The Silence of The Lambs:

A Feminist's Story of Pay Inequity

Rebecca Louise BURKE

K0539163

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Kingston University, UK

Submission date: 10th July 2024

Abstract

Women have consistently provided substantial contributions (both paid and unpaid) that have resulted in an exponential economic growth, and ultimately the success of nations (IMF, 2018; Holland and Ell, 2023), yet they continue to experience pay inequity within the workforce despite laws attempting to remove such discrimination such as the sex disqualification act in 1919, and the Equal Pay act in 1970. As well as an infringement on women's basic human rights, we are now awakening to the horrifying consequences of capitalist and patriarchal dominance on the planet and its people, and to the important role that women's equality and economic empowerment must play in securing the future prosperity and survival (Guterres, 2023). This study explores the narratives of 12 women's experience of pay inequity so that we might gain access deep inside the workings of this phenomenon and uncover the mechanisms that allow for its continued existence in contemporary workplaces. These stories have been shared by women from diverse industry sectors, at varying career-levels, providing us with new and unique perspectives on how inequity reveals itself within today's gendered workplaces, and what happens when women expose the sexism that lies beneath. Both thematic and narrative analysis techniques have been embedded into a social constructionist epistemology provide the cornerstone of this research approach. Thematic analysis techniques support the presentation of the rich descriptions that capture women's experiences of pay inequity, before the author provides visual aides to the networking and clustering of the themes and sub-themes into those which speak to the organisation, and those that focus on the individual experience. The author has found depth and clarity from across all 12 women's stories that, when combined, can be presented as narratives that entwine our lived experiences together; and thus the living story paradigm has been used to place women at the centre of their own experiences, as we trace

their sense-making and emotional responses from their initial discovery, to beyond their court hearings (Rosile et, al., 2013). Finally, the author returns to her own experiences of pay inequity, providing a reflexive auto-narrative that draws on the stories of other women to highlight the emotional responses and psychological affects that continue to shape her life and career. This thesis intends to provide a voice to the women's stories that have been denied and silenced by the organisation for decades, and in doing so this research exposes how sexism is practiced every day, providing stories that describe the ways in which organisations fail to listen women's stories of pay inequity, and how their voices are routinely silenced and ignored. This research therefore contributes to the expanding field of feminist research within organisational management theory and provides a unique insight into the ways that organisational practices are harming women, highlighting the traumatic psychological affects that pay inequity experiences can have, in the hope that we can focus future research on interventions that will protect future generations from the trauma it causes.

Keywords: Writing Differently, Gender Pay Inequity, Sexism, Gender Washing, Emotional Affects of Injustice, Gendered Practice, Post Feminism, Social Constructionist, Feminism, Story Telling, Lived Experiences

Acknowledgements

This thesis is a culmination of over 7 years of personal and academic rumination which I simply would not have been brave enough to do without the courageous and intelligent women who have contributed their stories, tears and laughter to this project. Their generosity has helped me to navigate my own difficult journey over these past few years, but has also shed new light on the age-old topic of pay inequity, by bridging across two research communities, that of the organisation and of gender, so that we can now begin to unpick the complexities of how organisational injustice, specifically pay inequity, is inter-woven into women's perceptions of everyday sexism. These discoveries has reshaped my understanding of my experiences, and pushed me down a path where my senses have been heightened, and I feel more alert to the inequalities I encounter in the everyday. This very personal journey has led me back onto a feminist path, a path that I had momentarily strayed from through the pursuit of a career aligned to neo-liberal ideals. I now see that living a feminist life is my true calling and have stumbled back onto this familiar path more by accident than design. This is indeed a well-trodden path, a path where I will not feel lonely, as I understand that I will be taught, guided and supported by those feminists and scholars who have, throughout our history, strived to capture the compelling stories of women, preserving the voices that speak to our unique experiences of the world, and sharing them so that we can make sense of our own lives. We must rebalance the deficit in our collective knowledge through centuries of oppression through our continued efforts as researchers, and as women, to bring women's voices back into our social consciousness, so that we can shape a future that have listened and responded with empathy to such stories.

I have persisted on this journey due to my deep sense of responsibility for re-telling and sharing these important stories, but also as a result of the unwavering support of my supervisors. I thank Dr Qi Wei and Hans Joachim-Wolfram for their gentle steers through my early development of this PhD project; and to Dr Miguel Imas for the enthusiastic energy, and

methodological support he provided to my analysis and findings, his expertise and support gave me the courage to present this research in a way that remains true to the voices of women and authentic to my personal values. I would of course not be here today without the support of my family and friends, bringing their support, challenges, distractions and love. Thank you to my sister Melanie for sharing her wealth of experience and gently pushing me forwards, and to my daughter, Neve, for her constant inspiration to make the world a better place.

> *The fact that we are here and that I speak these words is an attempt to break that silence and bridge some of those differences between us, for it is not difference that immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken. (Audre Lorde, Sister, Outsider).*

Table of Contents

Abstract 2

Acknowledgements 4

Table of Contents 6

Glossary of Key Terms 10

Summary of Submitted Publications 15

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review 17

My Story 17

Writing as Living, Living as Writing 20

The Inquiring Mind 22

Chapter 2: What We Know About Pay Inequity 32

Introduction 32

Review Method 40

Pay Inequity: Past, Present and Future (published on 2nd June 2023) 44

Chapter 3: Method in the Madness 61

Introduction 61

Story-Telling and Objectivity 62

Where We Begin 67

Findings, Meaning and Insights 76

Introduction 76

Limitations and Challenges 82

Chapter 4: Themes and Meaning 84

Introduction 84

The Meaning of Themes..... 86

Focus Group Themes..... 105

Chapter 5: Hidden in Plain Sight: Sexism and the Pay Inequity Experiences of Women..... 119

Abstract 119

Introduction 120

Sexism 124

Study Findings..... 126

Discussion 149

Conclusion..... 151

Chapter 6: Hung out to dry: Gender Washing 155

Abstract 155

Introduction 156

Gender-Washing: A Deceit Practice of Organisation 158

Methodology 162

How is gender washing perceived and experienced? (Walters, 2021). 162

What are the affects of gender washing on women? (Pullen et. al., 2016) 162

Data Analysis..... 163

Findings..... 165

Discussion 188

Conclusion..... 190

Chapter 7: Sacrificial Lambs: An Emotional Tale of Pay Inequity. Introduction 194

Emotional Affects of Injustice 196

The problem with gender equality 201

'Why did I trust them?' 205

'Talk yourself off a ledge.' 208

'There goes my week.' 212

'Put me in my place.' 217

'A Troublemaker.' 222

'Ammunition and armour.' 226

The 'strong voices of other women alongside me.' 232

Chapter 8. Conclusion 237

Introduction 237

What I've Learnt About Feminism 247

What I've Learnt About Post-feminism 248

What I've Learnt About Sexism 251

What I've Learnt About Trauma 255

Final Thoughts – My Feminist Journey 258

Chapter 9. References 261

Chapter 10. Appendices 300

Appendix A – Ethics Approval Letter 300

Appendix B – Data Management Plan 302

Appendix C – Participant Information Sheet and Social Media 307

Appendix D – NHS Depression Scale Form 310

Appendix E – Participant Depression Form – Responses 311

Appendix F – Participant Consent Form – Responses 311

Appendix G – Participant Information Form – Responses 312

Appendix H – Pay Inequity Interview Questions 312

Appendix I – MAXQDA Code System Export 315

Appendix J – Literature Review – Search Filters 318

Appendix K – Full Literature Review Analysis (additional file) 318

Appendix L – Full Transcripts (additional files) 319

Appendix M – Focus Group Session Slides – Research Summary 319

Appendix N – Slide Deck presented to the European Conference for Rewards Management in Brussel in December 2022 328

Appendix O – Presentation to the European Research methods Conference in September 2023 332

Appendix P - Hidden Sexism Abstract for GWO conference 337

Appendix Q – Methodology Paper 340

Appendix R – Focus Group 'Hot Topics' 360

Appendix S – Focus Group Further Findings 371

Glossary of Key Terms

Anger is expressed here as the frustration over systemic inequalities, such as pay inequity, sexism and gendered work practices, that can result in unresolved anger as described within the affective events theory . This anger can spill out into women's everyday lives and affect their interpersonal relationships (Weiss and Beal, 2005).

Anxiety describes the constant vigilance that women will undertake within an unjust society, triggered by experiences such as everyday sexism, that can develop into anxiety disorders (Borrell et, al,. 2011).

Depression as used here relates to women's ongoing struggles with episodes of injustice, including lengthy grievance and court hearings, that can lead to feelings of helplessness and despair (Borgogna and Aita, 2024).

Everyday sexism has been used to describe the forms of sex discrimination that occurs within their everyday lives. This term was successfully used by Laura Bates to describe the types of discrimination and prejudice that women experience as they go about doing their jobs, daily activities and routines, but ranging from the minor to major incidents of sexism that shape women's experiences of the world around them (Bates, 2016).

Feminism is, according to the Cambridge English dictionary, used here to describe the belief of the author, specifically in relation to the social, economic, and political equality of all genders within our contemporary society. It can be described in terms of a socio-political movement, which creates and evolves a set of ideologies that aim at creating equality at all levels across our society, examples of which are women's rights to equal pay, and protection from sexual harassment at work (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2024: Online).

Gender Pay Inequity is the key term used to describe women being paid less than their male colleagues for doing the same job, or a job of equal value to the organisation (Equal Pay Act, 1970).

Gendered Practices refers to the set of activities that are performed in accordance with cultural gender expectations. Most commonly these are referred to as discursive forms, such as how people talk about or position themselves relative to others, as well as more tactic actions such as creating routines and processes that discriminate against women by adopting 'gender norms', such as prioritising the 'superior white male' voice. Identifying and talking to gendered practices within the organisation sit within the critical lens that has been more widely adopted within this thesis (Acker, 1992, 1994, 2006; Martin, 2003).

Gender Washing is a term more recently used to describe a form of marketing hypocrisy used to protect the corporate image, where companies routinely claim to support women's empowerment but their actions or policies (such as gender pay inequity) contradict those statements and images. It's similar to the concept of "greenwashing," where companies make misleading claims about their environmental practices. Examples are; (i) Selective Disclosure: publicising only the positive information about female representation or gender pay equity, and omitting or denying any gender inequalities or disputes, (ii) Empty Gender Policies: Initiatives such as "women's networks" are created to provide a voice for women internally, but often these networks have no decision making power or authority to elicit real change, and therefore can not address the sexism and discrimination within the organisation, (iii) Perpetuating Myths of Equity: Constant claims of practicing equity and fairness to employees and stakeholders, yet women are marginalized with no access to power and decision-making and silenced or removed when they speak up. Gendered practices work together to undermine genuine efforts towards gender equality by creating fake narratives that create beliefs by the general public that the problem of gender equality has ceased to exist (Guigni and Tracey, 2021; Walters, 2022; Ito and Uranaka; 2023).

Injustice trauma is the psychological aftermath of being subjected to unfairness, usually in protracted and episodic ways, and that manifests in various forms. These can include

experiences of being a target of bullying, harassment, or discrimination, while indirect experiences involve witnessing or hearing about others being treated unfairly, such as through sexism and gendered practices at work (Bies and Barclay, 2024).

Lived Experiences here becomes central to the collection and analysis of data that relate to pay inequity experiences, and critical to the qualitative phenomenological research approach taken. Women are selected because they have experienced the phenomenon for themselves, and thus their stories are captured to provide rich descriptions of their perceptions and sense making for researchers to gain meaningful interpretations of the phenomenon. This approach supports a personal, reflexive and empathetic approach which aligns to the authors values and beliefs (Dembele et, al,. 2024).

Organisational Injustice as used here relates to an employees' perception of fairness within the workplace. This incorporates how employees judge the behaviour of the organization's representatives, including attitudes and behaviours, but specifically related to the idea that actions, practices or decisions should be morally right, defined according to ethics, fairness, equity, or law (Greenberg and McCarthy, 1990). Pay equity is primarily related to distributive justice concepts, however, women's experiences also point to practices, described as procedural injustice (Leventhal, 1980), and sexist treatment (interactional injustice) as central to their pay inequity experiences (Laxminarayan, 2013).

Post Feminism can be seen as a way to understand and describe the constantly evolving relationship between feminism, femininity, and society. Here it is used to support our understanding of the contemporary organisational context, particularly in terms of the challenges that women face when attempting to make sense of their pay inequity experiences in an era of neo-liberal values, where feminism is considered obsolete, sexism is non-existent, and both are considered to be a problem of the past (Kelan 2009, 2014; Gill, 2014; Donaghue, 2015; Gill et, al,. 2017).

Psychological injustice recognises that organisational injustice, such as pay inequity, can lead to a wide range of emotional responses, such as depression, anxiety and anger which have an impact on women's well-being, specifically their lives, relationships and careers (Bies and Barclay, 2024).

Sexism as used here explains the belief that men are superior to women, which provides a rationale for the devaluing of women's work and attributes. Sexism is linked to power, where those with power (white privileged men) routinely discriminate against women and girls in the form of everyday sexism, but because it is so deeply rooted in the social structures, cultural norms, and institutional practices that surround us, it can be subtle and imperceptible to both the perpetrator as well as the victim (Calder-Dawe and Gavey, 2016; Jones and Clifton, 2018; Rimmer, 2021).

Social Constructionism is used here to reflect the authors own epistemological stance which considers the impacts and effects of the infinite number of social interactions that come to make up our individually lived lives. The author considers that an individual reality is constructed around the culture and people that we are exposed to, informed by experience, and shaped by the language and behaviours that we observe (Sayers, 2010; Wang 2016).

Story Telling has been adopted as an appropriate way to convey the deep meaning present within women's narratives of pay inequity. Stories, particularly autobiographies or auto narratives, can be used to transport us into the lives of other people, so that we might come to understand the world from their perspective. We gain insights into their experiences through their descriptions, and our deeper understanding can help us to connect with others (Rosile et, al,. 2013; Grace et, al., 2024).

Writing Differently refers to the authors personal need to embrace the creative process of writing and presenting ideas within this thesis in order to remain authentic to my own PhD journey, and therefore I use my own voice to convey the language and meanings that are present within this text, and have thus affected my own life, career and relationships. My

purpose is to use this thesis to engage directly with you, my audience, in an authentic and personal way, as through your reading of this thesis, you also become part of my PhD journey (Imas, 2004; Pullen and Rhodes, 2008; Weatherall, 2019; Kinnunen et al., 2021; Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2023).

Summary of Submitted Publications

My aims for this research is for its eventually dissemination across the usual academic routes, such as journal articles published within academic journals, so that it can have an impact on contemporary conversations about post feminism, sexism and feminism. As well as contribute towards the development of new theoretical advancements and interventions related to pay inequity. The journal articles that have currently been submitted or published, and that are either referenced or contained within this thesis are:

1. Chapter 2: Pay Inequity: Past, Present and Future.

   A literature review paper with bibliometric analysis that explores current knowledge and studies that tackle pay inequity through the past several decades. The topics covered here are equity theory, the gender pay gap and equal pay law as relevant to the UK context. This paper is titled: *'Pay Inequity: Past, Present and Future'* and was published on 2nd June 2023, in the 'World at Work' practitioner journal: https://worldatwork.org/resources/publications/journal/jtr-q2-2023

   Authors: Burke, Rebecca (95%); Qi Wei (3%); Wolfram, Hans-Joachim (2%)

   This publication has been listed with 2 additional authors, Dr Qi (Jean) Wei and Dr Hans Joachim-Wolfram who both performed an editorial review of the paper before publication and therefore contributed less than 5% of the total work required for this paper.

2. Appendix Q: BE FAIR: A qualitative investigation of pay inequity experiences.

   A published methodology paper has been included here titled: *BE FAIR - A qualitative investigation of pay inequity experiences'* which was published on 11th September 2023 in the Vol. 22 No. 1 (2023): European Conference on Research Methodology for

Business and Management Studies: https://papers.academic-conferences.org/index.php/ecrm/article/view/1216/1268

Author: Burke, Rebecca (100%)

3. Chapter 5: Hidden From Plain Sight: How Pay Inequity Experiences Expose Sexism.

   A findings paper: submitted into the Gender, Work and Organisation conference for presentation in June 2024 (Abstract accepted on 8th March 2024 and presented on 16th June 2024). Paper being worked up for submission.

   Author: Burke, Rebecca (100%)

4. Chapter 6: Hung out to dry: The Gender Washing Practices of Organisations.

   A findings paper submitted in March 2024 and under review with the Gender, Work and Organisation Journal for publication. This publication was submitted following a detailed review by Migual Imas, resulting in some rethinking of theoretical context and rewording of key introductory and conclusion arguments. All data collection, transcription and analysis was performed by the main author, as well as a full write-up of the draft paper prior to the second author's review.

   Author: Burke, Rebecca (100%)

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

My Story [1]

Pay inequity can have a major impact on women's lives (Blau and Khan, 2007; Perugini and Pompei, 2024). I know this personally, as I have been suffering both financially and emotionally from its harmful affects for several years. In 2017 I discovered that I was being paid 40% less than my male colleagues for doing the same job. When I reported this to my employer I was subjected to personal attacks, extensive denials, ostracization, legal and financial bullying and gas-lighting (see e.g., Okereke, 2020), all culminating in massive negative impacts to my financial security, my career, my relationships and my mental health. These impacts were so panoptic that they changed the trajectory of my life, and continue to affect me today, to haunt my career, relationships, politics and choices in ways that I did not imagine at the start of this journey. Indeed, I could not have spent several years ruminating on a single experience were it not so life-changing.

This thesis represents the journey that I have taken to get to this place, where I currently stand. This was a messy and complicated journey, as much of what we encounter in life is, and thus does not fit into the neat and logical confines of scientific enquiry that drives much of the knowledge and thinking related to concepts of equity within organisational management theory (Imas, 2004).

The logical confines of pay inequity literature, which maintains 'social behaviours as exchange' (Homans 1958), has historically reflected a positivist drive to explain away and whitewash the phenomenon (Manning and Swaffield 2008; Tharenou 2013; Mumford and

[1] Please note that the terms narrative, story and journey are used across this thesis interchangeably as I reflexively consider the meanings of the words used by theorists, myself and my participants.

Smith 2004; Alkadry and Tower 2011; Rubery 2017; Anderson, Bjarnadottir, and Ross 2023). For instance, my first attempt to engage with the literature that explains what pay inequity was and how it affected women like me, was dominated by 'rational' explanations.[2]

And so this thesis represents my story. A story that began much like any other PhD story, buried deep within the literature that surrounds the topic of pay inequity as I present here as chapter 2, and searching for the knowledge that could help me to make sense of my experiences. Masses of literature surrounds the topic of equity (Adams, 1962, 1963, 1964; Huseman et. al. 1987; Carrell and Dittrich, 1978), which remains embedded within our grand justice theories, theories that consumed the minds of great philosophers throughout the last two centuries (Homans, 1958; Rawls, 1971). I dutifully followed the sound guidance from my initial supervisory team and completed a literature review immersed in this knowledge, before the gaps and cracks in these foundations began to emerge (the results from which you will find presented here as Chapter 2), and my questions began to flourish. I felt the narrow confines that had shaped the research within this field previously as I discovered a topic that was saturated in highly positivist and quantitative research, seeking out facts from data or surveys that would prove or disprove various hypotheses as to the reasons why women are paid less than men (Manning and Swaffield 2008; Tharenou 2013; Mumford and Smith 2004; Alkadry and Tower 2011; Rubery 2017; Anderson, Bjarnadottir, and Ross 2023). This

[2] Chapter 2 represents my initial attempts to follow a more positive approach to the topic of pay inequity (Manning and Swaffield 2008; Tharenou 2013; Mumford and Smith 2004; Alkadry and Tower 2011; Rubery 2017; Anderson, Bjarnadottir, and Ross 2023), as guided by my initial supervisory team and their epistemological stance. A deeper understanding of the gaps in this literature made me realise that a traditional approach did not appeal to my personal epistemology, which had become grounded in the feminist critical management literature that spoke to me and my experiences (Bell et al., 2019; Ahmed, 2017; Lorde, 2019). Upon reflection I deem chapter 2 as an important inclusion in this thesis, as it represents my personal point of departure from the traditional approaches that readers expect when approaching the topic, but then flows into my personal narrative that explains how wide the gap has become.

research seemed to reduce my very personal and traumatic experiences into a series of structural causes and percentages, and the entire process left me feeling empty and frustrated. This paper became an important turning point in my PhD journey, as it represents the point at which I transgressed from the path of the many previous researchers in this field, to forge a new path, supported by a critical feminist approach (Bell et al., 2019; Ahmed, 2017; Lorde, 2019) and woven deep into women's experiences of the phenomenon, where I immersed myself in my own and their horror stories of the workplace. These stories are told through a performative and creative style where I bring myself and the other women within this study into conversation with ourselves and with each other and attempt to provide deep insights into our experiences and emotions (Oikarinen-Jabai, 2003; Berridge, 2008; Lapum, 2008). I have been guided through the early development of my research approach, particularly through the literature review, on into my adoption of traditional qualitative research methods, which served me well in terms of establishing what is known. However, when I began to collect women's narratives, listening deeply to their stories, and finding sense and meaning akin to my own experiences, that I began to understand the intertwining of their stories, and how their stories looped into and out of my own, in ways that it became impossible for me to separate the two. Stories and storytelling has become an integral part of this thesis and I believe that they should play a role in how we come to understand ourselves and how we interact with the world, just as these stories have helped me to make sense of my own life. I understand stories to be, following Czarniawska's narrative analysis approaches that explains how narratives are critical to how we make sense of the world, and how deconstructive analysis can lead to deep insights (Czarniawska, 1998).

Thus we can see how this thesis tracks this scholarship journey, presenting and communicating, using different forms of writing (Boje, 2018), as help to navigate the reader through the confusing, contradictory and messy path that a researcher will inevitably take towards an unknown destination. In part, therefore, I consider this thesis as my own narrative

and so I write from my individual perspective (Maynes et, al., 2010). I take on the many stories that have been shared with me over these past 4 years, and I use these stories to create a new vantage point from which we can all gain insights into how women discover pay inequity, and what happens to them. I have come to understand these stories as much more than simply stories about pay inequity at work, they are collective forms of expression that help us to understand the contemporary world of work from different perspectives. I discovered that these stories describe the manifold of ways in which women experience acts of discrimination (Babic and Hansez, 2021) and sexism (Guryan and Pan, 2022) in their working lives, and how these experiences transform their whole being. It was through the act of listening to these stories that I also began to feel and understand the same trauma in me, and how I came to understand the discomfort alienation that has resulted from my own transformations over these past years.

Writing as Living, Living as Writing

The act of separating myself from my research here, so as to become distant and objective, would constitute an act of violence against me, against myself [3] (Pullen, et, al,. 2020). The words spoken through the stories, contained within this document, are as much as a part of me as my arms or legs. These words have been my constant companions throughout this last phase of my life, and I have come to understand these stories as representative of my own truth, of what I have learnt, and of what I have become, and I will not be separated from them at this final stage of writing and presenting my thesis. This inability to separate myself

[3] Separation from my work, and these stories, represents a violent act against my person, I am personally affected by my own, as well as the other stories contained in this thesis, and express my own learning and emotions in relation to them. This approach not only advocates for scholars to write differently, but also urges reviewer to consider the powerful and performative nature of these stories as providing new knowledge and insight into women's lives (Pullen, et, al,. 2020).

from my work is a novel feeling. I have of course always cared for my work and wanted to do my best, but these new feelings of connection stem from something much deeper. I think it is gratitude that I am experiencing. Gratitude is an emotion at odds with how I viewed my situation at the start of this journey, where I felt angry, sad and betrayed. I understand this contradiction. I am a long-term sufferer of the negative affects of pay inequity, yet I feel gratitude towards my ability to undertake this research. Perhaps my gratitude emerges from the realisation that this research presents us with such compelling and meaningful stories that they simply cannot be ignored. And so, it is my gratitude for these stories that has led me towards a hope that something could change, that we might use these stories as ways of educating and enlightening others, and that we might one day come to live in a world where pay inequity no longer exists. Equally, by challenging pay inequity I feel I am contributing to the feminist literature that has created a groundswell of awareness of women's experiences at work, and speaks directly to how feminism and collective action can be used as tools to aide our progress towards our equity goals (e.g. Bell et al., 2019). And so, it has dawned on me again as to why the act of removing myself from these stories, or becoming the outsider, objective, observing, felt so violent. It is because these stories, for me, represent the hopes and dreams that I began my journey with, and that have sustained me to its conclusion. I hoped that I could use these stories to make a difference, and a dared to dream that they actually would, and upon reaching the end of my thesis I still believe. I believe in stories as hopes and dreams, I believe in stories as points of learning and insight, and I believe in stories as potential for transformations. I believe this because this has happened to me, this is my story, and I feel compelled to tell it.

The act of taking these stories and placing them onto the page has helped me to understand that it is through sharing stories that we can inspire, learn, grow and perhaps even influence others (Imas, 2004). Stories are so central to how we gain insight and understanding that the act of not sharing our stories too, could be considered a type of violence. Remaining

silent when others can benefit from your story, preventing others from gaining the insight and understanding that could hep them to navigate this uncertain and complex world, we might consider criminal (Czarniawska, 2007). During the course of my PhD journey I have come to understand stories as precious gifts. I believe that these women shared their stories with me, and I with them, as acts of loving kindness. Instinctively knowing that the insights and inspiration that can come from sharing stories is a way of helping others to make sense of their own situations, their own lives. I believe that they wanted to help me, and I wanted to help and support them, and this mutual support I believe was a way for us to 'fast-track' the sense making process (Weick, 1995) and ultimately begin to heal together.

Since stories are precious gifts, I feel that I must protect them from harm, and that I have been placed into a position of great responsibility in preserving the words and the meanings of these stories so that they do not get lost or misconstrued over time. I have taken great care in preserving the voices and sentiments of each participant of the study, finding that their eloquent and insightful words transport us into their experiences and everyday working lives.

The Inquiring Mind

The entire project can be distilled into answering two main questions that have thus far been devoid of research for many reasons that we will explore across the various literature reviews contained in this thesis, but for now we shall concentrate on unpicking the two main questions driving both me personally, as well as this PhD study, which are:

1. **Why are women paid less than men for doing the same job?**

This first question is driven directly from the shock felt at my own pay inequity discovery. I worked for a large well-respected organisation, with well-publicised diversity and inclusion initiatives to protect its marginalised groups of employees (such as women), as well as transparent pay structures and grades designed to comply with equal pay legislation, surely

that meant that I was protected from this type of discrimination? Surely, I would be treated fairly? My assumptions were proved wrong when I was unfairly dismissed before discovering my four male colleagues were on a higher grade and salary than me. My perceptions of equity were based on job titles, reporting lines, roles and responsibilities and the like, I did not take into account the fact that I was a woman. Five employees doing the same job, with the same job title, attending the same meetings and workshops in the same capacity, working on similar sized projects, yet only one was being dismissed? I scrutinised my performance instead. I was a good performer; I'd always received good feedback from the people that I worked with and respected. I had even been singled out as a high performer receiving a bonus for my 'exceptional work'. And so, it was then through querying my sudden and unexplained dismissal with a junior HR colleague that I came to understand the large disparity in pay that existed between myself and my male colleagues, and that the risk of discovery through planned structural changes became the reason for my sudden and unexplained exit from the business. The business denied any wrong doing in the subsequent tribunal court case which was won based on the false premise that not only did I already know that I was underpaid for my job, but that I also chose to accept it.

