initial newsletters were biannual affairs, photocopied with Kowhaiwha boards, cut and pasted (literally) around the edge of the covers and late articles hastily hand arranged on pages with tape.

These were also the days of home fax machines and, Apple computers that squatted on desks like small square shoeboxes. The technology may have changed but the same spirit of whanaungatanga (or mutual support) has not. In the early 1990s women in Parliament and the public service embraced the concept, supporting it with articles and commentary, as did the Women's Electoral Lobby and the National Council of Women. I remember being woken at 3 am to the sound of the home fax coughing into life as a handwritten piece was sent by Helen Clark, working late on housing policy. Later Jenny Shipley wrote a personal discussion on the influence a course on Rural Women Stepping Out had had and on her decision to enter politics.

(continued)

A Word About the Origins of Women Talking Politics

Over the years the newsletter has become a long lasting institution. We thank Associate Professor Janine Hayward and colleagues at the University of Otago for painstakingly scanning the copies, (as we find them!), to document the precarious evolution of women's voices and debate in political science and the passion which women feel teaching, researching and mentoring.

Today, I am reminded again that supportive networks matter as much as ever. New Zealand has witnessed significant waves of feminism (McLeay et al 2009). The first, and most well known, was the ground breaking first wave of campaigns for political enfranchisement. The second wave was the push for women's greater participation in economic life, culminating in the "girls can do anything" campaigns and celebrations of women's leadership in public life. No sooner were women stepping into the limelight, than the identity politics of third wave feminism reminded us that without inclusive critical reflection, the advancement of women can very quickly be reduced to issues of concern to an elite, white, 1%, or, as Burnham (2013) memorably puts it, concerned only about the glass ceiling and never the "floor", by which she means the complex flax roots concerns of indigenous identity, secure housing and other issues of transformative social justice (Burnham, 2013; see also Awatere 1984).

Today, as we re-launch the magazine, new feminist voices are being expressed on campuses everywhere, in a "global fourth wave of feminism" (Cockrane, 2013), which is making explicit connections between everyday issues of a living wage, LGBTB rights and new forms of online 'e-expression'. Political science as a discipline needs to connect with these debates and also provide a platform for women's research. I am delighted the project is continuing in a new form.

Awatere, Donna (1984) *Maori Sovereignty in Broadsheet: New Zealand's Feminist Magazine*

Burnham, Linda (8 April 2013) 1% Feminism in *Open Democracy*

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/linda-burnham/1-feminism>

(accessed 20 Nov 2013)

Cockrane, Kira (10 December 2013) 'The fourth wave of Feminism, Meet the Rebel Women', *The Guardian*

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/10/fourth-wave-feminism-rebel-women> (accessed 20 Nov 2014)

McLeay, Elizabeth, McMillan Kate and Leslie, John (Eds.) (2009) *Rethinking Women and Politics: New Zealand and Comparative Perspective*, Wellington: Victoria University Press

Gender and Leadership in the New Zealand Political Studies Association

I am now coming to the end of my two-year term as the NZPSA President and I am delighted we are supporting the re-launch of *Women Talking Politics* through our newly instituted Bi-Annual Grant. I am sure it will become an important vehicle that will particularly support female postgraduates and early career researchers in their publishing efforts. This year we also saw the publication of the first comprehensive survey of the (under-) representation of women in political studies in New Zealand. *Advancing the Status of Women in Political Science and International Relations in New Zealand* (Janabi, McMillan and Lam 2014) was supported by the grants Jennifer Lees-Marshment (former NZPSA President) initiated and we are currently exploring how we might implement its recommendations. These grants also assisted Jennifer Curtin (2013) to research women in the discipline. Her study notes that the NZPSA is a female-friendly organisation as evident by its last few presidents having been women. This, I have to say, is a relatively new phenomenon. Having just gone through old newsletters from the 1970s and 80s, the association was most definitely a 'boys club' in the past (NZPSA 1975-86). It is therefore interesting in light of *Advancing the Status of Women* to reflect on the factors that have contributed to this complete turnaround.

It began a mere six years ago when Janine Hayward (Treasurer) and myself (Secretary) nominated Therese Arseneau as President. Since then, the NZPSA has gone from having no official members to a vibrant and highly professional organisation. Our first task was to launch a new website that also acted as a catalyst in reinvigorating the annual conference. The next executive – Jennifer Lees-Marshment, Julianne Molineaux (Treasurer) and Xavier Marquez (Secretary) – introduced more innovations due to increased funding. Membership is now computerised, we fund an annual postgraduate workshop, have three annual student prizes, a quarterly newsletter, UK and Australian PSA conference exchanges, and we are looking into becoming a constituent member of the Royal Society and nominating potential Fellows next year. Women have not been responsible for all these initiatives. However, women have undoubtedly been central players in the revitalisation of the Association.

