UCL Institute of Education

Eventful Gender:

An Ethnographic Exploration of Gender Knowledge Production at International Academic Conferences

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Declaration

I, Emily Frascatore Henderson, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where the information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

The concept of gender is both celebrated and maligned in academic discourse; gender is credited with opening up or closing down debates, including or excluding concepts and the groups they designate. But how does gender come to mean what it means? This thesis is a deconstructive study of gender, which explores the conceptual negotiations that establish 'what counts' as gender. I argue that conceptual work on gender is bound up in political contestations which affect how social identities and processes entailed in thinking about gender are expressed and understood. The study is located in the embodied 'context' of international academic knowledge production, where conceptual negotiations cannot rely on familiar understandings of gender. Three national women's studies association conferences were researched, in the United Kingdom, United States and India. The study used an ethnographic approach which included pre- and post-conference interviews with c.10 participants per conference, and a group meeting; materials collected from the conferences; autoethnographic research on the conferences and my doctoral trajectory.

The thesis moves through a cumulative theorisation, which involves four stages of deconstructive analysis derived from Derrida's oeuvre. The first stage establishes gender as '*critical concept*'; I analyse participants' conceptual negotiations around what gender is and does. The second stage entails '*surrounding*' the concept of gender; I use autoethnographic research to explore participants' and conference delegates' performative 'surrounding' of gender with intersectionality. Thirdly, '*marking out*' focuses on conference conventions, which are understood in the study as bearing their own performative and citational qualities for the conceptualisation of gender. Finally, in seeking the '*chink/crevice*' in the concept of gender, I ask if something unexpected can 'happen' to gender: an event. The study as a whole theorises 'eventful gender' as conceptual work that is inextricable from embodied, situated and mobile analyses of academic practice and knowledge construction and production.

'Du moment qu'on est perdu
et qu'on n'a donc plus rien à écrire,
à perdre,
on écrit.'

(Marguerite Duras, Ecrire, 1993, p. 22)

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Thank you to my parents, John Henderson and Karen Henderson. I really struck lucky to have you two in my life.

Finally, thank you to Holly Henderson. When we made our promises to each other, when I promised you my every day, the days of this year were not quite what I had in mind. However, true to your promise, you have stayed with me and beside me as I have explored, you have kept me steady and within sight of home. As you said, our home is in our safety and our reaching; one could not be without the other – this would have been unthinkable and unthought without you.

Abbreviations and notes on the text

Abbreviations

AERA   American Educational Research Association.

AFSPA   Armed Forces Special Protection Act.

ASHE   Association for the Study of Higher Education, US.

B&B   Bed and Breakfast (type of accommodation).

BERA   British Educational Research Association.

BSA   British Sociological Association.

CEDREF   Le centre d'enseignement, de documentation et de recherches pour les études féministes (Centre for the teaching, documentation and research of feminist studies), Université Paris 7, France.

CHEER   Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research, University of Sussex, UK.

CHES   Centre for Higher Education Studies, University College London Institute of Education, UK.

CRHED   Centre for Research on Higher Education and Development, University of the Free State, South Africa.

CMT   Conceptual Metaphor Theory.

CU   City University (see references to Nicolazzo, 2015).

E4   'Engendering Empowerment: Education and Equality' Conference, convened by UNGEI, Dakar, Senegal, 2010.

ESRC   Economic and Social Research Council, UK.

FWSA   Feminist and Women's Studies Association, UK and Ireland.

GEA   Gender and Education Association.

GWO   Gender, Work and Organization.

HE	Higher Education.
HEI	Higher Education Institution.
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus infection/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.
IAWS	Indian Association of Women's Studies.
IOE	Institute of Education (formerly of the University of London, now of UCL), UK.
LGBTQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, queer.
MOC	Masculine of center.
M/o DONER	Ministry of Development of North East Region, India.
MOOC	Massive open online course.
MSM	Men who have sex with men.
n.d.	No date, i.e. the cited publication is not dated.
n.p.	No page, i.e. the cited publication has no numbered pages.
NWSA	National Women's Studies Association, US.
OIV	Overseas Institutional Visit.
RHEA	*Research into Higher Education Abstracts*.
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, UK.
SRHE	Society for Research into Higher Education.
THE	*Times Higher Education* magazine.
tr.	Translated.
UCL	University College London, UK.
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative.
UFS	University of the Free State, South Africa.

UK   United Kingdom.

US   United States.

USA   United States of America.

WGFS   Women's, Gender and Feminist Studies (see references to
            Pereira, 2011; 2012).

Notes on translated texts

In the thesis I have used some texts in French. Where an English translation is available, I have included this in the main body of the text, and have included the French as a footnote. In some cases (marked with 'tr.'), where a translation was not available, I have translated the French into English, and have included the French in the footnote.

I have referred between English and French versions of Derrida's oeuvre; I have included these below in order to facilitate identification of texts from the in-text referencing.

List of texts used by Derrida, for reference

In the thesis text, references to Derrida's oeuvre are indicated by the year of the edition used. I have therefore listed the French and English texts by date, to enable the reader to check an in-text date reference against this list.

French editions:

Derrida, J. (1967). *De la grammatologie*. Paris: Editions de minuit.

Derrida, J. (1972a). *La dissémination*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

Derrida, J. (1972b). *Marges de la philosophie*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

Derrida, J. (1972c). *Positions: Entretiens avec Henri Ronse, Julia Kristeva, Jean-Louis Houdebine, Guy Scarpetta*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit.

Derrida, J. (2001). *L'université sans condition*. Paris: Galilée.

English editions:

Derrida, J. (1976). *Of grammatology*. Translated from French by G. C.
Spivak. Baltimore, MD; London: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Derrida, J. (1982). *Margins of philosophy*. Translated from French by A. Bass.
Brighton: Harvester Press.

Derrida, J. (2004a). *Dissemination*. Translated from French by B. Johnson. London:
Continuum.

Derrida, J. (2004b). *Positions*. Translated from French by A. Bass. London:
Continuum.

Derrida, J. (2002). *Without alibi*. Translated from French by P. Kamuf.
Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Chapter 1
A 'welcome'

It is never possible to predict what will throw us off course in our conceptual understanding of gender. Waking up to the reactivity of this concept, to its myriad possibilities for signification, to the range and strength of affective responses it provokes, can happen at any time, in any place. In coming and going: a giant gnome towering over the entrance to a tiny university beyond the outskirts of Chicago; ornate teapots displayed on lurid cloth up the stairs to a bed and breakfast in Nottingham; an interminable feminist river cruise in deep fog on the Brahmaputra; a hand gently stroking my thigh in the Paris métro on the way to an International Women's Day event. In sitting and listening: Femen; genital examinations; AFSPA; Afrikaner intersectional identity; princess culture; *mariage pour tous*; Fat Studies. In asking and discussing: girls versus girlhood versus girlhoods; intersectionality as US women of color, as Black British Feminism, as trans*, as caste and class; cis-gendered versus female-bodied versus assigned female gender at birth... This clumsy and incomplete set of enumerations provides a taste of some of the re-orientations that my concept of gender – as a concept in its own right and as an umbrella term for any number of other concepts – has taken over the course of my doctoral research. I have begun in this way, with these disjointed lists, because throughout my doctoral 'journey' I have actively sought out situations where I would be thrown off course in my gender thinking, and indeed it is this being thrown off course that is the nearest thing to stability in the research process in which I have engaged.

By way of a beginning, I offer a 'welcome' rather than an introduction. A welcome is more appropriate as this opening is in effect an exhortation to join me in the position that I have occupied without reprieve since beginning my doctoral work. It is a position of exposure, of instability and vulnerability, a position without clear limits or breaks. Having occupied so many spaces marked and unmarked by the concept of gender, I mark out this thesis as the place to bring together many of the negotiations around this concept that I have witnessed and participated in over the last few years.

It is therefore a welcome that performatively demarcates a place: this thesis as a single spatio-temporalisation of the ongoing conceptualisation of gender. It is moreover a welcome that reflects the 'site' of this research, namely dissemination spaces, in particular academic conferences. In the construction of this thesis, as I shall go on to explain further, I have taken inspiration from the form and conventions of oral dissemination by attempting to reflect in my textual performance some of the processes of speaking, listening and being physically present that are overtly discernible within academic spaces, but often dissimulated in the written text. As such this 'welcome' makes a primary gesture towards the construction of the thesis as never just a written representation of an already-achieved research process. Rather, as this welcome conveys, the thesis is itself viewed as the construction of yet another dissemination space in which the negotiations around gender that I present are themselves caught up in the negotiations of gender between the narrator and reader.

Definitional politics

The concept of gender is resistant to definition: the signifier 'gender' has no accurate synonyms, no literal signified – we cannot point to an object, indicating 'this is gender'. This lack of literal referent ensures that the concept is open to multiple meanings, to the negotiation of its signification. It is not simply an abstract noun, because it is generally used to refer to something on or about bodies, interpretations and manifestations of bodies. This non-specific connection between the signifier gender and its non-specific referent results in the destabilisation of both the signifier and the signified – a troubling, therefore, of signification in general. Gender does not leave us in peace, or in one piece, while we are asking it to do our conceptual work. Not only does defining gender arrange and rearrange what it refers to, but the act of definition also acts upon what gender is, and what it can be – and what we can be in relation to gender.

This thesis, in one view, makes no attempt to define gender. In another view, it is in its entirety a definition *of* gender, and is therefore also

defined *by* gender. In a strict sense of a definition, I would offer a brief, cogent statement about the meaning of gender. In a looser version, I can consider that each time the term gender is used, each time it is coupled with, replaced with or replaces other terms, it is being defined. Each time gender is used, it is being mobilised to carve out or reinforce an area of thinking, that, with or without intention, with or without direct explanation, is being shifted and redetermined. This view of definition could be labeled 'definitional politics', in that the concern is not centred on achieving a 'true', accurate or comprehensive definition of the term; the focus is on practices of definition as including and excluding different possibilities for gender. These practices are inherently political because they are accompanied not just by possibilities for a more or less inclusive, intersectional or feminist version of gender, but also by the possibilities that each conceptual constellation opens up or closes down for different forms of existence. A common example of this would be to state that 'gender is about men and women', a conceptual formulation which excludes any gendered existences that do not identify squarely with these two terms. As such, perhaps the core message of this thesis, if it can be said to have such a message, is that each time 'gender' and related terms are used, whether it is intended and desired or not, the manner in which they are used makes a political gesture towards the potential of the concept and therefore towards the potential for gendered existence. The deconstruction of gender that this thesis enacts detaches the signifier 'gender' – and its related terms – from any naturalised definition. In so doing, I highlight the political impetus that accompanies the act of conceptualisation. Inevitably the deconstruction that I offer can be considered in itself a definition of gender – to make this explicit, I conceptualise my act of definitional politics as a deliberate ongoing detachment and reattachment of signifier to signified, in a manner which destabilises signifier, signified and signification in general.

In this study I do not just take gender as a signifier that relates to bodies. I have been following the conceptual life that gender leads in universities, higher education, academia, whichever term we choose for my research 'site'. The term 'university' does not work because I have deliberately sought sites that collect together people who, in their everyday

existence, inhabit universities, but who are temporarily extracted from their 'home' institution for a conference or event. 'Higher education' is also not accurate, as, although it can act as a short-hand for anything that happens in and in connection with universities (Tight, 2012), some of my work on conferences has been rejected from a higher education conference and a higher education journal on the grounds that conferences are not 'higher education'. 'Academia' is also an unsatisfactory term, as it tends to denote those who are lecturing and researching in universities (see eg. Flood, Martin and Dreher, 2013; Gonzales and Nunez, 2014; Savigny, 2014), and my study also incorporates students' analyses, as well as those occupying the activist-academic hyphenation (Pereira, 2015). In fact the problem of naming the 'site' of my research goes hand in hand with the project of charting gender's 'conceptual life'.

In conversation with my friend and colleague Z Nicolazzo (Personal communication, 8 January 2015), I described the anxiety that was surrounding my engagement with the literature on gender in higher education. I referred to the number of studies that were out there and, the range of contexts and aspects of higher education that they encompassed. I tried to express the disconnect I was feeling between the studies that were scattered across my floor, and my own project of conceptualising gender. Z pointed out that much research into higher education involves separating off a 'portion' of higher education from an otherwise unmanageable mass; rather than selecting a 'portion' of higher education to study, such as leadership or student retention, I have selected 'gender'. 'Gender' is not a portion: it cuts across portions. Gender and its related terms are used to designate the gendered bodies and identities that circulate in higher education spaces, and as institutional and disciplinary markers to name courses, research centres, departments, committees, qualifications, job titles. Gender is also used as a concept for research in conjunction with *and* independently from institutional and disciplinary locations that are marked by gender – as such, it is perfectly possible to conduct gender research in a department that is completely isolated from any institutional affiliation with gender. Gender can also form part of a person's academic identity, where 'academic identity' refers to an academic's understanding of their self and

life within or connected to academia or higher education (see eg. Clegg, 2008a, 2008b; Evans and Nixon, 2015; Leibowitz, Ndebele and Winberg, 2013; Walker, 1998; Ylijoki and Ursin, 2013).

In exploring the significations that gender is given across different – but highly interconnected – domains of 'higher education', this study aims to bring discussions around the concept of gender together with the academic contexts and processes that construct and are constructed by gender. I take the stance that the way that gender is defined, and defined in its usage, has far-reaching consequences. Insofar as universities continue to be major sites of gender knowledge production, the way that gender is constructed in – and constructs – academia has consequences not only for those who are researching and teaching gender in academia, but also the graduates of universities who go on to work in other fields, their future colleagues and stakeholders, the partners and participants of academic research projects, the funders, partners and recipients of consultancy and intervention work, the families, friends and networks of those connected with gender work. When 'gender' is funded, mainstreamed, fought for and rejected, differing conceptualisations of gender mean that different concerns, different lives are funded, mainstreamed, fought for and rejected. The possibilities for different conceptualisations of gender to exist within the university are likely to be affected by institutional arrangements; the conceptualisations of gender used in research are affected and affect these arrangements; the academic identity of those working with gender is enmeshed in and determines the mobilisation of different understandings of gender. What gender *can* be, then, is embedded in discussions of what gender *is* – what gender *is* not just as a signifier of bodies and identities, but also as a signifier of the very conditions within academia which in turn contribute to its conceptual existence within academia. In thinking about what gender *is*, I have been led to think about what we are trying to do when we define gender, when we put it to work, and how gender comes to mean what it means.

Gender in motion

My research project has deliberately eschewed the notion of a research 'site'. Universities and other HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) almost always form the 'site' of higher education research. My experiences of researching with students who are participating in distance higher education (Henderson, 2012d; 2015b), and attending academic conferences that are held in hotels or superimposed onto university campuses (Henderson, 2015a), have led me to question the ways in which higher education research tends to be structured around the locus of the HEI. McAlpine and Norton's (2006) notion of 'nested contexts', in which any one individual in a higher education system is understood as participating at a number of different levels[1], goes some way towards breaching the divide between the HEI and beyond, but the physical 'site' of the HEI is still not contested as *the* site for researching higher education. There is a growing number of social and conceptual conditions that are changing the notion of the university as *the* research site for higher education and academic practice. In the UK, for example, HEIs are diversifying as Further Education colleges in the UK are taking a greater role in providing degree-level courses (Bathmaker et al., 2008; Feather, 2011; Feather, 2013), and internationally private providers are increasing their share of the market (Fielden, 2013; Panigrahi, 2015). The advent and global growth of MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) (Baggaley, 2014; Nisha and Senthil, 2015) and the increase in courses offered in an e-learning mode (Carroll, 2013; Unterhalter and Carpentier, 2010; Wright, Dhanarajan and Reju, 2009) mean that the physical campus no longer fully contains a university's activities. The spread of international branch campuses (Ahmad and Buchanan, 2015; Franklin and Alzouebi, 2014; Wilkins and Huisman, 2012) and regional hubs (Cheng, Mahmood and Yeap, 2013; Knight, 2014; Lo, 2015) also mean that a university may have multiple locations.

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[1] Tight's (2012, p. 10) 'levels' of higher education range from studying an individual through institutions to national and regional systems.

In parallel with these changes and developments, theorisations of higher education are also attempting to open the imaginary of higher education to a less specifically located place. Barnett (2000) has conceptualised higher education as operating in 'an age of supercomplexity', where '[t]he fundamental frameworks by which we might understand the world are multiplying and are often in conflict' (p. 6). One of the effects of 'supercomplexity' is that universities themselves are open to multiple interpretations, where 'boundaries between universities and the wider society…[are being] breached' (Barnett, 2004, p. 195). The 'ivory tower' is giving way to '"clusters", "hubs" and "networks"' (Robertson, 2009, pp. 26-27); Standaert (2012, pp. 88-90), charting the development of the university over time through metaphors, ends up at the 'web', which depicts a university that is 'driven by networks, interdisciplinary connections, real and virtual meeting points and collaborations, both at a local as well as at an international (global) level'. Kavanagh (2012, p. 101) represents the university as 'a shape shifter, a chameleon and a trickster, always open to the possibility of transformation'. While these alternative, deliberate metaphorisations of the university are helpful in imaginatively extending understandings of the university beyond the restricted and bounded 'ivory tower' (Barnett, 2011), they are more difficult to extend into empirical research. In my 'official fieldwork' and my doctoral trajectory as a whole I have tried to connect these imaginative theorisations of the university with the possibilities of empirical research.

But there is a further reason why I have chosen to suspend my research project in a zone of motion and mobility. In accordance with sociologists who are seeking to develop methodological and conceptual means to analyse the global hyper-mobility of the contemporary age (Büscher and Urry, 2009; Urry, 2007; Urry and Larsen, 2011), I have sought to capture the multi-sited and transient existence of an academic traveller (Barnett and Phipps, 2005; Cabanis and Martin, 2010; Fahey and Kenway, 2010b; Kim, 2014; Parker and Weik, 2014). Rather than viewing gender as uniquely conceptualised within a university, I have sought to represent the dynamic flow of people and concepts in global academia. It is undoubtedly more difficult to conduct research that is underpinned by the notion of the

'global' – rather than the 'international' – aspect of higher education. Here I employ *international* higher education to mean 'relations across national borders' and 'institutions situated within national systems' (Marginson, 2007, p. 8), and *global* higher education to signify 'a dynamic process that draws the local, national and global dimensions more closely together' (ibid.). In David's (2011) article entitled 'Overview of researching global higher education', and Chapter 2 of *Feminism, Gender and Universities* (David, 2014a), 'Gender equality in global higher education', many of the studies that are included are marked by nation-based signifiers which identify them, according to Marginson's distinction, as *international* studies. In the later chapters of *Feminism, Gender and Universities*, however, space is given in abundance to the intricacies of feminist academics' individual trajectories: we discover a rich fabric of *global* knowledge production, in which experiences of studying abroad, relocating, and collaborating internationally seem to speak back to the geographical simplifications and reifications that are common in *international* comparisons of higher education systems. Echoing this disconnect, researchers in the field of international student mobility have highlighted the tension between *international* and *global* readings of higher education, by complicating the national constructions of 'home' and 'host' country and exploring the ways in which international students engage in global learning and knowledge production (Bilecen, 2013; Robinson-Pant, 2005; van Oorschot, 2013).

Studying academic mobility is therefore one way of engaging with the global dimension of higher education. Much of the existing research on academic mobility tends to concentrate on longer stays, of one year and above (Kim, 2010; Kim and Brooks, 2012; Kim and Locke, 2010; Maadad and Tight, 2014). However academic mobility also occurs on a much more regular basis, where academics and students travel for institutional visits, conferences, research trips, and exchange schemes. Of course this mobility is not by any means evenly distributed globally, regionally, nationally, or within institutions (Kim, 2009; Unterhalter and Carpentier, 2010). In full awareness that any study that encompasses mobility will only ever take into consideration those who *can* move, nonetheless I consider that taking sites

of mobility is a valuable contribution to the study of gender in academia. In my study, by taking dissemination spaces, in particular conferences, as my research site, I have been able to work with multiple views of gender both in connection with participants' 'home' university or universities and as situated within the conference space as a site of mobility and connection. This approach attempts to capture the academic motion that Fahey and Kenway (2010a, p. 568) assert has even become a replacement for 'home' for a global elite of mobile academics.

Not only has conducting research in multiple sites allowed me to access a huge variety of gender conceptualisations, but it has also permitted me to repeatedly unfix my own conceptualisation of gender. I have travelled extensively during my doctoral research, benefitting from the opportunities available in my ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) funded studentship. My 'official' doctoral 'fieldwork' was conducted at three national Women's Studies conferences:

- FWSA ('Feminist and Women's Studies Association, UK and Ireland'), Nottingham, UK, June 2013.
- NWSA ('National Women's Studies Association'), Cincinnati, Ohio, US, November 2013.
- IAWS ('Indian Association for Women's Studies'), Guwahati, Assam, India, February 2014.

At these conferences, I conducted research using ethnographic and autoethnographic approaches to explore the interpretations and manifestations of gender, and I recruited c.10 participants for each conference, who assisted me in shifting my gender conceptualisations and co-analysed the conferences with me both during the conferences and in interviews after the conferences. I conducted informal pilot work to develop my research approach at the GEA (Gender and Education Association) Conference in London in April 2013. In addition to this, I participated in the OIV (Overseas Institutional Visit) scheme[2], where I attended Gender Studies classes and seminars in Paris (February-March 2013, October 2013,

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[2] A scheme attached to the ESRC studentships, where students can apply for a grant to visit a university or research centre outside of the UK.

February 2015); I have participated in a PhD Partnering Scheme[3] with researchers and doctoral students at the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Development (CRHED) at UFS (University of the Free State), South Africa (London, April 2013; Bloemfontein, May 2014, Bloemfontein, October 2015). I have also organised, attended and presented at a large number of gender-related events in several different UK-based and international locations.

I have travelled across geographical boundaries in my quest for a conceptualisation of gender that resists being organised and closed down. Because of my own position of mobility, conceptual and embodied, and my project to explore gender in dynamic and shifting sites of higher education and academia, this thesis can only ever be a textual performance of something quite unrepresentable. Now grasping at, now embracing, now flinging away – a kaleidoscopic proliferation of gender (Spade and Valentine, 2011) – a concept layered with movement. The name I have given this concept, the concept that lies at the heart of this thesis, that which underpins the research ethos and the practices of writing that have contributed to its production, is 'eventful gender'. To take a shortcut through the routes that this thesis traces out in exploring this concept, I offer a preliminary definitional statement: 'eventful gender is about trying the impossible to see what happens'. As I will go on to show in Chapters 6-8, this definition is rooted in theorisations of the performative and gender performativity; rooted there, but located here, in a possible location for thinking beyond or outside of the performative. This location is the notion of the 'event' that Derrida (2001; 2002) sets out in his essay 'University without condition'[4] as contesting the performative act and its associations of making things happen (see chapter 7). Suffice it to say here that two of the – perhaps *the* two – facets of the event are: (i) the impossible and (ii) happening, neither of which, Derrida argues, are characteristics of the

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[3] A one-off funding scheme for ESRC studentship holders and their supervisors to team up with a team of doctoral students and supervisors working on a similar topic at a university outside of the UK; the scheme involved an exchange visit in both countries.

[4] 'L'université sans condition'.

performative event. In this ethnographic study of the conceptual existence of gender in academic spaces, I have tried to achieve a kaleidoscopic understanding of gender. This understanding is situated in an openness to being moved, swayed, dislocated by things happening – things happening to gender, things happening to me in my travels with gender. And yet the openness to happening that is the bedrock of this project is, after all, impossible. It is fissured, split by the impossible co-existence of what follows: the desire to sort out the mess, to clean it up, and what followed: the attempt to work with the mess, to operate within the frameless order of disorganisation.

Deconstructive research

An attempt to work with, rather than against, disorganisation runs contrary to the project of producing a thesis. What if, in trying to produce a thesis in line with my deconstructive research ethic, I could not produce a thesis at all? In *Of grammatology* (1976, p. 10), Derrida explains deconstruction as 'desedimentation', rather than 'demolition'[5] (see Chapter 3 for further exploration of deconstruction). The term deconstruction has been worn into more popular parlance as synonymous with 'destruction', implying a taking apart, as in nouvelle cuisine, where a 'deconstructed' cheesecake involves presenting base, filling and topping on different parts of a dish (see also Szendy, 2014). We could say that the understanding of 'deconstruction' as taking apart has contributed to common perceptions of Derrida's theoretical work as 'nihilistic' in its relativism[6]. This critique amounts to saying, 'So you've taken it all apart, what are you going to do now?' However Derrida (1976) stresses that deconstruction does not leave us with nothing – in deconstructing something, we cannot move beyond that something and into something wholly new. We can only keep on working with the same tools, but at least we will have worked out some of the assumptions that underpin why we are doing things in a particular way; perhaps striving to see our naturalised assumptions might lead us to do or

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[5] '[N]on pas la démolition mais la dé-sédimentation' (Derrida, 1967, p. 21).

[6] As noted by Biesta and Egéa-Kuehne (2001), Jagger (1996), St. Pierre and Pillow (2000a).

see things differently, even within the existing framework or structure. It is helpful when taking deconstruction as an ethic for research[7] (see Chapters 3 and 4) to keep in mind that deconstruction does not hold up a final state of inaction, of deconstructedness, as a satisfactory end-point. Deconstruction therefore can become an enabling process, not a preventive obstacle. The textual practice of the thesis as a whole builds upon these initial thoughts, by prolonging and extending the focus on the production of gender knowledge.

Conferences have provided the 'site' for my research into 'eventful gender', but they have served as much more than the site for a part of the research project that we could call 'data collection'. Conferences have formed the deconstructive agent in my overarching research practice. This is because distinctions are troubled: between empirical materials and academic literature, between content and construction, between author and speaking body, reader and listener. Studying conferences as sites of knowledge production and dissemination, as spaces in which the written and spoken intersect and overlap, has provided an avenue to think through the textual production of a 'thesis'. Throughout the chapters that follow, I frequently refer to seminars and conferences that I have attended, including those which also served as 'fieldwork'. At times I deliberately refer to dissemination events instead of, or alongside published 'literature'. Conventional engagement with written academic 'literature' tends to be prioritised over the spoken word; for example, if a conference paper has been published as a journal article, it would be customary to refer to that article instead of the conference presentation. Reliance on the written publication in academia is of course reinforced by the necessity for academics to obtain multiple publications, and for those publications to be read and widely cited for research assessment exercises (Law, Lee and Au, 2012; Teodorescu and Andrei, 2014; Warner, 2000). It could be viewed as a feminist practice to highlight the importance of embodied and collaborative

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[7] I use the term 'ethic' in the sense of a 'feminist research ethic,' as 'a tool for guiding feminist scholarship' (Ackerly and True, 2010, p. 21), where the principles of the chosen 'ethic' underpin the research process as a whole, rather than individual stages.

discussion for knowledge construction; alternatively it could also be dangerous to a feminist practice to not cite the publications which need to be cited in order to gain recognition in research assessment exercises and to ensure promotion (as in Herther, 2015, for Disability Studies; and Pickett, 2009, for Black Studies). Literature review guidance recommends adhering to 'reliable' or 'academic sources' (Godfrey, 2013, p. 12), 'the most recent, relevant publications available' (Craswell, 2005, p. 131), and 'reports of research' which are mainly found in 'academic journals' (Oliver, 2014, p. 126). In my citation and 'literature reviewing' practice I have considered the hierarchy of different forms of knowledge production, given that feminist knowledge would not have gained traction in academic spaces if feminist scholars had not forced a reappraisal of what counted as valid knowledge (Maynard, 1994; St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000a).

At a conference in the US[8], during the question-time of my presentation (Henderson, 2012b), a self-identified ex-serviceman/student told an anecdote about the differentiated treatment that women soldiers who had bared their breasts as a joke had received from men who had bared their backsides. This story crafted a completely unforeseen link between life in the navy and my Master's work on gender and international volunteering (Henderson, 2011). Equating this moment with academic literature would not be welcomed in many areas of academic work. However I consider that the audience member who told this story was engaging in the theorisation of gender that I had set out, but took this analysis into a different empirical situation. I take the position that moments experienced in the spaces that I have researched, at times despite myself, can be held up alongside more traditional academic literature as valuable contributions to the theorisation of gender. In a similar vein, later in the thesis (Chapters 5-8) I use my research participants' theorisations of gender and related terms alongside more traditional theoretical texts to craft ways of analysing gender that are embedded in the study. From one perspective, this thesis only deals with 'literature'. From another perspective, there is no 'literature', only 'data'.

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[8] 'Gender matters', Governor's State University, Illinois, US, 13-14 April 2012.

Performative writing is considered more of a feature of literary writing, as literature seeks to create an effect in its construction (Fish, 1980). Derrida's writing, in straddling the demarcating boundary that separates a philosophical from a literary text, 'enacts what it describes' and therefore can be considered 'performative' (Howells, 1998, p. 71). It is this deliberate striving towards performative writing that I attempt to enact in my theorisation of eventful gender, by investing value in dissemination spaces as sites for knowledge construction. In writing against descriptive tendencies and towards the performative elements of textuality, I aim to write with 'a textual energy that sets itself against congealment' (Spivak, 1976, p. lxxi).

Since a core aim of this research is to map the concepts and conceptualisations that surround gender, I cannot avoid engaging with my own use of concepts and conceptualisations. In calling my approach 'deconstructive research', I am using the concept of deconstruction to qualify my research process. It could be argued that my approach is 'poststructuralist feminist', and indeed that 'deconstructive' and 'gender' are synonymous for 'poststructuralist' and 'feminist'. However, in a research project which aims to elucidate the slippages between different terms that are used together or interchangeably, I would not be practising what I preach if I did not give an explicit account of my own terminology.

The term 'poststructuralism' can be considered problematic when used to identify Derrida's work. Howells (1998, p. 2) even goes as far as to state that identifying Derrida as a poststructuralist is a 'theoretical misunderstanding'. There is no doubt that Derrida takes structuralism as a starting point and operates a departure from structuralist thinking by considering the way in which structuralist thinking relies on and reinforces the self-dissimulating logic of presence and spatio-temporalisation (Derrida, 1976; 1982). Designating Derrida's approach with a prefix of 'post' added onto 'structuralism' is itself a temporalising manoeuvre which locates Derrida in a chronological progression beyond structuralism. We cannot get to a place that is *outside of* or *after* structuralism; we can only work within it

to explore its limits. As Howells (1998, p. 2) states, probably the most appropriate term to use for Derrida's approach is 'deconstruction'.

There is also a question as to whether working with a deconstructive approach that is clearly informed by Derrida's theoretical oeuvre can count as 'feminist poststructuralist'. One day, when I was sitting in the café at the IOE (Institute of Education), a colleague came over and asked how my thesis was progressing. Since I answered incoherently, she probed further by asking which 'theoretical framework' I was working with. Given my uncertainties regarding the 'use' of 'theory' and the idea of calling something a 'framework', I replied that Derrida was the only thing I could be sure of (itself a sign of being generally unsure). She retorted, 'Ok so that's the phallus!' – and in my memory she continued, 'So where's the vagina?', but I may have misremembered the incident. The reception of Derrida's work in the non-unified non-field (Hemmings, 2005; Lykke, 2010) that we could call 'Feminist Studies' has been mixed. Derrida, and 'poststructuralist thought' in general, is seen by many as incompatible with feminism, in part because of the dominance of male theorists (Brodzki and Schenk, 1989; Duyfhuizen, 1989), and furthermore because this area of thought is characterised by complex philosophical texts which are construed as elitist and complex for 'complexity's sake' (Evans, 1991, p. 73). Deconstruction is also considered to be what feminists had been doing 'all along' (Bowles, 1984, p. 186, see also Christian, 1989), by identifying the ways in which (masculine) power has been naturalised as normal and inevitable.

I do not dispute the fact that continuing the legacy of a white male theorist is an action which requires some justification. I have experienced a fair amount of anti-Derrida wrath, which has stuck to me as someone using his work. In a conference presentation that followed my own slot, in which I had alluded to Derrida as a productive source of theoretical inspiration for thinking about feminist pedagogy (Henderson, 2013b), the presenter, in describing a particularly unflattering young elite feminine identity, referred 'jokingly' to young women who read Derrida, as a manifestation of this identity. This thinly-veiled academic 'micro-aggression' (Morley, 1999)

constituted me as young, precocious, and as an alumna of an elite private
school. I felt obliged to counter this by declaring my state school education,
thus playing into her hands as having taken up her indirect jibe. I have also
been explicitly informed, in another conference session (Henderson, 2012c),
that using Derrida is 'not enough' – that in order to do what I want to do, I
'need' Lacan, or Deleuze and Guattari. Deconstruction would not do for me
what the symbolic order or assemblages and rhizomes could do. As a result,
I have now made it my practice to build in a justification for using Derrida's
work.

Though the incidents I have just mentioned may seem rather petty,
this is the way that theoretical fashions are made or broken (Esch, 1999). I
recognise in these incidents familiar objections to working with Derrida,
and try to respond to them. It is not enough to state that Derrida himself did
not wish to become an authorial signifier for his work (Glendinning, 2011;
Rovatti, 2014), and that he did not seek to become a 'personality' in the
academic world – that his theories therefore can stand on their own,
authorless. I understand that knowledge construction is highly situated and
dependent on circumstances, including the exertion of power and the
exploitation of others – this thesis would not stand up without this notion. I
can see that Derrida's writing is dense and off-putting. If it were easy to
read, it would not be performatively enacting the theory that it outlines. I
cannot therefore expostulate on the 'ethico-political' potential of Derrida's
work (Biesta and Egéa-Kuehne, 2001) without recognising the difficulty of
accessing this potential. Given the huge compromises that are necessarily
made in trying to summarise and synthesise the concepts that Derrida
deploys (Howells, 1998), making deconstruction a readily accessible
approach without stripping it of its layered complexity is a well-nigh
impossible task.

Even with all these issues, I do consider that there is something in
Derrida's work on deconstruction (particularly in *Of Grammatology*, 1976,
and *Margins of Philosophy*, 1982) that remains a relevant and indeed urgent
project. This project, as I go on to show in Chapter 3, is the deconstruction
of presence, and its implication in the construction and production of

knowledge. Embedded in the concept of deconstruction is the necessity of paying attention to the *means* of knowledge construction: namely, the textual performance, and the ways in which knowledge production dissimulates the processes that both shore it up and, if examined, threaten to topple its enterprise. Deconstruction, if taken seriously in its project, ensures that knowledge cannot be constructed or produced without an explicit awareness of these processes. Deconstruction, if understood as always already a deconstruction of presence, cannot function without an interrogation of the knowledge production process.

Looking forward to eventful gender

In the chapters that ensue, I have tried to stay faithful to the deconstructive research ethic by not leaving acknowledgement of my process of knowledge construction behind in the early stages of the thesis. As such, discussions of theory, concepts, literature, methods and empirical materials are not discretely packaged in designated chapters. Some of the chapters focus more on one aspect than another. Chapter 3 is predominantly a theorisation of the concept of gender; in Chapter 4 I account for my empirical research process; Chapters 5-8 incorporate analysis of the empirical materials collected during my fieldwork. However none of these chapters is permitted to comfortably reside within that designation. The chapters move through a linear cumulative theorisation of eventful gender, and are designed to build up the layers of the research process and literature engagement in step with the theorisation, so that none of the layers are considered 'over' until the 'En/closing remarks' have been reached. In addition to the linear direction of the text, the thesis also circles back through its interim stages and, ultimately, back to where it started.

The chief project of the thesis is to theorise *how gender comes to mean what it means*; each chapter makes a different contribution to the theoretical project. First of all, Chapter 2, 'Happens to gender', acts as a rationale for the project. I work through some incidents that occurred in academic dissemination spaces where gender was publicly conceptualised,

and present some initial analysis on these incidents. Analysing these incidents leads into a discussion of what it means to analyse gender, and how different issues are determined as relevant to gender. I thus turn the spotlight that I shone on the processes of definition and conceptualisation in the initial accounts onto my own processes of establishing what counts as gender. This chapter leads on to a more theoretical engagement with these questions in Chapter 3, 'Gender here and now'.

Chapter 3 engages with the question of how gender comes to mean what it means at the level of the concept of gender. Gender, conceptualised as inherently unstable and unfixed, is analysed through some of the claims that authors in the field(s) of Women's and Gender Studies have made about gender. The argument presented in this chapter is that, because gender has no inherent meaning, or rather its inherent meaning is that it has no inherent meaning, gender is to a large extent determined in its use. Gender is thus perceived as a concept which has the potential to shift in its meaning. The chapter culminates in a four-stage explanation of deconstruction, which then forms the basis of Chapters 5-8.

I transfer the theoretical argument of Chapter 3 to the context of academic dissemination spaces via Chapter 4, 'Unfixing research', which is an account of the research process that produced the empirical materials for the study. In Chapter 4, I show how the deconstructive ethic of the project underpinned the research process, over the course of my 'official fieldwork', which consisted of ethnographic and autoethnographic research (including interviews with delegates) at three national Women's Studies conferences, in the UK, the US and India. Chapters 5-8 then work more closely with the empirical materials from the fieldwork, using different aspects of the research process to construct a four-part theorisation of eventful gender.

Chapter 5, 'Producing and negotiating the act of conceptualisation: gender as "critical concept"', enacts the first stage of deconstruction by establishing gender as a 'critical concept'. The chapter begins with a discussion of the production of interview material for analysis, and then

moves on to analyse the conceptualisations of gender that participants constructed in interviews. Building on the theorisation in Chapter 3, I show how conceptual contestations over the 'concept-ness' of gender claim an inherent meaning for gender whilst shifting its parameters.

Chapter 6, 'Conceptual performativity: "surrounding" gender with "names addressed from elsewhere"', moves contestations over the 'critical concept' of gender into the conference site. This chapter uses the notion of conceptual performativity to analyse conceptual negotiations of gender that play out in conference presentations and question time. The chapter is based on the understanding of performativity that asserts that a conceptual performative can only be achieved if the conceptual manoeuvre cites familiar conceptualisations. By situating these conceptualisations in the arena of academic mobility, I bring questions of unfamiliarity and elsewhere-ness into play with the citationality understanding of performativity. The chapter focuses on the conceptualisation of gender in relation to intersectionality, and is based on autoethnographic elements of the research.

Chapter 7, 'Appropriate circumstances: "marking out" the performative conditions of conceptualisation', shifts the role of the conference from *containing* conceptual negotiations to conferences helping to *produce* conceptualisations. This chapter analyses the material conditions and conventions of conferences for the ways in which they affect the conceptualisations that unfold in their midst. The conditions are constructed as citational in their own right, and as such they contribute to conceptualisations. The analysis collects together interview material and autoethnographic reflections; I present a detailed analysis of the role of chair (moderator) in contributing to the ways in which conceptualisations of gender play out at conferences.

Chapter 8, 'Eventful gender: en/closure – "chink/crevice" – en/closure', holds the dual role of evaluating the cumulative effect of the theorisation and pushing that theorisation one step further. The chapter begins by assessing the potential for eventfulness (understood as 'when

something happens') in each of the stages of deconstruction, and asks if I have explained away the eventfulness of the concept of gender. I return to one of the incidents narrated in Chapter 2 and re-present the incident through the stages of theorisation. The chapter then approaches the final stage of deconstruction by asking if there is a form of event that exceeds the performative. I then analyse two conceptual events using the stages of theorisation and the questions that the final form of eventfulness ensure that I ask. These final analyses of 'how gender comes to mean what it means' bring the cumulative theorisation to a close (or back to the start). Having already completed some of the work of a 'conclusion' in Chapter 8, the task of Chapter 9, 'En/closing remarks', is to speak to some of the concerns of the project as a whole, regarding the potential for deconstructive research to produce a thesis, for conferences to serve as sites for (higher education) research, for 'how gender comes to mean what it means' to be theorised.

Chapter 2
Happens to gender

Happens to gender

Things happen to gender all of the time. But how do we know when something is 'about', connected to, or happening to gender? In a seminar entitled 'On being a feminist researcher when not researching gender: teacher subjectivities in chain academies', Braun (2015) explained that she could not help seeing gender in her data from interviews with teachers, even if the research project was not explicitly looking at *gendered* teacher subjectivities. She gave seminar participants a sheet with excerpts from interview transcripts, and we were invited in groups to see if and how we would analyse gender in the excerpts. In my group, we dutifully began 'looking for gender': we discussed whether crying was mentioned because of its feminine associations, or if it could be re-read as a masculine gauge of the toughness of the situation; we discussed the notion of the good female student, and the mirroring of that in the young female teacher; we discussed care work and parenthood and the necessity of women and men performing an unburdened masculine professional identity. We found ourselves circling words in the transcript that we considered to be related to gender, even though there were no 'obvious' markers of gender, such as 'gender', 'cisgender', 'transgender', 'woman', 'man', 'mother', 'father', 'boy', 'girl', 'masculine', 'feminine', 'female', 'male', among others. At one point the seminar discussion turned to a debate over whether or not the signifier 'cardigan' was gendered. Did 'cardigan' in relation to teacher dress refer to an effeminate man, or a scruffy woman? When we encounter the signifier 'cardigan', do we automatically know that it is 'about' gender? How do we know for sure if something is or is not 'about' gender?

In this reflection on the gender-finding exercise in Braun's seminar, I have sought to portray the way that gender can act as an umbrella term for a plethora of different signifiers, and the ease with which gender can be connected to any number of entities and processes. This chapter aims to convey the importance of researching the signification process that links the signifier gender to its associated terms and subjects. When a tutor asks their

students at the start of a course to complete a questionnaire on 'attitudes towards gender' (Silkü, 2012, p. 177), for example, I am arguing for the acknowledgement of the process that leads to some 'attitudes' being inimically linked with 'gender', and others excluded. Moreover, the conceptual existence that gender leads is located *within* the structures, systems and processes of higher education and academia; this chapter begins to consider how the conceptualisation of gender is shaped by the higher education systems that contain it. The analysis that I present in this chapter sets out some of the incidents and processes that have sparked my interest in this project. In subsequent chapters, I work through a theorisation of the conceptualisation of gender which builds back towards a theorised understanding of the way in which higher education contexts and conventions shape conceptualisation (see Chapters 7 and 8). Firstly, I narrate three instances where I have experienced a conceptualisation of gender that, because of the in-the-moment context in which each conceptualisation occurred, was inseparably linked with the workings of higher education conventions. These three instances are provided as prompts for thinking through (i) the shaping of gender and (ii) the situatedness of this shaping in processes and conventions of higher education and academia. Following on from this section, I approach my own questions around how I decide what counts as being 'about' gender, and finally I account for my own use of the signifier 'gender' as being the key concept of the thesis.

Happens to gender, when they…

In this section, I narrate three instances where gender has been publicly conceptualised, and relate each of the conceptualisations to the higher education conventions that produced and structured them. Each of the conceptualisations occurred at what we might call 'events' – a workshop, a conference and a dissemination event for a funded research project. By drawing on 'live' academic events, I am foreshadowing the significance of academic conferences to this research project, in which I view conferences as both representative and resistant sites of higher

education research (Henderson, 2015a). The processes and performances that occur at academic events provide a site for the scrutiny of what happens in the corridors (Gill, 2010) of universities and in the indirect contact of academic publications (Hemmings, 2011). I aim to give a sense of how the 'live' processes of higher education events contribute to the construction of particular understandings of gender.

I have chosen these three moments because they have retained much of the impact that they had on me at the time. I view my response as being attached to the institutional conditions and conventions within which the incidents unfolded, and as such I try to read the response as embedded within the conceptualisation of gender. I cannot say that the conceptualisations that occurred in these instances were thought out or deliberate – there was no sense that the speakers were consciously enacting the process of signification. Just the opposite in fact – the conceptualisations seemed to happen 'naturally', as if gender were incontestably linked to the significations on offer. I have in part chosen these incidents because they seem quite absurd to me – and the gender 'experts' with whom I have since shared them – but they did not seem absurd to the people that uttered them. By offering these three incidents I aim to highlight some of the ways in which gender is fixed in particular academic scenarios as denoting certain ideas and arguments.

Incident I: Newer researchers' publishing workshop
The first incident occurred at a workshop on publishing that was organised for newer researchers by an academic association. The workshop brought together approximately thirty people who had identified themselves as 'newer researchers'. The tables were arranged in the 'café style' set-up, where we were grouped around small tables to facilitate group discussion. Each of us introduced ourselves to the whole group. Although I do not remember the specific instruction given for this introduction, I do remember that we were to state our experience of publishing (if we had published anything, presumably in a peer-reviewed academic journal) and we were to state the area of our research. We were all there to gain more advice about publishing, which meant that we were all probably rather afraid of

publishing and the linked status of success and employability (Lee, 2014; Smeyers et al., 2014; Wilkinson, 2015). I had already gained some experience of publishing articles, and I think I was one of the first to introduce myself, but I did not realise that I was one of the only attendees to have already published, so I introduced myself unself-consciously. I must have also stated that my research was on gender. I then found that most of the other participants at the workshop had not had any experience of publishing, but, possibly because of my introduction, felt it was necessary to state what they *had* achieved, either in a previous or parallel career, or in terms of conference papers, for example.

This backdrop, I conjecture, contributed to the extremely uncomfortable conversations I had with two of the participants on my table, who, possibly because I had stood out as an object of anxiety with my existing publication record, and definitely because I had mentioned working on gender, proceeded to tell me what they thought of research on gender as if it were my fault. The first jibe I received was from a workshop participant who addressed me accusingly as if *I* had invented the idea that women are better at coursework and men at exams. *He* had been much better at coursework – how did I explain that? The second jibe came at lunchtime from another participant, who informed me that women eat less than men. He stated that there were more women than men at his university, and that there was always a lot of food left over at events. I was profoundly irritated by these two remarks; the irritation persists two years on.

In her work on feminism and the micropolitics of the academy, Morley (1999) sets out the importance of looking at 'the ways in which power is relayed in everyday practices' (p. 4). Taking a micropolitics stance involves analysing 'seemingly trivial incidents and transactions' (p. 5) for the way that they contribute to the construction and maintenance of power structures. Analysing the micropolitics of the academy occurs in Morley's work through the representation of excerpts from interview transcripts and the re-telling of participants' narratives. This re-telling or quotation practice is key to the reconstruction of micropolitics as structurally important: enough people coming forward to tell their stories of seemingly petty,

everyday occurrences amounts to a significant finding, as in the Everyday Sexism Project (Bates, 2014). It is in this spirit that I view this first anecdote. I cannot with any certainty say *why* these two workshop participants directed these comments to me, or *how* they intended their comments to be received. I remember one of them speaking with a smirk, the other with a glint in his eye, but I can only conjecture as to what they were thinking. What I do know is that both of the remarks referred to relatively common manifestations of 'popular' gender thinking, around gender and education, and gender difference as natural or cultural. Perhaps because I am more used to being immersed in the debates that are playing out *within* academic feminism, regarding the nuances of gender identification and intersectionality, I was actually relatively ill-equipped to counter these jibes, which came from 'outside' the field. I could even go further and suggest that their jibes hit me 'below the belt', in the area of doubt that occasionally whispers 'what if' in relation to the house of cards that all of my beliefs around gender might turn out to be. How to argue anti-binarism and gender performativity in the face of such gleeful simplicity? And how to argue confidently when so much research reinforces the (over-)simplification of gender that I am working against?

Aside from whether or not I was up to or up for the task of discussing gender with these two fellow workshop participants, part of my affective response was undoubtedly connected with the surprise of being asked these questions in that context. Pereira (2012, p. 288) states, 'epistemic boundary-work [around gender and feminist studies] can begin suddenly and when least expected'. To illustrate this, she reflects on a conversation she found herself having during the coffee break of a conference, where another delegate spoke about the 'occult stuff' that happens in gender studies (ibid). Ahmed (2012) refers to the ways in which those who embody 'diversity' are asked to do diversity work in all manner of situations; in parallel, the label of gender research 'sticks' to the gender researcher. But perhaps because I was, and am, still relatively new to the status of gender researcher, it came as more of a surprise to be addressed in this way. It was not just the simplification of these debates that irritated me, but the automatic assumption that, because I was interested in something

that could be designated by the term 'gender', these must have been the questions that I was working on, and, moreover these are questions that I am *responsible for justifying*. Why, at a professional development event on publishing, should I be asked to justify not *my* but *any* gender research?

Incident II: Conference on the future of the university

In Incident I, the comments, if uninvited and unwelcome, were at least uttered in a scenario with room for discussion, and we did indeed have some discussion. Ultimately, in that scenario, there was a contestable power balance between my identity as published, theirs as unpublished, and their attempts to reduce my academic standing by dismissing my research field. In the other two incidents, which both involved invited speakers on panels, discussion would not have been possible without serious contravention of conference behavioural codes (Henderson, 2015a). Andreotti (2013) reflected on an example of her own transgression of conference conventions in her seminar, 'Washing the dishes and/or dancing in the living room'. She had attended a conference keynote on the philosophy of education, which had presented an exclusively white and male (but unremarked as such) history of the field. As a brown-postcolonial-feminist-scholar, she felt obliged – and indeed implicitly coerced by her white feminist colleagues – to speak out during question time about the omission of alternative histories of the philosophy of education. Her colleagues only rallied around her afterwards, during coffee-time. Because she introduced abject bodies and identities into an otherwise sanitised academic environment (Henderson, 2014a; Leathwood and Hey, 2009), she did not play the game fairly – her question publicly embarrassed a key figure in the field, and he would not speak to her after the session. Question time of conferences is a particularly fraught time, as noted by Pereira (2011) and Leathwood and Read (2009), and many of my research participants (see Chapter 7). It is often compressed by papers which have overrun, and, as a cartoon that went viral on social media depicted, it is frequently dominated by 'shorter speeches disguised as questions' (anon., 2012), meaning that often there is no time for more than a single question and response between any one audience member and panelist. Within the short space of time allowed for questions, some questions – and some people's questions – are given more salience

and credited with more relevance than others. Asking a question at all can be an affront both in terms of the body and status of the person asking the question, and the nature of the question asked.

The first of the two question-time incidents that I include here occurred at a conference on the future of the university, which was hosted by an interdisciplinary research centre at a UK university. On the second afternoon, I attended a panel on the future of the humanities. The panel was chaired by the vice-chancellor of a UK university, and the speakers included another university vice-chancellor, the presidents of two major research funding organisations, and three full professors from elite universities. Each of the panelists was given around ten minutes to present their views on changes to the Humanities and to universities and higher education in general.

As I listened, I realised that these figures, all of whom were influential representatives of powerful institutions, were speaking of university students as if they were a homogenous group. When question time arrived, I plucked up the courage to ask 'the gender question': I asked if the changes they had been speaking about, for example the increase in tuition fees, would be likely to affect different sections of the population more than others; I gave the example of mature women students returning to education, and the change in the cost-benefit analysis of that decision that higher fees might entail. That I should call this 'the gender question' is an example of how 'bringing up gender' (Henderson, 2014a) requires translation into different terminology in different contexts – I had tried to find an easily accessible 'gender' example. The only speaker who addressed my question was the university vice-chancellor. His response to my question was to state that, in his field (medical sciences), women outnumber men. This answer clearly buys into the feminisation argument that applies to fields with large numbers of women, such as health and education, where women are portrayed in popular discourses as taking over (Leathwood and Read, 2009; Morley, 2011). There are easy ripostes to make to the speaker, which I can drum up in hindsight. Perhaps there are many women nurses in the profession, women undergraduates in the universities, but what about

consultants and Professors of Medicine? I could have referred him to David's (2014a) work comparing contradictory policy portrayals of the (over-)feminisation of undergraduate degrees and the underrepresentation of women in academia.

However, because I had asked my question in a busy question session, as a postgraduate student speaking to a powerful panel, in the only forum in which I could access this group, there was no other option than to swallow his answer, in which, as with the coursework example and the food example from Incident I, a nuanced debate had been reduced to a conveniently packaged slogan. My response to this was to feel extremely frustrated, as I felt that, because of the format of the event, I had had to make my point in a one-liner, and that I had had to be content with the put-down that had countered it. Having all the nuances available for this issue did not mean that I could use them in the context of the question time of a conference plenary session.

Incident III: Dissemination event on gender and pedagogy in higher education

The third incident occurred at a dissemination event for a research project on gender and pedagogy in higher education, which was held in a UK university. The day was divided into two halves: 'Key findings', in which the academics who had worked on the project shared empirical and theoretical findings and invited participants to workshop some data analysis, and 'Keynote debate', in which three speakers engaged with issues of gender and higher education from a policy perspective. The speakers included a major policy figure working in access to higher education, an academic who works across higher education studies and policy, and a representative of a higher education funding body. Of the three speakers, only the academic had been present for the morning session, meaning that the other two speakers had not engaged with the more nuanced gender analyses that had emerged earlier in the day. During the three keynote interventions, I remember noticing that most, if not all, references to gender took 'gender' to mean the (quasi-)biological markers 'male' and 'female' (eg 'female student'). During question time I asked a question from the

floor up to the panel on the stage, about the possibilities for the concept of gender that work in the field of Gender Studies was offering, and why there was no cross-fertilisation in discussing gender in relation to higher education policy. I do not remember if the incident that followed was in direct response to my question, but I think it may have been.

In his discussion, the policy figure described his version of a gender-aware higher education pedagogy from the perspective of his own academic field, chemistry. His pedagogical strategy was to identify which illustrative examples, used to explain chemical phenomena, would lose women's interest, in order to identify which type of examples would help women to succeed more in sciences. Mining was an example that would lose women's interest, while topics relating to health would be more suitable. To illustrate this approach, the speaker recounted the story of a dinner reception that had been held on the chemistry of '2 in 1' shampoo (shampoo and conditioner in the same product). '2 in 1' shampoo was, as the speaker recounted, developed with men in mind as men do not like to take two bottles into the shower. During the event, those present realised that they were not being served with drinks: the servers – all women – were gathered around listening to the talk. So, in the policy figure's interpretation, using '2 in 1' shampoo to illustrate an explanation would be an excellent example of how to get women interested in science.

I remember there being a ripple of astonishment and some laughter around the room during this anecdote, but nobody voiced a direct response. This would have necessitated an intervention similar to Andreotti's, which no one present was willing to risk. The silence surrounding this incident – and the ridicule that followed over a glass of wine afterwards, fit perfectly into the conference conventions outlined above. However, I have retained a sense of betrayal from this particular incident – it was an eye-opening experience of witnessing academic feminists 'playing the game' – keeping the policy figures onside, allowing them to skip the theoretical and nuanced discussion session, giving them air-time on the big stage, humouring their implicit or explicit sexism and ham-fisted conceptualisations of gender, regrouping afterwards to get on with the 'real' feminist work. I have aired

this anecdote in various contexts to ask what other relatively senior feminist academics would have done, and my question, presumably seen as coming from a rather inexperienced academic feminist, has been met with some embarrassment and no clear answer. I could not help but ask – what is academic feminism for, if it is to walk the thin line of acceptability? In this case, walking that line involved allowing the public reinforcement of the very stereotypes that the funded project had sought to complicate to go undisputed.

One of the reasons that the remark was allowed to pass was that it was uttered within the strict conventions of a plenary session, with all of the associated power-play that I mentioned in relation to Incident II. The pedagogy of a plenary session does not allow the powerful speaker to be gently shown other ways of thinking, especially when this would involve revealing the absurd bathos between the speaker's understanding of gender and that of the gender 'expert'. In a room set up in that way, there is too much power, too little space for discussion. This incident is a micro-example of the way that gender is constructed *within* and therefore *by* the environment in which is it conceptualised.

Happens to gender when I…

I have dwelt on these three incidents at some length because I consider that they encapsulate the key concerns of this project: the shaping of the concept of gender, and the role of academic convention in contributing to a particular understanding of gender. I portrayed each of the incidents in a way that exposed what I saw, and still see, as the absurdity of the comments made. In conveying this absurdity, I am engaging in the textual equivalent of what I named above as coffee-time grumbling – I am speaking to academic feminists, as if they were my confirmed readers, knowing that the incidents narrated above will have asked the reader to identify with these moments, to recall other similar instances. I am portraying the 'white men' who uttered the remarks as buffoonish perpetrators of conceptual gender violence – the ideal target for irrefutable

accusations of sexism. I am also asking for recognition of the difficulty of 'winning' in these situations if any opposition is stated in defence of a more complex stance in relation to gender. Because of the conventions that structure academic events, regarding the how and the what of interventions, achieving an 'appropriate' intervention that will stand a chance of being heard is extremely difficult – especially when 'bringing up gender' is associated with the opposite of the rationality that governs universities (Leathwood and Hey, 2009), and furthermore when any suggestion that gender has not been dealt with well bears on its underside an implied accusation of sexism and ignorance.

The question of absurdity is, however, double-faceted in my study. On the one hand, I have read up on and spent time listening to the ways in which gender is conceptualised in relation to higher education, and on the other hand the 'official' empirical sites for the study were designated gender-related academic spaces. The coffee-time grumblings (in my experience) of the former are more likely to indicate that gender was not taken into consideration, and, if it was, it will have been reductive, clumsy, even sexist. And for the latter, (again in my experience), I am likely to encounter grumblings around cisgender[9] and/or white privilege, and which intersectional identities have been ignored or ignorantly represented. When set together like this, as in my academic trajectory, absurdity plays a different role – suddenly the wranglings within gender studies seem of minute importance when it is difficult to even get a mention for gender in a higher education studies environment. On the other hand, the ways in which gender tends to be conceptualised and mobilised in higher education research seem absurd in contrast with the complex nuances of gender studies.

From the empirical research I have conducted, I have a multi-faceted vision of the conceptual potential of gender – provided by the conferences

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[9] The term 'cisgender' implies 'staying *within* certain gender parameters…rather than *crossing* (or trans-ing) those parameters' (Enke, 2012, p. 61, emphasis in original); the term is used to refer to a person who stays within the gender that they have been assigned.

attended and interviews with participants about their research and analytical tools (see Chapter 4). Because of the framing of the field, conversations around 'what counts as gender' are completely different in the gender studies context to the higher education research context. I have found myself thinking through 'what counts as gender' in different ways when engaging with different literature and events, and so I have caught myself reinforcing a disciplinary binary that I am actually trying to trouble. If *I* find myself isolating a multi-faceted concept of gender that is located in gender studies from a rigid notion of gender that I associate with the higher education research field, how am I to expect others to accompany me in the troubling? In this section, then, I turn the spotlight away from the ways others conceptualise gender, and I ask myself how I decide 'what counts' – in particular, what counts as gender, and how my strategies of 'making things count' are in and of themselves constructed by and within academic conventions and higher education spaces and structures. I take a look at two higher education sources which I regularly search for 'gender', and consider my rationale for what I cut out and what I highlight as pertaining to 'gender'. The section as a whole turns inward from coffee-time grumbling about others, and as such I try to examine my own participation in the processes which make me want to grumble about others at coffee-time.

Happens to gender when I look for it in higher education

There are different ways to keep abreast of emerging issues in higher education, and, within these, to chart where and how gender appears as a concern. Some of the ways in which I try to keep 'up to date' include: receiving alerts for academic journals; receiving seminar programmes for research centres, such as Centre for Higher Education Studies (CHES) at the UCL Institute of Education, and Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research (CHEER) at the University of Sussex, and attending seminars; being a member of the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE); attending higher education conferences; receiving publication alerts for

scholars that I 'follow' on academia.edu[10]; reading media sources and comments that Facebook 'friends' post on their 'walls'.

Each of these sources produces an unmanageable quantity of information. Inevitably, I make snap judgements about which articles I will read, which seminars I will attend, which sessions I will choose at a conference. These are judgements of relevance, and one of the major reasons that persuade me to spend more time on reading or that will make me arrange my day around a seminar or conference session is that I will consider that the article, seminar or session is 'about' gender. In practice, the knowledge that something is 'about' gender is often obtained by proxy – the article or event title, for example, will mention terms that I perceive to be connected with gender.

The point of detailing some of these processes of academic life is that we are constantly making decisions about whether something is relevant based on the same types of automatic connection as the people involved in the above incidents made between gender and coursework, eating, medicine, mining, health, and shampoo. These choices and decisions about relevance contribute to processes of knowledge construction and production. If my search criteria tell me that a publication must use the term 'gender', for example, then do I assume that publications that do not mention this term *are not* 'about' gender, and that those which do mention the term *are* 'about' gender? Which other terms would I include in my search to proxy gender? These terms in turn would produce a conceptualisation of what gender is 'about', what is relevant to gender.

In order to examine and question my participation in the production of 'gender relevance', I now look in more detail at two higher education sources that I regularly peruse for gender.

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[10] 'Academia.edu' is a website where researchers can construct a profile displaying their publications and research, and search for and 'follow' other researchers.

'About' gender in the Times Higher Education *magazine*

The *Times Higher Education* magazine (*THE*) is a weekly British-focused magazine that is aimed at people working and studying in the higher education sector. The magazine had an estimated print readership of 95,000 in 2013 (*Times Higher Education*, 2013) and many more access the publication online (ibid.). I am not the first to transfer my work-leisure reading of this magazine to using *THE* as a site for research. Leathwood (2012) has written an article based on a survey that she conducted of the visual imagery in *THE*; indeed it was reading this article that motivated me to start my 'gender' articles folder. Leathwood mentions noticing the frequency of certain types of imagery only once *THE* had crossed over into her research site (p. 141). I have experienced the same surprise in moving from reader to researcher of *THE* in seeing the types of 'gender' issues that are included. What I have recently begun to notice, however, is not just the types of issues, but *how* I decide what I put in my folder.