And thus, I embarked on the difficult journey towards making sense of what happened to me, of the careful consideration of my own reality, of my perceptions and experiences, of how I felt and how that impacted on how I behaved, and how others reacted to me. These things taken together have helped me to understand the two things that are crucial to answering the first question addressed by this research, that is, (i) What happened to me? What is pay inequity? And (ii) Why did it happen to me? Is it because I am a woman? What we learn here is presented across the pages of this thesis, where I reflexively (Hardy et al., 2001) explore, alongside the other women who participate in this study, how we talk about our experiences and then come to make sense of what has happened to us. Through these stories we come to understand why women remain a target for gender pay inequity within

contemporary organisational contexts, and we consider the social and psychological barriers that point to the conservation of the gendered status quo by the organisation, and those individuals embedded within its power structures that fight hard to maintain it.

I have come to understand that what I did when I spoke up about my own unfair treatment, was to expose an embedded gendered hierarchy that surround pay setting practices, and this could be considered akin to whistleblowing (Tilton, 2018) I discovered a sexism deeply buried within the organisations structure and practices, that was intended to remain hidden and unspoken (Jones and Clifton, 2018). Pay inequity discoveries unearth the sexism operating beneath the surface in organisations, which triggers multiple defence mechanisms that organisations rely on in times of crises; practices such as HR (Human Resources) grievance processes and Non-Disclosure Agreements (COT3 and NDA) have been designed to deny, invalidate, and silence women's voices so that the veil that hides gender discrimination can continue to shroud the reality that is experienced by women who venture to see beyond. By exposing sexism, I began to realise that I had unwittingly unearthed the wrath of those individuals working to protect the company's image, individuals whose purpose is to deny and erase the organisations dirty secrets to prevent the kind of scandals that might affect the balance sheet if discovered by customers and the law. I witnessed the use of powerful gender washing strategies and collective gas lighting techniques (Walters, 2022) designed to subvert and disorientate me through my grievance and tribunal cases, make me question my perceptions and sanity, before attempting to silencing me forever.

I had no words, no language to describe what was happening to me. My perceptions and experiences were denied, my story invalidated, I was dismissed as a liar, a vindictive and spiteful ex-employee, over-reacting to the fair and transparent decisions of the business. Hours into the tribunal hearing the judge let slip his desire to 'throw the case out' before even hearing any evidence, my heart sank at the prospect of sacrificing so much to just get to the doors of the tribunal only to find that my voice had again been silence, and my story remain

untold. My barrister requested Judge Hodgeson's recusal on the grounds of bias, which was vehemently denied and the case proceeded a year later. Three years on from this legal battle that left me battered and bruised I found myself, and my financial security, completely lost on our legal system. My future career and legal choices restricted by the constant threat of legal 'slaps' (the threat of being continuously sued by big businesses for daring to speak out), and thus was forced me to sign a COT3 agreement in order to protect my family from legal action and financial ruin, and preventing me from taking the case forwards or talking about my experiences at the company with anyone (including friends and family). I had been backed into a dark and lonely corner, where I had no job, no voice and was suffering from the financial and mental exhaustion that follows a protracted court process. The feeling of panic still haunts me, the anxiety of a life lost still palpable. But it's that dark and lonely place where helplessness resides that concerns me the most. It is here where other pay inequity victims may wander when they feel lost and alone, and it is here where I believe much of the trauma and lasting damage can happen (Belle and Doucet, 2003).

I want this research to provide hope to those lost in those dark corners that our organisations create for victims of discrimination. I hope that these words will shine a light in the darkness, helping them to make sense of their experiences and supporting their return to the world, and the workplace, ready to push forwards into a new day and able to face into the challenges of living a feminist life within the confines of the patriarchy. I do believe that in order for me to bring hope to the victims of pay inequity I must first understand why this experience is so psychologically damaging. And so, this research intentionally explores the perceptions and experiences that drive women towards the anxiety and depression that frequently follows discoveries of pay inequity (see e.g. Hammarstrom and Phillips, 2012). What happens to us that trigger such extreme emotional responses? How do our emotions evolve and change over time? How do these emotions help us to make sense of these

experiences? Why are these affects so profound, life-changing and traumatic? Which leads me to the next important question that has shaped this research:

2. **How do pay inequity experiences affect women?**

I have asked myself this question many times. I have been asked this question many times by those who care about me. I have been poked and prodded by my most trusted friends and family over this seven-year long journey, with questions like: 'When will you move on?', 'Why can't you just let it go?', 'Why can't you just get on with your life?', 'What's wrong with you?', and 'When is the old Becky coming back?'. I didn't understand what was happening to me. I had no idea why this experience was having such a deep and lasting emotional impact, and I couldn't see any clear way through the mire that had encompassed my life. I simply couldn't answer these questions, but I understood that my ability to understand what had happened to me might somehow lead to my ability to recover, to heal, and to move on from the trauma.

When my story went public, as the case hit the tribunal courts, I began to receive messages via social media from other women who had experienced something similar. They told me stories of how their lives, relationship and careers had been irrevocably damaged, and how they have spent years trying to pick up the pieces of their broken lives and livelihoods. It was through these conversations with other women that I began to realise how little we understood about how pay inequity is experienced by women in the real-world. I hungrily searched the literature on pay inequity, gender pay gaps and equal pay law (e.g., Costa Dias et, al., 2020) to see whether previous studies or knowledge could help to explain what had happened to us. Despite an abundance of research across all three topic areas, I found no studies that spoke to me, or to my experiences of this phenomenon. In 2020, having spent 3 years oscillating between desperate searching and ruminations, I decided to embark on this PhD journey to help me to uncover answers to these two questions. This thesis not only

presents a creative and unique set of findings to the age-old problem of pay inequity, but it also tracks my personal journey on my road to sense making and, eventually, into recovery.

Four years ago I established this gap in our knowledge, and since then I have plotted a course that begins with this experiential gap in the literature, through the development of a feminist and critical stance and methodological design (Sprague, 2016), into the collection of the rich descriptive narratives of 12 women (including my own). I present here the thematic analysis that led me to three findings of theoretical importance that have been woven into 3 stories, and included as chapters 5, 6 and 7. I discuss the findings in relation of the broader topic of pay inequity, and consider the impact that this research has on our knowledge and the future of the topic area. Finally, I conclude with my personal reflections, reflecting on where this particular journey has ended, and where my new journey begins. I present a more detailed structure below that explains where and how the 5 journal articles have been slotted into this thesis.

But first I will summarise the research questions driving this PhD study, they are:

1. **Why are women paid less than men for doing the same job?**

This research question is focussed on exploring the reasons why inequity exists and persists according to those women who have experienced it for themselves. In asking this question I have restricted the research scope to studies that relate to gender pay inequity, thereby ruling out considerations for other pay inequity discrimination such as race, sexual orientation or disability. The research design adopted has also, pragmatically, focussed on gathering knowledge and research from previous studies conducted within the UK, or within similar cultural contexts, such as Europe and America where appropriate. And thus the question could be extended to ask, 'why are women paid less than men for doing the same job in the UK or similar contexts?'. It may at first seem pertinent to attempt to answer such a categorical question using a highly qualitative methodology based on experiences. However, let us consider for a moment the gendered nature of both the context for this question, as well as the

historical approach taken to answering categorical questions. The cultural context dictates both how questions are asked, as well as the social acceptance of answers; and thus, such a categorical question would demand a quantitative response asserted with the type of power and knowledge assumed of, and associated with, men (Lee & Pratto, 2018). This thesis seeks to redress this imbalance by answering this categorical question through a lens that takes account of the gendered power dynamics, pushing forwards an answer that has been founded within the depths of women's experiences, and presented as a subjective truth to the question of why, and as a challenge to the gendered way in which we generate knowledge of phenomena that disproportionately affects women.

2. How do pay inequity experiences affect women?

Where the first question focussing on the causes and reasons why pay inequity exists, the second question attempts to unpick the complex topic of emotional affects. Requiring a literature search that reaches across two research domains, that of emotional affects, and that of pay inequity. Thus, the literature review, as well as the subsequent research design has been carefully considered to present what is known about the broader emotional affects of organisational injustice, and then apply these findings to the research design and analysis of results.

So many questions have driven this study forwards over the past several years; why have we remained so far from finding answers or solutions to this problem? Why do we allowed this type of injustice to persist within organisations? Who is affected by this type of injustice? How are they affected? Who are the perpetrators? How do organisations respond to accusations of pay inequity? What attitudes and behaviours do they exhibit? Are certain businesses more prone towards paying women unfairly than others? How do women find out that they are being paid unfairly? And how does it make them feel about their jobs,

organisation and the world around them? How do women respond to the injustice? Are there any long-term emotional impacts for women?

These important questions have been largely ignored by previous studies on pay inequity. Motivations for explaining the numerical differences in pay has pushed researchers into decades of quantitative positivist studies attempting to find definite answers to hypothetical questions. But our obsessions with facts and truths have come at the sacrifice of our understanding of the impacts that gender pay inequity is having on women's lives and careers. Perhaps we might even stumble across new knowledge that can help us to understand some of the causes that have been so difficult to find, as well as help us to explore the experiences that are causing women harm. And so I find myself like a child, naïve as to how best to embark on this new approach to an age old problem; however, what is clear is that it must be the aim of this doctoral work to explore the gender pay inequity phenomenon from this new perspective, that of the victim, so that we might uncover why gender pay inequity is able to flourish in modern business contexts, as well as answer some, if not all, of the questions outlined above. This approach will follow a phenomenological approach, that will explore the experiences of individual women in the hope that this can shed a new light on this centuries old problem. The individual perspectives of 12 women have been captured in order to help us to discover what women believe to be the causes of their own pay inequity, what they perceive in the business environment that helps them to make sense of their situation, and how this experience affects their lives and careers. Therefore, the two key research questions for this doctorate thesis focus on why women are paid less, as well as how they are affected by their experiences once they discover the injustice. The two questions are:

1. **Why are women paid less than men for doing the same job?**
2. **How do pay inequity experiences affect women?**

This thesis presents a culmination of my research from the start of my journey in 2017 to the present day (2024). Although constructed as a traditional PhD thesis, the work includes

references or content from 5 papers at various stages of publication including one literature review, one methods paper and three findings papers. The thesis itself comprises a series of 'interlinking' chapters that are intended to present a comprehensive overview of the doctorate works. Since these papers are either published or intended for publication they are clearly referenced across the text and included either as linked papers or 'stand-alone' chapters. Please note that the author has gained the necessary permissions for re-publishing the content as part of this PhD thesis.

The main sections of this thesis:

1. Chapter 1: Introduction: an outline of the study that provides personal drivers behind the research project, as well as description of the research questions that have driven the project to its fruition. This section contains:
    a. Literature review methodology is included as an interlinking chapter to provide more methodological grounding to the paper presented in the next section.
2. Chapter 2: Literature Review Paper: https://worldatwork.org/resources/publications/journal/jtr-q2-2023
3. Chapter 3: Method in the Madness - This chapter provides a detailed account of the research design and methodological approach adopted for the data collection and analysis phases of this study.
    a. The research approach outlines how participants were selected and the interview process followed.
    b. A section explaining the qualitative methodological techniques that were adopted for the analysis of the interview transcripts are included. This section also contains a critical appraisal of the original design and approach. We discover how and where the study has deviated from its origins and the challenges faced during the data collection phase.

c. Link to methods paper: *BE FAIR - A qualitative investigation of pay inequity experiences'*: https://papers.academic-conferences.org/index.php/ecrm/article/view/1216/1268

4. Chapter 4: Themes and Meaning – this section provides a summary of the research findings through the thematic analysis sections before presenting the three theoretically relevant findings.
    a. The thematic analysis works through the themes and sub-themes (or codes) that are identified across the study before presenting a model that conceptually groups the findings into areas of theoretical interest.
5. Chapter 5: Story 1: Hidden From Plain Sight: How Pay Inequity Experiences Expose Sexism.
6. Chapter 6: Story 2: Hung out to dry: The Gender Washing Practices of Organisations.
7. Chapter 7: Story 3: Sacrificial Lambs: An Emotional Tale of Pay Inequity.
8. Chapter 8: Conclusion – This chapter presents arguments that describe where and how these finding contribute to the existing body of knowledge. This chapter also presents how this research deviates from some traditional methodological and theoretical discussions within the pay inequity topic area, before presenting some interesting and insightful discussion points from the focus group session held with participants about the research findings. The chapter finally attempts to bring these findings back together, to inform us on how this research presents us with new knowledge that can be used to inform our future thinking on the topic.

Chapter 2: What We Know About Pay Inequity

Introduction

I will begin by introducing what we know about pay inequity, that being what centuries of philosophers, academics and teachers provide in the form of knowledge. As I write my own story into this thesis, I can more clearly see how that notion of pay inequity, as described and analysed within the field, does not fit into my own experience or understanding of the topic. That said, we must consider where this research journey began, and much like every other PhD study, it began with a literature review, that took me as far back as primitive accumulation theory, into the grand theories of justice, until I bring us into the present with a paper I wrote at the start of my PhD journey. You will find that much of my thinking, and my writing in particular, has changed dramatically since then, but in the interests of fullness, I present here the body of knowledge for pay inequity in the UK.

We begin by understanding that the exchange of labour for rewards has been a fundamental component of the economic, social and political make-up of our modern business world for centuries (Marx, 1873). Humanity's ability to contribute valuable inputs into the country's economy, producing goods that enable the financial stability of nations, providing the food and materials necessary for the sustainability of their people, has been the capitalist driving-force that has propelled us through the past ten centuries of globalisation and economic prosperity (Harari, 2018; Federici, 2004). The natural resources of each continent, and the education, training and skills of people, are what have enabled competing economies to survive and thrive, or indeed to plunder and fail, at the benefit or expense of their people (Harari, 2018). Pay has important economic, social and political implications for us all; and the fairness, equity and equality of the pay that we receive in exchange for our labour has become the subject of much debate for many centuries (Rawls, 1971). We can therefore appreciate why gender pay inequity not only remains theoretically problematic for academics,

but a phenomenon that continues to hinder our collective progress and the financial security of women in today's modern business contexts (Grimshaw and Rubery 2007, 2015). I understand and use the term gender pay inequity in this thesis to represent the difference in pay that women and men received for doing the same job within an organisation, or performing work of equal value to the organisation (Equal Pay Act, 1970). The exact amount of difference in pay should encapsulate total rewards, including bonuses, pensions and any other benefits that can be directly attributed to the role being performed.

The resistance of UK employers and governments to enforce our equal pay laws, despite decades of national enquiries and reviews into the gender pay gap, highlights the vulnerability of pay equity, and its supporting legislation, to the prevailing political climate (Dickens, 2007). There is clearly an 'interpretive space' that surrounds the implementation of equality around the world, which is further encouraged through the void of actors that can hold businesses to account when they continue to fail to adhere to either the legal, social or moral imperative (Ross, 2018). We must, therefore, face into the fact that gender pay inequity continues to exist, and persist, despite the liberal values upon which western society has prospered, and the intention of equal pay legislation attempts around the world.

UK related pay data collected by the office for national statistics utilises the crude data sources provided by large corporations and public sector organisations through the gender pay gap reporting regulation which takes an average hourly pay rate from these organisations to compare male and female wages (ONS, Gender Pay Gap Report 2022). Such data allows for businesses to manipulate their own results, excludes the millions of SMEs (small and medium sized businesses) with staff numbers below 250 employees, and does not include other rewards or benefits such as overtime or bonuses as part of hourly wage calculations. However, this data still points to pay inequity as prevalent across all of the companies reporting, averaging out at a 10% difference in hourly rates that work in men's favour, a statistic equivalent to women simply not being paid for a full 4 years of their employment if we take

the average career to last for 40 years. What the data also shows is that the pay gap escalates with age and seniority, demonstrating that women's earning potential is significantly hindered as they advance towards the high point of their careers, having a significant impact on women's overall financial security and pensionable income as they head towards retirement (ONS, Gender Pay Gap Report 2022). Such statistical analyses present us with a view of this topic that emphasises the difference in pay as both the cause and effect of pay inequity, focussing on the positivist and quantitative, and therefore cognitive responses to the phenomenon (Burke et, al., 2023). Pay inequity is a topic that is so embedded within this positivist paradigm that our knowledge creation and legal interventions have historically used observable and financial data, assuming a homogenous cognitive response to the pay inequity situation, that is quantifiable and relational to the extent of the differences in pay (Burke, 2023). Women who have experienced pay inequity for themselves implicitly understand that this phenomenon cannot be adequately explained simply in relation to the cognitive and rational, and money rarely factors into their considerations. Tribunal statistics running at over 100,000 a year (Gov.uk, 2020) together with a booming litigation profession, demonstrate that in many cases the cost of going to court far outweigh the monetary compensation that could be rewarded to the victims of this faceless crime, and thereby indicating that there are other reasons that women will decide to fight their employers for equal pay (BBC, 2018). What pay inequity research has fail to explain is why pay inequity experiences can lead women towards embarking on protracted, expensive and unfair tribunal cases (Thornburg, 2019), and how these experiences lead to lasting and harmful emotional and psychological affects that can irrevocably damage their lives and careers in the future. This doctoral work has positioned itself within the centre of this unresolved phenomenon by seeking out the answers to these important questions so that we might explore what lies within women's lived experiences and unpick the emotional responses and sense-making to understand why women embark on such an arduous journey through the tribunal courts.

Some scholars may argue that the plethora of research that surrounds the topic, developed over decades of both theoretical and empirical studies, provides us with an adequate list of potential causes thanks to the gender pay gap data, we have; (i) gender role theory that speaks to the social pressures on women to move into lower paid careers than their male counterparts (Lips, 2013; Rubery, 2017); (ii) human capital theory which professed women's lesser 'value' to businesses due to a lack of skills and experience, a theory that now lacks credibility in western cultures (Becker et, al., 1990; Polachek, 1981; Manning and Swaffield, 2008); and (iii) Occupational Segregation which points to the feminisation of specific job roles as predominately female and therefore undervalued as a result (Blau and Kahn, 2003, 2017; Mumford and Smith, 2009). These various causes have helped academics to explain-away the phenomenon as influenced by structural or societal mechanisms outside of the control of organisations and individuals, yet those of us who have experienced pay inequity, understand that experiences are centred around the pay structures and decisions of individuals within specific organisational contexts, who through this theoretical perspective have been absolved of responsibility, and therefore devoid of the need to elicit change to either people or practices, and thereby address the evolving ways in which women are undervalued in the workplace (Rubery and Grimshaw, 2015).

This search has therefore move away from such mechanistic explanations of the phenomenon, and towards the social psychology theories that address individual motivations and responses to this type of organisational injustice (e.g., Cohen and Greenberg, 1982; Hegtvedt and Isom, 2015). The 'grand theories of justice' have use the concept of fairness, equality and equity to drive forwards theory and research fascinating philosopher's and academics for centuries (Hamedi, 2014). The theories of the political and ethical philosopher John Rawls (1971) are particularly pertinent to this debate, where his work on distributive justice has formed the basis for decades of research on social exchange theories, most of which are born from the principles of liberty and equality, and deal with the 'fair' distribution

of rewards within a free and equal society (Rawls, 1971). Rawls theories prompted a plethora of studies in the 1970s, attempts to empirically test our human nature against such theoretical models. The emergence of distributive justice, cognitive dissonance and equity theories have provided us with some understanding of how a sense of equity and fairness might affect the motivations and productivity of a 'typical' human being within a business setting; this research has focussed on cognitive approaches to the phenomena of justice, and therefore provides us with empirical research that tests our cognitive responses to fake (or hypothetical) situations of inequity (Adams, 1962, 1963, 1964; Huseman et. al. 1987; Carrell and Dittrich, 1978). The highly quantitative research methods, based on a positivist epistemology and the homogenised response of individual actors, is typical of the empirical research within the field of business at this time. However, by focussing on the cognitive, and ignoring the emotional, we are missing a crucial factor when considering the affects of injustice on the individual, and thus this research fails to speak to the experience of the individual who finds themselves exploited in this way. And hence, this literature lands at the final stop, one where we come to understand the theories that link individual experiences of injustice to emotional affects. Through this research we can begin to understand the role that episodes of injustice are linked to the emotional affects felt by the victims (Cropanzano et, al., 2011). However, this field of research lacks the empirical findings that could help us to unpick the complex relationship between injustice and affects, which has been attributed to the complexity of studying emotions, particularly following specific trigger events (such as pay inequity), and then over time, as further episodes of injustice are experienced by victims. What we find is the highly personalised nature of how injustice is experienced, that nuanced emotional responses can in part be attributed to the context, relationships and subsequent treatment that individuals receive as part of a broader experience, protracted over long periods of time (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005).

As scholars deeply connected to our topics, we find ourselves questioning beyond the narrow confines of historical approaches to the topic, discovering that academic debates have moved on. Theory that considers workplace discrimination more broadly provides us with some insight into related topic areas. Specifically gendered organizational theory provides us with the relevant theories for examining how gender biases and inequalities are embedded within organizational structures, processes, and practices (Rodriguez & Guenther, 2022). Joan Acker has historically been highly influential in presenting the concept of the gendered organisation in her seminal work, "Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations" (1990), where she argues against the populist notion of the ‘gender-neutral’ organisation, highlighting instead, the inherently gendered nature of our workplaces, as made visible through their structures, cultures, and interactions. This foundational theory has been pivotal in supporting the ideas presented within this thesis that point to the perpetuation of gender inequalities within workplaces and supported a deeper understanding of the types of structural inequalities that hinder women’s careers, that are invisible to the ‘naked eye’ (Acker, 1990). Less relevant, but important contextual research is that which helps us to understand the gendered division of labour, showing that job roles and responsibilities are often divided along gender lines, with women typically occupying lower-status, lower-paid positions (Clark-Saboda & Lemke, 2023). We can use this understanding of how gender hierarchies are reinforced within organisational power structures to see how such gendered divisions can limit women's career advancement opportunities (O’Neil & Hopkins, 2015), their rates of pay, or perceived value to the organisation. We approach structural inequalities directly through the findings of this research, where women’s stories force us to face into the patriarchal nature of organizational cultures (Ferry, 2024), and describe how these cultures have become dominated by the masculine, with the feminine devalued, and leading us towards the marginalizing and rejection of those who fail conform to these norms (Vartika,

2022), creating a hostile and toxic work environment for women and other marginalized groups (Randall & Short, 1983).

This study's focus on women has inevitably led me into contemporary feminist debates. One of the key themes that emerges from the literature on feminist perspectives on equity has provided us with clarity of how we come to understand equity, and its conceptual relationship to equality (Fredman, 2022). Feminist scholars argue that equity and equality are not synonymous. While equality focuses on providing the same resources to everyone, equity involves recognizing and addressing the specific needs and circumstances of different groups to achieve fair outcomes (Friedan, 1963). This distinction has become crucial in policy-making and organizational practices, where a one-size-fits-all approach may not effectively address the unique challenges faced by marginalized groups (Valenziano, 2008). Contemporary debates on feminist perspectives now consider the intersectional feminist concept of multiple identities as introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw, emphasizes that gender cannot be examined in isolation from other social categories such as race, class, and sexuality Crenshaw, 1989). Although intersectionality is not a focus of this study, this approach highlights how overlapping identities create unique experiences of oppression and privilege (Alexander, & Welzel, 2021; Hooks, 1984; Mohanty, 2003; Blau & Kahn, 2000; Gornick & Meyers, 2003; Collins, 1990; Mohanty, 2003) and is therefore a key theoretical framework for consideration of pay inequity experiences, there lacks relevant empirical studies that examine how intersecting identities impact on women's experiences of pay inequity, particularly in non-western contexts, which identifies a need for more studies that explore feminist equity issues in diverse cultural and geographical settings (Anjum & Aziz, 2024). Feminism has also played a crucial role in developing theories that examine structural power dynamics and how this is used against women in the organisation and more broadly (Thompson, 2023). These theories expose the ways in which patriarchal structures maintain gender inequalities, and how power dynamics affect access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making

processes, but particularly pertinent to the study is how these theories help us to identify the ways that power can be ingrained into gendered systems, such as within government policies, legal systems and organisational practices, which are often designed to reinforce patriarchal norms and values that marginalize women (Milazzo & Goldstein, 2019). This study does find examples of how symbolic power is used to shape the dominant discourse that serves to reinforce gendered hierarchies, and silence women's voices and experiences from our everyday lives, rendering women powerless to speak of their experiences and stimulate action that could create social change for the better (Capdevila & Zurbriggen, 2023). I find that the toxic workplace context works to impede women's agency to resist and fight back against the oppressive structures that paralyses them (Randall & Short, 1983). In concluding this research helps us to understand that the only options left available to women for creating lasting change are through the use of advocacy and grassroots movements to promote awareness, and therefore exercise their agency in numbers that may eventually lead towards the type of policy reforms that promote gender equity more widely (McCammon et, al, 2017). Despite significant theoretical advancements, several gaps still remain in the literature on feminist perspectives on equity, most specifically empirical studies that explore the structural barriers and power dynamics that operate within the organisation. This study seeks to address this knowledge gap by beginning with women's experiences, and exploring their narratives of pay inequity and discrimination, so that we might come to understand how these barriers and dynamics manifest in the 'real world' and how women come to make sense of their situation.

This initial literature review has therefore provided us with theoretical gaps in our understanding of why organisations and individuals continue to pay women less than men for doing the same job, but we also find this research lacking in describing the pay inequity experience sufficiently for us to understand its emotional effects on those women who find themselves exploited in this way (Burke, 2023). In addition, we find helpful guidance in the literature about emotional affects that highlights the need for future research to take account

of the complexities of the interacting factors that result in emotional affects over time. Thereby also demonstrating the need to adopt different methodological approaches to the topic.

The author's approach to this doctorate takes heed of this methodological guidance through the adoption of a highly qualitative methodology that has been designed to capture women's stories so that we can understand how women discover their pay inequity and why they perceive they have been exploited in this way by the organisation. A combination of feminist, thematic and narrative analysis (Woodiwiss et, al., 2017) has been used to then provide context to and explore the emotional affects that are central to women's pay inequity experiences, as we then track their emotional journey through subsequent HR grievance and legal practices adopted by the organisation.

Review Method

Before I present the early literature review paper that provides a summary of the pay inequity literature, I provide some additional detail on how I conducted a preliminary review of the topic area to support my decisions around the likely focus of the literature review, as well as to establish any obvious gaps in relation to the research question. The systematic review and bibliometric analysis I conducted as part of the literature review addressed the topic area of equal pay, or gender pay inequity, and initially presented over 600,000 studies as relevant. However, through filtering and criteria selection techniques in the library database I was able to refine the search down to a more manageable number of papers for my manual review. An early view of the types of papers being returned within this search provided me with ideas for how best to categorize this content in a meaningful way, and thus this early review was also used to inform the categories of data that were captured for the paper analysis conducted in Excel using a grid format (Appendix K). Finally, I summarised and categorised

all 291 papers into the Excel spreadsheet and used this for tracking and referencing going forwards.

