For a Revival of Feminist Consciousness Raising: Horizontal Transformation of Epistemologies and Transgression of Neoliberal TimeSpace

Abstract

This paper looks back on the methodology and experience of feminist consciousness-raising (CR) in the 1970s, in relation to the current re-emergence of feminism. It constructs an argument that a new wave of CR is desirable so as to construct new forms of feminist pedagogy and activism. The paper will argue that contemporary feminism in the UK and US would benefit from this kind of methodology, through which a standpoint is constructed. The core of the paper is an analysis of how CR works as an affective and social process. Drawing on academic studies and participant accounts, the paper reconstructs the mechanisms through which participants' subjectivities and narratives are expressed and transformed. It suggests that these mechanisms express different non-homogeneous temporalities. The paper invites feminist pedagogy to get back to the base level of experience and unfold new theories and strategies to address the current context.

Keywords: Feminism, pedagogy, consciousness-raising, temporality.

Introduction

The re-emergence of feminism is a notable aspect of contemporary social movements, exemplified in the UK and US by practices including Slutwalk, Internet campaigns such as "I Need Feminism Because" and the growth of significant feminist subcultures on Twitter, Facebook and Tumblr. This re-emergence represents a welcome recomposition of oppositional politics in a context where social movements in general are under siege and in decline. However, it has been argued (e.g. Cook and Hasmath 2014; Renold and Ringrose

2012) that something is lacking in the discursive construction of many current Anglo-American feminist movements, which are often individualised and appeal to hegemonic structures and identities. We contend that this is because they lack means of collective grassroots knowledge-formation about the experiences of women. This lack, which has some international exceptions (c.f. Casas, 2006 on Precarias a la Deriva), affects those movements most visibly portrayed in mainstream and social media, and is reflected in many contemporary academic approaches. This limit arguably has the potential to impede the ability of feminists and other radicals to break with the dominant assumptions of neoliberalism.

In this paper, we argue that the lack of grassroots knowledge-production is problematic for social movements, for academic feminism, and for radical politics and theory more broadly. The reason this issue is so important is the existence of two traps: First, the glorification or acceptance of existing common sense and thus of systemic discursive power; second, of positing a vanguardist form of knowledge in which a leading group represents an entire social sector based on its own, self-formulated theoretical perspective. To elaborate, the first trap refers to the replication of 'common sense' in the Gramscian sense of a dominant, taken-for-granted immanent philosophy embedded in and reproducing the existing social structure. Following Gramsci we take 'common sense' to be a major underpinning of social conformity, but also an inconsistent assemblage containing emancipatory residues of 'good sense' (Gramsci 1971:323-34). The second trap, vanguardism, refers to cases whereby the activist, leader, or scholar claims a right to know, from outside or above, a particular position (Motta, 2011). Our framework is thus inspired by recent literatures on post-representational and anti-oppressive epistemologies, which argue that practices of representing others or claiming privileged oversight ought to be avoided in favour of radically open approaches in which

theoretical knowledge is produced non-hierarchically through direct experiences with others as part of prefigurative non-hierarchical political practices (Starodub 2015; Luchies 2015).

This dual trap is manifested in many different movements. In feminist movements it is expressed by, on the one hand, the mistaking of neoliberal truisms for feminism, e.g. spatial regulation, personal responsibility, conventional 'success', and on the other, the construction of feminist subjectivities in which claims to consciousness are premised on structural knowledge and/or individual experience, and which therefore risks vanguardism. This is not to deny the vital necessity of feminism or its contemporary expressions. However, we suggest that the feminist movement needs to deepen its grassroots epistemic base so as to flourish. The earlier wave of consciousness-raising took place during the Fordist period, which, through a combination of labour security and social welfare citizenship, ensured a degree of uniformity in experiences of oppression (Nadasen 2012). Transformations in the present neoliberal period, including 'deregulation, privatization, securitization, and the dismantling of the welfare state' (Nadasen 2012), have led to more fragmented experiences, such as accentuating race and class divides. Thus, constructing the possibility for identifying and resisting new forms of oppression today requires conditions of collective knowledge production in which different perspectives can be weaved together without privileging one or other voice in some form of polyphonic dialogue (Bakhtin 1984).