I am interested to see how Leathwood justified her selection of images for her study, which drew on just over a year's worth of *THE* issues, and so yielded a 'very large source of images' (p. 137). Leathwood wanted to establish as 'rigorous as possible' a selection process, so she developed 'a set of criteria' to include and exclude images in order to explore the visual representation of gender in relation to higher education. Leathwood used criteria to exclude certain images, in particular 'abstract images or images of objects' (ibid.) and 'generic library images of groups of students' (ibid.). These types of image are distinguished from the images that were included: 'images of people that were of, or representing, students or academics (photographs, paintings, drawings)' (ibid.). A distinction is therefore made between literal and figurative representations of higher education.

Most of the gender-related research that identifies as 'Higher Education Studies' (by choice of eg. journal for publication) (Clegg, 2012a) concentrates on the gendered subjects that inhabit (work, study, teach, learn in) higher education institutions. Leathwood's (2012) article is rare in that it focuses on the *representation* of gender in higher education (see also Edgerton, 2005; Leathwood and Read, 2009; Reynolds, 2014). However, as

I have noted, even in Leathwood's (2012) article on visual representations of gender in *THE*, the relevance of a *representation* is based on its proximity to a gendered subject of higher education. When I read *THE* with my gender folder in mind, I have found myself asking, which signifiers identify an article as 'about' gender?

Unlike Leathwood, at the time of starting the gender folder, I did not set out criteria other than 'relevance to gender', because I intended the folder more as a means of keeping up to date with current gender issues than explicitly researching the articles themselves. As a result, I am able to retrospectively access my 'automatic' selection process. Looking back at the folder, which begins in May 2014 with an article entitled 'Rebalance required: "one in three senior contenders should be women"' (Parr, 2014b), I can see that, in order to make its way into this folder, an article does not have to mention the word 'gender'. A subtitle to one article reads 'Researcher laments the difficulty of recruiting *men* to her all-*female* unit' (Jump, 2014a, emphasis added). This article must have been chosen for the folder because it mentions 'men' and 'female'. Other article titles indicate the same type of selection criteria: 'Industry backs *women*-only ad: Business sponsorship "enables" *gender*-specific recruitment at Swiss institution' (Else, 2014, emphasis added); '*Women* and minorities more likely to go back for postgraduate study' (Grove, 2014b, emphasis added). In the folder, there are some clippings that demonstrate other selection criteria, such as Rogers' (2014) contribution on the increase in the use of gender-neutral and trans* pronouns in her university classrooms, and Phipps' (2014) article on 'The price of impact', detailing the public abuse that she has received for her research on 'lad cultures' in universities.

There are two articles in the folder that are less obviously connected with the gendered subjects that inhabit higher education. These articles recall Leathwood's search criteria for her *THE* study, as they both use gender as a figurative trope in discussing areas of higher education that are not evoked as being explicitly 'about' gender. Moreover, both articles are included in the 'News' sections of the magazine, so are positioned by the magazine as objective, if perhaps tongue-in-cheek. The first article is 'Small

pleasures: risqué acronyms' (Jump, 2014b, p. 7). The article refers summarily to a group of Swedish scientists who have been identified as planting Bob Dylan song titles in their academic papers, but moves quickly on to describe the antics of an academic who has been planting his papers with spoof acronyms since the 1990s. One such acronym is STRING, referring to the French word for a G-string or thong. Another is TAMERE, the French equivalent of 'your mum', which, as the article helpfully indicates, is short for 'fuck your mother'. This article is less easily identified as concentrating on 'gender issues' because it does not refer directly to gendered subjects, such as the researchers, job candidates, and postgraduate students mentioned in the article titles above. Perhaps because it does not refer to a specific gendered cohort (apart from the 'mother', who is perceived as a figure of speech), this article escapes the political correctness siphon that the publication employs for its other news articles on gendered subjects.

The acceptability of what I could call figurative sexism is further demonstrated in an article on the merger of the IOE (Institute of Education) with UCL (University College London), 'Institute of Education will bring "healthy dowry" to UCL marriage' (Grove, 2014a), in which the IOE is figuratively portrayed as a bride to the bigger, richer UCL groom. This figurative sexism is critiqued and redeployed within the lexis of gender equality in a follow-up article (David, 2014b), 'The IoE[sic]-UCL marriage is not one of equals'. What I am interested in here is the simultaneous ease and difficulty of identifying what is a 'gender issue'. On the one hand, it was easy for me to identify both the acronyms and the merger articles as suitable for my 'gender in higher education' folder, because they referred to what we might call gendered figurative tropes – the figure of the mother deployed within an insult; the depiction of a strong groom and a weak bride. However it also seems to be the case that these two articles do not easily qualify as covering 'gender issues', as they concern games in academic publishing and a merger between two institutions.

Even with this variation in article topics, all of the clippings in the folder include terms that, had I entered them into an electronic search engine

for the publication's archives, would have enabled me to find the articles. Do I only consider that an article is 'about' gender if it declares itself as such, or if it declares itself as 'about' a relatively narrow set of related terms? Surely, if feminists were content to only analyse entities that declare themselves as 'about' gender, they would not be able to identify the tacit, unmarked nature of gendered structures (Spender, 1985)? However, if my project is to look at the conceptual existence of gender, then surely I need to be able to draw some boundaries between what is or is not 'about' gender? But what if, in drawing these boundaries, I shield gender from something happening to it? In view of this conundrum, I now cast a retrospective glance over another source of current higher education-related information.

'About' gender in Research into Higher Education Abstracts

Research into Higher Education Abstracts (*RHEA*) (edited by Visser-Wijnveen and van der Rijst) brings together 750 abstracts per year from peer-reviewed journals; it provides researchers in the field of Higher Education Studies with a means to keep abreast of new research. In 2013, I read the year's issues, to see how many articles were 'about' gender, and the terms that were used to designate this. The publication includes more research on 'Europe and the British Commonwealth' (*Research into Higher Education Abstracts*, 2015, p. i). *RHEA* therefore cannot be taken as representative of a global Higher Education Studies field. Furthermore, the agenda is in the editors' hands – although *RHEA* does include *Gender and Education* and *Women's Studies International Forum* in the journals surveyed, it is up to the editors to select what they consider to be more relevant articles. Any survey of gender coverage in this publication therefore cannot be considered as 'objectively' representing the higher education research field, but, as an artifact of the research field, the exercise does have salience.

I used my survey in a presentation (Henderson, 2014e) to show that gender is not a high priority in higher education research, by stating that, of the 750 abstracts in the 2013 issues of *RHEA*, only 56 abstracts (7.5%) referred to at least one gender-related term in their title and/or abstract. To make my point more clearly, I noted that in fact only 27 (3.6%) of the 750

abstracts were 'about' gender, whereas the others mentioned gender in passing. Abstracts that counted as being 'about' gender included more than one instance of the same or different gender-related terms, generally in both the title and the abstract, for example: '*Gender* stereotypes among *women* engineering and technology students in the UK: lessons from career choice narratives' (emphasis added) (Powell, Dainty and Bagilhole, 2012; *RHEA*, 46(2), p. 170). This abstract uses the terms 'gender' and 'women' in the title, and, within the abstract, 'women' is used seven times, 'gendered' three times, 'gender', 'masculine' and 'men' once each.

In my presentation, I then looked in more detail at how the abstracts that were 'about' gender understood gender. I noticed that there were two principal ways of setting up a gender analysis in these abstracts: comparison of the difference between males and females in an HE context, and division of the gender group into a particular segment of the group. The former approach took a particular HE phenomenon and looked at how 'the two genders' (ie men and women) compared. An example of this was around students' motivations for course choice; this was analysed 'by gender and degree' (López-Bonilla et al., 2011; *RHEA* 46(1), p. 62). A second example conducted a 'gender comparison' of 'male and female-dominated programs' (Severiens and ten Dam, 2012; *RHEA* 46(1), p. 67). The second approach involved taking 'one of the two gender groups' and whittling it down into a specific section of that general group (women or men); this whittling involved sectioning off a group of gendered higher education subjects, as in 'the experiences of six *women early career researchers*' (Mercer, 2013; *RHEA* 46(3), p. 281, emphasis added), or 'Higher education for *Palestinian Muslim female students in Israel and Jordan*' (Arar, Masry-Harzalla and Haj-Yehia, 2013; *RHEA* 46(3), p. 254, emphasis added). In identifying these approaches, I was attempting to show that, although research into gender and higher education is being conducted in many different areas and different contexts internationally, the research that is identified as 'about' gender in general takes a conceptual and methodological stance that results in gender being researched and understood as, in the former, an easily – and usefully – comparable binary, and, in the latter, a category among other categories.

What I notice in my own approach of including and excluding abstracts as being 'about' or 'not about' gender is that *I* set the terms for deciding which articles I would focus on. This was based on the function of quickfire selection that I referred to earlier in the chapter in relation to everyday academic processes of 'keeping up to date' – in the first place I was only interested in the abstracts, and did not delve further to look up any articles. It may be that articles I considered as not being 'about gender' included a discussion on gender, but, because my survey exercise was to identify which articles overtly advertise one of their key themes as gender, those abstracts did not qualify as being 'about' gender. Furthermore, I based my survey on my automatic selection of 'gender-related terms', which I did not find difficult to identify as I read. I made a list of terms as they came up: 'women', 'men', 'female', 'male', 'masculinity', 'femininity', 'feminism', 'sex' (referring to male/female), 'gender' (and derivatives eg 'gendered'). There were also a few occurrences of some other gender-related terms, such as 'mother', 'sexist'. By circling these terms as 'gender-related', I was participating in the ongoing process of defining gender. How did I know which of these terms to circle?

By representing and retrospectively analysing my selection processes for gender-finding in *THE* and *RHEA*, I hope to have shown how my own quickfire selection decisions regarding what is 'about' gender are not too dissimilar from the incidents outlined earlier in the chapter. I hope to have turned the comfort of coffee-time grumbling about how *they* use gender into an uncomfortable reflection (one which many of my participants also remarked on during the interview process) on *my* participation in the same processes of fixing into place certain understandings of gender.

Happens to gender here and now

I have presented these accounts of how I have inscribed certain possibilities into gender – and thereby foreclosed other possibilities – as accounts that have retrospectively re-read my own automatic selection

procedures of what 'counts' as being 'about' gender. It has been relatively easy, though admittedly somewhat troubling, to return to my folder, survey and seminar, and to reflect on the ways in which the conceptual existence of gender has been shaped by the choices I made. What is more difficult is to consider how choices I have made over the course of this research project have undoubtedly led to gender being shaped in a particular way (see Chapter 4). I have constantly striven to be swayed and shifted in my conceptualisation of gender, I have opened myself up to destabilisation and disruption at the level of signification, and preserving this vulnerability to my 'key' concept has, I would hope, resulted in a more complex and multi-faceted conceptualisation of gender than I would otherwise have been able to reach. However, I am fully aware that there are some conceptual movements that have seemed more possible, more available, some that I will have embraced and integrated into my conceptualisation, and others that I know I have turned away from or shrugged off, or missed altogether. And of course it is not only my choices along the way – which conferences to attend, which papers to listen to, who to chat to and who to interview, what to ask them and what to comment on, what to record and what to keep – that have affected what gender in this thesis can be 'about'. The concept of gender that this thesis is 'about' is happening *here and now*, as I write, in the act of representation.

It is clear from the title of this thesis and the sections so far that the concept of 'gender' acts as the primary signifier for this research. This is potentially a controversial move, as all three of the conferences that I researched were explicitly 'Women's Studies' conferences. As I go on to show in the following chapter, 'Women's Studies' and 'Gender Studies' are by no means interchangeable, and indeed the use of one or the other, or a combination of these terms, is a matter of ongoing discussion (Hemmings, 2005). I have chosen to work with the term gender as the overarching concept for the thesis because of what I perceive to be its deconstructive potential (see Chapter 3), and its wider applicability as an 'umbrella' term – it is easier to see masculinity studies or queer studies, for example, as 'gender-related' than 'women-related' or 'Women's Studies-related'. By selecting gender as the signifier that serves as the umbrella term for this

study, I am reinforcing its very capacity to act as an umbrella term. I am not claiming that gender *is* an umbrella term – rather, by virtue of my use of gender-as-umbrella-term, I am making something happen to gender.

However this position, and indeed the ease with which I find I can use 'gender' as an umbrella term – where I find 'women' to be constricting – is evidence of my possible implication in a 'progress narrative' of academic feminism, in which I 'lay[] claim to being on the side of complexity and multiplicity, enthusiasm rather than nostalgia' (Hemmings, 2011, p. 36). My claiming and privileging of the gender signifier is a political act, one which potentially situates my work within a 'progress narrative' of feminism. Various factors lead me to defend gender as my territory. That my Master's is in 'Gender, Education and International Development'[11] means that gender is an integral part of my academic background and my institutional home. Furthermore, probably because of the feminist underpinnings of this course (Henderson, 2015b), I did not enter academic feminism aware of the uneasy link between gender and feminism (Morley, 2013). I have since taken up a position that is deeply embedded in this debate, a stance which defends the potential of the concept gender (Henderson, 2014a; 2014c; 2015b), which wants to argue against 'queer' stealing all of gender's thunder (Henderson, 2014b). Gender is a source of endless fascination for me – the way it is understood, used and conceptualised, and the things it is blamed for and praised as if it were a human subject. It is also a source of hope, and as such I invest it with positive affect – a stance which would certainly align me with a 'progress narrative', though I try to layer my enthusiasm for gender with awareness – rather than dismissal – of others' less favourable relationship with this concept (see Chapter 3).

My own contribution to the conceptual existence of gender is ubiquitous in the thesis and the research project for which the thesis acts as a textual representation. It is clear that, because of my investment in the

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[11] Institute of Education, University of London (UCL Institute of Education as of December 2014).

hopeful potential of gender, I will have made – or allowed – things to happen to gender *in a certain way*. I have tried to notice, interrogate, and acknowledge the ways in which I find myself vouching for gender. This practice is grounded in the notion of 'here and now', the deliberate location of conceptualisations of gender in space and time. As I go on to explain in the next chapter, framing the ways in which gender is understood *in* and *as* 'here and now' has been integral to crafting and maintaining my research stance.

Chapter 3
Gender here and now

Gender where and when?

Before reading the edited collection *Out of the Margins: Women's Studies in the Nineties* (Aaron and Walby, 1991b) in the first year of my PhD studentship, I thought that gender was a concept that could quite simply be *used*. I knew that people used the concept in different ways, and that they meant different things in using it – I knew that things happened to gender in its usage, that its conceptual potential was shaped in use. What I did not yet know, and which *Out of the margins* showed me, was that gender can also be seen as something that makes things *happen* of its own accord. It is not just a question of what people do to gender, but also what gender does to people. Aaron and Walby's *Out of the margins* edited collection draws on papers presented at the 1989 and 1990 Women's Studies Network UK conferences (Aaron and Walby, 1991a), and as such the collection spans the distinction between spoken and written dissemination. As a reader, I imagine that I am picking up on the written representation of the shared 'live' thinking that occurred at these conferences, though of course this may be my fantasy of a moment in feminism's history that I did not experience in person. Coate (1999, p. 141) describes this collection as characterised by 'an overall note of optimism concerning the development of women's studies', but she also refers to 'cautionary tales', of which I understand the advent of 'gender' to be one. The introduction refers to 'anxieties' at the conferences about naming 'purportedly feminist teaching programmes' 'Gender Studies' instead of 'Women's Studies' (Aaron and Walby, 1991a, p. 4). This change in terminology would potentially bring about 'a shift of attention away from the basic issue of women's subordination' (ibid.), and as such was posited as a threat to the presence of feminism in universities. My interest in the collection of essays sprang from the way that the advent of gender is expressed in the contributions that analyse this shift in terminology from 'women' to 'gender'.

The aim of these essays in their 'here and now' was to denigrate gender and deny its potential, indeed the authors to whom I refer show gender to be a neutralising, apolitical term. However, reading this literature outside of its intended 'here and now', I paradoxically found something in the portrayals of gender in this literature to *counter* the naturalised (neutral, objective and apolitical) understandings of gender that abound in policy (Cornwall, Harrison and Whitehead, 2007; Dieltiens et al., 2009; Molyneux, 2007; Smyth, 2007; Unterhalter, 2013) and research (see Chapter 2). It could be considered somewhat perverse to have espied the groundings of my own conceptualisation of gender in the 'anxieties' of those whose political and personal work was under threat. However I cannot proceed without acknowledging the eye-opening effect that reading these essays had on my notion of gender. As such I begin the chapter with a fuller account of this jolt and its after-effects on my conceptualisation of gender.

The chapter's trajectory unfolds through a number of theoretical steps which can be traced through to the deconstructive concept of gender that underpins the thesis as a whole. The notion that the chapter builds upon, as indicated by the title 'Gender here and now' is that of 'spatio-temporalisation'. Spatio-temporalisation, as I go on to explain, is a shorthand for the way that logocentric[12] thinking situates everything in time and space in order for it to be understood. The deconstructive concept of – and approach to – gender that the chapter cumulatively theorises is approached through intermediary stages. 'Gender there and then' begins to pose questions about whether gender signifies only in its usage, or if it has some inherent properties or meaning. Using material from *Out of the margins* (Aaron and Walby, 1991b), I show how gender is depicted as having some inherent negative properties, and begin to ask if we can claim this negative potential for productive thinking.

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[12] Howells (1998, pp. 48-49) explains that Derrida uses the term 'logocentrism' to indicate a 'philosophy of presence', 'a world-view which understands being in terms of presence', 'a reassuringly stable and hierarchical view of the world', which Derrida critiques.

The section 'Gender in space and time' probes the metaphorical depictions of gender further, initially by exploring the metaphors of space and time that are used to construct gender as an enemy to women's studies. This section then begins to problematise the notion that we can conduct a metaphor analysis of gender, by working through the layers of doubt that surround the binary between literal and figurative language. This binary takes at its base the issue of significance resulting from usage versus inherent meaning, which I also address in the 'Gender there and then' section in relation to gender. The section unites the troubled binary of literal/figurative language with the other troubled binary of the inherent meaning/meaning in usage of gender, by introducing the concept of a 'heliotropic metaphor' from Derrida's essay 'White mythology' (*Margins of Philosophy*, 1982), or a metaphor whose literal referent can never fully be known. I conceptualise gender as a heliotropic metaphor, where it is neither literal nor figurative, neither fully significant in itself nor in its usage.

The destabilisation of both binaries brings the chapter to its final section, 'Gender here(ness) and now(ness)'. In this section, the focus shifts from gender as a deconstructive signifier in the foreground with deconstruction in the background, to the reverse. The section begins by taking the questions of space and time that are posed earlier in the chapter in relation to metaphor and relocating them in questions of language and meaning in general; in accordance with Derrida's conceptualisation of spatio-temporalisation ('White mythology', 1982) and presence (*Of Grammatology*, 1976). Having set out how we can think of meaning as the construction of presence, I move onto an explanation of deconstruction, which is the action of exposing and pushing against the limits of that which is perceived as having no limits. I set out four stages of deconstructive thought, 'critical concept', 'surrounding', 'marking out', and 'chink, crevice', and show how the chapter has enacted these stages, as well as how the deconstructive process forms the basis for the following chapters of the thesis.

Gender there and then

Within the collection *Out of the Margins* (Aaron and Walby, 1991b), three of the essays (Evans, 1991; Klein, 1991; Zmoroczek and Duchen, 1991) refer in more or less detail to the issue of gender taking over or usurping Women's Studies' place in the university. What caught my attention in these essays was the vivid figurative language (perhaps the result of conference exchanges) which the authors used to accuse the term 'gender' and its users of the ills they were bringing to women's studies:

> One *thick cloud on the horizon* of Women's Studies is the increasing tendency to rename Women's Studies and call it gender studies (Klein, 1991, p. 18, emphasis added).

> [T]he attempt to *smother* [Women's Studies] by 'replacing' or 'superceding' it with 'gender studies' (Zmoroczek and Duchen, 1991, p. 18, emphasis added).

> [T]o *abandon* 'woman' in favour of a dressing-up-box version of reality is surely *dangerous* (Evans, 1991, p. 72, emphasis added).

It had not occurred to me, reading in my 'here and now', that the term 'gender' could be so controversial, that it could be invested with connotations of violence and danger. Opening this book twenty years after its publication, it felt dated, located 'there and then', and I could not help but reflect on the fact that I was five years old when the essays were being written up for publication. I read the essays with fascination, trying to imagine the students and classrooms that were being discussed with such passion. The citations above and the essays that they have been lifted from have stayed with me as my doctoral project has progressed, for they awoke an interest in me about the *concept* of gender (see Chapter 5). I moved from thinking only about what people do *to* and *with* the concept of gender to asking questions about what this concept also does *to us*.

Evans (1991, p. 70) locates 'the problem of gender' (also the title of her essay) as particular to 'the early 1990s'. The essays in *Out of the*

Margins, by claiming 'the problem of gender' as of their time and place, firmly *situate* themselves in the 'here and now' of their current moment of the cusp of the 1990s. In so doing, they also *constitute* their moment as *the* moment where 'Women's Studies' is under threat. Since first being struck by these pieces, however, I have encountered other accounts that construct a different 'here and now' for gender's take-over. Levet (2014), for example, has recently produced a book-length essay on the problem of gender in France; in Levet's view, gender can be blamed for leading people to think that there can be 'a world where there would no longer be men or women, but undifferentiated individuals…, free to wander through identities, sexualities' (p. 7, tr.[13]). This argument, which is firmly situated in the 'here and now' of the 2011 debates around the inclusion of gender in the secondary school curriculum in France and the 2013 protests for and against equal marriage (ibid.; Laufer and Rochefort, 2014; Vidal, 2014), nonetheless bears a strong resemblance to the arguments of the 1990s UK-based essays that allude to gender as, for instance, 'a dressing-up-box version of reality' (Evans, 1991, p. 72). I also encountered some anti-gender lobbying at the IAWS (Indian Association of Women's Studies) conference in 2014, where, during the opening ceremony and speeches for the conference, the Patrons' Committee Representative for IAWS warned against the 'apolitical' nature of gender studies as opposed to women's studies. In juxtaposing these different 'here and now' constructions of gender, the specificity of each 'here and now' is diminished. Instead, we are left with the commonality between these 'here*s* and now*s*'; the use of signifiers of 'here-ness and now-ness' to reinforce the urgency and relevance of the argument. Instead of concentrating on the moment that the *Out of the Margins* essays ask me to look at, I thus re-focus my analytical lens onto the ways in which accounts of gender take-over utilise signifiers of place and time to bring about the signification – and significance – of gender.

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[13] '…cet avenir radieux promis par le Genre d'un monde où il n'y aurait plus ni hommes, ni femmes, mais des individus indifférenciés…libres de vagabonder à travers les identités, les sexualités' (Levet, 2014, p. 7).

Gender use(r)s

In this chapter as a whole, I set out my conceptualisation of gender as a disruptive signifer, a signifer which has the capacity to disrupt language, meaning and signification – and therefore which can disrupt our understandings of ourselves. I am, however, aware that, by asserting that gender *makes things happen*, I am in fact making something *happen to gender*. Even as I conceptualise gender as disruptive in and of itself, I am making disruption happen to gender. This is an inescapable bind: to say that gender 'is' disruptive is both to describe and constitute gender as disruptive. The bind is reflected in the citations above with the implication that it is in the use *and/or* the nature of gender that the danger lies. In Klein's (1991, p. 81) citation, is it *people* who are showing the 'tendency to rename Women's Studies' that are the 'thick cloud', or is the 'thick cloud' *gender*? For Zmoroczeck and Duchen (1991, p. 18), are we to worry about the *people* who are 'attempt[ing] to smother' Women's Studies, or the *gender studies* that is the instrument of 'smother[ing]'? For Evans (1991, p. 72), does the 'danger[]' lie in those who 'abandon "woman"', or is it the alternative concept on offer that is 'dangerous', the 'dressing-up-box version of reality' (ie gender)? Within these citations, there is a sense that, even if it is the user that we are to target, gender itself is not just an empty signifier to be tossed into the vacant place of women's studies.

In the above quotations, then, gender appears to be *inherently* invested with negative potential – it is the pillow that 'smothers', the 'thick cloud' that promises rain. The constructions used to explain gender at times result in gender even being endowed with its own subjecthood, grammatically at least, and its own inherent identity or essence. In the aforementioned essay by Levet (2014), gender is capitalised as 'Genre', and is often personified as being, for example, capable of 'respond[ing]' when asked questions (p. 30, tr.[14]). In another instance of gender-as-subject, gender is able to 'unite[] and divide[]' people of its own accord (Madoc-Jones, 1997, p. 14), so it must have some inherent power to act upon people. Hemmings (2011, p. 153) states that, 'whatever we call the field, gender

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[14] 'Car le Genre…répond…' (Levet, 2014, p. 30).

tends to (re)attach to women whether we like it or not', suggesting, grammatically at least, that gender may be capable of deciding its own attachments without its users' volition. For Budgeon (2014, p. 317), gender may be 'deployed' to 'dismantle perceived essential differences between men and women'. The difficulty of deciding how much gender is constituted by its usage and how much it has an inherent identity or essence is played out in de Groot and Maynard's essay (1993b) from their edited collection, another epoch-defining volume entitled *Women's Studies in the 1990s* (1993c). In the space of two pages, gender is both invested with its own inherent meaning and defined in its usage:

> [Gender work should be] concerned with problematising and analysing the relationships between the sexes, *as the word 'gender' implies*.' (de Groot and Maynard, 1993b, p. 153, emphasis added).

> [I]t is becoming fashionable to *use the term gender to imply* that feminist questions have been taken on board' (ibid., p. 154, emphasis added).

In the first quotation, the term gender has its own inherent meaning: it 'problematis[es] and analys[es] the relationships between the sexes'. In the second quotation, gender moves from doing its own 'impl[ying]' to being 'use[d]…to imply'. While on the one hand (in line with Fassin, 2009), I do not consider that gender 'is' anything beyond its usage, on the other hand I cannot help but ask if gender does in fact have its own capacity to act. Does gender as a signifier have some properties that disrupt, regardless of the user?

It is in this chiasmus of 'acting upon gender/gender acting upon' that I situate my conceptualisation of gender. Rather than asking *what* gender *is*, I have started to question whether the inherent meaning of gender (which is therefore not an inherent meaning) is that using the signifier gender destabilises the possibility of stating *what is* at all. I am not including an up-front explanation of what I think this means, because each section of this chapter is devoted to gradually unpacking this conundrum. In the remainder of this part, I concentrate in more detail on the ways in which gender is

perceived to be disruptive, and how the discourse used to frame gender's disruptiveness works to constitute both gender and its user.

Troubling gender use(r)s

Butler, writing *Gender Trouble* (1999[15]) in the same period as *Out of the Margins* (Aaron and Walby, 1991b), comments on the moment that these essays contributed to:

> [c]ontemporary feminist debates over the meanings of gender
> lead time and time again to a certain sense of trouble, as if the
> indeterminacy of gender might eventually culminate in the failure
> of feminism. Perhaps *trouble need not carry such a negative*
> *valence*. (Butler, 1999, p. xxix, emphasis added).

This quotation is located at the beginning of the Preface to the 1990 edition of *Gender Trouble*. The quotation announces the resignification of 'trouble' that the book *Gender Trouble* will then enact. Butler situates her manoeuvre of reappropriating 'trouble' from its associations with 'failure' in the 'here and now' of 'debates over the meanings of gender'. Many of Butler's analyses of gender refer to the 'meanings of gender' that are used to understand bodies and identities, as opposed to the 'meanings' that demarcate and organise the conceptual presence of gender in higher education and academia. In my conceptualisation of gender, I seek out trouble in gender and try to spread its reach across different versions of the concept. As such, in working with gender as an 'indetermina[te]' signifier, I am embracing the 'sense of trouble' as *positive* or productive 'valence'.

I have analysed what I could call 'anti-gender' literature to explore the discursive construction of gender. The 'women' of 'women's studies' is portrayed in this literature as a tangible, identifiable, real entity: in a neat circle of signification, 'women' represent and are represented by 'women's studies'; 'women's studies' designates 'the study *of* women *by* women' (Lubelska, 1991, pp. 41-42, emphasis added). When it comes to defining 'the problem of gender' against the certainty of 'women's studies',

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[15] First published 1990.

however, the opposition founders. This is because gender has no clear subject or object (Henderson, 2015b). Gender has different referential properties because it is an abstract term without a literal referent, whereas the term 'women' in 'Women's Studies' draws its potency from the solid reality of women's lives. Gender, rather than acting as a replacement, in fact undermines women's studies: it is impossible to imagine 'the study *of* gender *by* gender', so both subject and object of study lose their literal foundations. Gender is associated with unfair play – just as replacing 'women' with 'gender' is not a direct replacement, so fighting 'gender' with 'women' is not a fair fight. In this section, I now take a closer look at the discursive construction of gender as an unfair or underhand opponent, and the narrative strategies used to portray gender's negative valence. In analysing the discursive construction of gender in these essays, I begin to think about how constructing gender in these ways has led to some of the productive thinking that underpins my study.

Gender, then, is neither a fair fighter (if gender is a subject), nor a fair weapon (if gender is an object). The insidious means that are used to oust 'women' and instate 'gender' in its place are subtle and gradual. Gender does not propose a public duel to deal with its rival once and for all. It 'encroach[es]' (Zmoroczech and Duchen, 1991, p. 18), 'eclipses' (Klein, 1991, p. 81) and 'invisibilis[es]' (de Groot and Maynard, 1993a, p. 15), it is the pillow that 'smother[s]' women's studies (ibid.). Gender is a Trojan horse: it can smuggle feminism into the university as a 'strategy' (Zmoroczech and Duchen, 1991, p. 18) to bring feminist issues to 'the central concerns of the academy' (Evans, 1991, p. 73, see also Scott, 1991, p. 15). But the Trojan horse turns out to be doubly duplicitous – though it seems to smuggle feminism into the university, it in fact simultaneously smuggles men and men's issues into feminism (Evans, 1991, p. 73; Klein, 1991, p. 81; Zmoroczech and Duchen, 1991, p. 18). The Trojan horse opens, and men come spilling out, studying men in masculine ways (Klein, 1991).

Gender *seems* more pleasant and accommodating than women's studies; it is 'less threatening' (ibid.), it 'opens up' women's studies (ibid.), it 'seems to add an aura of "complexity" to what might otherwise be seen as

a narrow or restricted field' (Evans, 1991, p. 73), it provides a 'broader vision' than women's studies (Klein, 1991, p. 81), and it 'defus[es]' feminist issues (de Groot and Maynard, 1993b, p. 154). However, appearances are deceptive, as the 'seems' in 'seems to add an aura of "complexity"' (Evans, 1991, p. 73) implies. In fact, as I suggested with the Trojan horse metaphor, the appearance of gender as pleasant and accommodating is a 'lure' (ibid.). The 'lure' turns out to be a trick that brings into women's studies not only men as subjects and objects of research, but also masculine ways of knowing: gender is cast as 'a masculine construction of knowledge' (Klein, 1991, p. 81), as belonging to the realm of the 'general', which is to say the male realm (Zmoroczech and Duchen, 1991, p. 18, see also du Bois, 1983).

The choice of verbs used to describe what gender (as quasi-subject) is doing, and what is being done with gender (as quasi-object), construct gender as permissive. The verb 'to allow' recurs:

> Is [gender gaining in popularity] because [studying gender] *allows* the study of an abstract concept to replace the study of women and men? (Zmoroczech and Duchen, 1991, p. 18, emphasis added).

> [Is gender becoming more popular because studying gender] *allows* women to be subsumed once more in to the general (that is to say, into man)? (ibid., emphasis added).

> Changing Women's Studies to gender studies *allows* men into the area' (Evans, 1991, p. 73, emphasis added).

The use of the verb 'to allow' constructs gender as passively active, as facilitating others' action. Gender could have been depicted as breaking in, smashing up, or tearing apart women's studies (and/or being used to carry out these actions). Instead, gender-as-gatekeeper (subject) is just a little too lenient or easily persuadable; gender-as-gate (object) swings open, leaving a clear passage into Women's Studies. Gender, as we see it here, acts as a *means* for men in particular (but also non-feminists or anti-feminists) to get inside academic feminism and take over the 'hard-won and often none too

secure place of Women's Studies in the academy' (Zmoroczech and Duchen, 1991, p. 18).

Admittedly, this portrayal of gender is not the most flattering. Gender seems to be a rather unsavoury, slippery character. But, in alignment with my project to reinvest gender's potency with positive valence, I am interested to see how the discursive constructions of gender operate, in order to reclaim the negative valence of this duplicitous concept for productive analysis that works with, rather than against, the legacy of women's studies and academic feminism. I am particularly interested in the ways in which women's studies and women are constructed with metaphors of place and time *so that* gender can effect changes. I have already mentioned the clear positioning of the texts I have been analysing in a particular 'here and now' of the early 1990s. Now, by reading more closely the constructions of gender effecting change, I show how 'here and now' are captured and constructed in metaphors of space and time. This analysis will form the bridge between these constructions of the 'here and now' of gender in higher education and academia and the constructions of 'here-ness and now-ness' that, in deconstructive thought, underpin knowledge construction in general – and, within this, how my theorisation of gender is founded on conceptual links between 'here and now' and 'here-ness and now-ness'.

Gender in space and time

Metaphors of space and time

I have stated that I am about to analyse the metaphors of space and time in the essays that I started to unpick in the previous section. I have already begun to identify metaphorical constructions of gender as inflicting violence and danger. I have promised to further this analysis by seeking out the spatial and temporal metaphors that construct women's studies – and gender as the invader and newcomer – as located in space and time. This task is, however, doomed to become much more complicated than it may initially seem. Surely I just have to identify which metaphors are used to construct gender, perhaps put them in a table to find patterns and groups,

and then describe the significance of the patterns and groupings? (Carter, 2010; Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Frost, 2009; see also Robertson, 2009). This task, as I go on to show, founders under a number of pressures, which can be reduced to one problem: how to identify a metaphor? This question forks off in two different (but related) directions: firstly, can gender be constructed in metaphor if it does not work as a literal referent? Secondly, what happens if the literal/figurative binary does not hold true? (Henderson, 2014c).

I have selected some excerpts from the *Out of the Margins* (Aaron and Walby, 1991b) essays to begin my metaphor analysis. The chosen quotations have been selected because they clearly evoke markers of time and place:

> [T]he encroachment of gender studies on the hard-won and often none too secure place of Women's Studies in the academy (Zmoroczek and Duchen, 1991, p. 18).

> Changing Women's Studies to gender studies allows men into the area and seems to add an aura of 'complexity' to what might otherwise be seen as a narrow or restricted field (Evans, 1991, p. 73).

> In my view [the renaming of Women's Studies programmes as gender studies] is the beginning of eclipsing Women's Studies,…by allowing men into feminist space (Klein, 1991, p. 81).

Firstly, I should identify metaphors of space and time in these citations. I could start by noticing the recurrence of spatial metaphors: women's studies is a 'place', an 'area', a 'field', a 'space'. There is already an issue with this, because of what we can – at least for now – call the literal and metaphorical use of space in these citations. 'Women's studies' is literally a marker of space – of classrooms and offices within universities, but it is also a metaphorical marker of a discipline, an 'area' or 'field' of research and learning. Returning to the idea that women's studies is 'the study *of* women

by women' (Lubelska, 1991, pp. 41-42, emphasis added), both the place of 'study *by* women' (literal offices and classrooms) and the place of the 'study *of* women' (the metaphorical 'field' of research and learning) are under threat, because gender acts as an invitation for both 'study *by* men' and the 'study *of* men'. Thus, even at the first hurdle it is already difficult to separate literal and metaphorical designations of gender as temporally and spatially situated in relation to women's studies.

I could also try to identify metaphors of time, though it is difficult to separate these from spatial metaphors. 'Encroachment' and 'hard-won' imply a present and a past narrative, respectively, and both expressions employ metaphors of territorial battle. The verbs 'allow' and 'add' are again spatially linked to a chronology of events: what was not there before is now there. The verb 'eclipse' in the third quotation suggests a metaphorical process in which we see gender in motion as it slides in front of women's studies, blocking women's studies from sight. This narrative matches Hemmings' (2011, p. 153, emphasis in original) analysis of the '*temporal* separation of Women's and Gender studies', where 'Women's studies is marked as original, with gender studies as the (young) upstart'. What we get from the first and last quotations, and the middle one to some extent, is a sense that gender is in motion, while women's studies is standing still. Motion and standing still are both constructed in space *and* time; evocations of space and time interlink to construct gender as an agent – or tool – of change.

Initially, I have tried to conduct an analysis of the spatial and temporal metaphors used to construct gender as if I believed that I *could* identify metaphors, and as if *identifying* the metaphors and *drawing links* between them (eg. gender as in motion, women's studies as staying still) were the object of my analysis. This type of metaphor analysis has helped me to look in more detail at the discursive construction of gender as taking over women's studies in these quotations. I am not dismissing studies which do follow the identification-classification path. However this type of analysis resides on epistemological tenets that do not sit comfortably with a deconstructive research ethos. Some of the more conceptual work around

metaphor draws out the complications of analysing metaphors for gender that I have just elided in my analysis of these quotations.

Metaphors

The primary assumption of metaphor analysis is that metaphors exist in relief against literal language (Ricoeur, 1975): as Goatly (2011, p. 350) puts it, '[m]etaphors are hills and mountains on the flat literal landscape'. If '[m]etaphors are a figurative use of language' (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p. 85), then we must be able to distinguish between when language is used figuratively and when it is not used figuratively (Cameron, 1999). There will be a metaphorical vehicle and a literal referent, and we will know which is which. Following on from this logic, we will be able to recognise 'metaphor-free' areas of talk or writing (Cameron, 2008, p. 203), where '[m]etaphor…is altogether absent' (p. 197), versus instances where '[m]etaphor…gathers in clusters' (ibid.). We will also be able to translate what the metaphor user would have said if they had been expressing their comment in literal language; as such metaphor analysis allows us to depart from analysing 'content' ('what was said') and brings us to focus on 'form' ('how it was said') (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p. 83). The implication of this is that whereas a thematic analysis of the above quotations would allow us to translate metaphorical language into literal language ('what was said') without losing significance, metaphor analysis tells us that significance lies in the fact that a metaphor was used ('how it was said').

This logic seems to be developing well, until the primary assumption, the literal/figurative binary, comes up against its own instability. Even – or indeed especially – scholars who dedicate their academic careers to analysing and conceptualising metaphors admit that there is an 'issue' with 'the reliability and generality of individual scholars' analyses of metaphor', and that 'more objective criteria for determining instances of metaphor' are needed (Gibbs, 2008, p. 12; see also Gibbs, 2011a). In this school of thought, the problem with identifying what counts as a metaphor reposes on the degree to which a metaphor has become lexicalised, or naturalised into language. Metaphors which are unnoticeable when they occur in speech are known as 'dead metaphors', though dead

metaphors are considered to operate on a scale that encompasses 'tired, sleeping, dead and buried metaphors' (Goatly, 2011, p. 29) and also includes 'revitalized' metaphors (Steen, 2011, p. 588). We might consider that the use of 'area' or 'field' to designate women's studies is a dead metaphor; if it were used in a distinctive way that makes its metaphorical use more obvious, we could say that has been 'revitalized'. If is not 'revitalized', however, we can say that the 'metaphoricity' of the area metaphor 'carries out its work unbeknownst to us, behind our backs'[16] (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 362, tr.).

It is clear by now that identifying what counts as a metaphor is difficult. Yet another challenge arises when we turn to ask about how metaphors interact with abstract concepts (such as gender). Johnson (2008, p. 51) puts forward the suggestion that '[a]ll theories are based on metaphors because all our abstract concepts are metaphorically defined'. This suggestion resembles the direction of thought that Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) takes by exploring how 'some concepts may be metaphorically structured' (Gibbs, 2011a, p. 532). What if we are only able to understand some concepts in terms of metaphors (such as relationships understood as journeys)? Then how would we establish the literal meaning of a concept? Gibbs (2011b, p. 576) states that CMT is part of a wider effort to understand 'how people's experiences in the world affect their use of language'. This school of thought introduces more fluidity into an understanding of metaphor, where language ceases to just describe experience, but is implicated in a dialectical relationship between lived experience and its expression in language. CMT implies that we may only be able to understand some concepts through metaphors that are rooted in our lived experience of those concepts.

We have by now moved some distance from the notion that metaphors can be identified as distinct from literal language. In fact we could say that we have returned to the question of the extent to which

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[16] '[L]a métaphoricité opère à notre insu, derrière notre dos' (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 362).

gender is *inherently* invested with signification, or the extent to which it is determined in its *use*. Ricoeur (1975, p. 369, tr.) refers to the idea that 'words would have within themselves a meaning of their own, that is to say [a] primitive, natural, original [meaning]' as an 'illusion'[17]. Instead, he considers that 'literal' in fact means 'current' (ibid.), which means that 'the difference between literal and metaphorical' is established through 'usage in language'[18] (ibid.). This (re)definition of literal language sets up something of a tautology where literal language (ie language which is non-metaphorical, which is therefore lexicalised) is defined as language which is, well, 'lexicalised' (ibid.). In this view, gender has no 'natural, original' meaning, but rather is defined in its use – but this use must gain enough traction so that it *appears* natural and original enough not to be understood as metaphorical. We can see this occurring in the following quotation from Levet's (2014) aforementioned essay on 'the problem of gender' in France:

> So I am trying to find out for what gender is truly the name/noun [*nom*]. This semantic substitution, this slippage of the vocabulary of sex [*sexe*] towards gender is not neutral. This little term is heavy with anthropological and metaphysical presuppositions[19] (p. 22, tr.).

In this quotation, Levet is looking for the 'tru[e]' referent (the 'what') of gender. However, her own metaphorical depiction of gender as weighed down ('heavy') with the 'presuppositions' from anthropology and metaphysics seems to transfer the *uses* of gender ('presuppositions') to its inherent meaning. Thus, in Levet's expression, in concordance with Ricoeur, gender's inherent meaning *is* its uses.

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[17] 'On pourfend…l'illusion que les mots auraient en eux-mêmes un sens propre, c'est-à-dire primitif, naturel, originaire' (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 369).

[18] '[C]'est l'emploi dans le discours…qui spécifie la différence du littéral et du métaphorique' (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 369).

[19] 'Nous cherchons donc à savoir de quoi le genre est véritablement le nom. Cette substitution sémantique, ce glissement de vocabulaire du sexe vers le genre n'est pas neutre. Ce petit vocable est lourd de présupposés anthropologiques et métaphysiques' (Levet, 2014, p. 22).

We can now bring together this development of the term 'literal' with the idea expressed above that abstract concepts may only be understood metaphorically (Johnson, 2008); we can add that our understanding of some concepts as metaphorical is dialectically related to the way that we express them in language (CMT). Given this group of ideas, we might begin to ask: is gender only understood metaphorically? I could add, how do we know that gender is not a metaphor in its own right? Is it a dead metaphor? In the quotations above, is gender expressed in metaphors of 'encroachment' and 'eclipse', or do these metaphors assist in 'revitalizing' the metaphor of gender? Where does this leave us with gender?

Gender as a heliotropic metaphor

The simple answer to the question, 'Where does this leave us with gender?' is: 'In trouble'. Trouble with positive valence, hopefully. When I began looking for metaphors of space and time in the quotations about gender taking over women's studies, I was (pretending to be) at ease with the idea of looking for metaphors that construct gender in terms of space and time. But I am not at all comfortable with this process. On the one hand, in order to know that gender is being constructed *in metaphors*, I should have to know what gender's literal referent was. On the other hand, in order to accept that *gender* is being constructed in metaphors, I would have to know that it is not a metaphor.

Gender does not have a literal referent or any synonyms (Henderson, 2014c); gender can only acquire referents and synonyms in its *usage* – it is at various points equated with 'women', for example, to augment 'the political acceptability of the field' (Scott, 1991, p. 15). However, if we want to find synonyms that *inhere* to gender, I agree with Ricoeur that there are no 'natural, original'[20] meanings (of gender) (1975, p. 369, tr.). Although I can accept Ricoeur's help thus far, I do not find his assistance useful beyond this point, as I am not sure that the 'literal' of gender *is* established by its usage, or indeed if there *can* be a literal referent for gender. When we begin

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[20] See footnote 17.

to look at instances where the term gender is used, it is difficult to decide just *what* it is referring to, whether or not that *what* is established by an inherent essence or a 'lexicalised' usage. For example, when Ferrebe and Tolan, in the introduction to their edited collection *Teaching Gender* (2012b), state that '[g]ender…underpins Women's Studies, Queer Studies and Masculinity Studies' (2012a, p. 1), *what* is it that does the 'underpin[ning]'? Before 'gender' came into currency, *what* 'underpin[ned]' women's studies, and was it the same as 'gender…underpin[ning]'?

I am particularly interested in some instances of the term gender that appear in Brown's essay 'The impossibility of women's studies' (2008[21]):

> Insofar as the superordination of white women within women's studies is secured by the primacy and purity of the category *gender*, guilt emerges as the persistent social relation of women's studies to race (pp. 30-31, emphasis added).

> [T]his work will no longer have *gender* at its core and is in that sense no longer women's studies (p. 32, emphasis added).

Unlike the quotations that featured in my analysis earlier in the chapter, neither of these quotations takes gender as extraneous to women's studies, but rather they set up gender as inherent to women's studies. Of course, as with the Ferrebe and Tolan quotation in the last paragraph, Brown's essay was written in a different 'here and now' to the essays in *Out of the Margins* (Aaron and Walby, 1991b). I have not included these quotations to provide a riposte to *Out of the Margins*. What I am interested in here is the way that gender is cast as the entity which shores up (rather than undermines) Women's Studies in matters of race and intersectional politics. Gender in these quotations is no longer the weak gatekeeper who 'allows' men in; rather, gender is the barrier that keeps women of color[22] out. Because of gender, women's studies is the domain of 'white women'. So deep is the

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[21] First published in 1999.

[22] I use the US spelling of colour when referring to the term 'of color' to indicate the situatedness of the term in US race discourses.

collusion between gender and white women (should we say 'the study *of* gender *by* white women'? (see p. 66)), that, in order for Brown to conceptualise an area of academic work that encompasses intersectional study, she is obliged to discard gender as the 'core' of the discipline. In Brown's logic, this in turn means that the signifier 'women's studies' no longer works – and perhaps never did work – as the marker for the feminist intersectional field. In contrast to the other quotations I have analysed, here gender and women's studies are spatially and temporally inextricable from each other; if you reject gender, you concomitantly reject women's studies.

Aside from the bathos I hope to have produced between these different spatial and temporal conceptualisations of gender in relation to women's studies, I have a further reason to address these quotations. I am obliged to ask: if the 'superordination of white women within women's studies' *is* 'secured by the primacy and purity of the category gender', just *what* exactly does the 'secur[ing]'? If 'women's studies' 'has gender at its core', just *what* is that core? Given the trouble we are in with gender following our tour through metaphor analysis and theory, we cannot be certain *what* it is that Brown is referring to. Currently, we have the sense that, contrary to Brown's implication, if gender is doing the 'secur[ing]', then Women's Studies must be *in*secure; if gender is the 'core', then perhaps there is *no* core as such. Gender, seen in this way, acts as a syntactical place holder for a concept which does not hold its place.

This cyclical motion recalls the concept of a heliotropic metaphor, which Derrida (1982) brings into play in his essay on metaphor theory and philosophy entitled 'White mythology'[23]. The term 'heliotropic' is etymologically and conceptually situated in Derrida's analysis of the sun as metaphor. According to Derrida, the sun and its motion can only be understood metaphorically: '[the sun] is always, already…one might say an *artificial* construction'[24] (ibid, p. 251, emphasis in original). If we consider

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[23] 'La mythologie blanche' (Derrida, 1972b).

[24] 'Si le soleil est métaphorique déjà, toujours, il n'est plus tout à fait naturel. Il est déjà, toujours…on dirait une construction *artificielle* si l'on pouvait encore accréditer cette signification quand la nature a disparu' (Derrida, 1972b, p. 300).

that the sun is one of the key concepts of nature, insinuating that the sun is 'artificial' means that we can no longer confidently use the natural/artificial binary: 'nature has disappeared' (ibid.). The concept of the heliotropic metaphor is located in the rotating conceptualisation of sun-metaphor-sun-, which in itself represents the instability of the binary constructions of literal/metaphorical and natural/artificial. Derrida (1982, p. 250) defines heliotropic metaphors as 'imperfect metaphors'[25], for

> [t]hey provide us with too little knowledge, because one of the
> terms…implied in the substitution…cannot be known in what is
> proper to it [*dans son propre*]'[26] (ibid.).

Gender can also be understood as a heliotropic metaphor (Henderson, 2014c). We can say that gender 'provide[s] us with too little knowledge' because it too cannot be known *dans son propre*. This is a difficult expression to translate, as the above quotation shows ('in what is proper to it'). The significance of *propre* in French is that it bears a double meaning that layers *dans son propre* with, on the one hand, a sense of correctness and tidiness ('sit properly', 'clean and proper') and on the other hand of possession ('property'). This latter meaning is imbued with a sense of integrity and belonging, in that *ma propre maison*, for example, indicates 'my *own* house'. As such, to know gender *dans son propre* would entail knowing its *proper properties*, its *own* proper properties.

There is no *propre* of gender, whichever notion of gender we are looking at. We can discern this idea in Butler's (1999, p. 45) explanation of gender as the '*appearance* of a substance' (emphasis in original); a 'substance' can be known in its 'own proper properties', but the '*appearance* of a substance' constructs gender as unknowable in this way. Because we do not know what gender *is* as a literal referent, it cannot be constituted in metaphor (Henderson, 2014c). Thinking of gender as a

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[25] 'Les métaphores héliotropiques sont toujours des métaphores imparfaites' (Derrida, 1972b, p. 299).

[26] 'Elles nous donnent trop peu de connaissances parce que l'un des termes…impliqués dans la substitution…ne peut pas être connu dans son propre' (Derrida, 1972b, p. 299).

heliotropic metaphor shares some tenets with Unterhalter's (2014) re-imagining of gender as a gerund. Unterhalter had previously analysed the use of gender as a noun, in which gender was taken to mean 'how many girls and boys, men and women[?]' (ibid., p. 113), as an adjective, where gender analyses circulated around 'gendered relations of power, distribution of resources, forms of struggle or representation' (ibid.), and as a verb, where 'gender identities, performances or actions…were not stable' (ibid.). While these three notions of gender refer overtly to the *uses* of gender, in which gender is *used* as a noun, adjective or verb, the formation of gender as a gerund suggests a more complex conceptual relationship between *use* and *user*. Because a gerund is 'a verb that works as a noun' (p. 121), gender conceptualised as such is seen as 'theoris[ing] the double entendres' where the same notion of gender may be used to support gender equity or to 'support exploitation' (ibid.). Gender-as-gerund means that the use of gender may at times 'turn[]…into a commodity', while at other times it may be 'turn[ed]…into a different way of reading or acting in the world' (ibid.). Thinking of gender in this way 'unsettles the existing containers' of research (ibid.), and therefore must 'unsettle' those who try to 'contain' gender. As with the heliotropic metaphor, the gender-as-gerund idea is invested with properties which we could call 'non-proper' or 'improper' properties: the gerund is neither fully a verb nor fully a noun. To use gender as a gerund or a heliotropic metaphor is to complicate its usage beyond the intention of the user: because the properties of both gerund and heliotropic metaphor are not strictly properties, using these concepts in the conceptualisation of gender destabilises both the subject (the user) and object (gender) of the conceptualisation.

Thinking of gender as a heliotropic metaphor brings me back to my attempt to locate metaphors of space and time in the quotations at the start of this part of the chapter. By expressing gender in metaphorical terms, the quotations construct a space and time for gender. Gender has no space and time of its own; space and time are not part of its 'proper properties'. However we can see that gender, expressed in metaphor, takes on temporality and spatiality (Henderson, 2014c). If gender is caught up in a cycle of heliotropic metaphor, then we can say that the metaphoricity of

gender in turn destabilises the literal/metaphorical binary of space and time. Do metaphors of space and time construct gender, or does gender construct metaphors of space and time? Derrida destabilises the natural/artificial binary by positing the sun (ie. nature *dans son propre*) as artificial. Taking a lead from this manoeuvre, I have constructed gender as neither fully literal nor fully metaphorical. That which lies at the 'core' of gender is therefore no-thing as such. This conceptualisation of gender destabilises the opposition between (i) there being an inherent meaning of gender or (ii) the meaning of gender being established only in its usage:

(i) If we consider heliotropic metaphoricity to be an *inherent* and integral property of gender, then gender only has non-proper and improper properties, which leave it open to definition-in-*use*.

(ii) If we consider that *using* gender is tantamount to constructing a heliotropic metaphor, then using gender is always already gesturing towards heliotropic metaphoricity as an *inherent* property.

Although I have not used this term, we could say that this part of the chapter has enacted a deconstruction of both gender and metaphor, in order to build towards a conceptualisation that views gender as productively disruptive. Instead of starting with an account of what I thought deconstructing gender *would have* entailed, I have chosen to work *through and towards* this aim.

Gender here(ness) and now(ness)

The sections of this chapter have so far focused on constructing gender as a deconstructive signifier, a signifier which unsettles binaries of, for example, use/user and literal/figurative. Although the explicit focus has been on the construction of gender as a deconstructive signifier, I have been simultaneously working through the foundational stages of a deconstructive approach for researching gender. I now change the focus so that gender as a deconstructive signifier appears fuzzy and the deconstructive approach for researching gender is revealed in greater clarity. In this section, I try to show that, like gender, deconstruction can be understood as trouble with positive

valence. Earlier in the chapter, I asked, 'What happens if the literal/figurative binary does not hold true?'. This part of the chapter addresses this question head-on by situating the 'Eventful gender' research project in a scenario where gender (and indeed language and meaning in general) can only be explored through metaphoricity, specifically the metaphoricity of space and time. In evoking the expression 'here and now', I am gesturing to the impossibility of doing anything other than locating my claims in space and time. This impossibility is represented in the duality of this part's title: any *specific* expression of 'here and now' is inevitably caught up in the *generality* of 'here and now', or 'hereness and nowness'. The tension between 'here and now' as specific and 'here and now' as general is a tension which runs throughout this thesis, and indeed, as I go on to explore in Chapter 4, it underpins the rationale that shores up my empirical research strategy.

In applying the term 'deconstruction' to my own work, I have tried to pay attention to the manoeuvres of theory *application*, or 'plugging in' (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). The term 'deconstruction' is frequently used in empirical research to denote analytical practices of unpicking and unpacking, and the signifier 'Derrida' is often attached to these practices, but there is not guarantee that these will be accompanied by an explanation of what the deconstructive analytical practice actually involves. While it is in some ways counter to the Derridean project to clarify and simplify what might be best left ambiguous and complex, I consider that the effects of not setting out a deconstructive practice before engaging in it are potentially more clarifying and simplifying than doing so. In the following explanations of deconstructive work, I synthesise some of the key ideas that underpin deconstructive practice, as they are set out in Derrida's oeuvre. These explanations are intended not as a canonisation of Derrida, but as a bridge between the signifier 'deconstruction' and the deconstructive work that I then move on to develop.

Presence and spatio-temporalisation

Spatio-temporalisation, as I am using it in this study, refers to the action of locating something in time and space in order to understand it. As

we have seen, metaphor analysis may seek to identify how metaphors are used to locate abstract ideas in space and time. In his work on metaphors, 'White Mythology' (1982), Derrida widens the relevance of locating in space and time, or spatio-temporalisation, to meaning in general. Derrida's manoeuvre is in part possible because 'White Mythology' destabilises the binary between literal and figurative language, thus rendering any analysis that is directed specifically towards metaphors relevant for any language. The transfer of spatio-temporalisation from metaphors to language in general is also possible because, in Derrida's theory of language and meaning, meaning itself depends on the construction of presence, where presence is understood in terms of spatio-temporalisation. Derrida asks how we can 'clarif[y] what "space" and "time" mean'[27] (1982, p. 227) 'before knowing what might be…a meaning that in and of [itself] spatio-temporalize[s] everything [it] state[s]'[28] (p. 228). Trying to understand spatio-temporalisation places us in the cyclical situation of only being able to grasp what space and time are by constructing them in terms of space and time.

Spatio-temporalisation is a shorthand term for the manifestations of presence that we use in constructing meaning. Although most forms of presence boil down to space and time, Derrida offers a number of enumerations of the different facets of presence, which help to elucidate the ways in which the construction of meaning relies on presence[29]. These enumerations are often held within parentheses, as Derrida is more focused upon taking presence as a given

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[27] 'Comment savoir ce que veut dire temporalisation et spatialisation…si l'on a pas élucidé ce que "espace" et "temps" veulent dire?' (Derrida, 1972b, p. 271).

[28] 'Mais comment le faire avant de savoir ce que c'est qu'un…vouloir-dire qui spatio-temporalise, de lui-même, tout ce qu'il énonce?' (Derrida, 1972b, p. 271).

[29] Examples include: '(present to itself, to its signified, to the other, to the very condition of the theme of presence in general)' (Derrida, 1976, p. 8), '(présente à soi, à son signifié, à l'autre, condition même de la présence en général)' (Derrida, 1967, p. 17); '(the identity of the subject who is present for all his operations, present beneath every accident or event, self-present in its "living speech", in its enunciations…)' (Derrida, 2004b, p. 26), '(…l'identité du sujet, présent à toutes ses opérations, présent sous tous ses accidents ou événements, présent à soi dans sa "parole vive", dans ses énoncés ou ses énonciations…)' (Derrida, 1972c, p. 41).

and working out how to deconstruct it. Working out how to deconstruct presence is a theoretical obligation because Derrida views the various forms of presence as resulting in the fixing of meaning, a fixity which dissimulates the possibility for non-fixity. Non-fixity, if only we could get hold of 'it', has the potential to destabilise the hegemony of logocentric thought. In *Of Grammatology* (1976), Derrida conceptualises non-fixity, or at least a construction of meaning which admits to the fixing processes in which it engages in order to succeed; this process of conceptualisation is deconstruction.

Paradoxically, I have found presence and spatio-temporalisation to be essential concepts to explore in crafting a deconstructive research practice. This dependence on the concepts that Derrida highlights as underpinning the construction of meaning in logocentric thought may seem paradoxical, but Derrida (1976, p. 67) suggests that the deconstruction of presence involves a motion of 'surrounding', which does not preclude the mobilisation *in the deconstruction* of the very concepts that will be deconstruct*ed*:

> deconstructing the simplicity of presence does not [only consist in] accounting for the horizons of potential presence, [nor] indeed [in] a 'dialectic' of protention and retention that one would install in the heart of the present instead of *surrounding* it with it'[30] (ibid., emphasis added).

The recommended action is not one of 'accounting': we are not to make a list of the ways in which different forms of presence are, well, 'present'. We are also not to engage in a back-and-forth about presence in which we exchange views on 'what *is* presence', for posing this question, even using the verb 'to be' is itself a gesture of spatio-temporalisation. Such a back-and-forth would therefore install reliance on presence as the vital organ of presence. We are instead to use a gesture of 'surrounding' – something like

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[30] '[D]éconstruire la simplicité de la présence ne revient pas seulement à tenir compte des horizons de présence potentielle, voire d'une "dialectique" de la protention et de la rétention qu'on installerait au coeur du présent au lieu de l'entourer' (Derrida, 1967, p. 97).

surrounding presence with presence. Because Derrida's theorisation of language and meaning begins with deconstruction (rather than presence), any explanation of presence that works with Derrida's texts continually returns to deconstruction. However, in the interest of elucidating this notion of presence, I am trying not to pass immediately to deconstruction (as Derrida does, returning parenthetically to presence as an always-already pre-face). In order to proceed with a 'surrounding' motion, ie deconstruction, we need to know what 'it' 'is' that we might be trying to surround.

Derrida (1976, p. 12) refers to enumerations of presence as 'the subdeterminations' of presence, that is to say the facets which both (i) 'depend on [the] general form' of 'the meaning of being [*l'étant*] in general as *presence*' (emphasis in original), and which (ii) 'organise [their system] within [the general form]'[31]. One of the more comprehensive enumerations that Derrida (1976, p. 12) gives for the 'subdeterminations' of presence is as follows:

> (presence of the thing to [the gaze]..., presence as substance/essence/existence..., temporal presence as point... of the now or of the moment..., the cogito['s presence to itself], consciousness, subjectivity, the co-presence of the other and of the self, intersubjectivity as the intentional phenomenon of the ego, and so forth)[32].

According to this enumeration, presence involves the following facets. Firstly, do we need to be able to see something to establish that it 'is'? Secondly, does it need to be marked out by non-things, perhaps by being touched, or by discernibly having a form of life? Thirdly, does it

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[31] '[L]a détermination historiale du sens de l'être en général comme *présence*, avec toutes ses sous-déterminations qui dépendent de cette forme générale et qui organisent en elle leur système' (Derrida, 1967, p. 23).

[32] '(présence de la chose au regard…, présence comme substance/essence/existence …, présence temporelle comme pointe…du maintenant ou de l'instant…, présence à soi du cogito, conscience, subjectivité, co-présence de l'autre et de soi, intersubjectivité comme phénomène intentionnel de l'ego, etc.)' (Derrida, 1967, p. 23).

need to be temporalised, in a moment that is now, or in another moment that was another now? Fourthly, do we need to know that we ourselves are there, that we have a self, that there are others with selves who are not us, that we are able to interact with others and know that we are doing so? Without the subdeterminations of presence, then, nothing 'is there', and indeed nothing 'is'; there is no-thing. In order to enact the 'surrounding' action which Derrida prescribes, we have to recognise the ways in which presence *itself* 'is there' and 'is'. In a statement that is almost impossible to translate into English, Derrida (1976, p. 12) states that, in logocentrism, the very 'being', 'the "to be"' (*l'être*) of the 'entity', of 'being' [*l'étant*] is 'presence'[33]. In this formulation, presence *is* presence.