Partly women's greater input in recent times reflects a generational change. We have a long way to go before we achieve gender equity in our discipline, but it is far better than it was. I have wondered though at times when I've been spending my annual leave or weekends working on NZPSA activities, if the rise of women in this organisation compared to other PSAs has occurred because we do not have equivalent administrative support. NZPSA Officers actually do the bulk of the work. So the fact that many women reported feeling like department housewives in *Advancing the Status of Women* struck a chord. Of course, in the past, men were very willing to do the Association's housework and those who have not retired remain some of the most willing contributors I've been able to call on for assistance. Nonetheless, a historical correlation exists between the decreasing activity of men in the NZPSA and the introduction of New Zealand's Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) that is worth thinking about.

This correlation may be a mere coincidence, and the 2013 Annual General Meeting (AGM) did approve some administrative support. Yet even if it is an accurate gauge of men's attitudes now toward undertaking service roles, women should not follow suit. At the University of Otago, leadership in service is recognized for promotion to higher levels. Many of the activities in which the NZPSA engages are, moreover, highly important contributions to the national research environment. (continued)

Dr. Vicki A. Spencer

NZPSA
President

University of
Otago

It is true that some colleagues insufficiently value the Association's significance, and we need to overturn their misperceptions. Advancing the Status of Women notes that positions taken on by women often lose their status. But while that has undoubtedly occurred in some professions – in the Soviet Union, for example, doctors were mainly women and poorly paid in relative terms (Eaton 2004: 176-7) – it is not the case in this instance. It is precisely women who are leading the way in renewing the Association and making it increasingly relevant to the profession. The fact that its Presidency is open to those who are not professors might also mean it has less prestige than in other PSAs. However, this circumstance has also had its advantages, as it has enabled more women to gain leadership experience when professors in our discipline are disproportionately men.

Next year we are hoping to amend our Constitution's objectives and commit further to supporting traditionally under-represented groups in our discipline. These objectives might be cutting against the grain in a PBRF climate, but that only makes them more important. Ultimately, to achieve gender equity in our discipline, we need to encourage more women, not less, to get involved in collegial activities and leadership roles. The NZPSA in my experience is a great organisation in which to do that.

Curtin, J. 2013. Women and political science in New Zealand: The state of the discipline. *Political Science*. 65(1): 63-83.

Eaton, K.B. 2004. *Daily Life in the Soviet Union*. Westport, CT.: The Greenwood Press.

Janabi, A.A., McMillan, K. & Lam, C. 2014. *Advancing the Status of Women in Political Science and International Relations in New Zealand*. Available: <http://nzpsa.com/womens-caucus/> [accessed 6 November 2014].

NZPSA. 1975-86. *New Zealand Political Studies Association Newsletter*. 1(1) to 11(2). Available: <http://nzpsa.com/about/nzpsa-newsletter/> [accessed 6 November 2014].

Introducing the President of the Australian Political Studies Association Professor Linda Botterill University of Canberra

As President of the Australian Political Studies Association for 2014-15 I will be attending this year's NZPSA and I am looking forward to meeting those members of the Association who I do not already know. I am Professor in Australian Public Policy and Head of the School of Government & Policy in the Faculty of Business, Government & Law at the University of Canberra.

I have had an interesting and diverse career, coming to academia relatively late, after 15 years as a public policy practitioner in the Australian Public Service, as an advisor to two Ministers in the Keating Government and as a senior policy officer in two industry associations. My PhD examined Australian government responses to farm poverty and my research has continued to be largely based on issues facing rural Australia. Drought policy has been a major part of that work and the focus of my international collaborations and media engagement.

I am very interested in the role of values in the policy process and am currently working on a book with my long time collaborator Geoff Cockfield on the role of values in policy. This is drawing us into the fascinating world of political psychology and we currently have an Australian Research Council grant, along with a third colleague Helen Berry, taking a values analytic approach to land use conflict in rural Australia, specifically around issues such as the development of wind farms and coal seam gas.

In addition to my role in APSA, I am an active member of the Public Policy Network, which has a number of members from New Zealand who attend our annual conference in late January.

I am looking forward to being in Auckland in December and meeting new colleagues and catching up with old ones.

**Dr Heather
Devere**
University of Otago

'Women Talking Politics: Women's Conversations and Civic Friendship'

I was excited to be asked to contribute to this first issue of *Women Talking Politics*, as this is precisely where my research is now focused. Also, I was one of the first women involved in the original *Women and Politics* newsletter, and edited it for several years from both the University of Auckland and from AUT. Now I'm down in Dunedin at Otago University where the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies is located.

My work in politics has been shaped to a very large extent by friendship. Mentoring, support, inspiration has been given to me by my friends and I have been investigating for the last twenty years the politics of friendship (yes, me and Derrida!). Bronwyn Hayward (to whom we are greatly indebted for the *Women and Politics* newsletter) acknowledges my 'friendship group' research method developed for my PhD. Jennifer Curtin and I have worked together over many years and co-wrote a chapter on 'women, friendship and politics' in Elizabeth McLeay and Kate McMillan's book *Rethinking Women and Politics*. My work on international friendship treaties includes a chapter with Jane Verbitsky and Simon Mark, and an article with Michael Ligaliga on the Friendship Treaty between Samoa and New Zealand. I co-edit *AMITY: The Journal of Friendship Studies* with Graham M. Smith.