The core argument of the paper is that feminism (and by extension, all forms of radical theory) requires grassroots knowledge-production to provide a non-vanguardist epistemological basis for knowledge-production which also avoids reproducing 'common sense'. We theorise feminist consciousness raising (henceforth CR) as a historical and

potential future example of such a practice, and show how it enables everyday social actors and social movements to produce varied forms of social knowledge, including transformed consciousness and structural awareness. Feminism is not a singular movement, and many different actors use the label 'feminist' for diverse projects. In this paper, we treat feminism as a movement for the liberation of women from social-systemic domination (whether this is conceived as domination by men, patriarchy, or capitalism). Feminism thus requires claims about women's experiences, perspectives, or interests, to ground the view that women as a group are oppressed in systematic ways. We maintain that claims of this type are possible, but that making such claims from a vanguard position is inherently problematic. Feminism thus requires a process of grassroots knowledge-production involving a diverse range of different women (as well as or instead of academic, media, or political figures) so as to construct a viable sense of a commonly oppressed group which is not simply a projection or construct of a particular author or speaker.

The paper begins by arguing that there is a fundamental problem in radical epistemology, which derives from two contending imperatives. On the one hand, radical theory, including feminism, is almost by definition opposed to the dominant common sense constructed and articulated by the dominant social system (Robinson, 2005). An effective political radicalism must necessarily challenge existing attachments, transform affect, release or restructure desire and 'decolonise' existing insertions in dominant discourses (Firth, 2013). On the other hand, radicals have become increasingly aware of the need to avoid a vanguardist intellectual position which carries dangers of vertical political power, manipulative politics, and the silencing of the very people the movement aims to liberate (Motta, 2011). We would argue that certain practices of the 1960s/70s wave and of recent horizontalist movements – such as the more radical versions of critical pedagogy, institutional analysis, theatre of the oppressed,

autonomist militant inquiry, horizontal knowledge-sharing such as skill-shares, and, centrally for this article, the feminist practice of consciousness-raising (CR), provide a solution to this problem, offering ways to reformulate knowledges at once transformative and non-vanguardist. Such processes of collective knowledge-production have largely gone missing in the translation of second-wave feminist practices into academic, mediatised, and virtual spaces today. This is reflective of a wider tendency towards disconnection and alienation of social movement studies in the academy from social movement practices (Bevington and Dixon 2005). A revival is needed to overcome the forms of paralysis arising from the neoliberal context and the dominance of mediated, instrumental forms of communication, and to ground feminist theory in the politically-informed experience and interests of those it aims to liberate. As Bartky (1977: 23) argues, 'the oppression of women is universal, feminist consciousness is not'. In order to contribute to such a revival, this paper attempts to theorise and reconstruct the affective process of CR with reference to theories of temporality, in order to link CR as a historical practice of grassroots knowledge-production with broader ideas of social change relevant to the current context.

This question is tied-up with theories of temporality in various ways. We have argued in previous articles (Firth and Robinson 2012 & 2014) that whilst particular experiences of time, for example as linear, progressive and sequential are often viewed as essential features of any temporal ontology, such experiences are actually historically and culturally contingent, and it is possible to imagine and create alternatives, through theories and practices. Experiences of time are necessarily connected to experiences of continuity and change, causality and/or free will, and the realm of the possible and desirable. Transformation is limited by the dominant mode of homogeneous empty time (Benjamin, 1970), and empowered by prefigurative temporalities (Firth and Robinson, 2012). Time has suffered particular mutations in neoliberal

capitalism, which are dissimilar to those of the Fordist structure combated by earlier movements. A current spatio-temporal closure – an inability to imagine beyond present constructions of space and time - afflicts oppressed subjects in general. This includes women, and has been characterised as 'present shock' (Rushkoff, 2013), a type of temporal compression whereby time becomes an eternal present. The discursive construction of causation is increasingly reduced to neoliberal doctrines of personal responsibility and aggregate forms of data-driven social correlation. Thus the ways in which we understand the causes of current suffering and struggle are individualised, and it becomes difficult to produce knowledge and communicate the impact of oppressive structures on our lives using existing terminology and concepts. This process of temporal closure increasingly makes the present system feel like the only possibility. An effective feminist movement needs to break out of the type of temporality represented by 'present shock', yet prevalent forms of subjectivity and communication render this difficult. Recovery of grassroots knowledge-production is vital to overcoming this blockage. In line with our earlier work (Firth and Robinson 2012, 2014), we conceive the process of transformation as fundamentally temporal. This is congruent with feminist approaches to time (Kristeva, 1981; Amoros, 2004), although we also rely on male postcolonial and poststructural theorists of time including Wallerstein, Deleuze and Virilio. We are not only interested in the relationship between past and present varieties of consciousness-raising or in the question of learning from the past, although the ability to adapt established practices to new contexts is arguably crucial to any revival of CR today. What we are more specifically interested in is thinking through the ways in which CR as a form of grassroots knowledge production enables critique of 'common sense' without the need for a vanguard. We do this by theorising the ways in which CR alters experiences of space and time by constructing a form of knowledge rooted in experiences but distinct from common sense. The paper is thus largely theoretical but has practical implications for feminist