Spatio-temporalisation, as a shorthand for the subdeterminations of presence, is a process which depends on and reinforces presence as the means of meaning. As we cannot help but operate within the terms of presence, I have developed a research process which overtly and deliberately mobilises the subdeterminations of presence as a motif that runs through my processes of knowledge construction. In explicitly utilising spatio-temporalisation in my research strategy, I have tried to conceptualise a 'surrounding' motion that derives significance not from dissimulating my reliance on presence, but from admitting to it and deploying it. This research mode holds to an ethic of deconstruction, which, having introduced the notion of presence, I now move on to discuss.

Deconstruction

The analytical process which renders presence and its subdeterminations visible in Derrida's analysis is the process of deconstruction. Because deconstruction involves working with presence to render it visible, deconstruction and presence are inextricably linked. Although deconstruction can be used to work on any manner of concepts,

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[33] 'Le logocentrisme serait donc solidaire de la détermination de l'être de l'étant comme présence' (Derrida, 1967, p. 23).

what is often missed from deconstructive analysis is the deconstruction of presence that underlies any deconstruction.

To explain deconstruction, it is necessary to spatio-temporalise it, even as it pushes at each spatio-temporalisation. The French term *clôture* is perhaps the key spatio-temporalising term that helps us to understand deconstruction. *Clôture* is used by Derrida (1967) to designate the limits of logocentric thought – the limits within which we are obliged to work, but also the limits which, once they become visible, give us something to push against. Spivak, in her translation of *Of Grammatology* (1976), translates *clôture* as 'closure'. However, *clôture* indicates both a spatial and a temporal dimension, in that it means both closure or end (temporal), and fence or boundary (spatial). It is important to retain both temporal and spatial dimensions in *clôture*, for the term *clôture* performatively spatio-temporalises a thought system, logocentric thought, which was hitherto inconceivable as having either a temporal end or a spatial limit. The term *clôture* is therefore instrumental in reconceiving logocentric thought as a system at all, and moreover as a system that can be deconstructed for its implications in constructing meaning as presence. Just as gender needed spatio-temporalising in order for women's studies to oppose it in the *Out of the Margins* (Aaron and Walby, 1991b) essays, the logocentric thought system must be constructed in space and time in order to be challenged. It is especially important to retain the spatial dimension in addition to temporalisation because 'closure' on its own seems to indicate a linear progression towards the end of logocentric thought. Layering temporal limits with spatial limits draws attention to the multi-faceted conceptualisation of limits: I have chosen to translate *clôture* with 'en/closure'[34], which retains both the spatial and temporal dimensions of limits.

It must be noted that the passages where Derrida offers definition-like statements about deconstruction are extremely difficult to translate into English. Translating a concept that refuses to be fully understandable is a

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[34] Thanks to Charley Nussey for this conversation.

highly uncomfortable activity. Translations of the definitions that more or less attempt to recreate the French word by word in English do not succeed, because Derrida often plays with ambiguity and double entendre which are not directly translatable. In working with Derrida in an empirical study, it is my project to *apply* some of Derrida's ideas on deconstruction to the empirical context. In view of this project, I consider that grappling with a precise translation is less important than developing Derrida's quasi-definitions of deconstruction into a means of enacting deconstruction. As such, I have decided to build an amalgamated synthesis of two chosen passages; I bring to the fore the 'instructions' for deconstructive working. For reference, I have included the passages in French and in Spivak's translation[35].

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[35] Passage 1:

'Since these concepts are indispensable for unsettling the heritage to which they belong, we should be even less prone to renounce them. Within the closure, by an oblique and always perilous movement, constantly risking falling back within what is being deconstructed, it is necessary to surround the critical concepts with a careful and thorough discourse – to mark the conditions, the medium, and the limits of their effectiveness and to designate rigorously their intimate relationship to the machine whose deconstruction they permit; and, in the same process, designate the crevice through which the yet unnameable glimmer beyond the closure can be glimpsed' (Derrida, 1976, p. 14).

'Nous devons d'autant moins renoncer à ces concepts qu'ils nous sont indispensables pour ébranler aujourd'hui l'héritage dont ils font partie. A l'intérieur de la clôture, par un mouvement oblique et toujours périlleux, risquant sans cesse de retomber en-deçà de ce qu'il déconstruit, il faut entourer les concepts critiques d'un discours prudent et minutieux, marquer les conditions, le milieu et les limites de leur efficacité, désigner rigoureusement leur appartenance à la machine qu'ils permettent de déconstituer ; et du même coup la faille par laquelle se laisse entrevoir, encore innommable, la lueur de l'outre-clôture' (Derrida, 1967, p. 25).

Passage 2:

'The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them *in a certain way*, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work' (Derrida, 1976, p. 24, emphasis in original).

'Les mouvements de déconstruction ne sollicitent pas les structures du dehors. Ils ne sont possibles et efficaces, ils n'ajustent leurs coups qu'en habitant ces structures. En les habitant *d'une certaine manière*, car on habite toujours et plus encore quand on s'en doute pas. Opérant nécessairement de l'intérieur, empruntant à la structure ancienne toutes les ressources stratégiques et économiques de la subversion, les lui empruntant structurellement, c'est-à-dire sans pouvoir en isoler

The 'instructions' for deconstructive working that I have developed from Derrida's explanations are as follows:

> *Critical concept(s)*: We may be troubled by a particular concept, by the way in which a concept constructs its referent. Although we are troubled by the concept, we cannot 'renounce' it, or discard it: it is this very concept that is 'indispensable' for our work, because we work *with* the concept in order to 'unsettle' its 'heritage'. We therefore keep hold of the concept, and aim to 'surround' it.

> *Surrounding*: Although 'surrounding' may seem as though it would occur outside the thing to be surrounded, we can only 'surround' from *within* the 'en/closure'; we can only 'aim our blows' by 'inhabiting' the structure of the concept. Importantly, we 'are always inhabiting', even 'when we least suspect it'. Although we are always 'inhabiting', 'surrounding' involves 'inhabiting structures *in a certain way*'. In attempting to occupy a liminal zone of limits, we run the 'constant risk' of 'falling back on this side of that which is being deconstructed': our deconstructive motion can only ever be 'oblique' and 'perilous'. 'Falling back' would involve re-inscribing the concept in the very terms which we are seeking to destabilise. 'Surrounding' is a discursive motion, which involves taking great care and paying attention to the detail of what we do with discourse in destabilising – and potentially re-stabilising – the concepts that are troubling us.

> *Marking out:* The task of 'surrounding' involves identifying, 'marking out' the 'conditions' that establish the concept's 'effectiveness' – what constitutes the (central) 'environment' (*milieu*) for the concept to operate, and where are its 'limits'? In order to mark out these conditions, we are obliged to 'borrow[] all the strategic and systemic resources from the old structure': we use the conditions of the concept's effectiveness to identify its

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des éléments et des atomes, l'entreprise de la déconstruction est toujours d'une certaine manière emportée pas son propre travail' (Derrida, 1967, p. 39, emphasis in original).

conditions of effectiveness. In identifying where the concept is most effective, and where it begins to exceed or fail, we show how the concept 'belong[s] to the very machine that [it] help[s] to take apart'. The strength and weakness of the concept are thus intertwined and mutually constitutive.

Chink/crevice: Marking out the concept's sphere of operation, and, in parallel, the limits of the sphere, means that we crack the solidity of the en/closure. We cannot go beyond the en/closure, because this would amount to going beyond space and time, which we cannot do. However, we do seem to be able to 'glimpse' something through the 'chink' or 'crevice' (*faille*): an 'unnameable' (not spatio-temporalised) 'glow'. This 'glow' points towards a realm (thus spatialised), an era (thus temporalised), beyond the en/closure (*l'outre-clôture*), which, because it is outside of spatio-temporalisation, we cannot access. In imagining the 'glow', we turn back inwards to work on making visible the fixing processes of presence that structure our imagination.

The four facets of deconstruction delineated here reflect the textual performance of the earlier sections of the chapter:

Critical concept: Gender is my critical concept. I am troubled by the way it is used, what it is made to mean, but I cannot 'renounce' it. Instead I am obliged to work with it to destabilise its 'heritage'.

Surrounding: Through Chapters 2 and 3 I have 'surrounded' gender. Because I am constantly obliged to use the signifier 'gender' and to ask what it 'is', even as I deny the salience of that question, I am working within the 'en/closure' of gender, inhabiting its conceptual reach, trying to notice (as in Chapter 2) when I am unsuspectingly 'inhabiting' gender in the way that I wish to resist. My resistance takes the form of constantly analysing the ways in which I myself am complicit in constructing gender. It is an uncomfortable way of inhabiting – it is inhabiting 'in a certain way'. And I *do* keep 'falling' back into comfortably inhabiting gender; each time that I notice that I too am making claims for the natural meaning of gender I try to scrabble back, taking care to

acknowledge that my actions of destabilising gender inevitably mirror gestures of stabilisation.

Marking out: I have been 'marking out' the conditions that make gender mean in a full and present sense, and those conditions which push at the limits of the concept, so that it no longer seems to mean. I have 'borrowed' from metaphor analysis in order to show gender in its clarity as a referent; I have turned metaphor analysis back on gender in order to demonstrate the ways in which gender is shored up as a signifier. Gender cannot operate fully as a metaphor, but it also cannot operate without metaphoricity.

Chink/crevice: In conceptualising gender as a heliotropic metaphor, I have gestured towards a chink or crevice in the en/closure of gender. We cannot go beyond spatio-temporalisations of gender, but, by reaching towards an imaginary of gender that pushes at its construction in presence, I have tried to suggest a glow-like conceptualisation for gender. In thinking of gender as inevitably but uncomfortably constructed in space and time, I have drawn attention to the ways in which we invest gender with certainty out of necessity.

Deconstructing a 'critical concept', then, involves overtly locating the concept in the facets of presence that establish it as a 'critical concept'. The motions of surrounding and marking out are inscribed in a logic of temporality, an order of events, and a logic of spatiality, a demarcation of boundaries and edges and their interconnections. In deconstructing, we can only operate on these terms, but it is the deliberate and self-conscious use of spatio-temporalisation that contributes to and indeed constitutes a deconstructive project. It is in this vein that I have developed a deconstructive research process – by 'inhabiting [gender] *in a certain way*'[36] (Derrida, 1976, p. 24, emphasis in original). As I go on to show in the next chapter, my empirical research project has largely consisted in spatio-temporalising gender, and, as such, it has operated within the framing of

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[36] '[E]n habitant ces structures…*d'une certaine manière*' (Derrida, 1967, p. 39, emphasis in original).

logocentric thinking. In full knowledge that exceeding logocentric thinking is never entirely possible, I have nonetheless operated with a spatio-temporalising strategy that is *deliberate* and *self-conscious*, and hence deconstructive, in its processes.

It is to this strategy that I now turn in Chapter 4, in order to explore in greater depth my research process. However it is necessary to note here that these four stages of deconstruction, in addition to their role in the conceptualisation of my research process, also play a much greater part in the thesis as a whole. The four chapters which follow Chapter 4 each focus on one of the deconstructive stages in enmeshing theoretical and empirical analysis. Chapter 5 centres on gender as a 'critical concept' by bringing together the notion of conceptuality with empirical material from interviews about conceptualising gender from delegates who attended the 'official fieldwork' conferences. Chapter 6 constructs a 'surrounding' motion, using theorisations of performativity in conjunction with autoethnographic material from the conferences on gender and intersectionality to surround naturalised assumptions of what gender 'is'. In Chapter 7, I 'mark out' the conditions that result in some conceptualisations of gender succeeding where others fail; this chapter is based on ethnographic and autoethnographic material from the conferences, particularly in relation to chairing at conferences. Finally, in Chapter 8 I use the notion of the 'event' as a progression from performativity to envision the 'chink, crevice' where gender can be imagined as productively and positively valent.

Chapter 4
Unfixing research

> As a self-reflexive discourse, which constantly divides itself
> against itself and transgresses its own systems, post-structuralist
> criticism avoids being fixed, avoids becoming an established
> method (Young, 1981, p. 7).

Narratives of the research process in theses may fix research into
place in two ways. Firstly, the *research process* followed may be organised
into a coherent, logical and justifiable set of actions. Secondly, the
representation of the research process may be unified and stabilised, so that
there is one story for the research process. In employing a deconstructive
ethic of research, I am obliged not just to *enact* a deconstructive research
process, but also to take into consideration the *representation* of the process
(Britzman, 2000; Gordon, 2003; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Schostak
and Schostak, 2013). As such I am not just making a claim to having
designed my research process in order that it 'divides itself against itself'
and 'transgresses its own systems' (Young, 1981, p. 7), I am also trying to
demonstrate these actions in my representational techniques and strategies.
In line with St. Pierre and Pillow's (2000a, p. 10) questions around the
effect of poststructural thinking on the research process[37], I have found
myself asking '[w]here, when is research?' How could I even decide what
counted as research, and indeed how would I establish what counted as
'counting' or mattering?

Although I can say with ease and 'ethnographic confidence'
(Britzman, 2000, p. 32) that I conducted research in certain spaces and
certain times, that I recruited and interviewed participants, that I observed
and recorded and reflected, that I obtained ethical approval and ensured that
my participants were participating with informed consent, I want to spend
some time in the first section of this chapter thinking in more detail about

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[37] In Chapter 1, I referred to the distinction between poststructuralism and
deconstruction in terms of Derrida's work. However in research literature there is a
crossover between these two terms; for example Pillow (1997) and Rhedding-Jones
(1997) write on deconstructive research and use the term poststructuralism.

how I can represent my research process. In her work on telling the stories of feminism, Hemmings (2011, p. 16) notes that some narratives 'do not require evidencing' because they are able to come across as 'common sense' knowledge. We could align the statements that I included at the start of this paragraph with this type of ethnographic narrative: I can issue these statements without including a citation, as well as countless others on using semi-structured interviews, transcribing my interviews verbatim, and so on. However, as Hemmings highlights, narrative strategies such as this 'common sense' presentation of research processes 'make it hard to think about telling these stories in other ways' (p. 132).

This is why the first section of this chapter is dedicated to exploring a narrative strategy for the chapter that will balance coherence with disruption. Britzman (2000, p. 39) advocates 'requir[ing] something more of readers [of ethnographic texts]'. Because readers can 'participate in exceeding and informing the meanings ethnography might offer', they need to be given entry to 'the difference within the story' (p. 38). The entry to 'difference within' is associated with an openness regarding 'the impossibility of telling everything' (ibid.), which runs counter to the desire to represent a complete narrative. In my research narrative, recognition of the 'impossibility of telling everything' is situated in practices of deliberate spatio-temporalisation, whereby no one narrative position pretends to speak from outside the research process. After the first section, which sets out the narrative strategy, the chapter progresses onto three further sections, each of which centres on the process of 'unfixing'. By placing 'unfixing' centre stage, I focus on the processes of spatio-temporalisation that shore up notions such as research approach, context and site, researcher and participants, 'data'.

Unfixing the research narrative

Britzman (2000, p. 30) presents her paper '"The question of belief": Writing poststructural ethnography' as 'a "hidden chapter" in [her] own ethnographic text', in which she explores the 'narrative dilemmas' that are

'unleashed' in the writing of an ethnographic study. I here present a scaled down version of the '"hidden chapter"' of my research process. Thus I ensure that I am addressing the '"graphy"' as well as the '"ethno"' of ethnography (p. 27). However, as Britzman also found, in reaching into the '"hidden chapter"', I am engaged in a struggle: in preparing this chapter, I found myself writing lists of what I should include in the chapter in order for it to pass muster as the account of my research process. Reflecting on my gestures of planning and organisation, I began to think about the way that other research narratives I had read constructed their authority upon notions of space, time and presence; 'the immediacy, the "now", the "being there"' (Lather and St. Pierre, 2013, p. 630). As I reflected on the spatio-temporalisation of the research narrative, I started to draw parallels with narrative literary theory. This is not a coincidence (see Rhedding-Jones, 1997); where and when the author or narrator of a research narrative can be said to *be present*, for example, is instrumental in determining the authority and authenticity of the research process; the construction of the author and the narrator of a text is a matter of longstanding debate in narrative literary theory (Barthes, 2008[38]; Hirsch, 1967). In this section of the chapter, I turn to some notions that are usually employed in analysing literary texts in order to explore different options of narrative spatio-temporalisation. There is some irony in providing a rationale for a research narrative that deliberately counters normalised narratives of research. However, just as we cannot move beyond or outside the en/closure, it is equally – and concomitantly – impossible to escape the necessity of narrating. As such, in keeping with an ethic of deconstruction, I do not attempt to move beyond or outside the research narrative. Instead, I attempt to 'surround' the concept of the research narrative with a research narrative, thus 'marking out' the inherent dependence on presence of research narratives.

Readers of feminist poststructuralist ethnographic research studies[39] will be familiar with a particular style for narrating the research process. This narrative style incorporates a blend of narrative voices. The

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[38] 'The death of the author' was published in English before French, in 1968.

[39] For example, Chaudhry (2000), Pomerantz (2008), Pereira (2011), Youdell (2011).

overarching research story, which I refer to as the 'researcher-narrator' position, is recounted predominantly in the first person[40], in the past tense[41]; from this narrative position, the research process is described, in which the researcher (reinforced by academic citations), justifies the choice of research site, and recounts gatekeeper issues, the recruitment process, their interview and observation practice, ethical issues, their own positionality as researcher. The researcher-narrator voice, where it is expressed in the first person, constructs the subjectivity of the researcher (Lenz Taguchi, 2013); for Gordon (2003, p. 86), use of the first person is key to signalling reflexivity, that 'our stories are…about ourselves in the field'. However the combination of the researcher and narrator subject positions belies the abstracted spatio-temporalisation of this narrative voice. The narrative position that the researcher-narrator takes is 'extradiegetic', or at the narrative level above the story (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983, p. 91, from Genette, 1972). This means that, spatio-temporally, the narrator is located outside the action of the story and so appears to be a '[v]oice from nowhere' (Richardson, 2000, p. 157). To counter the abstraction of the extradiegetic level, I conceive of the extradiegetic narrator as an 'unreliable narrator'. Unreliability can be discerned through the narrator's 'limited knowledge,…personal involvement [in the story],…[or] problematic value-scheme' (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983, p. 100). As such, an unreliable narrator is an 'invented character[] who [is] part of the stories they tell' (Lodge, 1992, p. 154). According to Lodge, an 'unreliable "omniscient" narrator…could only occur in a very deviant, experimental text' (p. 154), for '[t]here must be some possibility of discriminating between truth and falsehood…for the story to engage our interest' (p. 155). I have attempted to create an 'unreliable "omniscient" narrator' for my research narrative precisely because this turns over the most authoritative position in the narrative to an 'unreliable' source, thus destabilising the reliance of the extradiegetic narrator's authority upon a negated or abstracted spatio-temporalisation. By

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[40] The alternative in English being the use of passive constructions, sometimes the first person plural, 'we' or the third person 'one'.

[41] Although the methodology chapter may initially be written in the future tense in advance of the fieldwork, and changed to past tense after the fieldwork has been completed.

gesturing to the 'unreliability' of the researcher-narrator position (Watson, 2006), I admit to the impossibility of producing a coherent, 'uncontaminated' or 'neutral' narrative (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013, p. 3) of my study.

In feminist poststructuralist ethnographic writing, the researcher-narrator's narrative is often juxtaposed with short, episodic narratives of specific incidents that occurred during the research process, which are '[a]nchored in specific interactions in "the field"' (Cairns, 2013, p. 325), and which aim to reveal 'the everyday, embodied negotiations of research practice' (ibid.). These 'incident narratives' are varied in form, but often include snippets of direct speech, or extracts from a journal or field notes, in which the researcher is invoked as a 'character' (or character-narrator) within the story. An excerpt from Pomerantz's (2008) monograph on girls' style and schooling, adapted from her doctoral study, illustrates the juxtaposition. Pomerantz begins the paragraph in the researcher-narrator voice:

> In an effort to conduct the kind of feminist research that I felt would challenge dominant discourses on girlhood, I had initially conceived of my study…[with a] focus on 'alternative' girls (p. 26).

She then recalls talking to a research participant, Ratch, about what counted as 'alternative', in a conversation which is construed as pivotal to the change in research focus from the exceptional – the 'alternative' – to the study of style as a spectrum:

> Ratch leaned over to me in English class and whispered, 'I've been thinking about your study.' 'Yeah?' I said out of the corner of my mouth, not wanting to get in trouble for talking during the lesson. 'You know, *everyone's* alternative in their own way' (ibid., emphasis in original).

The juxtaposition of narrative styles has a bathetic effect. In the researcher-narrator excerpt, we have no indication of the narrator's presence, while the

second excerpt is situated 'in English class', in an intimate moment where Ratch 'leaned over' and 'whispered'. The depicted proximity of Ratch and the researcher, the direct speech markers used to represent the interaction, the reference to the researcher's ambiguous presence in the classroom as researcher and student: all of these narrative techniques shift the spatiality and temporality of the research narrative. In the first excerpt, we are not given explicit spatial and temporal clues. As such, the spatio-temporalisation that this voice enacts negates the embodied presence of the researcher in the knowledge construction process. Meanwhile, the techniques used in the second quotation enact a clear spatio-temporalisation, in which the researcher is depicted as firmly present within the research interaction.

In the tension – and complementarity – between the two narrative strategies, we can discern some of the major concerns of 'feminist research'. Firstly, how do we develop a mode of research that does not pretend to be conducted by a neutral, unbiased researcher, that does not claim to produce an objective data set? Secondly, how do we nonetheless construct our research as in some way rigorous, valid, credible, reliable, to ourselves, to fellow feminist researchers, and to others outside of this research paradigm (Ackerly and True, 2010; Marshall and Young, 2006; Morley, 1999; Ramazanoğlu and Holland, 2002)? These questions hark back to my commentary on the women's studies literature in the previous chapter, relating to masculine knowledge production. How do we create alternative terms for the production of knowledge and its justification? (Klein, 1983; Maynard, 1994; St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000b). Feminist research derives authority from experience, often shared experience (Cerwonka, 2011). Experience (even as a contested concept) operates as a source of authentic research (Ramazanoğlu, 1989; Reinharz, 1983), and the authenticity of the research narrative is achieved in part through the representation of the research *experience*. In the excerpt from Pomerantz's (2008) work, the function of the incident narrative is to show the role of the participants in shaping the research project. By representing the conversation with Ratch, Pomerantz shows that she has undermined the hierarchy between researcher and researched (Mies, 1983; Oakley, 1981); in an illicit classroom

conversation that positions researcher and participant as equals, the researcher allows her pre-planned research trajectory to shift course. The insertion of an incident narrative serves a further purpose, in relation to the sub-field of poststructuralist feminist research. Research that is operating under the banner of poststructuralist feminism 'encourage[s]…[an] enabling confusion that deterritorializes ontological reckonings, epistemological conditions and justifications, and methodological striations' (St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000a, p.1). As such, although key tenets of feminist research remain in place, the core notion of experience comes under scrutiny: experience is worked with, but worked with *as unstable*. The incident narrative comes into play here as a means of representing the instability – and multiplicity – of the researcher's experience, through a proliferation of the researcher's subjectivity.

I have focused on this excerpt from Pomerantz's text because I am interested in which parts of our research processes we choose to present in which ways. It is far rarer to refer to the moment of knowledge production in an incident narrative, as Richardson (2000, p. 161) does 'as [she] pause[s] in the writing of [the] paper' when a courier arrives to deliver her book, or as Berbary (2014, p. 1213) does when she reports on a meeting with her doctoral committee where she realises she has been 'socialized' into her research community. In my narrative strategy, I try to take seriously Clegg's (2012b, p. 416) suggestion that 'writing is…not simply an expression of what one already knows', by embedding incident narratives that address the construction of my research narrative in the following sections, in addition to narratives of researching at conferences and conducting interviews. The consideration of the incidents that occur during 'writing up' research accords with Robinson-Pant and Singal's (2013, p. 451) reminder that 'the most difficult ethical dilemmas…may be encountered during write up'. In the research narrative, I foreground the contrasting constructions of authority that accompany each narrative level: the extradiegetic researcher-narrator, whose authority is located in a negation of presence, versus the presence of the researcher as a character in the story, whose authority is derived from a heightened sense of presence.

The narrative strategy that I employ 'marks out' its reliance on presence and spatio-temporalisation in establishing its authority and authenticity. This 'marking out', as in Barthes' conceptualisation of writing, can be considered a performative mode of writing, in that it does not refer to 'an operation of recording, noting, representation' (Barthes, 2008, p. 315), but rather to a form of writing that *produces* its effect. In his essay 'Tympan'[42], Derrida (1982) prints a thin column of text in the margin of the main text of the essay. This visible margin is the performative enactment of the notion that 'beyond the philosophical text there is not a blank, virgin, empty margin, but another text, a weave of differences of forces without any present center of reference'[43] (Derrida, 1982, p. xxiii). The sections of this chapter, without playfully producing a textualised margin, performatively gesture towards the text that lies beyond that which is included as present within this chapter. The form of my gesturing resembles the 'space of writing' that, for Barthes, is 'to be ranged over, …not pierced' (Barthes, 2008, p. 316). Barthes associates 'pierc[ing]' with the form of criticism that burrows down into the text until it has pierced through to the author's truth, while 'rang[ing] over' is the spatial metaphor to indicate a critical action of analysing across the text. In the ensuing research narrative, I try to produce a movement of 'rang[ing] over' which challenges the possibility of unifying the narrators of the research narrative with the researcher/author. I resist what Duras calls the writer 'becoming their own cop' in their attempt to write in 'the clearest and the most inoffensive [form]'[44] (Duras, 1993, p. 34, tr.). By following a form which does not aim to create a pellucid reading experience, I am seeking to construct a research narrative that allows for 'telling…stories in other ways' (Hemmings, 2011, p. 132). The deliberate and acknowledged plurality of researcher-narrators in my research narrative gestures to the contextual conditions of research narrative production, and resists the telling of one research narrative for the thesis context (even as

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[42] 'Tympan' (Derrida, 1972b).

[43] '[A]u-delà du texte philosophique, il n'y a pas une marge blanche, vierge, vide, mais un autre texte, un tissu de différences de forces sans aucun centre de référence présente' (Derrida, 1972b, p. xix).

[44] 'L'écrivain, alors il devient son propre flic. J'entends par là la recherche de la bonne forme, c'est-à-dire la forme…la plus claire et la plus inoffensive' (Duras, 1993, p. 34).

this chapter does, after all, fall back on this side of the 'chink/crevice', as just one account of my research process).

Unfixing how

When I embarked upon my PhD journey, it was a given that I would conduct empirical research. The doctoral training programme at my university distinguished between those who were conducting empirical research and those who were working with arts-based or philosophical disciplinary paradigms; as a student funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) (as opposed to the Arts and Humanities Research Council), whose research proposal had specified an empirical element, I fell clearly within the empirical research contingent. The result of this early demarcation was that my doctoral training and early stages of planning and writing were directed towards designing my empirical research project. As I crafted (and was recognised into) different positionalities within a multitude of academic contexts, I began to question the separation between the doctoral trajectory as a whole and my designated empirical research. Particular moments surface in writing this: when I applied for the ESRC Overseas Institutional Visit (OIV) scheme, the guidance clearly stated that the grant could not be used for PhD fieldwork; rather, my proposed visit should contribute to my research training needs (ESRC, 2014, p. 26). When my experiences of attending events in Paris for my three OIV trips to the French Gender Studies milieu connect themselves to my 'official fieldwork' in a web of interlinked conceptual shifts, strands of the web are severed by the thought of this funding guidance. Another memory surfaces, of attending a Higher Education research seminar, at which I was intensely affected by the hierarchical enactment of institutional power play, and for the first time finding that I could no longer attend an event just to learn about a topic. These concerns echo what Clegg and Stevenson (2013, p. 7) identify as the 'fish in the water' problem of researching higher education (see also Pabian, 2014). That is, researchers researching higher education from within frequently embed 'tacit ethnographic' (Clegg and Stevenson, 2013, p. 6) description into their accounts of higher education practices in

the form of 'a seemingly neutral description of the research site' (p. 7), without noticing or acknowledging that they only 'know' this detail from their own experiences of higher education. Instead of eliding the distinction between what I 'know' from research and what I 'know' from my own experience, I am reluctant to make a clear distinction between these two domains.

Since teaching myself to look for the ways in which gender is made to mean what it means in higher education and academia, I have been unable to 'switch off' my researcher identity. Moreover, because I have designed my 'official fieldwork' with the same ethos as my doctoral journey, around networks, community and mobility, all experiences are intertwined in the knowledge construction that I perform. My 'official fieldwork' involved attending three national women's studies conferences, in the UK, the US and India. I attended each conference as a delegate-researcher, and for each conference I recruited around 10 participants who shared and developed their interpretations of the conference with me. One of the aims of this research design was to develop my own global connections in gender research, as well as to develop my conceptual understandings of gender. Indeed these two aims are linked, as, in tune with my ethos of deliberate spatio-temporalisation, I have sought intense, spatially and temporally situated micro-portraits of experience to achieve a multi-faceted, rather than homogenising, depiction of both concepts and contexts. Although I only recruited participants for the three 'official fieldwork' conferences, I have also engaged in similar processes of collective interpretation in other conferences that I have attended, particularly during some informal pilot work that I conducted at the 2013 Gender and Education Association (GEA) conference[45].

Because the boundary between 'official fieldwork' and doctoral journey has become so blurred, I have at times wondered why I have chosen

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[45] I attended this conference with three members of the PhD Partnering Exchange (see Chapter 1) from UFS, my two supervisors, and two of the researchers from one of my supervisor's research project. This formed an informal group in which to try out some of my questions. I also practised my autoethnographic process.

to still designate any of my experiences as empirical research. Or perhaps, as in Doloriert and Sambrook's (2011), Beňovà's (2013) or Stanley's (2015) autoethnographies of PhD journeys, my doctoral experience as a whole counts as research? Furthermore, because I am interrogating the status of written versus orally disseminated ideas in academic knowledge production, elements of my so-called empirical research have presented themselves to me as nearer 'literature' than 'data'. In their introduction to their special issue on 'What is the empirical?', Adkins and Lury (2009) note an increased focus on empirical research in Sociology. According to Adkins and Lury, asking '*what the empirical is and how it matters*' (p. 6, emphasis in original) may lead to 'a necessary and productive destabilization of the functioning of the empirical in the determination of the character, status and role of the discipline' (ibid.). My induction into social sciences research through doctoral training and the expectations of funders was steeped in the implicit co-determination of knowledge production and empirical research. This co-determination has been 'productive[ly] destabiliz[ed]' by the interweaving of 'doctoral trajectory' with 'official fieldwork', with the result that I can only conceptualise my research project through a set of blurred boundaries, starting with the blurring of 'what counts' as the research that I should describe and justify in this chapter. It is this blurred foundation that constitutes me, the narrating subject, as an 'unreliable narrator'.

When pressed to describe my study in a few sentences, in a conference abstract or short presentation, for example, I use shorthand terms such as 'ethnography' and 'autoethnography' to account for the 'how' of my research study:

> My PhD study is something like an ethnographic study of the
> concept of gender as it is understood and put to use in an
> increasingly global and mobile academia (Henderson, 2015d).

> The larger study from which this paper is drawn used ethnographic
> and autoethnographic approaches to conduct research at three
> national women's studies conferences (Henderson, 2015c).

Depending on the dissemination context, I try to resist the direct descriptive (and so constitutive) action of stating that my study *is* an ethnograph*y*, as in the quotation from the seminar slide above, where I included the marker of a simile, 'something like'. This resistance to categorising my research approach is rooted in two separate, but connected, issues. On the one hand, I resist the unquestioning obedience to fixed methodological processes with the view that they will automatically produce 'valid' conclusions, known as 'methodism' (Hammersley, 2009), that adopting a particular approach can entail. In line with Clegg's (2012b, p. 407) conceptualisation of research as a non-linear 'messy and complex endeavour of theorising', it was a clear aim of my research study to open up the possibility of researching that which I had never even anticipated knowing at the start of the project, and, in tandem, to leave open the research process to shape the 'how' with the progress of the study. Each of my research processes is squared (or desquared) with my deconstructive research ethic before and while being enacted. By categorising (and so resisting the categorisation of) my research approach using the analogical marker of 'something like', as in the quotation above, I try to convey the process of querying and destabilising that tenets of a research approach must undergo in order to become part of a deconstructive research process. The second issue, which is closely related to the first, is indicated in the above quotations with the adjectival forms 'ethnograph*ic*' and 'autoethnograph*ic*' and the term 'approach'[46]. I use these forms in the same vein as Morley (1999, p. 20) uses the expression 'ethnographic tactics', to indicate the impossibility of classifying my 'official fieldwork' as *an* ethnograph*y* or *an* autoethnograph*y*. Because my 'official fieldwork' consists of researching conferences, I could use the term 'conference ethnography', but this term is, according to a strict definition of ethnography, an oxymoron.

Ethnography, as it has traditionally been defined, is implicitly reliant on presence and spatio-temporalisation in establishing its authority; the long-term commitment to space and time immediately discounts the ethnographic study of a collection of events in different places, each of

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[46] Thanks to Charley Nussey for this conversation.

which only lasts for a matter of days. A 'suitable' ethnography of higher education would, as in Nathan's (2005) study *My Freshman Year*, involve spending a year 'in the field'. When I read about how long researchers have spent in the field, I frequently experience one of two affective responses. On the one hand, when researchers seem to have spent 'long enough' in the field, as in the excerpt from Z Nicolazzo's (2015, pp. 44-45) doctoral thesis that I have interspersed with my own reflections below, I feel anxious and begin to doubt that my own time 'in the field' was 'enough':

> Z: I started by…spen[ding] time at CU [City University] prior to engaging in the research to meet trans* students and see where they spent their time.
>
>> *Emily: I arrived on Tuesday evening and went to bed. On Wednesday, I managed through the jet-lag to grab time to interview Margaret and Shori, and met up with Susan for dinner. On our way to dinner we tried to find the part of the convention centre where the conference would be held, and we could find almost no sign that 1,500 feminist scholars and activists would arrive the next day.*
>
> Z: Once I was familiar with the research setting and those who were a part of the environment…
>
>> *Emily: We were herded into a minibus outside the hotel in the cold, pre-breakfast morning light. We made conversation in the bus. Then we realised that the trip would take an hour or so, and we readjusted our companionship to a respectful quiet. We spilled out onto the grassy playing field and experienced our first of the ten or so meals that we would eat in the 'feeding tent'. Before the tea had got through to my confused mind, the felicitations had begun on the plenary stage.*
>
> Z: I recruited initial participants… Once initial participants had been identified, I used snowball sampling methods…to identify additional participants…
>
>> *Emily: Shortly before the conference, I released a call for participants on the FWSA mailing list. I received some interest, including some responses*

> *from people who had not fully read the call and*
> *were not attending the conference, or who excitedly*
> *replied and never reappeared. In the four days*
> *before the conference, I interviewed six*
> *participants; on the first day of the conference, I*
> *interspersed sessions with an interview at lunch,*
> *one before dinner, and one at 10:30pm.*

Z: This was…realistic…given the extended time participants and I spent working alongside each other (18 months).

On the other hand, if the researcher uses qualifications (as with my adjectival modification of the noun 'ethnography'), I experience relief, which is invariably tempered when I encounter the alternative 'enough' that is used to substitute for the 'lacking' time dimension:

I am at a symposium on Gender, Violence, Poverty and Young People[47], listening to research cameos from a variety of speakers. Charlotte Nussey (2015) describes her ethnograph*ic* study of the participants of an adult literacy project in rural South Africa. She highlights the ways in which her study does not count as an ethnograph*y*: because of safety concerns, she could not sleep in the community where she was conducting her research; she did not spend as long in the community as strict ethnographic definitions demand.

> *Though momentarily soothed by Charley's qualifications, I*
> *reflect on the months she spent away from home in a*
> *challenging environment. How could my short stays in hotel*
> *accommodation, spending time with old and new friends,*
> *enter the same league of research experience? Four days in*
> *Nottingham, six days in Cincinnati, and five days in*
> *Guwahati. Perhaps I spent long months trying to find out*
> *where and when IAWS would be in 2014, perhaps I waited*
> *for long months to be reimbursed for my fieldwork funding,*
> *perhaps the long hours spent in the Indian visa centre,*
> *waiting to be told that I had missed some vital detail from*

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[47] 'Gender violence, poverty and young people symposium', UCL Institute of Education and Friends House, London, UK, 12 May 2015.

my application, the long hour delayed in Cincinnati airport
by high winds, watching my flight home from Chicago
recede into improbability, the long minutes in the train
home after FWSA listening to a man insist upon telling us
about feminism in Germany, perhaps these moments had
their own longevity about them. But in quantifiable units of
time, had I spent long enough, experienced enough…?

I have found myself seeking substitutions for 'duration of stay' by considering that I have researched the process of applying for a conference and the aftermath, or that I have autoethnographically studied my whole doctoral trajectory. I have also found academic terms for my research, such as 'mobile ethnography' (Büscher and Urry, 2009, p. 105), 'multi-sited ethnography' (Coleman and von Hellermann, 2011; Epstein, Fahey and Kenway, 2013) and 'nomadic inquiry' (St. Pierre, 2000). It is when I catch myself finding justifications as to how I have conducted 'valid' research that I begin to interrogate my construction of knowledge on the basis of presence and spatio-temporalisation. The longevity expectation of ethnography, because my own 'official fieldwork' so clearly contravenes this rule, has been the easiest route into my questioning of ethnographic norms, but it has led me to query other more latent anxieties around the 'enough' of my research process.

If we return, then, to Derrida's (1976) enumeration of facets of presence that I referred to in the explanation of spatio-temporalisation in Chapter 3 (p. 84), we can see how they align with a definition of ethnographic fieldwork:

> ethnography usually involves the researcher participating…in
> people's lives for an extended period of time, watching what
> happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions
> through…interviews, collecting documents and artefacts
> (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 3).

This definition of ethnographic practice intertwines forms of presence, such as *presence to the gaze*, *co-presence*, *intersubjectivity*, with the different

aspects of ethnography. Overall there is a sense that the researcher should be in the *there and then* of the research site, that the longer the researcher spends in the research context, the more *temporal points* or *moments* they will experience, so the more they will know. The researcher should construct knowledge from that which is *present to the gaze*, that which is experienced as the *presence of the other*, and the *co-presence* of the researcher and the other, and that which is perceived as *there*, as *substance* which can be collected and taken away. By taking up a location *in* people's lives, the researcher constructs the ethnographic site as *substance/essence/existence*; in turn the researcher, in order to take up that location, is aware of their distinctness from the research location, as being present to and in themselves. This distinctness enables the *intersubjective* connection (via distance and differentiation) between the researcher and 'people's lives'. Hammersley and Atkinson recognise (2007, p. 13) that, while their definition of ethnographic practice represents a common understanding of the approach, one of the effects of poststructuralist theorising has been to problematise the idea that 'the ethnographer getting close to [social reality]', ie being *there and then*, automatically results in an accurate representation.

It is virtually impossible *not* to locate the tenets of ethnographic research in a logic of spatio-temporalisation; I do not pretend to exit the ethnographic 'en/closure'. Instead, in line with the motion of 'marking out', I try to recognise the ways in which my research approach reposes on practices of spatio-temporalisation in order to garner 'enough' authority. In the following sections, I 'mark out' my investment in and resistance to different forms of presence in ethnograph*ic* research: I firstly address the *here and now* or *there and then* of research ('Unfixing where and when'); the subsequent section concentrates on the *presence of the self* and *the co-presence of the other*, and the construction of empirical materials as *substance* ('Unfixing whom and what').

Unfixing where and when

When I began planning the empirical component of my study, I envisaged spending a semester conducting ethnographic research in two universities, one in the UK, one in India, and comparing the ways in which gender was conceptualised across the different university contexts. In planning my research, I have tried to retain an openness towards learning about that which I could not conceive of knowing at the start of the research process (Jain, 2004). In view of this aspiration, the basic design of a two-country, two-university study evolved substantially over the research training year and first year of my PhD studentship. My initial experiences of academic mobility both within the UK and in the US and France introduced uncertainty into the idea of researching *national* contexts in the field of international higher education research, and situating my research in *universities*. These uncertainties, which embedded 'global perspective…within the self-consciousness of the ethnographic act' (Friedman, 1994, p. 3), called into question where I should conduct research, and for how long. The decision to research academic conferences developed out of these uncertainties, as it seemed that conferences would offer a ready-made *dis*organisation of 'context' and 'site'. Conferences are events that are both highly situated in space and time and transient and temporary: they exceed the space and time that they inhabit (Henderson, 2013a; 2015a). In this section, I consider the ways in which the conference as a research 'site' operates according to the intense embodiment of a specifically located spatio-temporalisation.

For my 'official fieldwork', I researched three conferences in three countries, each of which was the regular conference of the country's association of Women's Studies scholars:

- FWSA ('Feminist and Women's Studies Association, UK and Ireland'), biennial conference, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, UK, June 2013.
- NWSA ('National Women's Studies Association'), annual conference, Cincinnati, Ohio, US, November 2013.

- IAWS ('Indian Association for Women's Studies'), triennial conference, Guwahati, Assam, India, February 2014.

It is noticeable that none of the associations has changed its name to incorporate the term 'gender', contrary to the department and course name changes (incorporating gender or replacing women's studies with gender) in universities in all three countries[48]. In this sense, the conferences do not take 'gender' as their umbrella term. I wanted to attend and research conferences that were set up as 'home' conferences for those working in the field of gender, women's studies, and feminism, with the reasoning that, instead of being 'the gender person' at a conference, 'everyone is there trying to pitch their nuance against someone else's' (EH explaining research to Anna, FWSA[49]). Although there are regular conferences that *do* espouse the 'gender' marker, such as 'Gender Work and Organization (GWO)' and 'Gender and Education Association (GEA)' in the UK and 'Gender Matters' in the US, these conferences are either related to a particular disciplinary orientation, as in GWO and GEA, or they are regional, as in 'Gender Matters' (mid-West, US). In seeking a national 'home' conference for Gender Studies, I was not looking to provide a representation of a nationally bounded understanding of gender. Rather, my intention was to locate my research in amongst the networks, friendships and cross-pollination of ideas across disciplinary and regional – and international – boundaries that are formed and reunited at gender-related conferences. In effect, the 'home' conferences for the UK, the US and India all used the signifier 'Women's Studies', but this provided a site where 'gender' was both used as if it were automatically associated with women's studies, and contested as an impostor.

As my project evolved into a study of conferences, I raised questions over the idea of a two-country study. Would attending a conference in the UK and India encourage me to draw up a dichotomous perspective of a

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[48] See for UK: Ballaster (2012), Kirkup and Whitelegg (2012), Richardson and Robinson (1994), Robinson and Richardson (1994); for US: Ginsberg (2008), Smith (2013); for India: Sreenivas (2015).

[49] Where interview participants are referred to, I include their pseudonym and the conference they attended.

developed and developing, a Global North and Global South, a Western and non-Western country? Could adding a further context complicate the compulsion to engage in direct comparison, would this enhance the development of a multi-faceted understanding of gender? Including the NWSA (US) conference in the study is justifiable by academic reasons; the UK and US are often grouped together in analyses of Anglophone Western knowledge production, but my previous experience of a US gender-related conference[50] had revealed striking contrasts in Gender Studies between the US and the UK, in particular with regards to the proliferation of perspectives on and terms for queer, trans* and race-related work. However, in the spirit of admitting to the messy and often arbitrary nature of research, I should also say that my choice of conferences was limited by time and funding. At the time of study, my PhD funding accommodated a short[51] period of fieldwork in one country other than the UK; the funding allowed for a single front-end payment, meaning that fieldwork could only occur in one 'session'. In theory, more than one country could have been incorporated, but I could not have returned to the UK between trips. Because of the specific spatial and temporal nature of conferences, this single-trip multi-destination design was impossible under the funding regulations. I have included this information here to indicate how research funding can restrict the design of a study (Pryor et al., 2009) so that, in my case, the attempt to capture a more 'global' or 'mobilities' perspective was actively discouraged. The lack of overseas fieldwork funding for the US stage of my fieldwork resulted in me using the entirety of my annual conference and research training budget, as well as some of my own funds, on completing this stage. The academically reasoned choice of the NWSA conference was therefore inextricably linked with the fact that London-Chicago flights are relatively cheap, as was Cincinnati accommodation, and indeed the NWSA conference registration. If, as with the 2014 conference, NWSA had been located in Puerto Rico, I would not have been able to conduct research there because of the cost of flying from the UK.

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[50] 'Gender matters', Governor's State University, Illinois, US, 13-14 April 2012.

[51] While the studentship in theory allowed for up to 12 months of overseas fieldwork, the financial provision was not adequate to enable a safe and secure stay (£70/week); the studentship also had restrictions on paid work.

Although I have not researched under *national* signifiers, it may seem that I have studied *national associations*. This is where a tension arises between the ethnographic and autoethnographic facets of my study. Whereas an ethnographic approach to my study might require me to research the history and evolution of each host association, my autoethnographically oriented approach (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011; Ellis and Bochner, 2000) and turn towards a mobilities paradigm (Büscher and Urry, 2009; Cresswell, 2006; Urry, 2007) has been to research *as a conference delegate among other delegates*. I have understood myself as a participant – in the study and at the conferences. As such I have researched what I, *as a delegate*, 'allowing myself to be moved by, and to move with, [research] subjects' (Büscher and Urry, 2009, p. 103), came to know about the associations, about key concerns of the field, about the local, regional and national context where the conference was held. However, as an (auto)ethnographic researcher, I was of course not just *any* delegate, as I was engaged in the 'significant *development* of the ordinary modes of making sense of the social world…in a manner that is attuned to the specific purposes of producing research knowledge' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 4, emphasis in original). For, as Anderson (2006, p. 380) notes, the autoethnographer's immersion in their participant role is complicated by the 'additional tasks' of recording experience and the 'multiple foci' of trying to both experience *and* notice the experience simultaneously.

> *I am sitting near the back of the plenary tent, where it is warmer. I am diligently taking notes on the plenary panel, 'Building Women's Studies in the North East' (4 February 2014). I know I should be fully present in the session, as I want to learn more about the context of the North East region of India. As I sit there, trying to listen, I shift into thinking about the venue. There is a problem with the plenary tent, as there is no strict demarcation between inside and outside, so the drift out towards the sun and the warm is not restricted by codes of politeness – there is no door to open and close. Soon, hordes of people are chatting loudly at the perimeter of the tent. My notes for the session end abruptly with 'The pull of the outside', as my role of dedicated information-*

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> *gathering researcher blurs into cold, uncomfortable delegate-*
> *researcher in need of tea and conversation. (Developed from IAWS*
> *notes).*

For each of the conferences, I had to negotiate my position as delegate and researcher with the associations who hosted the conferences. These negotiations started with the pre-conference period. As a delegate, this involved searching for and receiving information about the conferences, and registering. As a researcher, I sought contact with the association in order to discuss permissions, options for recruitment and consent, and the provision of a space for me at the conference to conduct interviews and hold a lunch-time meeting for participants. The pre-conference period is an important stage for the establishment of the specific spatio-temporalisation of the conference, as this is the time when impressions of the conference and its location start to be formed. As both delegate and researcher, I was positioned very differently by each of the conferences in their pre-departure information and communications. The differences in treatment inevitably affected the ways in which I experienced and so constructed knowledge out of the conferences.

Delegate

For a delegate, the pre-departure conference experience may include the conference website, the registration process, and the provision of a soft copy of the programme, as well as visa, travel and accommodation arrangements, which may or may not be handled by the conference organisers. Attending a conference as an international delegate is of course different to attending a domestic conference. The FWSA conference was held at the University of Nottingham, and the venue was already familiar to me. I did not require any travel documents except for my rail card, and I booked into one of the recommended B&Bs. The conference website included substantial information but also added a hand-made touch with a painting as the back-drop. I was able to access a copy of the programme before departing for the conference, so I spent some time reading through the presentation titles.

The NWSA conference, which attracts around seven times more delegates than the FWSA[52], and which takes place every year, is a well-oiled professional operation. Delegates are provided not only with the full programme before the event, but they are also given access to a phone app which allows them to plan their trajectory through the at times 11 parallel sessions before arriving at the conference. The hotel which was linked to the conference centre (by a covered pedestrian walkway suspended above the road) was far too expensive for my means, so I found a cheaper alternative. At ten minutes' walking distance from the conference centre, my hotel room (which turned out to be a duplex two-bedroom apartment with separate kitchen) was considered too far from the conference for most people that I talked to. In order to travel to the NWSA conference, I needed a visa-waiver and passport, but since my waiver was still valid from my previous US visit, I needed no new travel documents.

It was very difficult to obtain information about the IAWS conference in advance. Several of the links on the website did not function, and I received no reply from emails sent to the admin email address. For several anxious weeks I was caught between the requirement that I apply for overseas fieldwork three months before departure and the impossibility of applying for funding without details of my itinerary. I shamelessly used any contacts I could think of – 'gatekeeper[s] to the gatekeepers' (Hett and Hett, 2013, p. 500) – to try to get hold of the information: my India-based participants from the FWSA conference, acquaintances briefly made three years before during a passing visit to an Indian university, members of the queer feminist collective I had been part of in Mumbai. Once I had established that the conference would take place in Guwahati, Assam, I discovered the necessity of applying for a conference visa as an international delegate attending a conference in India. This involved collating a portfolio of documents from my university and the IAWS, and the IAWS had to obtain clearance from the local authorities in Assam. I then applied for a visa, and obtained the conference visa at short notice before travelling, after a long wait in the visa centre. I only realised how lucky I

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[52] FWSA attracts c.200 delegates, NWSA c.1,500, IAWS c.800.

had been to go through this process when I discovered that two of my participants (international delegates but with extended visas to study in India) had already arrived at the conference when they were informed of the need for local clearance in order to attend conferences, so they were unable to attend the conference as delegates.

In contrast to the NWSA conference, where I was just another delegate in terms of pre-departure experience, at IAWS I was interpellated into the role of international delegate from the outset: there was an international delegate fee, which was much greater than the fee for Indian nationals[53]. In order to guarantee my attendance, I was obliged to pester and demand; I felt extremely uncomfortable that I was an added burden to the IAWS committee in that they had to obtain clearances for me, and that I was forced by the timescale of my fieldwork funding to demand information much further in advance than seemed necessary to the organisers. From an autoethnographic perspective, the levels of discomfort that I experienced as an international delegate before and at the conference were necessary and important experiences. As a British citizen I am granted automatic membership to much global mobility, and I embraced the interpellation of unwelcome international delegate as a stark reminder of my own positionality. Recognising the importance of my experiences both before and at the conference does not however prevent the parallel fact that my pre-departure positioning shaped my arrival at and participation in the conference, which had a profound effect on the way in which I conducted research there (Berbary, 2014; Combe, 2004). Furthermore, almost no information about the conference was distributed beforehand. The conference pack itself included a sheet of paper with the timings of the sessions, and a banner near the plenary tent listed the rooms in which sub-themes would be held, but there was no conference programme or brochure listing the sub-theme presentation titles or abstracts or the presenters' names. One copy of this information was taped to the side of the plenary tent later in the conference, where the evaporation of the dew in the grass

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[53] The international fee was 100 US$; the 'non-member student' fee I would have otherwise paid was 550 Rupees, approximately 8 US$.

promptly unstuck the tape. This was the opposite situation to the NWSA conference, where delegates could map out their conference before attending; at IAWS, I still do not know the presenters' names for some of the sessions I attended. I am not saying that the NWSA set-up was preferable; I experienced interesting word-of-mouth processes about which sessions were happening where at IAWS, and the lack of pre-departure information left delegates open to more spontaneous choices than at NWSA. It is also necessary to note that accommodation and meals were included in the conference fee, which, although much higher for international delegates, was still much lower than the fees for NWSA and FWSA that did not include accommodation (FWSA, NWSA) or meals (NWSA). Furthermore a group of volunteers had set up a welcome desk at Guwahati airport, and transit was provided from the airport and then from the venue to the accommodation each day (one hour of transit by bus each way). The lack of pre-departure information had led me to expect a disorganised arrival, but my assumptions were overridden by the welcome.

Researcher

My experiences as a researcher add a further layer of difference between the conferences. In approaching the FWSA, as a member I was able to contact the executive committee. Furthermore, some members of the committee had only recently completed their PhDs; they were keen to help a fellow student. The committee gave me permission to conduct research at the conference, and they agreed to publicise my project, both for recruitment and ethical purposes, on the email list and in the conference pack, and my project was also alluded to in the introduction to the conference. I was given permission to use a room as a space for interviews and an optional lunch-time discussion for participants. Some of the executive members also volunteered to take part as participants in the study. At the FWSA conference, I felt 'on show' because of the publicity my research was given. If I met people, they said, 'Oh you're the one who is researching conferences', and, in line with Pereira's (2011) experiences of researching conferences, I noticed that my presence in some sessions attracted suspicion.

At NWSA, on the other hand, my status changed from being a recognisable figure to a drop in the ocean. The committee gave me permission to conduct research at the conference, but they did not respond to my email requests for space or help with recruitment. As such, I felt more comfortable 'researching' in sessions, but I did attend some sessions where it was impossible to inform speakers in advance of my research, so I in fact experienced the comfort of anonymity as the discomfort of conducting 'covert' research. Although I could not claim any designated space at the conference, the venue was so vast that I could easily find a quiet space for a snatched interview, and a private space at the back of the building for a lunchtime discussion where participants could meet each other.

My researcher positionality at the IAWS conference was different again. I moved from 'drop in the ocean' to non-researcher. I was only just able to obtain a conference visa to attend the IAWS conference; there was no way that I could have obtained the necessary research visa to officially conduct research in India. I tried to obtain a sense from the IAWS committee as to what I could do at the conference that would not count as the type of activity requiring a visa, and finally, three weeks before the conference, I received an email from one of the committee members stating that I could not conduct any research at all, but that I could learn from informal conversations; the email also suggested that anyway I would have found it difficult to conduct research at such a large conference. The latter comment was just one among many criticisms of my research design from participants and involved parties (see the 'Unfixing whom and what' section), but the instruction to learn from informal conversations put paid to my 'formal' research plans for the conference. Just as two of my participants did not attend the conference as delegates, I could not research the conference as a researcher. To circumvent the impossibility of conducting formal research at the conference, I recruited and interviewed all my participants after the conference, by emailing and interviewing them from the UK. For both the NWSA and FWSA conferences, all but one participant had participated in pre-conference interviews, and so were to some extent reading the conferences for the conceptual and performative understandings of gender that I asked about in the pre-conference interview;

for IAWS, all participants only analysed the conferences retrospectively, which required participants to shift within the interview – rather than throughout the conference – towards looking out for conceptualisations of gender. Furthermore, I could not hold a lunch-time meeting for participants to meet and discuss the conference. With regards to autoethnographic research at IAWS, I could not 'turn off' my researcher identity. I thought about other contexts where I had unofficially conducted research at conferences and seminars, unable to prevent myself making mental or written notes on an interaction, but aware of the impossibility of gaining consent from all of those involved. My notes from IAWS were consciously taken in this style, which is characterised by a lack of detail and a leaning towards the delegate facet of the researcher-delegate role, hence the decision to leave the plenary panel. In the following chapters, analyses from the IAWS conference tend to derive from the interviews rather than my notes.

Where and when?

In one view, each of these conferences took the form of three intense spatio-temporalisations. In each case, I travelled to a new place, slept in a new room, attended sessions and ate meals and talked or listened according to a set schedule; then I left again. But the boundaries of a conference are much less clear-cut than the schedules and site maps would have us believe. I have already referred to the ways in which conferences exceed the space and time that they are given, whether this excess occurs through the pre-departure imaginary, the lasting communications with friends met or re-met, or the connections of thought and embodiment made from one conference to another. As Cairns (2013, p. 324) recognises, 'while ethnographic knowledge is always produced in context, it also produces that context' (see also Urry and Larsen, 2011).

So when and where should I begin producing my autoethnographic context? At the passport check in Chicago (*'Are you a trouble-maker?'* – *'Oh no, it's strictly academic'*)? At the gate to my Cincinnati flight (*where I learned that it is plausible to answer your phone by saying, 'This is Josh' or, 'Hi, how are you doing today'*)? Upon checking into the hotel (*being*

declared the receptionist's BFF[54]: 'Cute hair, cute accent, cute name!')? At the supermarket check-out (*when I did not take a plastic bag and the cashier exclaimed, 'She's putting it in her* purse*!'*)? And when should it end? Before trailing Aisha around several shops for an Assamese silk sari for her mother? Before uneasily hovering during a visit to a temple dedicated to a menstruating goddess? Before eating a final dinner in Mumbai where I uncontrollably expressed my negative conference experience to friends? Before discovering the *Voices of the North-East* booklet (Deka, 2014b) we were given at the conference in the flight home? Before treating the lingering foot infection that stayed with me weeks later?

And at the conference, how could I decide where and when the conference was happening? In the 'feeding tent' at IAWS, metres away from the plenary tent and book stalls, I was definitely at the conference. In the official transit bus and my designated hotel, I was at the conference. During the long walk through the campus to the conference dinners at FWSA, I was at the conference. In the B&B, awoken at 4am by the drunken return of conference delegates to their rooms, I was at the conference. But over dinner with Aisha and Sylvia, following our escape to try to find 'Assamese food', was I at the conference? Dining out with Lucy the night before FWSA, were we at the conference? In the hotel room I had found in Cincinnati, was I at the conference? Sitting around a table negotiating the sharing of too little Turkish food and politely hearing about faculty life in the US, lined up along a table negotiating a huge burrito and politely celebrating the end of their presentation day with fellow students, was I at the conference? Tolerating the amateur queer cabaret at FWSA, sitting on the floor for a spontaneous feminist picnic when the keynote unexpectedly cancelled at NWSA, discovering the Assamese rock scene at IAWS and watching with amazement when the awesome female-fronted rock band of the night before was replaced the next day with highly gendered traditional Northeastern dancing – was I at the conference? Chatting between sessions to a friend of a participant about the 'no scent rule' at NWSA (someone had flouted the rule with some particularly pungent patchouli) was I at the

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[54] BFF = 'Best friend forever'

conference? Sitting in a keynote at FWSA, intolerably frustrated with the paper and exhausted from all the listening, texting with Lucy – was I at the conference?

Finally, but never finally, how could I know when I was not 'at a conference' at all, but 'just' in my 'doctoral trajectory'? Where was I when, in a packed métro on my way to an International Women's Day event hosted by academics at Université Paris 8, I realised that what I had thought was someone's bag rubbing lightly against my leg was actually a man's fingers? Where was I when, following Jenny's talk at the QwaQwa campus of UFS, we were all presented with a womb-like pot, a woven food mat and a hand-made broom?

Where and when was I when, with a sigh of relief, I settled into the huge sofa in my hotel living room, scraped off half of the inch of cheese on my room service pizza, and turned on the huge TV for the first time in my stay?

> *Life in remote Alaska is a deadly struggle.*
> *Men hunt and trap to survive.*
> *Viewer discretion advised (Lerat, 2014).*

Stan Zuray does not have enough meat left in his freezer, so he takes his son on a treacherous hunt for caribou, having first replenished his wife's water supply by drilling through the ice and pumping out water to transport by snowmobile back to the house. Charlie Wright confronts the desperate situation of the diminished wood supply for the town's water system's essential heat pipes, which could result in the water pipes exploding, when he is called to assist Courtney Agnes, who has found that a wolf is eating her fish supply. Where and when was I?

> Just 60 miles from the Arctic Circle lies a town on the edge of
> civilization: Tanana, Alaska. This frozen village of 200 people is at
> the junction of two powerful rivers, with no roads in or out, where
> wolves howling through the frigid night air remind the residents
> how isolated they really are.

…

At the end of the day, each man will be pushed to the limit. Pushed
to decide: How far will they go to live free? To be a Yukon Man?
(Discovery, n.d.).

I watched several episodes of 'Yukon Men' with rapt attention, telling my
partner I could only talk briefly on Skype. 'I wouldn't want you to miss
anything!', she replied in disbelief on Skype instant messenger. 'Well they
were just catching a beaver!' was my retort. Unfortunately, I seemed to still
be at the conference. My 'at the conference' analysis of 'Yukon Men'
continued into Monday, where I began to formulate some thoughts in
Cincinnati airport. I noted down that, although the programme seemed at
first to operate along sexist lines, where women were only identified in
relation to their husbands, where men were shown to provide for their
families while their wives worried at home, a prolonged exposure to the
show had begun to reveal the programme-makers' gender challenge: how
could they make a programme about the Yukon *men* as primeval providers,
which they seemed determined to do, when undoubtedly some of the
women were as tough as the men? As I wrote in my notebook, the
programme had to deal with 'weathered,….stout and unkempt [women],
wrapped in many layers and not made up', whose femininity was in fact
confirmed in their contribution to the family's survival, as encapsulated in a
husband's proud reaction to his wife catching a fish: 'That's my wife!'
These thoughts occupied me as I lay on my sofa, looking through the bare
branches of my favourite tree onto the terraced houses opposite. I
contemplated my week, which seemed to have set itself up without my
notice; a Skype appointment to discuss the trip to UFS in South Africa, an
LGBTQ and Friends Network meeting, a Hindi lesson, a Feminisms,
Gender and Sexuality Seminar, a niece's birthday, the deadline for the
IAWS Conference registration, a note in large font proclaiming
'INTERVIEWS'. I shied away from the prospect of the quick succession of
eight conversations, each of which would involve an emotional and
intellectual re-engagement with the conference.