My current research engages with civic friendship as I explore this as a model for citizenship. Inspired by Sibyl Schwarzenbach's 2009 book *On Civic Friendship: Including Women in the State* where she proposes 'ethical reproductive praxis' which reproduces friendship and goodwill for an inclusive and freely chosen model for citizenship, I am arguing that the practical actions of friendship that develop the trust, solidarity and support needed for citizenship are reinforced by the informal conversations, dialogue and discussion that characterise women's friendships. So, yes, it's all about 'women talking politics'!

Derrida, Jacques (1997) *The Politics of Friendship*, London: Verso.

Heather Devere and Michael Fusi Ligaliga (2013) *Covenant or Contract: The Treaty of Friendship Between New Zealand and Samoa 1962*. *The Journal of Pacific Studies*. Vol. 33, No.2, pp. 95-111.

Devere, Heather, Mark, Simon and Verbitsky, Jane (2011) 'A History of the Language of Friendship in International Treaties', *International Politics*, Vol.48, Iss.1

McMillan, Kate, Leslie, John and McLeay, Elizabeth (2009) *Rethinking Women and Politics: New Zealand and Comparative Perspectives*, Wellington, NZ: Victoria University Press

Schwarzenbach, Sybil (2009) *On Civic Friendship: Including Women in the State*, New York: Columbia University Press

Engaging with Intersectionality, Power, Violence and Blood in Feminist Development Research

I am currently engaging in new research that builds on previous research projects on questions of security, development and urbanisation in the western Pacific, specifically in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. This work is explicitly feminist in orientation and makes use of poststructural tools to question women's experiences and engagement in development programmes, as well as the intersections between development and security. This new research project considers two contemporary development programmes in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. The first is internationally-funded anti-violence against women campaigns and the second development programme is the 'purse pad' project based around the home-based production of reusable sanitary pads. I examine the ways in which intersectionality informs both my research process but also the gendered development programmes I investigate. In the first part of the project, I examine the framing of women as uniformly victims of male-perpetrated violence, without consideration of the diverse range of women's experiences of violence and the absence of violence, plus the impact of issues such as age, ethnicity, sexuality, class and location on these experiences. The second and related part of the research project investigates a development intervention that emerged out of discussions with young women about violence and violence prevention: the 'purse pad' project. This project is run in both Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea and has engaged women around the question of menstruation management and has seemingly taken account of the multi-dimensions of their gendered identities and lives. Far from a singular development intervention, however, this project has had unexpected consequences that I am interested in, including the production and sale of the home-sewn pads at local markets, thus transforming a home-based solution to menstruation management this into a potential livelihood source.

Dr Anita Lacey

University of Auckland

Rethinking Relationships for Welfare in the 21st Century

**Associate Professor
Susan St John
University of Auckland**

Despite the recent focus on 'vulnerable children' in New Zealand, many current policies have themselves had harmful effects on the already most disadvantaged children. In particular, under the guise of 'welfare reform', punitive policies have been implemented without considering the impact on the children in the most precarious of low income families. The use of sanctions for example can see benefits cut in half, with severe impact on child well-being. Such policies operate with little transparency or accountability for the power the state wields.

My research examines a more systemic issue: the traditional reliance of using a couple as the unit in the welfare system. To determine whether or not a relationship in the nature of marriage exists is far from a black and white exercise yet it has far reaching ramifications. Policies that treat parents in relationships differently from those who are not in relationships may impose severe penalties, particularly on women, with little regard to the welfare of her children. A sole parent may be deemed to in a relationship even when that relationship has provided little or no financial support, and/or the relationship is unstable. Such a relationship makes her ineligible for Sole Parent Support (SPS) and liable for penalties and repayment. In some cases of so called 'relationship fraud' she may be prosecuted and face imprisonment and a lifetime of repayment for allegedly illegitimate payments.

In large part, the media fails to investigate and report these cases with insight and empathy, nor is the harm to the children from both the separation from a primary caregiver, and her subsequent debt and diminished income been highlighted.

Ambiguities and anomalies posed by the use of a couple as the defining unit arise differently in different parts of NZ welfare system. It is not just that there are worrying impacts on children in cases of so called relationship fraud, but that the use of marital status more generally is inconsistent and iniquitous. It has been a major contributing factor to increased poverty, income and gender inequality.

Gender on the Campaign Trail

Deborah Russell was Labour's candidate in the true blue rural electorate of Rangitikei. Despite being a 'townie' and university lecturer specialising in taxation she met acceptance and warmth across the electorate. Dr Russell also has a public profile as a feminist commentator, so we asked her, what difference did gender make on the campaign trail?