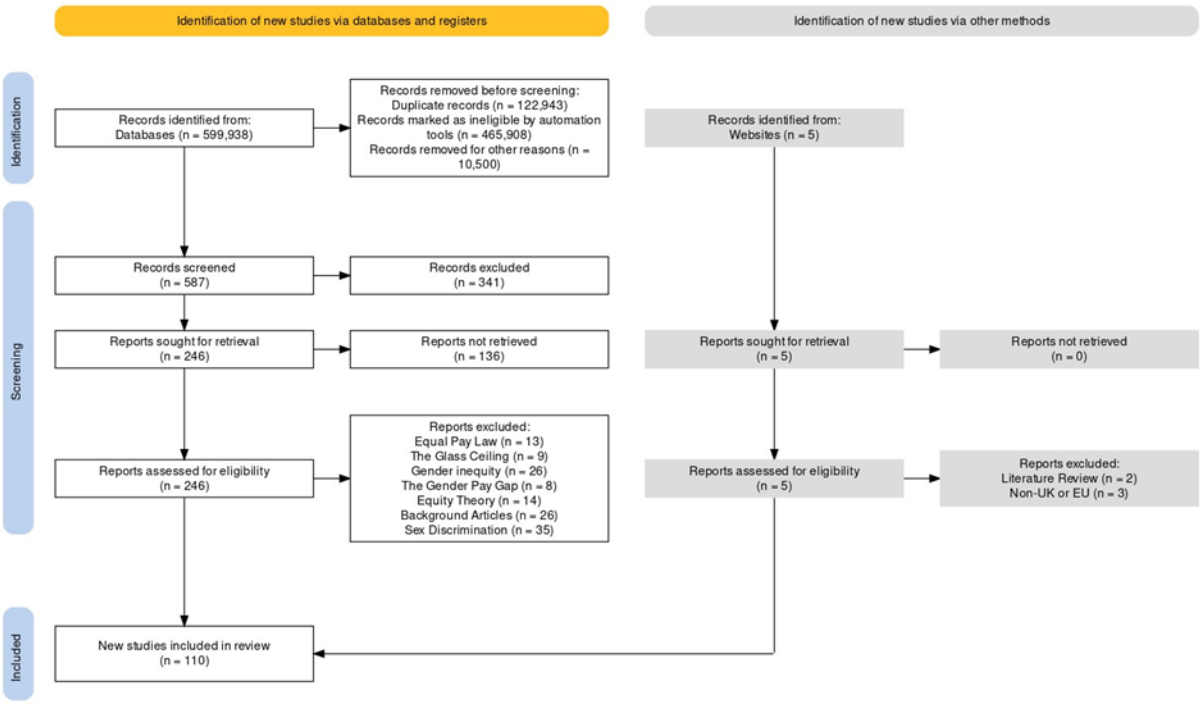
The categorisation matrix (or GRID analysis) was therefore developed early in the process and became the tracking method for the author to input all of the relevant studies captured through the literature review which then supported the capture and development of the top-level themes that emerged from the abstracts and conclusions of all papers within the initial search. These were (1) Equity Theory, (2) The Gender Pay Gap and (3) Equal Pay Law. The full matrix for all papers reviewed can be found as ***Appendix J***.

The author conducted a literature search on equal pay as it relates to gender, before narrowing down the papers identified into the areas of interest that emerged from an abstract and conclusion review of each paper which were placed into a GRID analysis, an Excel spreadsheet that listed each paper to capture key criteria as well as assign a category or sub-topic to allow for the next stage of analysis. This approach has been adapted from of the Cochrane method *(Higgins et. Al., 2019)* and is outlined in the sections below.

The key search term 'equal pay' was used across the business journal databases listed below to ensure that each paper would have some relevance to 'equity or equality', as well as some relevance to 'pay': ABI/INFORM Global, British Library Integrated Catalogue, EconLit (EBSCO), Google Scholar, Humanities Full Text (EBSCO), JSTOR, PsycArticles (EBSCO), SAGE Journals Online, Social Sciences Full Text (EBSCO)**.**

This search resulted in ~ 600,000 papers, which were then automatically filtered using the criteria of 'equal' and 'pay' which returned 599,960 papers before selecting English-only, recent studies (post 1970s) from peer reviewed journals which resulted in 11,087 papers. Utilising the systems 'pay inequity' selection category then further narrowed the search to the final 586 papers, until the author then selected 'gender' as required with the keyword search which resulted in 289 for review. All papers were then manually read and reviewed and placed into the GRID categorization spreadsheet with key data relating to each paper. A copy of this full analysis has been attached / embedded to the thesis documentation as ***Appendix K***, with a PRISM (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) summary provided as ***Appendix J***.

Figure 1: PRISM Flow Diagram



Note: PRISM Flow Diagram for Literature Review (adapted from: https://www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n71)

The initial 341 records were automatically excluded as not gender related. The 289 papers that were listed at the end of the search and filtering activities above were inputted into a GRID matrix Excel spreadsheet that allowed the author to screen each paper so that it could be categorized further. The full spreadsheet can be found as ***Appendix K***. The following sub-categories were established following the detailed review of each paper by the author using a thematic approach. This detailed review phase established the 5 categories outlined below:

1. Equal Pay Law = 33 papers
2. The Glass Ceiling = 38 papers
3. Gender Inequality = 30 papers
4. Gender Pay Gap = 80 papers
5. Equity Theory = 43 papers

The bibliometric methods used in the paper published below were applied after the detailed review of papers in order to support the development of a visual network that showed the connections, and the gaps, that exist across this broad topic area. This paper was published on 2nd June 2023. The full paper has been included as chapter 2 within this thesis, and the slide deck that was presented at the conference has been included as ***Appendix N.***

The original paper was developed and presented at the European Rewards Management Conference towards the end of 2021 coinciding with the point when my interviews with women began in earnest. What I found across the literature was particularly disheartening, so much research on the Gender Pay Gap, so much research attempting to hypothesise on the causes of broad pay differences, and so little interest in the questions that were so important to me. This conference was the very first academic conference I had attended, and I found the community friendly and curious about my research. I sat through many sessions of wage gap differentials and bonus and reward management theory, but what struck me was the highly formulaic and non-critical content that was delivered. I (hope) that I have learnt a lot about academic writing and academic conferences since this initial introduction, and now consider my original approach to the literature review and this conference as lacking in substance and depth. This paper is, however, reminiscent of where my PhD journey began, and has been included here for that purpose. I have since realised that I lacked the kind of critical reflexivity and courage to adopt a more intimate voice with which to share these very personal stories. Happily it has been through my discoveries of the wider literature on gender organisation theory which has led me closer towards an understanding of the structural barriers that women face within patriarchal contexts (Acker, 1990); and the vast amount of literature supporting feminist perspectives of equity which provided me with the confidence and theoretical space within which to tell stories that oppose the dominant narratives that surround us in western societies (Freidan, 1963; Hooks, 2015). I will be eternally grateful to Miguel Imas' encouragement to tell my own story in my own words.

Pay Inequity: Past, Present and Future (published on 2nd June 2023)

Note: Published paper figures were specifically reformatted for the online publication.

Citation: Burke, R., Wei, J. Q., & Wolfram, H. (2023///Second Quarter). PAY INEQUITY: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE. The Journal of Total Rewards, 32(2), 1-24. Retrieved from https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/pay-inequity-past-present-future/docview/2918624962/se-2

Introduction

Research on gender pay inequity is complex both in terms of its theoretical basis and its real-world sociological significance. Sociology lends us the social justice theories that helps to explain our cognitive and emotional responses to pay inequity. Be we also have a wealth of research that has focused on the organizational and structural causes of the pay differences between the genders, most notably the gender pay gap (Manning and Swaffield 2008; Tharenou 2013; Mumford and Smith 2004; Alkadry and Tower 2011; Rubery 2017; Anderson, Bjarnadottir, and Ross 2023).

In addition, we have societal interventions, such as the United Kingdom's Equal Pay Act (1970). For more than half a century, the act has been designed to deter organizations from discriminating against employees because of personal characteristics, such as race, sexual orientation, disability and gender. Yet, 53 years later, there is still a gender pay gap, whose size differs depending on the source. According to a BBC analysis, the median gender pay gap across all reporting companies was 9.4% (Calcea 2023) — the same level as in 2017-18, when mandatory pay gap reporting began. Across all sectors, as many as eight in ten UK employers paid men more on average than they did women. Office for National Statistics (ONS 2022) data show that the gender pay gap has slowly declined over the past 25 years, from 30% down to less than 15%.

This presents a fragmented and complex landscape from which to consider new directions. Therefore, this study will attempt to simplify the situation with the use of bibliometric tools (www.VOSViewer.com).

We will begin by defining “pay” and “pay equity” before presenting contextual information on the Equal Pay Act and the gender pay gap as it relates to the UK. A brief methods section will then explain how the literature was analyzed before we present findings. We hope that our conclusions shed light on the gaps in this landscape for practitioner and academic communities, and that our discussion points to the opportunities that we see for taking this topic forward in the future. While this paper focuses on the UK, it has applications for HR practitioners in other countries because instituting compensation systems that address a gender pay gap is a common challenge. As you are reading about our research, we suggest you keep in mind these questions that can lead to a better understanding of prevalent pay equity challenges:

- Does pay inequity stem from managers simply complying with productivity and organizational goals to cut costs? (Greenberg and Leventhal 1976)
- Do individual agents act in accordance with their own unconscious biases? (Runciman 1967)
- Is it sometimes a conscious choice to act against equal pay and in favor of personal gains? (Leventhal, Michaels and Sanford 1972)
- Is there a resistance from individuals, employers or the government to introduce meaningful interventions that protect women?
- Does pay equity legislation and its interventions depend on the prevailing political climate?
- What harm is this type of inequity causing women in the workplace? (Cropanzano, Stein, and Nadisic 2011).

Pay

Pay, the exchange of labour for rewards (Homans 1958), is a fundamental component to the economic, social and political makeup of the modern business world. The pay, or rewards, that we receive for our labour is multifaceted. It can either relate to the time that we might spend doing the job (such as a market rate per hour) or to the amount that we might need to sustain our basic needs (such as rent, food and clothing), sometimes referred to as a living wage. Specific jobs also have a social value that is based on their perceived worth to society (Figart, Mutari, Power 2002). Additional complexity can stem from the increasing popularity of performance-related pay in the form of bonuses, which have contributed to greater disparities between men and women (Amado, Santos, Sao Jose 2018). Some level of complexity and secrecy continues to surround the wage-setting processes within many organizations, leading to subjective decision making that takes into account internal budgetary constraints, labour trends and the expectations and motivations of individual employees (Grimshaw and Rubery 2007). Pay systems and practices have been built upon historical ideas of worth, which have been demonstrated to value male traits and characteristics above those typically associated with female workers. Together, these factors have contributed to the persistence of undervaluing of women in the wage-setting practices of most organizations (Rubery and Grimshaw 2015).

Pay Equity

The concept of fair pay leads us toward the notion of equity, where we are prone to perceive our inputs or efforts as equitable to the rewards (or pay) that we receive. This described the distributive justice theory that emerged following George C. Homans' influential paper contemplating "Social Behaviour as Exchange" (Homans 1958). Homans' original theory builds on the concept of an exchange of rewards for labour and considers how this exchange can affect our motivations. Perceptions of the fairness of those rewards, when

efforts are matched to pay, were seen to generate an equilibrium, or sense of equity, that can motivate us to perform well, and thus the equity theory was born (Adams 1965; Homans 1958; Leventhal 1980). Our perceptions of a fair reward were also linked to social contexts where we might compare our pay to others with similar jobs, either within or outside of our organization. Therefore, we perceive the fairness of these rewards through this social comparison (Festinger 1954, 1961). Perceptions of unfairness or inequity can trigger a cognitive dissonance that leads to a decrease in motivation and performance (Adams and Rosenbaum 1962).

UK Equal Pay Act 1970

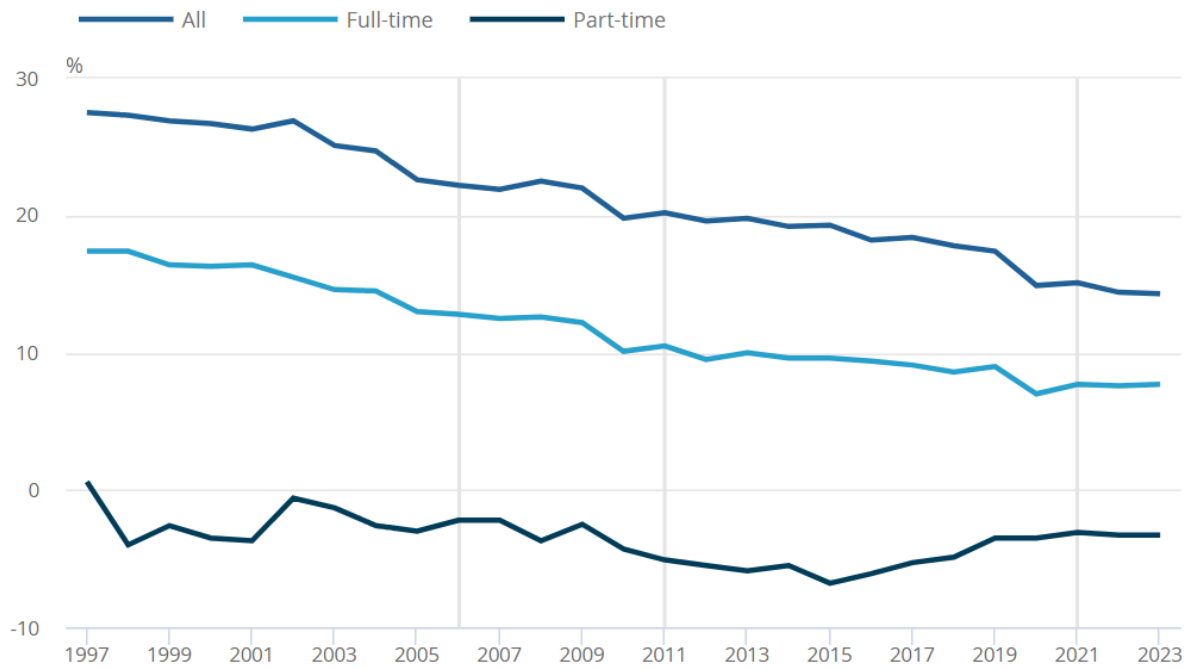
Surely, however, it is tacitly known that injustice hurts or harms us in some way? Which is why discrimination against individuals by organizations on the basis of personal characteristics, such as age, race, disability, or gender, is contrary to the values of the UK's liberal society, established after World War II. The UK's equal rights legislation has been designed to protect those individuals who have historically suffered discriminatory treatment, including the rights of women to receive equal pay for equal work (Equal Pay Act, 1970).

Gender Pay Gap

Nearly a third of all equal pay research conducted in the UK over the past two decades has focused on studies that have used the gender pay gap data. This data source, which refers to the average difference in hourly earnings between men and women, is publicly available and has been collected by the UK government via the Office for National Statistics (ONS) annually since 1998. Figure 1 demonstrates a gender pay gap that has been in slow decline over the past 25 years, starting at 30% down to less than 15% in 2022 (ONS 2022). The pay gap data comprise pay information since 2017 from all of the UK's government organizations, as well as some voluntary data from nearly 9,000 UK businesses that qualify as large enough

(more than 250 employees). However, with more than 5.5 million businesses registered in the UK in 2023 (www.gov.uk), the overall private-sector participation rates could be considered too low to provide us with meaningful data, and clearly a predominantly government data source could also skew these results. These data represent a very crude estimate of the actual wage disparities between men and women in the UK today and could be considered misleading as a result.

FIGURE 1: Gender pay gap for median gross hourly earnings (excluding overtime), UK, April 1997 to 2023



NOTE: The gender pay gap is higher for all employees than it is for full-time or part-time employees. This is because women fill more part-time jobs which in comparison with full-time jobs have lower hourly median pay.

Source: Office of National Statistics (ONS) 2023

Methodology

The authors began the literature review process by conducting a broad literature search on the topic of "pay equity. However, this search did not return results for the Equal Pay Law or gender pay gap. So the broader terms "equal" and "pay" were used in order to ensure the inclusion of literature pertaining to the gender pay gap and equal pay law. Here we can see that the theoretical basis for the topic can be found in social psychology where the term

“equity” has been used to explain individual perceptions of equity’ in relation to exchange for rewards (Homans 1958). However, the term equal pre-dates Equity Theory, as it was adopted to cover both organizational and societal-level differences in the treatment of men and women as outlined in the 1951 UN Human Rights Convention relating to Equal Remuneration (Oelz, Olney, and Tomei, 2013). It then follows that the search term should adopt the original and broader term “equal” to ensure that both organizational and societal focused studies are included. The search terms used were therefore “equal” and “pay” as explained in the first box of Figure 2. These results were then refined by selecting date ranges that corresponded to the enactment of the Equal Pay Act (post-1970s) and written in English and applicable to the UK, as well as undergoing a peer-review process. These two steps helped narrow the research to the studies’ scope that will address only the UK. The final filter relates to “gender” to ensure that equal pay was considered in relation to gender pay differences specifically, rather than another characteristic such as race or disability. These filtering options resulted in a total of 587 results being taken into the analysis stage. Search results and filter criteria are shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2 Article Search Filter Approach

The authors then completed a manual review and GRID analysis using Excel to categorize all 587 articles to establish: key themes, theoretical areas, research methods and conclusions from each paper. A total of 311 papers were excluded at this stage as either duplicates or non-conformant with the search criteria, thereby leaving 281 papers for review. These references were collated in referencing software (RefWorks) before being converted into an .RIS file ready to be uploaded by the bibliometric tool VOSViewer as described next.

Bibliometric Analysis

The VOSViewer Bibliometric Tool (www.VOSViewer.com) was used to scan title, keyword and abstract data of the .RIS file to find connections. Due to the complexity of the research surrounding gender pay equity, this bibliometric tool has been used to provide a visual aid to the connectedness of keywords surrounding the body of knowledge (Zupic and Cater 2015). The visualization techniques have been used to explain clustering (grouping) of keywords, as well as the density (volume) of research around each cluster. The overlay visualization has been used to explain how research interests have evolved over the past few decades.

The following network maps were created from the data:

- Network visualization. Shows linear connections between the keywords, allowing for an analysis of the connectedness of key themes.
- Overlay visualization. Allows analyzing of articles according to their publication dates, demonstrating the historical direction of research themes.
- Density visualization. Shows a heat map of keyword density, demonstrating where research has been concentrated and where any gaps might exist.

Findings

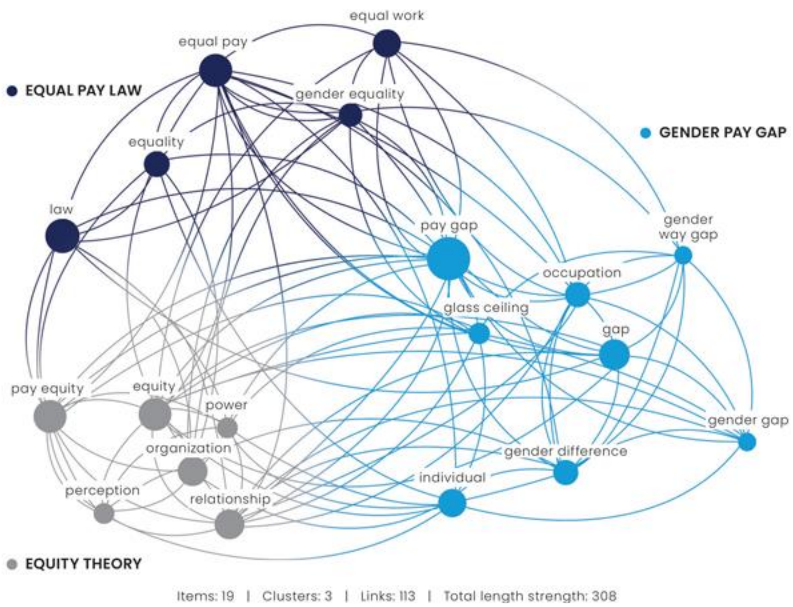
After manually cleansing the keywords, 22 were taken forward for analysis. Three clusters have been analyzed through the frequency of keywords appearing together (links), and bigger circle sizes indicating a greater volume of studies. The clusters have been color-coded and ranked by volume as shown in Figure 3:

Indigo: Gender Pay Gap – 73 occurrences

Dark Blue: Equal Pay Law – 28 occurrences

Gray: Equity Theory – 25 occurrences

FIGURE 3 Network Visualization (VOSViewer)



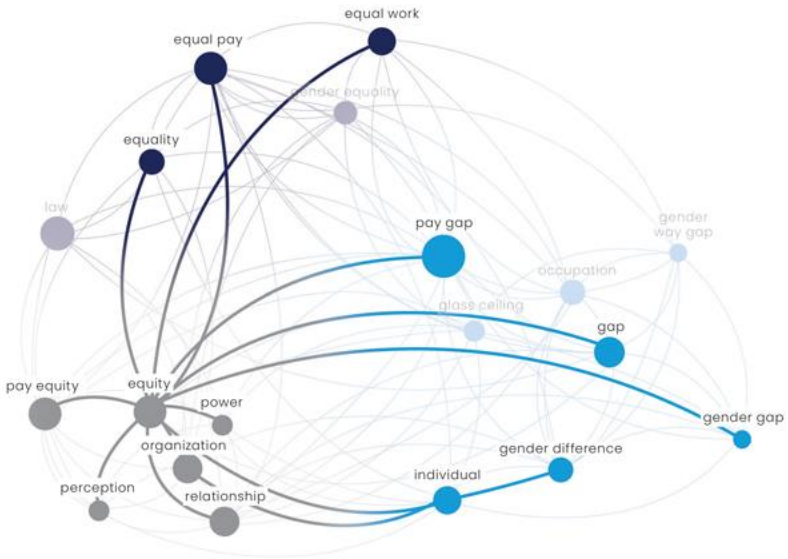
The tool has grouped the data into three clear clusters based on the strength of the co-occurrence of keywords within the title, keywords and abstract data of each of the 281 articles. We can see that the gender pay gap connections dominate the diagram and the supporting data points to more than half of all studies conducted having a focus on this area.

Equity Theory

Homans' call for empirical research prompted a plethora of prominent researchers from academia and industry (General Electric) to explore cognitive responses to rewards and how that information might be used to increase workforce productivity (e.g., Homans 1958). Drawing on the research from a number of separate studies of the behaviour of workers when presented with over- and under-reward scenarios, Adams (1965) made an important substantive theory development with specific reference to wage inequity or equity theory. By studying real-life scenarios of female clerical and ledger workers at General Electric, as well as more controlled experimentation on male students in temporary jobs, Adams was able to describe how inequity is perceived as a comparison of jobs (inputs), against the rewards received (pay). He pointed to an emotional state of distress that arises when inequity has been discovered, and empirically demonstrated how workers will modify their behavior in an

attempt to restore equity, either by reducing their inputs when underpayment is perceived or increasing their inputs if overpayment is identified (Adams 1963), in order to achieve an equity norm (Adams 1965; Homans 1958). Subsequent research from the mid-1970s began to focus on the fairness and equality of rewards, with the inclusion of a social comparison termed employee equity (Festinger 1954, 1961; Leventhal 1980; Walster and Walster 1975).

FIGURE 4 Network Visualization: Equity Theory



Items: 19 | Clusters: 3 | Links: 113 | Total length strength: 308

Leventhal and Lane (1970) provided some deeper insights into pay allocation decision making, where individuals allocate wages in hypothetical scenarios for teams (including themselves) from a single pot of funds. The findings from this study indicated that women were much more likely to decide on pay allocations equitably (that is matching inputs to rewards), as well as less likely to inflate their own rewards if their inputs were greater. That strengthened the idea that rewards can be used in businesses to motivate the workforce to perform better (Adams 1965) and that perceived inequity of pay can cause significant distress that could result in behaviors that are detrimental to organizational goals and objectives (Leventhal 1980).

Fifteen years after Homans' original call for research (Homans 1958), Walster, Berscheid, and Walster (1973) provided us with more clarity on individual motivations for creating or sustaining inequity within the organizational context. As social beings, we are

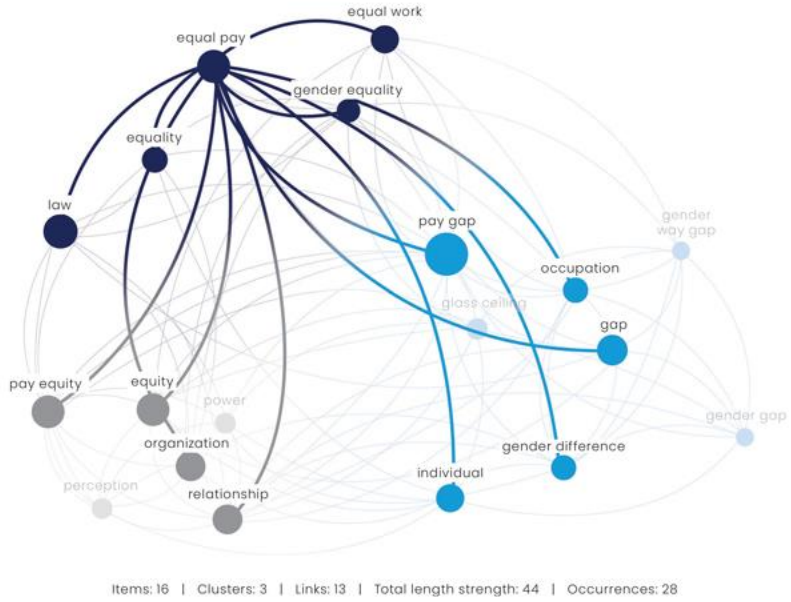
motivated toward maintaining harmony in our society through exercising restraint when distributing resources, and will do so if that provides sufficient rewards. However, if more profit can be gained through acting inequitably, then humans will likely do so. The paper described inequity from an individual perspective with the identification of victims as "exploited" and violators as "harm-doers," which serves to connect inequity with behaviors (harm-doers) that can be linked to perceptions (exploited), triggering an emotional response (exploited) (Walster, Berscheid, and Walster 1973). Cropanzano, Stein, and Nadisic (2011) directly challenged previous academic biases toward the cognitive (equity theory) over the emotional response to injustice and provided a detailed review of the literature on injustice and the emotional responses it can generate.

Since then, recommendations have been made to the academic community to focus our future research on capturing the lived experience of inequity victims so that we can provide this missing perspective on the phenomenon (Ambrose and Schminke 2009; Tornblom and Vermunt 1999). Hillenbrandt and Barclay (2013) made explicit the need to explore individual "sense-making" of the experience, and how this could be connected to both positive and negative emotions, making specific reference to research that focuses on fear, anger, guilt, shame, sadness and disgust. They contended that a longitudinal view of the emotional impact could bring even greater insight.