Unfixing whom and what

It is to these conversations that I now turn. In the action of *turning towards*, I spatialise, in the action of turning *now,* I temporalise the conversations in the *here and now* of the creation of this research narrative. In providing an account of the people who participated in this research project and the materials which have emerged from these interactions, I am caught between presenting them 'of the now' and rendering them present 'of the moment'. Although I can only understand the participation of myself and other people in terms of 'now' and 'the moment', I resist the unacknowledged narrative strategy of presenting participants from a retrospective vantage point ('now') as if they were unified subjects who were present ('substance/essence/existence') at the time of the research encounter ('the moment'). The tendency of higher education research to deal in 'portions' of higher education equates in research terms to researching the inhabitants of higher education institutions in a particular role. Leaders are researched *in their capacity as* leaders, students *as* students, and so on. The translation of this apportionment into research terms has the effect of producing a disconnected picture of higher education and academia. What if, for example, a leader is also studying for a leadership qualification? How do these multiple positionings within higher education inform and impact upon each other?

In 'producing' the participants both at 'the moment' and in the 'now' of writing I have tried to recognise that any one of the people who have been involved in this study has occupied multiple positions within higher education and within this research project. Furthermore, by 'producing' participants as both attached to universities *and* as conference delegates, I have deliberately extended and so blurred the frontiers of higher education institutions as the assumed sites for higher education research. As such, I have conceptualised the participants as multi-faceted both within their 'home' higher education institution and in the transient realm of academic mobility. I do not make a claim to be presenting a more 'rounded' or 'complete' version of participants. Rather, in line with my strategy of deliberate spatio-temporalisation, I conceive of each participant as a

collection of spatially and temporally situated accounts. In this section, I produce and explore my production of a spectrum of participants, from 'official' to incidental participants. I also attempt to recount their production of me.

'Participant'

How then to decide who or what counts as 'a participant' in an ethnographic study? We have already encountered the difficulty of delimiting what counts as the research site in a study that takes the conference as its 'site'. Bearing in mind this blurred demarcation, and the concomitant merging of the 'doctoral trajectory' with 'official fieldwork', it follows that deciding who counts as a participant is accompanied with similar challenges. I can be sure of my 'official participants', i.e. those who responded to my various recruitment strategies and who participated in at least one interview, although as I go on to show I am not sure of *who* or *what* they become in the 'now' of writing. But what about all the other people, the 'bit players' (Hollway and Jefferson, 2013, p. 88) who have crossed paths with my research journey? Where do I draw the line at 'participation'? Do I include the presenters, speakers and workshop facilitators I have encountered? The audience members whose questions I have listened to and noted down? The people I have chatted with? The people whose conversations I have overheard? The people who have served me tea, who have registered me and shown me where to go, who have cleaned the toilets and the floors? People in any of the zones of pre-departure, transit and homecoming I mentioned in the previous section? Stan Zuray and Courtney Agnes? These questions are of course not just of concern because of the resultant decision about who to write into this section and what to count as 'empirical material'. Given that the British Educational Research Association (BERA) ethical guidelines (BERA, 2011, p. 5) include in the definition of participants those who 'may simply be part of the context', these decisions impact upon the way that the research is presented for the institutional ethics procedure, and the way in which I shape my research practice in my ongoing commitment to questioning my ethical involvement with those who are considered 'participants'.

Opening up my questioning to an unfixed sense of 'what counts' as a participant, and to the ethical decisions that are implicated in the unfixing, has led to a further proliferation of questions. Many of the potential participants that I listed in the previous paragraph have crossed the path of my research through 'observation', or 'watch[ing] what [people] do, [and]…record[ing] this in some way' (Robson, 2011, p. 315). Depending on how observational research is categorised, there are different responses as to who counts as a participant and which strategies the observer should use in recording and then representing their observations. Two possible categorisations are 'covert'/'overt' and 'open setting'/'closed setting' (Gillham, 2008, p. 93). In the case of researching conferences, these distinctions do not hold in any clear sense. If I had conducted my research in one conference session, and I had before the session announced my presence and my intentions, and engaged in a practice of informed consent, I could have called this 'overt' observation in a 'closed setting'. However there are many ways in which conferences are 'open settings'. Although there may be a specific location and a set of markers (bags, lanyards) to demarcate 'members', the hotels, universities or convention centres where conferences take place are not isolated from the other people and processes that occur in these locations. Conferences are therefore relatively 'open' settings. The effect of this openness is that at least some 'covert' observation, where 'people don't know they're being "observed" in the research sense' (ibid.), is inevitable. Conferences may seem to occur in public spaces, but they are also spaces where delegates can engage in behaviour that is less condoned in their 'home' institutions, such as academics skipping sessions to 'go skiing' and sharing accommodation with students (Thompson et al., 2012, pp. 542-544), or indeed 'kill[ing] it at the conference disco' (Burford and Henderson, 2015, p. 805). It is therefore not possible to assume that conference delegates can be considered 'members of the public' who can be observed and recorded; whereas the action of conducting 'covert' observation is also known as 'unobtrusive' observation (Angrosino, 2007, p. 38), conferences are locations where the dissemination of the recorded notes from 'unobtrusive' observation can have extremely obtrusive effects.

Pereira's (2011, p. 93) solution to the difficulty of knowing how to use 'claims made publicly' at academic events as empirical material was to 'exclude from [her] thesis some of…[her] most interesting data' in order to avoid the identification of the speaker. At times during the research process this approach has appeared to be the only possibility that I could square with my conscience. However, taking the strategy of paring down or omitting the identifiable features of speakers and contexts runs contrary to my project of analysing the embodied nature of knowledge construction and production at conferences. As such, often the most identifiable features are also those which are most relevant to my analysis. My reflections around whether and how to include what we might call 'observed participants' have been further complicated by the occurrence of conference-related incidents in written and oral dissemination. Since I began researching conferences, I have taken note of where conferences are mentioned in passing, i.e. not as the focus of the publication, and certainly not as 'data' requiring ethical consideration. It is surprising, given the paucity of literature that takes conferences as the focus (Henderson, 2015a), that conference experiences are frequently woven into the fabric of disciplinary textual production. There is a common practice (including and perhaps especially in academic feminism) of informally 'researching' conferences and of harvesting conferences for anecdotal evidence[55]. My presence at the 'official fieldwork' conferences (and at conferences in general) produces 'reactivity', or a self-consciousness on the part of the observed as an effect of being observed (Robson, 2011, p. 317) for those who are aware of my research interests. However, given the tendency of feminist academics to observe each other and even to use their observations in their writing or presentations, I have been led to question the status of my observations as 'data' or as a type of information, somewhat like a citation, that assists in the construction of feminist knowledge. I have

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[55] Some examples: 'I am speaking of whiteness at a seminar. Someone in the audience says, "But you are a professor", as if to say when people of color become professors then the whiteness of the world recedes' (Ahmed, 2012, p. 43); '[I]n 1989, I delivered a talk on feminist authority in the classroom… Some members of the audience responded in what I could only call rhetorical violence' (Bauer, 2009, p. 24); 'My favourite anecdote was about the first feminist caucus meeting of the BSA [British Sociological Association], where the men had to be physically locked out of the room so that they would stop interrupting the women' (Kelly Coate, in David, 2014a, p. 69).

not developed a strict strategy for representing 'observed participants'. The degree to which I omit or pare down a particular analysis rather depends on the way in which I am using the information – whether my use is closer to 'literature' or 'empirical material', and the extent to which the analysis could be hurtful or harmful to the person should they be identified. This ongoing ethical self-questioning about representation reflects the dissonance between the ethical review process as a pre-research stage, and working out how to 'feel…ethical' (Berbary, 2014, p. 1218) throughout and beyond the research process (Ali, 2010; Malone, 2003; Turner and Webb, 2012).

'Official' participant

The participants who were 'officially' involved in the study present a further set of questions around representation and identification. The participants who contacted me or who agreed to participate in the study do not form a sample as such; as I have stated, the aim of my recruitment strategy was to operate along the lines of an international gender network. The participants work in a range of disciplines and research areas; their varied and multiple roles, affiliations and/or institutions have in several cases shifted since the conferences, and the marker FWSA, NWSA or IAWS is in many cases no indication of where they live and work or have ever lived and worked. As such, it is a sample which resists being taken as a sample. As in David's (2014a) collective biography of academic feminism, some of the participants were already part of my network at the start of the project; other participants were completely unknown to me before the first interview. I have already suggested that the way that each conference constructed me as a delegate and a researcher impacted upon the manner in which I could follow my planned research process. This included the recruitment process; for FWSA I was able to recruit some of the participants through an email to the FWSA mailing list; for NWSA, two US-based contacts from the FWSA conference facilitated the recruitment of some of the participants; the conditions for my research 'at' IAWS meant that, with the exception of one existing friend, the remaining participants were all contacts who were recruited through an email exchange after the conference. I have communicated more or less regularly with the majority of the 27 'official' participants since meeting them, and I have encountered

many of them in person at other conferences. Some of the participants have become important colleagues and friends. The network structure of my participant group and the numerous pre-conference, at conference and post-conference encounters have resulted in the fact that none of the 'official' participants can be spatio-temporalised into one interview meeting.

There are various ways in which I could represent the 'official' participants, and my choice of representation depends on the decisions which I take around the conceptualisation of 'participant'. At one extreme, I could construct the impression of a living, breathing, complex and multi-faceted human subject, who seems to speak with a 'voice' (Mazzei and Jackson, 2012) and whose analyses and narratives are collected under a single proper name. At the other extreme, I could avoid any 'characterisation' at all – I could prevent the reader from making a connection between one transcript quotation and another, and I could remove all identifiable markers. In the stages between these two extremes, I could for example engage in the parenthetical shorthand 'characterisation' that is common in social sciences texts, such as '(Rumana, working class eastern European refugee)' (Reay, David and Ball, 2005, p. 86). The way in which I engage in characterisation depends on the *what* (the empirical materials) that I am producing from the encounters with participants and the extent to which a *whom* is needed to attach to and form part of the *what*. Hemmings (2011), when citing excerpts from feminist academic journals as examples of the construction of narratives for feminism, does not refer to the author. This is a deliberate move, which Hemmings accounts for as a 'non-corrective approach' that does not evaluate individual feminist authors as '"good" or "bad"' (p. 21). The parenthetical identifications in Hemmings' study therefore lead to a characterisation of the journal and the era: '(*Feminist Review* 2000)' (p. 118). Pereira (2011) also takes up a strategy of prevented characterisation, with the explanation that the combination of a small research community, high-status individuals and sensitive information posed too many risks. Pereira's parenthetical identifications instead highlight the seniority and the disciplinary orientation of the speaker in relation to Women's, Gender and Feminist Studies (WGFS): 'Interview with senior scholar teaching WGFS in non-WGFS degrees' (p. 222). This

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mode of characterisation corresponds to the focus of the study on the development of the research field. Pomerantz (2008) and Nicolazzo (2015), on the other hand, build characters that recur throughout the study. In her study of girls' style at school, Pomerantz (2008, p. 121) uses style-related designations to accompany the pseudonyms: 'Jamie, "out-there-but-socially-acceptable" style'. This technique builds up the reader's familiarity with the ways in which the participants express their own and read each other's style, so that the students appear refracted through the analysis of style. Both Pomerantz and Nicolazzo include detailed portraits of their participants in which they illustrate the intricacies of style (Pomerantz) and trans* student identity (Nicolazzo). In Nicolazzo's study, participants were asked to provide their own pseudonym. As in Parkes' (2011) research on boys and urban violence where one of her participants chose a gang tag as a pseudonym and in so doing sutured a gang connection to his participant identity, using the participants' chosen pseudonyms in a study of trans*-identified students is an important way of recognising participants' decisions regarding their expressions of identity as inimical to the research process.

With regard to the 'official' participants of my study, each of the following chapters constructs the participants in a different way, according to the use that I am making of the material from our interviews and interactions. As such, I present no 'factual' or 'demographic' information on the participants here, as is sometimes customary in research narratives. I will however now address ways in which the interviews with 'official' participants contributed to the production of participants. The majority of the interviews were conducted on Skype, with or without the webcam facility. This in several cases seemed to lead to the devaluation of the importance of our meetings, as van Doorn (2013) also found with the use of smartphones by research participants. As I received regular updates of how much longer it would take to get home, or last minute postponements to another day, I wondered if, had participants been imagining me waiting alone in a café or classroom, they would have prioritised our arrangement. The use of Skype for interviews fractured the spatio-temporalised 'here and now' of the interview setting. The interviews occupied different time zones

and weather systems, and in some cases participants spoke to me from other locations – one with her partner's family for Thanksgiving, another while staying in her sister's halls of residence. I was given a window into a whole new set of contexts; Kate spoke to me while eating her breakfast after staying up all night to write an essay; Molly's son came in to ask for a biscuit; Radhika interrupted herself to call out to her mother to make sure her friend could find her house. I saw bare walls, bookshelves, segments of furniture; when the webcam did not work, I saw a picture of Charlotte in a sunlit field, Edith with short enough hair that I did not recognise her, now with long hair, at the conference. I heard birds, dogs, phones, traffic, sirens. Where possible, I interviewed participants before and after the conference; where this was not possible, I combined the two interviews after the conference (see Appendix 4). I developed an interview guide (Cohen et al., 2011) for the pre-conference interview (or Part 1 of the single post-conference interview) (see Appendix 2), which included an invitation to the participants to 'introduce themselves as they would like to be known in the study' and questions about the participants' previous conference experiences. It also included a three-part prompt about the participants' institutional and conceptual position in relation to gender, and the way they understood their gender in relation to their academic identity. Where it was possible for participants to join a group discussion while at the conference, we began initial analysis of the conceptualisations of gender that followed on from the initial interview questions. The post-conference interview (or Part 2 of the single post-conference interview), which was more of a discussion, was based on answers from the pre-conference interviews: I invited participants to analyse their conference experiences in part through the conceptual lenses they had elucidated in their first interview. As such I attempted not just to direct the analysis through my own prism but also to integrate the participants' prisms into my own lens.

'Researcher'/'Participant'

This is where another boundary is blurred: was I a participant or a researcher? Were my attempts to take participants' modes of enquiry into my own developing multi-faceted concept of gender rendering me part of them, them part of me? Inherently linked with this is the fact that my

participants were all researchers themselves, and all the participants participated *as* researchers. Some participants treated our interviews as a reflexive exercise, to see what it feels like to be 'on the other side'; some checked with me that they were providing 'the kind of things [I was] looking for'; several participants commented on and made suggestions about my research project. These ranged from recommending that I compare women's studies conferences with 'mainstream disciplinary' conferences, to stating that one of my interview questions was more like a research question than an interview question, to reassuring me that I could not expect to capture everything at a conference, to asking pointedly if conferences have enough 'scope' for a doctoral project, to stating a preference for my interview style in the post-conference interview, to comforting me that I would be able to relax at a conference again: 'you'll get it out of your system and you'll just continue to always notice things'. One NWSA participant sent me an email after receiving my 'information for participants' email (Appendix 1) stating that 'in the US, it's de rig[u]eur that gender is always also informed by race' and recommending reading that would allow me to update my research approach for the US conference[56]. Many participants also recommended reading and alerted me to their own work. As such, some participants occur in this thesis both as participants and authors. This has led to a further set of questions around the feasibility of preventing the identification of the participants, and a further level of precaution as to how I present participants in their different guises. In accordance with Moosa's (2013, p. 493) recommendations, I have conceptualised anonymity as 'a process of negotiation…throughout the research process' by engaging in an ongoing discussion of these issues with participants. I have frequently discussed issues of anonymity in conjunction with analysis with participants and colleagues, and all of the excerpts from interviews have been shown to participants along with my analysis, with opportunity to comment.

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[56] The questions I asked in the first interview did not change in scope according to the conference context. I was looking for the participants to 'set the agenda' for discussing gender, to which this email was an invaluable contribution.

I want to stress that the production of myself by participants is not only 'of the moment', but it is also occurring even now, as I write. Richardson (2000, p. 153) asks, 'How does what we write affect who we become?' and even as I write the participants' interventions in my research into this chapter, I experience the same tussle of ownership over the research, over research in general.

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This tussle plays out in the following chapters. What follows will presumably highlight the fact that this chapter has, despite itself, only told one story of the research process, for each of the chapters to come constructs the research site, participants and materials in a different way. And each construction will reveal the insufficiencies of this chapter, which has after all been overseen by an unreliable narrator. What this narrator hopes to have achieved in providing an 'unfixing' narrative of research is a performative text that has 'marked out' the 'en/closure' of empirical research. The narrator hopes to have 'surrounded' the 'official fieldwork' by blurring the edges where 'official fieldwork' meets 'doctoral journey', where airplane melds with hotel melds with conference, where the roles of 'delegate', 'researcher', 'participant' bleed into each other. Although it is impossible to escape the strictures of spatio-temporalisation and presence in the construction of a research narrative, the narrator hopes that explicitly acknowledging these strictures has enabled some relaxation of the constraints that arise from upholding the pretence of an infallible research process.

Chapter 5
Producing and negotiating the act of conceptualisation: gender as 'critical concept'

'Critical concept'

> Fuzzy, blurred and multiple meanings are not signs of the personal failure of the naïve. Their recognition is a prelude to unveiling the broader political significance of conceptual contestation (Hughes, 2002, p. 4).

The focus of this chapter is on the act of conceptualisation. As such, the chapter returns in greater detail to the discussions of conceptualising gender in earlier chapters of the thesis, but it also serves as the first stage of deconstruction. In Chapter 3, I outlined the four stages of deconstruction, which form the basis of this and the three subsequent chapters: 'critical concept', 'surrounding', 'marking out', 'chink/crevice'. The first stage, then, involves elucidating the 'critical concept' to be deconstructed. This concept is 'gender', but the action designating gender as a 'critical concept' requires exploration. Gender as 'critical concept' is simultaneously troubling and indispensable: even as we are troubled by the concept, we are obliged to work with it in its unsettled and unsettling state. But what form does this take? How can we approach gender as critical concept? In one view, these questions are expounded upon in this chapter; in another view, each of the subsequent chapters provides a different answer to these questions. The answer that I provide in this chapter stays close to the moment where gender is conceptualised in discourse; I specifically turn to the moments in the interviews where I asked participants to tell me about the concepts that they work with, in particular gender, and what they ask gender to do in their work. I begin with this close-up so as to focus in on the discursive practice of conceptualising gender, in order to pay attention to the micro-processes of conceptualisation that constitute participants' engagement with my question. By taking this focus, I bridge the divide between the account of my research practice in Chapter 4 and these later chapters which are underpinned by engagement with empirical materials: I

recognise that the interview is itself a site of negotiating conceptualisation, and that focusing in on the micro-processes of conceptualisation in the interview provides a starting point from which to step off into the later chapters.

I began the chapter with a quotation from Hughes' (2002) account of 'conceptual literacy' and 'conceptual contestation'. Both notions refer to the idea that concepts do not have fixed definitions. The contribution that these two notions make to my ongoing discussion is that they swing the lens from 'gender' to 'concept'. 'Conceptual literacy' and 'conceptual contestation' are inextricably linked because conceptual literacy involves developing the knowhow to look out for and engage in conceptual contestation. Conceptual contestation refers to the fact that 'in certain circumstances different protagonists will forcefully and protectively deploy their specific definitions in a contest over meaning' (p. 11). By recognising that the reach of concepts is determined by contests over their meaning, we acknowledge the impossibility of arriving at a single meaning, and in tandem we admit that 'arguments over meaning should be appraised as political acts' (p. 178) which determine 'what become acceptable ways of knowing, theorizing and doing' (p. 196). And of course the effects of conceptual contestation (or lack thereof) reach beyond knowledge production; as Butler (2004, p. 1) states, '[s]ometimes a normative conception of gender can undo one's personhood'. However, as Butler goes on to note, normative conceptions of gender need not be accepted as such. To deliberately contest a conceptualisation of gender, conceptual literacy is necessary:

> conceptual literacy is concerned to develop an understanding of the
> effect of epistemic games that surround conceptual contestation in
> producing warrantable knowledge that justifies the directions
> through which a field of enquiry and its associated political
> concerns may proceed (Hughes, 2002, p. 3).

Using conceptual literacy, we might identify the normative conception of gender to which Butler refers as an 'epistemic game' (albeit a serious one) where the goal is to naturalise a particular understanding of gender. Situating the 'epistemic game' of gender within the gender research field,

Marshall and Young (2006, p. 68) refer to the need to 'use gender and categories like "women" for strategic purposes' so as to (re)focus the agenda onto the fact that 'women as a group still live in uneven and oppressed conditions'. Conceptual contests over gender may strategically drive the meaning of gender in a particular direction, but underlying the driving force is the exclusion and marginalisation of other meanings. In this chapter I aim to capture some of the moments where what gender 'is' or 'means' is established through overt or implicit contestation.

The point at which I partly diverge from Hughes' (2002) explanation of conceptual contestation is the suggestion that '[c]ontestation arises because of the *internal complexity* of some concepts' (p. 178, emphasis in original). As I have explored at length in Chapter 3, the extent to which we can ascribe any inherent ('internal') meaning to gender is highly debatable, and furthermore the spatial metaphor that is suggested by 'internal' seems to construct a concept as a coherent entity with an inside and an outside. However, Hughes also recognises that concepts may be linked to other concepts so that a conceptual web is formed; it is this understanding that I work with in exploring conceptuality in relation to moments of conceptualisation in the interviews with participants.

Theorising *the concept of* gender

Before starting to write this chapter, I attended a seminar at the SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies[57]) Centre for Gender Studies Seminar Series. The title of the seminar was particularly enticing as it seemed to be speaking directly to the chapter I was about to write: 'The black box[58] of gender: what revealing its contents can do for us' (Harris, 2015). The argument of the seminar was, to cite my notes, 'if we understand

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[57] University of London, London, UK.

[58] The term 'black box' refers to the flight recorder in an aircraft that records flight activity. Its more figurative meaning is as a mechanism 'with contents which are mysterious to the user' (New Oxford Dictionary of English, Pearsall and Hanks, 2001, p. 181).

better what gender *is*, [it will be] easier to make change' (emphasis in original). In the question time following the seminar, I thought of two questions for the presenter. I shall come onto the second question in Chapter 6; the first question asked what *was* in the black box of gender, because this had not been explicitly addressed in the seminar. The answer to the question was that 'gender norms' were in the black box of gender. The strong spatial metaphor of 'black box' provided a means for me to position my own thoughts around gender in relation to Harris' 'black box'. In my conceptualisation of the 'black box', the one that I expected Harris to be discussing, there is another 'black box' that contains her 'black box', and indeed a multitude of others. This 'black box', akin to 'en/closure' (see p. 86), is the box that delineates the *concept* of gender. Harris' 'black box' asks '*what is gender?*'; the 'black box' I am exploring here as a 'critical concept' asks '*what is the concept of gender?*'.

In her keynote address to the 2013 GEA conference, Adkins (2013) discussed the work that we ask concepts to do. In her paper, she particularly focused on the changing work that the concept of money performs. She analysed the function of money in feminist thought as a measure of equality and inequality, and as a means of delivering justice through distribution. According to Adkins, the concept of money has lost some of its measuring function as it has become a commodity with its own exchange value (in the case of, for example, buying and selling debt); feminist thought needs to rethink the work that we ask the concept of money to carry out in theorising inequalities in the light of this conceptual shift[59]. Although I had already been reflecting on the conceptual use of gender, Adkins' expression introduced space into the layers of my thinking. Rather than thinking of people meaning something directly by or with *gender*, I began to think about gender as a concept where people mean something with the *concept of gender*. The conceptual shift that Adkins' expression instigated in my conceptualisation of gender was ostensibly a movement from the task of theorising gender to the task of theorising the *concept* of gender, which

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[59] For changes to the concept of gender, see Adkins (1999; 2001), Adkins and Dever (2014).

amounts to theorising conceptual contestation. Understanding gender as a signifier to be directly theorised, where we can ask, 'What is gender?', elides both the unfixity of the gender signifier (and therefore its manipulability and capacity to manipulate), and the affective and political attachments that its users and receivers experience and create. By inserting the 'concept' of gender into the direct formulation 'What is gender?', I am not however introducing a new hook of fixity from which gender can dangle freely, a new 'box' in which to enclose gender. In order to avoid simply moving fixity to another (occluded) location so as to work with gender as unfixed, it is important to include a brief discussion of 'What is the concept of a concept?'. Derrida, in his essay 'Différance'[60] (1982), sets out the (anti-)tenets of the (non-)concept, *différance*; his explanation of the relationship between *différance* and conceptuality is a useful starting point to destabilise the 'concept' with which I in turn (but always already) seek to destabilise 'gender'. Derrida returns to the ideas presented in 'Différance' in 'Positions'[61] (2004), an interview with Houdebine and Scarpetta. In the interview, Scarpetta asks Derrida if the concept of 'history' is, as Derrida has previously stated, inherently linear, or if another form of history can be conceived[62] (p. 49). I bring Derrida's answer and some of the ideas from 'Différance' together in discussing 'the concept of the concept'.

The point that Derrida makes in 'Différance', and then returns to in 'Positions', is that concepts, despite the impression of concept-ness that they convey, do not exist in isolation from other concepts as complete and discrete entities. A concept is not 'present in and of itself, in a sufficient presence that would refer only to itself'[63] (1982, p. 11); a concept is not 'by itself…outside all the textual work in which it is inscribed'[64] (2004, p. 50).

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[60] 'La différance' (Derrida, 1972b).

[61] 'Positions' (Derrida, 1972c).

[62] Derrida (1972c, pp. 76-77).

[63] 'Le concept signifié n'est jamais présent en lui-même, dans une présence suffisante qui ne renverrait qu'à elle-même' (Derrida, 1972b, p. 11).

[64] 'Aucun concept n'est…lui-même…hors de tout le travail textuel dans lequel il s'inscrit' (Derrida, 1972c, p. 78).

In order for a concept to 'appear[] on the scene [stage] of presence'[65] (1982, p. 13), to convey an impression of concept-ness, it has to differentiate itself from other concepts. This act of definition, of demarcation, which gives that impression of a discrete entity (a spatially and temporally defined entity), is in fact entirely dependent for its signification on the other concepts that it *is not*, but which define it as *being*. As such, each concept is 'inscribed in a chain or in a system', inside which it engages in the 'systematic play [or game] of differences'[66] (1982, p. 11). This 'play' or 'game' (*jeu*), *différance*, is therefore not 'simply a concept, but rather *the possibility of conceptuality*'[67] (ibid., emphasis added). The (non)concept which inheres to and indeed produces each concept, that of *différance*, could have operated in Derrida's deconstruction of concepts as the differed/deferred hook of fixity that I referred to above in relation to the movement from asking 'what is gender?' to 'what is the concept of gender?'. However, because a concept is established as such through processes of *différance*, differing and deferring, these processes are always destabilising 'the concept of the concept', or 'conceptuality'. *Différance*, by referring to what shores up the concept's 'possibility', simultaneously traces the outline of the *im*possibility which haunts its possibility.

If a concept is established via what it is not, the opportunity arises for a concept to mean differently and evolve, for what it is not to become what it is, or for what it is and what it is not to shift or swap places. Derrida responds to the question about 'history' in 'Positions' by suggesting that using, even over-using, the word 'history' in a different way, to mean differently can relocate a concept in other 'conceptual chain[s]'[68] (2004, p. 50). He stresses that, in order to move a concept within its 'play' or 'game' of differences, it is not a question of 'a simple and instantaneous mutation',

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[65] '…apparaissant sur la scène de la présence' (Derrida, 1972b, p. 13).

[66] 'Tout concept est…inscrit dans une chaîne ou dans un système à l'intérieur duquel il renvoie à l'autre, aux autres concepts, par jeu systématique de différences' (Derrida, 1972b, p. 11).

[67] 'Un tel jeu, la différance, n'est plus alors simplement un concept mais la possibilité de la conceptualité' (Derrida, 1972b, p. 11).

[68] 'Cela explique que…je me sers *très souvent* du mot "histoire" pour en réinscrire la portée et produire…une autre chaîne conceptuelle' (Derrida, 1972c, p. 78).

the abandonment of a word, the 'striking of a name [noun] from the vocabulary'[69] (p. 51). Rather, we are obliged to still work with the 'old word' using a 'strategy of [] textual work' that involves using and thus 'demarcat[ing]' the word[70] (ibid.). By 'demarcat[ing]' I understand the locating of a concept as *within* but *dissimulating* its surrounding 'conceptual chain' or system. This strategy relates to the action of placing a word 'under erasure', which is a technique used in *Of Grammatology* (1976). Spivak, in her translator's preface to *Of Grammatology*, defines '*sous rature*', or 'under erasure' as 'to write a word, cross it out, and then print the word and deletion' (Spivak, 1976, p. ixv); the word, as with 'history' in 'Positions', cannot be abandoned, but its conceptual stability can be undermined by printing it in this way. We could say that the mark of 'under erasure' renders visible on the page the *différance* that inheres to (and therefore undermines the inherence of) a concept. The work that we carry out by attempting to redirect a concept cannot happen at a conceptual level, as this would involve reifying the concept as a discrete unit. Instead, we need to work at a ~~conceptual~~ level, where conceptuality is understood as both bearing and dissimulating 'that which "practically" inscribes and overflows [exceeds] the limits of such a discourse'[71] (Derrida, 2004, p. 52). What I therefore understand by working with 'the concept of gender' is in fact working with 'the ~~concept~~ of gender'; in turn (and always already), the effect of working with '~~concept~~' under erasure is to place the conceptuality of 'gender' under erasure: 'What is the ~~concept~~ of ~~gender~~?'

Inherent to my understanding of the work that the concept of gender performs – and is asked to perform – is the reactivity or disruptive nature of gender. Gender, in my conceptualisation of the term, refers to bodies and identities, departments and courses, and the topic of research, *via* processes of signification and ~~conceptual~~ work. These processes of signification and

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[69] '[O]n ne peut opérer une mutation simple et instantanée, voire rayer un nom de vocabulaire' (Derrida, 1972c, p. 81).

[70] 'Il faut élaborer une stratégie du travail textuel qui à chaque instant emprunte un vieux mot à la philosophie pour l'en démarquer aussitôt' (Derrida, 1972c, p. 81).

[71] '…ce qui inscrit et déborde "pratiquement" les limites d'un tel discours' (Derrida, 1972c, p. 82).

resignification, as with Derrida's deliberate over-use of 'history', are themselves imbued with affective and political attachments and investments. I am of course not immune to operating with these attachments in my own theorisation of gender; indeed I have tried to foreground my own attempts to shift or differ/defer 'gender'. Earlier in this section, I referred to one other question that I wanted to ask Harris about the 'black box of gender'; the question was about gender and intersectionality. The gist of my question was that the account of gender being presented in the seminar did not include *intersectionality* – this concept and the work that it can do were kept on the other side of the demarcated area reserved for what gender *is*, and as such were stored in the conceptual chain or system defining what gender *is not*. Upon finding intersectionality absent from the conceptualisation of gender being offered, my instinct was to move it over the demarcation into the zone of what gender *is*. In asking this question, I am pushing at the conceptual chains or systems that define gender as different from other concepts.

The dissimulated conceptual chains and systems that surround a concept, defining its possibility and pointing to the impossibility of its concept-ness, gesture to another of Derrida's (non-)concepts, or ~~concept~~s: the trace[72]. With the trace, as with *différance*, it is particularly redundant to define it by unselfconsciously saying 'the trace is…', because the trace 'is' one of those (non-)concepts that disrupts the certainty of definition. This is because the 'play' or 'game' (*jeu*) of the trace is that it 'has no meaning and is not'[73] (Derrida, 1982, p. 22). The trace 'is not' because it 'produces itself as self-occultation'[74] (1976, p. 47), it 'erases itself in presenting itself'[75] (1982, p. 23), or, as Howells (1998, p. 52) puts it, the trace produces an effect of 'now you see it, now you don't'. By introducing the trace into our understanding of how meaning works, we introduce unfixity. That which becomes fixed in meaning can only be fixed via the exclusion of other

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[72] See Derrida's *Of grammatology* (1967), 'Différance' (1982).

[73] '...jeu de la trace…qui n'a pas de sens et qui n'est pas' (Derrida, 1972b, p. 23).

[74] '[L]e mouvement de la trace…se produit comme occultation de soi' (Derrida, 1967, p. 69).

[75] 'Elle s'efface en se présentant' (Derrida, 1972b, p. 24).

meaning; this excluded meaning does not disappear when it is not included – rather, it occupies the zone of the trace, as that which surrounds or exists alongside the fixed meaning. The trace is not only 'there' *before* we fix something into language – it is always there, always already there, even when we think something is fixed and stable: 'what was chased off limits…has indeed never ceased to haunt language as its first [primary] and most intimate possibility'[76] (Derrida, 1976, p. 44).

In relation to conceptualising gender, what the trace can help us to do is to see each use, each definition of gender as an instance of fixing something into presence and fixing something else out in the trace. However, rather than the excluded disappearing from view, we can (spatially and temporally) imagine it accompanying – and therefore destabilising – the fixed, present meaning. The image from the 'conceptual chain' metaphor is one of separate links, each of which is attached to other links – the trace is a more fluid metaphor, in that whatever appears to be a separate link in a conceptual chain is, in the trace, undefined and unfixed, but nonetheless ~~present~~.

Producing the act of conceptualisation

> Gender is not just related to some social roles which have been
> assigned to men and women, who differ from each other
> biologically. Gender is much *more*.
>
> > (Nirja, IAWS)

> Of course there's always the misconception that when you're talking
> about gender you're talking about women, which is not true.
>
> > (Rachel, FWSA)

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[76] '[C]e qui était chassé hors frontière…n'a jamais cessé de hanter le langage comme sa première et plus intime possibilité' (Derrida, 1967, p. 64).

>Emily: Whichever terms that you identify your work with- like what are you trying to do with them?
>
>Shori: *Stay tuned for the dissertation* [exaggerated broadcaster voice].
>
>(Shori, NWSA)

>Emily: So, so I suppose just um- you- do you consider that you are working with the concept of gender?
>
>Priya: Mhmm I mean- I- my- [pause] mm you know what I think? [Laughs] it's so funny-
>
>(Priya, IAWS)

These quotations give a flavour of the responses that I received to my question about the use of the concept of gender in participants' work. The first two quotations represent what I am calling 'conceptual chain work', and the latter two are examples of 'trace work'. In the first two examples, Nirja and Rachel both position gender as a contested concept which is understood in different ways. In their explanations, they oppose their own understandings of gender in relation to how others (erroneously, in their view) define gender. Nirja creates a conceptual chain in which gender is differentiated from social and biological binary understandings of gender; Rachel's chain links 'gender' to 'women'. Because these two examples clearly distinguish the 'link' of gender from other linked concepts, they resemble 'conceptual chain work'. The second pair of examples, on the other hand, do not clearly indicate other 'links' to which gender is connected; rather, Shori and Priya both frame their responses in the struggle of isolating the concept-ness of gender. This seems to be 'trace work' because the responses express the difficulty of committing to an understanding of gender.

Before progressing further with the analysis, the *production* of the texts for looking at 'conceptual chain work' and 'trace work' needs addressing. As Clegg and Stevenson (2013, p. 5) indicate, 'data' is often 'cut loose from the interpretive acts and power relations implied in the production of data'. I have presented some 'cut loose' text, floating at the

head of this section. This text was produced in the context of an interview, it was recorded and transcribed, and now it has been cut from the larger interview document and pasted into this document in the form of a short excerpt: we could call this process 'a certain violence…done to data' (Lapping, 2008, p. 77). By dissimulating these processes, and referring to the excerpts as if they directly represented the interview interaction (Mazzei, 2013), I have negated my own role in the production of the text. It is to these processes that I briefly turn, in order to resist 'cutting loose'.

As part of his study on diversity, racism and the media in France, Cervulle (2013) conducted interviews with self-identified white participants on viewing films through a race-aware lens. The interviews were not viewed as sites for the retrospective reproduction of viewing experiences, but rather as 'a situation of discursive coproduction that permitted the emergence of an enunciated position'[77] (p. 134). This was because the participants did not in general – at least before the interview – view films through a race-aware lens. Thus the interview guide was designed to produce a phenomenon which did not necessarily pre-exist the interview. Most of the participants I interviewed, on the other hand, were working in contexts where they were regularly called upon to discuss gender, and many participants referred to the way that they teach gender in order to explain their thoughts. Despite this familiar citation of definitions or warnings not to over-simplify gender, there was a strong element of the coproduction of a particular stance towards gender in the interview setting that resonates with Cervulle's study. This arose from a number of factors. In some cases, participants referred to the rarity of having to discuss key concepts: in one case a doctoral student told me that, had I asked her during her Master's, she would have had a clear idea of gender; in another case, an adjunct professor, said that she had not revisited those debates since 'grad school'.

There was also a strong sense of anxiety surrounding the interview interaction in relation to this question. Several participants asked me if they

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[77] 'Il s'agissait…de voir l'entretien comme situation de coproduction discursive permettant l'émergence d'une position énonciative' (Cervulle, 2013, p. 134).

had said the right thing or if they had provided enough detail, or apologised for not being able to answer coherently. As the interviewer I felt the strain of the interview encounter acutely during the discussions that followed this question. I was aware of pushing for further explanations in a manner that replicated the encounter between a teacher and student. The scrabbling for words that constitutes the establishing of a concept's concept-ness seemed to expose those who are supposed to be experts or 'in the know' (as most of my participants were, as teachers or trainers and authors) to the vulnerability of uncertainty to which the citation from Hughes (2002) at the start of the chapter alludes. Added to this anxiety was the position that participants understood me to be taking in relation to gender – in some cases participants spoke back to my use of gender as a key term, arguing instead for 'women' or 'feminism'; in other cases, of which it is more difficult to be aware, participants may have been trying to answer in ways that would please or impress me, based on their knowledge or assumptions of my views around gender.

In accordance with Parkes (2010), Youdell (2010) and Phoenix (2010), I recognise that the interview (or, in Parkes' case, focus group) has the potential to become a site where the 'problem' being researched is reproduced, at times by the hand of the researcher; in Parkes' (2010, p. 348) words, '[c]ould it be that researching the topic of violence was itself an act of violation?'. Youdell (2010) and Phoenix (2010) analyse incidents where, instead of listening to and observing participants, their questions and reflections come to 'author' the participants (ibid., p. 164) in relation to their sexual orientation (Youdell) and their gender and race (Phoenix). I might suggest that it is impossible to do otherwise; as Oakley suggests in her (1981) article 'Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms', interviews run contrary to 'normal' social interactions because 'properly socialised respondents do not…ask[] questions back' (p. 35). As such, '[t]he person doing the interviewing must actively and continually construct the "respondent"…as passive' (ibid.). There are therefore limits to the construction of myself as researcher as involved in the *co*production of data, just as there are limits to constructing the researcher as 'a critical, intentional subject standing separate and outside of "the data"' (MacLure,

2013, p. 660). In my interviews, I was clearly aware of my role in the production of the conceptualisations of gender: in basic terms, I had set up the interview and asked the question. I was also aware of not being able to claim *co*production in the sense of a collaborative conceptualisation, because, especially in the first of the pair of interviews, I did not encourage participants to ask questions back regarding my ideas on gender. While my project as a whole has problematised the possibility of stating 'gender is…', in this question I encouraged participants to commit to a verbal explanation of the work they were asking gender to carry out in their research, which asked that participants fix gender – albeit momentarily – into presence (into space and time), thus contravening my project as a whole. The question was motivated by my interest in how participants would negotiate speaking about gender, but it could be argued that the question demanded something of participants that, according to my theorisation of gender, should not and indeed cannot be demanded (Henderson, 2015b).

Having conducted and audio-recorded the interviews, I then followed a process of transcription and selection. Just as the excerpts at the start of this section do not reflect the interview setting, they also do not reveal the processes that led to their inclusion. Transcription as a practice is acknowledged to be 'theoretical, selective, interpretive, and representational' (Davidson, 2009, p. 37), and furthermore the ways in which interview recordings are transcribed 'enact the theories that [the researchers] hold' (Lapadat and Lindsay, 1999, p. 66). As such, the choices I made about how to transcribe were inevitably connected to how I thought I would analyse the data. Because I would be conducting close textual analysis, I knew I would want to include incomplete words and non-verbal sounds. Hammersley (2010, p. 558), cautioning against the 'slippery slope' that leads to 'the conclusion that the data are created or constituted by the transcriber', defines a 'strict transcription' method that 'involves constructional work but also takes certain resources as given, notably the words that are audible in a recording' (p. 561). The notion of 'audible' is however less clear-cut than it may seem, as Downs (2010) indicates in relation to piecing together parts of her interviews where the recorder had skipped. While 'audible' and 'inaudible' suggest absolute and exclusive

states, in fact ethical issues arise as to how hard we try to make things audible, and whose words come to be omitted. Cohen et al. (2011, p. 426) refer to the 'potential for massive data loss, distortion and the reduction of complexity' in transcription; one source of this 'loss' is data that is decreed 'inaudible'.

The ethical issue surrounding the decision to mark 'inaudible' in a transcription becomes more salient where, as was the case with the most 'inaudible' interview, it was with a participant who did not have access to technology that would support Skype at home, so the interview was conducted over the phone, which produced a poor quality of sound. There are further ethical issues surrounding transcription that I must mention here. Tilley (2003) encourages researchers not to remain silent with regards to their transcription processes, especially when they have hired a transcriber. However, for a doctoral researcher, transcription is held up as a rite of passage to be suffered, based on the idea that transcribing one's own interviews 'promotes intense familiarity with the data' (Lapadat, 2000, p. 204). As such, stating that, at a late stage of my transcription process, I used my own funds to employ a transcriber to finish the remaining transcripts, feels like the confession of a misdeed. I include this in the same spirit as my 'confessions' around fieldwork funding and logistics in Chapter 4: I realised that, if I completed the transcription process myself, I would not be able to finish my PhD within the funded period. This was a practical question of longer-term versus short-term livelihood, which cannot be divorced from a seemingly abstract researcher identity. I required the transcriber to sign a confidentiality agreement and ensured that it was a recognised firm with experience of transcribing research interviews. I listened to the interviews that had been transcribed by the firm, alongside the transcripts, inserting further notes and changing some parts from 'inaudible' to text, and it was here that the ethical implications of transcription became even clearer. The transcriber struggled more with Indian accents, declaring more text to be 'inaudible'; they also struggled more with Indian place names and terminology. There were terms, specifically around gender and sexuality

(such as 'cisgender' and 'heternonormative'), which confused the transcriber; they guessed at terms, often leading to comic nonsense[78].

Bird (2005, p. 234) refers to '"transcription issue[s]"', where the transcriber is presented with a challenge of textual representation. An example of a transcription issue is where the participant's words ('it was fun') were in fact used sarcastically to imply that 'it was [not] fun' (ibid.). How to represent this 'verbatim'? An equivalent 'issue' occurs in the quotation from Shori's interview at the start of this section, where she said, 'Stay tuned for the dissertation'. In the first transcription, I wrote 'funny voice' in parentheses. When I pasted the excerpt into this chapter, I realised that I knew what 'funny voice' meant, but that it was not helpful for the reader to imagine her tone. The need to include any marker here reflects the importance that I place on these nuances, which is intimately connected with my theorisation of the trace. This is particularly the case with the inclusion of the excerpt from Priya's interview, in which she pauses, starts and re-starts sentences, says 'mm', asks a rhetorical question, and laughs ('Mhmm I mean- I- my- … mm you know what I think? [Laughs] it's so funny-'). I consider that representing these utterances in the transcript is representative of 'trace work' around the conceptualisation of gender, which is why I pay particular attention to them. However, as Myers and Lampropoulou (2015, p. 2) found in their study of transcribed data from multiple sources, laughter is often transcribed even when no other paralinguistic features are included. Why, for example, have I described Shori's 'funny voice' but just used italics to represent Nirja's tone of voice in stating 'Gender is much *more*'? The excerpts that I consider to represent 'trace work' are littered with evidence of the difficulties of transcription, they resemble 'messy, lumpy, ugly, and puckered text' (Mazzei, 2007, p. 92), while the 'conceptual chain work' excerpts read fairly smoothly. While I seem to have chosen the 'trace work' excerpts *based on* the textual irregularities, in fact I have been complicit in *producing* the textual irregularities: where participants were struggling to express their

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[78] For example, 'Has your relationship with *Curtis* changed as you've developed a career identity?', 'I was thinking about the…*male times*' (EH asking Radhika, IAWS, about *kurtas* – a tunic-like garment – and *meal times*).

understanding of gender, I was more assiduous in representing their struggle.

This brings me onto the final stage: selection and inclusion. Lapping (2008) resituates the significance of 'rapport' between interviewer and interviewee in the written analysis stage, where the researcher selects a moment where the interviewer and interviewee shared the same perspective and uses it to reinforce their own argument. To what extent do we choose which data we reproduce in our written analysis based on the fact that we agree with it, or that it reminds us of a moment of shared positive affect? With the excerpt from Shori's interview, for example, I remember distinctly enjoying the 'meta' moment of Shori making my thesis wait for her own doctoral dissertation for an answer. In leaving out my reaction to the comment, I have omitted the signs of 'rapport' that indicate why I might have chosen this excerpt. I have also omitted the more serious comments which follow, in which Shori engages in 'conceptual chain work'. Bird (2005, p. 228) states that '[w]hen representing an oral voice in written form, the transcriber becomes the channel for that voice'; Mazzei and Jackson (2012) echo this in troubling the notion that including long excerpts of transcribed interview data allows participants' 'voices' to be heard. In the excerpts that I have chosen to illustrate this section, participants' words are subsumed into my own voice. This becomes especially clear when considering the concept-ness of 'conceptual chain work' and 'trace work': in order to distinguish between these two types of work, I have deliberately cut out isolated excerpts and not included the ways in which the participants wove 'conceptual chain work' and 'trace work' together.

In this section, I have acknowledged multiple stages in the production of 'data', though inevitably many micro-stages remain unanalysed. By including this section in what ought to be an 'analysis chapter', I have tried to destabilise the distinction between the demarcated area of the thesis for 'dealing with' methodological questions and the designated textual space for analysis. I have instead sought to interweave theoretical and conceptual concerns to illustrate the inextricable links between the production and analysis of data. In the next section, I bring the

concerns from this section, and the theoretical work around conceptual chains and the trace, into a more detailed engagement with the participants' negotiations of the conceptualisation of gender.

Negotiating the act of conceptualisation

In order to home in on the discursive negotiations that surround the act of conceptualisation, I have selected two of the responses to the interview question which asked participants to explain the work they were using the concept of gender to carry out in their research. This process of selection immediately returns us to the production of interview material for analysis: on what basis did I select the two excerpts? Justifications could include that I wanted to choose excerpts from different conference participants (although this is no guarantee of contextual difference, as there were Indian-based and US-based participants in my UK group, UK-based participants in my US group, and a range of international trajectories within and between different countries). Another justification could be that each answer shows a different approach to conceptual chain work and trace work, and that different features of the production of interview text are applicable. A third justification might be that I chose both of the two excerpts based on a sense of rapport or an affective connection established in the interview and continued into the reading and selection of interview material (Lapping, 2008; 2013). We have already seen some of the affective attachment that I bear towards Shori's answer to the question, as she began her answer with the 'stay tuned' comment. There are further elements of the answer which appealed to me: she analysed a concept which I had not encountered before ('masculine-of-center'), and secondly she ended her answer with a comment on the importance of the act of conceptualisation: 'how I conceptualise it matters'. I had not noticed this until I had already chosen the excerpt, but re-reading the excerpt in the light of Lapping's (2008, p. 76) article, I recognise the 'affirm[ation]' that Lapping experienced when her participant stated '"I'm glad that you said that"'. In the case of the second excerpt, the sense of affirmation is clear even from my question, which I framed in the wake of the previous discussion of the participant's professional role. We had

been discussing gender relations on campus, and in this discussion Meeta
had expressed frustrations which I often experience in higher education
research that attempts to research gender issues on campus (eg sexual
harassment) by only talking to women. In asking my question about the
concepts she works with, I introduced my question along the same lines:

> you're someone who is using the word 'gender', 'gender relations'
> um w- whereas uh in relation to this- this topic of the campus,
> 'women' seems to be the term that a lot of people are using.

In my introduction to a question that was designed to open up the concept of
gender, I invited Meeta to position 'gender' as a different link in the
conceptual chain to 'women', and I also implied that, by doing so, she and I
would occupy the same position in opposition to the 'women' group; I then
asked Meeta how she was using gender in her work. Added to the positive
affect that led me to choose this excerpt, re-reading it has now produced an
acute awareness of my own production of that affirmation through the
construction of the question in the interview (H. Henderson, 2015). I have
focused on the third justification for my choice of excerpts at the start of the
section because my 'intellectual' reasons for the choice of excerpts will
become clear as I discuss the excerpts further; if I had not acknowledged my
attachments to each excerpt here, I would have written the excitement
without acknowledgement into my 'impartial' analysis, with the implication
that each excerpt was objectively important to analyse.

The second 'production' point that I ought to include here is the
production of participants. I have alluded to my ongoing questions around
the extent to which I should create 'characters' for my participants, versus
anonymised, fractured sources of discourse. I stated that in each chapter I
would construct the participants in a form that would fit with the analysis
and theoretical underpinnings of the chapter. In this chapter, then, I use the
two participant-selected pseudonyms, Shori (NWSA), and Meeta (IAWS),
as organising nodes for the interview text. Each of the participants was also
studying and/or working in the same national context as the conference that
they attended; this becomes significant as some of the discussions are

related to, in particular, specificities of a 'US' and an 'Indian' context. I do not include further information about the two participants because I do not, at this stage, wish to draw links between 'who' they are and 'what' they say; I also do not include information on the other participants whose responses I draw on in connection with points I am making about Shori and Meeta's responses. The connection between 'whom' and 'what' will emerge in the theoretical layers that I build up over the following chapters. The aim of this chapter is to focus on the ways in which the act of conceptualising gender is produced and discursively negotiated.

In the two excerpts analysed below, I bring together the questions of production and of conceptual contestation that I have discussed earlier in the chapter. For both excerpts, I consider how I have *produced* the act of conceptualisation, and how, represented in this production, the participant has *negotiated* the act. I include commentary on the (co-)production of the interview text in the interview context, as well as in the act of transcription. In relation to the representation of the participants' answers in the text of the thesis, I have elected not to represent the excerpt in its entirety. Had I done this, I would have suggested that the excerpt was in fact an 'entirety', a coherent whole, when in fact it is a fragment. Through the produced interview text, I address the ways in which participants perform conceptual contestation, pitting different concepts and understandings of gender against each other as separate links in a conceptual chain, or as inherently combined in the same link; I analyse what I consider to be textual representations of trace work, of the differing/deferring (*différance*) of meaning, of hovering at or resolutely camping out at the edge of the en/closure. This analysis returns to the theorisation of spatio-temporalisation and presence in Chapter 3: the participants' negotiations of the act of conceptualisation inevitably locate gender in metaphors of space and time in order to construct a conceptualisation.

Shori's negotiations of the act of conceptualisation

Before asking Shori about her concept of gender, we had already discussed her interest in the concepts of 'masculinities' and 'queer'; in my question, I invited her to discuss these concepts, and added 'I don't know if

you're working with the term gender'. I can identify in this statement the contradiction where I wanted Shori to talk about gender but was unwilling to impose the term 'gender' on her work if she did not use it. We have already seen that Shori began her response with the 'stay tuned' comment. Following this, she affirmed twice (perhaps reassuring me) that she did in fact use gender, stating 'I do use gender' and 'gender is very much central to my work'. Shori then addressed the other part of my question: 'whichever terms that you identify your- your work with, like what are you trying to do with them?' Shori was reluctant to answer this question, and she moved through several stages of resistance and deferral. Rather than moving quickly past these stages in my analysis, I consider that these stages are an intrinsic part of the negotiation of conceptualisation. The first stage is '[sigh]'. This is a 'transcription issue' (Bird, 2005, p. 234), firstly because, unlike the distinction between, say, 'a bark' and 'woof', a sigh is a paralinguistic feature which has no written signifer in English (no 'woof' equivalent), and secondly a sigh can have many meanings, from satisfaction to exasperation or boredom. In Shori's case, I interpret the sigh as an acknowledgement of the difficulty of the question, which is equivalent to Anne and Rachel both beginning their responses with 'Oh gosh', but the sigh also seems to represent both a reluctance to answer and a promise of capitulation, an 'Oh, alright then, if I must'. The '[sigh]' prolongs the possibility of retaining the concept of gender in an unfixed state, which is why I classify it as 'trace work'.

Following the '[sigh]', Shori then asked herself the question in a slightly different form, 'How I'm thinking about it?'; this question shifts my phrasing of 'what are you trying do to?' to 'how [are you] thinking about it?'. Shori's editing of the question could be seen as representing the different stages of (i) writing the dissertation ('stay tuned'), where 'trying to do' would apply, and (ii) the earlier process of preparing and conducting the research (where Shori was located at the time of the interview), where 'thinking' applies. This distinction is highlighted in the next stage of deferral, where Shori stated, 'I'm really using the space- the dissertation to work out how I'm thinking about gender'. The dissertation was thus constructed as a 'space' where Shori would 'work out' gender and so

produce a response to this question (hence 'stay tuned'); the interview continued as a space where gender was not being brought into presence. Shori continued, 'Um so really I don't have an answer because-', and then cuts off with a pause. Here she spoke back to my question and the interview format. Re-reading this excerpt, I can see that I was asking Shori to prematurely fix into place an account of her conceptualisation of gender which she was not in fact obliged to fix until producing her PhD dissertation. There is some irony to my demand that *she* fix *her* conceptualisation of gender so that *I* could produce *my* thesis, when the very purpose of my thesis is to conceptualise gender as unfixed.

Introduced with 'all I know is', perhaps as a concession, Shori then produced what I consider to be a citational definition of gender, as opposed to an act of conceptualisation within the interview context (as referred to in the earlier discussion of Cervulle's study):

> All I know is that I believe that gender structures um very many
> social, cultural, political and economic institutions.

I identify this as a citational definition because it was spoken in a way that seemed rehearsed and as if it were part of discourse that is repeated until it has become banal (another 'transcription issue'). Anne too produced a definition of this kind in her interview, which was also marked with an introduction that indicated the entry into the definition (see italics):

> *I guess, you know very simply like yes, it's you know* it's a socially
> constructed um you know a set of categories that you know sort of
> oppresses everybody.

Anne then went on to critique her own recited definition by identifying incompatibilities between social construction and political action. A particularly marked form of citational definition occurred in Catarina's response where, unlike Shori who asked me to wait for her future dissertation, Catarina wanted to recall the definition she had included in a draft chapter of her thesis (but not ultimately in the final document), having

developed the definition in a previous context to her doctoral work. She tried to remember several times, and made this attempt at recalling:

> my definition was something along the lines of um 'a set of um practices, meanings um that uh were hierarchical uh and binaristic uh and that serve to organise everything, people, um clothing, objects um words, um uh in a- a- along the lines of masculine and feminine';

finally at the end of the interview she located the original definition on her computer and translated it into English for me. The function of this citational definition in Catarina's response was to illustrate how her conceptualisation had developed in accordance with her supervisor's questions, such as '"why are you defining gender?"' and why 'the pleasures of gender' had not been included in her definition. Unlike Shori's and Anne's cited definitions, Catarina's definition occurred within a narrative which was also produced as a cited or citable narrative, and which she even referred to as a 'story'. Interestingly, we see Catarina's *representations* of marks of trace work in her 'story' of conceptual development in conversation with her doctoral supervisor. For example, when representing her supervisor's question about pleasure, she stated (and I tried to transcribe): 'I thought "[intake of breath] ohhohhohh [rising and falling singsong ohhs]"'. This suite of 'ohh' exclamations seems to refer to the realisation that pleasure had been moved from the zone of the trace to the concept-ness of gender, but also the impossibility of including so many facets in the en/closure of gender. The clear narrative representation of an act of conceptualisation in Catarina's response casts some light over the transition from citational definition to the production of a conceptualisation in Shori's interview; it also highlights the correlation between the interview context (coupled with this question) and the teacher-student conversation. I asked Shori to commit to a conceptualisation of gender, which she would normally be asked to do by her doctoral advisers and committee. Having staved off the question in several different ways, including by using a citational definition, Shori launched into a discussion of the concepts of gender and sexuality, which moved from resolutely deferring

coneptualisation to analysing the conceptual chain work between these two concepts.

Shori's discussion of gender and sexuality occurred in the context of her dissertation work on 'black masculine-of-center women's presentation [and] production'. I had not encountered the term 'masculine-of-center' (also known as MOC) before speaking with Shori; this is just one example of the nuances that were brought to my understanding of gender by this research, and which have thus become part of the text of this thesis. MOC was coined by B. Cole, who founded the nonprofit organisation The Brown Boi Project (Brown Boi Project, n.d.); part of this organisation's work is to explore the language and cultural constructions of people of color who 'tilt toward the masculine side of the gender spectrum' (The Brown Boi Project, 2012, p. 2); MOC acts as 'an umbrella term to include all gender-nonconforming masculine people of color', and encompasses a range of sub-identifications or co-identifications, such as 'stud' and 'brown boi' (Bailey, 2014, p. 45). There is an association of MOC with appearance and gender expression, where MOC women of color are at times not 'perceived as "real" women' (Logie and Rwigema, 2014, p. 183); the use of the term MOC is, in conjunction with the work of The Brown Boi Project, a conceptual means of gaining recognition for this particular range of gender expressions. The term involves the spatial metaphor of 'centre', with the implication, as with 'left of centre', for example, that there is a 'neutral' or 'gender-free' or 'normal' centre from which it is possible to move towards the masculine, or, in the case of 'feminine-of-center', towards the feminine. MOC seems to be used especially in conjunction with people of color, but it nonetheless is often marked with a racial signifier such as 'MOC of color' or, as in Shori's case, 'black masculine-of-center'. Furthermore, MOC has implications for the understanding of a person's gender, as MOC bears within it a division between assigned gender[79] and gender presentation, as exemplified in Shange's (2014, pp. 42, n.3) definition of MOC women as

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[79] The term 'assigned male/female at birth' implies that 'gender is assigned to us at birth based on the traditional conflation of sex, in particular of the external genitalia, with gender'; the term allows for differentiation between assigned gender and 'a person's own sense of hir/their gender' (LABIA, 2013, p. 10, see also Nevatia et al., 2012).

'people *assigned* female at birth who embody a masculine-of-center gender *presentation*' (emphasis added). In addition to the racial and gendered implications of MOC, there is also a question regarding the connection between MOC gender presentation and sexuality. It is this question that Shori addresses in her response, and which she highlights as 'probably [her] major dilemma in [her] work'.

The issue for Shori is that, when she conducted research with black MOC women, she found that 'their sexuality and their gender intermingle[d]'. This also occurred in Amritha's study, where, in researching *sexuality* (as opposed to gender) in secondary education, the participants were 'all talking about gender, gender roles, um gender identity, performance', to the extent that she did not know if 'we can separate the two'. Having begun the research with sexuality as the key link in the conceptual chain, Amritha found that gender and sexuality were contained within the same link for her participants. In contrast, Shori had begun her research with a sense of two separate links, gender and sexuality, but had found that her participants conceptualised an MOC gender identification as inherently signifying a non-heterosexual sexual orientation. The 'dilemma' for Shori was that she '*kn[e]w* that there [we]re um [pause] black masculine-of-center women who [we]re also heterosexual', so she felt that the concept of MOC gender should not be inherently defined by a particular (in this case 'non-heterosexual') concept of sexuality, but on the other hand this was how her participants had conceptualised MOC.

Shori's 'dilemma' is manifested in a number of metaphorical expressions in which she represents the struggle between the conceptual chain links of gender and sexuality. The metaphorical actions include pulling apart, looking at together, grouping (see italics):

> [T]here are times when we need to *pull apart* gender and sexuality, in my opinion, and then times when we really need to *look at* the saliency of the two *together*.

> [F]or a lot of the women that I talked to, their sexuality and their
> gender intermingle, because it is really hard *to pull* those things
> *apart*.

> [W]e always *group* [MOC gender identification] not just [with]
> sexuality but like non- non-heterosexual sexuality.

These metaphorical actions of detaching and attaching conceptual chain links are constructed in space with the idea of gender and sexuality being nearer or farther away, and in time in that each action involves a narrative of first moving the concepts *in order* to analyse them. Shori emphasises the role of the concept-user in determining the understanding of the concept by the action which they undertake in order to position gender and sexuality in relation to each other. This may be related to the importance of *self*-identifying in connection with MOC, as mentioned above in relation to The Brown Boi Project. Importantly, to return to the quotations from Hughes and Butler, conceptual contestation has 'broader political significance' (Hughes, 2002, p. 4) than abstract questions of definition: '[s]ometimes a normative conception of gender can undo one's personhood' (Butler, 2004, p. 1). Shori links her 'dilemma' around the relationship between gender and sexuality to the 'real implications' of conceptual contestation 'for women that are masculine-of-center walking on the streets'. A nuanced understanding of the contested relationship between an MOC gender identification and/or presentation and sexual orientation is necessary to understand and indeed to address the marginalisation and indeed harassment that MOC women of color experience in public and semi-public spaces (Logie and Rwigema, 2014). This harassment is based on, for example, the visual recognition of MOC women of color as 'Black male[s]', and the destabilisation of codes of race and gender that they are seen as enacting (p. 185). As Logie and Rwigema found, this recognition is layered with sexual orientation if, for example, an MOC woman of color is seen in public as being in a relationship with a feminine-presenting woman, and whether this is recognised – and reacted to – by passers-by as a heterosexual or a homosexual couple.