pedagogy and political action. In the following sections, we introduce CR as a process and consider some of the problems with feminist knowledge production today that necessitate the re-introduction of a process like CR. We then disaggregate the process into various aspects: The structuring role of the hypothesis; constructing a safe space; the emotional weaving of narratives; affective transformation and personal durée and the transformative moment of 'the click'. We theorise each of these aspects in through the ways in which they construct alternative temporalities in order to elaborate the ways in which they transform 'common sense' through grassroots and non-vanguardist forms of knowledge production.

Consciousness-raising groups

Consciousness Raising (CR) groups were central to the second-wave feminist movement of the 1970s, with the first groups emerging in the late 1960s. They have been interpreted as a pedagogical tool for social transformation (Henderson-King and Stewart, 1999). CR groups were voluntary, usually women-only, regular discussion groups focused on recounting and interpreting the experiences of participants, generally by presenting members' experiences around a defined topic, then drawing out similarities and structural relations to the oppression of women. Initiated by the New York Radical Feminists and the Redstockings Collective, they were quickly adopted and adapted by other groups in the US and worldwide (Rosenthal, 1984:309), encompassing hundreds of thousands of women at their height. The group format typically consisted of a round of personal experiences and reflections on the week's theme, followed by an integrative session in which the group sought to combine their accounts into a structural picture. They occurred in a political context in which women were frustrated with traditional roles, but unable to articulate their frustrations in social lives where contact among women was usually mediated by men. The groups were not intended primarily as self-help, therapy, or 'venting', but rather, as a form of political transformation (Shreve, 1989:218-19).

The goal was to analyse a common situation of oppression to provide a basis for a programme of liberation (Redstockings, cited Shreve, 1989:11). CR has been termed 'the major technique of analysis, structure of organization, method of practice, and theory of social change of the women's movement' (MacKinnon 1982:519).

Problems in Feminist Knowledge Production Today

In order to understand the context we begin from, we will outline some of the problems of contemporary feminisms which necessitate a return to CR. The mass movement of the 1970s has not resurfaced, CR groups have withered, and many graduates of the movement are employed in academia or the media. We contend that, at the height of the movement in the 1970s, knowledge defined as 'feminist' generally arose from the knowledge-production activities of women in CR groups, who were not defined as intellectual specialists. It was in this way that feminist theory could speak of the experience of women as a group. In contrast, feminist knowledge-production today is largely the preserve of specialist academics and media figures, who define what counts as feminist knowledge. Women who are not specialist knowledge-producers become objects of knowledge who are spoken 'about' and 'for', rather than contributing to knowledge-production. In the absence of a process such as CR, feminists seeking to articulate a gendered positionality can derive one in three ways: firstly, by defaulting back to the traditional model of a vanguard intellectual or political leader, whose own analysis integrates otherwise disparate perspectives; secondly, by accepting and arguing from the common-sense perspectives of conventional social subjects, thus reproducing their conservative assumptions; or thirdly, by relying on past processes of subject-formation (most often, the conclusions of the 1970s CR process itself), deployed outside its context, with the

theorist exclusively responsible for updating or modifying this knowledge to the current neoliberal context.

Some theorists argue that the function of CR has not disappeared through this process, but been transformed. It is argued that television shows which incorporate feminist themes now perform the role of CR groups, or the function of CR groups has devolved onto publications such as magazines and novels (Sowards and Renegar, 2004; Campbell, 2002:58). It is also argued that the process is displaced into Women's Studies programmes in universities (see Boxer, 1982). However, the difference between these alternatives and classical CR is that the communicative relationship is hierarchical. As Levine (n.d.:6) argues, such experiences may raise awareness, but are unlikely to create collective consciousness or encourage action. The movement of feminism towards academia is criticised for rendering feminism subject mainly to academic standards, rather than women's experiences (Suleri, 1992). This problem partly reflects a wider difficulty with communication. People, including women, are densely connected today, for example through business networks and social media, but mostly through alienating forms of semi-coerced, performative connectedness (Lazzarato, 1996; Berardi, 2009:108, 112) in which self-censorship and insincere expression are common. Whereas Fordist subjects could easily see themselves as oppressed once they found their voice, today's subjects increasingly articulate mainstream standards in their own voices, as part of the dominant subjective performativity (Amsler, 2011). In our own case, the knowledge-production contained in this paper is not an alternative grassroots approach, but points to the importance of such an approach by drawing on the voices of CR group participants. We are a junior academic and an independent researcher, both with connections to social movements. Our contribution is intended to encourage academic feminists to move towards a revival of grassroots knowledge-production to provide a theoretical base for

feminism and other radical theories. It is similar to MacKinnon's (1982) call for feminism to be a grounded theory rooted in the experiences of women.