Equal Pay Act

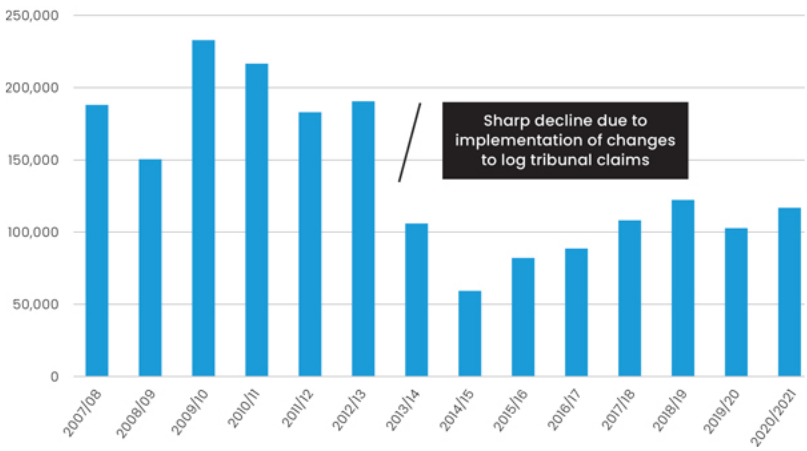
The GRID review helped the authors identify 33 papers that focus on the impact that the Equal Pay Act has had on women working in the UK since its enactment in the 1970s.

FIGURE 5 Network Visualization: Equal Pay Act



The history of UK employment tribunal cases, shown in Figure 6, point to an apparent stagnation in the number of reported incidents. For the past four reporting years, the number of cases has hovered around 100,000.

FIGURE 6 UK Employment Tribunal Claims



We could interpret this steady flow of tribunal cases as confidence in the UK's equal pay laws (Equal Pay Act 1970; Equality Act 2010) and tribunal court systems. However, findings from U.S. study in the US into judicial discrimination found that the court system tended to reflect the same biases present within society because it relies heavily on the inferences made by a minority of non-diverse individuals (Thornburg 2019). It is certainly true that the victims of pay inequity are beginning to get heard. A significant change to the UK's sociocultural climate in the #MeToo era has brought women together with renewed

confidence, empowered to call out their experiences of sex discrimination, particularly through social media channels (Burke 2022). Could this climate change herald the awakening of a new type of empirical research not previously thought possible? Could we consider that more women might be willing to share their lived experiences of pay inequity today in a way previously not considered?

Gender Pay Gap

The gender pay gap research during this past two decades has concentrated on the processes and mechanisms that enable the wage-setting process and structural causes that may cause gender-based disparities in an organizational context. This has, in turn, resulted in the adoption of quantitative methodologies to analyze job and employee data that relate to the pay and rewards of employees across a variety of job categories. The data itself could be considered a poor representation of the UK-wide gap. This is due to low private-sector participation rates and because the data do not specify the extent of gender pay gaps within and across job categories and the reasons behind the pay gaps.

This is mainly due to the data being presented within job categories as determined by the businesses themselves, which can lead to businesses categorizing job roles to present a more favorable picture of gender pay equality. These reports also fail to account for individual perceptions of job value and rewards equity. Despite these challenges, we have identified five areas of research that point to causes of the gender pay gap. Those factors are:

- Occupational segregation. This research found empirical evidence that the feminization of the workforce leads to substantial gaps across job categories, not within them, as is assumed by some gender pay gap reporting. However, this describes the effect rather than the cause of why "women's work" continues to be undervalued given the research explaining its harmful effects on the quality of life and economy (Mumford and Smith 2004; Alkadry and Tower 2011; Rubery 2017).

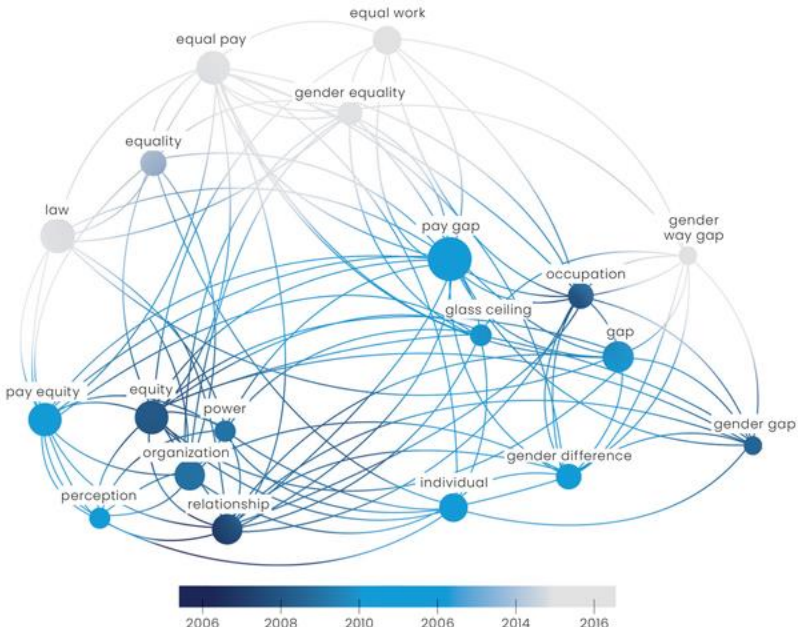
- The motherhood penalty. This research continues to support flexible working and parental leave policies that can help close the gender pay gap. However, we have seen very little real-world impacts of the widespread uptake of such policies in practice (Manning and Robinson 2004; Sigle-Rushton and Waldfogel 2007; Myck and Paull 2004; Cory and Stirling 2012; Magnusson and Nermo 2017; Fuller and Cooke 2018).
- The glass ceiling. This concept, which includes the "sticky floors" and "glass elevator" theories, considers how women are held back from progressing within the workplace through the lack of promotion and recruitment (Cook and Glass 2014; Bygren and Gahler 2012).
- Collective bargaining. Research initially showed that union activity helped improve the relative wages of women. But those gains have been waning in recent years due to the decreasing trade union activity in businesses across the UK (Conley 2014; Milner et al. 2019; McGuinness et al. 2011).
- Human capital theory. This has failed to explain the breadth and depth of the difference in pay, pointing only to explanations for small elements and a lack of valid data sources (Manning and Swaffield 2008; Tharenou 2013).

Research Trends

When we apply the date of publication information across the network visualization, we can clearly see the trajectory of research interests (See Figure 8). This visual network helps us to understand the prominence of equity theory research from its emergence in the late 1950s, and how it continued to dominate the literature landscape well into the early 2000s, before we see a shift toward literature on the gender pay gap following its introduction in 1998. There has remained a steady interest in the quantitative analysis of this data to identify the various causes for the difference in pay gap that remains, despite both organizational and legal efforts to combat this. And we can see that research on this topic has dominated the

landscape for several years before the research focus shifts again, but this time toward studies that evaluate equal pay laws.

FIGURE 8 Overlay Visualization (VOSViewer)



We contend that this historical view of our literature focus has helped us better understand the historical trajectory that has shifted our focus away from the individual, their motivations, emotions and behaviors (equity theory research) toward explanations of causes at the organization level, as demonstrated by research that focuses on the gender pay gap. The recent shift that takes the broader societal context into consideration through our equal pay laws appears to move us even further from our understanding of the individual experience that surrounds this phenomenon, and arguably even further from developing new theory that could unlock future theoretical developments (Hillebrandt and Barclay 2013).

Conclusions

This paper provides a literature review, supported by visual aids using bibliometric tools, to help practitioners and academics alike understand and navigate through the complex landscape surrounding gender pay inequity. It is by looking backward at what is known, and understanding what is missing from this picture, that we might move forward with new

developments on the topic. Bibliometric analyses were used to cut through the complexities of the literature and theoretical landscape so that we can consider where we have strong connections in the literature, and likewise any voids, to establish the blind spots that could be holding us back.

This analysis has helped us understand the important role that equity theory has played in shaping this research domain prior to UK government interventions, such as the Equal Pay Act and gender pay gap reporting. However, social psychology theories have subsequently taken a backseat in the debate, when the discourse became dominated by the quantitative methods that supported our understanding of the gender pay gap.

As practitioners, and as a research community, we have collectively dropped the baton in seeking out the research that supports our understanding of how pay inequity is perceived and experienced by us as individuals. One of the last calls for more research in this area came 45 years ago when Carrell and Dittrich (1978) pointed to the need for research that can provide us with insights into the real-world human behaviors and processes that drive pay inequity through each new generation. We have not yet answered that call.

We have seen that the empirical equity theory research aids our understanding of motivation, but it falls short of linking pay inequity experiences to perceptions and emotional responses. This theory's assumption that we all experience pay inequity in a homogenous way is fundamentally flawed when we consider it from a critical realist and feminist perspective. The authors rejected the idea that responses to injustice can be predicted in this way. This review has demonstrated a perspective gap in the research that describes what happens to the female victims of pay inequity. That ultimately prevents our ability to bridge the gaps that remain between our theory and practice, and thereby having the real impacts that this area has been patiently waiting for.

Similarly, gender pay gap research has failed to cross the chasm that exists in our thinking about change at the organization level, and the individual actors that perpetuate the

practices that allow gender pay inequity to persist. Research of the UK government's gender pay gap intervention measures shows just how much faith was placed on the good intentions of employers to be transparent through the risk of public shaming. Sadly, this intervention has not succeeded (Sharkey, Pontikes, and Hsu 2022). The stubbornness of the gender pay gap to significantly shift its position over this past decade of reporting has also demonstrated that organizational-level interventions are limited in their efficacy of actually changing behavior (Sharkey, Pontikes, and Hsu 2022), and that the historical feminization of jobs (occupational segregation) continues into the present with the undervaluing of "women's work" built into the fabric of pay systems and practices, and current estimates sit at 132 years to close the pay gap (Figueiredo et al. 2015; World Economic Forum 2022).

Discussion

The existing research fails to help the understanding of how pay inequity is experienced by women and how it affects their lives and careers. Surely it is time for us to take a different approach. An approach where we attempt to capture the lived experience of pay inequity in the UK today in order to bring some insight to the blind spots that have been identified by existing literature on the topic.

Social media and a shift in cultural norms have combined to provide women with a voice, a platform and a desire to speak out against the inequity that they are experiencing every day. Women are angry, emboldened and less afraid of telling their stories in public, showing a willingness to face the public backlash and misogynistic trolling that inevitably follows. This was demonstrated by some of the reactions to then-Australian Prime Minister Ursula Gillard's famous misogyny speech (Gillard 2012). Is this the perfect storm that could provide new opportunities for research? We argue that this setting has opened the doors to women that are now, more than ever, prepared to call out pay inequity where they see it, talk about their experiences in open forums, and even pursue expensive and intrusive legal action.

Implications For Future Research And Action

The authors contend that we are collectively responsible for pursuing new directions, particularly when previous research and methodological approaches have failed to protect employees from the harm that is caused by pay inequity. We encourage both practitioners and researchers to continue to ask the difficult and sometimes uncomfortable questions that surround this phenomenon and make space within this topic to capture theory that might emerge from the sharing of the lived experiences of women who have experienced pay inequity. Each unique narrative will add depth of our understanding so that we might develop new theories that could help us understand what is holding us back from truly understanding how pay inequity is affecting the lives and careers of women within our society. It is entirely possible that this new perspective could lead toward interventions that protect both the employee and organization from the harmful consequences of pay inequity.

Looking back, I am now angry that the whole research community hadn't thought to question women about their experiences – the objective, cold and sanitised language I began to realise was hurtful to me. Something that had cut me so deep and left me traumatised had been reduced to the sanitised language of charts and graphs. The whole knowledge based had remained unchallenged for decades, with so many great minds pondering why. And still no one thought to ask those women at the edge of the sword, or those fallen from its deadly cuts. My reflection of this, much later, once I'd began to speak to other women, heard their stories, the hurt, the pain, was that I began to realise that this could never be something that I could take this scientific paper approach to. That the audience I will write for will be these women, I will give them what I didn't have, a voice and story that truly represented what they had been through. I wanted to give them meaning, something that could help them to understand and make sense of their experience. I decided that I needed to write this thesis dialogically (Shotter, 2010), and that this thesis will be written for them, to them, with them. And they have remained in the forefront of my mind throughout.

Chapter 3: Method in the Madness

Introduction

Chapter 2 provided the key context for this study, setting the scene from which this study emerged, and considering the historical and ontological standpoints that has driven the topic forwards over these past 6 decades. Three major strands of research have dominated our thinking across this field, that of equity theory, the gender pay gap and equal pay law, all contributing towards the dominance of theory and empirical studies built upon positivist and highly quantitative approaches that have favoured explanations that point to structural causes, and cognitive responses to the phenomenon. This research presents a topic that is so irrelevant and distant from my personal lived experiences of pay inequity, research that has bent and shaped our knowledge into the narrow confines of objective truths and measurable homogenous responses, that it appears distorted and unfamiliar to me, not representative of my own experiences (Pullen, et, al,. 2020). I found this research lacking in the explanations and insights that could have helped me to understand what was happening to me when I discovered my own pay inequity , studies that spoke to my experiences, that could help me to make sense of why I was ousted, humiliated and threatened by the organisation I had worked so hard for, and why the experience had left me so traumatised (Oikarinen-Jabai, 2003; Berridge, 2008; Lapum, 2008).

This next chapter, therefore, provides a detailed justification for the methodological approach that has been taken to exploring women's perceptions of our own pay inequity situations, explaining how I set about collecting and analysing the stories that women use to describe their experiences, and tracing their emotional journeys from the moment of discovery through to their present situation. I begin by outlining the aims and objectives I have for my research, together with the two research questions that have helped me to probe deeper into the topic, further than the academic community has thus far achieved. I outline the

structure and approach taken to my research design and ontological approaches (Shotter, 2010), which had been shaped by the organisational management literature (Pullen, 2006) in the first instance, speaking to validity and robustness of the research design. A design which then evolved and morphed into something different, as I listened to women's stories, immersed myself in the meaning and interpretations that emerged, I began to understand that this study was creating new knowledge in ways that had not been apparent to me at the start of the study. I therefore bring to the forefront of this section the new ideas and perspectives that provided the lens through which I eventually examined this phenomenon, that of the feminist scholar (Deutsch, 2004). I therefore provide my justification for taking a feminist, social constructionist and therefore highly qualitative approach to the collection of data and the analysis of the findings before I move onto describing my participants and the size of my sample, before moving into the considerations of the personal, emic, and reflexive nature of this study.

Story-Telling and Objectivity

Wilhelm Dilthey in 1860-70 "emphasised the importance of 'understanding' ('verstehen' in his native German) and of studying people's 'lived experiences' which occur in a particular historical and social context" (Ritchie et al., 2014, pp. 11). The study of the language of businesses, resulted in a conflicting ontological standpoint, one which placed 'social actors' (people) at the centre of new theory development, thereby reconsidering our experiences of the world in terms of a 'social construct' that we create for ourselves, based on our perceptions and beliefs and therefore entirely subjective, and another which held onto ideas of an objective reality that could be measured alongside the natural world (Bell, 2018). The social constructionist epistemology is where I began my methodological journey, seeking to provide women with a voice from which to speak their own truth, encouraging individual expression describing a personal and socially created reality (Bell, 2018). In doing so I deny a

shared objective reality that is experienced by all in the same way, but ascertain that individual perceptions, experiences and emotions are shaped by the social contexts and unique histories that merge that the sense of self, shaping who we believe we are, and influencing how we respond to the events and experiences that happen to us (Sayers, 2010). Therefore, social constructionists will use stories, and the meaning that we draw from those stories, to create the 'truths' that become relevant to our own understanding of the world. And thus these 'truths' are shared through our written and oral histories, presented as 'ideas' that can either be accepted or rejected by those who come to learn about them, and forever evolving as we move through our lives (Berger and Luckman, 2011). A lack of explanation for the unexpected or illogical (such as the pay inequity) demonstrates a gap in our current knowledge or understanding, pointing to the need for a deeper investigation, and indicating a complexity to getting at this 'truth'. I propose then that it is the stories of women who have experienced pay inequity for themselves that hold the key to our deeper understanding of this phenomenon, and through exploring these stories we will come closer to the 'truths' of this phenomenon, and therefore how we make sense of what has happened to us (Weick, 1995).

Social constructionist perspectives on the grand social justice theories and their emotional affects can provide us with the necessity of further probing individual sensemaking processes, so that we can begin to unpick the ways in which individuals interpret and assign meaning to experiences of injustice (Weick, 1995). Phenomenological approaches (Guenther, 2017) to research that follows individual experiences after injustice events that capture the range of emotions that individuals experience will provide much needed insight into the subsequent negative emotional affects, allowing researchers to trace the relationships between injustice perceptions and emotional affects throughout the subsequent episodes of injustice as hypothesized (Hillebrandt and Barclay, 2013). Such studies will also allow researchers to consider how other factors, such as time, perception, uncertainty, beliefs and environment may interact in dynamic ways to elicit emotional affects and subsequent reactions. This study

has deliberately utilised this approach to the capture and analysis of women's stories of pay inequity so as to provide this insight into this specific area of research, and thereby contributing new and important knowledge as to why women experience such traumatic affects as a result of pay inequity experiences at work.

The moment I began to capture women's stories I began the process of analysis. Constantly looking for insights and meanings to enhance our understanding of phenomenon, but also searching for the deep description that would help to describe the experience so that other might understand (Jorgensen et. al., 2013; Rosile et, al., 2013, Rosile et, al., 2024). My intentions for exploring and describing women's perceptions and experiences are threefold; (i) portray the stories that represent women's experiences of pay inequity to those who have not experienced it for themselves, and (ii) capture women's emotional responses throughout the episodes of injustice that are associated with pay inequity experiences, and (iii) describe how women come to make sense of their experiences. These stories are therefore designed to speak directly to the women victims of pay inequity, aimed at providing guidance and support through the sharing of stories. As well as enlighten and influence the research community with new and novel clues as to why pay inequity continues to wreck the lives and careers of women around the globe.

The social constructionist approach taken here implies a qualitative methodology, as well as an inductive approach to the analysis of the data, and the emergence of findings (Glaser and Strauss, 2017). Embarking on this study, I had assumed the development of themes, and sub-themes from which we might build new theory on the topic, and I still remain confident that the interpretations and insights that are presented across the thematic analysis is both highly description and insightful. However, what I began to realise through this analysis and interpretation phase was how women's stories point to new meanings that linked women's experiences of pay inequity to a specific historical context (Toole, 2022). And thus my research refuses to fit neatly into the theoretical boundaries that have been created around

the topic, which, in the spritspirit of writing differently, I have learnt to embrace. I therefore choose instead to apply a more critical stance when considering the relevant concepts and theory that have emerged from this study, and in so doing I bring out into the open a feminist epistemology that speaks directly to the victims of pay inequity, which may be considered subversive to the academic community, so that I can continue to share these stories, and the lessons that we have learnt, directly with those women most affected (Pullen, 2018). Perhaps re-emphasising the relevance and importance of the social constructionist's standpoint to this particular study (Blaikie, 2007).

Stories are powerful ways to convey meaning. They can influence and shape how we think and feel. They can inspire us or disgust us. Stories can bring us into worlds that we may never experience for ourselves, face into realties that we couldn't possible understand otherwise. Such is the power of stories that they can transform fiction into fact, and fact into fiction, but most importantly convey rich and deep descriptions that brings us closer to understand some of the most complex aspects of our lives, particularly how we construct our own realities and make sense of our lives (Imas, 2004). Story-telling, then for me, becomes a crucial part of how we come to know and understand both our individual experiences, and our collective histories. Auto-biographies, or auto-narratives (Daskalaki, 2012), then are the stories we tell about ourselves, where we invite others to gaze upon the important events that shape our lives, and consider the situations that we find ourselves in. We may even share our thoughts and feelings, bringing colour and texture to the images that are conjured in the minds of our readers and leave impressions that are cast into memories, ready to be recalled when we are in need of them.

The idea that the organisation is a place where rational objectivity and logical facts converge to provide homogenous interpretations and experiences has been rejected as a mythical and convenient approach to the development of organisational theory. Through this research I have come to understand our workplaces as a melting pot of cultures and contexts,

of interactions and perceptions, that are forever evolving and reshaping in accordance with our everyday lives. The complexities, or messiness (Ahmed, 2017) of how we experience our working lives cannot be collected, measured, or even observed easily by those sitting on the 'outside' of those contexts and cultures, and thus much of what can be gathered by way of 'data' must be freely expressed to those individuals with a relationship to the topic, so that they can interpret and explain its complexities on behalf of the subject (Toole, 2022).

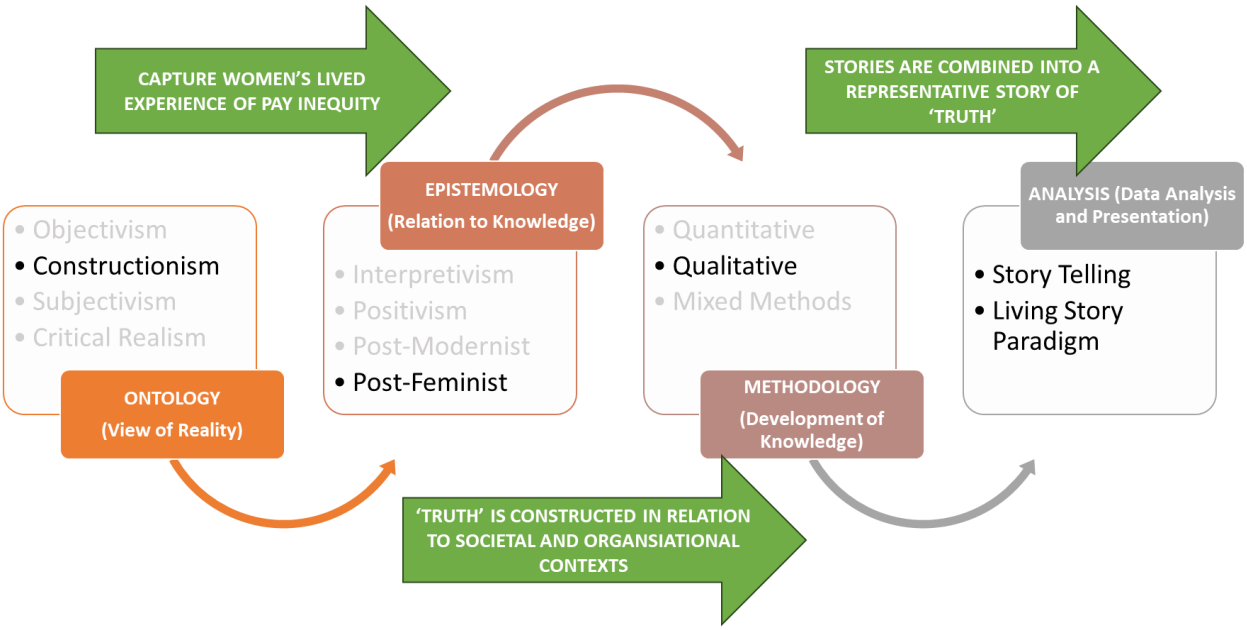
Thus, the very concept of a 'method' can invoke an epistemological crisis, as this PhD study does not seek to test hypotheses of external objects, but is primarily concerned with understanding personal viewpoints, or subjectivity, in order to describe and explain individual experiences. As a woman who has experienced pay inequity, and a woman grounded within feminist epistemologies', the research approach could prove problematic for those academics situated within positivist ontologies, where a perspectival objectivity is considered a pre-requisite to 'good' knowledge creation (Toole, 2022). It is therefore necessary for me to explain how this study is situated within the social and subjective, and that my approach considers knowledge as created through the close inspection and interpretation of how individuals interact and experience the world, and that our interpretations of these experiences can be related to the social features that make up the context of working lives. In other words, in order to know about the world, or a given phenomenon like pay inequity, we must study those who are situated within the phenomenon, such as women who have experienced it for themselves. In a continuation of this argument, I have also considered the social features, or contextual elements that have informed my interpretation of women's pay inequity experiences, such as the fact that I am a woman, working within similar organisational contexts, with my own pay inequity experiences. Social factors which I believe bring me closer to the perspectives of the community of women that I represent here, and that, as we will discover from these findings, perspectives come into direct conflict with the objective and partial 'views from nowhere' that has historically dominated ad directed the development

of organisational management theory (Toole, 2022). This thesis therefore presents a critical view of current organisation management theory and approaches, specifically in relation to the dominance of aperspective objectivity, arguing that the closeness of the researcher to the topic being investigated here makes this research all the more relevant and insightful.

Where We Begin

Previous research in this field of study, as referenced in the supporting literature reviews, points to the widespread acceptance of quantitative approaches, indicating a predominantly positivist standpoint that promotes ideas of external realities, that can be observed and measured through empirical research (Blaikie, 2007), as evidenced through the literature review presented within chapter 1 of this thesis (Burke et, al,. 2023). I now put forward the argument that has been born from the assumption that pay inequity is a phenomenon that is experienced almost exclusively by women and other marginalized groups, and therefore a relevant epistemological standpoint should study the specific experiences that are unique to women's position, perceptions and emotional responses (Toole, 2022). Women work within specific contexts, both societal, and organizational, which impact on their personal perceptions and sense making of the world, how they experience places of work, and what happens to them. I therefore now present myself within the role of the researcher, collecting data, and becoming a conduit for gathering women's perceptions and sense-making through our most accessible method, that of story-telling. Within this chapter I carefully consider methodological approaches that support my personal values and objectives for this research, which allows me to remain authentic to the personal nature of this topic, where I take an emic approach that provides a space for my own reflexivity and sense-making, and present the messy and complex nature of the reality that women construct for themselves.

Figure 2: Research Approach



Note: Research Approach (self-developed based on Glaser and Strauss, 2017; and Rosile, et, al., 2013)

I capture women's stories through an in-depth interview process (Mears, 2012), followed by a thematic analysis that allow for themes to emerge that may help us to understand how this phenomenon is experienced, an approach to developed from the principles behind Glaser's grounded theory development (1968), which provides researchers with a methodology on how theory can be extracted from stories collected from those people who have experienced a particular phenomenon for themselves (Glaser, 1968). Initial questions that flow from the two main research questions point towards the capture of descriptions that can help us to understand women's perceptions of what has happened to them, as well questions that help us to understand the emotional affects over time. For a full list of the interview questions used for the semi-structured interview please see ***Appendix H***), here are some example questions:

1. What is your story?
2. What happened to you?
3. How did you discovered the inequity?
4. What did you do to report your discovery?
5. Who was involved?
6. Who made the decisions?
7. How did the organization respond to your reports of pay inequity?
8. What did you observe?
9. How did you feel?
10. How has the experience affected you?

'Textbook' methods for the approach to qualitative sociological research have historically been designed around the context of a 'masculine normality' and drawn directly from our patriarchal social cultures. Portraying a clinical and objective interview between an authoritative researcher, and punitive participant (Oakley, 1981). This 'traditional' approach to this research would seem iniquitous and inauthentic in the context of interviewing women about the inequality that they have experienced in their place of work. Ann Oakley, in the book 'Doing Feminist Research', published in 1981, provides her story of how she approached the task of interviewing pregnant women about their experiences where she describes how she was able to establish a non-hierarchical relationship with her participants, through adopting an authentic standpoint whereby she was willing to share her own experiences of pregnancy so as to provide a sense of equity, and foster an open relationship of mutual trust (Oakley, 1981). We have as part of this study a similar situation, in that the researcher is a female with her own experience of pay inequity. Following a feminist approach would lead the researcher in this instance to also share her own story, or to provide any details or clarity of her own experiences that might be requested by the participants, as this is clearly

that which she is seeking from them. Thus, a relationship must be developed between the researcher and the participant in order to achieve the required level of trust and respect in order to allow for both women to share their stories, and their truths, in a way that provides an insight into their thoughts and feelings. The researcher's sharing of her own personal experiences and feelings provides a supportive and empathetic environment for lasting relationships and a sense of well-being and non-judgement, such as used by Rochelle L. Dalla in her paper about prostitution called 'Night Moves: A Qualitative Investigation of Street-Level Sex Work' (Dalla, 2002).