By analysing Shori's response in detail, I have sought to unpack some of the processes that are involved in negotiating conceptualisation, and have situated these processes in the wider questions of the impact of conceptual contestation on the way in which certain lives are understood. I have also tried to engage with my own role in this process as interviewer, transcriber and writer. I pushed Shori to explain her conceptual work to me before she was ready, thus requiring her to fix some of her conceptual chains into place in the 'space' of my own thesis before she was ready to write her own. Having obliged me by engaging with my question, Shori then proceeded to unfix my concept of gender, adding a new nuance in the form of MOC. I am grateful for this nuance, but I am also uncomfortable that I gained this from asking Shori to fix her conceptual contestations into place. This fixing into place involved constructing gender and sexuality as spatial and temporal concepts which must be positioned by the user before they can be analysed. The actions of bringing gender and sexuality together and pulling them apart contest the concept-ness or discreteness of the two concepts, by highlighting the indistinct border between them, their 'intermingling'.

Meeta's negotiations of the act of conceptualisation

If Shori resisted closing down gender by hovering at the edge of the en/closure for some time before offering her discussion of MOC in relation to gender and sexuality, Meeta's resistance consisted in sequentially constructing five different conceptualisations of gender. I have already alluded to the embarrassment that I now feel in relation to the framing of my initial question to Meeta, in which I drew on my preference for her framing of gender relations on campus (as opposed to the 'women on campus' analyses that I had heard elsewhere at the IAWS conference). My follow-up question is a further source of embarrassment because I chose just one of Meeta's four conceptualisations (the fifth followed this question) to ask about: the conceptualisation of gender as inclusive of sexuality and in particular homosexuality. However, although – or perhaps because – I unintentionally provided a frame for Meeta's conceptualisations of gender, Meeta in fact took gender through a number of different contestations. In my analysis of these contestations, I have changed the order of the

contestations from the order in which Meeta presented them to two 'sets' of contestations – one where gender is seen to open up or broaden discussions, the other where gender is more problematically seen to close down or restrict analysis. This change of order prevents the transcript from becoming the 'natural' representation of the order of conceptualisations; acknowledging the order change is a gesture towards preventing the order in which the conceptualisations are presented in this text from becoming another 'natural' order.

When inviting Meeta to discuss the work that she asks gender to carry out, I transferred the context of our previous discussion – higher education campuses – to my framing of the question. Meeta responded by relating her first conceptualisation of gender to the campus, and in so doing she directly related conceptual contestation to the spatial location of her current research. Whereas Shori's conceptual contestation ended with the impact of conceptual contestation on lives lived, Meeta's conceptualisation (presumably influenced by my question) links conceptual understandings of gender with lives lived on campus from the start. Meeta constructs a causal (and temporal) link between gender and sexuality, stating 'I'm using the term gender *because* it's been in the last uh 10 years that we have also begun to think about the issues of sexuality' (emphasis added). In terms of conceptual chain work, Meeta takes my question about 'gender' versus 'women' as underpinning analyses of campus life and brings in a third link, 'sexuality', which she attaches to 'gender'. The effects of this chain work are immediately demonstrated in concrete terms, in that introducing the sexuality link as relevant to gender relations on campus is seen as enabling conversations about and with 'homosexual students'. Furthermore, increasing the relevance of the sexuality link enables discussion of the challenges that 'homosexual students' face on campus, such as 'feel[ing] quite isolated' and finding that 'it [is] not easy…to be out openly'. Meeta associates these challenges with the overarching difficulty of 'belong[ing] to the place uh normally'. In Meeta's conceptualisation of gender analyses of higher education campuses, she aligns the conceptual contestation of making *conceptual* space for sexuality discussions with the related process of making a *tangible and visible* space for homosexual students on campus.

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Thus the concept of gender – as opposed to 'women' – is construed as making space for conversations of sexuality to occur alongside discussions around 'women' on campus. The concept of 'women', however, is not seen as directly enabling of these discussions; rather, sexuality must pass through gender in order to achieve visibility.

The notion that the concept of gender enables conversations around sexuality (understood particularly as non-heterosexual sexuality and non-binary gender) was common in participants' responses, and is also echoed in Sreenivas' (2015) account of teaching gender studies at the University of Hyderabad. For example, Nirja, who was quoted in the excerpts at the start of the previous section, constructs an opposition between a citational definition ('gender is not just related to some social roles which have been assigned to men and women, who differ from each other biologically'), and the idea that 'gender is much *more*'. The 'much *more*', which I excluded from the earlier fragment, is 'the sexuality, transgender, [pause] the issues of the gays'. Nirja here operates a manoeuvre where she takes an initial conceptual set-up, where the concept of gender contains sexual difference and its associated binary of social roles, and sets off on a conceptual chain that links 'sexuality', 'transgender' and 'gays' to this central link of gender. The use of '*more*' (rather than 'also', for instance) indicates a widening of the scope of gender (rather than the construction of a parallel conceptual chain that 'also' would have indicated). Nirja reinforces her temporal narrative of less-to-more by following up her chain construction with the statement that 'all these gender issues *do not remain only* the social and cultural concepts' (emphasis added). Nirja links the importance of this *re*-conceptualisation of gender with the avowal that '[gay] rights have not been recognised in India'; as in Meeta's conceptualisation, gender enables hitherto invisibilised ('not…recognised') sexuality-related issues to be brought into more recognised discussions around sexual difference and role differences between women and men.

Meeta's second conceptualisation constructs gender as a means of avoiding the use of 'women' as a collective, universal term. I was familiar with this understanding of gender, but in my sphere of reference I had only

encountered the accusation levelled at *white, middle-class* feminism for assuming a homogenous experience for 'women' in the US and the UK (Chow, 1987; Collins, 2000; hooks, 1984; Lutz, Herrera Vivar and Supik, 2011a; Mohanty, 2003; Ramazanoğlu, 1989). In my concept of 'women' (when used in this way), then, the concepts of 'white' and 'middle-class' were elided into the en/closure of 'women'. In Meeta's concept, which she situates 'in Indian contexts', the elided concepts were 'upper-caste' and 'Hindu'. Rather than the race/class elision, that is so familiar to me as to appear as pre-requisite for discussions of ('Western') feminism, Meeta had brought in caste and religion as the salient elided intersections for 'Indian' feminism. The critique of what Gopal (2012, p. 223) refers to as 'women *qua* women' approaches is situated in longstanding tensions between different strands of feminism in India. Purkayastha et al. (2003, p. 512) locate the 'women *qua* women' approach in the work of urban-based small groups of feminists who, recognising the difficulty of prioritising women's issues in party politics and left-leaning social movements, organised separate fora for discussion in order 'to address women's issues without subordination to other issues and organizations'. However, there has been critique that these groups 'excluded the majority of women living in both urban and rural areas' (ibid.). This critique has involved – and in part originated from – the development of Dalit feminism, 'Dalit' being the umbrella term used to refer to what were known as 'untouchable' castes (Anandi Collective, 2009). Dalit feminism is seen as bringing the question of how 'caste privileges and oppressions define relationships among women (and men)' to the 'gap in mainstream feminist and social science' (Gopal, 2012, p. 224).

There is one conceptual question which I need to unpack in relation to Meeta's second conceptualisation. This is in relation to the 'women *qua* women' approach, and its elided characteristics, in Meeta's case 'upper-caste' and 'Hindu'. There is a marked difference in conceptual chain work and trace work between Gopal's (2012) expression 'women *qua* women' and Meeta's inclusion of elided characteristics, which determines the potential of the concept of 'women'. In Gopal's narrative, which passes from 'women *qua* women' to 'women' *and* 'caste', a 'gap' in knowledge is

filled by the addition of the caste concept. We could imagine a 'women' chain link that previously had no adjoining links, but that now is attached to 'caste'; we could visualise a palpably absent 'caste' ('gap') moving from the trace of 'women' to full presence in its en/closure. In Meeta's conceptualisation, caste – and religion – were *always already* present in 'women'. Susan (NWSA) expressed the *always already* of what ze[80] referred to as 'general terms' by uncovering the hidden attachments of the 'general term' 'trans': 'white trans people that are temporarily able-bodied and have some sort of class privilege'. In Meeta's 'women' and Susan's 'trans', we can see these unnamed attachments as conceptual links that fell outside the central link, or as semi-present concepts pressing against the en/closure to move from trace to presence. Whereas Gopal's narrative sees 'women' as open to correction and amendment, Meeta constructs 'women', at least in the 'here and now' of her conceptualisation, as always already referring to not just caste and religion, but to a privileged conjoining of caste and religion (as in the unspoken assumptions of privilege in Susan's example). Gender, then, appears in Meeta's conceptualisation as the means of avoiding the automatic assumption of upper-caste and Hindu that resides in 'women'. The implication of this is that gender does not inherently contain a particular positionality in relation to caste, religion, and privilege, but instead opens up discussions of different positionalities (see also Sreenivas, 2015).

In this conceptualisation, then, gender is constructed in opposition to the concept of women; if the concept-ness of 'women' is to elide caste and religion, then what is the concept-ness of gender? Is it that gender makes no pretence to speak for all women, that it resists homogenising and universalising? Importantly, Meeta situates this conceptualisation of gender in the past tense, as having particular relevance 'some time back'; when 'women' was being used particularly to refer to 'the upper-caste Hindu woman', Meeta 'felt [that] "The term gender is much better"'. She then moved on to discuss the current problems with gender, which I go on to analyse after the third gender conceptualisation in this 'set'. As such, the use

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[80] Ze and hir are Susan's preferred pronouns.

of gender to avoid homogenising women is constructed as a conceptualisation that has less relevance in the current moment of Indian feminism, though this is contradicted in more recent literature, such as Gopal's study of the ban on dancers in beer bars in Mumbai (Gopal, 2012; 2013).

The final conceptualisation in the first 'set' constructs 'gender' as a means to avoid limiting discussions of gender-related issues to 'women's issues'. As with Nirja's 'much *more*', and the citations analysed in Chapter 3 from women's studies literature, this conceptualisation invests the concept of gender with spatial (but also temporal) metaphors of opening up, of having more space, and temporal (but also spatial) processes of starting off, of moving on. In this conceptualisation, gender 'opens up to…a much bigger group', gender 'starts [off] thinking', it leads to a '*wider*' 'social horizon'. The prior situation that is altered by this conceptual widening is a 'restricted' consideration of 'just this biological kind of divide', a 'rigid biological category'; with the term '*woman*', 'one gets restricted to just women's issues'. Gender, on the other hand, enables discussions of 'modes of thinking, modes of performing, modes of uh being'. This potential for discussion is translated into concrete terms in Abigail's discussion of 'women's issues' in relation to her role as director of a Women's Center[81] in a US HEI. Unlike Meeta's conceptualisation of gender as separate from women's issues, Abigail connects 'women's issues' and 'gender' in a conceptual chain: 'You wouldn't have women's issues without gender, right?'. In her conceptualisation, she constructs 'women's issues' as a 'sphere' where issues such as 'sexual assault and Title IX[82]' are 'placed'.

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[81] Women's centers are located on many US HEI campuses. Their role, activities and configurations vary according to the individual university. Examples of activities include running campaigns for Women's History Month (Kleinman and Ezzell, 2012), working with/against university administration in matters of sexual harassment (Parker and Freedman, 1999), working in collaboration with women's studies programmes (Byrne, 2000), providing a space for feminist work on campus (Nicolazzo and Harris, 2014). For a bibliography of women's centers literature, see Vlasnik (2014).

[82] 'Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) prohibits discrimination based on sex in education programs and activities in federally funded schools at all levels…All students (as well as other persons) at recipient institutions are protected by Title IX – regardless of their sex, sexual orientation,

Gender is constructed as a 'larger conversation' which 'allows us to [pause] sort of re-examine why one might place such a set of issues [in the 'women's issues' 'sphere']'. By constructing gender as a 'larger' space than 'women's issues', Abigail tries to shift the concept of sexual assault from the restricted 'sphere' of 'women's issues' to a space where sexual assault, for example, can be addressed as not just pertaining to – and in tandem not just the responsibility of – 'women'.

The temporal and spatial characterisation of gender as spacious was common in participants' responses; Jasmyn, for example, imbued the concept with the inherent characteristic of spaciousness (see added emphasis):

> I think the *usefulness* of gender is that *there is that space* to sort of explore both the social process and the multitude of identities and experiences.

Returning to the discussion of the 'use' versus the 'user' of gender, here Jasmyn further nominalises 'use' into 'usefulness', which renders the 'use' quality of gender an inherent quality of the concept. This 'usefulness' is bound up in the conceptualisation of gender as having 'space' for the exploration of 'social process' as well as 'identities and experiences'. In terms of trace work, Jasmyn's conceptualisation sets up gender as having a wide en/closure, or perhaps we could say an expansive and 'easy-access' trace. Akin to this, Nisha's conceptualisation constructs gender as 'a concept…which has that elasticity'; she 'finds that she can extend it a little more, and not extend it a little more'. We could imagine this as the en/closure stretching, or contracting; Nisha refers both to the quality of 'elasticity' and the user's action of 'stretching', thus implying that gender has the inherent characteristic of 'elasticity', but that it is up to the user to make use of the elasticity. In making use of the elasticity, Nisha 'could use it to… bring in many more dimensions…[that] one hadn't imagined earlier'. Because of the flexibility of the en/closure, or the 'easy-access trace',

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gender identity, part- or full-time status, disability, race, or national origin' (US Department of Education, 2015, p. 1, see also Wies, 2015).

gender is set up in Meeta's, Jasmyn's and Nisha's conceptualisations as having the potential to include different and even unforeseen concepts within its en/closure.

This set of three conceptualisations of gender (gender enables conversations around sexuality; gender avoids the elided intersections of 'women'; gender avoids limiting discussions to 'women's issues'), although operating in different ways and in relation to different constellations of concepts, all give the impression that gender is useful and can lead to productive conceptual work. The final two interlinked conceptualisations that Meeta included in her response view gender in a different light, namely the problematic and reductive use of the concept of gender. In Hughes' (2002) explanation of conceptual contestation, she alludes to the fact that different conceptual contestations occur in different contexts where concepts are being used and debated. In Meeta's conceptualisation of gender as problematic, we can discern differentiation between contexts for the conceptual contestation of gender. The intertwined conceptualisations of gender that occur in this final 'set' are (i) the understanding of gender as a 'developmental category', and (ii) the view that the concept of gender *per se* is useful, but that gender in the context of 'gender *studies*' is problematic. Meeta marks this conceptualisation with several temporal signifiers that link together the different contexts. She states that she is 'rethinking [the usefulness of gender], now'. The 'now' that has provoked this 'rethinking' is characterised by the fact that 'gender has also become a very strong developmental category at least in the third world countries'. The term 'developmental category', in conjunction with 'third world countries', indicates the focus on gender equality (as opposed to feminst concerns) in the field of international development studies and in international organisations (Aikman and Unterhalter, 2005; Heward, 1999; Mukhopadhyay, 2007; Unterhalter and North, 2010). Meeta constructs the disciplinary space of 'gender studies' as the academic location – the internal link to the external policy world – where this conceptualisation of gender is contained. This space, which is constructed as in transition in the present moment, is opposed with the 'women's studies departments' which have

been producing 'exemplary [work]' for 'the last 25 [pause] years'. 'Gender studies', instead of steadily producing 'exemplary' work, is seen as

> getting a bit too um [pause] how should I put it, a bit too *policy-oriented* [smile in voice], a bit too uh um restricted in relation to [pause] actually just- uh um just with developmental categories.

Meeta depicts gender studies as shifting towards the development agenda that she sees as closing down the potential of the concept of gender. The two adjectives that Meeta employs to convey this are 'policy-oriented' and 'restricted'. Deciding how to transcribe Meeta's tone for 'policy-oriented' was a 'transcription issue', because she did not utter 'policy-oriented' as if it were a factual description; rather, she seemed to have a smile in her voice. The way in which Meeta uttered 'policy-oriented' seemed to echo the discourses around the closing down or depoliticising of gender, the equivalent of 'gender lite' (Dieltiens et al., 2009; Unterhalter, 2013), which are to be both scorned and feared, though this is clearly my production of the smile.

Although I can see that Meeta is drawing up clear contextual boundaries for the use of this form of gender, I am also obliged to complicate the notion that conceptual contestation is contextually situated. In an article on women's atudies in higher education in India, Pappu (2002, p. 231) draws up a clear dichotomy between '[t]he kind of studies taken up by various NGOs and development-oriented committees of the government', which use the concept of gender, and the 'obverse' conceptual context, i.e. 'women's studies within the higher education system'. In Pappu's dichotomy, we can see a clear contextual boundary between an external policy-oriented context (gender), and an internal higher education context (women's studies). The policy-oriented context, according to Pappu (p. 232), produces 'reports and studies' that 'lack the methodological finesse that would qualify them as pieces of research' and are either 'ignoran[t] of feminist principles' or anti-feminist. The 'gender training programmes' (ibid.) that are conducted in this external context are contrasted with the higher education academic teaching programmes of women's studies.

However the contexts are not in fact so discrete. Meeta, in contrast with Pappu, draws up separate contexts *within* higher education spaces for policy-oriented work (gender studies) and feminist work (women's studies), thus troubling the internal-external divide of the university context.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

In this section, I have analysed a variety of conceptualisations of gender; each conceptualisation conducts different conceptual chain work and trace work. At times 'forcefully and protectively' (Hughes, 2002, p. 11), new concepts are linked together with gender, other concepts are 'pulled apart'. The en/closure of gender, the 'area' or 'era' of gender's meaning is moved, 'stretched', and concepts are pulled into or pushed out of the en/closure into the trace of gender. Each conceptualisation of gender seeks to place gender so that it can be used to analyse – and so shape the understanding of different lives and forms of existence; at times, gender is constructed as *useful*, in other instances it appears *unusable*. The conceptualisations have vacillated between the *user* and the *use* of gender – gender is at times invested with inherent qualities and at other times demonstrably shifting in the hands of its users. In the last example of Meeta's conceptualisations, I sought to show how gender can be construed as *contextually* contested, as understood in different ways according to different contexts. However I also indicated that these contexts are not discrete, that conceptualisations collide and overlap in different contexts.

Each of the conceptualisations that I have analysed in this chapter was uttered in relation to each participant's context, in particular their research context, as a result of my interview question. As such, the conceptualisation context was relatively bounded (though of course addressed to me and shaped by whichever contextual factors I was seen as representing). But what happens to conceptual contestation when gender travels? How does conceptual literacy cope with mobility? I have already alluded to instances where my own concept of gender shifted during the course of this study, in relation to MOC and the idea of 'women' as eliding 'upper-caste' and 'Hindu' as opposed to/as well as 'white' and 'middle-

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class'. In the next chapter, I focus my analysis more directly on the locus of conceptual contestation and the processes by which conceptual shifts can happen (or not happen).

Chapter 6
Conceptual performativity:
'surrounding' gender with 'names addressed from elsewhere'

'Surrounding'

> [T]he vulnerability to being named constitutes a constant condition
> of the speaking subject.
> And what if one were to compile all the names that one has ever
> been called?
> Would they not present a quandary for identity?
> Would some of them cancel the effect of others?
> Would one find oneself fundamentally dependent upon a
> competing array of names to derive a sense of oneself?
> Would one find oneself alienated in language, finding oneself, as it
> were, in the names addressed from elsewhere?
> (Butler, 1997, p. 30, line breaks inserted)

I begin this chapter with a quotation from Butler's (1997) work on *Excitable speech* because, although the passage directly addresses the vulnerability to being named of the *speaking subject*, I also view this set of questions as relevant to the vulnerability of the *concept of gender* to being named and made to mean in different ways. In the discussion so far of the 'names' that gender has been called, a certain 'quandary' over the 'identity' of gender has become evident. In the examples that I have given so far in the thesis, gender has at times been invested with – or defined in use as having – positive and creative potential; at other times, gender has been named as – or used as – restrictive and lacking in its politics and potential. Could we say that these different occurrences of naming 'cancel the effect' of each other? I have expressed some aspects of this 'quandary' in terms of the tensions between gender understood as having inherent meaning, and gender understood as made to mean through its uses; in Chapter 3, I problematised the dichotomy between these two positions. I postulated that perhaps the nearest gender gets to having an inherent meaning is that it destabilises its use – and its user. We could align this theorisation of gender with the notion that a 'sense of [gender's] self' is 'fundamentally dependent

upon a competing array of names' that gender is called. Gender is nothing but the names that it is called, but in being called names, gender *is* (and so destabilises what it means to 'be', to have inherent meaning). Up to this point, the sequence of questions represents the theoretical manoeuvres that I have set out in previous chapters; it is in the last question that I locate the central focus of this chapter: 'Would one find oneself alienated in language, finding oneself…in the names addressed from elsewhere?'.

This chapter takes a step along from 'critical concept' on the deconstructive journey: it is a theorisation and a textual performance of 'surrounding'. I have established the 'critical concept' of gender, but I cannot become too comfortable with it. To proceed with the deconstruction of the concept of gender, I must now 'surround' the 'critical concept'. 'Surrounding' therefore forms the second layer of analysis in the four-part cumulative theorisation of 'eventful gender'. As I explained in Chapter 3 (pp. 88-90), this involves 'surrounding' from *within* the 'en/closure'; I have to 'inhabit' the structure of the concept '*in a certain way*'. This involves an 'oblique' and perilous' motion of climbing the boundary of the 'en/closure', running the 'constant risk' of 'falling back on this side of that which is being deconstructed'. This chapter, in order to 'surround' gender from *within*, occupies a liminal location at the edge of the en/closure. This location is the place (that is no place) where trace becomes presence, where ideas cross over into the en/closure and so become part of the concept of gender. The particular direction of this chapter is to analyse the conceptual shifts that occur when an aspect of gender is simultaneously 'alienated' *and* 'found', 'in the names addressed from elsewhere'.

This chapter takes the situated acts of conceptualisation that I analysed in Chapter 5 and sets them in motion through 'names addressed from elsewhere'. The act of 'setting in motion' is produced by three different – but interlinked – forms of 'surrounding'. The first section of the chapter therefore contains three separate 'introductions' (none of which are therefore introductions *sensu stricto*); each 'introduction' sets out the terms of its 'surrounding' of the 'critical concept' of gender. The first 'introduction' introduces the theorisation of conceptual performativity,

which is developed further in the later sections of the chapter. The second 'introduction' discusses the underpinnings of the autoethnographic elements of the chapter. The third 'introduction' introduces the particular conceptual contestation around which this chapter revolves: namely, the concept of 'intersectionality', and its relationship with 'gender'. This relationship is used to illustrate and tussle with the theorisation of conceptual performativity in later sections; shifts in my understanding of this relationship that have occurred through exchanges with research participants and in seminars and conference sessions form the basis for the autoethnographic material.

Theoretical 'surrounding': conceptual performativity in 'names addressed from elsewhere'

While Chapter 5 explored the ways in which participants established what the concept of gender was or meant, this chapter begins to try to account for *how* gender comes to mean what it means. I conceive of this theoretical manoeuvre as a form of 'surrounding' because, rather than focusing on the concept of gender, on what forms the concept-ness of gender, I now centre my analysis on the conceptual chains or the limit of en/closure which *surrounds* gender. I am particularly interested in the ways in which gender comes to be analysed in new forms because of the claims made about what gender is, especially when these conceptualisations travel from the context in which they were enacted or intended. I use conceptual performativity to account for how concepts are made to mean what they mean through 'names addressed from elsewhere'.

To return to the example of 'masculine-of-center' and Shori's (NWSA participant) conceptual chain work around linking or pulling apart gender and sexuality, this is an example where my concept of gender received a new name 'from elsewhere' during the course of the study. Although my concept of gender was already equipped with conceptual chains leading through butch, soft and hard butch, androgyny and queer, 'masculine-of-center' named something which was hitherto not named; it made a leap from Shori's contextualised conceptualisation of gender to my own concept of gender. The metaphor of 'leaping' provokes a re-

engagement with the theorisation of conceptual chains and traces, which both indicate a sense of 'always already there'. Was masculine-of-center always already there, waiting in the wings to be linked to my concept of gender, lurking just outside the en/closure? Or was it necessary for my concept of gender to encounter Shori's conceptualisation in order for gender to include or link with masculine-of-center? This question represents one of the key tasks of this chapter: to theorise conceptual shifts that seem to come from 'elsewhere', in my case through exposure to new conceptualisations in my experiences of seminars and conferences, and interviews with delegates from the 'official fieldwork' conferences. In this chapter, seminars and conferences are represented as sites where conceptual performativity is enacted.

Importantly, while names from 'elsewhere' may lead to 'alienation', it may be in that very 'alienation' that the subject 'finds itself' – or finds others' 'selves'. Finding a new name for gender is accompanied by what du Bois (1983, p. 108), in her essay on feminist knowledge, refers to as 'the power of naming':

> naming defines the quality and value of that which is named – and
> it also denies reality and value to that which is never named, never
> uttered. That which has no name, that for which we have no words
> or concepts, is rendered mute and invisible.

Acquiring a new name for gender may bring the name's referent out of 'mute[ness] and invisib[ility]'; this shift can be expressed as the lived effect of trace work, where the 'never named, never uttered' is waiting to be named and uttered and thus recognised as a 'that' which *does* have a name or words or concepts. An example of a name 'from elsewhere' that has led to the recognition of a subject position is the term 'MSM' or 'men who have sex with men'. 'MSM' is a means of naming a sexual practice without aligning this practice with the (potentially Western-centric) associations of identity and political affiliation of 'gay' or 'homosexual' (Boellstorff, 2011); the term is used in health research in relation to sexual behaviour and practices in societies in the 'Global South', thus circumventing the necessity of inscribing same-sex sexual activity in the (at times) contextually

inappropriate discourses of identity and politics (Allman et al., 2007; Okall et al., 2014; Oldenburg et al., 2015). The term is also employed internationally in health research as a means of designating a sexual practice which may be accompanied by particular health risks, such as hepatitis or HIV/AIDS (Lorenc et al., 2011; Vet, de Wit and Das, 2011); in this usage the term can include men who also identify as gay or homosexual – MSM specifically then designates, for example, gay men who are sexually active with other men. However MSM has also come to act as a marker of identity, a subject position adopted by those who identify as MSM but deliberately not homosexual (even at times homophobic), as in Sonnekus' (2013) analysis of Afrikaner MSM identity in South Africa. Boellstorf's (2011, p. 287) statement that the term MSM provided 'confirmation of a selfhood felt to have already been there' clearly resonates with the du Bois quotation above: the term MSM gave a name and thus a recognisable subject position to a practice which was not aligned with any existing signifiers and identifications.

I have outlined this example because it is a clear instance where a 'name[] addressed from elsewhere' (ie the 'elsewhere' of international health research discourse) has provided a means for MSM to be identified (and to identify themselves) without ascribing to them(selves) the identity position or political leanings of 'gay' and 'homosexual'. Including the term MSM in my concept of gender is a means of naming 'that which [was] never named', and thus simultaneously a means of recognising the existence of MSM subjecthood. We might conceive of MSM as having been waiting in the wings (the trace) of gender and sexuality to name that which was waiting for a name. But in this case, *how* do terms such as MSM 'leap' into gender or appear out of the trace? This question, which is another angle on the overarching question of how gender comes to mean what it means, represents the main theoretical focus of this chapter.

Methodological 'surrounding': autoethnography
I suggested in Chapter 5 that I was instigating an artificial separation of the act of conceptualising from the speaker and context of conceptualisation, in order to focus in on the act of conceptualisation, but

that I would re-introduce these layers in subsequent chapters. In this chapter, I (re-)introduce the 'speaking subject' of conceptualisation as inextricably linked with the processes of conceptual contestation, particularly in the embodied site of knowledge production that is the conference or seminar room. The inextricable link between conceptualisation and 'speaking subject' is encapsulated in the last of Butler's questions as quoted above; the 'speaking subject' whose concept of gender shifts to encompass new or different conceptual understandings of gender is as a result able to conceptualise their own and others' gendered identities and practices differently. I focus on shifts that have taken place over the course of my doctoral trajectory, in particular during seminars, conferences and in interviews with participants. I particularly focus on conceptual performatives that I have experienced in the more formal, timetabled aspects of conferences and seminars, as opposed to, for example, informal discussions over coffee or in transit. In this chapter, I am interested in the formal aspects of conferences and seminars, in which the designated room acts as an arena for deliberate acts of conceptualisation. I approach the more social and informal aspects of conferences in the next and following chapter. I interpret autoethnographic analysis as a means of 'surrounding' my concept of gender: I try to piece together the conceptual shifts which have occurred from having physically travelled around the concept of gender, by seeking out spaces where gender was being theorised in different locations. In the conceptual shifts that I analyse in more detail in the following parts of the chapter, I 'surround' my concept of gender by textually travelling around the en/closure of my concept of gender – and where it meets intersectionality – to chart how the en/closure has been pushed and pulled by conceptual performativity and 'names addressed from elsewhere'.

In this chapter I explicitly engage with the autoethnographic elements of my research project, and attempting to craft a textual strategy to recount the shifts that have occurred in my conceptualisation of gender through engaging in research at conferences and with conference delegates. Although I have already produced autoethnographic narratives earlier in the thesis, they appeared to 'write themselves in'. Now that I have come to

confront the necessity of justifying an approach for the textual representation of autoethnographic material, I have come up against perhaps the greatest challenge that autoethnographic research faces: the desire to produce what Pereira (2011; 2012) refers to as 'proper knowledge'.

I can represent this challenge without needing to refer to the plethora of publications arguing for the recognition of autoethnography as serious research – and the rejection of different forms of autoethnography as less serious – just by including two recent examples from my experience that demonstrate negotiations of the 'epistemic status' of autoethnography. Pereira (2012, p. 285) defines 'epistemic status' as 'refer[ring] to the degree to which, and conditions in which, a knowledge claim, or body of claims, is recognised as fulfilling the requisite criteria to be considered credible and relevant knowledge'; in Pereira's ethnographic work epistemic status is shown to be established in the micro-conditions and encounters of academic work and knowledge production. In this vein, I here include two instances of the negotiation of the epistemic status of autoethnographic research:

> *No data collection per se is planned* at the ASHE [Association for the Study of Higher Education] conference in the USA *apart from* auto-ethnographic research…of the author's own network developing and knowledge building as an international delegate. Would the [grant awarding body] be happy to fund this conference attendance?
> (Excerpt of feedback on my grant application for a Newer Researchers Award from an academic association, received by email 16 June 2015, emphasis added).

> Emily: Hi sunshine. Have you read any particularly good articles on autoethnography? If so please could you share? Am finding that there's quite a lot of stuff out there that uses the term as an excuse to write the academic article version of a selfie, without any discussion of what it means or why we might do it! […].
> Jamie: Hello! Yes - I went through quite an autoethnography phase, and then came to a similar position. A lot of it isn't

great quality in my opinion […]. But it is also the kind of
thing that when it is good, I find it is GOOD […].
(Facebook message exchange with Jamie Burford, 25 July 2015).

In the first excerpt, I have included feedback from a grant proposal that I wrote which included autoethnographic research of my own experiences as an international conference delegate. The reviewer has positioned autoethnographic research as *not proper enough* data collection to warrant funding for an international research trip; the phrasing of the feedback appears ambiguous as to whether autoethnographic research counts as 'data collection per se'. In the second excerpt, we can see evidence of what Pereira (2012) refers to as 'epistemic splitting', where some aspects of (in this case) autoethnographic research are counted as 'proper knowledge', and others are rejected from this epistemic status. In our exchange, both Jamie and I 'split' autoethnographic work between, in my case, 'the academic article version of a selfie' and 'good articles', and in Jamie's case '[not] great quality' and 'GOOD'.

The outright dismissal of autoethnographic research from some quarters and the epistemic splitting within the field of autoethnography in which I have participated have resulted in a great deal of discomfort with my own research. On the one hand, I know that putting myself through the research process as a participant as well as a researcher has led to some of my richest and most challenging thinking. On the other hand, I am frequently tempted to reject either all or some aspects of (my) autoethnographic research as 'solipsism or a confessional' (Bullough and Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15), i.e. not 'proper knowledge'. I thought that I had found an answer in Anderson's (2006) argument for 'analytic' as opposed to 'evocative' autoethnography (see also Atkinson, 2006). Upon reading Anderson's article, I was obliged to recognise my frustration with the 'self-absorbed digression' (p. 385) that for Anderson characterises 'evocative ethnography'. For as I have read examples of 'evocative ethnography', such as the much-cited article by Spry (2001), 'Performing autoethnography', I have felt as though I must be 'doing something wrong' as a reader. Spry (p. 709) states that she finds the 'emotional texturing of theory' in her poetic

autoethnographic texts 'far more engaging' than her more traditional academic analysis, but I have experienced intense irritation when reading the more experimental texts. I have found these texts, though at times fascinating, as in Forber-Pratt's (2015) collage of materials and exchanges at her university regarding ethical approval of her autoethnographic research project, cumbersome and tiring to read. As Pathak (2010, p. 5) has found, I have also at times 'felt immeasurably let down' by texts that claim the label 'autoethnography'. I therefore briefly found solace in the idea of 'analytic autoethnography' which, in Anderson's (2006, p. 385) words, 'constrain[s] [researchers] from self-absorption by the ethnographic imperative of dialogic engagement with others in the social worlds they seek to understand'.

However as I have engaged further with negotiations of the epistemic status of autoethnography, I have, along with Burnier (2006) and Denzin (2006), recognised the dangers of the epistemic splitting of autoethnography into 'evocative' and 'analytic' types. Reading Delamont's (2009) comparison of different autoethnographic excerpts from her research project on capoeira teachers highlighted my unease with this split: she includes one excerpt that is based on an interaction with a capoeira teacher, and another where she has written in her journal that she is worried about neglecting her partner and leaving him alone at the weekend to do all the housework. She declares that the latter incident, which can be aligned with evocative autoethnography, is 'intellectually lazy' because information about her partner is 'academically uninteresting' (p. 60). In a financially-grounded epistemic negotiation that is akin to the feedback for the funding proposal that I included above, Delamont (ibid.) states that 'it [cannot] be argued that our salaries should be spent on writing about each other'. By contrast, the narrative about the interaction with the capoeira teacher, which can be aligned with analytic autoethnography, is, in Delamont's terms, useful to include and analyse. The hyperbolic terms in which this demarcation is made between appropriate and inappropriate, relevant and irrelevant, has led me to question my own (brief) allegiance to analytic autoethnography. I have encountered a number of autoethnographic texts that throw this distinction into disarray because of the impossibility of

distinguishing between what might count as relevant or irrelevant, appropriate or inappropriate thoughts and feelings. I have been particularly struck by autoethnographies of race and racialisation in conjunction with gender (eg. Gatson, 2003; Mawhinney and Petchauer, 2013; McClellan, 2012; Miller, 2008). McClellan (2012), for example, narrates an experience where she gave her business card to an academic and turned to see him throwing it in the rubbish bin. This moment is narrated and unpicked in McClellan's analysis to tease out the complex tangles of her embodied and recognisable identity and the topic of her research. She views the 'emotional recall' and narration of this incident as integral to understanding how leadership identity is shaped in academia (p. 96). In another example, Miller (2008), who writes from the perspective of an African-American academic who was raised in a White family, constructs a dual narrative of moments during his childhood when he realised he was Black and moments during his career when he realised he was being treated as a Black academic. Miller (p. 350) states that he has tried to provide the reader with 'an intimate view of how [he] arrived at [his] own constructions'; in view of Delamont's (2009) searing critique of autoethnographic accounts that focus on feelings and the personal life of the researcher, how could – or should – accessing this 'intimate view' of the author be constructed as 'proper knowledge'?

Given my attention to the different ways in which the epistemic status of autoethnography is constructed, I cannot make an argument here for analytic or evocative autoethnography that escapes my own watchful gaze. Instead, I have designed this chapter to unfold as an autoethnographic grappling with the struggles that I have laid out here. While I aspire to produce 'vulnerable texts', for example, I am not sure that I want to 'make you cry' (Denzin, 2006, p. 421). While I like the idea that '[a]utoethnography writes a world in a state of flux and movement' (Jones, 2005, p. 764), I am not sure I want to make your head spin with the fragmented textual presentation that Jones uses to represent the 'flux and movement'. While I have found relief in Anderson's (2006) unplayful account of analytic autoethnography, I have also found relief in Ellis and Bochner's (2006) reply to what they term Anderson's 'aloof autoethnography' (p. 436), in which they intertwine their experiences of

watching the televised devastation of hurricane Katrina in New Orleans with their attempts to construct a non-combative engagement with Anderson's piece. Because of these tensions, I have decided not to settle into one fixed form of autoethnography in this chapter; instead I develop the textual performance over the course of the different analyses. In the following parts of the chapter, which can be read as an autoethnographic theorisation of conceptual performativity in motion, I embed autoethnographic reflections on the development of my conceptualisation of gender in relation to intersectionality. In the chapter's conclusion I return to the three forms of 'surrounding' and my engagement with autoethnographic textual production in order to evaluate the epistemic status that I claim for my version of autoethnographic research.

Conceptual 'surrounding': gender and intersectionality

It was with some trepidation that I elected to engage with the concept of intersectionality as a form of conceptual 'surrounding' of gender. Because discussions of intersectionality arose no matter where I went in my doctoral travels, at conferences, seminars and classes in the UK and internationally, I felt some obligation to engage with the concept. However I cannot help but be aware of the controversies surrounding the term, its usage and its legacy (Ali et al., 2010; Bilge, 2013; Carbado, 2013; Carbado et al., 2013; Lewis, 2009; 2013; Lutz, Herrera Vivar and Supik, 2011b; Lykke, 2010; Nash, 2008; Phoenix and Pattynama, 2006), not to mention the enormous 'explosion' (Ringrose, 2007, p. 264) of literature pertaining to the development of intersectional analyses which spans decades and continues to emerge. On several occasions, I have almost abandoned my attempt to engage with the conceptual contestations surrounding the relationship between intersectionality and gender. It is only because of these contestations, and my discomfort within them, that I have finally decided to choose my conceptual journey through intersectionality as the conceptual-empirical ground for this chapter. Intersectionality and the ways that it interacts with gender certainly provide a means of inhabiting the concept of gender 'obliquely' and 'perilously'; I have continually 'fallen back within' a fixed and present concept of gender

in trying to understand how the concept-ness of intersectionality is being constructed. Intersectionality presents a real challenge for the concept of gender: it 'surrounds' gender as an over-arching concept which comes to contain gender and a number of other concepts. Working out where gender stands and how it is manifested within intersectionality is particularly challenging because of the contestations that push and pull at the conceptual formation of intersectionality, and of gender within intersectionality.

I have not begun my discussion of intersectionality in the way that I have begun my engagement with other terms that I have introduced into this thesis so far, such as MOC and MSM, with statements about origins and proper names signifying a conceptual lineage. This is a deliberate strategy, because these statements of origin and proper names are all caught up in the conceptual contestation surrounding intersectionality. In resisting the discourse of origins in the first instance, I am trying to avoid laying down an authoritative summary of intersectionality against which my subsequent analyses are pitched. Bilge (2013, p. 410, emphasis added), for example, refers to the 'widespread *mis*representation…, *dis*placement, and *dis*articulation' of intersectionality from its original formulation. Each of these nouns includes a prefix that asserts a correct state of 'representation', 'placement' and 'articulation' from which intersectionality is deviating; I wish to avoid claims to one fundamental notion of intersectionality. Furthermore, the way in which the lineage of intersectionality is constructed is key in establishing my use of intersectionality to conceptualise gender in the 'names addressed from elsewhere' in which it has been framed in conference presentations, seminars and interviews. Introducing intersectionality as belonging 'here-and-now' would detract from the prominence of its 'elsewhere-ness' in my understanding of the concept.

Commentary on intersectionality is often prefaced with a collection of textual markers, an example of which is the first sentence of an article by Carbado (2013, p. 811):

> In 1989 Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw published 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics'.

The textual markers signal the 'coining' of the term intersectionality and locate it in the year of 1989, under the name of Kimberlé Crenshaw, and with the title of an academic publication. Other markers may include Crenshaw's position as an academic working in the field of Law studies, her national context of the United States, and her associations with Black feminism. The link between Crenshaw and 'intersectionality' is vividly presented in the intersectionality chapter of Smith's (2013) *Women's Studies: the Basics*: in a section entitled 'Race and the birth of intersectionality' (pp. 47-50), Crenshaw seems to be constructed as the birth mother of the concept (see also Lutz, Herrera Vivar and Supik, 2011a). In recognition of this tendency, Lykke (2010, p. 68) has created a 'genealogy' of intersectionality which does not 'tell[] the history of knowledge production as some kind of origins story, starting in the past and running forward'; instead she sets out to 'use the here-and-now as a lens and trace different theoretical strands'. However the genealogical account of intersectionality begins with Lykke establishing a 'hub' for the genealogy; this 'hub' is 'the concept of intersectionality as it was explicitly introduced into feminist theorizing by black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s' (ibid.). I cannot help but question the distinction between an 'origins story' and a 'hub', since Lykke's 'hub' is explicitly attached to the earliest usage of the concept.

The attribution of intersectionality to the proper name 'Crenshaw' is not however undisputed. Accounts of intersectionality frequently preface the 'Crenshaw' marker with versions of what we

might call proto-intersectionality; this strategy combats what Hemmings (2011, p. 48) refers to as the marking of 'the 1990s and onwards' as 'the intersectional decade(s)' and the 'erasure or tokenization' of previous intersectional thinking that accompanies this temporal marker. In an article on using intersectionality in activism, the Feminist Fightback collective (2015) state that the term intersectionality named what had already been happening in 1970s Black feminism in the US. In the introduction to their special issue of the *European Journal of Women's Studies*, Phoenix and Pattynama (2006, p. 187) note that 'long before' Crenshaw's coining, 'the concept it denotes had been employed in feminist work'; in their introduction to a special issue of *Cahiers du CEDREF*[83], Falquet and Kian (2015) link the origins of intersectional analysis back to 19th Century struggles around civil rights in the US. Conversely, as noted by Bilge (2013, p. 414), some accounts of intersectionality remove its origins from a specific place and time (that of 'Black thought' in the US) by stating that '"it was in the air"'.

Closely enmeshed with the attribution of intersectionality to Crenshaw is the meaning of the concept, or its concept-ness, and the degree to which Crenshaw's work on intersectionality should form the basis of an intersectional approach. In many accounts, race, class and gender are the three key intersections; claiming this combination – and only this combination – is located in what Lykke (2010) might call the Crenshaw 'origins story'. The aforementioned chapter on intersectionality in Smith's (2013) *Women's Studies: the Basics* is entitled 'Intersectionality and difference: race, class and gender' (pp. 41-59); Andersen (2005, p. 443) names 'the intersectionality of gender, race, and class' as a 'major theme in contemporary feminist scholarship'; she goes on to discuss sexuality as a separate issue which should not just be added on to this trio. In the journal article write-up of a roundtable on 'Intersectionality, Black British feminism

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[83] *Cahiers du CEDREF* – le Centre d'enseignement, de documentation et de recherches pour les études féministes, Université Paris 7.

and resistance in education' (Ali et al., 2010, p. 657), a question from an audience member is included, in which they ask for the panel's opinion on 'the way intersectionality is invoked not necessarily to include race, class and gender, but sometimes to look at disability and class, or gender and nationality'. The way in which the question is formulated posits 'race, class and gender' as the fundamental trio to analyse. This question regarding the use of intersectionality is summed up in response by Ann Phoenix as the 'when do you stop?' debate (ibid.), otherwise known as the '"et cetera" problem' of 'the number of categories' (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013, p. 787, see Butler, 1999). In addition to the problem of how many 'things' are analysed, there is also the issue of how we understand the idea of 'things working together'. Are race, gender and class each 'autonomous' categories which are combined 'additive[ly]' (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013, p. 787)? Or are they 'interactive' and 'mutually constituting' (ibid.)? Does intersectionality involve analysing 'privileged' or 'subordinate' subjects (ibid.)? These issues and questions form the basis of the questions that I wish to ask of intersectionality in this chapter. However, in relation to the 'perilous' 'surrounding' motion that is involved in analysing intersectionality and gender, these questions can become unmoored when intersectionality is seen as 'a name addressed from elsewhere', and furthermore when it is 'a name addressed from elsewhere' that is being addressed from yet another 'elsewhere'.

For, in order to address these questions and issues, I draw on the negotiations and contestations surrounding intersectionality and gender that have emerged as 'names addressed from elsewhere' during my doctoral research at conferences and seminars. In so doing, I construct a deliberately fragmented and multi-faceted conceptualisation of intersectionality, which I conceive of as 'intersectionality-in-use'. In this sense I am adopting the 'work-in-progress' approach to intersectionality, as advocated by Carbado, et al. (2013, p. 304) and Crenshaw (2011, p. 233). They suggest that 'it makes little sense to frame the concept as a contained entity';

intersectionality is not, they argue, 'its own agent replete with specific interests and tasks' (ibid.). Instead of arguing for the concept-ness of intersectionality, they propose that we 'assess what intersectionality does as a starting point for thinking about what else the framework might be mobilized to do' (ibid.). It is with this proposal in mind that I explore the conceptual contestations around gender and intersectionality that have arisen during my doctoral research: I aim to surround intersectionality even as uses of the concept surround gender with intersectionality.

Conceptual performativity and 'names addressed from elsewhere'

In Chapter 5, I referred to a seminar that I attended on the 'black box of gender' (Harris, 2015), and to the questions that I asked at this seminar. The first of these questions asked what was in the black box of gender; the second question engaged in conceptual chain work that brought the conceptual link of intersectionality into the presenter's analysis of gender. I wanted to ask this question because it seemed to me that the seminar had omitted the important conceptual work that is represented by 'intersectionality'. I also wanted to ask the question because, by the stage of my doctoral trajectory that I had reached when I attended the seminar, it was impossible for me *not* to think of gender in this way. I wanted to ask the presenter if, in her analysis, gender was inherently intersectional, if the gender norms that she was discussing were always already intersectional: were the 'norms' listed given in relation to difference within the group, i.e. micro-intersections, or in relation to the 'other' (known or imagined) external intersections to the community in question? I felt that where there were discernible norms, there must be deviations from these norms, and that therefore the norms must inherently comprise markers of difference; I wanted to use the concept of 'intersectionality' to take the discussion in that direction.

Although at the time I felt that Harris had *omitted* what was inherent to gender, I now realise that I was *claiming* an inherent meaning for gender

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during the questions section of the seminar. I had felt the heavy presence of intersectionality in the trace of Harris' concept of gender, and wanted to bring it over into the en/closure, into the room. But this manoeuvre of bringing intersectionality over into the en/closure may have involved the concept having to make the 'leap' from my conceptualisation to hers, as with MOC and Shori's conceptualisation of gender and sexuality 'leaping' into my concept of gender. And there is no guarantee that the concept would manage the 'leap': would it be 'names from elsewhere' that were too 'alienating' to make it into the en/closure? In my intersectionality question, I read evidence of two performative processes: (i) intersectionality had become part of my concept of gender, (ii) I was attempting to use question time to performatively move intersectionality into the en/closure of the concept of gender being discussed. I now turn to a theorisation of conceptual performativity in order to explain these two statements. The theorisation that I present is divided into two stages: conceptual performativity, followed by the addition of citationality to conceptual performativity. Throughout the theorisation I interweave autoethnographic analysis with the theoretical explanation in order to reflect my embodied presence in the theoretical development of this chapter: it is through sitting in different rooms and tuning into different conversations that shifts have occurred in my understanding of intersectionality. I have tried to use performativity to understand these shifts, and in tandem my experiences of conceptual shifts have led me to develop my understanding of performativity.

In asking the question about intersectionality, then, I was attempting to move the differed/deferred concept of intersectionality over the border demarcating the en/closure of gender. Otherwise put, I was arguing that intersectionality was anyway always already 'there' in gender's trace, and that it could be brought into – instead of excluded from – the concept of gender. If it were possible in linking gender and intersectionality to achieve this transfer from conceptual chain to concept, from trace to presence, then this linking would be a performative act. Now in bringing the concept of 'performativity' into the fray, I need to consider what conceptual work I want it to do, and which theorisation or theorisations I want to make use of.

I am conscious that the performative is (un)fortunately not a concept which can be explained in isolation from conceptual contestation and indeed conceptual performativity. Because stating 'performativity is…' is itself a performative act of conceptualistion, the two can only be theorised here as intertwined and inseparably linked. Rather than starting with 'performativity is…', and moving on to 'conceptual performativity is…', I therefore offer an account of performativity that is always already engaged in its own conceptual contestation and negotiation.

If I were to explain performativity by going to its 'origins' in the '1950s' (Culler, 1997, p. 94), I would be referencing the 'British' (ibid.), 'Oxford' (Hood-Williams and Cealey Harrison, 1998, p. 77), 'linguistic philosopher' (ibid.) J. L. Austin, and his book *How to Do Things with Words*. I would, as in the case of the origins of intersectionality discussed earlier in the chapter, be going to a textual location to access a definition of concept that was developed in a very particular academic setting and disciplinary area. Uses of the concept of performativity often cite Austin as the origin for the concept, as in the adjectival formulation 'Austinian speech act theory' (Prosser, 2013, p. 37). In consulting the section of *How to Do Things with Words* (Austin, 2004) that has been reprinted in *Literary Theory: an Anthology* (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004), I became aware that, if direct quotations are included in explanations of performativity, they are often taken from the few 'famous' pages of *How to Do Things with Words* which are reproduced in this anthology. To explain performativity, these quotations might (and often do) act as the source:

> [I]t seems clear that to utter the sentence [eg 'I do' in a marriage ceremony] (in, of course, the appropriate circumstances) is not to *describe* my doing …: it is to do it' (Austin, 2004, p. 163, emphasis in original).

> What are we to call a sentence or an utterance of this type? I propose to call it a *performative sentence* or a performative utterance, or, for short, a 'performative' (ibid., emphasis in original).

What I have provided here is the common denominator of understandings of the performative – the idea that in making a particular statement, an action may be achieved (eg. the realisation of a marriage). I could use this idea to claim that, in asking a question in which intersectionality was portrayed as inherently linked to gender, I was able to bring gender to include intersectionality in its meaning. This explanation would be supported by Austin's own performative conceptualisation of peformativity, in the second quotation given above: in the utterance 'I propose to call it a performative sentence' (ibid., p. 163, emphasis in 'original'), the naming of performativity is achieved.

If we take my question in this light, it would be possible to link intersectionality and gender just by *saying* that they are linked. The conferences and seminars that I have attended during my doctoral research, and the interviews and exchanges with participants from the three 'official fieldwork' conferences, have been rich sites of conceptual performativity. Speakers, audience members and interview participants have repeatedly *said* how gender and intersectionality are linked. Indeed the fragmented and multi-faceted way in which I understand the relationship between intersectionality and gender are attributable to the intersectional analyses and the claims about intersectionality that presentations and questions included, and that participants produced during the interviews and in our other exchanges.

In many of our interviews and exchanges, participants performatively linked the concepts of gender and intersectionality. Indeed participants were implicitly or at times explicitly pushing against my gender focus by insisting on the impossibility of analysing gender on its own, or 'just gender', as Rosie (FWSA) and Maya (IAWS) expressed it. From my perspective, I thought I was exploring what, for my participants, was involved in the concept of gender, and so was waiting to see what was brought to gender by the participants. I did not want to deliberately ask about intersectionality, just as I did not want to layer my initial questions with other concepts such as queer or feminism, but when discussions of intersectionality arose I asked further questions. However, many

participants seemed to be suggesting that I should be studying intersectionality *rather than* gender, or at the very least should be asking how gender intersects with other characteristics. In these instances, the concept of gender that I appeared to be advocating was equivalent to the concept of gender that Harris seemed to me to be setting out in her seminar: it was intersectionality-less. Therefore the ways in which participants brought intersectionality into contact with gender in the interviews mirrors what I was trying to do in my question to Harris.

As I mentioned in Chapter 4, Anne, an NWSA participant who had agreed to take part in the study, emailed me about the information on the study (Appendix 1) that I had sent her. This email provides an illustration of the performative inclusion of intersectionality in my study. She wrote to me as follows:

> I didn't see anything [in the information on the study] about the racial politics of the US, which is central in shaping the way that US academics think about gender… In the US it is de rig[u]eur that gender is always also informed by race, and other intersecting aspects of one's identity (email, 22 October 2013).

Anne uses 'central' and 'de rigueur' in her email to performatively bring intersectional analyses into the frame of my study. The spatial metaphor of centrality locates race in the middle of gender, so that it is not a conceptual link or a concept lurking at the en/closure of gender, but rather it occupies a central zone of the concept of gender. In this conceptual negotiation, it is not that gender and intersectionality are being linked, but rather that the concept of gender is depicted as 'always also' subsumed into the concept of intersectionality as a sub-concept alongside 'race, and other intersecting aspects'. Anne's comments thus performatively shift the conceptual arrangement of my study from 'just gender' to 'intersectionality, including gender'. Moreover, Anne's performative insertion of race into the concept of gender that I would be researching at the NWSA conference contributed to the way in which I participated in the conference.

On Friday morning of NWSA, I attended a round table on teaching queer studies in higher education classrooms[84]. The panel covered a wide range of issues, including curriculum and embodiment, and I basked in the rare chance to listen to a panel entirely devoted to a topic of particular interest to me. However, as I listened, I experienced a strange sensation. The sensation itself was not strange; I have already discussed the same sensation in Chapter 2 with regards to wanting to ask 'the gender question' at a conference. The strangeness came from the fact that the sensation was not linked to either of the concepts that I normally find myself 'bringing up' (Henderson, 2014a), gender (in non-gender spaces) or sexuality (in gender spaces), for I was in a session at a women's studies conference where queer was being discussed. Instead, the sensation came from a realisation of the whiteness of the panel and the audience, and the fact that it was not being acknowledged. I became increasingly incensed about this silence during the panel. I began to think about the conference, which had such a strong focus on race and on the knowledge production and leadership of academics of color, and I wondered if, instead of conversations on race and presenters and delegates of color being spread across the conference rooms, the conference was in fact a constellation of rooms, in some of which people of color would congregate, and in others White people would gather. Although this was not true of many of the panels I attended, I realised that there was only one visibly identifiable person of color in this well-attended session. During question time, my English accent rang out across the room to address this silence. The stark contrast of my accent against previous comments and discussions surprised me, as the concentrated spells of listening to US accents had slid my inner voice into a US accent. The question I asked further surprised me: I pointed out that it was 'pretty white' in the room, and asked to what extent teachers of queer studies were using their whiteness and middle-classness to legitimise the acceptability of queerness in their classrooms. The first reaction was to pass off my comment as a 'good point' and move on. My voice rang out again, 'But what are you going to say about it?'. Some members of the panel began to talk about using

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[84] 'At the corner of theory and praxis: teaching queer studies at the college level', convened by Deborah T. Meem, 8 November 2013, NWSA Annual Conference, Cincinnati, US.

intersectional texts and materials in their classrooms. I was even further surprised to hear myself *interrupting* them to say that even if they were choosing intersectional curricular materials, this meant that they were 'setting the text' and therefore acting as 'the mouthpiece for intersectional queer'. The two further replies from members of the panel were (i) that even if we 'de-center authority' in the classroom to allow different voices, teachers still hold the 'grade-book', and (ii) that it is necessary to discuss with students who is absent from the classroom and why.

As I have stated, I am still surprised – and uneasy – when I read back over my notes from this interaction. I seemed to find myself in a script that was set up from, and playing out in, an 'elsewhere' that I was neither fully part of or excluded from. I had learned from Anne's email that race should be 'central' to an understanding of gender in the US. There I was, at a panel discussion in the US, where race was not 'central' to the discussion, and, because Anne had performatively set up my concept of US-based gender as centrally occupied by race, and necessarily intersectional, I noticed a gap in the issues that were being addressed by the panel. The discussion seemed evident to introduce in the 'here' of the room, but it also felt 'elsewhere' to me. The 'elsewhere-ness' stuck to me with my resoundingly English accent – I wondered if I was able to 'bring up' race because of my status as an outsider?

It seemed that, once I had committed to bringing race up in conjunction with a demand for reflexivity, I found myself in a position where I had to keep insisting in order to gain an engagement with my question. Interrupting and insisting is not something I would normally dare to do during the question time of a busy session: in my understanding, you get one shot and if it falls foul of the mark, you let it be. However there seemed to be an unfamiliar drive pushing me to interrupt. I felt obliged to counter the strategies that the panel members used to avoid discussing the possible use of their whiteness and/or middle-classness to legitimise queer in their classrooms. In summary, none of the panelists addressed their own intersecting identity characteristics in relation to race and class privilege and the construction of authority in the classroom. This experience of 'bringing

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up' race in a women's studies/queer studies space at NWSA both confirmed race in my concept of gender as a 'name addressed from elsewhere' and helped to establish discussions of race as an integral part of my understanding of gender from thence. It is not that I had been oblivious to race and racism before Anne's email and the NWSA panel; rather, I had previously lacked the impetus to 'bring it up'. At NWSA I was initiated into the script, and was thus 'alienated' and 'found' in the experience. Akin to the connection that du Bois (1983, p. 108) draws between having a name and 'quality and value', Butler (1997, p. 2) equates 'being called a name' with being 'given a certain possibility for social existence'. Because Anne had performatively inserted race into my concept of gender, I repeated that performative action in the NWSA session. The fact that I named the concept of race in that room, although it did not change the available discourses that were circulated by the panel, it did give race a 'certain possibility for [conceptual] existence' in my concept of gender.

Anne's email, and my experience of intervening to 'name' race at the NWSA session, are just two examples of contestations which have made it impossible for me to think about gender as 'just gender', without recognising that gender is always already intersectional. But just because participants such as Anne verbally shifted the conceptual arrangement of the questions I was asking to an intersectional focus, does that mean that these performative reconceptualisations necessarily succeeded? On the basis of what we might call the lowest common denominator understanding of performativity, I would argue that participants only needed to bring gender into a frame of intersectionality in order to bring about the conceptual re-arrangement of gender in my study. However, I might be feeling dubious about the idea that a statement *can* achieve an action in the moment. I might be worried by the parenthetical addition to the first quotation from Austin (2004, p. 163), that a performative achieves an action '(in, of course, the appropriate circumstances)'. I might be particularly concerned by the 'of course' in this parenthetical remark, and the warning light it emits as indicating something which is performatively constituted as 'of course' (and as such is not a matter of course). What would constitute 'appropriate circumstances', and what would count as an *in*appropriate circumstance?

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Are there circumstances where intersectionality would work to shift gender's overt meaning, and others where it would fail? Is it based on who says it, where or when it is said? I can think of some contexts where linking gender and intersectionality is taken as read, as in Charlotte's interview (NWSA), where she stated 'it's impossible to talk about gender anyway without dealing with those things ['race, class and/or sexuality']', and Aisha's interview (IAWS): 'there has to be this intersectionality approach when you're talking about gender or women in India'. I can think of other contexts where intersectionality has been received with incomprehension or hostility; at a workshop on intersectionality, for example, an unconvinced participant referred to intersectionality as an 'exclusionary term' because it is based on the US metaphor of an intersection (as opposed to the British English term 'crossroads'), so it is not immediately obvious (outside of US English) what the term is evoking. So how might we explain the fact that some attempts to rearrange concepts succeed in achieving the action, whilst others do not?

Conceptual performativity and the citationality of 'names addressed from elsewhere'

Asking what actually makes a performative speech act achieve its action brings us to Derrida's account of performativity[85], and Butler's (1993; 1997; 1999) subsequent development of the concept in which she puts performativity to work in conceptualising gender. While Austin's 'appropriate circumstances' refer to the precise moment and context of the performative itself (which I address further in Chapter 7), both Derrida and Butler argue that a performative speech act is never only achieved in the moment, but rather that the performative necessarily exceeds the moment in which the action is achieved. In Derrida's reading of Austin's performativity, the success of a performative depends on there being 'no

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[85] See 'Signature event context' (Derrida, 1982); 'Signature événement contexte', (Derrida, 1972b).

remainder [excess, leftover (*reste*)] [that] escapes the present totalization'[86] (1982, p. 322, emphasis in original). For Derrida, however, the 'context' of the performative action can never be 'saturat[ed]'[87] (ibid., p. 327): there can never be a 'present totalization'. For the performative speech act can only be achieved if it refers to other instances of the same speech act achieving an action elsewhere, in another place and time. As such, the speech act, which seems to depend on certain conditions being satisfied *in the moment*, must depend on the other repeated, and therefore citational, uses of the expression which stretch out far beyond the specific instance.

If I explain performativity by focusing in particular on Derrida and Butler, I must highlight the importance of repetition and citation in an understanding of performativity. I can thus claim that, in order for intersectionality to be performatively linked with gender, this conceptual move needs to be recognised in some way as referring to a convention that has a wider relevance than the moment in which I utter the statement. Questions of where/whom/when might still apply to how my utterance would be received, and whether it would be recognised as such (and I go on to address these questions in the next chapter). However, what the repetition/citation account of performativity tells us is that, in order for a performative speech act to get as far as succeeding or failing in a particular context, it needs to be recognised as repeating or citing speech acts that exist externally to – but as essential to – the moment of the speech act in question. Indeed it is the perceived omission of this step in Butler's logic of performativity that has got Butler into trouble with fellow feminists. In the preface to *Bodies that Matter* (1993), Butler refers to the (mis)interpretation of gender performativity in *Gender Trouble* (1999[88]). These (mis)interpretations understand Butler's theorisation in *Gender Trouble* as follows:

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[86] '[Q]u'aucun *reste* n'échappe à la totalisation présente' (Derrida, 1972b, p. 384).

[87] '[C]ette absence essentielle de l'intention à l'actualité de l'énoncé…interdit toute saturation du contexte' (Derrida, 1972b, p. 389).

[88] First published in 1990.

one w[a]ke[s] in the morning, peruse[s] the closet or some more
open space for the gender of choice, don[s] that gender for the day,
and then restore[s] the garment to its place at night (Butler, 1993, p.
ix).