Current theoretical approaches in feminism reflect difficulties resulting from an absence of grassroots knowledge-production (i.e. by 'ordinary' or subaltern social actors themselves, without an intellectual or political leadership providing the bridge between everyday experience and theoretical knowledge). Of the three approaches discussed above, the third – deriving a general body of theory from second-wave feminism, and articulating and updating it oneself – is the most common strategy adopted by feminists in academia. This is the case, for instance, in feminist International Relations (IR) theory, which generally deploys insights from the 1970s to criticise masculine structures of international power (e.g. Cohn, 1993; Tickner, 1988; Enloe, 1990). The resultant critiques are powerful, but leave epistemological power in the hands of the theorist, albeit based on the results of earlier social movements. An alternative path is provided by autobiographical and autoethnographic forms of feminism, but these similarly leave the theorist in the position of epistemological power by focusing on the theorist's own experiences and narratives. The danger in this case is both vanguardism (only the properly qualified theorist can write a recognised autobiography) and common-sense (the narrative of a subject is untouchable, even though it embeds dominant social assumptions). For example, when Griffin positions 'anger as a productive force' through autobiography and situates her anger in relation to structural racism and sexism (2012:138), she is articulating a similar process to CR groups. However, the autobiographical approach presents the point of view of a single subject. In addition, autobiography is tied-up with personal accountability in a public written sphere (Swindell, 1995:9), playing into a management of subjectivity which undermines participatory experience and knowledge (Heshusius, 1994). While some feminists argue that female autobiographies avoid such problems, this seems to rely on a

loaded selection of examples (Stanley, 1990:58) and elision of complexity (Stanley, 1993). The author is typically a relatively privileged academic and longstanding feminist, whose voice effectively stands for, but cannot directly articulate, the perspectives of women more broadly. This is particularly exposed by Reynolds' (2002) critique of black feminism, based on sociological research into black women's self-perceptions. Reynolds' research reveals sharp discontinuities between what is described as black female experience in academic accounts and literary texts, and what is suggested in everyday discourse. Her research shows that black feminist theory, at an academic level, is disconnected from the lives of black women outside academia. This situation has arguably arisen because of the prevalence of autobiographical accounts in academic feminism, with the feminist academic's personal conscience, or the group norms of similar academics, providing the test for knowledge-claims, separate from wider contexts.

Reynolds' critique relies on a third approach which provides a means to access perspectives wider than the author's: the use of social-scientific research methods to access the perspectives of actually-existing women, a process which combines a vanguard researcher role with a perspective articulated from existing beliefs. In these cases, the integration of experiences occurs, but is exclusively the work of the feminist academic who performs the integration of interview results. The conclusion is typically reached that women perform gender in different ways, and/or that many women hold anti-feminist positions. A conscious, non-submerged position never emerges, or else is simply claimed by the interviewer from a vanguard position.

For example, Luttrell (1989) studies black and white working-class women's 'ways of

knowing' using traditional qualitative methods of interview and participant observation. Her conclusion is that these women value 'common sense' or 'streetwise' knowledge over school knowledge, and they misrecognise this knowledge as instinctive, rather than learnt. They believe, for instance, that working-class women have instinctive ways of making do, and of caring for children. They also treat their own knowledge as subordinate to male and educated types of knowledge. These findings are unsurprising. We do not question either Luttrell's method or her conclusions, but the *political* consequences are twofold. Firstly, Luttrell is only able to draw feminist conclusions because she distances her own position from that of her respondents; otherwise, she would be required to accept both women's inferiority and the instinctual nature of knowledge. Secondly, the process of knowledge-formation which analyses and shows the fallacies in working-class women's knowledge in this outer way is apparently ineffectual in transforming such knowledge. Knowledge-construction remains the privilege of the scholar.