Pay Inequity Survivors

As I have established, pay inequity could represent a visible indication of the sexism that is present, but hidden, in contemporary organizations. However, the discovery of pay inequity is still a relatively rare occurrence due to the secrecy that still surrounds the pay and rewards of employees working in today's British workplaces (Amis et, al., 2019). Thus, women tend to discover their own pay inequity by accident, such as accidental disclosures from colleagues or administration errors. The culture of secrecy that surrounds our pay is something that has already been established as a barrier for women to achieving pay equity, and something currently being tackled by feminist charities such as the Fawcett Society in their 'Right to Know' Campaign launched in 2020 (Fawcett Society 'Right to Know' campaign, 2020). The Gender Pay Gap reporting indicates that millions of women are falling foul of pay inequity, but the true extent of the problem will remain elusive for as long as women's only route to justice involves lengthy and expensive court battles. The author's own experiences of pay inequity hit UK media channels for a short period of time in 2018/19 whilst her case went to Tribunal for the first time, this revelation prompted a number of women who had experienced pay inequity for themselves to reach out to me with offers of support, and a desire to share their own stories with me. This network of women, together

with some supporting charitable organisations such as the Fawcett Society, became the focus of my initial social media efforts to recruit women into the study, as they represented a network of women whom I knew to have experienced this phenomenon first-hand. I reached out to this network via social media posts on LinkedIn and Instagram (see ***Appendix C***) stating the purpose of my research and the criteria for their participation (as women who had experienced pay inequity at work), these efforts resulted in the vetting and introduction of the first 7 participants for this study (see ***Appendix C***). Secondary efforts to expand this small sample using 'snowballing' techniques through legal and charitable contacts helped me to gain contact with others who were currently fighting their own pay inequity cases through the UK's tribunal courts, this route resulted in an additional 4 participants that were willing to share their stories. Although potentially problematic in terms of generating a cross-section of participants, from different industries, business sizes and professions, a diversity of participants was achieved across the 12 participants (including the author's own story) which has been included within and across this study:

Table 1: Participant Information

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET - RESPONSES

START TIME	COMPLETION TIME	CODENAME (chosen by participants)	CURRENT LOCATION	CURENT JOB TILE	CURRENT INDUSTRY SECTO	AGE RANGE
1/27/21 13:09:31	1/27/21 13:11:04	Pilot Test	Anonymised	Test	It	36 - 45
2/2/21 10:41:55	2/2/21 10:42:43	Pilot Test	Anonymised	Head of Employee Relations and Diversity	Charity	46 - 55
2/3/21 11:49:02	2/3/21 11:49:43	Pilot Test	Anonymised	Doctoral student	Education	36 - 45
2/7/21 14:45:53	2/7/21 14:47:55	Pilot Test	Anonymised	HR	charity	46 - 55
2/1/21 14:35:27	2/1/21 14:36:25	Ruth Bader-Ginsberg	Anonymised	Managing Director	Professional Services	36 - 45
3/24/21 10:58:50	3/24/21 10:59:17	Titanium	Anonymised	Chief Executive	Food manufacturing	46 - 55
3/30/21 21:02:51	3/30/21 21:03:37	Florence Nightingale	Anonymised	Sales Specialist Team Leader	Telco	36 - 45
4/15/21 12:03:25	4/15/21 12:04:16	Ada Lovelace	Anonymised	Head of Product	Broadcasting	36 - 45
2/5/22 11:58:53	2/5/22 12:04:43	Phyllis	Anonymised	Microbiology Business Support Manager	NHS	46 - 55
3/10/22 15:05:50	3/10/22 15:07:15	Ursula	Anonymised	Co-ordinator NHS	Public	56 - 65
2/6/23 10:33:49	2/6/23 10:34:46	Sarafina	Anonymised	Senior Pricing and Proposition Manager	Telco	26 - 35
		Ursula Banks	Anonymised			
6/28/23 22:54:15	6/28/23 22:55:06	Mary Seacole	Anonymised	Chief operating officer	Training provider - healthcare	36 - 45
7/18/23 10:45:34	7/18/23 10:47:11	Katie	Anonymised	Director of Property	Finance	36 - 45
2/29/24 11:46:27	2/29/24 11:47:32	Rebecca Burke	Anonymised	Programme Director	Telecommunications	46 - 55
2/29/24 12:30:40	2/29/24 12:31:44	Maya	Anonymised	Lead Presenter	Media	46 - 55

Note: Table taken from the optional information online forms completed by the study participants with names and emails anonymised (includes test / pilot candidates also).

My initial expectation of participation rates was 20, as I have estimated that this would result in between 20 and 40 hours of transcribed data for analysis, the volume of which I considered as possible for a 4 year PhD project. However, as I began to schedule and record my interviews I began to see that the stories we shared were very rich in descriptive content, and I found that we were much more willing to talk openly about the emotional affects of the experience than I had initially expected. Many tears were shed as my participants dug deep into their traumatic experiences and shared their thoughts and feeling with me. I captured over 30 hours of footage across 11 interviews and, through my concurrent transcription and analysis realised that I had reach a thematic saturation which meant that no additional themes emerge during the transcription of the final 5 interviews. This milestone was provided me with the additional comfort that the dataset was sufficient to address my research objectives of

collecting a diverse range of stories so as to be able to portray the pay inequity experience. During the interview process many women expressed an interest in remaining active with the study, and so I had agreed upon delivering a focus group session at the concluding point of my research to feedback my findings to participants wanting to understand how their stories would be used for research. I also used this session to make sure that individual voices, stories and experiences were recognisable across the findings presented, that I hadn't somehow lost their meaning in the analysis process, and allow time and space for them to digest and response to the findings as part of a wider group. I gained so much personally from this focus group session. I felt a deep appreciation for the women's bravery in sharing their stories in this way, their generosity in contributing to our knowledge on the topic, and I also understood the responsibility that I had taken on in presenting their stories to others, both within and outside of the academic community.

Interviewing women with pay inequity experiences takes time, patience and an understanding of the complexity, or messiness, with which we come to talk about our lives. I had considered that women's lived experiences could be vastly different, and therefore what we talk about, and how we talk about it, could be unstructured and difficult to transcribe and analyse. I adopted a semi-structured approach to the interview which afforded me a degree of consistency to the questions that I asked, but it was clear through the initial interviews that my role was to provide the time and space for my participants to tell their own stories in their own way. I did probe into specific areas of their experiences with open questions, but always making sure that each story could be told in full, allowing for reflexive and thoughtful responses to my questions, and focussing on the whole experience (Bryman, 2012). Questions were grouped into areas that represented the 'standard' pay inequity journey, beginning with a broad question asking for an explanation of what happened to them, which will allow the interviewee to take the explanation of their experience in the direction that they wanted to and

therefore controlling their own narrative, going directly to those points that remain at the front of their thoughts, before asking follow up questions in a slightly more structured way.

The identification and engagement of potential participants through my existing networks and social media channels supported the building up of trust and rapport, and which undoubtedly aided the fluidity and scheduling and conducting the interviews. The interview techniques I adopted felt authentic to my own experiences, and I sought to develop an open and non-hierarchical relationship with my participants more akin to an empathetic friend. This approach is based on feminist principles as explained by Richardson:

> 'How can you operate with an interviewee with any degree of authenticity or integrity if you refuse to answer their questions honestly, or allow them to get to know you the same way that you are getting to know them?' (Richardson et, al., 1965, pp.129)

Sharing our Stories

Each interview lasted between 2 and 3 hours, and therefore longer than the 2 hours scheduled in MS Teams in most cases. I was acutely aware of the emotional effort and energy required to relay traumatic stories, and so in all cases I offered to split the interview session into two parts or insisted on taking regular breaks to ensure that the participant remained comfortable and focused throughout. 10 interviews were conducted online, these were done at home, but away from daily distractions. One interview was conducted in a meeting room that was booked in central London for this purpose, to ensure that the background noise could be minimized, and a comfortable and confidential setting could be provided. I conducted three 'pilot' interviews, in order to test the flow of the questions, recording equipment, online consent forms, transcription and anonymisation processes prior to the full data collection phase beginning.

Each participant was contacted over email or via social media before scheduling an introductory online meeting to introduce myself and my research, as well as take them through the participant information and consent forms in preparation for the full interviews usually scheduled within 2 weeks of the initial introductory meeting, see ***Appendices C, D and F*** for forms used. All interviews were recorded in MS Teams with transcription turned on, allowing for my final manual transcription checks and the anonymisation process before uploading each transcript into the MAXQDA qualitative analysis software (https://www.maxqda.com/).

The sample itself is a rich and diverse set of individuals, with a range of expertise, tenure and backgrounds from a cross-section of industry sectors. I have maintained connections to all of the participants of this study beyond the interview, so that they could be invited to participate in the focus group session I held on the evening of 1st February 2024, which saw 6 participants join, but with 5 actively contributing to the session. AgainAgain, this session was recorded with MS Teams and transcribed before being anonymised and uploaded into the MAXQDA system and undergoing a thematic analysis alongside the other transcripts. I intend to sustain my connections to participants in the interest of sharing the progress of this research, as well as providing support where I can.

As per Kingston University's data management policies a full data management plan has been developed and followed in relation to this study which can be found as ***Appendix B.***

Ethics

This research intends to interview women who have been treated badly by their employers, about a subject that we know causes emotional distress. This research's ethical considerations were presented to the Kingston University's Ethic Committee and formally approved on 5th January 2021. The details relating to this approval can be found as ***Appendix A.*** Ethical approval has been granted in accordance with the declaration of Helsinki.

In my conclusion of this section I consider how the theoretical and methodological gaps that emerged from the literature were so perfectly suited to the design and approach that I now see I was compelled to take all along. My growing feminist ontology, combined with my despair at the lack of research pertaining to women's lived experiences, for me created the perfect storm within my research could reside. I am convinced that this approach to the topic will transform our understanding of why pay inequity remains so elusive, bringing new insights into the domain that will help us to finally face into the problem so that we can better support and protect women and girls in our future from the same type of harm. In summary I believe that this thesis makes a strong methodological contribution to the topic of pay inequity by advocating for a more critical and feminist ontological approach that seeks to find deeper insights that can help us to address the issues caused by pay inequity, and in so doing seek to inform and educate future generations of its harmful affects.

Findings, Meaning and Insights

Introduction

The previous section presented the detailed description of how I collected the stories of 12 women's experiences of pay inequity, seeking to explain and justify the research design and approach as relevant and in line with my epistemological stance. I will now seek to bring my research questions even closer together with my approach to capturing, by linking these inputs (research questions) with the outputs (data in the form of stories), so that the meaning can emerge from the data (themes and sub-themes). This section will therefore discuss how I have conducted the thematic analysis, as well as describe the narrative analysis approach, using a living story paradigm, that I have adopted to present the findings (Glaser and Strauss, 1968). And so, we begin again with my research questions:

1. **Why are women paid less than men for doing the same job?**
2. **How do pay inequity experiences affect women?**

In order to adequately address the 'why' and 'how' questions posed within the research questions two main analysis techniques have been adopted, these are thematic analysis in the first instance, used here to extract the meaning from these stories (Glaser and Strauss, 1968; Ritchie, et, al, 2014), followed by a narrative analysis approach called the living story which presents a paradigm that supports the presentation of emic research in the form of storytelling (Rosile, et. Al., 2013). These analysis techniques have been combined to address both the methodological (qualitative) and theoretical (lived experience) gaps in the literature presented in chapter 2. This chapter describes the thematic approaches taken in order to provide insight into why women believe they are paid less than their male colleagues for doing the same job. Here I seek to portray the meaning of the themes that emerged from the stories that we share about our pay inequity discoveries, the grievance process and our time in court through using the words and voices of the participants of the study. The living story paradigm (Parter and Wilson, 2021) is then used as a narrative analysis technique that support's this study's intention of providing the deep and rich insights of women's perceptions and sense-making during this time, as well as help us to understand the emotional affects that are associated with pay inequity experiences, and how these may change over time, becoming episodic.

Large and lengthy video and audio files were securely stored within a secure filing system provided by Kingston University, as per the data management plan included as ***Appendix B***, and all video and transcription files were placed into a word document for the final manual transcription and anonymisation process. This process kick-started my analysis as linkages and themes began to emerge as I listened carefully to each story and immersed myself in the audio and transcription files. This approach allowed me to create a steady 'flow'

of interview transcripts and analysis in line with my other work and personal commitments, and allowed for the management of this volume of data into my chosen data systems as per my process and in line with a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1968).

Themes into Meaning

The study adopted a grounded theory approach as originally described by Glaser and Strauss in their textbook Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1968). Here they describe a 'phenomenologist approach' to substantive theory development, where one can use comparative analysis techniques to explore qualitative data with an aim of generating new and emergent theories that can help to explain and bring deeper insights into substantive areas of sociological study (Glasser and Strauss, 1968). My main aim, however, was to ensure that the voice of each participant was maintained throughout the analysis process, particularly the rich descriptions that reference distinct experiences. As mentioned his analysis is presented in two ways that are consistent with this methodology; (i) as a codified set of propositions, that the form of a thematic analysis and culminating in a model that groups the sub-themes into the two main perspectives, that of the organisation, and that of the individual which I completed using the MAXQDA software; (ii) I then used the code relationships and heatmaps to help to focus my attention during the next stage of the analysis on areas of overlap, which resulted in the epiphanies that led to the development of the 3 findings papers that use the living story paradigm to present deep insight into the pay inequity experiences of women from three theoretically relevant lenses, that being sexism, gender washing and emotional affect (Rosile, et. Al., 2013).

The analysis phase of this project represented a personal journey of discovery. As I worked deep into these stories, looking for themes and insights my attempts to describe women's experiences of pay inequity meant that I was constantly and reflexively finding the new and hidden meaning that was embedded within each story. Much of the top-level themes,

and subsequently sub-themes became intuitively understood; I began to spot the similarities, differences and relationships between each theme as more meaning became visible through the words (Richie et.al. 2014). I found this approach challenging as it relied heavily on my own interpretative skills of what is being said by participants, and as I became more immersed in the stories I struggled to separate myself and my story from the stories of the other women in this study. Our stories became intertwined, and I could feel myself learning more, feeling more, making sense more of this painful and complex topic and began to see how the retelling of these stories presented me with an opportunity to generate powerful insights across the academic community, but also more widely into public domains (Zayer, 2021), countering what is known by adding new knowledge that provides a critical stance on the topic (Garcia, 2005) .

The emergence of themes can be problematic when we consider the "conceptual labels placed on discrete happenings, events, and other instances of phenomena" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). How, then, did I distil such vast quantities of textual data, into themes which both remain true to the participants' own context and meaning, whilst also summarising this complex data into 'conceptual labels' that are meaningful and understood by a broader readership? This presents a limitation of the research that can only be tested over time, as this research is published and shared more widely, and I gather feedback from other victims, my community and academia. I will add here however, that the codifying of the themes and sub-themes within the MAXQDA software helped me to view the networks and linkages between and across the transcripts much more clearly than if I was working manually (www.maxqda.com), and also allowing me the options of pulling together the rich descriptive content, which I could then probes further to gather insight and hidden meaning, before exporting into the tables and charts that are presented below (Dey, 1993, as cited in Ryan and Bernard, 2003), and the 'mapping' of the data to each theme and subtheme allowed for the constant recalibration of the codes and themes to make sure that the meaning had not been

lost through the various levels of abstraction (Miles and Huberman, 1994 as cited in Richie et, al, 2014).

I faced more challenges when deciding how best to present the findings, particularly given the volume and complexity that emerged. My approach here has been to provide both the summary charts together with detailed descriptions so that readers can follow the overall experience chronologically, starting with the contextual factors (such as culture and structure), before being presented with the experience from discovery to their current day reflections. I provide a simple summary at the end of each top-level theme to help reader to consider the main findings from each area of interest, which are then considered further within the discussion section of this thesis.

The Living Story

My original approach to the narrative analysis of the data is outlined in detail in the paper submitted into the European Conference on Research Methods, which has been included as ***Appendix Q***. This analysis approach was initially applied to the data, but has subsequently evolved, under the careful guidance of my first supervisor, who helped me to work towards an approach that was more authentic to my feminist epistemology. I have therefore developed the story-telling approach which has been adopted from the story-telling paradigm presented by Rosile et, al., 2013 into a presentation style that focusses on retaining the descriptive power of the stories themselves. Each findings paper combines the descriptive content contained across 12 separate stories, and presents the reader with a single story of the experience, a story that I have taken to represent the whole community of participants (all 12) and provides us with new and novel insights into women's experiences of pay inequity through the lens of three theoretically-relevant areas (Rosile et al., 2013). The three stories cover women's experiences of sexism, gender washing and the psychological affects as they relate to pay inequity discoveries, titled:

1. Hidden From Plain Sight: Sexism and the Pay Inequity Experiences of Women
2. Hung out to Dry: The Gender Washing Practices of Organisations
3. Sacrificial Lambs to the Slaughter: An Emotional Tale of Pay Inequity.

Focus Group

Ann Oakley in her essay 'Interviewing Women' explains that a feminist approach to research can add depth to the interview experience for both the interviewer and interviewee (Oakley, 1981). I have personally shared my feelings, opinions, and experiences of being paid unfairly with my participants, not least because they have asked me direct questions, but also because it would be inauthentic to distance myself from the research, somehow transforming myself into an 'objective outsider' looking from the outside in on the phenomenon, a disembodiment which I don't believe is possible for someone so entrenched within their topic. The success of this research is entirely reliant on the willingness of its participants to contribute their stories to this archive, and my objective of providing a voice to those women whose stories have been silenced through NDA's or COT3's remains a potent driving force (Roberts, 2013). I am therefore committed to the responsible capture, preservation, analysis and presentation of these stories, so as to remain true to my participants generous sharing of stories, and the promise of sharing them with the rest of the world in a meaningful way.

Due to my own personal experiences, and the emotive nature of this research I have been in constant reflexive surveillance over these past 4 years. I have come to understand the very privileged position that I have as a conduit to the sharing of important stories, and I feel a great deal of responsibility, as the custodian of these stories, to ensure their safe passage into the repositories of research and wider, so that they can fulfil their destiny and inform, perhaps even transform, how we come to understand this phenomenon in the future. This research has transformed my own sense-making, allowing me to linger for years with the same questions

suspended in my mind. It has informed my attitudes and opinions, affected my emotional well-being, impacted on the important decisions that I have made in my life, and across my career, and will continue to carry me forwards into my future.

My close connection to the research topic, and the participants involved, have led me towards questions of the research's objectivity. Is she too close to the subject? Will her own thoughts and opinions dominate interpretations and analysis? Can she be sure that she has represented all of the participants views? And hasn't allowed the domination of certain voices?

The author had planned to come back to the participants following the interviews so as to update them on the research progress, as well as prepare them for any publications or other events that may interest them. In addition during some of the interviews participants had expressed an interest in understanding the outcome of the research, and voiced a willingness to continue to contribute, which resulted in the inclusion of a focus group session, where all participants were invited to further contribute their thoughts as I presented the major findings from this research, the presentation used has been included as ***Appendix M***. 6 participants were able to attend, with 5 contributing their thoughts on whether it captured their personal stories. This focus group session was held on 1st February 2024, and recorded, transcribed and coded according to the themes already identified across the thematic analysis and presented within thematic analysis section contained in the findings chapter of this thesis.

Limitations and Challenges

This thesis has been written differently (Kinnunen et, al,. 2021; Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2023; Gilmore et, al,. 2019; Weatherall, 2019; Pullen, 2017; Pullen et, al., 2017; Pullen and Rhodes, 2008). Although this approach has not been used within the pay inequity and social justice spheres, it has been adopted through narrow channels of organisational management theory that specifically relate to feminist and critical perspectives. Most

importantly this approach has best supported my social constructionist and critical stance towards the exploration of this particular phenomenon, and allowed me the space and freedom to bring entirely new and novel data and research to a topic area that had become stuck within the confines of positivist and quantitative arenas (Garcia, 2005; Pomerantz et, al., 2013; Das et, al., 2023; Castelao-Huerta, 2022). The decision to include my own thoughts, feeling and opinions across the main sections of this thesis has been problematic, particularly given the ever-changing nature of our existence, where we are forever moving forwards in our journey, never standing still, and thus the process of documenting a thesis must be taken to represent a single point of reference within the space time continuum, a snapshot that captures the moment, but which cannot be recreated or indeed, undone. So too will my participants move on with their sense making, and as we enter into new eras of the organisation, and our social contexts change, I fear that these stories and interpretations will become lost and irrelevant. However, this study will remain true to my intention of capturing and preserving the stories of women's pay inequity experiences so that future generations might continue to gain insight and learn from them.

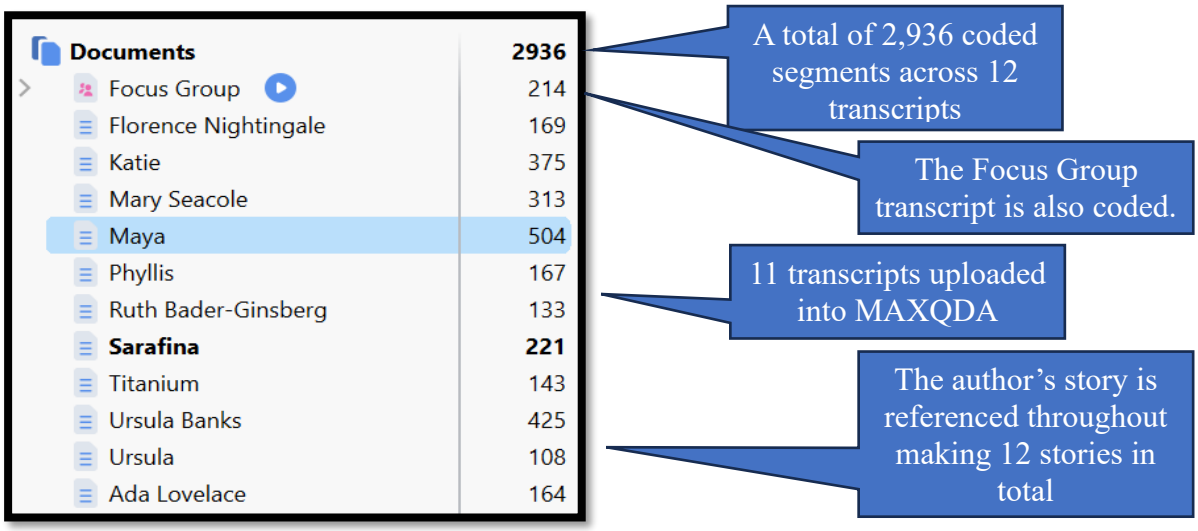
Another challenge that was recently put to me was regarding the question of social desirability. What if my participants simply wanted to support me, and in so doing told their stories in ways that they believed would contribute to my personal goals and affiliate with my feminist principles. In short, I have no way of finding out the 'truth' of these stories, and it as never my intention to set about establishing the 'facts' of their pay inequity situations. My research seeks to gather stories of women's experiences, the 'truth' of these experiences I consider to be superfluous to this point and aim, for the objective here is as a point of perspective and insight, not a point of 'truth' (Imas, 2004).

Chapter 4: Themes and Meaning

Introduction

The previous chapter has described the analysis journey in detail, explaining how themes and sub-themes emerged directly from the transcribed stories, which were then captured as 'codes' within the MAXQDA system, and so for the purposes of presenting my findings I propose that the reader considers themes and codes to be the same thing. The coding structure I created in the MAXQDA system therefore represents a codification of the study's themes, where I captured the emerging top-level themes (codes) and their sub-themes (sub-codes) alongside my own interpretation of the meaning. The top-level themes (codes) and their sub-themes (sub-codes) were in constant development as each transcript was coded within the system, with the first 4 transcripts seeing the highest inputting of codes. However, as I worked through the remaining transcripts, the coding structure eventually became more and more static, where I observed a saturation point (in terms of themes/codes. A summary chart of the coded sections of the transcripts from each participant has been provided below:

Figure 3: Transcripts as displayed in the MAXQDA system



Note: Shows a view of the 12 transcripts together with a total number representing the coded segments within each transcript.

A summary of the themes (codes), and sub themes (sub-codes) has been included below in Table 2, which shows the top-level themes, alongside their sub-themes and a count which relates to the times that each sub-code has been referenced across the transcripts. A total of 8 top-level themes, and 30 sub-themes were identified and labelled using my personal choice of descriptive language. The descriptions captured against each theme have been included as ***Appendix I***.

Table 2: Top-level Themes and Sub-Themes captured in MAXQDA

THEME (CODE)	SUB-THEME (SUB-CODE)	CODE COUNT
Culture		**352**
	Explicit behaviours	118
	Implicit norms and behaviours	74
	Legacies, legends and storys relating to culture	54
	Power and Hierarchy	106
Structure		**189**
	Hierarchy	15
	Role and responsibilities	93
	Team	80
The Discovery		**162**
	Comparator responses	42
	Finding out	32
	Job Comparison	82
The Individual's Response		**473**
	Resolution and healing	129
	Impact on career	68
	Impacts on lives	49
	Cognitive decision making	105
	Emotional response	120
The Organisational Response		**554**
	Company structure / grading information	60
	Indications and suspicions of inequity	47
	Colleagues' response to the pay inequity	202
	Recruitment process	43
	The grievance process	150
	Validation of pay inequity	50
The Law		**300**
	Affects on the individual	100
	The court process	186
Personal Reflections		**423**
	Future recommendations	92
	Others perceptions of me	82
	Perceptions of the self and self worth	140
	Personal support networks	107
Who do we blame?		**257**
	Sensemaking	104
	Who do we blame for pay inequity?	89
	Who made the pay decision?	54

Note: Shows a summary of the top-level codes or themes, with sub-codes / themes together with a total number of coded segments for each theme across all 12 transcripts.

The narrative approach I adopted supported my focus on the rich descriptive content providing me with deeper insights into the pay inequity experience, and allowing me the ability to develop a structure and identify concepts that represents this (Eldh et al., 2020), which I believe also offered an opportunity to address the complexity of the whole experience, by breaking the experience down into manageable themes that can be analysed independently, and then together, with the use of visual maps and tools as provided by the MAXQDA system.

The Meaning of Themes

1. Why are women paid less than men for doing the same job?

I return now to my research questions, specifically question 1, that seeks to understand why women are paid less than men for doing the same job. Here I present the meaning of each theme and how it relates to the pay inequity experience. This section therefore describes women's perceptions and sense making, revealing why they believe they were unfairly treated, and what they observed about the organisation and themselves throughout the experience. The descriptions and meanings presented here provided us with clues as to the culture, structure and ways in which organisations manage pay inequity situations, alongside women's perceptions and emotional responses that describe affects and sense making.