In Butler's reformulation of her critics' interpretation of *Gender Trouble*,
we can see the equivalent for gender of the simplest extrapolation of
Austin's performative, where 'I say it, so it is so': we can take up gender,
and in the action of taking it up we can achieve this action. And, because it
is that easy, we can keep changing gender too. The gender performativity
that is outlined in *Gender Trouble* is however heavily invested in the
repetition/citation aspect of performativity:

Gender is the *repeated* stylization of the body, a set of *repeated* acts
within a *highly rigid regulatory frame* that congeal over time to
produce the appearance of a substance, of a natural sort of being
(Butler, 1999, p. 45, emphasis added).

If we re-work the previous citation in light of this definition of gender, we
can see that the 'choice' of gender that is available in the 'closet' is
restricted by the 'rigid regulatory frame' of convention, and that 'don[ning]'
a gender will only work (ie be recognised and understood by yourself and
others) if the gender 'don[ned]' is a repetition of a gender that others have
'don[ned]' and will 'don', i.e. that cites conventions within the 'rigid
regulatory frame'. The linking of intersectionality with gender, in this view
of performativity, will only work if it is not understood as 'a singular or
deliberate "act"' (Butler, 1993, p. xii), but rather it must be taken to be part
of 'a ritual chain of resignifications whose origins and end remain unfixed
and unfixable' (Butler, 1997, p. 13). The linking of intersectionality with
gender must '"make sense" in order to work' as a performative (Youdell,
2006, p. 37); in order for a performative to 'make sense' it must cite
convention, and the scope for citation is limited within a frame of possible
conventions (the trace). In this view, intersectionality can only be linked to
gender in a conceptual chain, or moved out of the trace into the presence of
gender, if there is some precedent – and future – for this manoeuvre.

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As I suggested earlier in this chapter, in order for me to construct Harris' (2015) conceptualisation of gender as intersectionality-less, intersectionality must have become an inherent part of my concept of gender: there was a precedent and indeed an obligation to link gender with intersectionality. Although intersectionality was already inextricably embedded in my concept of gender before starting my doctoral research, my understanding of the connection between gender and intersectionality has evolved as I have encountered intersectionality in different forms and contexts at seminars and conferences, and in interviews with participants. These encounters have involved complex trajectories of travelling academic bodies, travelling academic names, and travelling concepts. In a single encounter, any one of these bodies, names and concepts may have evoked an 'elsewhere' or different 'elsewheres', and indeed the evolution of my conceptualisation of intersectionality/gender has been steeped in 'elsewhere-ness'. The issue at stake here is encapsulated in the notion of 'elsewhere' in relation to citationality: how can conceptual performativity be achieved if the citationality that underpins the conceptual manoeuvre in question is 'from elsewhere'? And what if the 'elsewhere-ness' of the citationality is exactly that which allows the performative to succeed?

These questions bring me back to Butler's (1997) 'names addressed from elsewhere'. How do conceptual shifts occur in spite of – or indeed because of – the 'elsewhere-ness' of the shifts' citationality? In the chapter 'On linguistic vulnerability' (pp. 1-42), Butler conceptualises injurious language as performative because of the 'agency' which we 'ascribe' to such language (p. 1): an insult has the power to constitute its addressee as something or someone. With injurious language, Butler argues, the potency or 'agency' derives from the repeated use of an insult over time, so that the 'time and place of injury' are not located in the moment of utterance (p. 4). As in the above discussion of Derrida's and Butler's use of performativity, Butler considers that the moment where injurious language is used 'exceeds itself in past and future directions' (p. 3): the insult takes performative effect through citationality. This is because an insult only gains its potency by being repeatedly evoked. If we are insulted with a term that we do not understand, we may sense in the moment of the utterance that we are being

insulted because of the tone or body language accompanying the utterance, but the full force of the insult will be lost because we will not be able to locate the name we have been called in its citational chain – we will not know the something or someone that we are supposed to have become. An insult will only performatively succeed if its citationality is shared to a certain degree.

If an insult does performatively succeed in constituting the addressee as something or someone (else), the speaking subject (and/or the concept of gender, in this study) may 'suffer a loss of context', which in turn has the result of 'not know[ing] where you are' (ibid., p. 4). If we translate this idea into the context of conceptual vulnerability to 'names addressed from elsewhere', then our concept of gender is vulnerable to being performatively resignified in unfamiliar and unforeseen directions. But if my concept of gender is performatively resignified in a 'name addressed from elsewhere', how does this new 'name' 'leap' into the en/closure of *my* concept of gender? How is it that an unfamiliar citational context can have effect without full understanding of that citationality?

At the NWSA conference, I attended a workshop entitled 'Fat studies in the women's and gender studies classroom' (Nowell and Buss, 2013). I had not come across 'fat studies' as an area of study before, so had decided to attend this workshop, we could say in order to encounter this 'name addressed from elsewhere'. Despite the title including the location 'in the women's and gender studies classroom', the workshop proceeded without discussing the relationship between the disciplinary designation that was the intended site of discussion and the topic of 'fat studies' that was supposed to be discussed in that classroom. The facilitators departed from a point where it was always already obvious that fat studies was relevant to – and indeed a curricular obligation of – women's and gender studies. Because the workshop's discussion did not call on the more familiar citational contexts of women's and gender studies, I experienced a disconnect, a 'loss of context' between the performative presumption of the relevance of fat studies to women's and gender studies and the complete unfamiliarity to me of this discourse. Butler uses the idiom 'to be put in

one's place' to illustrate the confusing effects of injurious language: 'one can be "put in one's place"…, but such a place may be no place' (Butler, 1997, p. 4). I felt 'put in my place' by the workshop facilitators' implication that fat studies should already be part of my concept of gender. However, because the workshop did not explain why or how fat studies could make the 'leap' into my concept of gender, the 'place' where they 'put me' was 'no place'.

It is not that the performative did not succeed in this conference session. The disconnect that I experienced between fat studies not even being in the trace of my concept of gender, and the workshop's presumption that it was already inside the en/closure, had the effect of catapulting fat studies into the en/closure of my concept of gender on ethical rather than conceptual grounds. It was as if fat studies was missing from my concept of gender because of some negligence on my part, so I had to get it in quickly! Butler (ibid., p. 145) states that 'an utterance may gain its force precisely by virtue of the break with context that it performs': the 'name' fat studies was 'addressed from elsewhere' but in a manner which reached out from its elsewhere-ness to address my concept of gender as lacking this name. In *Undoing Gender*, Butler (2004, p. 1) contests the idea that '[w]hat [we] call [our] "own" gender appears perhaps at times as something that [we] author, or, indeed, own', stating that 'the terms that make up one's own gender are…outside oneself, beyond oneself in a sociality that has no single author'. Although here Butler is addressing 'my gender' rather than 'my *concept of* gender', the formulation can be reapplied to 'my *concept of* gender'. Fat Studies was 'outside' and 'beyond' my concept of gender; the workshop 'author[ed]' my concept of gender.

Using the 'fat studies' example, I have identified a disconnect between my concept of gender being performatively 'put in its place', and that place being 'no place', or a 'place' between *here* and *elsewhere*. I now move on to explore this disconnect further, using examples of experiences where my concept of intersectionality has been 'author[ed]' at seminars and conferences, and in interviews with conference delegates. The obligation to think intersectionally has become part of my inherent understanding of

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gender, but the obligation is split between competing contextual signifiers. In the following section, I establish how my version of intersectionality-from-elsewhere has been formed. Moreover, I also explore instances where my intersectionality-from-elsewhere has been shaped from yet another elsewhere.

Intersectionality-from-elsewhere

Because the US is the 'birth place' of intersectionality (Lewis, 2013, p. 872), for me intersectionality seems to be a name citationally addressed from *there*. And not just from *there* meaning the US, but from *there* as in the politics of US-based Black feminism. During my doctoral research, I have been aware of the performative constitution of this *there* as both a *here* and a *there* or 'elsewhere'. Rosie, an FWSA participant who had travelled over to the conference from the US, staked her claim for the *here* of intersectionality:

> intersectionality comes out of Black feminist thought, so you cannot leave race and ethnicity out of this, and really have- and maintain any integrity.

Rosie was speaking as a woman of color who had been involved for decades in the struggle for the recognition of Black feminist scholarship in the academy; the performative statement 'intersectionality comes out of Black feminist thought' was citationally located in Rosie's *here*, i.e. the struggle over intersectionality in the US. Rosie's claim, as in the case of the fat studies workshop referred to above, included an ethical imperative for conceptualisation: omitting 'race and ethnicity' from intersectionality was, in Rosie's terms, a question of 'integrity'. That Rosie was saying this in the meeting room of a hotel in Nottingham had the effect of establishing the authority and authenticity of 'elsewhere' right 'here' in my 'home' academic context. I was particularly marked by my interview with Rosie. This was in part because of the conditions of the interview, which took place in the late evening of the first day of the FWSA conference, when I had already conducted two interviews, and attended a keynote, three panel sessions, a dinner, and a queer cabaret performance: I was, by that stage of

the day, in a state of exhausted hyper-awareness that produced an unmatched intensity of experience. I was also disorientated by the experience of talking to someone about the UK conference through a US-oriented lens, in a brightly-lit generic hotel meeting room with no windows, which could have been in any corporate hotel, anywhere. In this unmoored state of elsewhere-ness, Rosie represented a strong performative force that knew its own here-ness and was able to lay claim to it.

In contrast to Rosie's here-ness, I attended a panel[89] at a conference on intersectionality in London, UK, where Jonsson (2014), echoing Rosie's argument, criticised the brand of intersectionality being discussed at feminist conferences in the UK for having 'no need for race'; she advocated a return to the origins of intersectional thought. The performative locating of intersectionality *elsewhere*, i.e. in US-based Black feminism, has also been highlighted by Lewis (2013, p. 885); at a conference on intersectionality in Germany in 2009, a 'hard binary divide' was discursively produced 'between a place called the United States and a place called Europe'. Petzen (2012, p. 293), writing about the same conference, notes that the 'people of colour' who were asked to speak came 'from abroad', thus 'relegating race and postcolonial and/or anti-racist scholarship to a place outside of Germany'. These examples highlight the significance of conferences as 'arenas' where embodied conceptual contestations play out. Where does intersectionality citationally belong? As with the fat studies workshop example, there is an ethical imperative to these positions. Do I send intersectionality back to its 'origins' in US Black feminist thought, thus asserting the importance of Black feminist work for understanding inequality and difference? Or do I ensure that I am locating a 'local' version of intersectionality, in order to prevent difference and marginalisation, particularly on the grounds of race and ethnicity, being othered as the concerns of 'elsewhere'? Perhaps my most acute confusion about intersectionality has stemmed from this question. If I am to retain 'integrity' in my intersectional analyses, as Rosie put it, do I need to stay close to the

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[89] 'Radical politics, critical academia: talking the talk, but walking the walk?' panel, at 'Critical diversities @ the intersection' conference, London South Bank University, London, UK, 10-11 July 2014.

'origins' of intersectionality? Does this mean addressing race? If race is inherent to intersectionality, then, as an insistent audience member asked at the aforementioned round table on intersectionality and Black British feminism (Ali et al., 2010, p. 659), 'are Pacific Rim, Asian, other groups, are they going to identify with this paradigm?'. In the intersectionality section in the first part of this chapter, I alluded to the 'when do you stop?' debate, but I now want to ask, 'where do you start?'. As Carbado (2013) notes, Black women are often assumed to be the authentic subjects of intersectional analyses. In view of that assumption, was Rupert's (2015) seminar on French women with Moroccan origins, living in the Ile-de-France (the metropolitan region including Paris), who had been married and divorced, less authentic as a study of intersectionality because it did not directly address race? Does an insistence on race detract from discussions of, for example, 'gay Muslim' identities as '"impossible"…subjects' (Rahman, 2010, p. 952) and a 'secular Muslim feminist' position as 'unavailable' (Najmabadi, 2008, p. 77)?

What if race is addressed, but as whiteness? This question recalls the question posed by Cho, Crenshaw and McCall (2013, p. 787), which I referred to earlier in the chapter: does intersectionality involve analysing 'privileged' or 'subordinate' subjects? There are arguments for analysing intersecting privileges as well as disadvantages. Brown (1999, p. 4), for example, asserts the importance of 'white women…recognis[ing] themselves as having racial identities', so that race and racialisation are not dissociated from White people. Zingsheim and Goltz (2011) have noted university students' capacity to identify many different intersectional processes, but have observed that students of color and White students alike struggle to analyse whiteness; they propose a pedagogy that explicitly addresses whiteness so that it appears less invisible to students. Levine-Rasky (2011) deliberately turns the lens onto whiteness and middle-classness to explore the constructions of the power*ful* – is this necessary in order to understand how some people come to wield power over others? The study of whiteness has not been welcomed by all: Moon and Flores (2000) describe a widespread objection to whiteness studies which opposes the celebration of whiteness that the field appears at times to indulge in. I have

also been present at discussions where it has been suggested that the popularity of whiteness studies has arisen from the fact that whiteness is a means for White people to discuss race without facing the uncomfortable necessity of discussing people of color.

The question of whiteness becomes more complicated still when we problematise the relationship between whiteness and privilege, where '[t]o be white is to have greater access to rewards and valued resources simply because of one's group membership' (Ferber, 2007, p. 267). van der Westhuizen's (2014) paper at a colloquium on 'Universities, gender and development' in Bloemfontein, South Africa[90], drew on US-based intersectionality (citing Crenshaw, for example) to analyse what she referred to as the subaltern identity of (White) Afrikaner femininity. She used the image of a 'Putco bus' to highlight the proximity of understandings of whiteness and blackness for Afrikaner women. The 'Putco bus', which, as van der Westhuizen explained, is a form of transport predominantly used by black passengers in South Africa, is also a term used for a 'fat Afrikaner woman'. The 'Putco bus', for me a 'name addressed from elsewhere', evoked an image in which my understanding of Afrikaner identity, inherently bound up in discourses of whiteness, was forced into an *intersectional* understanding of Afrikaner white femininity as liminally inflected with black racialised discourses. I can identify van der Westhuizen's performative conceptual manoeuvre as a shift characterised by 'elsewhere-ness': my limited knowledge of Afrikaner identity – and South African transport – did not equip me with the tools to critically evaluate the veracity of the argument. Because van der Westhuizen spoke as a self-identified Afrikaner woman, and because the bus metaphor seemed so concrete an example, the performative re-arrangement of whiteness in its intersection with femininity was achieved wholesale for me. This 'leap' may not have occurred in this manner had the context in which the conceptualisation was located been more familiar to me; as such, I understand this conceptual shift as having occurred in the way it did because

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[90] 'Universities, gender and development' colloquium, Centre for Research on Higher Education and Development, University of the Free State, South Africa, 14 May 2014.

of its resounding elsewhere-ness, which was nonetheless located in the more familiar (to me) intersectionality-from-elsewhere that derives from US-based scholarship.

The final feature of my US-based intersectionality-from-elsewhere that I want to highlight here is the fact that I frequently 'lose' gender: I 'lose' the endeavour to surround intersectionality *as it surrounds gender*. I have become increasingly confused as to how intersectionality and gender are linked, and what the status of gender is in relation to intersectionality. At times, it has seemed as though gender is the obvious, assumed category of intersectionality, even too obvious to mention. But the 'gender' that I 'find' 'in the names addressed from elsewhere' does not seem to be the 'gender' that I have been trying to theorise in earlier chapters. To give an example, the excerpt that I included from Rosie's interview text above about the origins of intersectionality is preceded by the performative statement:

> when we talk about intersectionality we're not talking about
> sexual- sexual orientation and gender: we're talking about that
> intersectional- race, ethnicity, class and gender'.

This statement includes gender as the common feature of the two different understandings of intersectionality: 'sexual orientation and *gender*' (emphasis added) versus 'race, ethnicity, class and *gender*' (emphasis added). As in the question that I asked at the queer studies panel discussed above, the contest did not seem to be a contest over gender: gender appeared to be so fundamental (and perhaps uncontestable) that it was not being fought over. Anne (NWSA), discussing the antagonism between sexuality research and race-related research at her university, stated that she would be 'able to write a whole dissertation and *not* engage queer, if [she] wanted to, and not engage with queer theory or sexuality studies at all'; on the other hand, 'if [she] didn't address you know the really fundamental concepts of intersectionality in regard to race [she] would be crucified'. Where is gender in relation to this comment? Presumably in the 'fundamental concepts of intersectionality', but it is not mentioned. Is gender the base of intersectionality upon which other concepts are placed? Or is gender, seen

in the en/closure of intersectionality, a simplified version of gender which crashes against or overlaps with other concepts? Or is it that gender is nothing but the concepts with which it intersects? Losing gender, then, seems to be part of 'finding' gender in the 'name addressed from elsewhere' that is my concept of intersectionality.

In the three facets of my version of intersectionality-from-elsewhere that I have outlined (race, whiteness, 'losing' gender), I am not claiming to have produced overviews or scholarly arguments. I am conscious of the many lacunae in the debates I have gestured towards, and the simplification of national and theoretical signifiers that I have created. The attempt to summarise some of the contestations that I have read and encountered in interviews and presentations is presented as an autoethnographic representation of intersectionality-in-use, as I have experienced it. Carbado (2013) and Staunæs and Søndergaard (2011) imply that through theoretical engagement with intersectionality we can change the use and meaning of the concept. However I have found that, even though it makes sense that we can change our concepts rationally and logically, many of the contestations that I have experienced are embedded in ethical questions. Furthermore, these tough ethical questions are caught up in discussions that are located at times in multiple elsewhere*s*, which makes it more difficult to contest them – it is easier to accept them as authentic or reject them as alien. Even if I have a theoretical argument as to why I should analyse gender, class and sexuality, and not race, for example, how can I forget having been told that I will have no 'integrity' if I do not analyse race and ethnicity? How can I forget being told that by someone who had personally fought for decades for the recognition of women of color in the academy? Even if I can argue that studying privilege is an obligation as much as studying discrimination and marginalisation, can I dismiss the claim that I am co-opting a theory meant for the analysis of oppression? How can I critically engage with an argument about whiteness that is built almost entirely upon 'names addressed from elsewhere'? I have seen that a performative may not always succeed because it 'makes sense'; one performative may succeed in contesting another for citational reasons that evoke political and emotional citational threads (much the same as injurious language) rather than – or in

tandem with – purportedly intellectual or rational citational arguments. The performative claims that I have encountered during my doctoral research have undoubtedly shaped the ways in which I understand the concept of intersectionality, but it is not possible to view these performatives as distinct from emotional, ethical, political, contextual – undoubtedly citational – forces.

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In this chapter, I have attempted to keep three forms of 'surrounding' in motion: a theoretical, a methodological and a conceptual 'surrounding'. I theorised conceptual performativity as a means to surround the act of conceptualising gender; I used autoethnographic analysis to convey how my concept of gender has been surrounded 'in names addressed from elsewhere'; I used intersectionality as a surrounding concept for the conceptual-empirical material of the chapter. At the start of the chapter, as I reflected on the question that I asked at the seminar on 'the black box of gender', I stated that the question was representative of two performative processes: (i) intersectionality had become part of my concept of gender, and (ii) I was attempting to performatively move gender into the en/closure of the concept of gender being discussed. Over the course of the chapter, I have accounted for instances where authors, presenters and participants have made claims for the necessity of analysing gender within intersectionality, and for what intersectionality should be or do. These claims have left lasting marks on my conceptual formation, and my continuing exposure to conceptual contestation over the term intersectionality has undoubtedly contributed to the strong presence of intersectionality in the en/closure of my concept of gender. I have endeavoured to present my experiences of conceptual contestation and conceptual performativity at conferences and seminars and in exchanges with participants in a manner which demonstrates the vulnerability of my concept of gender – and of myself as 'speaking subject' – to being constituted in 'names addressed from elsewhere'. In writing this chapter, I have constantly struggled with the doubt that I am not doing 'proper' autoethnography, which is countered by the parallel doubt that anything else would not be 'proper' knowledge. What

I have presented is the textual performance of that struggle, rather than a fixed and predetermined strategy.

The chapter began with the idea that conceptual performativity may involve introducing something that has not been included in a conceptualisation into its conceptualisation. This can be conceived of as forming conceptual chains, as achieving an action in which what was not included is moved from the zone of the trace, into the fixed presence of meaning. These actions are *performative speech acts*, where the statement does not *describe* the action but rather it *is* the action. However, the performative act may fail. This may be, in Austin's (2004, p. 163, emphasis added) words, owing to '*[in]appropriate circumstances*', such as the wrong person, place, or time. But the potential for a performative to fail points to a reliance of the performative act on a wider context than the precise moment of the performative act. For Austin the conditions of the precise moment have to be exactly right, but in Derrida's and Butler's accounts of performativity, it is not the precise moment of the act that assures its success, but the *repetition or citation of conventions* that allow it to be understood and therefore for the performative to work.

Following on from the theoretical work that this chapter has covered, and the conceptual explorations of intersectionality, two pressing issues have arisen that I will address in the next chapter. The first issue relates to the 'appropriate circumstances' that I referred to in the explanation of performativity, where, in Austin's (2004) explanation, the 'circumstances' of the utterance must be 'appropriate' in order for the performative to achieve its action. As I have shown, Derrida and Butler have contested these grounds for the success of the performative, by asserting the significance of previous – and future – uses of the performative in ensuring its success: it is only by citing wider uses that a performative can be understood and thus achieve its action. The way in which I have so far interpreted this revision to Austin's theory is by exploring how the citationality of the *utterance* works. I have considered how, for example, my understanding of intersectionality has been shaped by performative acts 'addressed from elsewhere' which have snagged and rewoven the threads of citationality that underpin my

concept of intersectionality. I have recounted how intersectionality, because of its citational quality of 'elsewhere-ness', is imbued with a selection of conflicting demands.

What this interpretation of citationality does not take into consideration is the citational nature of the *conditions of the utterance*. Otherwise put, what Austin refers to as the 'appropriate circumstances' that are necessary for the success of the performative, could be considered to be just as citational as the utterance, and therefore just as essential for the success of the performative. What I am referring to here is the layer which I have – once again artificially – excluded from this chapter: the conditions in which conceptual performatives occur. In this chapter, I have balanced precariously between the act of conceptualisation and the context – and 'speaking subject' – of conceptualisation. I have alluded to the embodied nature of conference presentations and seminars, to some of the conventions that regulate who speaks when and how. In the next chapter, I unpack the conventions and circumstances that are, in my view, integral to whether a performative conceptual contestation succeeds or not.

Chapter 7
Appropriate circumstances:
'marking out' the performative conditions of conceptualisation

'Marking out' appropriate circumstances

Conceptual performativity, according to the theorisation that I presented in Chapter 6, operates by citing pre-existent definitional norms. But does conceptual performativity explain *how* gender comes to mean what it means? What if, for example, the concept of intersectionality is too alien or from 'elsewhere' to make the 'leap' into gender, and the performative does not succeed? The layer that I bring back into the argument in this chapter adds the question of how the *conditions* in which the conceptual performative is uttered affect the conceptualisation. In Chapters 5 and 6, I constructed conceptualisation as an abstract process. Conceptual contestation and negotiation, conceptual chains and trace work, conceptual performativity: all of these ideas, though I have situated them in the embodied interactions of the research study, are nonetheless operating at the level of spoken interaction. I have not fully brought in the 'speaking subject' and the context in which gender is performatively conceptualised as relevant to the conceptualisation of gender. In Chapter 6, I mentioned but did not dwell on Austin's parenthetical caveat of the 'appropriate circumstances' for a performative to succeed, to achieve an action. This is not to say that I am returning to the argument that the performative act, rather than being citationally established, is determined by its immediate moment and surroundings. Rather, I am also constructing the *circumstances* of the performative utterance as citational, and as contributing to the performativity of the utterance. As such, I am linking discursive acts of conceptualisation with the conventions and circumstances within which they are uttered, and which, I argue, contribute to the potential for conceptual performativity to succeed, fail or misfire.

This chapter builds on the 'surrounding' of the 'critical concept' that I enacted in the previous chapter, by engaging in a process of 'marking out'. I consider the analysis of 'appropriate circumstances' as a form of

'marking out' to be a close representation of the third stage of deconstruction that I set out in Chapter 3. 'Marking out' involves charting the 'conditions' that establish the concept's 'effectiveness': what is the 'milieu' in which the concept operates; where are the limits? In order to spot both the 'milieu' and its limits, it is necessary to use the very conditions of the concept's effectiveness to identify the conditions that ensure its effectiveness. In Chapter 3, I took 'marking out' to mean the task of identifying the ways in which gender is made to mean in a full and present sense, and the concomitant manner in which gender, when pushed to the limits of signification, comes not to mean at all. Returning to 'marking out' here, in the context of the 'site' of academic conferences where conceptualisations of gender occur, I suture the conceptual conditions from Chapter 3 to the conventions, roles and embodied knowledge production at conferences. Because of this suturing of processes, in this version of 'marking out' I take a slightly different interpretation of the idea of using the conditions of the concept's effectiveness to identify the conditions that ensure its effectiveness. In this version, I identify the conditions of conceptual knowledge production which have surrounded and produced conceptual performativity.

Now this manoeuvre could be interpreted as a 'new feminist materialist' or 'new materialist feminist' or 'materialist feminism*s*'[91] move. This 'area' of thought is considered (or we could say that it is performatively constituted as) a 'radical shift' in education and other social sciences research fields (Taylor and Ivinson, 2013, p. 665). It brings the 'materialities of bodies, things and spaces' into significance in a theoretical frame that is interested in 'flows, mobilities, multiplicities, assemblages' (ibid.). As Taylor and Ivinson (ibid.) caution in their editorial to the *Gender and Education* special issue on new material feminisms, the 'newness' belies the longstanding feminist concern with the material reality of people's lives. What is 'new' in this mode of thinking is that it straddles the opposition between materiality and discourse. Matter is not seen as 'an

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[91] Irni (2013, p. 348) uses the term material feminism*s* to highlight the move from material feminism to plural feminisms, to avoid the 'new' of the other options.

empty stage for, or background space to, human activity' (p. 666); matter is reconceptualised so that 'meaning-making' resembles a 'confederacy' that 'embrace[s]' 'all manner of bodies, objects and things' (ibid.): 'we make matter, and matter makes us' (Jackson, 2013a, p. 775). This in principle sounds like what I am proposing to do with conceptual performativity: to take gender away from the hegemony of discourse and resituate it in a web of co-constituted discursive and material conditions.

There are however question marks over the compatibility of a deconstructive approach and a 'new materialist feminist approach'. There is a sense of bifurcation in this issue – some who have worked with – and still work with – concepts from the so-called 'poststructuralist' canon (eg. Barad, 2014; Jackson and Mazzei, 2012; St. Pierre, 2013) are able to use the opportunities for empirical analysis offered by 'feminist materialisms' apparently without feeling prohibitively split by compatibility issues. However there does seem to be an incompatibility that is marked by a reaching for the 'natural' and 'scientific'. Irni (2013, p. 355) has noted that there is a '*politics of materiality*' (emphasis in original) which determines the degree to which different understandings of 'matter', and 'understanding[s] of what qualifies as an *analysis* of "matter"' (p. 352, emphasis added), can themselves come to matter. It is therefore far from clear to what extent there *is* an entity with which a discourse-focused approach can be noticeably incompatible. Hemmings (2011, pp. 95-127) discusses the 'return narratives' that feminist scholars contributing to academic journals are constructing. These scholars take up materiality in order to '*effect* the move away from poststructuralism' (p. 110, emphasis in original) – this action performatively constitutes an incompatibility between 'poststructuralism' and 'materialism'. In order for the incompatibility to be achieved, Hemmings notes that the concept of 'poststructuralism' also undergoes some performative work in return narratives: 'poststructuralism…has to be stripped of…feeling and creativity…in order that these can be found anew in the present' (p. 109). In these narratives, the conceptual resources which were at one stage credited with bringing creative thought to the fore are reified and rendered incapable of speaking to the here and now.

But how different are poststructuralism and new materialism? This statement from Taylor and Ivinson's (conceptually performative) editorial (2013, p. 667) is a case in point:

> By questioning how boundaries between categories, people or things get made, we are forced to grapple with our own position, voice and intentions and…to accept uncertainty.

This statement could easily pass as a description of deconstructive practice rather than an account of what bringing materiality back into play with discourse can do. In my approach, I am not highlighting the deficiency of the 'everything is discourse' stance – rather, I am bringing in the 'speaking subject' and the spaces that it occupies – as *performatively* and *citationally* involved in the signification of concepts such as gender. Conceived along the lines of 'appropriate circumstances', this conceptualisation of performativity (which is not that different from Derrida's and Butler's in fact) views 'appropriate circumstances' as citationally achieved: what sets apart a joke bet or a spoof marriage proposal from a 'serious' bet or proposal is the citation of *contextual circumstances* that exceed the site of the performative utterance to the same degree as that *utterance*. The 'appropriate circumstances' for a conceptual performative to achieve its action are therefore not understood as a fixed backdrop in front of which conceptual signifiers can act. Instead, these circumstances are viewed as unfixed, as requiring citationality in order to achieve signification.

In previous chapters, we could say that conferences have operated as 'fixed backdrops' for the conceptual contestations that occur within them. The principal task for this chapter, then, is to operate the transition from the perspective where conferences *contain* conceptual negotiations to the idea that conferences help to *produce* conceptualisations.

Producing conference 'circumstances'

To 'mark out' the conditions of conferences, I have explored representations of conferences in my own notes from conferences and events, the interviews that I conducted with delegates from the 'official fieldwork' conferences, in fiction, academic literature, media and social networking sources, and in conversations with friends and colleagues. My fascination with conferences has led me to read many texts against their intended direction. The short story, 'Conference sex' (L.R., 2012) is a clear example – I found myself skimming over the sex scene that earns this story a place in a book of queer erotica (Meenu and Shruti, 2012), and instead dwelling on the way in which the scene was set up against the unofficial conference conventions of 'after-hours conference chat' (L.R., 2012, p. 175) and deciding to 'play truant at the conference' (p. 177). More insidiously, I underlined the final line of Laclau's obituary in *THE*: 'Professor Laclau died of a heart attack while at a conference in Seville' (Reisz, 2014, p. 24). As a result of this rather ruthless ethnographic exploration, I have developed a detailed understanding of conferences as social phenomena; representing this in full is beyond the scope of this study.

In this chapter, I am not just conscious of the production of empirical materials as a form of analysis; I am particularly concerned that my representations are contributing to the existing restrictive repertoire of representations of conferences. In *Representing 'U'*, Reynolds (2014) argues that universities do not pre-exist their representations; rather, higher education is always understood through its representations – representations in research, in film and television, media, and advertising, representations encountered at school and through friends and family (see also Reay, David and Ball, 2005). She and other scholars who have studied representations of higher education (Edgerton, 2005; Reynolds, 2009; Tobolowsky, 2006) have found that pervasive representations may in fact affect what higher education *is*, and how it is experienced. One example of this effect is where students arrive at university expecting it to match Hollywood representations of higher education; their initial experiences are accordingly characterised by disappointment (Reynolds, 2014). In my exploration of

representations of conferences, I have found that there are a limited number of discourses available to portray academic conferences; I consider, in line with Reynolds' argument, that these discourses affect the extent to which conferences are taken seriously as sites of knowledge production. The two major discourses that I have identified are the 'defining moment' representation and the 'conference fatigue' representation. I have come across other representations of conferences, and I am aware that, by singling out and grouping certain representations, I am contributing to or even perhaps producing the reification of these categories. In defence of this, I argue that identifying these two representations, which are the most common in my exploration of representations, can provide a means of complicating reductive representations of conferences.

Firstly, then, the 'defining moment' representation. In academic literature, conferences are frequently referred to in passing as having constituted key moments in the development of a discipline or a field of research. To give some examples, the development of French queer theory is linked with a conference that Didier Eribon organised in Paris in 1997 (Rifkin, 2012); Acker (2010), reflecting on the legacy of the 'annual International Sociology of Education Conference', recalls the landmark conference in 1982 which was 'devoted to race and gender issues in education' (p. 130); the advent of the term gender in French feminist studies is linked with a conference entitled 'Femmes, féminisme et recherches'[92], which took place in Toulouse in 1982 (Chevalier and Planté, 2014, pp. 17-18); Pappu (2002, p. 221) situates 'the recommendation for the incorporation of women's issues into teaching and research programmes in universities and colleges' in India at the 'first National Conference on Women's Studies', which was held in Bombay in 1981 (see also Sreenivas, 2015); in David's (2014a, p. 99) collective biography of academic feminism, Nira Yuval-Davis identifies a 'key moment' for academic feminism as 'the 1974 BSA conference on feminist sociology', which is also referred to by Jackie Barron (ibid., pp. 118-119). Conferences may be used to mark important confluence points where international organisations,

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[92] 'Women, feminism and research'.

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academics and activists have met to establish future priorities, for instance the 'United Nations Durban Conference on Racism and Racial Discrimination' in 2001 (Falquet and Kian, 2015; Paik, 2014), and the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) conference, 'Engendering Empowerment: Education and Equality', or 'E4', in Dakar, Senegal, in 2010 (Unterhalter and North, 2011; Vaughan, 2010).

I have deliberately presented these examples as a list of juxtaposed contexts, disciplines, years, in order to highlight the similarity in the way in which references to conferences are often constructed. These 'defining moment' representations of conferences always include similar details: the date, the location, perhaps the title of the conference or of the group or association who organised it. Often, these are the only details that the reader is given: a textual spatio-temporalisation of a landmark event. Some references of this kind (including some of those listed above) are accompanied by a more detailed discussion of the conference in question, but where the reference alone stands in for the event, the reader is excluded from understanding *how* the shift occurred *at* the conference. The *Out of the Margins* (Aaron and Walby, 1991b) collection provides the textual marker of the 1989 and 1990 Women's Studies Network UK conferences in order to spatio-temporalise the 'shift of attention away from the basic issue of women's subordination' (Aaron and Walby, 1991a, p. 4). But *where* and *when* and *with whom* were the 'anxieties' that they mention were 'expressed' (ibid.) at the conference actually uttered? In order for a conference to become the marker for a significant development, does something have to happen in one of the plenary sessions? What if something seemed to be happening in the next-door parallel session from yours, where the 'fragile bricks covered with a thin layer of plaster' could not keep out the 'shouts, howls, and especially the applause' from next door (Bolaño, 2009, p. 17)? And what if the moment passed you by because you lost your way trying to find a session and went 'up hill and down dale and whatnot' in the wind and rain (Kamala, FWSA), or because you were in the session but

'checking World Cup news on [your] tablet' (anonymised Facebook post[93],
20 June 2014), or because you left the session early, having succumbed to
'the pull of the outside' (from my IAWS notebook, 4 February, 2014)?
What if the significant development in fact happens in a private meeting, a
coffee break where, while some delegates are 'wandering around looking
intently at displays' because they do not know anyone (Holly Henderson,
personal communication, 1 June 2013), and others are finding that they are
networking with people who have very different views to them (Pereira,
2012), another group find that the coffee break is the place where their
edited book on early career women in academia (Lemon and Garvis, 2014b)
is born (Lemon and Garvis, 2014a). In her short story 'Conference sex',
L.R. (2012, p. 174) refers to 'searchable' relics of conferences, such as
'presenters, keynote speakers, panels and workshops' (p. 173); 'not
similarly searchable' (p. 174) are the other significant activities which occur
at conferences, from sexual encounters to localised or private conceptual
developments, and thus there is no trace of *how* they happened.

Some of the 'not similarly searchable' aspects of conferences do
appear in another common representation of conferences: 'conference
fatigue'. 'Conference fatigue', which is a term used in informal
conversations and blogs (Karlsson, 2007; Kitzel, 2015; Owens, 2011;
Molly, FWSA, interview), expresses the embodied aspects of the conference
experience and often devalues the significance of academic conferences as
locations where knowledge production occurs. Conference fatigue is used to
refer both to a feeling of discontent and weariness from attending too many
conferences, and to the exhaustion that may be experienced during a
conference from attending too many presentations. These representations
may focus on the following elements:

- *The touristic elements of conferences:* 'I went to [French city] for an
  archaeology "conference" ;)[94]' (anonymised Facebook post, 24 May

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[93] Where I state 'anonymised Facebook post', this indicates that, because I have
been unable to seek permission to quote these conversations, I have omitted names
and locations, and also that I have replaced some words with synonyms to prevent
them being searchable.

[94] ';)' indicates a winking face.

2015); 'especially at conferences happening in India…the primary agenda of at least half the people is to…do the sightseeing' (Aisha, IAWS, interview).

- *The inanity of conference conversation:* 'Number of people in conference registration queue who said, "Wasn't Easter unusually late this year?": 6' (Rees, 2014, p. 30); 'Bonded over lack of food provided rather than their work initially' (Lucy, FWSA, notebook entry[95] 21 June 2013).

- *Drinking and drunken behaviour:* 'I remember sitting with you at the hotel bar…unpacking the sordid facts of our professional and then our personal lives' (Schumacher, 2014, p. 72); 'It is important that people remember who you are – and for good reasons, rather than because you got hideously drunk and behaved badly at the conference dinner' (Kenway, Epstein and Boden, 2005, p. 48).

- *Bodily functions:* 'I have just PUKED[96] at a conference session', 'If it makes you feel any better, someone shat themselves during a panel at [a conference]' (from an anonymised Facebook exchange, split between June 2010 and December 2014).

This is a small selection of a huge range of issues that conference participants pick up on as contributing to the strangeness and above all the intellectually unproductive nature of academic conferences. These representations focus on the physical constraints (and temptations) that prevent a conference delegate from fully accessing the 'content' of the conference presentations. 'Conference fatigue' representations capitalise on the bathetic juxtaposition of abstract knowledge production with the bodies who produce this knowledge; with this type of representation, it is equally challenging to imagine *how* a significant conceptual shift could occur *at* a conference.

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[95] Some participants shared notes with me that they had taken at the conference in relation to my questions; at FWSA this was easier to coordinate as some participants sent me notes by post.

[96] Slang term for vomited.

Taking these two common representations of conferences, it is difficult to discern what the processes are which connect the embodied disengagement of 'conference fatigue' with the spatio-temporalised 'there and then' of 'defining moment' representations. In order to move from conferences as *containing* conceptual negotiations, to a representation of conferences as helping to *produce* conceptualisation, I need to move beyond both of the dominant conference representations, neither of which lends itself to an engagement with the processes of knowledge production – in particular of conceptualisation – at conferences. The question of representation extends to both *what* to 'mark out' and *how* to go about 'marking it out'.

Even before deciding which elements of conferences I would focus on in this chapter (the *what* to 'mark out'), I was obliged to exclude some aspects for ethical reasons. Several of my participants from all three conferences were involved in organising or working at the conferences, or held positions of responsibility in the associations who hosted the conferences. The interview material on these aspects, particularly their participation in meetings and activities that were restricted to these roles, would have rendered all of these participants immediately identifiable; I took the decision to exclude this material from my thesis, with the exception of some material, where I have removed all identifiable features of the participant. I have already mentioned the difficulties of deciding how to understand my (non-)researcher position at IAWS, and that two of my participants were not official participants at that conference; these issues have also come into play in my decisions regarding what to include.

Inevitably, I have taken decisions regarding *what* to represent as relevant to conceptualisations of gender at conferences. Thus far, I have only set up barriers and boundaries; I now move onto a fuller account of how conference 'circumstances' can be understood as *producing*, rather than just *containing*, the experience of the conference.

'Circumstances' producing conferences

I have developed two different understandings of 'circumstances' as *producing* conferences; I explain them using the idiomatic expression 'if the shoe fits, wear it'. The expression 'if the shoe fits, wear it', also phrased as 'if the cap fits, wear it,' signifies that 'someone should accept a *generalized* remark or criticism as *applying to themselves*' (*The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, Pearsall and Hanks, 2001, p. 269, emphasis added). I am using the expression to indicate that there is a *generalised* structure and purpose (the shoe, the conference rooms and roles) that may or may not fit and be worn or *applied to oneself*; implicit in my usage of the expression is the question of how to wear the shoe if it does not fit, which can be reformulated as '(only) if the shoe fits'. I use the expression in two parts: the first part is 'the shoe', i.e. the unoccupied rooms and roles; the second part is 'if the shoe fits', or the ways in which the rooms and roles are then occupied.

'The shoe' and 'if the shoe fits'

The difference between 'the shoe' and 'if the shoe fits' understandings can be illustrated with accounts of shoes from the conference participants; several of the NWSA participants discussed shoes in their interviews. Charlotte, for example, 'went [back to the hotel] and [she] actually changed [her] shoes for the presentation, because [she] wanted to look a little bit taller'. She took off her *delegate* 'red boots' and changed into her *presenter* shoes. In this example, 'the shoe' understanding states that Charlotte's behaviour is determined by the roles of delegate and presenter, which are set out before her, and which are inscribed with particular ideas of status – and stature – and professionalism. In the 'if the shoe fits' understanding, Charlotte modifies her dress – and stature – by changing into higher heels, *so that* the shoe fits and she qualifies as presenter. In this understanding, the Charlotte and shoe combine in a 'confederacy' of 'meaning-making' (Taylor and Ivinson, 2013, p, 666) to produce the embodiment of a presenter.

To give a second example, one of the NWSA participants was working at the conference; she felt obliged to wear 'flats' which 'hurt [her] feet' as opposed to 'tennis shoes,…which [she] kind of would have liked to wear' (anonymised interview). The 'shoe' understanding in this case states that working at the conference is a professional role which is accompanied by a type of smart shoe; the participant wore uncomfortable shoes to ensure that the shoe fitted. If she had worn 'tennis shoes', she would not have been citing the professional dress code for working at the conference.

In the final illustrative example that I provide here, Anne discussed her experience of feeling 'uncool' at the conference. She described the 'urban intellectual professional kind of style thing' which is on view at NWSA, and which is characterised by 'cool haircuts' and 'good flat shoes'. Anne's comments and feelings of not being cool enough or not dressed appropriately were echoed throughout participants' interviews from all three conferences. In 'the shoe' understanding of Anne's comments, the role of 'cool' delegate is accompanied by the necessity of wearing 'good flat shoes' – but does wearing 'good flat shoes' ensure fitting in at the conference? In fact, Anne had come to the conference with complete outfits to wear, which included 'red sort of like corduroys or velvet or something with *clogs*, a buttoned down shirt' (emphasis added). This reminded me that I had noticed Anne's shoes and registered them as 'interesting shoes'; I informed Anne that she had in fact been 'part of the flat shoes thing'. However Anne's 'interesting shoes' did not help her to fit in at the conference – at times the shoe, even if it is the correct size and style, does not fit.

'The shoe'

The 'shoe' is aligned with some of the questions of materialism, where 'matter' is understood as having its own form of agency which operates in conjunction with human agency (if the two can be separated). The particular type of analysis that I focus on here is also known as 'post-qualitative research' (Lather and St. Pierre, 2013), which involves analysing the constitutive effect that material conditions have on human interactions. Jackson (2013b, p. 745), for example, has conducted a 'post-qualitative' analysis of the ways in which the 'material forces' of the office space and

office furniture of one of her research participants 'produced a discourse…of openness, casual ways of being, and personal attention', which contributed to the construction of the participant as a maternal mentor figure. Research on the heteronormativity and gender binarism of university spaces has focused on the ways in which halls of residence, for example, construct particular identities for their residents (Hamilton, 2007; Taulke-Johnson, 2010). Nicolazzo (2015, p. 61) notes the centrality of the 'crater' of the football stadium to the university campus which ze[97] focused on in hir study of trans* university students' resilience; the heteronormative and cis-gendered sporting culture of the university was spatially privileged and took prime place on campus. The spatial elements of conferences can be understood as having similar effects. Parker and Weik (2014, p. 169) consider that the 'defining element' of conferences is that they 'take place somewhere else'; this 'somewhere else', unlike the conceptual location of the 'elsewhere' of Chapter 6, is characterised by the material conditions of travel: 'We use different money, eat different food and sleep in someone else's bed' (ibid.).

Importantly, in my conceptualisation of conference 'circumstances', I do not wish to assert that spatial elements of conferences bear an organic force. It is not that the money, food and bed involved in attending conferences have an *inherent* power to act upon the delegate. Rather, I wish to suggest that each of these spatial or material elements contributes to conceptual performativity by way of citationality, albeit a citationality beyond words. When delegates attend conferences, they become accustomed to certain contexts, rituals and practices, which they cite without thought. As with the discussion of 'elsewhere-ness' in the previous chapter in relation to conceptualisation, at times only an outsider – or a newcomer – to a conference can identify the sheer number of conventions and rules that regulate conference spaces. In the 'shoe' understanding of conference 'circumstances', these conventions and rules pre-exist and so shape delegates' participation in conferences; in this understanding, it is the citing of 'circumstances' that constitutes the individuals involved. An example of

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[97] Ze and hir are Nicolazzo's preferred pronouns.

this is the practice of 'felicitation' that I encountered at the IAWS conference. 'Felicitation' at IAWS involved giving each plenary panel member a traditional item – in most cases a scarf – from the North-East region of India, where the conference was held. Each of the panel members only took on the role of panel member once the scarf had been placed around their neck. At one point, a plenary panel began before felicitation had occurred, and the speaker had to be interrupted by this process before they could continue: until they had been 'felicitated', they were not officially a speaker.

Another example of the 'shoe' understanding can be related to what is known as 'the graveyard slot' of conferences. The authors of an edited collection on feminist poststructuralist policy analysis (Allan, Iverson and Ropers-Huilman, 2010) comment that the AERA (American Educational Research Association) conference session that led to the inception of the book 'was scheduled for the last day of the conference, during the last time slot, and placed at the farthest end of an obscure hallway' (Ropers-Huilman, Iverson and Allan, 2010, p. 239); these factors characterise 'the graveyard slot'. A number of my participants also referred to the problem of being scheduled for the last session or the last day. Edith, who had travelled over from the US to the UK to publicise her book at the FWSA conference, found that she was scheduled for the final session; she alluded to the low attendance that accompanies the graveyard slot: 'I might talk to four other people about my book [laughs]'. Molly, who had travelled from India to the UK for FWSA, also found that her presentation was 'not very well attended' because it was in the final session. Anne, whose presentation was scheduled for the last day of NWSA, compared the relative benefit of presenting at 10am rather than 8am following the Saturday night festivities at NWSA, but still '[did not] know if anybody [would] be there'. In some cases, presenters feel that their positioning in 'the graveyard slot' is deliberate: Ropers-Huilman, Iverson and Allan (2010) refer to an audience member's comment that the conference gatekeepers had relegated feminist poststructuralism to this position. Even if the decision to schedule a session for this slot is not a deliberate comment on the subject matter of the presentation, those who are scheduled for this slot are constituted as less relevant or less important.

There is a sense of inevitability about the schedule; 'graveyard slot' presenters attending the conference know that they will listen to others' work without being able to expect others to stay to listen to theirs. It is a rite of passage to watch others 'kill it at the conference disco[98]' (Burford and Henderson, 2015), in the full knowledge that you have to speak coherently to a sparsely populated room at 9am the next day; you are 'the graveyard slot' presenter, and you have no one to blame.

A final example of the 'shoe' understanding of conference 'circumstances' is an incident which happened to Shori at NWSA. I have already indicated that most of my participants discussed dress and appearance in their interviews (without me specifically asking a question on this). It was clear from each of the 'official fieldwork' conferences that there were types of conference outfit that were expected at feminist conferences; we saw an example of this in Anne's reference to the 'urban intellectual professional kind of style thing' at NWSA. Most participants spoke of their clothes choice as finding a balance between representing their style or identity and tailoring that style for the style they needed to cite in the conference context. Shori's version of this, in accordance with her usual varied gender presentation(s) at her home university, was to adopt completely different gender presentations for different days of the conference. On one of the days she 'presented as more, quote unquote, "masculine"', which involved a bow tie, a 'men's…dressy like zip-up sweatshirt', 'floral pants[99]' and 'glasses'. On the next day she wore 'a dress with a full skirt', 'fish-nets', 'Oxford-esque shoes'[100], and she 'let her hair be down'. Thus at the same conference Shori adopted two different conference 'uniforms': the MOC 'urban intellectual professional kind of style thing' on one day, and a femme style on the next day. At the conference, she met someone on her MOC day, with whom she had a relatively in-depth conversation; the next day, the person 'treated [her] like a stranger' and introduced themselves as if they had not met. Shori 'had to

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[98] Or in some cases, to carefully 'kill it at the disco' anyway…

[99] Trousers in British English.

[100] Flat, smart, lace-up shoes.

like explicitly be like, "Hi, it's me, I'm the same person"' before the person realised. I read this incident as an example of the 'shoe' understanding because, in line with Jackson and Mazzei's (2012, p. 129) analysis of one of their participant's experience of wearing a suit that 'seem[ed] to have a life of its own', Shori's citation of two different conference uniforms constituted her as two different people, irrespective of her being 'the same person' underneath.

'If the shoe fits'

In each of the examples that I gave of the 'shoe' understanding, I showed how a conference convention citationally constituted the individuals involved as occupying a particular role. I now want to 'put the boot on the other foot' and consider how the roles and conventions may be affected by the individuals who cite them. What if, for example, you are 'called upon to make an impromptu speech' but the 'local etiquette' regarding 'speechmaking' is 'unclear' (Barnett, 2011, p. 80) – what if you 'get it wrong'? And do individuals interrupt one form of citationality with another? In Pillow's (1997, 2003) research on pregnant school students, she realised that it was impossible to occupy the role of student *and* be pregnant, that the status of 'pregnant' in some ways cancelled out the status of 'student'. This was particularly obvious when the 'shoe' of student did not physically 'fit' because of the competing role of pregnancy: 'by their last trimester, many of the girls had to sit on the edge of the desk seat and turn sideways to *fit* within the confines of the desk space' (1997, p. 357, emphasis added). In this case, the visible and physical citationality of pregnancy trumped the student citationality of sitting at a student's designated place in the classroom. We can see similar processes at conferences regarding different – and intersecting – aspects of identity.

In *On Being Included*, Ahmed (2012) analyses the conflicting positions of Black/woman/academic. For example, she recounts a meeting at her university where academics were to introduce their courses to students. The academics, 'Professor So-and-So' and 'Professor Such-and-Such' (p. 176), took turns to take the stage, and were introduced by the colleague who was chairing with their titles. Ahmed was the only Professor to be

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introduced without the title; her introduction stated, '"This is Sara"' (ibid.). Because of this, she could not 'pass seamlessly' into the position of Professor – the 'shoe' did not fit. Ringrose (2010) and Ali et al. (2010) discuss the fact that the Black feminist and GEA keynote Grace Livingstone was detained at Heathrow Airport in the UK and then forced to return to the US without attending the conference. It appeared to immigration officials in the UK that the keynote invitation was not valid (Ringrose, 2010): it was impossible that Livingstone could occupy the role of Black/woman/keynote. The problem with analysing this type of incident is that, as with 'the graveyard slot', in general we cannot *know* that any particular aspect of our identity (and/or the 'identity' of our work) has been singled out for this treatment – we cannot say that the introduction '"This is Sara"' was *intentionally* belittling; we cannot know that we were *deliberately* scheduled for 'the graveyard slot'. Likewise, when Jones et al. (2014) conducted a study of a Biology conference (with a 1:1 gender ratio) that found that women were more likely to be scheduled to and to opt to present in the shorter presentation slots, they could only conjecture why this may be. Rassool (1995) could only conjecture why one of her research participants, a teacher education lecturer, was turned away from one of her student's school placements because she was assumed to be a cleaner who had turned up late for work. Indeed the only accusation that we might make is that the people involved (immigration officials, Sara Ahmed's colleague, the Biology conference organisers and presenters, the staff at the placement school) did not (as far as we know) *resist* the confines of the 'shoe': they did not contribute to making the keynote shoe fit Grace Livingstone, or making the professorial shoe fit 'Sara', or making the long presentation slots fit women, or making the lecturer 'shoe' fit Rassool's research participant. However, because we cannot *know*, it is only by amassing numerous examples of instances where we cannot *know*, as Ahmed (2012) has done, that we can try to build an analysis of ways in which the feet in the 'shoe' called 'the academy' participate in retaining its narrow shape.

I have already mentioned the uncomfortable bathos between embodied presence and abstract knowledge production that is alluded to in many representations of conferences (see also Stanley, 1995). I would not

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be doing my research project justice if I did not refer to toilets at conferences. In my understanding of conferences, the 'shoe' that is designed for the delegate is highly regulated, especially at large conferences where systems of managing huge numbers of people are employed. The delegate is constructed by the 'shoe' of the timetable as a robot, or at least a robot-human hybrid. The 'proper delegate' (Henderson, 2014d) – for whom the 'shoe' fits – takes in and excretes food and drink at set times; ideally they do neither – at NWSA, there was no food provided and only a short break to go to buy it; at FWSA, there was too little food to feed everybody; at IAWS the plenary sessions and meals were held in tents on the sports field of the university, and the only toilets for 800 delegates were the five or so cubicles in the sports pavilion, which were surrounded by 'creepy guys' 'hanging around' (Priya, IAWS). I will never forget visiting the toilet on the morning of the last day, where there had been no running water for over 24 hours; I made the mistake of looking in and saw a rainbow representation of 'conference fatigue' which is etched in my mind. Speaking of which, menstruation is certainly not catered for in the 'shoe' of conference timetabling; as Nisha (NWSA) stated, 'you just don't want conferences and your menstruating cycle to come together', especially if it begins when you '[are]n't expecting it' and have to use the '*awful*' sports field toilets. Menstruation at a conference breaks the citationality of the 'proper delegate' because it demands immediate action irrespective of the timetable, or, if ignored, it creates visible mess. At an SRHE conference[101], I was faced with the choice of either being late for the session I was supposed to be chairing, or knowing that I could end up 'leaking' on the chair's chair; when I arrived at the session, people looked at me askance that I was late for my chairing duties, but I could not allude to my emergency toilet trip to explain my lateness without also breaking the citationality of 'proper delegate'.

Conference toilets are interesting locations: in some senses, they are outside the conference – once inside, it is possible to 'hide' from the conference (Pereira, 2011, p. 99, n. 129; anonymised personal communication, 25 May 2013), and delegates can adjust their 'hair and

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[101] SRHE Annual Conference, Celtic Manor, Newport, UK, 10-12 December 2014.

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make-up and stuff' before re-entering the 'parade' (Charlotte, NWSA). However, in other ways, even when using the toilet you are still *at* the conference, and therefore still under pressure to cite the role of 'proper delegate'; in addition to the 'shoe' of the 'proper delegate' who does not need to use the toilet at all, there is also a conference etiquette that applies to toilet use. If toilet use is necessary, then it should be quick, neat, silent and odourless, as if nothing ever happened. This may be rendered even more difficult by the design of the toilet: at a conference in the US, I was acquainted with my neighbour's knees as I sat down in a toilet with a very large gap between the floor and the cubicle wall. My yelp of shock when the automatic flush kicked in (which is not common in UK toilets) did not help me to fit the toilet etiquette 'shoe'. Even worse, at another conference, I was alone washing my hands in the washroom when a senior academic whose work I admire walked in. In one of the cubicles, someone had clearly vomited; I knew this because I had tried this cubicle first – perhaps there is a set order of cubicles that we try. I had used the adjacent cubicle. To my horror, although there were many cubicles, the academic first tried the vomit cubicle; having rejected this one she picked the adjacent one where I am sure some odour lingered. I was in the position of knowing that she knew that I had used one of those two cubicles, and that I had therefore failed at the (non-)citational 'proper delegate' practice of 'leave no trace'. I had been planning to introduce myself to the academic at this conference; I was so mortified that I felt unable to do so. I have dismissed my misgivings about including this highly embarrassing incident in my thesis because it is the type of incident which is not discussed in academic research, but which may have a huge impact on the way that a delegate's experience of a conference unfolds.

Last but not least, gender policing is a factor at conferences, and it is rarely clearer than in bathroom use. For conference delegates with gender-ambiguous presentation, having to make the choice between a 'male' and 'female' bathroom is a lived experience of the gendered regulation of the delegate 'shoe'. Although 'delegate' may seem to be a gender-neutral

'shoe', there may be an underlying expectation of gender binarism[102].
Rasmussen (2009, p. 443) writes about this problem at the AERA
conference as 'a place where the gender-ambiguous bathroom user is not-
man and not-woman'; the necessity of being recognisable as 'man-delegate'
or 'woman-delegate' becomes apparent when entering the conference
toilets. You may be wearing the lanyard or badge that marks you out as a
bona fide delegate, but you are treated as 'deviant' (ibid.) – the lanyard or
'shoe' does not 'fit' – if you are also not wearing a clear gender-lanyard[103].
At some conferences, particularly feminist or queer conferences, including
NWSA, some bathrooms are designated as 'gender-neutral'. Because
conferences tend to be held in institutions which may have little regard for
the binarism that toilets produce, such as universities and convention
centres, these bathrooms are temporarily designated with a sign; the choice
of which bathroom to designate as 'gender neutral' is imbued with its own
politics. As Susan noted, at NWSA 'the gender neutral bathrooms were
located in male restrooms':

> So like I wonder if these restrooms were placed in male rest-
> rooms because there is still less fear that you know someone who
> quote-unquote 'looks like a man', or might be quote-unquote a
> 'real man' but identify as a trans-woman, going into a women's
> rest-room is scary for women, like there's a sense [pause] there's
> still a sense of deviancy and um trickery that kind of goes along
> with trans* identities. And I [pause] I couldn't help but think
> about that when I saw multiple gender-neutral restrooms that
> were always placed in male bathrooms.

Even if a conference makes an effort to be trans-inclusive, to ensure that the
delegate 'shoe' fits, decisions regarding toilet provision[104] are still operating

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[102] On gender-segregated bathrooms, see Juang (2006), Cavanagh (2013).

[103] I originally wrote this tongue-in-cheek, but at NWSA 2015, the lanyards were
provided with a selection of pronoun stickers that could be affixed to the name
badge.

[104] It is notable that at NWSA 2015, almost all of the toilets were marked 'gender
neutral'.

within – and are therefore to some extent produced by – the environment that contains the conference.

In this section, I have tried to provide a sense of the variety of 'circumstances' which habitually occur at conferences, and which may have an effect on the way in which a conference is experienced. I have focused on the roles which may or may not successfully fit conference participants into their designated places, and which participants may or may not successfully fit into. In each of the examples that I have given, it is possible to discern implications for knowledge production and in particular conceptualisation. For example, Sylvia and I discussed the 'felicitation' process in the context of the plenary tent at IAWS; we were both surprised by the formality both of the space, with its large stage, and the introductory processes. We agreed that, as Sylvia put it, the space and the formalities 'created [their] own norms', and produced a degree of legitimacy for the presentations that were then given in these 'circumstances'. Sylvia was surprised that some of the plenary speakers referred to being married, or to their husbands, as in her experience of UK feminist circles this is a somewhat taboo topic (also echoed in Ruth's interview, FWSA). She felt in particular that the combination of 'the stage' and 'someone stand[ing] up on the stage [pause] and talk[ing] about their husband' contributed to the legitimisation or even privileging of a particular understanding of feminism at the conference. Susan (NWSA) echoed the material effect of the stage in relation to the NWSA plenaries: 'these folks are being put up like literally up on a stage for everyone to look up to who are talking about gender…in this kind of dichotomous way'. The implications for knowledge production for 'the graveyard slot', the keynote who is sent home before reaching the conference, the presenter who presents in the short slot are similar: a devaluation of the worth of the ideas to be presented, the delegitimisation of ideas via the delegitimisation of the presenter. And in the case of infringement of the role of 'proper delegate', there are a number of implications, including being late or disruptive, or missing out on discussions, and being unable to explain or apologise. In the next section, I focus more clearly on the relationship between particular sets of conference

'circumstances' and the conceptualisation of gender, in order to bring together the strands that I have so far held somewhat apart.

Conference 'circumstances' and conceptualisation

In this section, I piece together a possible representation of the relationship between conference 'circumstances' and processes of conceptualisation. In order to identify instances where conference 'circumstances' and conceptual negotiations appear mutually constitutive, I require that the incident incorporates aspects of both the conference context and/or processes and of conceptual performativity. This requirement counters the temptation to fall into either the 'defining moment' discourse, where the conditions of the conference are excluded, or the 'conference fatigue' discourse, where the knowledge production and intellectual engagement facets of conferences are excluded.

An example of an incident fulfilling this requirement is the walk across the university campus that FWSA delegates had to take to reach the venue for the dinner, which Molly discussed in her post-conference interview. The walk turned out to be more than a quick stroll, so delegates walking together were obliged to move beyond pleasantries; the walk, rather like a long-distance race, stretched out into groups walking at different paces, and it was too far for a lone 'straggler' to walk near another group without needing to join the group. These conditions produced the setting for a conversation on prostitution/sex work for one of my participants. One of the walkers was discussing her research on sexual commerce; another delegate who was walking 'very close to [them]' joined in, but she 'wanted to have a conversation about prostitution'. As Molly explained, there is a conceptual and political divide between 'people who look at prostitution as violence' and those who view 'prostitution as work', which also plays out as a 'generation gap'. It seems that the walk was long enough for the 'prostitution as violence' representative to 'fe[el] silenced' by the other walkers, who were representing the 'sex worker' conceptualisation. The next day, the 'prostitution as violence' representative, 'vulnerable' and

'quivering', approached Molly to explain that the conversation had been a difficult experience for her. In this case, the longer-than-expected transit walk, because of the circumstantial group of walkers and the depth of discussion that they were able to/forced to enter into, the 'violence' conceptualisation of prostitution/sex work was broken off from the conceptual chain, or 'silenced' back into the trace of prostitution/sex work. In Molly's reading, there was also an element of 'if the shoe fits' about the 'violence' versus 'work' conceptualisations of prostitution/sex work, because of the association of the 'violence' understanding with an 'older feminist sort of view'; it is impossible to *know* to what extent the 'silenc[ing]' occurred because of the 'violence' conceptualisation or because of the ageism of the 'generation gap'. In this example, it is impossible to extricate the conceptual contestation between prostitution/sex work as violence and work from the 'circumstances' of the walk that produced the conversation, and the embodied identities of those occupying the 'shoe' of delegate-walker.