Five candidates ran in the Rangitikei electorate in the 2014 general election: four men and one woman – me. I found the gender imbalance made very little difference: I got as much airtime as any candidate and I had no difficulty in being heard at candidates' forums. I never encountered any explicit sexism myself, although members of my campaign team did. When two women were door knocking together in Taihape, an older chap looked at the leaflet about me and said, "She's a woman. A woman can't do this job". They were gobsmacked and retreated down the path, gasping in astonishment and laughing at the same time.

Most of the time, gender seemed to make very little overt difference on the campaign trail. I encountered warm support and not once was I asked how I would manage my children or my household should I be elected; nor were comments made about my appearance rather than my policies. However, gender seemed to play a role in the candidate forums.

Typically these would involve each of the candidates introducing themselves and answering questions. Some of the questions were set by organisers, some of them came from the floor. Forums are important vehicles for testing candidates' capacity to speak effectively in public. They allow voters to engage directly with candidates, testing candidates' understanding of the electorate and giving them an opportunity to learn more about each electorate. They are real grassroots democracy in action: voters engaging directly with politicians and holding politicians to account.

Forums were, in the main, organised by women. Of course men were also involved. Nevertheless, from what I could see, it was women who were taking the initiative with ensuring that grassroots democratic meetings were held, especially in tiny rural communities such as Bunnythorpe and Mangaweka. It would be interesting to know whether this was the case in other rural electorates and to what extent this initiative is driven by greater engagement of women in community activities in general.

Even though forums were generally organised by women, the questions raised at them (with few exceptions) did not address women's issues relevant to the local communities. For example, given the gendered nature of caring, access to childcare and early childhood education can be difficult in rural areas. Many rural women want to work in paid employment, but because they can't find childcare, they are unable to do so, even when there is a crying need for their skills.

(continued)

**Dr Deborah
Russell**

**Massey
University**

Access to childcare was not raised once as an issue at the forums. Nor was any other issue that related directly to women. Perhaps this was because there was only one female candidate, or perhaps it was because people preferred not to raise gendered issues. I do not think that there are no issues for women in rural electorates – for example, access to sexual and domestic violence services such as Women's Refuge and Rape Crisis can be much more difficult for rural women. What I saw was a lack of discussion of these issues in political forums, unless I raised them myself.

As ever, when the floor was opened, men asked most of the questions. This was not necessarily due to bias on the part of people chairing the forums. My perception was that more men volunteered questions and that, when they posed them, they were more inclined to make a statement, rather than just ask a simple question. As a candidate, I could not make suggestions to people organising and chairing forums about how the meetings should be run. I have, however, adopted an expedient measure myself when chairing public forums, of simply alternating male and female voices. I've been wondering whether doing this would make it more likely for issues that concern women to be raised, as audiences could see women's voices being taken seriously.

To me, there was a familiar pattern in the forums. More men were up front, taking the stage and doing public politics, while more women were in the background, doing the organising and hosting the events. But, I also saw women doing public politics and men on the business end of tea towels cleaning up after supper.

I was hardly a disinterested observer of the forums. My views of what was happening were skewed by how I was received and by my own concerns about getting my messages across clearly and being well-regarded by the audience. I'm hoping to run again in Rangitikei in the next general election and I think there could be a good research project available for someone who wanted to follow a rural electorate campaign in depth.

PhD Research

Political Agency in an Age of 'Apathy': a Study of NZ Tertiary Students

Two events happened in 2011 that suggest we know very little about tertiary students' political agency – defined here as the capacity to imagine and effect desired change (Emirbayer & Mische 1998; McCullagh 2014). The first was the series of protests and riots of Madrid, Athens and London, followed by the occupations of Wall Street and numerous other cities around the world. While students were not the only members of these movements, they nevertheless were critical in their development. The second event is closer to my home. In the wake of the 2011 Canterbury earthquakes, university students around the city formed the 'Student Volunteer Army', organised via Facebook and attracting over 26,000 followers, to shovel silt from people's properties. That movements like Occupy and the Student Volunteer Army caught many by surprise suggests a real need to rethink our existing assumptions of the political agency of tertiary students, particularly at a time when students are predominately understood as either part of a 'lazy' or 'why bother' Generation Me, or as an 'apathetic' or 'disengaged' Lost Generation.

My PhD research examines the political agency of New Zealand tertiary students. In particular, I investigate how political agency is expressed and practised by university students, explore the conditions that shape or limit their political agency, and identify the resources, cultural and institutional conditions that could support tertiary students' political agency.

Student politics and activism have often been side-lined within academic discussions, aside from when protest captures media attention. Yet this focus misses the ways that campus environments continually shape how students think about problems in the present and further along (Binder & Wood 2013; Armstrong & Hamilton 2013). As university politics is often an important step to leadership in the larger political arena, knowing about students' development and activities is particularly important. However, at present, the way students' political styles are developed and the role of universities in the process is not well understood, as most of our attention has so far focused on the background characteristics and experiences students bring to campus. Understanding the way universities nurture particular forms of student political agency is particularly relevant given the rapid transformations of the landscape of higher education over the past three decades. While the impact of these changes on academic staff has been given some scrutiny, less attention has been paid to students, especially outside of academic achievement.