Culture

Table 3: The culture of the organisation as perceived by individual women.

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
Culture > Explicit Behaviors	(NAME) particularly doesn't like challenging women. I have to be quite strong to be in a male dominated sector. All the women that I've, that work in (COMPANY NAME) are. And he doesn't like it. Florence Nightingale
Meaning: *What people talked about, or how people openly behaved, and recognised as the behavioural norms in the business*	Not even addressing me in a meeting, even though I was responsible for certain things. Katie He was not a nice man and he treated me like kind of irritant. You know he's squatted me away, like a kind of fly. Maya He used to tell me to 'Up your fucking game, kid.' Phyllis I started working with him and literally I would just notice how I worked with another lady, which was this mixed race woman from Liverpool. And I just noticed, and I knew, like, he didn't like her, and he's treat her just like she was an idiot. Sarafina So I would just, you know, I would describe the culture as socially cohesive, and that the culture insists on social cohesiveness. Or else. Ursula Banks
Culture > Implicit Norms and Behaviors	I think there's I think there's a real problem with women not feeling comfortable. Maya
Meaning: *Perceptions about culture that are not talked about but understood and experienced by individual women.*	And certainly my, I felt like my boss could get away with anything he wanted, just seemed to have a free reign. Ruth Bader-Ginsberg I wasn't invited. No. It was me and like this other girl that was like, very outspoken, they just did not like. You could tell, you know. I could tell. And, you know, it's almost like throughout that whole time, like, I had to kind of, like prove myself, you know? Sarafina I saw him treat one other person really horrifically, I would say. And that was a peer of mine. That was a female. Ursula Banks

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
	This is an organisation where people lower down in the field know there is no comeback for them just sticking their fingers up at the second in command and going, there, We're not doing it. We are this department, we can do what we like. It's out of control. Ada Lovelace
Culture > Legacies, legends and stories relating to culture	I know there was somebody else that threatened to take them to tribunal over bullying, and and they didn't. Florence Nightingale
Meaning: *These are stories passed down from employee to employee to explain or normalise the behaviours of individuals, teams or the whole organisation*	He's well known in the industry, I have since found out for his, how he behaves. He he's quite a, he's quite ruthless. Katie Or, you know, even like. Discriminating against people for like their sexuality or anything like that, you wouldn't see it because like, it hit me, they were just paying people off, you know? And I'm like but they are doing this shit because I've heard stories from like women and other minorities. You know. Sarafina It wasn't only the work environment. It was that there were so many women coming to me telling me about discrimination, how they were being abused, how they some, to some extent, were sexually abused and and what have you. Ursula Banks It can be very aggressive shouting. Quite abusive. And I probably didn't experience the worst of it. The stories I hear, particularly from department name right, are horrendous. Ada Lovelace
Culture > Power and Hierarchy	And then a sat in the away day in the afternoon, and he presented the the new structure of the team. And I'd been demoted. Katie
Meaning: *Stories relating to how the hierarchy and power structures were manifested within each organisation as perceived by individual women*	HR is an adjunct management now. It's not somewhere you go to to to get help. Uh, and there is nowhere to go to get help. Really. And and yeah, so it it, it feels very top down from a management point of view. Maya I didn't feel like I could go to HR. And I didn't feel like I could do anything other than talk about it with my colleagues, and then leave. Those are the only real two

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
	things that I thought I could do, because the person who was my boss was, like I mentioned, untouchable. Ruth Bader-Ginsberg I would set up calls with her and she just decline, decline, decline. So I'm like obviously I'm not going to win because she's of a higher level. Sarafina That was also a common thread in the culture there. If they found somebody they didn't like or if one of the leaders found somebody they didn't like, they would in, they would, you know, kind of band together and try and run somebody out of the organization. It was very, a very common pattern there. Ursula Banks There's a programme on at the moment called PROGRAMME NAME and that is just exactly how it is. It's very male chauvinist. Even if you've got an extended skill base or you know and and you're really, you're really, really good at your job, you work hard, you won't get anywhere. You won't get anywhere there. Ursula He had made extremely close Connections right at the top of the organisation, so that he was well protected. Which is something I raised in my, In my grievance. It may or may not have had an impact that I don't know. He's paid well over the amount threshold for the publication of salary, but his salary isn't published. Ada Lovelace

Note: A table extracted from the MAXQDA system showing the meaning of the Culture theme sub-codes, supported by transcript segments that best represent the sub-codes meaning.

The chart above provides a summary of the findings of women's experiences as they relate to culture. (Harris, 1994) We can see that women tell stories about both what they see and hear (explicit), but equally tell stories about what is hidden or unseen (implicit). We come to understand that women experiences are being ignored, and they are treated like idiots or simply disliked because they don't fit the feminine or masculine expectations of their boss or colleagues. The lack of any consequences on colleagues for explicit sexist or discriminatory

behaviours work in harmony with legacies and implicit norms of the gendered organisation to create cultures that promote sexism, as well as provide protection for the perpetrators through organisational hierarchies and power. We find here explanations for how sexism exists and persists and how women see this as the cause of their own pay inequity, lifting the veil of sexism within the workplace exposes the systemic undervaluing of women in gendered workplace contexts. We hear stories of the choice that women are forced to make as a result of their pay inequity situation, they must either comply and stay silent about what they have discovered, or they are forced to suffer the personal attacks and humiliation that comes from speaking out and becoming a target of hierarchical power fighting to maintain the status quo.

Structure

Table 4: Hierarchy and structure as related to roles and responsibilities in the business.

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
Structure > Hierarchy	I kind of like felt uneasy. I remember my manager like, you know, I wouldn't say he was useless, but like I didn't think he was confident for the role. And he literally like at one point just had me doing one thing, which was to write a product document, which he was supposed to do. Sarafina
Meaning: *Where statements about the corporate structure relate to the hierarchy of the team or business overall.*	The (COMPANY NAME) is a very odd place. Looking back on it now, it's, it's very I want to say it's very hierarchical, but conversely, it's also completely out of control and unstructured. I don't know how it can be both of those things at the same time. Ada Lovelace
Structure > Role and responsibilities	I didn't get a job description when I started. And at the time, I didn't consider it a problem because I'd just got on with the job, you know? I just, and (name), gave me a false sense of security, I suppose. Florence Nightingale
Meaning: *These statements explain what individuals in the business actually did as their day-to-day work.*	So I've worked for the (COMPANY NAME) my whole career. So that's, you know, 32 years or something now. Maya I could be sitting here regularly, I could be sitting here with my family, or dinner, whatever it is on the weekend, and I

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
	would receive a phone call saying there's been a truck incident, or there's, we haven't got any cover, someone's phoned in sick, or we've got a suspension, can you come in and do it? And I would put my knife and fork down and I would leave. Phyllis
Structure > Team	There was no difference in the way that I was treated. They treated me like an equal peer. They didn't know that I was different grade or salary. Florence Nightingale
Meaning: *Stories relating to peers or subordinates within the teams where individual women worked.*	I told them, I was honest with them. I told them because I said there's the cat's out of the bag here, OK. I've not done anything wrong except that I had disclosed discrimination in the workplace. And for that I've been, you know, been terminated out of my role for disclosing this discrimination in the workplace. And at that they became immeasurably angry. Most of them were inconsolable. Really angry. Ursula Banks

Note: Hierarchy and structure as related to roles and responsibilities in the business.

The women that took part in this research have come from a range of backgrounds, industry sectors and represent different points in their careers. However, a common factor that is shared across these stories describe the deep commitment that women show towards their jobs. They tell stories of missing important life events in order to be present for their colleagues and their work and demonstrate high levels of commitment to the job and the organisation through their everyday sacrifices. Perhaps this emotional connection, and our sense of sacrifice, make pay inequity all the more hurtful to those women who experience it. Feeling that they have had to work harder, forfeited more of themselves, more of their lives that their male colleagues. We also speak with love and affection when telling stories about our colleagues and teams, demonstrating the deep emotional connections that women make to the people that they work with, as well as relaying a deep sense of pride in what they do.

There are also numerous stories that relate to the incompetence of senior leaders within their businesses to perform the roles and responsibilities assigned to them.

The Discovery

Table 5: Perceptions and information relating to how individual women discovered they are being paid unfairly.

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
The Discovery > Comparator Responses	People stopped coming to lunch with me. People stopped having breaks with me. People avoided me. Colleagues that I'd worked with for 15 years avoided me. Phyllis
Meaning: *The response that women perceive from those who they considered their peers, with equitable roles and responsibilities.*	The comparator opposite me, and the job, the sorry solicitor for, and the independent expert, and basically in those roundtable meetings I think I must have had five or six, I was just completely, I'm gonna use this word, very emotively bullied by the lawyer for (COMPANY NAME) and the four, the four, what you call them? Comparators that came into each meeting. Titanium
The Discovery > Finding Out	He was my direct report. And you would think there wouldn't, shouldn't, be any secret with this guy's contract. There shouldn't be any issue with sending it to me. And anyway, I received the contract and saw that he had been offered a 45% pay rise with his new role. Which didn't exist until, what about? And which saw him paid forty percent, I can't remember the exact percentage, but forty I think 40% more than me. Was that right? … anyway significantly more than me and, and (FEMALE COLLEAGUE'S NAME). Mary Seacole
Meaning: *The moment, or moments, when the individual finds out how much their comparator is being paid.*	I don't think they ever knew that I would have found out. And even when I questioned, when I saw the pay slip and it was confirmed that he was on more money than me, and then I asked the other gentleman to show me his pay slip, and I had to bear in mind, I had to laugh with them and banter with them a little bit, pretend I was, you know, on their side if you like, having a little banter with them. And I even said to them, wow you two, I'm not on that. And, and that comment just didn't even register with them. They didn't care. Phyllis

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
The Discovery > Job Comparison	There are two (ROLES) and we worked together. Umm. And it was always me and this other man, for that whole time, there was no chopping and changing. It was just me and him. Maya
Meaning: *How women have evaluated their job and their worth to the company (including any comparisons with colleagues)*	I don't need to prove that I was, my company was bigger, we delivered more profit. I don't need to prove I'm more superior to you. All I want to say is I'm the same. Didn't I deserve to be the same? Titanium

Note: Perceptions and information relating to how individual women discovered they are being paid unfairly.

All of the women in this study tell stories of how they came to understand of their pay inequities through accidental means. Either through the sharing of promotional, contractual or recruitment information by HR, or peer to peer sharing of pay information. Women tell stories of their shock and disbelief, particularly at the scale of the difference in pay (which through these stories range from a 40% to 200% difference in salary), the likes of which most women will seek to somehow confirm or validate in the first instance, checking that they have not made a mistake. Significant differences in the numerical pay figures are read as facts, numbers that denote our value to the organisations, however, the stories women tell about the pay difference speak mostly to their sense of equity when performing the role in real-world business context, we explain how we did the same things, performed the same routines, answered to the same people, had the same everyday stresses. What is striking from these descriptions are the immediate and frequent denials of equity that come from those male colleagues that are performing the same or similar roles. These 'comparators' become the crucial naysayers within grievance and tribunal court processes, which cuts women into the heart of their emotional responses. These stories point to the betrayal that women feel when their male colleagues turn their backs on them, and as such become the perpetrators of the psychological harm that is caused to women through their denial, participating in gas-lighting

tactics in order to silence and nullify women's stories throughout the grievance and tribunal courts. These stories reveals a male ego that is unable to accept that women are performing the same job, or work of equal value, to themselves, despite, in some cases, decades of working very closely together, sharing important life events and friendships and providing women with a sense of equity whilst in their roles.

The Individual's Response

Table 6: Stories about how the experience has impacted on the lives and careers of women.

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
The Individual's Response > Resolution and Healing *Meaning:* *What have individual women done to help to make themselves feel better, or have they been offered some sort of resolution? Did this work?*	That company, now, you know what I've just found out? They are paying women unequally in [COUNTRY], in the [COUNTRY] factory. I've just found that out because I talked to people in the companies one or two, and that they've learned nothing. They've learned nothing at all. And so I feel completely unsatisfied, aggrieved, emotional. Titanium
The Individual's Response > Impact on Career *Meaning:* *How has the pay inequity experience impacted on the future career of individual women?*	I didn't tell my new employer that it was going on. And then I did tell them when I did a newspaper article in about a year after I joined them. And I left it, and left it, and left it as long as I possibly could. And I was, my friends sort of said to me, don't tell them, they'll think you're a troublemaker. And then I had to tell them because I appeared in the [NAME OF A UK DAILY NEWSPAPER]. So I had to tell them before they saw that. I write occasional things on Twitter in support of [EQUAL PAY VICTIM NAME] or whatever, something that comes out. Titanium I'd like to go back into doing what I was doing before, but maybe not definitely categorically not in that environment. No way would I ever work in that environment again. Ursula
The Individual's Response > Impacts on Lives	I think it will affect my value, I think that, and I'm, I'm worried about it. And you know, after our conversation, when you said that they, you know, started trying to sue you for costs as well, I'm thinking, Christ, if they're trying to do that to me, I was like, ohh God. Florence Nightingale

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
Meaning: *Has this experience impacted on the lives, specifically the relationships and perception and plans of individual women.*	I can't put us through this, I can't. I can't keep, you know, us living in this kind of, you know, state. With me being anxious and flying off the handle. Katie It became a bit all, all-consuming, that was the only problem. It does become, as you know, it becomes kind of, and it makes you quite angry. Maya
The Individual's Response > Cognitive decision making	I think at the time I probably thought I've, have I got delusions of grandeur? Or am I, and am I not that good at my job? Or have I been taken as a mug? Have I been taken advantage of? Katie
Meaning: *How did the experience drive particular decisions about what to do about the pay inequity*	So you expect the fact that you're not being paid properly, but then you see how awful they can be, and you think, I don't know if I want to go through that right? Right. Ruth Bader-Ginsberg
The Individual's Response > Emotional response	I suppose it affected it really, really badly because it made me borderline depressed. And I didn't go to the doctor, but my mental state was really bad. Florence Nightingale
Meaning: *Stories about how the pay inequity and subsequent treatment made individual women feel, emotionally.*	I think the first time it happened, I was in shock and really disappointed because I kind of was brought up and raised that we were the generation that all these ceiling's have been broken through etcetera, and it was real shock. And I was in my mid 20s and that was just such a shock. Mary Seacole

Note: Stories about how the experience has impacted on the lives and careers of women.

We come to understand the reasons why women are so shocked to discover their own pay inequity. Despite the persistence of the gender pay gap, and long disputed equal pay claims across the media, women still believe that pay inequity is a problem that had been dealt with through the enactment of the Equal Pay Act, and the efforts of our grandmothers and mothers throughout the second and third waves of feminism. Our discoveries of being undervalued can often lead us to question ourselves, and sadly most women's stories talk about the emotional affects of feeling aggrieved and angry, which often lead to longer-term

psychological states such as anxiety and depression. We explain how our careers have been impacted by this experience by telling stories of the stigma that we experience when revealing our pay inequity battles with new or current employers, and how we are branded 'trouble-makers'. The financial burden on women who speak out continues into our new jobs, where we discover that we are unable to return to our careers at the level we were previously, regularly taking demotions and pay cuts and subsequently struggling to make ends meet.

The Organisational Response

Table 7: The organisation's response to the pay inequity and the women who report it.

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
The Organisational Response > Company Structure / Grading Information	The grading system has only really become public knowledge throughout this equal pay process. Florence Nightingale
Meaning: *How individual understood their grades relative to that of their colleagues, and what this meant for pay.*	There's a lot of restructuring going on, a lot of job losses coming. I cannot stand the way people are treated. Maya
The Organisational Response > Indications and Suspicions of Inequity	I don't think he'd realised, I don't think he thought about it from a gender perspective, and I think it really threw him. Um and I talked to him about how this had happened to me previously, and how that had impacted me. And how, you know, it was just like how, how could you ever trust or want to work in an organisation where this sort of thing happened? Mary Seacole
Meaning: *Stories about how women initially suspected that they were being paid unfairly or treated differently from their male peers.*	You know, I was, I was performing better and, but when we got to bonus time, you know, the response was - you should be thankful. Right, and um and I was so angry about that. Ruth Bader-Ginsberg
The Organisational Response > Organisational Peoples Response to the Pay Inequity Raised	He just sent me back in basically, and made me feel really rubbish in the process. And I really regretted going, because I thought now not only am I paid so much less, now I feel so much less, and so I let it lie. Maya

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
Meaning: *How did the teams, management and HR respond to the claims of pay inequity as perceived by individual women.*	They literally, like were pushing me and pushing me. They just did not care. This guy, he was being investigated for two grievances. I opened my company e-mail like a week later, right? Like he gets an e-mail from the director congratulating him on getting a new role. To everybody. Sarafina Ohh, they denied hands down for that, hands down deny, deny, deny, and I I just said look, you know it's there in black and white. Because obviously we had disclosure moving further down the line on everybody's pay rates, and it was clear as a bell there. I'd never seen it. Honestly I was speechless. Ursula
The Organisational Response > Recruitment Process *Meaning:* *How were the women, and others, recruited into the business?*	I was actually recruited by a gentleman who was moving to the company that I experienced unfair treatment at, and he was recruiting a whole new team to come in. And what happened was, you know, we negotiated the original salary, but we didn't negotiate the bonus, and the bonus can make up a substantial amount of your overall compensation. Ruth Bader-Ginsberg
The Organisational Response > The Grievance Process	I am emailing the managers, I am speaking to the managers, but they just keep saying that they're going to get back to me, they're going to get back to me. And no one's getting back to me. Phyllis
Meaning: *Stories and statements about the grievance process for the business and perceptions about its effectiveness for dealing with pay inequity.*	You're playing a game where they know the rules and you don't. So I'm going in this with an open mind and being honest, I'm being genuine. And then they have a whole thing where they're talking about you behind your back. Sarafina
The Organisational Response > Validation of Pay Inequity	I just kind of knew. And I didn't know the exact amount, but I just knew I was in the right ballpark. And from that I could estimate what the difference was. And it was, it was at least 2 and a half times more than me pro rata. Maya
Meaning: *Stories relating to when individual women found out for sure that they were being paid unfairly.*	When I saw the graph myself the next day, not only was I 10 grand below the bottom end of what they'd set as an appropriate pay range, but I could see from the distribution that I was of 1 of maybe two people in that position, and everyone else was, you know, well, well within the range.

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
	Ada Lovelace

Note: The organisation's response to the pay inequity and the women who report it.

When women talk about how they were treated by the organisations that they had worked hard for, we begin to understand how women have faith in their organisations paying them fairly, expressing shock at the discovery. But this is not a sentiment that is shared by their colleagues within the business. These women describe experiences of internal HR processes, such as the grievance process, as elongated and ineffective. Designed to deny and distract from numerical 'facts', through collecting opposing testimonies from colleagues and senior manager willing to deny these facts. Interestingly most women's stories tell of how grievances brought against senior men in the business seem to result in their sudden promotion (senior men). In some cases, these promotions place the offenders in positions of direct authority over those women who they have exploited or abused, with HR teams pushing women into lengthy and protracted mediation sessions with those individuals who have been harassing or gas lighting them.

The Law

Table 8: Experiences of tribunal court processes and hearings, or similar for public bodies (like a select committee).

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
The Law > Affects on the Individual	You think it's going to be an easy process. You've no idea how much time and effort it's going to take, and its massive, absolutely massive. Florence Nightingale
Meaning: *Stories and description of how the court process was experienced by individual women.*	I know for a fact from talking to (NAME), who was the FD and she works in financial services. She was treated horrendously, you know. Very publicly shamed, and challenged, and belittled in meetings consistently. But she

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
	never pursued it because she didn't want her name to be tarnished in in the industry. Katie I made a decision to separate from my husband, and so I've deprived my children and my husband of access to each other, to do the right thing. And it's all for nothing, if I just walk away right? They'll have won right? And so they're gonna win in the long run, right? Like I'm, there that's – I'm going to get what I deserve. And, of course, I've been through many, many dark moments over the past two years. Well, you know, where they write things that are untrue, or their bullying with it. Ruth Bader-Ginsberg I feel extremely strongly that all of these, that so many of these things go under the radar and go unchallenged. It was such a battle for the, I don't know, 15 months that I was fighting it. I'm a very, strong-willed, strong minded, very resilient person, and I have never battled anything as hard in my whole life. Titanium Then one Wednesday HR contacted me and said you need to get on a call at noon today. And when I got on the call at noon today they said effective this moment you no longer have any responsibilities. We are taking your entire team away. You basically have two months to go find another job in the company, or you will be terminated. And I was. Disbelief wouldn't even describe how I felt. Ursula Banks The impact it had on me financially, right. On the House, right, because that was difficult for us. It was just, yeah, I think it was because of the stress of, you know, I wasn't earning for a while. I actually, I had to take my pensions. I've got no pensions now because I had to take my pensions out to live on. You know, you've got debts. Ursula
The Law > The court process	I was expecting the court process to be there to support the employee, and it really isn't. Florence Nightingale
Meaning: *Stories and description of the tribunal court (or similar) processes.*	They ignored ACAS, they wouldn't engage with ACAS. Katie Ohh. It's just. Horrendous. But yeah, he deleted, he deleted stuff out. And I'm sure he would have deleted anything out

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
	around conversations or anything that would have been minuted around gender stuff as well. Mary Seacole

Note: Experiences of tribunal court processes and hearings, or similar for public bodies (like a select committee).

Women's stories about their experiences with the law, or the tribunal process, outline ineffective legislation that fails to protect women from the devastating emotional and financial affects of a legal case that will usually take between 2 and 4 years to complete. Women are usually sacked suddenly, and their access to information is restricted, so as to prevent them from bringing cases to court. It is the women victims of pay inequity that will pay the reputational price of bringing a case to a public hearing, frequently finding it difficult to secure positions equivalent to their previous jobs. Women suffer psychologically and emotionally from the gendered practices of courts, as well as the vicious legal threats and slaps that are thrown at women throughout their long legal battles. Many women share stories of broken lives and failed relationships as a consequence of their experiences, and the financial burden of court cases that last several years leave women without their financial security or pensions to fall back on when they retire.

Personal Reflections

Table 9: Description relating to the individuals view of themselves, and how they perceive themselves within the organisation as individuals.

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
Personal Reflections > Future Recommendations	It's not just about equal pay it, it's about supporting families, flexibilities, individuals to not just be this career-focused you know it, it's got to be more than that. Katie

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
Meaning: *What women think could help to prevent this type of injustice happening in the future.*	I think that the first thing I'd like to see change is the equal value, equal pay, where women are having to fight for equal pay, but the law says that there is, there will be no impact on you or your mental health for you having to do that. I mean, I find that grossly unfair. That we're not only expected to be paid less, but when we fight, when we have the guts to fight the battle, we don't get any recognition for the impact it's had on our mental health. Phyllis I think the shame that they try to put onto people that they victimize, that should be reverted back to them. Because that's the only way that they will listen. Because shame leads to low stock prices. Sarafina
Personal Reflections > Others Perceptions of Me	Just the feeling of questioning, you know? You know, you're in that, sort of, you, you end up questioning yourself. And I would be, maybe I'm not doing a good job? Maybe, this isn't what they want? And I suppose being constantly, sort of, trying to understand what is my role here? Am I doing enough? Katie
Meaning: *Statements relating to how individuals believe that other see them in the workplace.*	I was deemed to be ungrateful. Ruth Bader-Ginsberg The fact that they undervalued me from day one, you know? I suddenly thought, the only reason they put me in this role is because they needed to show that there was a woman in a role like that. Ursula
Personal Reflections > Perceptions of the Self and Self-worth	Yes, that is more valuable to them. They would rather have some of the most talented people walk out the door, and know that the people that they have will live the lie, and will perpetrate some of the injustices, than to have the most talented people. Ursula Banks
Meaning: *Statements relating to how I perceive myself at work, and my sense of self worth or value.*	It doesn't matter what the woman says, she will never be listened to. And that, for a man speaking from his position of privilege in life, where if he has a problem, he goes and says something to someone, and he's listened to. Ada Lovelace
Personal Reflections > Personal support networks	I thought I had the wind behind me. You know with this group of women. Maya

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
Meaning: *How others have featured in the stories of these women, in a supporting role.*	But what I also learned is that like, you know, it's sometimes you just have to be brave, and as soon as one person comes and says something, you realise there's so many, so many other stories out there. It's just they probably thought, oh no one's going to believe me. Sarafina

Note: Description relating to the individuals view of themselves, and how they perceive themselves within the organisation as individuals.

Women tell stories of how they have been made to feel lucky to have a job at all, and so their protest over pay inequity is not only ignored or nullified, but they are deemed to be ungrateful by those in decision-making positions. These perceptions flow into how women have come to perceive their own sense of worth, and although we hear stories of the important and inspirational roles that women play in business, they understand that their true worth will never be properly understood or recognised by those in positions of power. Women speak of how business values the socially cohesive attributes that flow from shared secrets and lies, creating a camaraderie that applies within the tight white male circles that make up the leadership of corporations. Women who choose to speak out against sexism are not listened to because of a deep-rooted discrimination that stems from centuries of the invalidation and silencing of women's voices, and the denial of women's experiences, because they don't reflect the experience of the white privileged man, and therefore assumed to be malicious lies, that must be nullified and denied at all costs. When women consider how best to tackle the sexism and pay inequity that they have experienced, they point to reforms at every level. Changes to how society perceives women's value, and women's ability to grow and nurture the next generation, with recognition for their contributions to businesses in ways as valuable as their male peers. Women want the law to properly reflect the inequalities that exist within the legislature and tribunal court process which serve to further discriminate against them by

failing to recognise the emotional and psychological and emotional affects it causes. And women want organisations to be held accountable for the way that they treat their employees, so that the blame and shame can be properly attributed to the perpetrators rather than the victims of these crimes. We feel solidarity when we come together with other women, and are buoyed by sharing stories and adding our voices to the communities of women that show a willingness to stand up and speak out.

Who do we blame?

Table 10: Who women consider the most responsible for the pay inequity and unfair treatment?

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
Who do we blame? > Sensemaking *Meaning:* *How have women begun to make sense of what has happened to them?*	I think until you see it yourself, or experience something like that, you can't, you can't really understand it. Katie I don't think I'll ever get over it. I really don't. Phyllis I know now it's because he was basically an abuser. Like that's what I call it. He's an abuser. Sarafina I was being harassed at work because I was not socially cohesive. Ursula Banks Because I'm a woman. I'm a woman, and I'm not his friend. That's the same. It's a simple fact. That's it. Ursula
Who do we blame? > Who do we blame for pay inequity? *Meaning:* *Society, Organisations, individuals, processes can all play a part in this complex phenomenon, but who do we really blame?*	I blame (COMPANY OWNER NAME) who is the owner of the business. It's a family run business. I blame her. Phyllis And to me, like it's not my place to decide if he did it on purpose or not, because I felt like I did everything in my power to tell him your behaviour is hurting me. Stop. And each time he just increased it a bit, increased, increased, you know? Sarafina I blame myself a lot. I blame myself a lot for not seeing through it. Ursula

CODE	SUMMARY (WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES)
Who do we blame? > Who made the pay decision?	(BOSS NAME) said to me. He said, ohh yeah, there's disparity across the board in bonuses, you know. He said, it urks me to see how much some people can get. But you know, if it's contractual, it's contractual. Katie
Meaning: Individuals or teams involved in the pay decision.	HR Manager, the business partner, I mean HR team in general, I mean my senior managers because they've all had involvement in those pay rates. Phyllis

Note: Who women consider the most responsible for the pay inequity and unfair treatment?