The absence of grassroots knowledge-production is a noticeable gap in all three types of academic feminism. None of the three approaches actually articulates a 'women's perspective', constructed from the standpoint of women as a group or particularity, because each relies on an epistemically privileged, vanguard standpoint for its construction of what women's experience 'means'. All three positions are torn between the alternatives of retaining radicalism at the expense of vanguardism, or reflecting popular views at the expense of de-radicalisation. The absence of grassroots knowledge-production makes it impossible to simultaneously avoid both vanguardism and recourse to (neoliberal) common sense when constructing knowledge of positionalities. There is thus a political need to return to bottom-up knowledge-production processes similar to those used in 1970s CR. We wish to emphasise that we are *not* saying qualitative research, autobiography, or feminist IR theory are

undesirable. Important discoveries and structural effects – particularly in opening up issues within academia – have been achieved through them. However, we believe these approaches *insufficient* to create situated, horizontal, non-vanguardist feminisms *in political practice*, because these approaches reproduce a hierarchical relationship between a scholar who knows and is able to speak, and a wider community of women who are spoken about, or spoken to.

The structuring role of the hypothesis in CR groups

This section aims to analyse how CR works as an affective and social process. Drawing on academic studies and participant accounts of the process, and emphasizing the testimonies of politicization of the participants in the 1970s process, we attempt to reconstruct the mechanisms through which participants' subjectivities and narratives are both expressed and transformed within CR groups. CR was a 'conscious attempt to speak in words born of grassroots insight, including the resulting passion and anger' (Hanisch, 2010). The process of structural integration of experiences occurs, but without need for vanguard intellectuals to perform this role. Sessions would thus involve two modalities of being together; first a convivial mode whereby women would speak from personal experience, recounting experiences and their emotions surrounding these, and a second mode where these experiences would be understood through a lens of 'structural causality'; that is in relation to the hypothesis that seemingly 'personal' experiences and emotions had political causes situated in structures of oppression. The role of the hypothesis of structural causality which underpins the second half of CR sessions, provides a means to connect personal experience into the wider spatio-temporal field of social structures and ecology (c.f. Wallerstein, 1988:291). It situates experience in a longer duration of structural time than usually arises in spontaneous everyday discourse, that is, a type of temporality which is connected to large-

scale geohistorical space. Feminist theory examines this space mainly in terms of patriarchy as a persistent system. In doing so, it inserts gender into a temporal field which is otherwise largely monopolised by masculine conceptions. In line with Marxist theorists such as Wallerstein and Gramsci, we would suggest 'structural TimeSpace' - the enduring continuities and patterns that change slowly (Wallerstein 1988:291) - is generally invisible to everyday experience or common sense. Social actors operating on an everyday level tend to neglect structural TimeSpace. CR rectifies this problem by connecting structural analysis directly to experience. While based in personal experience, CR also assumed that feminism requires political analyses (Rogers 2010:3). In CR, structuring claims that 'the personal is political' and that personal experiences are often structural effects made structural TimeSpace visible, in contrast to interpretations focused on the 'episodic TimeSpace' (Wallerstein 1988:290) of individual lives, which reproduces categories used in everyday life, or the 'eternal TimeSpace' (Wallerstein 1988:294) of naturalised gender roles.

Crucially, this entailed assuming women did not already know their own positionality, but unlike other theories that assume some form of 'false consciousness', the process of CR does not require vanguard knowledge to liberate submerged subjects. It was assumed that women's perceptions are 'cramped, darkened, frustrated, undeveloped, misguided or even seemingly replaced by a false consciousness' (Forer, 1975:151). As such, women's ability to perceive the structural nature of their oppression was blocked, individualized and personalized, with women tending to blame themselves or their unique situation. The addition of the structural hypothesis and the activity of sharing experiences revealed experiential commonalities, and feelings such as anger, frustration, boredom and unhappiness were saying something *political* (Hole and Levine, 1971:131; Brownmiller 1970:146; Allen 1970:28). Through the grassroots process of discovering that the personal is also political, participants were able to re-inscribe

and transform the dominant meaning of experience therefore overcoming the individualization and personalization of oppression (Bruley 1976:22; Bond and Lieberman, 1980 268). This involved a process of relating formerly personalised problems such as individual malaise to sexism and other structural causes, so the problems appear as a political pattern rather than individual dysfunction (Shreve, 1989:59; Dreifus, 1973:5; Bruley, 1976:21). Group organisers might already accept the truth of the structuring hypothesis, but participants typically entered the process in a more ambivalent stance. The 'hypothesis' is therefore a claim (structural oppression generates experience) initially proposed as a 'what if…' and has a structuring function within the groups on how the various personal experiences are combined and processed in the CR group setting. CR is thus not purely a matter of subjective positionality: 'We believe that theory and analysis which are not rooted in concrete experience (practice) are useless, but we also maintain that for the concrete, everyday experiences to be understood, they must be subjected to the process of analysis and abstraction' (Allen 1970:273).