Students are also being recognised, and at times targeted, by organisations and groups external to the university. For instance, the funding of right-leaning student activists in the US by conservative think tanks has begun to be recognised (Binder & Wood 2012), while UK research has pointed to the significance of targeted advertising in shaping student life. In New Zealand, this concern is all the more pressing in light of Nicky Hager's (2014) *Dirty Politics*, which reveals the efforts of some influential right-leaning figures to establish some students in a long-term political plan. These dynamics remain underreported and not well understood. Similar concerns have been raised that a great deal of political energy and contribution from students is diverted to spaces where it does not really matter.

(continued)

By Sylvia
Nissen

PhD Student

Canterbury
University

Robin D. G. Kelley (2014), for instance, suggests that many on the left are encouraging expressions of political agency that is not about thinking critically at all, but rather participating in actions already designed by (usually older) others, which may effectively function as a mode of social control that tames and channels dissent. It is unclear, however, in what ways students might be encouraged to express 'system compatible' political agency and whether this involvement limits participation in other more disruptive forms of dissent.

To investigate how political agency is expressed and shaped by New Zealand tertiary students, and how it could be supported, I am undertaking a combination of extensive participant observation, semi-structured interviews with students and document analysis. Over the past academic year I have undertaken systematic participant observation of a wide range of student-led events, mostly held at the University of Canterbury, recording my observations and impressions in full field notes as immediately as possible. In the first half of 2015 I will be undertaking a series of in-depth interviews of approximately 1 hour in length with students at all universities around New Zealand, both those students highly active in student politics as well as those less so. Throughout this time, I have also collected student publications and other relevant media. This in-depth, 'thick' approach closely mirrors those used by other researchers investigating student political agency (e.g. Binder & Wood 2013; Armstrong & Hamilton 2013). By focusing on insider meanings, rather than imposing an existing framework of understanding, it enhances the opportunity of genuinely revealing the perspectives of students and the aspects of their social world that are important to them.

- Armstrong, E. A. & Hamilton, L. T. 2013. *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Binder, A. J. & Wood, K. 2013. *Becoming Right: How Campuses Shape Young Conservatives*. Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Emirbayer, M. & Mische, A. 1998. What Is Agency? *The American Journal of Sociology*, 103 (4): 962-1023.
- Hager, N. 2014. *Dirty Politics: How attack politics is poisoning New Zealand's political environment*. Nelson: Craig Potton Publishing.
- Kelley, R. D. G. 2014. Resistance as Revelatory, in *Youth Resistance Research and Theories of Change*, edited by Eve Tuck & Kevin W. Yang. New York: Routledge: 82-96.
- McCullagh, S. M. 2014. *Limit, Collectivity, and the Capacity to Act: Reading Hannah Arendt with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari*. PhD thesis, University of Guelph.

Acknowledgements

This research is supported by a Canterbury Scholarship and the Kate Sheppard Memorial Prize. I am supervised by Dr Bronwyn Hayward from the Department of Political Science at the University of Canterbury and by Dr David Giles and Dr Aditya Malik from Anthropology.

Women Councillors' Stories of Effectiveness in New Zealand Local Government: A Feminist Hermeneutic Inquiry

There is a paucity of research about women in local government. As part of a PhD inquiry, stories of lived experience were gathered from 25 women councillors from 20 North Island New Zealand councils. The inquiry answered three questions that were absent from existing discourse: what the term effectiveness meant to the women councillors, the influences for their effectiveness and what their effectiveness looked and felt like.

Effectiveness was a lived experience.

The meaning of the women's effectiveness could be understood by the influence of their past experiences. Effectiveness was situated with a historical context, and embedded in ways of knowing and understanding that existed in relation to the women's simultaneous and multiple identities.

Childhoods, family, political experience, motherhood, employment, governance and community roles influenced the women's understanding and interpretations of their effectiveness. Hine described the importance of her diverse experience:

Having exposure to all those various things means that when I sit down at the table and there is an issue in front of me, I am looking at it with all of the different experiences and knowledge that I have. And when I make a decision, it is an informed one.

The women's stories highlighted how their rich experiences facilitated their individual and particular nature of being effective. Kura talked about "the values from a lifetime" and Anna reflected, "It is knowing who you are, as a person"

The significance of women's gendered lives emerged throughout the narratives. Anna said, "I am a woman in this time in history, so I bring a particular intellect with me... [And] as a woman I probably do bring a different perspective." The women's particular life experiences resulted in a gendered understanding about what it meant to be effective.

The meaning of effectiveness was complex.

There was no simple definition about what effectiveness meant. Effectiveness was a complex tapestry, contingent on the sum of multiple components to give it meaning. It was temporal, situated, and contextual. Effectiveness was something that was perceived, observed and realised. Effectiveness was grounded in the performance of the act and the meaning given to that performance. Pat stated:

[Effectiveness] means carrying out your plans in the best possible way. You have to take into account whether it is needed, and you have to take into account costs...and you have to have the right people. It is getting all of your ducks in a row. You do get it wrong – even if you think you have been effective i.e. you got the system running or the building built, and it might be on time and all of those things, but if the public do not see it that way, it is not really effective.