Women discover that pay inequity is widely understood and accepted across the organisational context, with HR and leadership teams acknowledging the disparity. To understand that although this pay disparity is highly visible through pay reporting and grievance processes, it's relation to gender, and thus to sexism or discrimination, is vehemently denied by the organisation. Each story tells of colleagues who made pay decisions that discriminated against women, of how their voices were silenced by the collective efforts of HR and senior teams to cover up the pay inequity, before experiencing additional discrimination through the tribunal court process. The complexity of our experiences makes it impossible to point to individual culpability, and thus the question of blame becomes a subjective matter, with some of us pointing to individual's, others blaming the business leaders, and some stories tackling the broader societal failures that have led to women's historic and continued undervaluing. But the question of blame is made all the more disconcerting as women come to understand that the experience has had a profound and traumatic affect on their lives. The emotional and psychological affects of women's experience of this phenomenon lead women towards considering blame as not only relevant to a difference in pay, but in terms of responsibility for the damages they have sustained to their mental health as a consequence of the collective action taken against them by 'the organisation' (or people within it). Thus, women consider their treatment as abusive, and

therefore the perpetrators of their treatment as ‘abusers’. Women consider these abusers as responsible for causing significant emotional and psychological damage, and the collective actions that they practice (such as denial, gas lighting and gender washing) as responsible for the long-term mental health issues that many of the women describe as the lasting impact of their experiences.

Focus Group Themes

In Figure 3 below we can see a summary of the coded segments from the focus group session. The specific areas of interest are indicated here as ‘hot topics’ with a warmer red colour demonstrating the codes and subcodes that generated the most discussion amongst the participants, blue indicated those that received less segment codes after the coding analysis. There are also numbers shown which indicate the number of coded segments per sub-code by each participant (including the author indicated as ‘Rebecca Burke’). This is shown as a visual ‘heatmap’ within the MAXQDA system, a copy of which has been presented here as Figure 3.

Table 11: Focus Group Discussion Heatmap

Code System	Burke, Rebecca L	Katie	Ruth Bader-Ginsberg	Mary Seacole	Ursula	Titanium	SUM
Thesis Section Analysis	66	38	27	16	2		149
Themes and Theories	76	29	4	19	8	7	143
Revolution and going public	18	15	3		5	2	43
Handbook	26	23	2				51
Culture							0
Structure	1						1
The Discovery	2						2
Job Comparison							0
Comparator responses							0
Finding out							0
The Individual's Response	3	1					4
Impact on career	4		4	2			10
Impacts on lives	1						1
Cognitive decision making	1						1
Emotional response	1						1
Resolution and healing							0
The Organisational Response		1					1
The Law	16	11	9				36
Affects on the individual							0
The court process	1						1
Personal Reflections	3	1					4
Future recommendations	9	10		4			23
Others perceptions of me							0
Perceptions of the self and self wort							0
Personal support networks							0
Who do we blame?	8	5	7	5			25
Sensemaking							0
Who do we blame for pay inequity?							0
Who made the pay decision?	1						1
SUM	237	134	56	46	15	9	497

Note: Shows the 'heatmap' taken from the MAXQDA system indicating the topics that generated the most discussion (red), with those with less codes coloured blue.

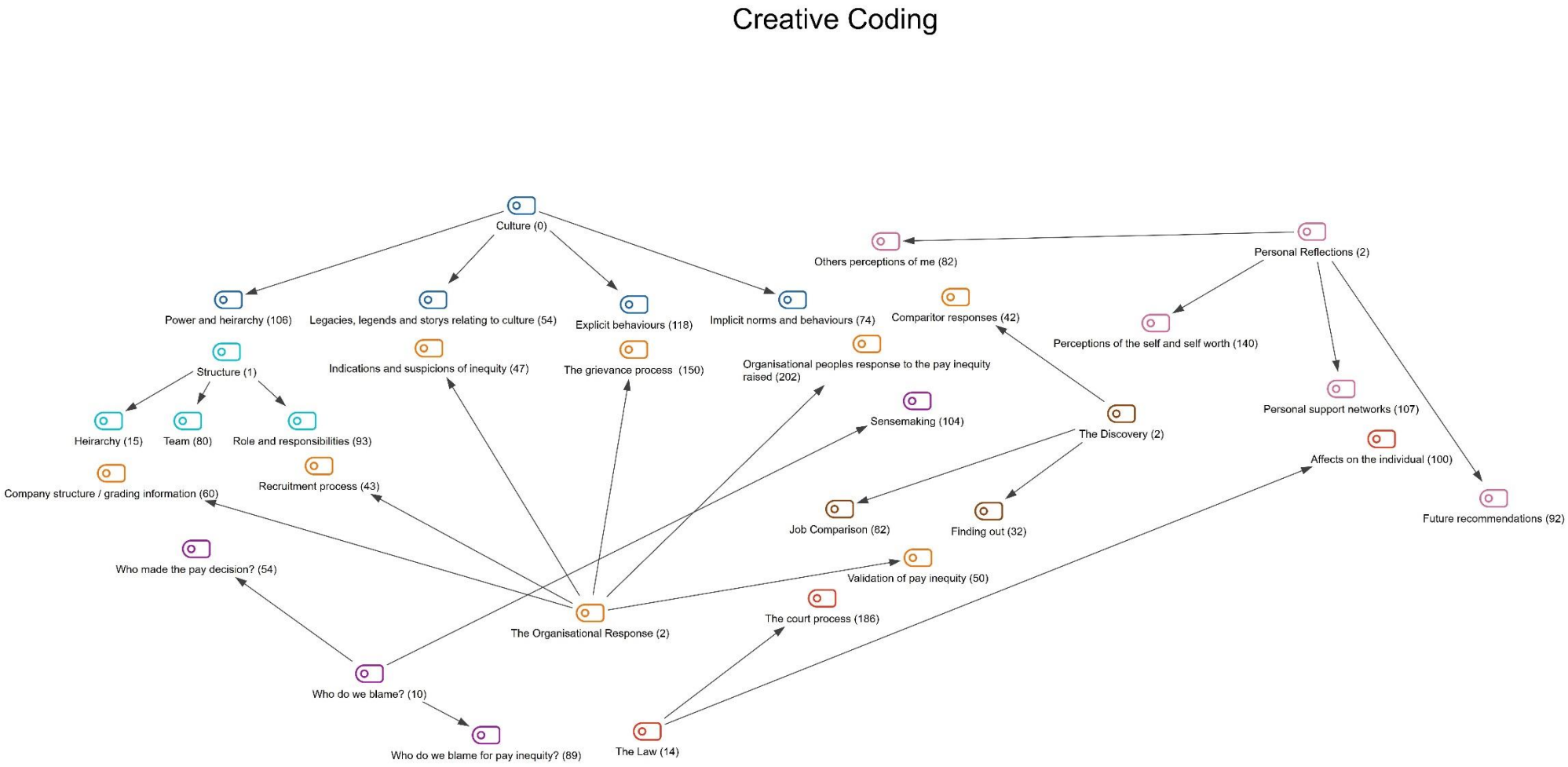
Four key discussions came from the focus group session as indicated through the high number of coded segments, these are; (i) Impact on career, (ii) The Law, (iii) Future recommendations, and (iv) Who do we blame. The content of these discussions have been included as ***Appendix R*** and some further discussion content included as ***Appendix S***.

I will now bring our attention towards the second question driving this research, which is:

2. How do pay inequity experiences affect women?

A high-level analysis of the relationships between codes pointed towards a clustering of stories that relate to the 'organisation', and another set of stories that focus on 'the self'. Perhaps, as women, we seek to separate ourselves from our organisations through the story-telling process, wishing to remain separate and distinct from the organisation that has inflicted pain and suffering on us. My initial mapping of the codes / themes within the MAXQDA software demonstrated high levels of complexity across as well as within the sub-themes, and so I returned to the research questions to help me to guide this process more precisely, seeking out those connections between sub-themes that could lead me towards to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. I present below the maps that were created within the MAXQDA system when analysing the code relations across the data. Below I present a visual aide (code map) that was automatically generated by the system and then used to prompt my thinking about the main areas of focus for my findings.

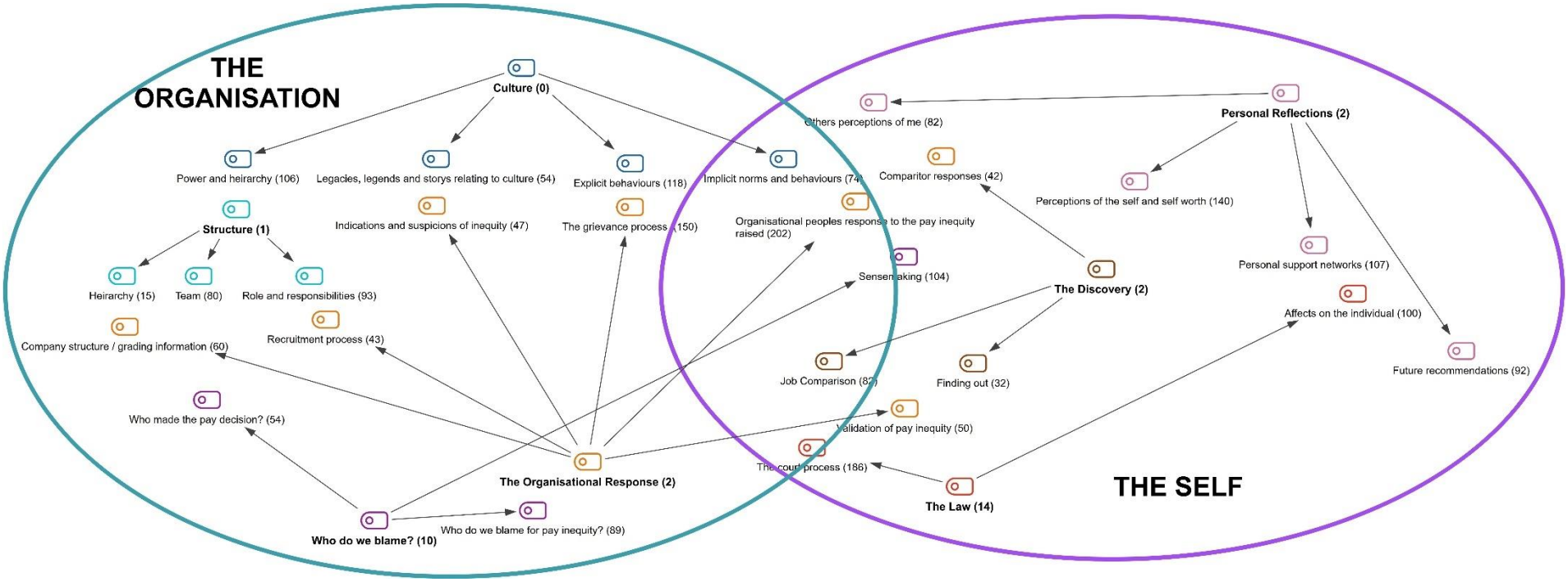
Figure 4: Code map exported from MAXQDA



Note: Code map – created from the visual tools within the MAXQDA system and exported as a picture.

The creative coding mapping approach presented as Figure 4 helped me to consider how the themes relate to each other and establish a high-level grouping that led me towards the two distinct perspectives on the topic, that of the organisation, and the self. I was then able to ascertain those themes contained within the stories that described the organisation (such as structure, culture and the organisation's response); and the other sub-themes that provide the rich description on the intrinsic elements of individual experiences (such as the emotional affects), as displayed in the map below.

Figure 5: Theoretical grouping of subcodes within the MAXQDA system

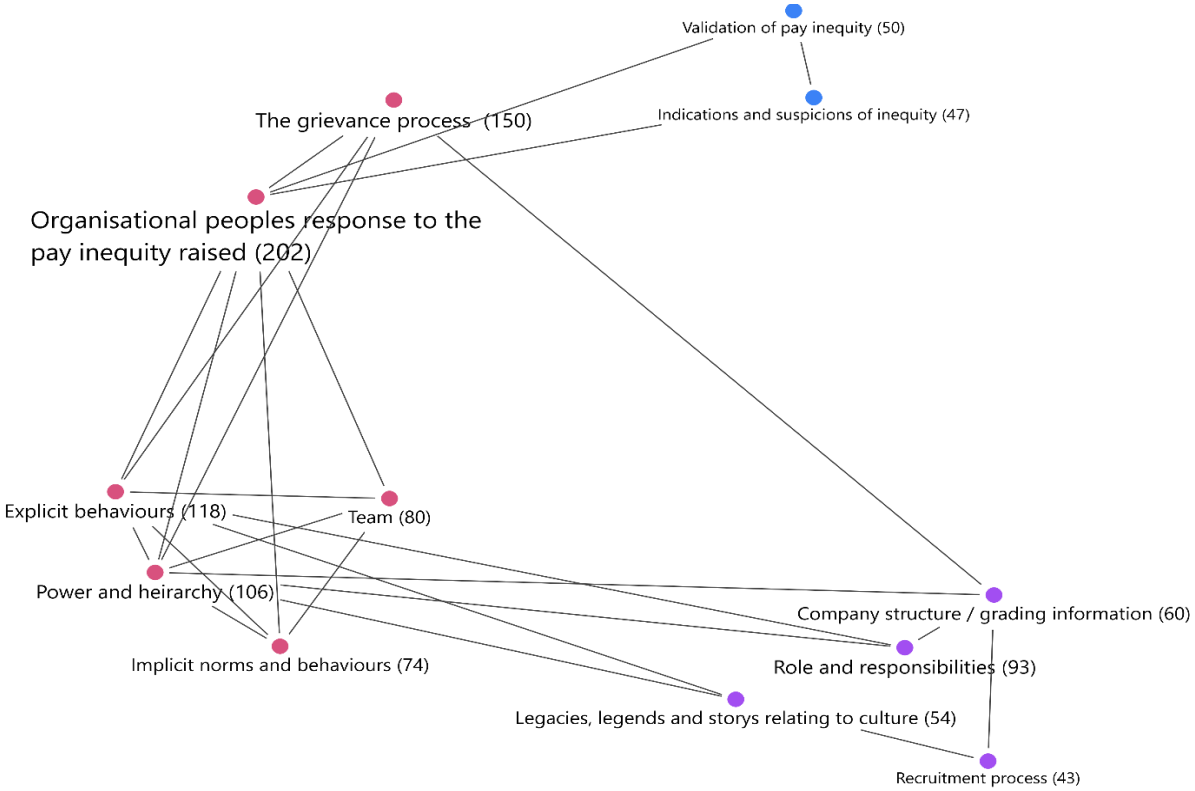


Note: Theoretical grouping of subcodes within the MAXQDA system

1. Why are women paid less than men for doing the same job?

Contemplating this question in light of our thematic analysis above, and the grouping of codes surrounding the organisation, we can see how we are directed towards the structural and cultural aspects of women's stories. Women tend to use their perceptions of the culture and structure to aide their sense making, by telling stories about the sexist cultures and power structures at play when they discover their pay inequity, and to explain their subsequent mistreatment. The sub-themes contain rich descriptions of the implicit norms, and explicit behaviours that they witness as part of their everyday working lives, which point to sexist cultures, gendered practices and patriarchal power structures all seemingly contributing to their pay inequity situations, and then as explanations for why they brought cases to the tribunal courts. What women perceive of power, hierarchy and culture is used as evidence to explain why pay inequity is able to thrive in these types of workplaces, and how gendered practices and collective action serve to gas light women through lengthy and discriminatory grievance and legal processes, working in harmony together to sustain the status quo, and creating an unyielding defence mechanism that serves to silence women's stories and voices. A visual representation of the connections between the sub-themes that speak to this specific question has been included as Figure 6 below:

Figure 6: Code connection map for sub-codes relating to the organisational response to the pay inequity situation.



Note: Code connection map for subcodes listed within the organisation theory theme.

The bottom section of this code map indicates the relationships between structure and culture, a finding that perhaps points to the importance of the organisational context, or understanding of specific work environments, within which pay inequity has existed and persisted. Therefore, in considering the question of why women are paid less, or why pay inequity exists here in the first place, I consider the organisation-related themes and sub-themes that relate to culture so as to explain this context. These themes are: (i) Explicit Behaviours, (ii) Implicit norms and behaviours, (iii) Legacies, legends and stories relating to culture, and (iv) Power and Hierarchy. In addition we see that the structure theme features within this code map, and thus the additional sub-themes within this theme are also considered here, these are: (i) Hierarchy, (ii) Roles and responsibilities, and (iii) Team.

Although this grouping helps to highlight important themes that relate to women's experience of the organisation, I wanted to probe further into how these organisational themes interact with women's pay inequity experiences, specifically how they discovered their inequity, which are; (i) Comparator responses, (ii) Finding out, and (iii) Job comparison.

The results of this analysis are shown in the heatmap chart below, which provides a numerical value to denote the strength of the relationship between each code, by analysing how frequently sub-themes are presented together across women's stories of their experiences. We can see the relative strength of the relationships between these themes through the red / blue colour depth presented in the chart, with the strongest relationships being displayed in the columns starting from the left of the chart, and with the thematic relationship strengths lessening as we move towards the right of the chart.

Table 12: Heatmap displaying connection strengths between the sub-codes of culture and structure and how these affect organisational responses to pay inequity.

Code System	Job Comparison	Comparator responses	Finding out
Culture			
Explicit behaviours	8	11	1
Implicit norms and behaviours	1	3	3
Power and heirarchy	6	9	4
Legacies, legends and storys relatin		2	
Structure			
Role and responsibilities	9	1	
Team	6	2	1
Heirarchy			

Note: Heatmap displaying connection strengths between sub-codes as automatically generated by the MAXQDA system. The higher the number, the redder the cell, and the greater the frequency of sub-codes being found together in the data.

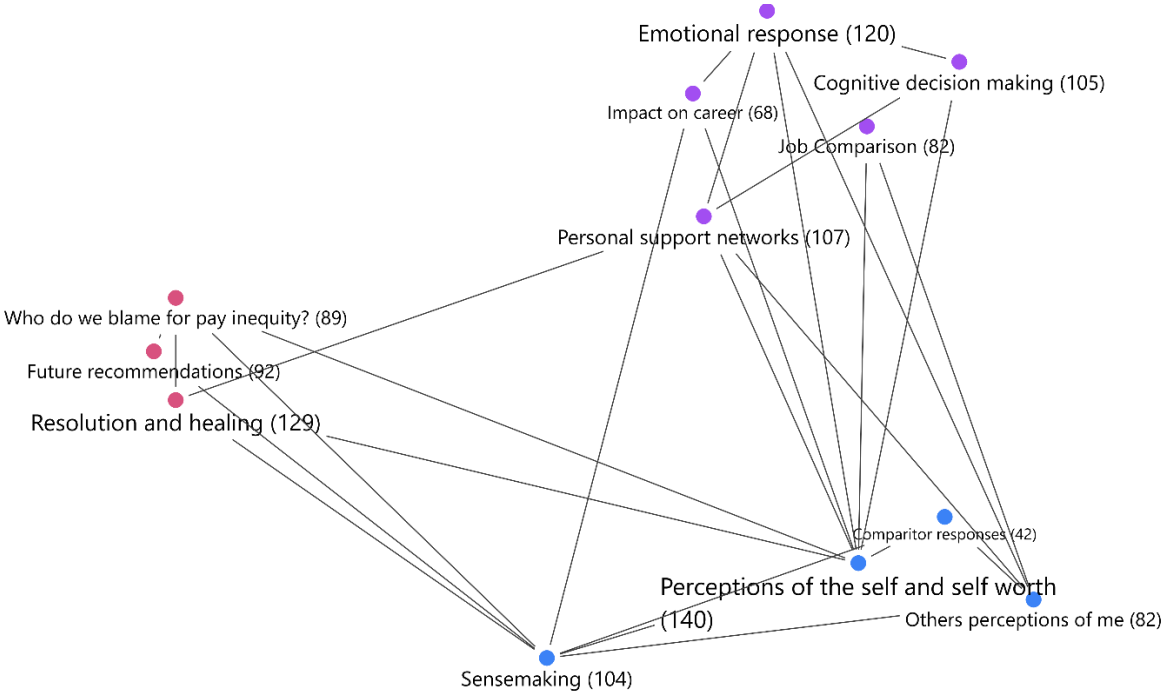
I found that organisational cultures are thematically related to both, (i) the responses of pay inequity comparators (men currently in the same or similar jobs to the women who have discovered pay inequity); and (ii) women's emotional responses to pay inequity, and that the structure of the company is related to women's stories about how they assess and compare their jobs to their colleagues. These thematic findings helped to guide my attention towards those sections of the narratives that would provide me with insight into how best to develop the stories that addressed the initial research question, and thus the narratives sitting underneath the 'hot points' on the map became the focus for my creation of the living stories that explored the meaning within these areas of cross-over. The findings are presented as a single living story and contained within a paper included as chapter 5 of this thesis and titled: '*Hidden From Plain Sight: Sexism and the Pay Inequity Experiences of Women'.* This paper uncovers the sexism that is rooted within organisational cultures and structures, portraying a sexism that exposed through women's pay inequity discoveries, and vehemently denied when women decide to speak out.

2. How do pay inequity experiences affect women?

The second question focusses on the psychological factors, emotional affects and thus the trauma caused by pay inequity experiences. With this question I am seeking insight and meaning from women's stories to help me to make sense of my own traumatic experience, I want to understand, to pinpoint, which aspects of the experience are so harmful so as to inflict the lasting harm that I experienced myself. What is the emotional journey that we take? How do our emotions change over time? What are the tactics employed by organisations to silence women? And why do these tactics have such devasting affects on us? Thus, I target the themes and sub-themes that speak to the psychological affects on women, namely those that relate to the 'perception of the self, and self worth', as well as emotional affects described

within the themes that are connected to women's 'emotional response'. The connection between these themes are: (i) perceptions of the self and self worth, (ii) Emotional response, (iii) Who do we blame? (iv) Impact on career, (v) Sense-making, (vi) Cognitive decision-making, (vii) Resolution and healing and (viii) Impact on lives. The results of this analysis are presented in the code connection map below (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Code connection map for sub-codes relating to women's emotional response to pay inequity experiences.



Note: Code connection map for sub-codes relating to women's emotional response to pay inequity experiences.

As previously describe, I then used the MAXQDA system's heatmap function to provide me with a visual map that showed the strength of connections across women's experiences of the whole pay inequity experience, spanning both the contextual aspects, such as culture and structure, as well as the processes involved, such as the organisations response (including the grievance process), as well as the law and affects from going to court.

Table 13: Heatmap displaying the connection strength between emotional affects and organisational culture, structure and responses.

Code System	Impact on career	Impacts on lives	Cognitive decision making	Emotional response	Resolution and healing	Sensemaking	Who do we blame for pay inequity?
Culture							
Explicit behaviours	4	1	4	6		2	1
Implicit norms and behaviours	1	1		3		9	
Power and heirarchy	2		2	6		10	7
Legacies, legends and storys relatin			2	1	1		1
Structure							
Role and responsibilities	2		4			1	1
Team	1		4	6	1	2	
Heirarchy							1
The Organisational Response							
Indications and suspicions of inequi	1		2	1			2
Company structure / grading inform	2			2	2	2	6
Organisational peoples response to	2	2	6	13	12	11	13
Recruitment process						3	1
The grievance process	4	2	7	16	4		4
Validation of pay inequity			2	1	2	1	
The Law							
Affects on the individual	8	7	7	8	3	5	3
The court process	4	3	14	2	19	2	7

Note: Heatmap displaying the connection strength between emotional affects and organisational culture, structure and responses, which was automatically generated by the MAXQDA system. The higher the number, the redder the cell, and the greater the frequency of sub-codes being found together in the data.

The findings already established a strong relationship between the themes that relate to organisational culture and emotional affects as explored across the findings paper included as chapter 4: Hidden From Plain Sight: Sexism and the Pay Inequity Experiences of Women. However, from Table 13 we can also see that the grievance process is also mentioned frequently when women talk about their emotional responses to their pay inequity. We can also see that the law, and the process of going to court, is related to women's emotional response, as well as considered to have an impact on their future career. We can also see that women's stories link the court process to their cognitive decision making, with a very strong relationship with resolution and healing.

The findings outlined in the heatmap above regarding the emotional affects of pay inequity subsequently guided the narrative analysis I conducted to explore my second research question on emotional and traumatic affects. Thus, as before, I explore the stories that sit beneath the areas of strong connections within this heatmap (such as 'Implicit norms and behaviours' and 'power and hierarchy' as it relates to 'sense-making') in order to provide insight on this research question. I present the findings as an auto-narrative, that incorporates the voices of the study's participants, using their stories to tell my own emotional journey. I use dialogical and reflexive techniques, alongside the living story paradigm, in order to provide a deep insight into the trauma that is created through pay inequity experiences. These findings are presented as Chapter 7: Sacrificial Lambs: The psychological and emotional affects of pay inequity. The paper goes on to explore how women who call out pay inequity become the target of emotional abuse by their employers and colleagues, reaching into other areas of their lives, eventually leading to longer-term psychological affects such as anxiety, depression and trauma, affecting women's careers, lives and relationships.

An additional finding that was developed through the call for papers from the Gender, Work and Organisation journal was related to the topic of gender washing. So much of the

description provided across these stories spoke of how women had experienced a collective silencing, and how these experiences worked in direct conflict to the image that the business was attempting to portray to its employees and the media through diversity and inclusion reports, media articles and policies. Gender washing is therefore then used as a feminist analytical construct, another way of analysing women's experiences of the workplace. This new analytical construct provides a new set of findings that supports the development of a conceptual framework for the gender washing that is experienced by women as part of their pay inequity experience, but also we present stories of four different 'types' of gender washing, which are; (i) Organisational Rhetoric, (ii) HR Policy, (iii) Gas Lighting and (iv) NDAs, with findings iii and iv representing new types of gender washing where I propose that (iii) gas lighting is a newly identified discursive gender washing tactic, and that (iv) the use of COT3's and NDA's also represent textual gender washing techniques employed by businesses in order to protect the company's image. This paper has been submitted into the Gender, Work and Organisation journal, which is currently under review, a copy of which is included here as Chapter 6: 'Hung out to dry: Gender Washing'.

Chapter 5: Hidden in Plain Sight: Sexism and the Pay Inequity Experiences of Women

I developed this findings paper using the living story paradigm to weave together those aspects of the narratives that describe women's perceptions of why they believe they have been paid unfairly, and therefore addressing the first question of this thesis which is:

1. **Why are women paid less than men for doing the same job?**

The abstract was submitted into the Gender, Work and Organisation conference, before I presented it at GWO 2024 in Nova Scotia, Canada on 17th 20th June 2024.