The 'skimpy clothes presentation' incident

The incident that I delve into here occurred at the FWSA conference, in a session that was chaired by one of my participants, Rachel. I have named the incident the 'skimpy clothes presentation', in line with the argument of the paper, to render it recognisable among the other incidents to which I refer in the forthcoming discussion. The incident was mentioned in a number of different places in my research encounters: the abstract from the presentation is in the conference programme; Rachel wrote a brief reflection on the experience in her notes; the incident was discussed during the lunchtime meeting for participants; Lucy referred to the incident in her post-conference interview, and Ruth and Rachel, who decided to have their post-conference interviews together, discussed the incident again. I did not attend this session; I was not in the room where *something happened*. In piecing together the representations of the incident, I have tried to omit the specific details of the presentation, and those involved, in order to prevent identification where it might cause harm. However it is impossible to analyse this type of incident and omit or alter all of the key details; the objective of the analysis is to identify some of the ways in which conceptual

contestation at conferences occurs at both an embodied and a conceptual level. I have trod carefully in my presentation of the incident, but it is inevitable that some risk is involved in exploring some of the 'dirty laundry' of conferences. I first set out the incident and the conceptual aspect; I then work through the 'shoe' and 'if the shoe fits' aspects of the incidents, teasing apart and then bringing together the different strands, and 'mark out' these questions in relation to the processes of conceptual contestation and negotiation that I set out in previous chapters.

The 'skimpy clothes presentation' incident took place during a parallel session at FWSA. This session was not a panel as such; it consisted of four papers on the same broad theme, which had been grouped by the organisers. A short window for questions followed each paper. The third speaker presented on the sexualisation of women in media and youth culture; he presented the argument that women should not wear such skimpy clothes, that the tendency to wear 'sexy' clothes went against traditional dress conventions, pandered to the male gaze, and that women wearing such clothes were using their bodies to get ahead in their careers. Audience members challenged this argument in a heated manner; one audience member told the presenter to sit down. The fourth speaker then gave their presentation in a reduced time slot.

I have deliberately recounted a pared-down version of the incident as a starting point, so that I can build up the representation as I focus on different elements of the 'circumstances'. However, before I foreground the 'circumstances', I will briefly set out the conceptual contestation that was at issue here. The argument that the presentation took can be parsed as follows: (i) women's attire is causally linked with the way that women are treated, (ii) women can avoid being treated badly by dressing more conservatively, (iii) some women deliberately use the causal relationship between appearance and treatment to 'get ahead' in their careers. Both (ii) and (iii) are built on the causal link of (i); the difference is established by what women decide to do with the causal link: do they avoid skimpy clothing, as in (ii), or do they make use of its effect, as in (iii)? As per the

argument of the paper, some women contribute to the association of clothes with the sexualisataion of women by using the association to gain a type of sexual advantage in professional situations. The counter-argument that was evoked in the discussion opposed the causality of clothes leading to treatment: women should be able to go wherever they wish and expect to be treated with respect and without constant sexualisation. Concepts were mobilised in this presentation which, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, are considered relevant to gender; as such, I take the incident to be a manifestation of a conceptual contestation that concerns the umbrella concept of gender.

The principal conceptual negotiation taking place in this incident involved the relationship between clothes and the sexual treatment of women. In the presenter's argument, women's bodies are inherently sexual, and clothes act to conceal or reveal this sexuality. In the opposing argument, women's bodies should not be understood as inherently sexual, so clothes should not be seen as acting upon a woman's sexuality. The opposing argument therefore breaks the conceptual chain constructed by the presenter that links women's bodies with sexuality. Both constructing and breaking the chain are conceptual performatives which are citational of discourses circulating in academic and activist, and 'popular' feminism, and in mainstream media. In Chapter 6, I reflected on the role of 'elsewhere-ness' for the success of a conceptual performative; one example I gave was the workshop on 'fat studies', where the association between fat studies and women and gender studies was taken to be so obvious – and yet felt so alien to me – that I felt compelled to accept 'fat' into the en/closure of my concept of gender without question. In this incident, the argument was to some degree from 'elsewhere': the paper analysed a national context that was not the UK, and, within that, a genre which is not particularly well known in the UK; the presenter was listed as belonging to a university that was not in the UK. However, the argument that he was making, and some of the academic work that he was using to reinforce the argument, were familiar enough to the conference delegates that the presenter's conceptual performative – linking the concept of sexuality as inherent to the concept of women – could not go unchallenged.

The opening remark to the discussion of the paper was contributed by a delegate who had travelled from India to the conference, and who directly implicated the presenter's argument into the heated debates surrounding the 'Delhi gang rape', where a university student was gang raped on a bus. The 'Delhi gang rape', rather than focusing on clothes, in fact focused on public space. The audience member's comment therefore brought in another 'elsewhere' to the picture, which situated the presenter's discussion in discourses of women-blaming for rape. Interestingly, the Delhi rape case caused such outrage in part because the woman who was raped was a 'respectable' university student who was out and about in public space (Dutta and Sircar, 2013; Phadke, 2013; Roychowdhury, 2013). The audience member who alluded to this case recognised the presenter's argument as citational of similar, but broader, discussions of women in public space in India, where the role of space is to some degree equated with (and combined with) the role of clothes that the presenter focused on. The audience member's comment contested the presenter's conceptual performative; it could be considered that the audience's reaction to the presentation countered the conceptual performative to the extent that it was completely quashed.

But to what extent was the conceptual contestation between the concepts of women and sexuality affected by the 'circumstances' of the conference context in which it occurred? How did the concepts come to mean what they meant in this instance? Returning to my brief initial narration of the incident, there are some specific conference 'circumstances' that I can draw attention to as contributing to the way in which the contestation unfolded, such as the timing of sessions, the question and answer session, the way in which the presenter is received. There is an overarching conference convention which links these 'circumstances' together: the role of chair (moderator). Before researching the FWSA conference, I was already aware of the importance of the role of chair in, for example, introducing the presenter so that they are already established before starting to present (Henderson, 2012a), or acting as a focal point for a presenter to orient themselves in the room before the session begins

(Henderson, 2015a). However I had not fully explored the role of the chair during the session, and two occurrences at the FWSA conference led me to explore the role further: firstly, Rachel's involvement as chair in the above incident gave me insight into the responsibility of the chair in the management of the session, secondly, the conference organisers asked me to step in to chair a session, so I was able to chair autoethnographically. In her professional development guide on conferences for newer researchers, Becker (2014) acknowledges the importance – and some of the challenges – of the chairing role, but the genre in which Becker is writing demands more of a 'how to' approach, so the implication of the role of chair in the knowledge production at conferences is missing from her portrayal. In the following discussion, I situate the incident that occurred at FWSA in the argument that the 'circumstances' helped to *produce* the quashing of the presenter's conceptual performative, particularly from the perspective of the chair.

Shoe/chair

In the first narration of the 'skimpy clothes presentation' incident, I noted that the session in which the presentation and discussion occurred was a parallel session, which involved four papers that had been grouped by the conference organising committee; each paper was followed by a short discussion. Within the session, especially because the presenters had not coordinated their session together, fairness dictated that time should be divided equally between the presenters. The only way to ensure this 'fairness' is to appoint a chair to monitor the presentation and discussion times. The 'chair' is a role with props: a chair, cards to hold up which state how much time is remaining, a time-keeping device. The designated person must occupy the chair (or 'shoe'), watch the clock as others have watched it before them, hold up the cards or point to the clock as they have seen others do. The power that is citationally associated with these objects, this place in the room, invest the chair's occupant with a disciplinary role in the session they are presiding over.

During the session that I autoethnographically chaired at FWSA, I now recognise the shift in attitude which signified that I had fully slipped

into the 'shoe' that had been allocated to me as chair. Although I was interested in the papers being presented in this panel, I was aware of becoming increasingly irritated with the presenters. As it became clear that none of the presenters were keeping to time, they shifted in my perception from colleagues talking about their work (I was not yet fully in the shoe/chair role), to people who were requiring 'active chairing' on my part (I slipped into the shoe/chair role). In the interview with Ruth and Rachel, we all shared experiences of 'active chairing', and I noticed when listening to the recording that our tone changes when we refer to people whose presentations or questions took up more than their allotted time. When I recounted my chairing experience at FWSA to Ruth and Rachel, I explained that 'they all wanted to go over'; my use of 'wanted' suggests that the presenters were intentionally taking up time. Ruth narrated the experience of a question and answer session for a panel that she chaired at another conference; she referred to the audience member who spoke as 'the one that kicked off and I couldn't shut her up'. The expressions 'kicked off' and 'shut her up' are redolent of aggressive confrontation; Ruth represents the role of chair in her experience as keeping order and discipline in a high-intensity interaction. Even within the skills-based genre of professional development guides, Kenway, Epstein and Boden (2005, p. 44) employ this tone: they state that 'people who overrun their time in their presentation become very unpopular, as they are stealing time from someone else'. It is a simple but important conclusion to draw about the effect of dividing up time equally on knowledge production that, if time is not allotted to each presenter, their ideas cannot be heard. In her notes on the 'skimpy clothes presentation' incident, Rachel stated that she 'let the session overrun and eat into the final speaker'. The expression 'eat into' is evocative of the irretrievably lost time for the development of the fourth presenter's ideas.

Although Kenway, Epstein and Boden (ibid.) suggest that it is the presenter who becomes 'unpopular' if they overrun, they miss the role of the chair in managing the timing of the session, and the degree to which the chair becomes 'unpopular' for *allowing* a presenter to overrun. Anna, who was chairing the final session of the day at FWSA, states that she 'got in trouble' because, although the session started late, she took the decision to

give the presenters 'the time they'd set aside to come and speak for. Keynotes often take priority in the schedule; this was particularly the case at IAWS, where there was a hierarchical split between the time and prestige given to the plenary sessions as compared to the ten minute slots given to the presenters in the parallel sessions. Nirja commented that '[her] own paper was a flop' because there were so many presenters in such a short slot, and the chair did not rigorously divide up the time. The chair 'apologised to [Nirja], "Sorry, there was no time for you."' When Nirja recounted this, we both laughed about it, in a similar way to the mirth that accompanied conversations about 'the graveyard slot': there is an inevitability about being told that time does not allow for your presentation. This inevitability is associated with the 'shoe' of chairing: in order for the chair to issue commands about timing that reduce or remove a presenter's opportunity to share their ideas, the chair must fit into the shoe/chair.

If a chair may become 'unpopular' for allowing a session to overrun, they may become equally 'unpopular' if they intervene and prevent a presenter or audience member from finishing their presentation or question, as Rachel was obliged to do in the discussion of the 'skimpy clothes presentation'. Stopping a presenter is, after all, far more difficult than allowing a speaker to overrun. At a conference for professional teachers, a delegate attended a plenary session which would culminate in a drinks reception (Holly Henderson, personal communication, 1 July 2014). The presenter spoke for longer than his allotted time, and in addition he devoted much of his presentation to advertising resources which he had developed. The audience members shuffled restlessly in their seats, and eventually, a member of the teachers' association organising committee asked the presenter to stop. The presenter then asked the audience if he should stop, and no one spoke. It seemed that, even though the audience apparently shared the opinion with the self-appointed chair that the speaker should stop, the act of 'shutting up' the speaker was too violent to condone. Catarina (FWSA) also recounted an experience where telling a presenter to stop backfired. She was chairing a session at a conference which started half an hour late; she had been instructed to 'be very strict with time', i.e. to firmly occupy the shoe/chair. She recounts the incident as follows:

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> there was one [speaker] that didn't [keep to time], and she'd had 20
> minutes. I'd told her- I told her at 18 minutes that she had two
> minutes left, at 24 minutes she was still going for it, and I- and I- and
> I said, 'I'm sorry you have to stop now,' and she got very grumpy,
> and um and I apologised, but she was still quite grumpy.

Some of the features of chairing that I have mentioned occur here. The expression 'going for it,' which Rachel also used in her account of the audience's reaction to the 'skimpy clothes presentation', seems to represent Catarina's shift from audience member to shoe/chair that I evoked above in Ruth's and my accounts of chairing presentations that overran. Catarina hesitates twice in her narration before quoting her request to the speaker to stop, which seems to evoke the difficulty of issuing such an instruction, even in retrospect. In this incident, Catarina was enacting the conference organisers' request for strict chairing, but her need to apologise reflects the way in which the role of chair – especially in the case of having to stop a speaker – melds with the embodied presence of the chair's occupant. This melding is particularly clear in the second instalment of this incident, where the speaker approached Catarina as she was about to leave the conference. She accosted Catarina, 'Why do *you* get to over time and I don't?' When Catarina had given her own presentation, the speaker, retaining the sense of injustice about Catarina's chairing, had checked the time to see how long she spoke for. Even when giving her own presentation, and in the hands of another chair, the chair/shoe still remained attached to Catarina.

As Catarina's example shows, even if a chair is enacting the role in a strictly mechanical fashion, restricting each time slot according to the clock, their citational actions of holding up 'two minutes left' signs and informing speakers that their time is up may still be taken as a personal affront from one academic to another. One problem inherent to chairing is that a chair is likely to be chairing a session in their research field, but is expected to act as a neutral referee or arbiter whose primary allegiance is to the clock and the schedule. Conferences are set up differently with respect to who chairs a session. At FWSA, the chairs were not necessarily involved in the same research field, although, as in the case of Rachel chairing the 'skimpy

clothes presentation,' all were involved in feminist, women's studies and gender research. They tended to be FWSA members, often PhD students or early career researchers. This was also mainly the case with NWSA. At IAWS, however, all parallel sessions were chaired by the sub-theme convenors, who had also selected the papers; moreover they were to give a summary in the plenary tent at the end of the conference on the issues that had been raised in the sub-theme. The IAWS chairs were more senior scholars in the field, and they were installed at the front of each sub-theme room for the duration of the afternoon parallel sessions. It is when the timing of the session is in the hands of an interested party that the role of chair enters into a deeper involvement with the conceptualisation that is unfolding in the session.

If the shoe/chair fits

The role of shoe/chair which is constituted by the props and schedule is a 'shoe' that is not adapted for occupancy by someone who is intellectually and/or emotionally involved in the topics that are being presented on. The shoe/chair seems to involve mechanically stopping and starting the clock, but other concerns may interrupt the enactment of this role. As Ruth stated, 'When they're saying something really interesting, you don't *want to* [end the discussion], and then you stick your stupid "5 minutes" sign up' (Rachel and Ruth interview). The resulting effect of the collision between chair and interested or involved listener is that other factors, including conceptual allegiances, enter into play alongside time in deciding how the session is split between presenters, and between presentations and discussions. Furthermore, whereas the neutral shoe/chair selects audience members to ask questions on a first come, first served basis, the chair may be motivated to select audience members on other grounds. In the 'skimpy clothes presentation' session, although this was not Rachel's area of research, as I remarked this presentation resonated with more general debates surrounding the relationship between women's behaviour and treatment, so Rachel was likely to have some stake in the conceptual contestation that was occurring in the discussion following the presentation. Rachel was faced with a difficult decision: it was clear that the discussion after the third presentation could continue for some time, but

there was still one presenter left to speak. The decision to stop the discussion was a difficult one; shutting down a heated debate is a risky step to take. Rachel was both the time-keeper who 'had to kind of shut [the discussion] down' (shoe/chair) and the participant (not fitting the shoe/chair) who 'didn't want to shut it down'.

There are a number of different ways in which the chair's occupant can become involved in the conceptual negotiations that occur in the session they are chairing. In addition to regulating the timing of the presentations, the question and answer slot is an area where the chair becomes involved in the direction that the discussion takes. Ruth referred to a panel that she had chaired at conference which was in her research area, and where the conceptual constellation expressed by the panel reflected her own work (Rachel and Ruth interview). Becker (2014, p. 33) advises inexperienced chairs that, 'If the speaker has been contentious, you will have to referee between disagreeing experts', but she does not advise on how to deal with a situation where you are also a 'disagreeing expert'. To avoid accusations of 'endorsing' one conceptualisation, the first question that Ruth took was from a member of the audience who she knew would represent another side of the debate. The audience member, the aforementioned 'one who kicked off', then spoke for the entire time allotted for questions, even ignoring Ruth's attempts to intervene; there was no possibility of a return conceptual contestation. The reason that Rachel gave for allowing the discussion to overrun in the 'skimpy clothes presentation' session across her three different representations of the incident was that she felt that the discussion was 'important' (notebook), 'important', 'needed to be had' and 'required' (lunchtime discussion), 'need[ed]' (Rachel and Ruth, interview). As soon as the chair departs from timing as the key 'importance' of the role, the chair cannot fully fit the 'shoe', and the notion of 'importance' enters into shaky terrain. Does 'importance', as in Ruth's incident, refer to proving the impartiality of the chair by ensuring that a balanced discussion is heard? Or, as in the session I chaired at FWSA, is it the chair's role to 'control[] the relevance of like what people are talking about'; if questions are on 'something [that] kind of organically comes out of [a session]' but have 'nothing to do with the papers'? (EH in Rachel and Ruth interview). The

chair's opinions on the answers to these questions, and the actions they take based on these answers, shape the nature of the discussion and thus the available space for different conceptual contestations to play out.

One of my IAWS participants was faced with the necessity of deciding what was 'important' for the discussion (anonymised interview). In one of the sessions she was chairing, a conference delegate who was at that time personally involved in the issue that was being discussed in the panel asked the chair if time could be set aside for her to present her own case. The chair was faced with the decision of cutting into the other presenters' slots and/or discussion time with the intervention, or of running the session according to the schedule. She decided that the session should run according to plan, but suggested that the issue could be brought up in the discussion section. It would have been difficult for the chair to shut down these personal representations of the issues, especially after refusing to allot formal time to the delegate in question. However the 'importance' of the personal account that dominated the discussion time concealed another competing 'importance'. One of my other participants, who was presenting her paper in the session, had, because of the squeezed presentation slot, omitted the part of her paper where she would join the concept of sexuality onto the otherwise heteronormative conceptualisation of gender that was being discussed in the panel; as she skipped over that section (in addition to many other sections of the paper), she thought that she could include this issue in the question and answer time. Because of the personal cases that were raised in the discussion session, and because of the impossibility of the chair shutting these cases down, the concept of non-normative sexuality remained in the trace of gender for this panel.

In Rachel's decision to allow the discussion to overrun into the fourth presenter's time slot in the 'skimpy clothes presentation' session, competing versions of 'importance' contributed to her decision, which then led to the formation of a particular conceptualisation in the shared space of the panel. She herself felt that the paper was '*quite* dodgy' in its message (Rachel and Ruth, interview), and she recognised that 'particular women in the audience needed the space to comment' (Rachel's notes). However, once

audience members had begun critiquing the presenter's conceptul chain (linking women and women's bodies with sexuality), she felt that he was being told, 'No I'm sorry you can't critique these [fashion trends]' (Rachel and Ruth interview), but was not given the time to respond. On the one hand, extending the discussion time had allowed audience members to shatter the conceptual performative that the presenter had constructed between women's bodies and sexuality, indeed he was asked to sit down; on the other hand, there had not been time for the presenter to defend his argument, to repair or amend his conceptual performative. Rachel felt obliged within the role of shoe/chair to stop the escalating discussion in order to preserve some time for the fourth presenter to give her paper, but the conceptual performative was allowed to remain quashed.

<p align="center">***</p>

In my discussion of the 'skimpy clothes presentation' and of chairing more broadly, I have shown how decisions made within an apparently mechanical role can impact on the ways in which conceptual contestations play out within conference sessions. The chair's role or 'shoe' is comprised of citational props and actions which invest its occupant with the power to regulate the session. Any conceptual performatives uttered in the presentation must be discussed in a compressed time-slot where there is reduced scope for a range of ideas and conceptual contestations to be aired. This time, and indeed decisions regarding the questions that are taken, lie in the hands of the chair.

I have given very little information about the intersecting identities of those involved in the 'skimpy clothes presentation' incident, including the chair. In my representation of the incident, I have implied that occupying the role of chair is in the hands of the occupant, and that fitting or not fitting into the shoe/chair depends on the chair's interpretation of the role. What I have not allowed for is the possibility that the occupant of the chair may or may not be allowed by others to fit into the role, because of their embodied intersecting identities, such as age, gender, status, and so on. When I said, '"No more questions"' in the session that I chaired at FWSA, why did 'this

woman [go] past me and [go] to the speaker you know for approval to speak' (EH in Ruth and Rachel interview)? Why, when Ruth was chairing at a seminar which had already involved other presentations of 20 minutes, did a presenter 'carr[y] on for *40* minutes' (Ruth and Rachel interview, emphasis in original)? In both cases, Ruth and I indicated the failure of our citational gestures to keep to time. In my account, I stated that, when the presenter '[went] past me' to gain permission to speak, 'I was there like that [gesture] you know'; my wordless gesture evokes my sudden redundancy as chair. In Ruth's case, she 'kept giving [the speaker] the "five [minutes remaining] sign"', but the speaker 'just kept looking at [her] and almost sniggering and then just carrying on'; the sign lost its citational potency because the speaker did not recognise its holder as bearing authority. In the end, it was Ruth's doctoral supervisor who intervened with, '"You need to *stop*"' (emphasis in original). Ruth felt that it may have been 'an age thing', as the speaker was older than her; it seemed that only someone with the age and status of Ruth's supervisor could enact the shoe/chair role in this case.

The question of 'if the shoe/chair fits' can, in case of failure, lead to particular viewpoints and conceptual performatives being aired rather than others. There is also the matter of the competing identity characteristics of the other people involved in the other 'shoes' of the room: the presenter and the audience. While the chair may be 'deposed' by audience members or speakers, the chair can also contribute to the 'shoe' fitting or not fitting others in the session. Amritha and her friends compared the different IAWS sessions they had attended, and they noticed that 'some of the chairpersons were extremely rude', and that 'certain people were given more time and certain people were not'; I also noted in my IAWS notebook that, in a session I attended, the 'chair told the presenter that her presentation wasn't finished'. This mode of chairing incorporated a validation process of the presenters, where the time given and the attitude shown to the presenter affected the extent to which the presenter 'shoe' could fit. Elizabeth also experienced this when her dissertation supervisor (advisor), who had been invited to chair her session at NWSA, stepped out of her role of chair and began to ask questions that Elizabeth would have expected in a supervision meeting; the chair, by taking up her role of supervisor, shifted Elizabeth's

'shoe' from presenter to student. Rachel was acutely conscious of the implication that allowing the discussion of the 'skimpy clothes presentation' to overrun would have on the fit of the fourth presenter's 'shoe': the fourth presenter was a Master's student at a conference where most presenters were doctoral students or academics, and Rachel did not want to suggest that the more junior status of the fourth presenter was the reason that the discussion could overrun (Rachel and Ruth interview).

I asked at the start of this chapter if it is enough to claim a particular meaning of gender for that claim to succeed. I asked if a performative utterance could bring about a reconceptualisation of gender, if the citationality of that conceptual performative could explain *how* gender comes to mean what it means. In this chapter, I have reintroduced to my argument the 'appropriate circumstances' that Austin (2004, p. 163) included in his definition of a performative act; instead of understanding 'appropriate circumstances' as the precise 'here and now' that ensures the success or failure of a conceptual performative, I have interpreted 'circumstances' as citational in and of themselves. Over the course of the chapter, I have developed an understanding of conferences as helping to *produce* – rather than just *containing* – conceptual contestations. In bringing together the knowledge production aspects of conferences with the embodied and material conditions, I have sought to develop a mode of representing conferences that values both aspects and that views these aspects, which are often divorced from each other in representations of conferences, as mutually constitutive. In the different examples of 'circumstances' that I have provided, I have attempted to include a wide variety of different elements of conference experience, including the relevance of all-too-embodied activities to a delegate's involvement in the conference. Using the expression 'if the shoe fits, wear it' as a springboard for my representation of 'circumstances', I have portrayed the different 'shoes' that are involved in conferences, and the effect that fitting into the shoe – or stretching it, may have on the way in which conference experience plays out. In the final section, I have focused on the relationship between the 'shoe' that is the role of chairing a session, and the way in which the 'shoe' – or chair – fits its occupant, shapes the time available for presentations and

discussions, as well as who may speak and why. Through this example, I have developed the argument presented in Chapter 6 by incorporating 'appropriate circumstances' as citational and as contributing to the success or failure of a conceptual performative. The argument now states that a conceptual performative requires two sets of citational factors to succeed or fail: conceptual citationality and citationality of the 'circumstances' in which the performative is uttered and received. In this argument, gender comes to mean what it means at least in part through the citing of 'appropriate circumstances'.

In addition to its task of developing conceptual performativity, this chapter has also engaged in the enactment of the third stage of deconstruction, as set out in Chapter 3: 'marking out'. In this chapter, I have flipped the focus from the acts of conceptuality to the circumstances or conditions which contain, or indeed produce, the movement by which one concept is linked with or moved over into the en/closure of another. In my exploration of conferences as sites of embodied knowledge production and conceptual contestation, I have 'marked out' some of the conditions which help to establish – or destabilise – the apparent concept-ness of a concept. Chapter 8 addresses the final stage of deconstruction: 'chink/crevice'.

Chapter 8
Eventful gender:
en/closure – 'chink/crevice' – en/closure

From en/closure to 'chink/crevice' and back again

Eventful gender is about trying the impossible to see what happens. This was the pre-emptive 'definition' of eventful gender that I included in Chapter 1; as the thesis moves into the final stage of deconstruction, I now return to the textual place marked by this definition. By way of an introduction to the concept of eventful gender, I stated that 'trying the impossible to see what happens' would underpin the theorisations that would unfold in subsequent chapters and, alternatively, that it could circumvent the need for further explanation at all. In the latter case, 'happening' was understood as 'an openness to being moved, swayed, dislocated by things happening – things happening to gender, things happening to me in my travels with gender'; the potential of 'happening' was framed in its 'fissured, split' impossibility, because of the difficulty of operating with a 'bedrock' that is in fact comprised of uncertainty and disorganisation. Thus I began the project with an instinctual, aspirational notion of eventful gender and what it could be; I have since travelled through theoretical arguments which have built a cumulatively constructed conceptualisation of eventful gender. Yet I am obliged to ask, as I hover at the en/closure of the thesis, if I have circled back to where I started, if the painstaking theoretical work of the interim stages has brought me back to what I felt I knew all along. This chapter represents a version of an answer to this question; as such the chapter contains both the crux of the theorisation and its simultaneous destabilisation.

'Chink/crevice' is the final stage of deconstruction that I set out in Chapter 3, following the stages of 'critical concept', 'surrounding' and 'marking out'. The notion of 'chink/crevice' is aligned with the idea of eventful gender, to the conceptualisation of which the thesis as a whole, and this chapter in particular, is dedicated. As with eventful gender,

'chink/crevice' is an impossibility. It is the split in the en/closure, the tiny crack through which we seem to be able to glimpse the glow of beyond. Importantly, we cannot fully access this beyond. We cannot, as 'demolition' accounts of deconstruction would have it (see p. 27), stamp down the en/closure and trample on its shattered pieces, basking in the newness of the beyond. For as soon as we try to access the beyond, we cast it in the spatio-temporalising terms that shore up our means of making meaning, and the beyond recedes further out of reach. Nor, as in the nihilism critiques of deconstruction (see p. 27), do we knock down the en/closure and find ourselves in a vacuum of nothingness. Instead of reaching for the beyond, we can only carefully explore the limits of the en/closure, layer by layer, with the hope that glimpsing the glow of beyond can help us to adjust the ways in which we understand the en/closure which we inhabit. We cannot make the crevice open – its opening *happens* when we surround and mark out, and so deconstruct, a critical concept. In this sense, 'trying the impossible to see what happens' can be understood as undertaking the impossible task of deliberately working to open the chink in the en/closure of the concept of gender so as to see what happens. This task is impossible because the chink or crevice cannot be deliberately opened – we can say that the glimpse through the crevice can only be experienced as an *event*.

Now this thesis has already dealt in a number of types of event. Events form the context of the study, in that conferences and seminars are organised 'events' of knowledge production. In that sense of the term 'event' – in fact a highly organised and structured gathering – signifies the opposite of the event that I refer to as inimical to 'chink/crevice'. Secondly, I have referred to a number of incidents which have occurred during my 'official fieldwork' at conferences and during my doctoral trajectory as a whole. These incidents represent 'events' which have occurred *within* organised events. In this understanding of 'event', the incident can be classified as 'something that happens' (*New Oxford Dictionary of English*, Pearsall and Hanks, 2001, p. 637). These two opposed understandings of the term 'event' have met in this thesis, which has after all sought to account for unforeseen events that occur within highly conventional events. The third type of event that I have referred to in the thesis, and which is related to the

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understanding of an event as 'something that happens', is the notion of a conceptual event. In this understanding of an event, it is not that *something* happens. Indeed it may appear that *nothing* has happened, for the happening takes place at a conceptual level, the level of chain and trace. On the other hand, the conceptual event may be accompanied or caused by an event, in the form of an intervention or question, for example, as in the narrative of asking a question about race that I included in Chapter 6.

Conceptual events that involve gender lie at the heart of this thesis, and indeed I could say that the heart of the thesis is the eventfulness of gender. Thus far, chapters of the thesis have developed different theoretical explanations for eventful gender; each of the different explanations could suffice on its own, but there is also an intended cumulative effect where conceptual events are situated in – and conceptualised as arising from – the 'events' where something happens within the 'events' which have been organised for academic knowledge production and dissemination.

Four explanations for eventful gender

In Chapter 3, I conceptualised gender as a deconstructive signifier. In this understanding of how gender comes to mean what it means, I contrasted the perspective where the meaning of gender is determined in its *use* with gender as having an *inherent* meaning. The conceptual eventfulness of gender arises from the destabilisation that it causes to the literal/figurative binary when its meaning is discussed. We can understand gender as a 'heliotropic metaphor', where its referent cannot be known in literal terms. Gender, understood in this way, is an inherently eventful concept: because gender has no fixed meaning, things happen to gender, and gender happens, and both of these happenings define what gender 'is' and how it comes to mean what it means. At a conceptual level, it could be argued that this explanation of the eventfulness of gender is sufficient. However a number of facets are neglected by an argument that is limited to the workings of signification and metaphoricity. After all, conceptual work does not occur in an abstract location, untouched by human hands. This is where the empirical component of my project brings the conceptual workings of gender into the context of academic knowledge construction

and production. The second of the four explanations of eventful gender, which are bridged by the account of fieldwork presented in Chapter 4, places gender in the hands of gender researchers who attended the FWSA, NWSA and IAWS conferences. The explanation presented in Chapter 5 as 'critical concept' considers that gender is made to mean through conceptual contestation, where gender's meaning is pushed and pulled in enactments of definitional politics. Gender is understood here as the *concept of* gender. Concepts are not isolated from each other, and defined in their concept-ness; rather, concepts are defined against each other in conceptual chains, and so always at risk of blending with or becoming other concepts. When gender researchers engage in conceptual contestation, they push and pull at the chains, thus determining what appears fully present in the concept of gender, and what is relegated to the zone of the trace. In this explanation, the eventfulness of gender is caused by – and responsible for – the (re)construction of conceptual chains surrounding gender by those using the term, and the pushing and pulling that they enact at the en/closure that separates gender from the zone of the trace.

The explanation offered in Chapter 5 introduced those using the concept of gender into the picture, but it could still be considered that the explanation was lacking a convincing argument for how gender comes to mean what it means. The argument in Chapter 5 suggested that it is possible merely to *say* that gender means something – to arrange the conceptual chains in a particular way or to pull a notion of gender from the trace over into the en/closure – and for this to succeed. This suggestion, which is named as 'conceptual performativity' in Chapter 6, implies that simply making a conceptual assertion is enough for it to succeed. The explanation in Chapter 6 adopts the version of performativity that Derrida and Butler use in their work, where the success of a performative speech act depends not on the precise circumstances of the utterance of the act (as suggested by Austin), but on the way in which the performative cites previous (and future) uses. In the citational version of conceptual performativity, it is possible to say that gender 'is' something and for that act of conceptualisation to succeed, *as long as* there is some precedent for the conceptual manoeuvre. This explanation is complicated by the notion of

academic mobility, where conceptual chains that are familiar in one academic context jangle against unfamiliar conceptual constellations. Academic travel, in particular conference attendance, was set up as the context in which these leaps, or events, may occur.

While Chapter 6 constructed conferences as *containing* conceptual performatives, Chapter 7 argued that the conference context, with its conventions and roles, helps to *produce* conceptual performativity. The explanation presented in Chapter 7 developed the notion of the 'appropriate circumstances' that Austin parenthetically included in his definition of performative speech acts as obligatory for a performative speech act to succeed. While the citationality understanding of performativity that I addressed in Chapter 6 diverted the means of success of a performative away from the circumstances in which it is uttered, the 'appropriate circumstances' argument that I constructed in Chapter 7 brought together the precise circumstances of utterance with citationality.

Although it may seem that eventfulness has shifted location in each development of the argument, each new stage has not left behind the eventfulness of the previous stages. We can reformulate the argument of Chapter 7 as follows: the potential meanings of an 'inherently' eventful concept are contested at their limits and borders by speaking subjects who have different investments in different constellations of gender; when these eventful constellations travel and collide with other unfamiliar conceptualisations, at conferences for example, this can create events where concepts seem to 'leap' into the en/closure of gender; the conference context that seems to contain the 'leaping' and the contestations of the concept in fact plays a part in creating – or stifling – events. As I stated, the 'bedrock' of the study was already eventful; each layer of the deconstruction (understood as 'desedimentation', see p. 27) has its own form of eventfulness, meaning that none of the layers are stable or predictable. Hence 'trying the impossible to see what happens': I have tried to work with an always already eventful construction in order to reach towards the event of the 'chink/crevice' and a glimpse of the glow emanating from beyond the en/closure.

As I stated at the start of this chapter, the 'chink/crevice' stage of the deconstruction of the concept of gender that this thesis has performed is both the crux of the theorisation and its destabilisation. At the crux of the theorisation, I turn toward the event of the 'chink/crevice' and the glimpsed potential for a concept of eventful gender. Yet as I turn toward the 'chink/crevice', I simultaneously turn back towards the en/closure: the two actions are inextricably linked. This chapter is thus faced with two mutually constitutive tasks. I must explore the final theorisation of eventful gender – the impossibility, the happening. This exploration, in seeking out the 'chink/crevice', is equally an evaluation of the other explanations. In establishing the 'critical concept', in 'surrounding' and 'marking out', have I allowed for or indeed foreclosed eventfulness? How does the cumulative explanation of how gender means what it means incorporate inexplicability and unpredictability?

Happens to eventful gender?

A lot has happened to gender since the narratives of incidents that I presented in Chapter 2. When I narrated the incidents, I wrote them with the sense that something had happened to gender, that there had been an event where gender had been subjected to conceptualisation. I now return to the first of the three incidents (the new researchers' publishing workshop, pp. 39-42) that I used to frame the rationale for this study, and work through it using the four stages of eventfulness that I have outlined; I reflect on the effect of the theorisation on my understanding of the incident, and ask if the theorisation has explained the eventfulness away.

Newer researchers' publishing workshop revisited

This was the incident where I was approached by two of the workshop participants with comments about gender research. One participant addressed me with a comment about gendered success regarding assessment: although men are supposed to be more successful at exams and women at coursework, he told me that he himself had met with more success in coursework. Another participant informed me that women ate less than men: there were more women than men at his university and there

was always a lot of food left over at events. I now return to the incident and re-narrate it using the four-stage theorisation of eventful gender.

Gender as an inherently eventful concept. If, as I have argued, we consider that gender is an inherently eventful concept, which has no inherent meaning other than that it has no fixed, stable inherent meaning (and is therefore open to events happening), then the resultant understanding of gender is a concept that is primarily defined in use. This renders gender vulnerable to being defined in different ways at any given moment. The use to which both of the workshop participants put gender was to signify that people can be divided into two groups: men and women, and that these are absolute groups with associated characteristics. In the comment on coursework, the workshop participant was in fact troubling this notion by stating the fact that he clearly belonged in the male group but that the associated 'male' behavioural characteristic of performing better in exams than coursework did not fit him. Although he was troubling the deterministic binary construction of gender, he set up gender research as taking this form. The comment on gendered food consumption did not try to trouble the construction: in the participant's view, his 'test' regarding the quantity of food left over at events at his university was a form of proof that there *are* behavioural differences between men and women.

The eventfulness of conceptual contestation. The problem posed by working with gender as an unfixed concept is that there is indeed nothing to stop gender being made to mean a binary construction with scientifically proven differences between each group. Gender can mean this just as much as it can mean MOC, MSM, prostitution or sex work, and so on. Because I had not elaborated my concept of gender when I identified myself as researching gender, the participants brought their understanding of gender to me. This was therefore less of a conceptual contestation than a conceptual construction that they presented to me. I had brought gender into the room, but the participants constructed the concept of gender that we would discuss. The contestation that they were asking me to engage in was related to the debates that they evoked on assessment and physiological difference, not the concept of gender: the en/closure of gender was already fixed.

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Conceptual performatives as events. Both of the comments that the workshop participants made could be classed as conceptual performatives: they made claims that, in so doing, brought gender to mean in a particular way. Neither of the conceptualisations of gender that the participants engaged in was new to me – both comments were citational of debates that I have encountered in academic contexts, as well as mainstream media. As such, the conceptual manoeuvre of associating my mention of 'gender' with a deterministic binary concept of gender did not come from 'nowhere'. It did however feel 'addressed from elsewhere', in part because of the context of a professional development workshop where I did not expect to defend gender research (as opposed to, for example, a seminar on gender where I might expect some challenging questions). The concept of gender that I had brought into the room (without conceptualising it) was alienated in language by the construction that it was given by the two workshop participants. I was wrong-footed because the conceptualisation that they gave to my mention of gender was not what I would have uttered, but neither was it unfamiliar enough to constitute a 'leap'. It begged an answer that followed a citational line of argument, an expected opposition which worked within the same conceptualisation of gender that had been set out for me. Indeed I resentfully engaged in some of this discussion, feeling that I had been given a very narrow route to follow.

Circumstances contribute to eventfulness. A set of circumstances contributed to the way in which this incident played out. The workshop convention of providing a quick introductory statement often results in the shorthand expression and construction of participants' identity and research. In this case, I brought the concept of gender into the room in my introductory statement without being able to explain what I meant by researching gender; it had already been conceptualised for me by other participants at the time we came to discuss it at lunchtime. The café-style arrangement of tables encouraged collegial group-work for the structured activities; having worked together on the activities, we could then network with each other over lunch. The self-service buffet was located in the adjacent room; participants could either eat standing up or take their lunch

across into the workshop room. Given the difficulty of eating standing up holding a paper plate and a cup, many of us chose to eat in the workshop room; because our bags and work materials were still on the desks, the most obvious solution was to return to the same places that we had occupied during the structured activities. This meant that we were forced to move on from the pleasantries that we had already exchanged over the course of the morning. I had already become aware that one element of the 'shoe' for this workshop did not fit me: I occupied the coveted status of 'published' in a room where publishing was the primary anxiety. There was also another problematic 'shoe': we were all researchers, but the 'shoe' of gender researcher seemed to clash with the 'shoe' of workshop participant. We were encouraged to network about our research, but my research on gender attracted confrontational questions. I had published, yes, but was it 'proper knowledge' (Pereira, 2011; 2012)? Could I deny the fallibility of gender research (read: the coursework versus exams thesis), if an exception to the thesis was sitting before me? I may have wanted to argue for the social construction of gender, but could I deny that I was a woman eating less than a man at an academic event?

When I returned to this incident, I did not know if re-narrating it through the mechanism of the four-stage theorisation would bring anything to my understanding of what happened. I had already spent time thinking through the incident in detail, and so did not necessarily anticipate being able to add to this initial thinking. However the theorisation has provided a means of structuring the analysis of the incident, so that the different layers of what was in effect a short and minimal interaction are magnified. Thinking through the incident in this way has elucidated certain aspects. For example, I had not fully appreciated that, because I work with a concept of gender that is infinitely resignifiable, my concept of gender is as open to being conceptualised as fixed and biologically determined as it is open to being signified as fluid or adventurous. This means that when gender comes 'under attack' from those who are hostile or skeptical, I experience the attack as from within, rather than from outside, the en/closure of my concept of gender. I think that this perceived invasion provides some explanation for the lasting discomfort that I experience in these instances. The discomfort

can also be linked to the analysis of citationality, which I also had not considered: the workshop participants exhorted me to respond to debates about gender where the concept of gender was already fixed in place, and where the possible paths of debate led off from this conceptualisation without leaving space to address the conceptualisation. Finally, I had not taken into account that the convention of the introduction that participants give about themselves at the start of a workshop had resulted in gender being introduced into the room without any conceptualisation, and that the time-lag between the introductions and the lunch break (which was exacerbated by sitting with the same people over lunch) had given workshop participants the opportunity to formulate their own understanding of gender research. As I stated above, conceptual events may not appear particularly eventful, but they are experienced as eventful. Unpacking the different layers of the conceptual event that occurred at the newer researchers' publishing workshop has enabled me to represent the complexity of this 'event'; in so doing I have been led to further analysis.

So, in re-narrating the incident through the four-part theorisation, have I explained away the eventfulness? This question reflects the balance that I am seeking to establish in my theorisation of eventful gender: between explaining the eventfulness of gender, and explaining its eventfulness away. Explaining eventfulness away would entail providing an explanation that accounts for eventfulness so thoroughly that it no longer involves either the impossible or happening. In my re-narration of the newer researchers' publishing workshop incident, I do wonder if I explained away some of the eventfulness. However it is not even necessarily the case that eventfulness, in the sense of the impossible happening, is possible. When an event happens, was it in fact always going to happen? Has my theorisation demonstrated the impossibility of eventfulness? Or is there further yet to go – is there still a 'chink/crevice' towards which I can strive? In the next part of the chapter, I address this theoretical challenge, and try to rectify the balance between explaining (but allowing for the unpredictable) and explaining away.

Eventful gender

> [I]f there is such a thing, the pure singular eventness of *what* [happens[105]] …, it would presuppose an *irruption* that punctures the horizon, *interrupting* any performative organization, any convention[106] (Derrida, 2002, p. 234, emphasis in original).

I began this thesis with the statement, 'It is never possible to predict what will throw us off course in our conceptual understanding of gender.' In the explanations that I have offered so far of how gender comes to mean what it means, I have highlighted the eventfulness of the concept of gender, and the ever-present possibility for conceptualisations of gender to shift or leap. While I have sought to stress the unpredictability of the concept of gender as it is conceptualised in conference settings, it could be argued that my reliance on the concept of performativity in fact rules out the final understanding of event that I draw on in this thesis. This final explanation for eventful gender is located in a contiguous space to the instinctual, aspirational understanding of eventful gender that I offered in Chapter 1. It is contiguous to this initial understanding because it shares the qualities of impossibility and happening: it has travelled through the arguments that I have outlined above, but it has ended up where I started. This is because the project has been built upon the notion that there is indeed something inexplicable about the concept of gender, the way that it works as a concept, and the relationships that people have with the concept. I have tried to embed each layer of analysis with an element of the inexplicable; as such the final understanding of eventful gender that I set out in this chapter emerges as a result of the inexplicability that has inhered to my conceptualisation of gender from start to finish.

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[105] In the English translation, the French verb 'arriver' is translated as 'arrives', presumably because of the noun 'arrivant' which follows. However 'arrive' in English does not bear the same double meaning of 'arriving' (in the sense of reaching a place) *and* 'happening', so I have chosen to highlight the sense of 'happening' here.

[106] '[S]'il y a quelque chose de tel, la pure événementialité singulière de *ce qui* arrive…, cela supposerait une *irruption* qui crève l'horizon, *interrompant* toute organisation performative, toute convention' (Derrida, 2001, pp. 73-74, emphasis in original).

In Chapter 6, the theorisation of performativity that I set out did not exclude the occurrence of the unforeseen. Indeed I embedded my account of conceptual performativity within the context of academic mobility – the mobility of subjects and of concepts, and the unforeseen conceptual events which may occur as a result of mobility. I asked how conceptual shifts can occur when the concept or conceptualisation appears to come from nowhere or elsewhere; the account that I produced included the idea that conceptual performatives can succeed by inducing a 'leap' from one conceptual constellation to another. Integral to this argument was the notion that citationality need not be familiar in order to bring about performative conceptualisation. We can conceive of this type of conceptualisation by imagining a link that is further down the conceptual chain, or a (non-)concept that occupies a particularly wild zone of the trace. If the concept of intersectionality (or other concepts brought into the en/closure of gender) is viewed as further down conceptual chains, or occupying the far reaches of the trace, then how can the performative that seeks to bring this concept into the overt meaning of gender succeed?

We certainly cannot abandon attempts at resignification, as in doing so we let go of the possibility of bringing certain meanings into being, into the en/closure of gender. Butler (1993, p. 25) refers to the 'theoretical gesture' where 'exclusions are simply affirmed as sad necessities of signification'. This 'gesture' involves letting a concept 'be', leaving it alone at its more received definition, without pushing at its trace. The 'task' which Butler lays out in *Bodies that Matter* is to 'refigure this necessary "outside" as a future horizon' (ibid.). The 'opacity of what is not included', the '"outside"' that we may understand as the zone of the trace, thus becomes a 'disruptive' site for the potential 'overcom[ing]' of 'the violence of exclusion' (ibid.). But just how can disruption be conceptualised within the logic of performativity that we have seen so far? In *Excitable Speech*, Butler (1997) offers a possible means of understanding a disruption to performativity as follows:

The force and meaning of an utterance are not exclusively determined by prior contexts or 'positions'; an utterance may gain its force precisely by virtue of the *break with context that it performs* (p. 145, emphasis added).

A performative could, according to this logic, cite a convention that does not fit with the context of utterance, but the question emerges of whether the 'break with context' is possible within the remit of the performative. Can the 'break' be effected using a performative (citational) utterance, or can the 'break' only occur as an event? Or is an event always already a performative? These are the questions that are posed in this final foray into eventful gender.

These questions, and indeed my engagement with the notion of the 'event', arose from Derrida's essay 'The university without condition'[107] (2002), in which he re-engages with the notion of performativity. In this essay, Derrida reminds us of the position of the event in the logic that takes its inheritance from Austin's speech act theory, that '[e]very performative…produces something; it makes an event come about'[108] (p. 218). In this logic, deconstruction operates '*performatively*' (p. 204, emphasis in original), in that it 'produc[es] events (for example, by writing)'[109] (ibid.); these 'event[s] of thought' can 'mak[e] something happen to [the] concept of truth,…without necessarily betraying it'[110] (ibid.).

However, in 'The university without condition', Derrida (2002) also finds a 'place where [the distinction between the constative and the

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[107] Published in *Without Alibi* (Derrida, 2002); abridged version 'The future of the profession' (Derrida, 2005); French version *L'université sans condition* (Derrida, 2002).

[108] 'Tout performatif produit quelque chose…il fait advenir un événement' (Derrida, 2001, p. 41).

[109] '[P]roduisant des événements, par exemple en écrivant' (Derrida, 2001, p. 15).

[110] 'Il s'agirait, par l'événement de pensée…de faire arriver, sans nécessairement le trahir, quelque chose à ce concept de vérité' (Derrida, 2001, p. 15).

performative[111]] fails – and must fail'[112] (p. 209). And this 'place' that Derrida sets out is 'the event', 'that which happens', the 'place of the taking-place' ['*lieu de l'avoir-lieu*'], which, in this conceptualisation, 'cares as little about ['*se moque du*'] the performative…as it does about the constative'[113] (p. 209). Deconstruction, recast in these conceptual conditions, is endowed with eventful qualities, in that it involves seeing 'what comes about'[114] (p. 234). Returning to the statement 'the performative produces the event of which it speaks'[115] (p. 234), Derrida produces his own conceptual performative that re-writes this 'old adage':

> where there is the performative, an event worthy of [its] name cannot [happen]… If [that which happens] belongs to the horizon of the possible, or even of a possible performative, …it does not happen… [O]nly the impossible *can* [happen]'[116] (p. 234, emphasis in translation).

Because the performative always involves the citation of convention, as in the definition of the event given above, the performative cannot produce a 'real' event. Anything that lies within the remit of a performative is linked with the always already possible, the 'horizon'. For an event to happen in conceptualisation, we might say that that which could bring about an *eventful* resignification would have to come from outside the trace, from beyond the 'chink/crevice'. In this formulation of the event, a *performative* event is brought about by conventions, and so 'what…happens… remains still controllable and programmable within a horizon of anticipation or

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[111] The 'constative' refers to a speech act which describes, versus the 'performative' which constitutes an action in its own right.

[112] '[U]n lieu où il échoue – et doit échouer' (Derrida, 2001, p. 24).

[113] 'Ce lieu, ce sera précisément *ce qui arrive*,…l'événement, le lieu de l'avoir-lieu – qui se moque du performatif…comme du constatif' (Derrida, 2001, p. 24, emphasis in original).

[114] '[C]e qui arrive' (Derrida, 2001, p. 74).

[115] '[L]e performatif produit l'événement dont il parle' (Derrida, 2001, p. 74).

[116] '[I]nversement, là où il y a le performatif, un événement digne de ce nom ne peut pas arriver… Si ce qui arrive appartient à l'horizon du possible, voire d'un performatif possible, cela n'arrive pas… [S]eul l'impossible peut *arriver*' (Derrida, 2001, p. 74, emphasis in original).

precomprehension'; it is the '[deployment] of what is already possible'[117] (pp. 233-234). In this formulation then, there is no 'surprise': the event 'does not happen'[118] (p. 234). The 'real' event, on the other hand, 'over[flows], exceed[s], expose[s]' the performative[119] (p. 235). The *performative* event is 'in advance…neutralized' because it 'announce[s] itself as possible or necessary', while the 'force' of the *event* is derived from its proximity to the 'impossible'[120] (p. 235). In terms of what we could term *conceptual eventfulness*, these 'events' 'affect the very limits of the academic field'[121] (p. 233).

I have set out in some detail this reformulation of the relationship between the concept of performativity and the concept of event because it has the potential to bring about a radical shift in thinking. I am not sure if a 'real' event, one which is a 'real' surprise, is possible, or if its possibility is necessary. What does spark my interest in the idea of an event that bypasses performativity is the opening that it provides to think through the idea that such an event *could* happen to gender. This understanding of the event changes the work that I ask performativity to carry out in my conceptualisation of gender. Before following the paths of theorisation which I have traced out in this section, performativity represented the end of the line in my notion of conceptual work. I felt that the opportunity for conceptual resignification provided enough space to think about change. What trying to think *beyond* performativity achieves is to force distance

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[117] '[J]e dirai que ce qui a lieu, arrive ou ce qui *m'*arrive reste encore contrôlable et programmable dans un horizon d'anticipation ou de pré-compréhension: dans un *horizon* tout court. C'est de l'ordre du possible maîtrisable, c'est le déploiement de ce qui est déjà possible' (Derrida, 2001, p. 73, emphasis in original).

[118] 'Point de surprise, donc pas d'événement au sens fort'; '[a]utant dire que…cela n'arrive pas' (Derrida, 2001, p. 73).

[119] '[D]evant l'autre qui arrive…toute force performative est débordée, excédée, exposée' (Derrida, 2001, p. 76).

[120] 'Ce qui a lieu ne doit pas s'annoncer comme possible ou nécessaire, sans quoi son irruption d'événement est d'avance neutralisée. L'événement relève d'un *peut-être* qui s'accorde non pas au possible mais à l'impossible. Et sa force alors est irréductible à la force d'un performatif'; '[l]a force d'un événement est toujours plus forte que la force d'un performatif' (Derrida, 2001, p. 75, emphasis in original).

[121] '[A]ffectent les limites mêmes du champ académique' (Derrida, 2001, p. 71).

between that which has become naturalised for me as conceptual performativity, and that which may represent the 'chink/crevice' in the logic of the performative. What the event has done for my vantage point, then, is to make me question the pre-thinkability of a performative event, and to try (performatively, of course) to surround gender, encircled by its trace, with something other, something impossible: its potential for eventfulness.

It is from this vantage point that I now turn to two conceptual events from my 'official fieldwork' about which I have ongoing questions as to how gender came to mean what it meant. I have chosen these two conceptual events in particular because they are clearly theorisable using the four-stage theorisation of eventful gender that I worked through earlier in the chapter, but they also exceed this theorisation and point towards the final theorisation of gender presented above. The chosen events also prompt a return to some of the other issues and questions that have arisen in the earlier chapters. In particular, I address the issues of gender relevance (Chapter 2), the positive valence of trouble (Chapter 3), conceptual literacy (Chapter 5), losing gender in intersectionality (Chapter 6), and the effects of the 'shoe' and the 'shoe' not fitting (Chapter 7).

'The weird panel', NWSA

> *From my NWSA notes:*
> [R]e a play about girls/rel[ationship]s.
> - feedback to play
>> - more male
>> - good to use for parents/daughter
>> - girls – never heard rel[ationship]s talked about in that
>> way
> - [title of one of the monologues]
>> - dorm room
> - Christian environment
> talking around sex
> - [title of one of the monologues].

From the transcript of the NWSA participants' lunchtime discussion:

Margaret: You were at the weird panel yesterday with the-

Kate: -What was the weird panel?

…

[Charlotte arrives]

Charlotte: Oh you're telling the story, fascinating – you were there.

From the transcript of the NWSA participants' lunchtime discussion:

Margaret: We talked about this extensively last night over several glasses of wine.

Charlotte: [Laughs] over a very intense drink [laughter].

From the transcript of Kate's post-conference interview:

Kate: I wasn't necessarily thinking about it *at* the conference…I only heard this story second-hand you know.

From the transcript of Elizabeth's post-conference interview:

Elizabeth: I just didn't get it.

Emily: No.

Elizabeth: I still don't get it.

Emily: No.

Elizabeth: I don't understand what she was doing there.

Emily: I know [laughter] it was crazy.

Instead of starting my account of this event by writing a narrative of what happened, I wanted to *produce* the event as an event before stating what happened. There is a particular reason for this, which is also the reason that I have chosen to focus on this event in the final chapter: during the presentation which was the locus of the event, it in fact appeared that nothing was happening. My notes from this presentation, reproduced above, show no sign that anything out of the ordinary was occurring. It was in the aftermath of the presentation, over the course of a number of different interactions and retellings, that the eventfulness was established. It is not unusual that a conceptual event have no exterior sign in the 'here and now' of its occurrence. With this event, however, it has gathered retrospective

eventfulness, to the extent that the event in question has grown in significance to represent the most important moment of the NWSA conference for me. As shown in the excerpts included above, this event initially became an event during the lunchtime discussion session that I held for my research participants at the conference. Margaret began talking about the event with the expression 'the weird panel'; the use of the definite article, which is echoed in Charlotte's reference to 'the story', immediately constructs the panel not just as *any* panel, but as *the* noteworthy panel. The status of this panel as the one not to have missed is further built upon establishing that, of the four of us who were present at that moment (the start of the discussion), Margaret, Charlotte and I had attended the session, but Kate had not; Kate thus provides the opportunity for a group retelling of 'the story'. However it becomes clear that this is not the first retelling: the event had already been narrated and analysed by Margaret and Charlotte the evening before, where its significance was further increased in mentioning this at the group meeting by the 'several glasses of wine' that had been necessary for their discussion. The lifetime of the event was further prolonged during post-conference interviews with Kate, Margaret, and Elizabeth, and by my own retelling of the event to my partner, supervisors, and friends.

I am now faced with the impasse of producing an account of the event which does not invest it with a sense of it always having been eventful. This question of representation is particularly salient because any attempt to summarise what happened in the 'here and now' of the presentation in question will inevitably produce the event as a pre-theorisation theorisation. As discussed in Chapter 5, any analysis of transcripts and other empirical materials necessarily involves producing material for analysis. Instead of seeking to produce a chronological representation of the eventfulness as it unfolded, I produce the event *through* the four stages, plus the fifth version of eventfulness that I have outlined in this chapter: the event that I come to represent is a culmination of multiple reinterpretations that have occurred since the 'here and now' of the presentation, and the organisation of these interpretations that results from working through the theorisation. There is one remaining concern that

I must cover before beginning the representation of the event. There are heightened ethical questions regarding this event, and above all its retelling. Although the presentation was delivered in the semi-public space of a conference panel, this does not automatically mean that its behind-the-scenes dissection should be made available, especially because, in this case, this dissection places neither the presenter nor the people discussing the presentation (myself included) in a particularly positive light. Kate and I spoke of the ethical issues of representing this event in my thesis during her post-conference interview – we wondered if it would be a good idea to contact the presenter to obtain her perspective. However, as I told Kate, I decided to 'write about her as a kind of myth'. I thought about this further when I encountered another 'myth' in the aftermath of the 2015 GEA conference[122] – in that case, I did not attend the presentation in question, but only heard different representations from different conversations. As with the FWSA presentation that I analysed in relation to chairing in Chapter 7, which I also did not attend, I learned that being present in the 'here and now' of a presentation is not necessarily the only means of being there. Indeed, as I discovered with the NWSA event, being in the room is not actually a guarantee of being present in the 'here and now', especially if the eventfulness only develops in retrospective analysis. I have endeavoured to present the event in question in a manner that circumvents the possibility of searching the NWSA programme for the presentation in question. As such, I have amended quoted text from the abstract, and I have not included any information on the panel. It is possible that identification could occur, and that even the presenter in question could come across this document; I urge that the event is read not as the representation of a specific 'here and now', but that it is taken as just one manifestation of the way that *a* panel can easily become *the* panel – and the difficult and controversial discussions that may be involved in producing a presentation's reputation. In Chapter 3, I referred to the positive valence of trouble (Butler, 1999, p. xxix); it is in this spirit that I present this event.

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[122] At the Gender and Education Association Biennial Conference, University of Roehampton, London, UK, 24-26 June 2015, there was a panel which involved a performance piece with audience participation; some audience members openly protested about the piece during the session.

Gender as an inherently eventful concept

The three papers[123] that comprised the panel in question were linked by a common thread: they all dealt with taboo issues related to gender. In calling this event an example of eventful gender, I return to the question surrounding gender relevance: did something happen to *gender*? How do we know if something is happening to *gender*? The panel was situated in a women's studies conference, so by default it had some relevance to women's and gender studies. Moreover, the presentation that produced the event proclaimed its 'daring engagement with issues of gender identity'[124]. The panel was about issues including female sexuality and abortion: in most circumstances, there would be no doubt about the relevance of these issues to the concept of gender. Even within the remit of this project, where no gender relevance is a given, I consider that something happened to gender. Each of the presentations dealt with issues relating to female sexuality that are considered explicit, graphic, inappropriate. The conceptual manoeuvre was to extend the remit of gender research, to open the gender agenda up, rather than to allow it to reproduce the norms and taboos that, arguably, it should be contesting. As my notes from the eventful presentation show, the presentation accorded with the conceptual aim of increasing the remit of gender research to 'talking around sex', both in research and in community settings. In line with the theme of the panel, the presentation included 'very disturbing' material (Charlotte, NWSA lunchtime session) and 'blood splashing in an abortion scenario' (Margaret, NWSA lunchtime session). As I have already discussed, the concept of gender is vulnerable to reconceptualisation; this panel represents an attempt to shift the limits of the en/closure of gender relevance.

The eventfulness of conceptual contestation

The three presentations that were delivered in the panel shared this broad conceptual manoeuvre, but there was one key difference that separated two

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[123] I omit any information about the other papers in order to reduce the possibility of identifying the panel.

[124] As stated above, all quotations taken from the presentation's abstract have been altered.

of the papers from the third. Two of the papers were presented from a liberal, secular, broadly pro-sex stance, while the other paper was presented with a conservative, Christian, pro-purity message. One of the questions that this panel has left me with is the extent to which conceptualisations are the same or different if they make a similar conceptual manoeuvre, but do not share the same political stance. In my understanding of this event, the fact that the papers shared a similar conceptual direction is what rendered the pro-purity presentation more disturbing for those who were disturbed by it. I also think that the conceptual alignment of the papers (in addition to the format and the delivery, which I will discuss shortly) contributed to the fact that nothing seemed to be happening during the 'here and now' of the panel; the political orientation of the presentation seemed to become more obvious in the aftermath. As Elizabeth stated, during the earlier stages of the presentation, she '*liked*' the depiction of abortion because she 'agree[d] that…abortion can be a very traumatic event', and she felt that its representation should not be sanitised. However, as the presentation progressed, and the pro-purity stance of the presenter became clear, she thought, '"Oh crap", like, "Now I get it, now I get why she was like kind of saying these stories"'. The in-the-moment realisation of the political disalignment is represented retrospectively in the interview with the exclamation, '"Oh crap"'. My question here is, does the shock of political disalignment prevent the conceptualisation from according with that of the other two presentations? Kate and I discussed this in her post-conference interview, in relation to the 'very limited number of kinds of political subjects who are legitimate um um within that kind of space' (Kate) and the perceived obligation to 'be some kind of liberal- liberal feminist subject in order to go to NWSA' (Emily). Kate asked if the expectation of a compulsory liberal feminist stance was in fact 'anti-feminist'. At certain points of analysing this event, I have felt that the event in fact constituted something happening to the concept of feminism, rather than gender. However, having concentrated in more detail on the conceptual contestation, I have come to understand the eventfulness of this event as stemming from the alignment of conceptual work, layered with the political contestation around definitions of feminism.