Effectiveness was more than the realisation of an outcome.

Understandings of effectiveness were subjective, and represented a view from the context within which the experience took place (Kinsella, 2006). Reflecting on a particular proposal, Rachel said, "I thought it was a great idea, but I recognised that sometimes the time has to be right for great ideas to get community buy in, and this was not the right time." Effectiveness was a process of understanding and interaction. It was an evolving and dynamic construct, realised and given meaning differently, at different times.

(continued)

By Louise
Tester

PhD
candidate

AUT
University

Women councillors' effectiveness was imbued with connection and an ethic of care

An ethic of care (Gilligan, 2011; 1982) characterised the women's effectiveness. Mackay (1998) reflected that an ethic of care had "strategic potential... [and] presents a powerful vision of a different sort of politics" (p. 261). Mary reflected how women's attachment to their world influenced the nature of their effectiveness:

As women councillors, we tend to try to relate all of the decisions we make to the community, to how the decision affects our families...For many of the blokes, it is 'How much is this going to cost? And how long is it going to take?' The women seem to be focussed on the social aspect, and the men on the mechanical aspect.

The ability of the women to hear other voices was central to the understanding about what it meant to be effective. Kura said, "You can't go wrong if you are helping somebody." Sarah said that effective councillors, "actually have to believe in people, they actually have to believe that people are worthwhile and worth working with." Being effective was not a solitary or selfish endeavour, and care was a force that gave meaning to the women councillors acts.

Conclusion

The research inquiry has shown that the women councillors acted in ways that reflected their lives, their relationships and their historical consciousness. The women's performances were representations of themselves, in all of the various forms of their identities, and vicissitudes of their lives. The interpretations about whether something was effective were countless. Effectiveness was a lived experience.

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Engendering Pensions: A Gender Assessment of the Pension System Reform in Mongolia

Mongolia, a country with 70 years of socialist history, has been going through a transition since 1990 from a central planning to a market economy with huge structural changes and public policy reforms. One of these involves the pension system with a move from a wage-based system to a lifetime contribution-based system. This reform, introduced with assistance from USAID, is inspired by a neoliberal ideology that encourages individualisation, privatisation and the tightening of social welfare programmes. Projections show that pensions, on average, will be reduced substantially from 45 to 20 per cent of the pre-retirement salaries with women receiving pension benefits about 10 per cent lower than men's (ILO, 2010; World Bank, 2011).

This thesis undertakes a gender analysis of pension reform in Mongolia, and addresses the following research questions: What were the main determinants of the pension system reforms? What discursive norms and values underpin the framing of the system? How has the internationally dominant neoliberal discourse been interpreted in Mongolia? What are the gender implications of the reforms?

(continued)

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For the analysis of the degree of gender sensitivity of the pension scheme, five indicators have been developed to inform the analysis of the Mongolian pension system. These indicators seek to take account of the way the pension system is located with the broader spectrum of social security and they are informed by key insights from scholarship in the field of gender, pensions and social policy. The indicators focus on (1) employment opportunities for women during working lives, (2) recognition of the economic importance of social reproduction and care-giving, (3) the degree of redistribution towards women and recognition of women, (4) intra-household inequality, and (5) the wider social safety net.

Adolescent Girls, Agency and Empowerment: Transformational Change for Development

With 2015 fast approaching we edge closer to the final countdown towards achieving the overarching eight global development commitments articulated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). My PhD thesis is a study of policy translation of MDG3 vis-à-vis a gender-based development project in India. MDG3 is a commitment to promote gender equality and empower women through education, remuneration and political participation. There is currently a gap in academic and practitioner-based research in studying how a global Goal translates into on-the-ground reality. My thesis, therefore, explores how MDG3 is translated into local developing country contexts, specifically India, and how ideas of young women's agency, autonomy, and empowerment are interpreted through the lens of local culture.

In addition, although there is an extensive scholarship around gender and development, there has been little attention paid to adolescent girls and what empowerment and development may mean to them individually and collectively. My thesis focuses on an analysis of *Deepshikha*, a UNICEF-supported programme in rural Maharashtra, India since 2008. *Deepshikha* is an education project designed to equip adolescent girls with life-skills to make informed choices, individually and collectively, and to affect change in their communities. The adolescent girls learn to negotiate with peers, family members and community in a democratic forum, thereby bolstering their agency and their ability to empower themselves and their communities.

My research reveals that each level of translation (from the globally-mandated Goal to local policy) represents a distinct forum in which shared debate furthers the creation, refinement or monitoring of policy. In Third World democratic contexts such as in India, transformational change is undoubtedly linked to notions of agency and autonomy. Through programmes such as *Deepshikha*, adolescent girls are learning about their potential roles in emerging forms of Third World citizenship and democratic processes. They thus embody particular ways of translating MDG3 into the culturally-specific local realities of rural India.