The main transformative effect of CR was the challenge posed to the existing, 'common sense' narratives through which women previously interpreted their experiences. CR therefore initiated a process of unlearning dominant thought patterns, or decolonizing patriarchal beliefs, beginning from women's concrete experiences. While CR did not simply leave existing narratives unchanged, it validated the reality of otherwise disavowed experiences of oppression, creating a standpoint outside the dominant regime of concepts from which the unthinkable could be thought. In discovering that the 'personal narrative is political' participants 'transform the dominant meaning of experience by bringing a different set of assumptions to bear on it' (Langellier, 1989:269). It changed the criteria of verification, from criteria limited by the categories of structural patriarchy to criteria focused on one's own

experience (MacKinnon, 1989:87). By assessing experiences from their embodied and affective significance for oneself – rather than their meaning within patriarchal structures, or for dominant others (in this case, men) – CR suspended patriarchal representational power and enabled alternative perceptions. This led to the creation of a 'crystal of time' (Deleuze, 1989:68-97) in which episodic and structural temporal perceptions coexist, in a setting encouraging to the selection of the latter.

Constructing a safe space

Some accounts of temporal transformation emphasise the need for a process of slowing-down in order to combat the system's predeliction for speed (Virilio, 1990:89). Separation is a particular effect of homogeneous empty time and neoliberal social space which fragment experiences and atomize individuals, and coming together in the face of social fragmentation is already an act of resistance (Bey, 1994). The spatial aspects of CR were particularly geared to this temporal effect. In addition to being a procedure for producing knowledge, CR was also a type of group formation. The organizational mode was necessarily small, formally non-hierarchical groups. (Whether they were also able to eliminate informal hierarchies is debated, though attempts were made to do so). CR aimed to end women's sense of isolation, thus enabling them to feel less alienated from one another, finding 'human contact with other women' (Allen 1970:273), fostering 'a feeling of intimacy and trust' (Ibid:273). This required a high level of commitment: in particular time commitments and also commitments to speaking and acting honestly, openly and with respect and non-judgment (Rogers 2010:18).

Similarly to anarchism (Day, 2005:9), CR relied on an immanentist approach to social

change, meaning that it did not assume the inevitability of contradiction between means and ends. It aimed to move away from vanguard knowledge and theory and activism produced on behalf of others: 'We felt that all women would have to see the fight of women as their own, not as something just to help "other women"' (Sarachild 1975:145). It was a 'conscious attempt to speak in words born of grassroots insight, including the resulting passion and anger' (Hanish, 2010). Finding an autonomous voice based on authentic desires was a difficult and time-consuming process as it required recognizing and overcoming existing habits of superficial communication (Bruley, 1976:8). This aspect of CR is based on the premise that women 'had been glued to our men and separated from each other all our lives' (Arnold 1970:160). CR enables women to form direct bonds, without the mediation of men (Bruley 1976:21), whilst problematising and overcoming feelings of hatred for the self and other women that are socialized through patriarchal culture (Allen 1970:11).

The affective process was also slower and more spontaneous. Participants write of allowing themselves to be moved to speech, rather than succumbing to a pressure to communicate (Griffin, 1978:197), encouraging compassion and expressiveness (Reger, 2004:212). It is described as breaking down emotional alienation (Allen, 1970:24). Crucially, emotions were expressed, not programmed in the groups (Brownmiller, 1970:152). The slower pace of the process, compared with other forms of politics and everyday life, was seen to facilitate community-building and analytical integration: 'We do not rush speech. We allow ourselves to be moved' (Griffin, 1978:197). Each participant would be encouraged to take as much 'free space' as she needed to talk, and interruption was discouraged. Less vocal members would be encouraged to participate in depth (Shreve 1989:21). Reger argues such free spaces were intentionally 'infused with feminized emotion cultures fostering emotional expressiveness and caring, nurturing and personal relationships' (Reger 2001:212). They

provided a safety net and vantage point outside everyday life (Shreve, 1989:199; Allen, 1970:20-1).

The emotional weaving of narratives

While the temporal duration of CR included long-term structural temporality, in a concrete sense it operated more closely within a specifically female-gendered TimeSpace of cyclical reproduction. Cyclical TimeSpace encompasses the rhythms of functioning within structural TimeSpace, the enduring continuities and patterns that change slowly (Wallerstein 1988:291). While such reproduction is often associated with the subordination of women (Kristeva, 1983), it has also been theorised as the level at which ideological identities are reproduced (Wallerstein, 1988:293; Lefebvre, 2014). Reproduction also underpins production as a deeper subaltern layer (Mies, 1999). CR challenges dominant framings of cyclical TimeSpace as naturalised repetition, but also uses cyclical TimeSpace through the modality of the 'kernel story'. The process reforms social existential territories by drawing emotional connections between personal narratives from an autonomous standpoint, rendering these narratives as cyclical repetitions of similar, comprehensible patterns. Levine (n.d.) argues that those who see CR as simply a precursor to large formal organizations or vanguardist politics are missing the point. Small groups offer an alternative approach to the reorganization of social and political life that rearticulates personal experiences into social connections, allowing participants to conceptualise 'where we are in light of where we are not yet' (Bartky, 1977:26). This creates an alternative worldview, an 'ideology' (Allen, 1970:8) or 'theoretical horizon' (Malo, 2004) to an extent autonomous or 'outside' patriarchy.