Conceptual performatives as events

In the discussion of the fat studies workshop at NWSA, I referred to my feeling of being '"put in [my] place"' (Butler, 1997, p. 4) by the assumption that I would already appreciate the relevance of fat studies to women's and gender studies. As Butler (ibid. p. 30) states, 'such a place may be no place' (ibid.), which was the effect of experiencing an assumed citationality of conceptualisation as 'a name addressed from elsewhere'. I consider that there were two forms of 'elsewhere' at play in the eventful presentation. Firstly, at least in Charlotte's and my experiences of the presentation, we both attended the panel as international delegates, and so were less involved in the particular politics of this conceptual event. Secondly, the majority of the presentation was comprised of monologues which, having been presented at various venues in the presenter's home state, were read out in the session. As I go on to argue, I consider that this format worked to create an 'elsewhere' for the presentation that worked together with the conceptual alignment mentioned above to defer the eventfulness of the presentation. It must be noted that these two discussions arose from the fact that there was such a disconnect in the lunchtime meeting between Margaret, who felt 'like a nuclear bomb went off in the middle of the presentation' and Charlotte and my response, where, as Charlotte expressed it, 'it just slipped over [her] head'. While some of Margaret's reaction to the presentation was attributable to her role as chair in the panel, which I go on to discuss, there is also a sense that Charlotte and I needed to analyse *why* the presentation had not felt like an event in the 'here and now', and, accompanying that, an underlying suspicion that we *should* have picked up on what was happening, on an intellectual or political basis.

In the first 'elsewhere', the 'elsewhere' that results from dropping into a context for a conference, the eventful presentation was situated within the NWSA experience as a whole. While it should be mentioned that many of my participants, even seasoned NWSA-goers, found the experience of the conference overwhelming for its size and intensity, the conference was arguably more disorientating still for international delegates. Some of the snippets that I included in Chapter 4 of the strangeness of everyday encounters in a new location, such as answering the phone with, 'This is

Josh,' or being espoused as the hotel receptionist's 'BFF' upon arrival, highlight the layering of elsewhere-ness that is compounded by the conference experience. Charlotte also described in her post-conference interview the 'Americanness that [she and her colleague] were faced with', a 'passion' and 'exuberance' that struck her as contextually specific and profoundly different to the spirit of academic conferences in her home country context[125]. In the lunchtime discussion where we recounted the eventful presentation, we both alluded to the elsewhere-ness that the presentation represented for us as international delegates. I stated that 'it was kind of like watching TV', and Charlotte reinforced this with her comment 'I could just sit there'. The passivity that is invoked by the 'watching TV' simile and the action of 'just sit[ting]' (as opposed to engaging) reflects the difficulty of critically engaging with academic work when it appears to be 'addressed from elsewhere', especially in a conference which is characterised by an enhanced elsewhere-ness. The 'no scent rule', the workshop on fat studies, a panel on 'femme studies', another on 'princess culture': many of the panels, presentations and conversations felt so entirely from elsewhere that I was not necessarily able to discern where I was seeing something that was extraordinary for the US-based delegates. Jasmyn, an FWSA participant from the US, described attending international conferences as 'opportunities for [her] to really sort of de-centre [her] own experience and get a chance to be that fly on the wall'. This statement resonates with my experience of the eventful presentation, in that a similar degree of passive or removed participation to 'watching TV' is implied by 'fly on the wall'. In the case of the eventful presentation, I was already so 'de-centre[d]' that I was unable to fully appreciate the significance of the pro-purity stance in the panel.

The second 'elsewhere' that contributed both to the uneventful 'here and now' of the presentation and its subsequent eventfulness was what I could call the means, or the vehicle, of the conceptual performative (where the conceptual performative is understood as the layering of an aligned

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[125] I have excluded Charlotte's country of residence here because there were relatively few international delegates at the conference, so naming the country would make her easily identifiable.

conceptualisation of gender with a disaligned feminist politics). The majority of the presentation comprised the reading of selected monologues from a larger oeuvre, which had been performed, as stated in the abstract, on HEI campuses and at youth gatherings and women's conferences; the presenter also added that the monologues had been performed for Christian audiences and faith community groups. During the lunchtime discussion, Margaret commented that 'most people in the room…weren't sure what [the presentation] was': the lack of response or reaction to the presentation during question time did not seem to be restricted to international delegates. There was something about the medium of the presentation – monologues, rather than a traditional empirical or theoretical paper – that invited the audience to 'sit back' and listen, instead of engage. Despite the graphic content of the monologues, both Charlotte and I found the session relaxing, the 'chance to kind of listen to a story' (EH), 'a mental break' (Charlotte). Furthermore, because the monologues had been designed for an intended audience of Christian youth in the southern states of the US, their direct excerpting at the NWSA conference had the curious effect of interpolating the panel's audience into 'being like the audience of a pro-life play kind of [laughs] which was designed for like church-goers in like the deep South' (EH in Kate's interview). The monologues were thus situated in two separate 'here*s* and now*s*'. This dual disconnect of medium and audience may serve as an explanation for why the audience did not perceive the event at the time, or produce the presentation as eventful in the discussion section of the panel.

Circumstances contribute to eventfulness

In the retrospective retellings of this event, a number of different conference conventions and circumstances have come to light, some of which have incorporated fresh elements of eventfulness to the event – indeed at times the 'shoe' has eclipsed the conceptual elements of the event. The 'shoe' did not fit the presenter or the presentation; some of the implications of this are evident regarding the status of a presenter as producing 'proper knowledge' (Pereira, 2011; 2012) or as a producer of 'proper knowledge'. Here I analyse three different 'shoes': the 'shoe' of an

acceptable conference paper at NWSA, the presenter 'shoe', and the 'shoe' of the chair or moderator.

There was some discussion during the lunchtime session and post-conference interviews as to whether the presentation had constituted a veritable paper. The 'shoe' of the conference abstract became a focal point for some of these discussions. The abstract serves the purpose of gaining entry to a conference, especially for a conference such as NWSA where the submission is reviewed solely on the basis of the abstract (as opposed to a longer paper); the abstract serves a secondary purpose (if it is printed in an accessible conference programme) to advertise the presentation to potential audience members. These purposes are already somewhat at odds: proving the intellectual worth of a presentation does not necessarily take the same form as marketing it to delegates; furthermore the abstract is confined by a word limit of 250 or 100 words (for NWSA), depending on the presentation format. It is therefore unsurprising that many presentations, especially where there has been a long time-lag between producing the 'fantasy' abstract (Hemmings, 2013, p. 335) and presenting the paper (see also Bruce, 2010, p. 200), do not appear to accurately reflect the abstract which has been printed in the conference 'book'. In the case of the eventful presentation, questions were raised as to whether or not the abstract had included some warning of the presenter's political stance, and whether or not the abstract had misled the selection committee by suggesting that it was based on empirical work. Margaret was of the opinion that the presentation had diverged to an unacceptable degree from the abstract; during the lunchtime session, she repeated, 'That was not her abstract', 'In her abstract there was *nothing* like that.' In the post-conference interview with Kate, I echoed this by stating that, 'If she'd like set out her cards on the table [in the abstract], you know, [maybe] it would have been more acceptable.' However Kate retorted, 'I looked back at the abstract…and actually…it didn't seem deceptive to me'.

After this interview, I also returned to the abstract to try to elucidate which phrases of the abstract could have been ambiguous. There seemed to be an assumption that the monologues were based on empirical work

(Margaret stated that she 'thought from [the presenter's] abstract that they were generated out of some kind of ethnographic engagement'); in fact they were fictional, written by the presenter herself. The abstract stated that the presentation was based on 'a set of monologues that chronicles the discoveries that students make about themselves when they face challenges in their relationships'. The only clue to ambiguity that I could find here was the word 'chronicles', which is defined as to 'record…in a factual and detailed way' (*New Oxford Dictionary of English*, Pearsall and Hanks, 2001, p. 327), but which is often employed in fictional works such as *The Chronicles of Narnia* or *The Barchester Chronicles*. However there seemed to be a degree of outrage that the monologues were fictional, which crystallised around the accusation, which Margaret uttered in an exaggeratedly colloquial tone, that the presenter 'just made 'em up'. I echoed this in Kate's post-conference interview, 'what she actually did is read out some stuff that she- she made up'; Elizabeth, who had been absent from the lunchtime session, exclaimed in her interview, 'She had just *made it up*' (emphasis in original). The use of this colloquial expression, which also has an infantilising element to it (reinforced by my use of the word 'stuff' and Margaret's expression 'weird little things that she read'), is a clear example of boundaries being drawn around what counts as 'proper knowledge' and what does not. In retrospect, I am surprised that we excluded the monologues from 'proper knowledge' on the basis of their being 'fiction', especially given the feminist methodological traditions of challenging received media of knowledge production (St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000b; Visweswaran, 1994). A possible explanation for our manoeuvre on the grounds of form and not content can be found in Elizabeth's post-conference interview, where she intertwines the issue of the fictional monologues with the the pro-purity politics issue, in the form of an imagined commentary that is addressed to the presenter:

> You know, like, 'This is not- this is not *anyone's* story,' like…, 'What is the purpose of this *really*?' like- like, 'This isn't *real*, if it was real then maybe like okay, like I…would have gotten it,' like, 'Okay,' like, 'That's real,' like- it's like, 'You are interviewing people and their stories and experiences and that's cool. But you like made it up!' [laughter] (emphasis in original).

In this commentary, Elizabeth vacillates between her projected acceptance of the monologues, if they had been research-based ('real'), versus what she refers to the 'really fucked up' idea that the presenter had written the monologues for teenagers in order to shock them out of both sex and abortion. The fictional nature of the monologues, and the audience's interpolation into the audience of the performance, meant that as conference delegates we were in fact subjected to the pedagogical project of the presentation.

There was also a question as to whether the presenter had deliberately excluded her political stance from her abstract in order to gain entry to the conference (the 'infiltration' argument) or whether she had been naïve about the dominant variety of feminism that underpinned the conference (the 'inexperience' argument). It is important to note that both of these positions entail the presenter 'shoe' not fitting. There is no question that the 'shoe' did not fit: not only had the presenter used her time slot to read 'made up' monologues, but she had also expressed political views that were outside the conference norms. In the 'infiltration' argument, the presenter had written 'a poisoned abstract' (Emily, in Kate's post-conference interview); she had 'submitted to the conference um and basically tried to get in and then kind of preach like pro-life stuff' (Elizabeth, post-conference interview). In the 'inexperience' argument, she was 'a deer in the headlights' (Margaret, lunchtime session), 'she didn't really know how to write an abstract' (Emily, in Kate's post-conference interview).

There is a further issue around the presenter 'shoe' not fitting, which is where the event became particularly eventful in its retelling. In her post-conference interview, Kate told me that, when she was listening to the account of the eventful presentation that we co-produced in the lunchtime session, the image that she had conjured up of the presenter was of 'a young, white, straight-looking woman, maybe in undergrad[uate studies] or something, maybe from the South'. When Kate searched for the presenter on the Internet, she found that the presenter was a woman of color and a

faculty member at an HEI. I found that, when I talked to others about my earlier representations of the event, they had also imagined a white, junior scholar. Returning to the transcript of the lunchtime discussion, I realised that there was no indication of the presenter's identity. It makes me profoundly uncomfortable that we were speaking of the presenter in a manner that constructed her as young and naïve. This discomfort is enhanced by the fact that, as mentioned in the discussion of intersectionality in Chapter 6, infantilising an academic of color (as when Sara Ahmed was referred to as 'Sara' rather than 'Professor') is a recognised means of reinforcing the incompatibility of academic status with a black racial identity (Griffin, Ward and Phillips, 2013; Miller, 2008), especially for black women academics (Gay, 2014; McClellan, 2012; Sulé, 2013). However Kate also raised another question about this very discomfort: is it more legitimate to exclude a junior white woman scholar than a comparatively senior black woman faculty member from the space of academic knowledge production? Is it more necessary to work on making the 'shoe' fit an academic of color than another liminal subject, or is this uncritical 'helping hand' itself another manifestation of discrimination? (Srivastava, 2005[126], see also Narayan, 1997).

The final 'shoe' that I want to briefly consider here is that of chair, in light of the discussion of chairing in Chapter 7. Margaret had chaired the panel; this put her in the difficult position of being responsible for the way that the session played out. Her handling of the presentations as chair, as in the case of Ruth's chairing experience (Chapter 7), could have led to the pro-purity presentation being taken as evidence of Margaret's own politics. This was particularly the case because the presenter who was scheduled to speak first had to wait for a technician to arrive to repair the projector, so the eventful presentation was first; furthermore the seating arrangement for speakers was split in half by the projector screen, which had the effect of the presenter in question being placed directly in the centre of the front of the room. To Margaret, it thus seemed that this presenter, who had in fact joined

the panel through a list-serve mini-call for abstracts, was at the core of the panel. There is an important issue to raise here about the acceptability of different forms of feminism and women's studies politics, and how 'alternative' viewpoints to the liberal feminist mainstream should be represented at conferences. In this case, Margaret felt that she had not been given the choice to make a decision about how to handle the inclusion of this political stance in her panel. She also worried that, in her role as moderator, during question time she would have to 'moderate an attack' or deal with a pro-life celebration of 'abortion is bad, it's definitely blood spurting on the walls and nobody should do it.' The eventful panel took on its eventfulness, at least in the context of my research, because of the intensity with which Margaret experienced the pro-purity presentation, awaiting the potential reaction of the audience. Although it seemed to me and other audience members as though nothing was happening, in her mind she was running through the possibilities for the discussion session, with an internal monologue of '"Gosh I'm *way* too tired for this but it is happening – what is *happening*?!"' The fact that something *was* happening in the 'here and now' of the presentation for the moderator then sparked the retrospective analysis of the presentation as having been eventful.

Eventful gender?

When I began writing the account of this event that I have presented in this chapter, I did not know if, after moving through the four-part theorisation, the event would still appear eventful. In writing the eventfulness of the event into its representation, have I in fact written the eventfulness out of the event? I deliberately chose to analyse this event in the late stages of my thesis, because of its multi-faceted complexity; I considered that the complexity lay particularly in the evolving significance of the event as it passed through different retellings. Having produced the event through the four-stage theorisation, I have separated out the strands of complexity, and I consider that some of the eventfulness has indeed been written out. However, I do consider that there is still potential for this event to be understood as eventful, even in relation to the final understanding of eventfulness that I have addressed in this chapter.

The principal aspect of the analysis presented above that speaks to the final understanding of eventfulness is the retrospective accrual of eventfulness. The path that the event took in its retellings stretched the 'here and now' of the presentation so that the conceptual performative existed in multiple manifestations. Derrida's (2002, p. 235) explanation of the event included the idea that an event 'exceed[s]' the performative: the performative can only make the 'already possible' happen (p. 234), while the event that is 'worthy of [its] name' must therefore deal in the 'impossible' (ibid.). As I mentioned above, it is not that I think that such an event actually exists, or that I am about to classify any of the events which appear to have happened in my research as this type of event. But there is perhaps an eventfulness about this event that is glimpsed through the 'chink/crevice'. There are certain facets of this event which represent, if not eventfulness in the fifth form, then the blurred boundary between performativity and eventfulness. For example, the elsewhere-ness of the presentation, the interpolation of the conference delegates into the audience of a pro-purity play, could be said to represent a performative 'break with context' (Butler, 1997, p. 145). Equally, I could argue that this unexpected interpolation constituted an event. As a second example, when the presenter revealed the political stance and pedagogical message of the monologues, which had until then reflected the conceptual manoeuvre of the panel as a whole, was this bifurcation 'already possible' for the audience, or was it an event? Thirdly, in relation to the assumed identity of the presenter for those listening to various retellings of the panel, was the presenter always both a junior, white scholar *and* a more senior academic of color, or when this dual identity was revealed, was this in fact a moment of the impossible happening? As a conceptual event that happened to gender, this presentation – and its aftermath – bears resemblance to the form of eventfulness that I have outlined in this chapter.

The multi-layered nature of the event – and its eventfulness – has ensured that there is no single aspect that I can be sure of. Analysing the conceptual performative and its accompanying (or producing) circumstances has opened up some further questions, which gesture towards the impossibility of explaining away this particular event. My principal question

concerns the relationship between the en/closure of gender and the political stance that accompanies the conceptualisation. Some of the impact of the pro-purity presentation resulted from its apparent suitability for the panel, which aimed to stretch the range of issues that can be researched under the name of gender, and the realisation that the conceptual manoeuvre was accompanied by a political message that was in direct opposition to the other presentations. As discussed in Chapter 5, the act of conceptualisation is always a political act; in this case, the contestation occurred *within* the same conceptualisation. This revealed the unspoken expectation that the conceptual manoeuvre in question would automatically be accompanied by a secular, pro-sex alignment. The pro-purity presentation shook apart the conceptualisation from its naturalised political coating, and so exposed the potential for gender to be defined – conceptually and politically – in use. As I demonstrated in the analysis of the conceptual events at the newer researchers' publishing workshop, those who build a commitment to working with gender are always vulnerable to the fundamental concept of their work being reconceptualised in unexpected ways; because gender is an inherently unstable concept, even the most carefully prepared defences may not hold.

Gender-in-the-Northeast, IAWS

> *Nisha:*
> I was indeed looking forward to get to know more about Northeast,
> which is a grey area for many of us.

> *From the IAWS President's Address, printed copy included in the*
> *conference pack:*
> The city of Guwahati, our host for the next four days, is the
> gateway to the lived realities of the many different communities in
> this region, the richness of their history and their struggles for
> social justice (Sen, 2014, p. 2).

> *From the IAWS General Secretary's opening note for* Voices of the
> North East *(Deka, 2014a), a collection of essays provided in the*
> *conference pack:*

[W]e welcome the publication with the hope that it will facilitate a more continuous engagement with the life and experiences of the women and people of this region (Agnihotri, 2014, p. i).

Amritha:
For me the most illuminating session was of course that on the Northeast because that is something which I am not familiar with.

Nirja:
It really shook me off my stupour. I can bring in these inputs in my *own* lectures which I give here in different colleges. I can carry those realities *here*. Those realities are not of somewhere far off – it is in my own country.

Emily in Nirja's interview:
I knew *nothing* about the Northeast before and I do feel like I know much more.

The NWSA 'event' that I chose to focus on in this chapter occurred in a short space of time and a localised place within the conference; its effects rippled out from that 'here and now' to gain wider significance; that 'event' was also unexpected, and its eventfulness stemmed from that fact. In order to give some sense of the range of possible events, I have chosen to focus on an 'event' with contrasting properties in the other worked example that I offer in this chapter. While the NWSA event was questionably eventful because it seemed that nothing happened, the IAWS event initially appears uneventful because it was planned. Indeed the event I have chosen is closely linked with what we could term the least eventful version of an event: the event as a planned occasion. In this event, the conference as a whole is understood as a conceptual event. The IAWS conference that fell within my fieldwork period was the first national IAWS event to be held in the Northeast region of India (Sen, 2014), and, as shown in the two above excerpts from the printed material that was included in delegates' conference packs, there was a pedagogical purpose to holding the conference in this location. This purpose was to raise awareness of the Northeast region, which, as indicated above, is relatively unknown to

residents of other regions of India; more specifically, the project was to highlight the specific gender issues that relate to the Northeast region. In the above initial production of this event, as with the NWSA equivalent, I have portrayed a version of the event which seeks to represent the eventfulness rather than the event. I have created a sequence that leads from the decision (expressed by several participants) to attend the conference in order to take up the pedagogical offer, to the presentation of the pedagogical project in conference materials, to the acknowledgement of the impact of the pedagogical project (also expressed by several participants) in the interviews. Something was supposed to happen to our concept of gender by attending that conference; according to the participants, something indeed seemed to have happened. What I have not included in this initial production of the event is *how* it happened, or even what exactly happened. The overarching question that I ask in relation to this event is: what happens when a conference is characterised by a pedagogical project to alter delegates' conceptualisations of gender? The IAWS conference as a whole can be understood as a conceptual performative; how was this performative manifested at the different levels of the conference, and what were the resultant effects on participants' conceptualisations of gender? In this section, I argue that, even if a conference clearly sets out a planned conceptual pedagogical project, there is still scope for unplanned and unpredictable eventfulness in the way in which the project plays out at the conference.

In representing this event, I try to bridge the gap between 'defining moment' and 'conference fatigue' representations, by showing how macro-level conference discourses play out in the micro-level experiences of conference delegates. Producing this event has therefore involved bringing together a more diverse set of materials, from wherever conceptualisations of gender in relation to the Northeast region occurred. In this section, I present a layered collation of what participants explained to me in their interviews as having learned about gender in the Northeast, and what I learned both from these interviews and from my own conference experiences. Because I am interested in charting what delegates learn from a conference which has an overt pedagogical project, I do not begin by

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offering an introduction to the geopolitical context of the Northeast region, and its associated gender issues. However, I do include some information from external sources in my production of this event, largely because some of the terms were so embedded in elsewhere-ness for me that, to make sense of the conceptualisations, I have been obliged to include some information about the context of the Northeast. I mainly refer to sources collected from the conference, which include: excerpts from interview transcripts; notes from the two keynotes, Haksar (2014), 'Exploring plural identities: Women's Studies to North East Studies', and Grover (2014), 'Sexual violence against women: state responsibility and culpability'; the two Northeast-specific plenary sessions, 'Building Women's Studies in the North East'[127] and 'Women in the North East: issues, struggles and challenges'[128]; materials from the conference pack; abstracts (downloaded after the conference from the CD provided) for papers with a Northeast focus; my notes from the conference.

As already noted, my status as non-researcher at the IAWS conference impacted significantly on my participation at the conference, and on the way in which I now view the materials that I analyse as contributing to the conceptualisation of gender at the conference. Because I attended the conference not as a researcher but as a delegate (and a reticent one at that), the notes from papers I attended are relatively sparse, and I did not record a great deal of autoethnographic material; I also left one of the plenary sessions early. Intellectually I was not as engaged as I would wish to have been, had the 'shoe' of researcher or even delegate been a better fit. I base the majority of my analysis on materials that do not reflect my embodied presence at the conference, such as interview transcripts and the conference pack, which do not contravene the rules regarding the research visa which I was unable to obtain.

Gender as an inherently eventful concept

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[127] Coordinator: Archana Sharma. 4 February 2014.

[128] Coordinator: Monisha Behal. 5 February 2014.

It is because gender is an inherently unstable concept that things can happen to it. That a conference can have a conceptual pedagogical project to reorient the concept of *gender in India* reflects the potential for gender to be resignified in use. The conference's conceptual project was to show that conceptualisations of gender that refer to a national state of affairs, but which do not incorporate the specificities of the Northeast region, are not referring to India as a whole. This project can be understood as a contestation between two naturalised inherent meanings of gender: the inherent meaning of *gender in India* versus the inherent meaning of *gender in the Northeast*. The conference deliberately set out to destabilise the inherent meaning of *gender in India* by confronting it with the inherent meaning of *gender in the Northeast*: the project, expressed in these terms, was to expose the concept of *gender-in-India-minus-the-Northeast* as a concept that is defined in use by those who do not consider the Northeast in their nation-wide assumptions. It was then the responsibility of the conference to educate the delegates from other regions about the inherent meaning of *gender in the Northeast*, and the differences between the region and the rest of India. However, just as there is no inherent meaning as such of *gender in India*, there is also no inherent meaning of *gender in the Northeast*: the conference exposed the concept of *gender-in-India-minus-the-Northeast* as being defined in use, but the shift to *gender-in-India-including-the-Northeast* could also only occur through processes of conceptualisation (i.e. defining in use) at the conference. As I go on to show, the imposition of the inherent meaning of *gender in the Northeast* onto *gender in India* was explicitly constructed at the conference as something happening to gender. The conference therefore capitalised on the potential for gender to be defined in use to make something happen to gender, but exactly what happened to gender, and how it happened, could not be entirely controlled by the IAWS conference organisers. The eventfulness at the heart of this apparently planned and organised conceptual pedagogical project derives from the openness of gender to reconceptualisation that the conference depended on, but could not fully control.

The eventfulness of conceptual contestation

Within the overarching conceptual contestation that sought to demonstrate the neglect of the Northeast region in national understandings of gender, I have identified three different sub-contestations in the official discourse of the conference (the plenaries, the pack) which sought to construct the differences between gender in the Northeast and the rest of India. These are: (i) inherent regional difference along geopolitical lines, (ii) difference related to socioeconomic development and human rights, (iii) difference stemming from the intersection of gender with other factors. Each contestation involves a different conceptual manoeuvre concerning the overarching conceptual project of altering the intersection between gender and region/nation.

The first contestation, the assertion of inherent regional difference, is exemplified by the excerpt from the printed copy of Sen's (2014) 'Presidential address' quoted above. The contestation that the Northeast region[129] is inherently different from the rest of India stems from the fact that none of the seven original states[130] are joined to the rest of India except by a narrow strip (26km), the Siliguri Corridor, which joins Assam to West Bengal. The landlocked region shares international borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar, and Nepal; these extensive borders, coupled with the region's narrow geographical attachment to the rest of India, have resulted in a region that is in many ways discrete from India. As many of my research participants stated, the Northeast region is 'a grey area' for women's studies scholars who are not directly linked with the region. The conference sought to set up the concept-ness of *gender in the Northeast* as an entity that was physically separated from *gender in India*; the conference constructed itself as a showcase for women's issues, culture and scholarship that were particular to the region.

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[129] The term 'Northeast' is itself a contestable term, as the region was discursively and geographically established as such during the British colonial period (Bora, 2014; Dutta, 2015; Gaikwad, 2009).

[130] These are: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura. The Himalayan state of Sikkim was added to the region in 2002 and shares a different border with West Bengal (M/o DONER, 2015, n.p.).

The contestation that ran through the introductions, plenaries and keynotes worked with a different – but linked – conceptual formation. The dominant discourse, at least in these spaces, drew attention to the extreme level of discrimination against women and the infringement of human rights that women suffer in this region[131]. The underlying discourse was that there was no place for identity politics in the face of such hardship. Within this discourse, the concept of gender was subordinated to the concept of women. By far the most prevalent concept in play at the IAWS conference was 'women'; gender was only referred to in passing, and even then it was constructed as a subordinate or auxiliary concept to 'women', as in this statement about the purpose of IAWS as an association (written by Meeta Deka, a women's studies scholar in the Northeast region (see eg. Deka, 2008; 2013)):

> IAWS was…set up…with the primary objective of developing Women's Studies as an interdisciplinary subject to facilitate dialogue and interaction *through the critical lens of gender* in various academic institutions and beyond (Deka, 2014a, p. ii, emphasis added).

In this statement, the concept of gender is explicitly portrayed as a *means* to achieve women's studies. This explicit construction is reflected implicitly in uses of gender in the contributions to *Voices of the Northeast* (Deka, 2014b), which was provided in the conference pack as 'an introduction to the region' (Agnihotri, 2014, p. i). In Vernal's (2014) essay, 'Women and armed conflict in North East India', and Laisram's (2014) contribution, 'Women's movements in Manipur'[132] (the two more context-based essays), the use of the term 'women' proliferates, while 'gender' is almost absent. When gender is employed, it is used to indicate the disparity in status between women and men, for example 'the gendered state of democracy in Manipur' (Laisram, 2014, p. 6). From my perspective, which was aligned

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[131] In particular regarding political violence against women in the region (see Bora, 2014; Gaikwad, 2009), sexual harassment (Purkayastha and Rao, 2012; Vauquline, 2013), and economic poverty (see Bhattacharya and Vauquline, 2013; Krishna, 2001; Mishra and Upadhyay, 2012).

[132] Manipur is one of the states in the Northeast region.

with opinions expressed by some of my participants, there was a silence around gender in this discourse, a relegating of gender to the trace of women, especially in the understanding of gender which includes discussions of sexuality, and which advocates opening up from a binaristic understanding of gender. During one of the introductory speeches, Radhika muttered to me, 'I really feel like standing up and telling people not to use the gender binary anymore'. Among several of my participants, as I go on to show, there was a sense that Gauhati University, the city of Guwahati, the women's studies scholarship on display, and the regional brand of feminism, were all rather 'behind' the rest of India. On the other side of the same coin, the dominant discourse portrayed at the conference proclaimed the need of special attention for this region on the same grounds.

A third contestation to mention as integral to the conference's conceptual pedagogical project was the realignment of gender as intersectional. The relationship between gender and caste is an integral dimension of what we might term 'Indian' intersectionality (see also Purkayastha et al., 2003). Priya, for example, critiqued an academic from another South Asian country because 'when she writes about India she doesn't really talk about caste'; Radhika, using the 'just gender' critique of gender work that does not use an intersectionality approach (see p. 187), felt it was 'important for us [as feminists] to *consciously* be aware of our gendered- not just our gendered identity but, in the Indian context, of our class identity, caste identity, ability-based identity, all of that' (emphasis in original). As I stated in Chapter 5, my discovery of the fundamental status of caste in an Indian intersectional gender analysis constituted a conceptual shift for my concepts of both intersectionality and gender. However the IAWS conference complicated this conceptual shift further. Because the Northeast region is strongly tribal[133] in nature (and so less dominated by

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[133] The term 'tribal' is inscribed in the Indian Constitution, where certain ethnicities (particularly the 'Hill Tribes' of the Northeast) are protected under Schedule six of the constitution, while others are excluded. Furthermore, membership of these groups is determined by a set of essentialised characteristics. (See Dutta, 2015; Krishna, 2001).

caste divisions[134]), the caste dimension in the 'Indian' intersectional gender analysis is displaced. The public face of the IAWS conference strove to convey the importance of tribal identity and culture in the region to the conference delegates: there was a performance of 'traditional' dance and music from across the region on one of the evenings of the conference. Furthermore, I encountered several mentions of the matrilineal[135] societies that exist in the region, for example in Deka's (2014a) and Laisram's (2014) contributions to *Voices from the North East* (Deka, 2014b); a film showing of a documentary on 'Meghalaya's matrilineal society' advertised on a flyer in the conference pack ('Drishti – Celluloid Representations', 2014); in her interview Priya discussed a presentation she had attended on matrilineal society in the Khasi hills (Khonglah, 2014). At the conference, the inherent position of caste was destabilised within the configuration of 'Indian' intersectionality; the resultant configuration of intersectional gender was forced to renegotiate its key reference point.

Conceptual performatives as events

According to the citationality understanding of performativity, the conceptual contestations that the conference engaged in had to cite familiar arguments in order to achieve the intended reconceptualisation. It is therefore important to note that each of the above contestations qualifies as a contestation precisely because familiarity (India; identity politics; the importance of caste) was played against unfamiliarity (Northeast; human rights violations; the importance of tribe) in order to gain its foothold in the conceptualisation of gender. The conceptualisations of gender in the Northeast were constructed as names addressed from elsewhere, where the elsewhere was, strictly speaking, not quite elsewhere. In the previous section, I referred to my inability to judge many of the papers at the NWSA conference, because I was so disoriented by the unfamiliarity of the terms

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[134] Though this is also contested; Haksar (2014) argued in her keynote that caste is more important in the Assamese context than allowed for by the tribal argument.

[135] Where a family's lineage is routed through the women of the family. In the Khasi case, for example, 'property both in land and other forms is passed on from generation to generation through the…youngest daughter' (Khonglah, 2014, abstract printed in IAWS abstracts, p. 4). See also Nongbri (2008, first published 2003).

being used and the arguments being made. I stated that this led to a passive form of conference participation, where I observed rather than engaged with the presentations. This also contributed to the wholesale – and uncritical – absorption of certain concepts and arguments into my concept of gender, based on the persuasive citationality of the conceptualisations and my inability to evaluate them based on my own citational conceptual norms. At IAWS, this effect was even more evident because many of the delegates at the conference were learning about gender in the Northeast from a position of almost no prior knowledge, but were simultaneously made aware of their ignorance of the region. There was therefore an impetus for these delegates to accept the arguments that were being presented by 'local' scholars.

An example of the success of the conference's conceptual performative (based on a citationality of elsewhere-ness *within* India) can be seen in this excerpt from Nirja's interview, in which she re-evaluates her understanding of women's studies in India:

> See now we think of women's studies: okay we confine her to the domestic sphere, [then] we give her some space, public space… But then the vast majority of women in the Northeast who remain neglected, …who have faced violence which has been induced by the state. So the role of the *state* in inducing in this conflict areas that was a *shock*. Then why do you call India a democracy *at all*, is it a dictatorship, is it military rule? … So such thoughts you know…the whole democracy concept, where does it stand in relation to…the women in the Northeast? (Emphasis in original).

Nirja had attended the IAWS conference because she felt that, even after thirty years of working in the field of women's studies, the Northeast remained unknown to her. She had therefore taken up the pedagogical project offered by the hosting of a national conference in the region. It is clear from both this excerpt and the transcript quotation included at the start of this section that the exposure to the portrayals of women's issues in the Northeast during the conference had a profound effect on Nirja. Indeed she stated that she 'had tears in [her] eyes in some of the sessions, [she] was literally crying'. In the above excerpt, Nirja uses a citational definition of

women's studies to illustrate what she considers to be a general understanding of women's studies: namely, gaining access to the public sphere (and, concomitantly, political participation in democratic rule). Nirja refers to AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Protection Act), where state violence is condoned[136], as a particularly shocking issue. AFSPA was discussed in the keynotes and plenary sessions, particularly the keynote by legal scholar and activist Vrinda Grover (2014), who analysed the role of the state in violence against women in Kashmir and the Northeast region. The transformation that occurs in Nirja's concept of women's studies is sparked by the challenge to the feminist project of gaining public space (including state representation) for women that is posed by the idea of that same state legally inflicting violence upon women. In this case we can see direct results of the pedagogical project that the IAWS conference sought to enact: something happened to Nirja's understanding of *gender in India*.

Circumstances contribute to eventfulness

Thus far in my analysis of the conceptual event that the IAWS conference sought to produce in delegates' conceptualisations of gender in India, I have focused on the discourses that circulated in the official spaces of the conference. I now move from showing how the conference *contained* its conceptual pedagogical project to the contribution of the conditions of the conference to the *production* of the conceptualisations that occurred. In the earlier analysis of the conference 'shoe' and whether or not it fits, I concentrated on micro-level conference incidents and processes. In theorising the IAWS conceptual event, I re-shape this analysis to speak to the level of the whole conference: did the 'shoe' fit the IAWS conference that Gauhati University hosted? Was the Guwahati 2014 conference able to fulfil the requirements of a national IAWS conference? Was it enough like an IAWS conference for the pedagogical project to be taken seriously? Did the conference succeed in its project of embedding elsewhere-ness within

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[136] 'In 1958 the Indian Constitution bestowed the national security forces with unmitigated powers to operate in the Northeast, by implementing the AFSPA. This act allows the Indian Army to encroach upon private property, penetrate homes and arrest people without a warrant and to assault, shoot or kill people, on the grounds of suspicion [of insurgency] alone' (Gaikwad, 2009). For more information, see Human Rights Watch (2008), Kikon (2009), Mathur (2012).

gender in India, or did the elsewhere-ness prevail? Did the conference succeed as a site for the production of 'proper knowledge' (Pereira, 2011; 2012)?

At the conference, there seemed to be a disjunction between perceptions of the conference as a national association and as a regional event. This disjunction played out in some of the formal conference spaces, where it became obvious that some of the scholars from the rest of India were not allowing the 'shoe' of scholarly feminist authority to fit scholars from the region. A micro-level example of this disjunction occurred in Amritha's interview, where she recounted that a presenter from the Northeast region referred to the rest of India as 'mainland India' in her paper. This term is a political reference to the sense that the Northeast region is like an island that is not attached to the rest of India. The chair of the session (also the sub-theme convenor) intervened to correct this expression, saying 'you are also Indian'. The sub-themes were convened by representatives of IAWS (not by the regional branch); the chair did not credit the presenter with the authority to choose to represent India in this way. Amritha felt that the chair had denied the presenter the possibility of conveying the regional 'nationalism' of the Northeast. In this moment, the chair had elided the difference *within* that was integral to the conference's pedagogical project. Amritha narrated another example of this disjunction, where the 'leading…feminist and Women's Studies scholars walked out of [a plenary] session [on the Northeast], they- they never attended it, and they were standing outside and you know chit-chatting and making noise'. She contrasted this with the keynotes, where these scholars 'c[a]me in full force', despite the fact that they 'have heard [Vrinda Grover and Nandita Haksar] numerous times'. For Amritha, this was evidence of a 'token' engagement on the part of prominent ('mainland') Indian feminists with Women's Studies scholarship in the Northeast. Amritha's point here is that the scholars that were based in the Northeast were shown by other scholars that they did not fit the 'shoe' of knowledge producer; instead, the 'shoe' of producing knowledge about the Northeast was shown to fit the keynotes, who were not from the region (Grover) or who had been based outside the region for many years (Haksar).

There was therefore a sense that the Northeastern academics at the conference were not being taken seriously as knowledge producers; this played out in the reception of the clothes and appearance of delegates at the conference. Two of my participants commented on the style of femininity at the conference for some of the students and academics from Northeast. When Aisha and I were discussing her clothes at the conference, she stated that she 'didn't want to look too fancy because then you'd look out of place'. I pointed out that some people had worn 'fancy' clothes, and Aisha identified that some of the 'local Assamese girls were dressed up in very fancy clothes'. There is an implication that these delegates were 'out of place' at IAWS, seen as a national conference. This is reflected in Priya's tongue-in-cheek analysis of the academics from the Northeast, who were wearing *sindoor* (marks on the forehead which show that the wearer is married), and who had dyed their hair. Priya compared this with more mainstream Indian versions of feminism, where 'a good feminist would never put on a *sindoor*' and 'a good feminist would let her hair go grey'. These comparisons touch on an area of discussion which occurred in several of the interviews with IAWS participants, namely, what an Indian feminist looks like. Participants felt there was a uniform for IAWS that they referred to as the 'Delhi feminist' or '*jhola wala*' (referring to a person carrying an 'ethnic' cotton bag) look. Key items were a cotton *kurta* (tunic), with a sleeveless coat over the top (or a shawl), *chappals* ('authentic' leather sandals), 'ethnic jewellery' (or no jewellery), a cloth bag, and often short hair. While this description fit most of the senior figures from 'mainland India', many of the academics who were organising the conference wore bright silk saris, ostentatious jewellery, and had elaborate hairstyles. Priya suspected that the 'older ['mainland Indian'] feminists [were] bitching about this', and she herself questioned the value of the local academics as 'role model feminists for their students'. The emphasised femininity at the local level of the conference detracted from the status of Northeastern feminists as producers of 'proper knowledge'. The 'shoe' of proper Indian feminist did not fit the Northeastern women's studies academics; the conceptual performative was unbalanced too far away from 'elsewhere but *within*' and too far towards 'elsewhere'.

Eventful gender?

The conceptual event that I have outlined in this section occurred at the level of the whole conference; as such, finding a means of representing it without reducing it to a 'defining moment' representation has proved challenging. This conceptual event bulkily exceeds the four stages of theorisation that I have used to represent it, because of the complexity involved in constructing – and experiencing – the conceptual pedagogical project of a conference. It was because of this tension between the planned conceptual project of the conference and the way in which the conceptualisation played out at the micro-level that I chose to focus on this conceptual event in the final chapter of the thesis. The conference deliberately set out to cause a resignification of delegates' concept of *gender in India*, but the carefully constructed discourses that were woven into the official spaces of the conference could not avoid the other processes that contributed to making gender mean at the conference, such as the way in which the clothes and accessories of scholars from the Northeast impacted on the seriousness with which their knowledge production was taken. In this sense, even a planned performative can be seen as eventful.

In the final version of eventfulness which I set out earlier in the chapter, I drew attention to the difference between a performative and an event. The conceptual event that the IAWS conference sought to bring about would certainly fall into the category of a performative, in that the resignification of gender was planned, and as such was already possible. However the boundary between a performative and an event is blurred by the question of whether a planned conceptual performative can still incorporate aspects of eventfulness. Even if the conceptual event was planned, there was no guarantee of how the project would play out when placed in the hands of the conference organisers and delegates. Because in some ways the conference acted as a spatio-temporalisation for the conceptual project, there was always the possibility that the fact of being there (in Guwahati) at that time (February 2014) would impact upon the conceptualisation. The planned messages that the conference intended to convey have been troubled (in a positive sense) by the other associations

that *gender in the Northeast* accrued simply by the fact of attending the conference. For example, as I have stated, the dominant official discourses of the conference focused on the concept of 'women', particularly in the roles of heterosexual marriage and motherhood (unlike in previous years, there was no sexuality-related sub-theme), but the dominant discourses were criss-crossed with the alternative discourse that circled around the conference: that of the first ever LGBTQ Pride march in Guwahati, which was to take place the day after the conference. Although the IAWS conference was not linked with the Pride march, there were petitions and announcements from Pride organisers at the conference, and the march took on a higher profile in the discourse at IAWS when security forces had threatened to call off the event; it was mentioned in passing in several different speeches. While the conference had focused its attention on the impact of AFSPA on women, the coincidental timing of the march with the conference broadened the gendered discourse of state violence to include members of the LGBTQ community. This is only one example of the potential for eventfulness to occur in a conference's pedagogical project, but it seems to illustrate the possibility for a planned conceptual event to exceed its intended performative and veer towards the 'chink/crevice' in the en/closure of gender. In this analysis between the planned conceptual performative of *gender in India* as including (but potentially different from) *gender in the Northeast* and the enactment of that performative at the conference, a space has opened up for a more complex, nuanced and negotiated conceptualisation of both the Northeast and gender.

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The two examples that I have worked through in the latter part of this chapter have served both to illustrate and to evaluate the theorisation that I have cumulatively constructed throughout the thesis. I hope I have shown that the theoretical steps that I have proposed explain conceptual eventfulness without explaining away the potential for unpredictability and inexplicability. In this chapter, I have brought together the versions of eventfulness that I set out individually in earlier chapters. Each layer of the theorisation has its own potential for something to happen to gender.

Eventfulness exists at the core of the concept of gender (which is as such not a core); the contestations that occur over the meaning of gender further destabilise the concept; the citationality which is used to shore up conceptuality opens up the possibility for eventfulness when academic mobility brings different citational chains into contact; the conventions and material conditions of the context of conceptualisation add a dimension of eventfulness to the way in which a conceptualisation plays out. At the beginning of the chapter, I raised the question of whether all of this brings me back to where I started. Because the project was built on a 'bedrock' of instability, namely the (as yet untheorised) concept of eventful gender, the eventfulness was always already there. But what I have tried to show in this chapter is that the four-stage theorisation, along with the discussion of the event that I have brought in to this last chapter, has helped me to work through conceptual events in a structured and detailed manner that has indeed led to new thinking about the chosen events.

In this chapter, I have turned towards the 'chink/crevice' in the en/closure, through which the glow of something beyond may be glimpsed. By introducing the event, I have provided some ground from which to look back towards the performative, to ask if the impossible can happen. The presence of the event in the theorisation has therefore constituted a refusal to allow the theorisation to suffice, to permit a sealing off or packaging of the conceptualisation of gender. However, turning towards the 'chink/crevice' inevitably involves turning back towards the en/closure. Indeed we could say that the concept of eventful gender is comprised of this repeated turning – turning towards the 'chink/crevice', turning back to the en/closure, and so on. The concept of eventful gender that I have constructed in this thesis always strives to highlight its own instability, its proximity to other links in the conceptual chain, to the zone of the trace. In so doing, eventful gender inevitably fixes into presence – spatio-temporalises – the very unfixity it seeks to establish. Even as the glow of unfixity disperses back into the en/closure, I consider that the glimpse carries out essential work in the conceptualisation of gender. Instead of claiming fixity for gender, and establishing conceptual authority on that basis, this understanding of gender gains its strength from the very

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instability that contestation on the basis of fixity cannot contemplate. Conceptual contestation on the basis of unfixity allows for a different kind of conceptual literacy around gender: in this view of conceptual literacy, gender is conceptualised with the possibility that something could happen – to gender, to us as we produce gender knowledge and receive others' gender knowledge production, to the referents of gender, and to the ways in which conceptualisations of gender performatively describe and so impact upon our lives.

Chapter 9
En/closing remarks

> When a book is finished…we can no longer read it and say that the
> book is one that we have written…nor can we say in what despair
> or what happiness we wrote it[137] (Duras, 1993, p. 30, tr.).

In, 'Ecrire', Duras describes the effect of finishing a book and releasing it to the world; this act of separation removes the possibility of engaging with the as yet unwritten potential of the work, and seals the book off from further intervention. Duras goes on to write, '[n]othing happens anymore in such a book, finished off and released'[138] (ibid., tr.). The expression 'nothing happens anymore' resonates with the theorisation of eventful gender which has run through the thesis: 'eventful gender is about trying the impossible to see what happens'. During the process of writing this thesis, I have embraced the unexpected and inexplicable qualities of research and knowledge production. I have been endlessly surprised by the possibilities and impossibilities that trying to theorise 'how gender comes to mean what it means' have brought to light. However there is a sense that the potential for eventfulness that has been inimical to this research project tailed off at the end of Chapter 8. The task of Chapter 9 is exactly the separation that Duras describes: to depose the figure of the author and concede my place to the finished thesis. This is the performative textual space in which to bring the eventfulness of the thesis, at least for me as writer, to a close: a spatial limit, a temporal ending.

This chapter serves as a symmetrical mirroring of the 'welcome' with which the thesis began. The 'welcome' enacted a gesture to the form of knowledge production that has provided the research 'site' and the conceptual inspiration for this project: academic conferences. The 'welcome' also acted as a reminder that this thesis too is its own form of

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[137] 'Quand un livre est fini…on ne peut plus dire en le lisant que ce livre-là c'est un livre que vous avez écrit…ni dans quel désespoir ou dans quel bonheur' (Duras, 1993, p. 30).

[138] 'Rien n'arrive plus dans un tel livre, terminé et distribué' (Duras, 1993, p. 30).

dissemination event. I therefore end with the matching stage of a conference: 'closing remarks'. In her post-conference interview, Catarina described the end of the FWSA conference:

> there was a lot of of trying to summarise it and trying to understand [the conference], people saying, 'Oh a lot of this happened; not enough of this happened,' or, 'As a whole this was this conference.'

My concluding chapter likewise looks back at the dissemination event of the thesis: 'a lot of this', 'not enough of this', the thesis 'as a whole'.

Even from this vantage point, I do not exempt this chapter from the scrutiny of its own processes of knowledge production, which, despite the written form, are not too far from the embodied knowledge production that the thesis has analysed. This textual space can be understood as akin to the question time after a presentation, but the author plays the roles of chair, audience and presenter. How will the chair choose who can ask a question? Will they accidentally – or deliberately – choose 'the aggressive questioner'? (Becker, 2014, p. 124). Will participants 'ask[] questions from the floor in a passive aggressive manner' (anonymised Facebook post, November 2014), perhaps starting their question with, 'I am grateful for this extremely creative and brainwashing paper'? (anonymised Facebook post, April 2015). Will there be a 'questioner without a question' (Becker, 2014, p. 126) who will 'strike fear into any academic who has ever presented a paper' by stating, '"Yes, I have [a question]. Well it's more of a comment"'? (blog cited in Parr, 2014a, p. 23). Will the presenter think that 'the problem is the questioner rather than the question' (Becker, 2014, p. 124), and answer by promising to deal with the issue raised another time? (Jonsson, 2014). Undoubtedly some of this behaviour will be conveyed in the ensuing questions which I put to the thesis, and the ways in which I answer them. The reflections that I present here are deliberately positioned at the edge of the en/closure of the thesis – they are neither fully in nor wholly outside the chapters that they bring to a close.

The first question I put to the thesis is in fact a question from one of my participants:

> What made you think of this kind of topic, what made you think that a conference can uh change and you know mould our ideas of gender as very radical? I- I don't think that conferences can *really* influence us that way (emphasis in original).

My first question, then: have conferences delivered what I hoped they would as research 'sites'? In Chapter 1, I set out a clear justification of why research on academia should extend its reach beyond the walls of the university. In the thesis I wanted to both research and perform processes of global knowledge production, in order to reflect the changes to and theorisations of contemporary academia that decentre the HEI as *the* location of higher education and knowledge production. I hoped to capture scholars' conceptualisations (including my own) while we were on the move, as we adjusted to strange places and different discussions, to locate my research away from the (un)comfortable familiarity of a 'home' institution. The intention of this decontextualising approach was firstly to access the moments where gender scholars come together to debate the nuances of gender (rather than the simplified conceptual formations that are often necessary in a non gender-specific setting), and secondly to seek out conceptual shifts that would result from these debates. My participant's scepticism was particularly related to this latter intention. She and several other participants, particularly those who were more advanced in their careers, referred to the reproduction of conventional thinking that occurs at conferences and to the low quality of presentations. At times I wondered if these comments were in part based on a customary citation of conference fatigue discourses, and the difficulty of escaping those discourses in representing conferences, because in other parts of these participants' interviews they discussed conversations or experiences at the conference that had excited or inspired them. However it is also possible to understand conference fatigue not just as a representation but a mode of attending conferences, especially for the global academic elite who are at 'home' in motion (Fahey and Kenway, 2010a, p. 568): conferences are by no means guaranteed to shake up conceptualisations. Some of the impact of a

conference depends on the degree to which it is constructed according to the other conference representation that I analysed (the defining moment representation), and whether the conference is constructed before, at and after the conference as an important conference to be or have been at. It was generally acknowledged by most of my participants that none of the three conferences I attended were 'defining moment' conferences, even IAWS in Guwahati, which set out to be one such conference.

However many of the conference delegates who participated in the study did recount papers, discussions and social conversations at the conferences that recontextualised or added to their conceptual constellation of gender. I must add that this was particularly the case for FWSA and NWSA participants, who had my pre-conference interview questions in mind as they participated in the conference. For the IAWS participants, none of whom could experience the pre-conference interview because of my visa issues, it was more difficult to retrospectively access these processes. There was a pedagogical element to my research process; because I was keen for participants to present their analyses of gender at the conference to me, rather than ask them questions that would lead to my analysis of their experiences, I had tried to induct them (and myself for the autoethnographic element) into a mode of conference attendance that involved engaging in the conceptual life of gender at the conference. Several of the participants commented on the effect that participating in the study had had on their experience, particularly in relation to the group discussion that I held at FWSA and NWSA, but also with regard to hearing papers differently or experiencing interactions with more affective intensity. I consider that some of the elements of my research process could contribute to a more carefully implemented conference pedagogy, and a means to challenge the representation and performance of conference fatigue.

The other justification that I gave for researching conferences in Chapter 1 centred on the disruption to (written) knowledge production that conference dissemination can cause. In producing the thesis, I have tried to take seriously Hughes' (2003, p. 40) suggestion that 'dissemination is not simply an end or beginning point but it is integral to the processes of

knowledge production'. I have woven together commentary on the logistical issues of my doctoral journey with more conceptual and theoretical analysis, in an attempt to produce a thesis that reflects the embodied process of knowledge production and that does not present a 'weightless[]' (Gill, 2010, p. 232) façade of academic production. However I am aware that the thesis, in foregrounding the dissemination process of the research process, has also come to foreground my own presence in the study, perhaps at the expense of the participants who accompanied me through each conference. Atkinson (2006, p. 402) warns against 'the ethnographer becom[ing] more memorable than the ethnography', and I wonder if this is somewhat the case with this study. I resisted creating characters for my research participants, because I did not want to create the illusion that I or my readers could fully know the people who passed through the study. However the resultant effect is that none of the participants recur through the thesis as coherent constructions. It is important to recognise that this does not mean that the participants' interviews simply served as sources of data which I could mine to reinforce my point (the 'aggressive questioner' surfaces here). I asked participants to show me the ways that they were thinking about gender, and the analytical tools they were using to think about the conceptual life of gender at a conference, and I built my own lens from these discussions. The participants who took time to talk to me before, at and after the conferences, and many of whom have continued to inform my work and thinking as our collegiality and friendship have developed, have permanently altered my understanding of gender, my ways of thinking about research, and indeed my present and future academic trajectory. This is to say that, while the individual participants may not come through as rounded characters in the thesis, their thoughts and conceptualisations are the weft to my warp in this thesis.

The central aim of the thesis was to present a theorisation of how gender comes to mean what it means, without explaining away the the inexplicable and unpredictable elements of conceptualisation. In order to find my way through this theorisation, I have adhered to four stages of deconstruction, which I developed from some of Derrida's writings on this elusive concept. It could be argued that I have developed deconstruction beyond Derrida – that breaking the deconstructive process down into four

stages and obediently following them goes against the deconstructive project. However I echo hooks' (1994, p. 61) comment that '[t]heory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfills this function only when we ask that it do so'. Rather than expecting deconstruction to happen of its own accord (and therefore finding it lacking), I wanted to put deconstruction to work in a way that could lead to a structured process of theory application – one which I could use to learn what had not even anticipated learning from my empirical study, and potentially one which others could use in other contexts. For each stage of deconstruction, I have layered the foundations with other theoretical perspectives, from conceptual contestation to performativity to materiality to eventfulness. Inevitably these perspectives, which have played a subordinated role to deconstruction, have not been theorised and applied with the same care; perhaps this is a moment where, echoing Shori, I answer, 'Stay tuned.' Alternatively, I can justify the range of different perspectives that I have brought together in this thesis by arguing that I wanted to provide as comprehensive as possible a theorisation of how gender comes to mean what it means. I have constructed a theorisation of conceptualisation which has brought together concepts, their uses, the claims that those using them make and the contexts where these claims are made, the material conditions and conventions that contribute to the way in which concepts are received and constructed. These elements were particularly obvious in conference contexts, because of the nature of conferences as embodied sites of knowledge production and academic mobility. However it is my hope that the theorisation may be useful for thinking through other sites of knowledge production, and other conceptualisations than gender.

This brings me on to the final question that I want to ask this thesis, which I fear may indeed be more of a comment than a question. I want to ask – why gender? Why do I have such a strong attachment to a concept that is frequently both maligned and stripped of productive potential? The drive to work with gender, and not to let it go, has remained with me during this process, even as I have lost any sense of what gender 'is'. Butler states that 'to call the frame into question is perhaps to lose something of one's sense of place in gender' (Butler, 1999, p. xi). Because I have been so determined

to open up my concept of gender to conceptual performativity, to finding gender 'in the names addressed from elsewhere' (Butler, 1997, p. 30), to eventfulness, I have indeed lost my place in gender, or rather I have been 'put in [my] place', where 'such a place [is] no place' (ibid., p. 4). However, even as I have lost my place, I have retained a strange loyalty to the concept of gender. I have, for example, wavered between asking the concepts of queer or feminism to do the conceptual or political work that gender is at times deemed incapable of. However I strongly adhere to Butler's (1993, p. 25) exhortation that we 'resist that theoretical gesture…in which exclusions are simply affirmed as sad necessities of signification.' Recalling Hughes' (2002) notion of conceptual literacy, I agree that it is important to embrace the positive valence of trouble (Butler, 1999) that accompanies questioning, and never ceasing to question, the fundamental or basic concepts, and the work that we ask them to perform. This, then, is my conceptual performative: I consider that there is work that gender can do, that 'eventful gender' can do, that other concepts cannot, and I have tried to show that gender comes to mean what it means through an eventfulness that, though impossible, seems nonetheless to happen.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Information for research participants

Emily F. Henderson
PhD Candidate (ESRC-funded)
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Institute of Education, University of London, UK
Mobile: …
Email: …

Information for Participants
Conference: [FWSA/NWSA/IAWS]

Conferences PhD Research Project: Information for Participants

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my PhD research about gender and academic conferences. Please see below for further information about the study.

Once you have read the information, please complete and sign the consent form I have also sent you. You can sign by email, or print and scan.

Aims of the study:

The aim of the study is to explore understandings of gender – and related concepts – in higher education and academia, with a multiple focus on gender as a concept, an area of research and study, and a performance of academic and personal identity. The research sites of the study are gender-related academic conferences, because gender, women's studies and feminist conferences are sites for the dissemination and renegotiation of gender. I have designed a qualitative study for which I have gained ethical approval from the Institute of Education.

Participation [FWSA/NWSA]:

The study begins with a short, informal interview by phone or Skype with each participant before the conference, in which we will discuss our understandings of gender and the way that it relates to our work. At the conference itself, participants (including me) will develop our initial discussions, with the option of meeting as a group, and we will discuss how our understandings of gender develop during the conference. Interactions during the conference will occur both when we accidentally meet and during more scheduled meetings, and in writing if preferred; the level and type of interaction will be determined by each participant. No interactions will disrupt attendance of conference sessions. A meeting place at the conference will be chosen and communicated to participants by email before the conference starts.

Participation [IAWS]:

For the [IAWS]-related part of the study, there will be one interview for participants, undertaken from the UK on Skype or by phone. The first section of the interview will involve a discussion of understandings of gender and the way that it relates to participants' work. The second section of the interview, which will be more discursive in form, will cover the participants' experiences of the conference, in relation to the understandings of gender discussed in the first part of the interview. Interviews are expected to last around one hour, but there is flexibility to extend, where participants wish to develop fuller discussions.

Further details [FWSA/NWSA]:

The proposed research is not an evaluation or an audit of the [FWSA/NWSA] conference, or of the [FWSA/NWSA], but is rather a conceptual exploration of gendered identities at academic conferences. The [FWSA/NWSA] have approved the research.

Further details [IAWS]:

The proposed research is not an evaluation or an audit of the IAWS national conference, or of the IAWS, but is rather a conceptual exploration of gendered identities at academic conferences. The IAWS will be shown any publishable material based on the conference before it is submitted.

Appendix 2: Interview guide

These are the prompts that I used for the pre-conference interviews. The post-conference interview (or part two of the interview if there was only a post-conference interview) was based on participants' responses from the first interview and was more conversational in nature.

Section 1 – Introductions and conferences
- Introductions
- First FWSA/NWSA/IAWS conference?
- Previous experiences of going to conferences?
        Where/when/discipline/lasting memories?
- Why going to FWSA/NWSA/IAWS this time?
        Expectations/what hoping to get out of the conference

Section 2 – Gender
- Discuss academic role in relation to gender
        Field/s, department/s, background/trajectory
        What is involved in the everyday?
- Discuss research/teaching/work in relation to gender
        Which terms used to identify work? What meant by the terms?
- Academic identity in relation to gender
        How describes academic identity?
        Relationship between academic identity and gender identity?
        Gendered academic identity?

Section 3 – Practical
- Pseudonym
- Pronouns used?
- Staying for whole conference?

Appendix 3: Conference reflection prompts for participants

Research participants were given these questions before the conference [FWSA/NWSA] or in the period between the conference and interview [IAWS].

Questions to think about:

These questions are to prompt your reflections – please do not feel obliged to address all of them, or to address them in this way.

Think about the formal sessions and the social, academic time, about incidents and moments during the conference that move, interest, excite, annoy, frustrate you.

Think about the context of the conference, as situated in a [UK/US/Indian] association and venue, but also as a temporary, global space.

1) 'Gender' as (institutional, academic) domain/s of research and study:
- How are people positioning themselves in relation to a domain of research, study, and teaching?
- What are the terms that are used to link people to (academic?) gender work, eg women, gender, feminist, queer etc etc?
- How are these terms used in conjunction with institutional roles or departments? - How are you introducing yourself? Has this varied across the conference?
- Has your idea of any of this changed or been challenged during the conference so far? What has prompted these thoughts?

2) 'Gender' as the subject of research, as a concept:
- Which terms are being used to identify presentations/discussions/conversations as gender-related?
- Do you relate to these terms with your own work?
- Which terms have you been using about your work at this conference? Have these differed in different conference spaces?
- Has your understanding of any of these terms shifted or been consolidated at the conference? What were the moments that led to this thinking?

3) Gender as a performed, embodied identity
- At this conference, have you been aware of performing gender, or being recognised into a gendered role?
- How have bodies and identities been moving about in the conference space? What has interested or annoyed you?
- How would you describe the gendered academic identities that you have encountered, as well as your own, in the conference space?
- Has anything happened to the way you perceive your own academic/gendered identity? Has anything happened to your understanding of the lived, performed, embodied experiences of gender?

4) Does anything not fit into the above?
- If so, what are your other thoughts?

Appendix 4: Interview dates

FWSA: 21-23 June 2013

Pseudonym	Pre-conference	Post-conference
Molly	17 June 2013	3 July 2013
Edith	17 June 2013	27 June 2013
Jasmyn	18 June 2013	8 August 2013
Ruth	19 June 2013	17 July 2013 (w/ Rachel)
Rachel	19 June 2013	17 July 2013 (w/ Ruth)
Lucy	20 June 2013	12 July 2013
Catarina	21 June 2013	5 July 2013
Kamala	21 June 2013	18 July 2013
Rosie	21 June 2013	21 August 2013
Anna	N/A	18 July 2013

(Lunch meeting 22 June 2013)

NWSA: 7-10 November 2013

Pseudonym	Pre-conference	Post-conference
Susan	31 October 2013	21 November 2013
Charlotte	1 November 2013	21 November 2013
Kate	2 November 2013	24 November 2013
Anne	3 November 2013	21 November 2013
Margaret	6 November 2013	16 November 2013
Shori	6 November 2013	27 November 2013
Elizabeth	7 November 2013	23 November 2013
Abigail	N/A	24 November 2013

(Lunch meeting 9 November 2013)

IAWS: 4-7 February 2014

Pseudonym	Pre-conference	Post-conference
Aisha	N/A	14 February 2014
Sylvia	N/A	14 February 2014
Radhika	N/A	15 February 2014
Priya	N/A	17 February 2014
Nisha	N/A	22 February 2014
Amritha	N/A	24 February 2014
Meeta	N/A	24 February 2014
Nirja	N/A	24 February 2014
Maya	N/A	3 March 2014

(No lunch meeting)

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