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MA Research

A Feminist Approach to Dialectical Utopianism

By Stevie
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The term 'utopia' conjures many scenarios; idealistic societies where we can indulge in the things we love and overly prescriptive communities where we are to fall in line to maintain the perfect status quo. There are links to failed Socialist regimes, radical activists and segregated communes. Most scholars are unwilling to identify as a utopian theorist, and why would they when our conception of utopia is typically a naive and problematic fantasy? My research considers what a reconceptualisation of utopia would look like, and if, in particular, it could overcome the critical baggage that the term is tied to presently.

Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* has been chosen as somewhat of a case study, given its radical feminist utopian reputation and its overt links to Marxist dialectics, a theoretical tool which is to be used in the 'new' utopianism suggested in the thesis. Firestone's utopia, famous for the suggestion of separating women from the 'tyranny of reproduction', has been unfairly characterised as dualistic, authoritarian, and subsequently, for prescribing a closed society with little room for dynamism. The book is an example of how a generally narrow understanding of utopianism can produce a widespread misreading of particular utopian scenarios. Commentators who conceptualise utopia in the previously discussed naive, fantastical way overlook the dialectical method that Firestone uses in her penultimate chapter "The Dialectics of Cultural History", which precedes the final and most famous "The Ultimate Revolution: Demands and Speculations." They do not see Firestone's potential for providing a unique and nuanced dialectical analysis of sexual and gendered relations, instead, simplifying her in order to condemn her.

The mischaracterisation of three major aspects of Firestone's writing; feminism, utopianism and Marxism has added to the unpopularity of her work. Part of understanding a new utopian method is therefore dismantling earlier portrayals of what these three things represent. For this reason, feminist interpretations of dialectical materialism and utopianism have been chosen in order to parallel similarly maligned ideologies and remain relevant to Firestone. The penultimate chapter of *The Dialectic of Sex*, "Dialectics of Cultural History" is a combination of dialectical materialism and feminist theory which maintains the utopian aspirations of the rest of the book. This chapter, I argue, is an example of how a 'dialectical utopianism', a phrase taken from David Harvey's *Spaces of Hope*, can be used to renew utopian theory in a way that overcomes earlier criticisms, as well as generating productive outcomes.

A dialectical utopianism draws on Marxist dialectical materialism and emphasises the importance of analysing dynamic relationships as part of a larger whole. While Harvey's emphasis was on the synthesis of space and time, the role of dialectical utopianism would be to analyse the relationship between materialism and idealism, and understand how seemingly oppositional forces can become 'productive antagonisms'. The benefit of a renewed dialectical utopianism lies in its ability to bridge what have been positioned as oppositional binaries in the past. Idealism and materialism do not have to remain mutually exclusive concepts; the relationship between thinking and acting is one that thrives in a dialectical framework, reframing utopia as a conceptual tool for all stages of social and political change. A new utopian theory must be one that engages with these 'oppositional' sides simultaneously to remain relevant and useful.

(continued)

The demise of utopia, discussed early in the research, is the result of changes in our political understandings of the world around us; the shift towards neoliberalism undermining the strength of imagination and group action. Utopia is a casualty of the championing of individualisation and personal responsibility. Understanding how this can be reversed should be important to any scholars who wish to analyse the potential for group activism and wider ideological change. Utopia has multiple roles in social and political movements; as a signal of hope, as something to move towards, as a critique of current situations, and, as a dialectical framework to analyse society. It is important to focus on this aspect of feminist theory as it can, and does have political consequences, both material and ideological. Using a dialectical utopian approach, a moment of feminist praxis can be reached where one "consciously acts in the world, changing it and testing it and deepening one's understanding of it all at the same time" (Ollman and Smith, 2008: 11). The evolution of behaviour and thinking will come to shape the future of individual and collective feminist action.

Ollman, Bertell and Smith, Tony (2008) (eds.) *Dialectics for the New Century*, London: Palgrave Macmillan

Current Research

Dr Amy Fletcher (2014) *Mendel's Ark: Biotechnology and the Future of Extinction*, Springer.

This month Dr Amy Fletcher launched her new book, *Mendel's Ark: Biotechnology and the Future of Extinction* (Springer, Netherlands 2014). In it she asks: does extinction have to be forever? As the global extinction crisis accelerates, scientists increasingly use advanced biotechnologies such as reproductive cloning and bioinformatics in the urgent effort to save species. *Mendel's Ark* considers the ethical, cultural and social implications of using these tools for wildlife conservation. Drawing upon sources ranging from science to science fiction, the book focuses on the stories we tell about extinction and the meanings we ascribe to nature and technology. The book integrates science, technology and society studies with environmental studies and engages with the controversial new rhetoric of "de-extinction." It will be of interest to scholars in such emerging areas as animal studies and post-humanities, as well as established disciplines such as political science and anthropology. The use of biotechnology in conservation is redrawing the boundaries between animals and machines, nature and artefacts and life and death. The degree to which we engage collectively with both the prosaic and the fantastic aspects of biotechnological conservation will shape the boundaries and ethics of our desire to restore lost worlds.