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As part of CR, the 'kernel story' was a key means through which cyclical time - a style of constructing time on the basis of recurrence, repetition and circular return - was reconstructed. Kalcik highlights the specific modes of speech and narrative that took place within groups, which reinforced the aims of linking experience to structures, following an aesthetic principle of harmonizing the accounts (Kalcik, 1975:6). Studies of the speech and rhetoric styles of the groups have constructed the idea of a 'kernel story', involving brief references to core themes in previous accounts, which allowed the weaving together of experiences (Kalcik, 1995:3,9; Shreve 1989:21; Campbell, 2002:51). Kernel stories meant similar meanings could be attributed to experiences with reference to the core hypothesis of structural patriarchy, without reducing the differences between experiences (Dubriwny, 2005:406, 417; Allen 1070:26). Bruley articulates the kernel story as a kind of 'shorthand' code that imbued the group with its own terminology, allowing rapid connections to previous discussions (Bruley 1976:8) which would lead to 'collective development of experiential knowledge' (Dubriwny 2005:395) involving a 'collaborative interaction of many voices' (Ibid:398). The kernel story offered a critique and alternative TimeSpace to 'reproductive labour', which refers to the largely unpaid labour which goes in to reproducing human labour power through childbirth, childcare, domestic and emotional work (Mies 1999: 31; Federici 2012: 2). In place of the closed, external cycles of reproductive labour, which confine women to the endless repetition of housework routines that are never complete and must be repeated at regular intervals, CR constructs a cyclical repetition of meaningful experience through mutual reference. This creates a cyclical temporality internal to the group, linking cyclical repetition of stories to structural repetitions underlying life-conditions.

Affective transformation and personal *durée*

In discussing the affective aspects of CR, we use the concept of a personal *durée*, which is derived from the work of Bergson (see Fujii, n.d.). For Bergson, each of us has a particular *durée*, or way of being in the field of time, with its own speed and points of connection. This field is suppressed in traditional, masculine political approaches, which tend to exclude emotions from the field of politics. In contrast, CR enabled emotional expression. Emotions which participants previously found it difficult to speak, which had no concomitant terms in language, often manifested as personal 'shittiness', were articulated (Levine, 1979:8; Milan Bookstore Collective, 1990:26). Anger in particular was given validation and outlets (Reger, 2004:214; Bruley, 1976:13). Emotions such as anger, frustration, hopelessness and alienation are depersonalized and transformed into 'a collectively defined sense of injustice' (Reger, 2004:205). Participants are therefore able to break out of the episodic TimeSpace of constant oppressive experiences, transforming the anger and frustration into 'constructive energy' (Levine 1979:6), turning emotions outwards towards dismantling patriarchal structures rather than turning them inwards (WMST-L, n.d.).

Affirmative emotions were also constructed, such as feelings of closeness and intimacy (Dreifus 1973:52), trust (Allen 1970:59) and empowerment (Lee 2001:68) and a feeling of being 'okay' (Shreve 1989:240). The process is described as breaking down emotional alienation (Allen 1970:24). Emotional response therefore acts as the basis of politicization and both personal and political transformation. There is no knowing subject who tells participants what they are to become, but rather, a type of self-transformation through 'the click'. This entails reconnecting with one's personal *durée* in a social context, accessing previously unconscious or repressed emotions which deviate from structural definitions of roles, thus mobilising personal *durée* as a transformative force against structural TimeSpace.