Dr Rachel Simon-Kumar (School of Population Health, University of Auckland/School of Social Sciences, The University of Waikato) has a current research programme in the area of gender and politics that follows two strands of work: the first focuses on the experiences of engagement and collaboration between women's community organisations and government in New Zealand. The research draws on fieldwork with women's organisations in New Zealand and include case studies of collaboration in the sexual violence and abuse sector. Papers from this research are currently under review.

A second strand is focused on gender in global and development contexts, examining reproductive health politics in India. A recent publication titled "Sexual Violence in India: Discourses of Rape and Discourses of Justice" in the *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* (Sage Publishers, October 2014) surveys the debates surrounding the causes and the remedial intervention to punish and prevent rape that emerged in the wake of the Delhi rape incident of 2012 in local Indian and international media. The paper particularly draws attention to the explanations around economic and social inequity as the basis for sexual violence in developing countries. Another paper in this strand "Claiming the State: Revisiting Women's Reproductive Identity in India's Development Policy", also located in the Indian context, undertakes a critical feminist evaluation of India's Reproductive and Child Health policy, using a WCD (Women, Culture and Development framework). To be published as part of the *Feminist Futures* edited volume (Zed Books, 2nd edition, forthcoming 2015), the paper critiques the ideological framework underpinning India's leading reproductive health and population policy which, since its inception in 1996 on the heels of the International Conference on Population and Development, 1994, has been promoted as a gender-sensitive policy.

Rachel is also on the Editorial Collective of the *Women's Studies Journal of Aotearoa New Zealand*. The Collective is in the process of commissioning review essays that survey contemporary feminist theorising and research in New Zealand in a range of disciplinary areas, including politics and law. These essays are expected to be published in forthcoming issues (the *WSJ* is a bi-annual journal with issues in December and June/July).

Forthcoming Research

Bhavnani, K-K, Foran, J., Kurian, P. & Munshi, D. (Eds) (2015, forthcoming) *Feminist Futures: Re-imagining Women, Culture and Development*. Revised second edition. London: Zed Books.

This is a revised and updated version of an important volume that links women, culture, and development to assess the situation of women across many sites in the Third World and understand how women are resisting the conditions in which they find themselves.

Straddling disciplines and geographical regions, this book weaves together scholarship and social change activism and juxtaposes the past, present and the future to provide a fresh look at the situation of women in the Third World. It reveals how Development has failed the Third World and opens up an understanding of the complex ways women are resisting the conditions in which they find themselves. Working at the intersection of cultural studies, feminist studies, and critical development studies, the contributors to the volume articulate a radically innovative framework that they call Women, Culture and Development (WCD) and apply it to a range of issues including sexuality and the gendered body; environment, technology and science; and the cultural politics of representation.

One goal of the WCD approach is to ensure that political economy is not defined as a domain that is privileged above that of culture, but that culture is seen as operating simultaneously with political economy. Thus contributors analyse the complex ways in which culture in all its myriad forms both shapes and is shaped by the term 'woman', and also examine how culture is created by women across the Third World. Finally, the volume interrogates the way in which the use of culture(s) permits the expression of alternative, sustainable and empowering forms of development.

The chapters, authored by leading academics and activists as well as a new generation of scholars, include a mix of theoretically informed chapters, case studies and a set of shorter essays which introduce visions of the future through the prism of exciting new work in the field.

Kurian, P., Munshi, D. & Mundkur, A. (2015) "The Dialectics of Power and Powerlessness in Transnational Feminist Networks: On-line Struggles around Gender-based Violence", in Harcourt, W. & Baksh, R. (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Transnational Feminist Movements*. London & New York: Oxford University Press.

Transnational feminist networks (TFNs) increasingly use the internet to mobilise people as well as create vibrant spaces to debate and respond to global, national and local issues. Despite their success in generating support for feminist issues, they remain fraught spaces where global agendas may trump local articulations of issues. This chapter explores the debates, discussions, and uses of virtual spaces by TFNs and local activists on the issue of violence against women, which invoke notions of gendered citizenship, to examine the competing dialectics of power and powerlessness amongst feminist activists. The analysis explores the response to the issue of violence against women by the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), and two TFNs, namely, Women Living Under Muslim Law (WLUML) and *50 Million Missing*. It then examines ideas of citizenship embedded in social media postings by men and women in India responding to the gang-rape and murder of a young woman in Delhi in December 2012. The wide national and international attention given to the Delhi gang-rape and the huge flow of online discussions on the case allows an exploration of how diverse networks of women and men simultaneously negotiate "the cultural politics of cyberspace" (Escobar, 1999, p. 32) alongside the place-based politics of gender and cultural violence. The analysis shows how the discourses of gender and violence are characterised by both power and powerlessness.

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