The transformative moment of the "click"

The revolutionary moment of transformation is best associated with *kairos*, which we believe provides a model for revolutionary change in the present, linking theory to practice without the need for vanguard knowledge producers. The transformative TimeSpace of *kairos*, associated mainly with large-scale revolutionary processes by theorists such as Wallerstein (1988:295-6), Negri (2005) and Deleuze (2004:190), also retains a strong element of personal transformation, in which the spatio-temporal field is reconceived through a shift in the personal point of view. *Kairos* is transformative time, which is experienced as a time-lapse or a moment where everything is simultaneous, rather than as homogeneous empty time. It is the time of events, although this term should be taken to encompass small everyday transformations as well as large ruptural events on a social scale. *Kairos* can thus be theorised as less like a Badiousian Event (Badiou 2005) than like a series of small, but structurally transformative events within the lives of particular actors. In our previous work (Firth and Robinson, 2014), we suggested these forms of time entail selections at the level of desire between different insertions in the field of time, and reconstructions which break with the continuity of structural time so as to allow the creation of new temporalities. Walter Benjamin has a related concept of 'messianic' time, a type of monadic moment separated from the flow of history in which disalienated life is compressed (Benjamin, 1970 [1955]:263; Wolin, 1994:58).

If *kairos* is conceived as a transformation in alignment or perspective, a shift in the crystal of time between two series of images or a new 'roll of the dice' in Nietzschean terms, then *kairos* exists as a moment within the CR process. A particular kind of personal *kairos* is experienced

within CR in the form of the 'click' – the moment at which subjective alignments are reconfigured on the basis of the group process. Prior to this, participants' lives were in turmoil, but few understood why (Shreve, 1989:40). Consciousness-raising, as described above, moved from personal experience towards developing a broader perspective of one's own life from the vantage point of wider social conditions, drawn from dialogue with other participants' experiences (Allen 1970:20-1), bridging politics and one's own life (Bruley, 1976:21; Allen 1970:15), or objectifying consciousness at a given time (Forer, 1975:151). This moment of achieving an autonomous epistemology is termed 'the click' (Reger 2004:211; Allen 1970:27), described as 'eye-popping realization' of how patriarchy structures life experiences (Shreve, 1989:53). It differs from vanguardist knowledge produced by intellectuals or movement leaders because it is produced through a combination of one's own experience and dialogue with the experiences of others, and occurs mainly affectively, rather than consciously. The reconstruction of affective autonomy is particularly important. The process is not a form of ideological vanguardism through which emotions are repressed and forced into new paths. Rather, emotions such as anger are chanelled *expressively* into a process of interacting creatively with the world, through actions to resist patriarchy and to re-form autonomous subjectivities and communities, breaking down emotional alienation (Allen 1970:24). The click is a quotidian form of *kairos* in which transformation is embedded in everyday practice. This is distinct from the view of *kairos* as a large social change, but it is our contention that major social transformations are actually accumulations of quotidian 'clicks'.

Conclusion

This discussion has shown how the temporal aspects of CR enable it to avoid the dual traps of

vanguardism and common sense. CR was a mode of knowledge-production that aimed to provide an alternative to masculinist theories. In the current context, it can also be contrasted with theories produced by women but in vanguardist or alienated ways, and those which are based on the previous wave of CR. In general, CR was a process of horizontal knowledge-creation. Through sharing particular truths and experiences, a shared epistemological position emerged which could be used to construct a common political position. A primary purpose of CR is to 'develop ideology and learn to think autonomously' (Allen 1070:8). CR transgresses dominant forms of homogeneous empty time, allowing the creation of cyclical continuities, the expression of personal *durée*, the exposure of invisible structural temporalities, and the emergence of *kairos* or transformative time. Without such a process, epistemologies remain trapped within the existing field and the possibilities available in episodic and repetitive time.

Both the re-emerging feminist movement which is appearing today, and the range of other social movements emerging in the context of precarity, austerity and global war – such as decolonial and indigenous movements, anarchism and autonomism, and the emerging anti-racist movement – need something similar to CR as a means of grassroots knowledge-production, so as to avoid falling into the dual pitfalls. Constructing such a process is easier said than done, because it is impeded by the ways capitalism eats up people's time today (Bey, 1994), by the mediated forms of communication which reduce perceptions of its necessity, by the high-speed, temporary nature of most contemporary movements, and by the subjectivities engendered by neoliberalism. However, persistent personal problems provide a basis for re-establishing CR.

To conclude, the history of CR shows the possibility for grassroots knowledge-production in

which general structural analysis emerges directly from social movement participants, without the need for an intellectual to play a mediating role. This is important in redressing current limits in academic and social movement feminism, which are over-reliant on general theoretical positions and claims about experience without a clear basis in grassroots reflection. This is important today to provide direction to the emerging feminist movement which connects it to the full range of women's experiences today. CR is a pedagogical process in that it entails the transformation of subjectivities and perspectives, though it is clearly not a top-down or didactic pedagogy which reproduces pre-formed positions. Rather, it is a form of immanent learning in which participants play a central role in constructing what is learnt. This is important today, in order to strengthen the creation of knowledge within social movements, rather than exclusively in academia.

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