Abstract

The main objective of the second wave of feminism was to bring greater social and economic freedoms to women, particularly through the legalisation of their fair treatment at work (Equal Pay Act, 1970). Today's ongoing struggles for equality demonstrate that such laws have not removed the deep-rooted sexism prevalent across the patriarchal society (Ross, 2018; Gow and Middlemiss, 2011), with our Equal Pay Laws upheld by a homogenous judiciary re-enacting the sexism present within our society (Thornburg, 2019), and thus failing to recognise the institutionalised sexism that is built into the very fabric of our gendered workplaces (Acker, 1994, 2006). The threat of such laws have served to remove the overt and blatant forms of sexism from most workplace cultures; however, what remains are the subtle, hidden or 'micro' forms of sexism that we have come to understand as everyday sexism (Basford et. al., 2014; Bates, 2012). Such insidious forms of sexism render most people oblivious to its presence, and agnostic of its affects; except, perhaps, those who find

themselves the victim of it (Van der Brink, 2009; Lewis, et. Al., 2017; Gill et. Al., 2017). This study seeks to contribute to the contemporary conversations forming at the intersections between organisational theory, sexism and post-feminism, through the exploration of women's experiences of the workplace, the most recent studies of which have focused on academia (Yarrow and Davies, 2022; Castelao-Huerta, 2022; Shymko et. al., 2023; Das et. al., 2023). Here we present a living story that represents 12 women's experiences across a range of organisational settings, where we trace women's perceptions from the point of the pay inequity discovery to the present day. These stories provide us with a rich description of the sexism that they encounter and maps their sense-making journey throughout. These narratives provide us with a unique glimpse into the various ways in which sexism is experienced through the gendered practices of the organisation, providing us with insight into how women make sense of their situation through a realisation of the post-feminist context.

KEYWORDS: *Pay Inequity, Sexism, Gendered Practices, Post Feminism*

Introduction

The main objective of the second wave of feminism was to bring greater social and economic freedoms to women, particularly through the legalisation of their fair treatment at work (Equal Pay Act, 1970). Today's ongoing struggles for equality demonstrate that such laws have not removed the deep-rooted sexism prevalent across the patriarchal society (Ross, 2018; Gow and Middlemiss, 2011), with our Equal Pay Laws upheld by a homogenous judiciary re-enacting the sexism present within our society (Thornburg, 2019), and thus failing to recognise the institutionalised sexism that is built into the very fabric of our gendered workplaces (Acker, 1994, 2006). The threat of such laws has served to remove the overt and blatant forms of sexism from most workplace cultures; however, what remains are the subtle, hidden or 'micro' forms of sexism that we have come to understand as everyday

sexism (Basford et. al., 2014; Bates, 2012). Such insidious forms of sexism render most people oblivious to its presence, and agnostic of its affects, except those who find themselves the victim of it (Van der Brink, 2009; Lewis, et. Al., 2017; Gill et. Al., 2017). And so it has become to work of the researcher to explore and expose the ways in which sexism continues to exist and persist within the organisation, in order to primarily address it's negative affects on women, but to also seek to influence societal-level factors that may support our efforts for equality.

The battle for equality has been constantly evolving since the 1970s, we have witnessed a radical shift in feminist thinking as we attempt to keep abreast of the new and diverging tactics that continue to evolve to control and coerce women through each new generation, spurred on by the golden chalice of patriarchal capitalism (Federici, 2004). However, academics must not assume that women's struggles of the past represent those struggles that will face the next generation of women and girls, and thus we must continue to explore and expose the ways in which women are held back, destined to stay in devalued roles, by probing into those dark and hidden corners of the organisation where women continue to be pushed down and silenced (Shymko et. Al., 2023). An awakening to the post feminist sensibility has provided scholars with a new lens through which to challenge to aging organisational management theories that assume an homogeny of the workforce (Lewis, 2014; Gill, 2011; Gill and Scharff, 2011), which has sparked critical debate from social constructionist perspectives, that had been missing from the literature surrounding pay inequity, a phenomenon affecting women (Shymko et. Al., 2023). Such research has helped us to understand that sexism has become hidden within the workplace, that a post feminist context and sensibility has allowed it to operate in plain sight, through gendered practices, hierarchies and inequality regimes (Acker, 1994, 2006; Martin, 2003, 2006; Jones and

Clifton, 2018), and the feminisation Human Resources as a gender friendly facade presented to the employees that speak out against it (Ainsworth and Pekarek, 2022).

These empirical and theoretical studies present both the academic community, as well sa those women in sexist workplaces, with the challenge of exposing new forms of sexism to an audience who will deny its existence, even when presented with evidence, as they enact the discourse of autonomy and choice in a post feminist rationale (Jones and Clifton, 2017). Dealing with such contradictions has typically been addressed through neo-liberal arguments which point to the free choice of individuals for self-betterment. Targeting women with the narrative of 'self-improvement' and pointing to their newfound economic and sexual freedoms as evidence of how women can 'have it all' if they simply re-invent themselves to suit the social context and norms of the organisations they inhabit (Linstead, 2000; Lewis et, al., 2017). Such arguments serve to provide an illusion of organisational workplaces and cultures that promote equality, where sexist attitudes and behaviours are considered banter and harmless (Kelan, 2008, 2009; Kelan and Dunkley, 2010). It seems appropriate, then, to consider women's acquiescence to the status quo, living within 'Barbie-like' realities that have women battling for acceptance, but never quite achieving the masculine norms of a gendered organisation (Barbie movie, 2023). However, through research into the psychological affects of everyday sexism, academics now understand the psychological trauma that stems from women living within a context that distorts and nullifies her experience, or that subjects her to exploitation or unfair treatment, such as the everyday oppression within a sexist workplace that can lead to stress, anxiety and eventually post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Berg, 2006).

Academics have explored the paradoxical experiences of women that arise from such instances of everyday sexism, from both theoretical (Gill, 2011, 2014; Gill et, al., 2017;

Lewis, 2014; Lewis et. al., 2017), and empirical perspectives (Savigny, 2019; Yarrow and Davies, 2022; Castelao-Huerta, 2022; Shymko et. al., 2023; Das et. al., 2023). However, less research has explored women's perceptions and sense-making when faced with obvious and highly visible forms of discrimination or episodes of injustice (Hillebrandt and Barclay, 2013), such as pay inequity, and thus provide a deeper understanding of how sexism is perceived by women and unpick why it's affects are so harmful. This phenomenological gap is filled using stories captured as part of a broader study that puts a voice to women's experiences of sexism in the workplace, via a pay inequity trigger event that forces women through the gendered practices of Human Resources, and the gendered hierarchies that will determine their fate. The authors capture the stories that surround each lived experience from the 'eye-opening' moment of discovering their own pay inequity, onwards through their journey that reveals the everyday sexism that is exposed as central to their perceptions and sense-making (Rosile, et. Al., 2013). The first author experienced her own pay inequity at work in 2017, and thus adopts a story-telling paradigm, as supported with auto-narratives, to supports an interpretation of the stories so that we can better understand emotional affects and reflexive nature of the sense-making that follows, and thus further illuminate our understanding of how sexism affects women in post feminist contexts (Kelan, 2008, 2009). We find that women perceive their own pay inequity in terms of a form of gendered practice, linked to gendered hierarchies, and that a deep-rooted sexism is exposed when they speak out about their discoveries. We find that the exposing of sexism can be delayed by the post feminist sensibility, where women will question themselves and assume personal failure, until their perceptions and sense-making lead them towards the sexism that is hidden underneath.

Sexism

Gender Pay Inequity is a phenomenon that is experienced solely by women, because they are women, and so we must sit comfortably with the notion that there may be sexist forces at play when exploring women's experiences of the pay inequity phenomenon (Acker, 1990). As sexism repudiates women's equality with men, it presents both hostile and benevolent arguments as to why women are 'weaker' and better suited to a life of domesticity, rather than residing alongside men in the workplace (Nguyen et. Al., 2023). Like a species with a life-force of its own, sexism has followed women from generation to generation, evolving and changing shape to fit the language and practices of the time, but never ceasing to exist. When we look, we can find sexism everywhere. It is rooted in violence against women (Martin, 2003; Lee et. al., 2004), built into the infrastructure and hierarchies of our organisations (Acker, 1990), forever present across our education and academic worlds (Das et. al., 2023) and interwoven into our homes and relationships. The enduring and insipid presence of sexism can stimulate the most visceral emotional responses such as anger or outrage in some individuals, whilst leaving others entirely unprovoked (Musto et. al., 2017), rendering it intangible and elusive, as well as ever changing. This project considers sexism as described from the perspective of women, through their everyday interactions within the workplace (Bates, 2014). The insidious forms of sexism that operate just below the surface of our consciousness, microaggressions that may seem like an isolated incident, ambiguous or inconsequential in the grand scheme of our lives, an itch that needs scratching (Basford et. al., 2013). This is the type of sexism that is hidden from plain sight, it's menacing presence felt throughout the organisation, and intimately known to those who threaten to expose and report. These are the colours and contours of the sexism that have come to shape women's experiences of the workplace and beyond.

The unseen nature of contemporary sexism is especially problematic for the women and girls who experience it. Like ghosts that might leave a faint impression, or present an unsolvable mystery, denying sexism's existence has become 'mainstream', and thus exposing its hidden tendrils across organisational practices and within the people it serves every more difficult to depict, with those women who dare to speak the unspeakable are crushed and thwarted until they become silent through a fear of retribution (Gill, 2014; McRobbie, 2009). In harmony with this post-feminist idea, is the neo-liberal ideology adopted by organisational leaders, which assumes the meritocratic and free choice of employees as the de-facto reality for all people. Such social and organisational discourses that declare the eradication of sexism, provide the 'veil' under which everyday sexism is hidden (Calder-Dawe and Gavey, 2016). Widespread denial of sexism promotes (i) removing inter-generational language for describing everyday sexism (Pomerantz et. Al., 2013), (ii) promoting an environment that supports the gas-lighting of women's experiences, presenting structural inequity as individual failure that can be avoided (Lewis, et. Al., 2017) and (iii) the demonising of feminist attitudes and discourse as inflated and distasteful (Kelan, 2009). This has allowed sexism to operate 'under the radar' since the enactment of the Equal Pay Act in 1970, thereby allowing damaging discriminatory attitudes and behaviours to continue without challenge or reprisal within the organisational setting.

So why are researchers and feminists compelled to pursue something so tenuous? This study hopes to provide clarity on some of the reasons why rooting out, naming, and shaming all forms of sexism are essential to women gaining equality in the workplace (Healy et. al., 2019). Studies that expose the sexism that is present in our workplaces and society are not only helpful to scholars and academics in tracing the various shapes and evolution of sexism through contemporary history so as to prevent the continued marginalisation of women (Antunovic, 2019), but we can also testify that the process of unveiling and naming sexism

provides essential support to the recovery and sense making of millions of women and girls who find themselves the victims of its consequences.

Study Findings

As feminists, we understand the gendered hierarchies of the organisation and how these structures work against gender equality (Acker, 1990); yet the experiences of women who are not experts in our academic theory and language would struggle to identify and name what they see and experience in accordance with these concepts, particularly given the post feminist sensibility (Martin, 2006; Gill et. al., 2017). Thus, what we present are stories that rarely name sexism or discrimination directly, where women do not speak of the unspeakable (Pomerantz et. Al., 2013), but instead describe the legacies and cultures that they witness, their perceptions of the attitudes and behaviours of colleagues, the inequalities they find when faced with gendered practices, and how power is welded and bestowed across organisation hierarchies. We therefore find stories that provide us with real-world examples of how the theoretical concepts that are academically connected to the topic are perceived and experienced by women today (Martin, 2006).

Gender Hierarchies

Today's corporate structures provide a highly visible hierarchy that denotes how superiority or inferiority creates relationships, interactions and thus the power structures that govern our everyday existence in the workplace. Some hierarchies are not as visible, and so must be deciphered from the cultural nuances that are present in the environment and culture. Social inequalities are inherent to the structure and culture of every organisation, and thus women must learn to navigate these social hierarchies alongside the official and communicated version made clear in organisational structure charts and role titles (Acker, 1990).

> "My experience, and also like, just, you pick up stuff from dealing with people, but also what you see culturally as well. Like, you know that person has power over you, so if you speak up, they might do something. What that something is, you don't really know."

Sarafina

Sarafina understands the social and hierarchical power that her male boss has over her which she perceives as a direct threat to her ability 'speak up' against any wrong doing. Her observations from 'dealing with people' have allow her to uncover the hidden power structures that surround her in the workplace, and she perceives the purpose of this hierarchical and social power as a means of silencing women. This tacit knowledge described the gendered hierarchies prevalent across the entire organisation, that are hidden, yet implicitly understood and observable by women who can see them (Acker, 1990, 1992, 2006). Women don't speak of their perceptions to the organisation, assuming instead that the gendered culture and hierarchies are intentional, silencing employees from speaking out against discrimination, and retaining the status quo of social structures and gendered hierarchies that serve them (Savigny, 2019).

> "I didn't feel like I could go to HR. And I didn't feel like I could do anything other than talk about it with my colleagues, and then leave. Those are the only real two things that I thought I could do, because the person who was my boss was, like I mentioned, untouchable."

Ruth Bader-Ginsberg

Women understand sexism to operate underneath a thin veil, just visible for women to perceive, but hidden from plain sight so as to allow for its denial (Pomerantz et. Al., 2013).

Sometimes the veil is lifted to expose sexism in the form of inappropriate relationships such as those that involve young junior female employees in sexual relationships with much older senior male employees. These types of relationships are viewed as abuses of organisational power, and perceived as blatant gender discrimination by women, as explained here by Ruth:

> "He was having an affair with an intern, and like that you know? There was no issues there, you know? He could say things. He could fire people"
>
> Ruth Bader-Ginsberg

Such environments can be perceived as hostile, where women are not welcome (Nguyen et. Al., 2023). A perception that is further supported through the ways that gender and sexism play into the social cohesion around organizational hierarchies, where one's maleness and willingness to be silent becomes the basis for promotion.

> "He's one of the socially cohesive. He's a one. He's one of the boys. He's one of the, and so is the guy that he promoted. They're one of the boys they can depend on. Those two guys, NAME and NAME, to keep their mouth shut, to keep to, to perpetrate the lies, to never whistle blow, to never say what they see. To never out the organisation and to do exactly as they're told."
>
> Ursula Burns

We understand that speaking out against the group, or the organisation, is considered a threat or challenge akin to whistleblowing (Alford, 2001). As the powers and status of the 'socially cohesive' males increase, so does recruitment into the club until they become

synonymous with the organisation itself, perpetuating the illusion of meritocracy and equal opportunity (Jones and Pringle, 2015).

> "I think the organisation attracts those individuals. I think those individuals have so much power, and are so pervasive across the organisation, that it basically is the organisation."
>
> Ada Lovelace

Where loyalty and secrets are the traded currency.

> "They're part of the gang. Your you. You'll die for us, won't you? kind of thing."
>
> Katie

Women's perceptions of power is particularly relevant in the context of widespread violence against women (Castelao-Huerta, 2022), we have learnt the consequences of speaking out. We understand that calling out sexism will result in a direct attack on ourselves, most likely resulting the in loss of our job and so we feel a fear for our jobs, our reputations, our lives (Alford, 2001). As women, we have learnt to live with the constant threat of violence, and as we discovered from the 'me too' movement, many women will remain silent from their fears of becoming a target of public scorn, further abuse from angry perpetrators, and the loss of our careers and livelihoods (Burke, 2023).

> "I heard stories here, he shouts at people. He'd marched people into his office, and they'd be gone."
>
> Katie

This is a rational fear, based on our perceptions of how people in positions of power opening abuse and exploit those within their hierarchical reach (Jeon and Newman, 2016; Bourdage et al. 2017).

> "It can be very aggressive shouting. Quite abusive. And I probably didn't experience the worst of it. The stories I hear, particularly from DEPARTMENT NAME right, are horrendous."
>
> Ada Lovelace

Either at home, at work, or in the street, women experience a subtle violence (Castelao-Huerta, 2022), and yet within our organisations, or in a court of law, despite showing courage when we speak out against those that abuse us our stories are nullified, downgraded and not believed (Ahmed, 2017) and serving to normalise harassing behaviours. Speaking out against sexism becomes the burden of those who challenge the status quo, who are public humiliated by sexist perpetrators welding their power whilst also warning others about the dangers of speaking out and maintaining the walls of silence (Antunovic, 2018).

> "She was treated horrendously, you know, very publicly shamed and challenged and belittled in meetings consistently. But she never pursued it because she didn't want her name to be tarnished in in the industry."
>
> Katie

Being in a constant state of fear for your job, as well as being manipulated by people in powerful positions, generate stress and anxiety that affects women's mental and physical health, particularly if this treatment is sustained over a long period of time as explained by Ada Lovelace (Berg, 2006).

> "This is a, an abusive relationship technique as they know you don't want to damage the thing that you love. Now, when you're in a domestic relationship, the abusive partner will often, it's threats to your kids, or to damage, or damaging relationships with others. But they know you don't want to damage the COMPANY NAME because you're there because you believe in the COMPANY NAME."
>
> Ada Lovelace

Deciding to speak out therefore comes at a cost (Alford, 2001). As women we understand that we will become a target of abuse if we speak out; we will not be listened to, we will not be believed, we will be gaslighted, by the perpetrators, the organisation and the court system. This also leaves us 'ousted' by colleagues, friends and family that we rely on for support.

> "I believe that my, I had a strong case. I do believe that. I. couldn't put my, I couldn't, I I couldn't put my faith in the legal system, and I couldn't put my faith in people doing the right thing from how they'd all behaved. I knew that there would be colleagues who would turn on me. You know, because of 'the click', because of the culture, and I couldn't put my trust that people would do the right thing."
>
> Katie

A Woman's Worth

Lawler suggests that our acceptance of inequitable situations (1986b) is driven by our desires to (a) to maintain our own self-esteem, or pride in our jobs, and (b) our motivations to

keep employed at whatever cost (Andrews and Valenzi, 1970). We can see how both drivers are challenged in pay inequity situations that women find themselves in. Our work is connected to our social value and our intrinsic sense of worth, we build emotional connections to our work and the people that we work with (Cropanzano and Ambrose, 2015).

> "I've always loved my job and I love the people I work with."
>
> Maya

And we believe that there is real value to our work, we become aware of our skills and the value that we bring to the organisation.

> "I really could see the how the work we were doing was really helping these INDUSTRY NAME and that's always been aligned with, sort my, my personal mission is around improving outcomes for service users or patients of public services. So I could see how what we were doing as a team was really making a difference."
>
> Mary Seacole

We believe that we are valued, and we use this belief to motivates us to work harder (Adams, 1965).

> "I can tell you now, I know I'm good at what I do, and I can only say that because I've had supportive women around me who have sort of almost, you know, brought me up when saw, you know instantly, you know, really restored my confidence."
>
> Katie

We will take pride in our roles, and how others rely on us and our skills to help them in times of crisis. We feel needed and appreciated.

> "I also regularly received um. You know, if they were difficult investigations or difficult disciplinaries or difficult people that require dismissal, they always came to me to do it. It was always me that they came to, and they never went to anybody else. Or if they did, very, very rarely. It was always me they came to, because I was so good at it, I guess. Yeah"

Phyllis

We gain confidence in ourselves and our abilities and we feel loyalty and commitment to our jobs, bringing meaning into our lives, and a sense of identity.

> "I I know I've 43, so I know what I'm good at, what I'm not good at, Yeah, I know the areas that I need to work on my, you know, everyone has areas that there. So I'm very good at being detail orientated, but that can lead me to be client driven rather than strategic sometimes, you know, So I know where I, you know where I my skills lie."

Florence Nightingale

We work in close teams, and get to know and appreciate those people around us. We build relationships with our colleagues, and communities where we feel beloved and respected.

> "It would be fair to say, and I think if you were to ask people that worked for me or worked in my organisation, it would be fair to say they would characterize me as beloved in the organisation, that they regarded me

> highly. They thought I was competent. They thought I was capable. They thought I was caring. And they thought I was a great leader. "
>
> Ursula Burns

We find ourselves regularly going ‘above and beyond’ what is required of us, sacrificing time with our friends and family, or even our physical or mental health, in commitment to our jobs.

> “I could be sitting here, regularly, I could be sitting here with my family, or dinner, whatever it is on the weekend, and I would receive a phone call saying there's been a truck incident, or there's, we haven't got any cover, someone's phoned in sick, or we've got a suspension, can you come in and do it? And I would put my knife and fork down and I would leave.”
>
> Phyllis

Mary talks about how her sense of responsibility drives her towards mental and physical exhaustion through the pandemic.

> "I just kind of felt this sense of responsibility to all these people, and making sure that, you know, we had jobs. I wasn't so focused on the future. It was more about the here and now. It's like, can all these people put food on their tables? And, you know, is what we're doing helping? Um, those working on the frontline of of this, it was, you know, I I guess maybe there was a bit of survivor guilt."
>
> Mary Seacole

Many women working in sexist workplaces tell stories of their struggles to get recognized and promoted, working hard against the odds to achieve what an equal footing with their male peers, demonstrating the neo-liberal ideals of individualism, choice and empowerment (Lewis et. Al., 2017):

> "I was, you know, I was up there. I had worked very hard to get that level of um. Acknowledgement from them, I guess. You know, I'm a woman in a male environment, in a male dominated environment that's run by senior managers who were all men."
>
> Phyllis

Yet we feel grateful for the positions that have worked hard to achieved.

> "I felt grateful. And I'm. I'm looking in hindsight, I'm ashamed to admit that, But the environment that I was working in, Um. I, you know, I I I guess I was made to feel grateful. I guess I was made to feel grateful."
>
> Phyllis

Roles that we recognize we fought for and were rewarded as a result of our extraordinary efforts and dedication. This explains why pay inequity is experienced as a type of abuse by our employers. It points to the casual exploitation of women and their labour, exposing the sexism that determines how women are valued by the organization and wider society.

> "I think it's because I am a hard worker, regardless of what, what sort of role it is I always put 110% in, you know, I'm never late. I'm always on time, never go sick. It's always it's that's my work ethic and I think they they absolutely abused that. They abused any, any amount of trust or good

will that I had in me for them. They abused all of it and I think that was the bit that hurt the most."

Ursula

Our ambitions of ‘having it all’, of being valued both at work and in the home, of equality and fair treatment at work start to unravel (Gill, et. Al., 2017). We begin to understand the emotional burden that the devaluing of women at the societal level, can have traumatic affects when experienced by individual women within their organisations, leaving them feeling abused and exploited (Walster and Walster, 1973).

Discovering Pay Inequity

It is widely understood and accepted that pay inequity situations leads to poor performance and the demotivation of employees in general (Mikula et. Al. 1998), which in turn has led to the widespread adoption of pay secrecy cultures that prohibits transparency and fosters suspicions. Because pay is elusive and elicit women often discover their pay inequity by accident, such as through individuals ‘letting slip’ their pay, line management changes or reporting errors.

"He was my direct report. And you would think they wouldn't, shouldn't be any secret with this guy's contract, there shouldn't be any issue with sending it to me. And anyway. I I received the contract and saw that he had been offered a 45% pay rise with his new role. Which didn't exist until, what about. And which saw him paid Forty percent, I can't remember the exact percentage, but forty I think 40% more than me, and I hit the roof."

Mary Seacole

Phyllis discovered her pay inequity through office ‘bantering’:

> "By pure chance, pure chance, I was sitting. We used to sit in a group…., the senior management team used to sit together at a desk…. So it was around about that time of the handover, and two of the men were uh, stood up next to my desk in the middle of handing over, and bantering a little bit. And it was payday, right? And they've opened their pay slips in front of each other, and they were bantering. One was on a couple of pence more than the other.”
>
> Phyllis

Their conversation alerts her to a pay difference, so she asks to see her male colleagues’ pay slips.

> “Then I. I could hear them and one of them said their rate of pay. And immediately it dawned on me straight away, hang on a second. That that figure straight away clocked in my mind and I thought, hang on a second, that's not what I want. And that's my immediate thought. I thought, hang on, that's not what I'm on. So I asked if I could see it."
>
> Phyllis

Phyllis attempts to hide her shock as she then confirms the thousands of pounds difference in pay.

> "I don't think they ever knew that I would have found out. And even when I questioned when I saw the pay slip and it, it was confirmed that he was on more money than me. And then I asked the other gentleman to show me his pay slip. And I had to bear in mind, I had to laugh with them and

> banter with them a little bit, pretend I was, you know, on their side if you like, having a little banter with them. And I even said to them, wow you two, I'm not on that. And and it it's that comment just didn't even register with them. They didn't care."

Phyllis

Katie discovered her male colleague was on significantly more than her during a finance meeting with her boss, which triggers an emotional response akin to being winded.

> "he's on huge sums of money and I was just out again. It kind of, hearing that these things you know. It kind of punches you in the chest. It's like, Oh my God, how? And then you start reading about it, cause you think how is it that I've been such an idiot? And then you, you realise that, you know, I've never pushed. I've always gone on what I was previously earning, and any increment above that has always been, you know, a bonus to me."

Katie

Pay inequity discoveries are downplayed as isolated incidents, quickly denied and deleted to prevent victims from ‘going public’ with their evidence. And so our stories describe the gas lighting that we experience as part of the cover-up that will leave us questioning our memories and sanity.

The Protagonist

These stories demonstrate the paradox that women must navigate in our everyday working lives, illustrating the post feminist sensibility as theorised by Gill and others (Gill et. Al., 2017). As women who have exposed pay inequity, and thus sexism, we find ourselves with a predicament; to either deny our experiences and accept the inequity as fair treatment, or to speak out against the sexism that is hidden from view and revealing their 'enlightened' position and the dangerous post feminist sensibility (McRobbie, 2009).

> "He was on a materially higher salary and I knew that his total compensation package was about 40% higher than mine, and he was upset about that because he had been promised he was going to be paid more. And so he was busy complaining to me about his crappy package, which was significantly more than mine, and I was having to work way harder, and being subjected to way more, you know, like, what am I looking for? Sexist behavior. And I was under so much pressure not only work-wise, but just from a social perspective."
>
> Ruth Bader-Ginsberg

Our stories hinge upon a simple acceptance by our peers but are not able to perceive the complexity of the inequalities and sexism that we are facing into every day. They are hidden and denied, and we find that the strength of our solitary voice is not enough to validate our stories. We can be daughters, sisters, wives and mothers, but our experiences do not count as equal to the experiences of men, and therefore their own lack of perception of the sexism that surrounds us is ample evidence to deny its existence.

"I ran the biggest company delivering the most profit in that group of companies, and none of them could accept that my job was even equal."

Titanium

Our managers, colleagues and peers all fail to see and respond to the sexism that is exposed within our workplaces. Blindly accepting its non-existence, pushing forwards the gendered practices that are harming women, and silencing their voices.

"These were my colleagues, people I had sat on the board with and we'd, you know, um, worked really closely together with, as close as you get to Friend, you know, Peers, in the business, and I what did I expect? They had, It was nothing against them. I had no issue with them. I had no axe to grind with them. I thought they would just turn up and tell it how it was."

Titanium

People that we had worked closely with for so long, who we considered our friends, turn against us and we become the protagonist.

"I realized we got, we'd always got on really well. And he'd come to my wedding, I've been to his house, he's been to our house, you know, you know, with his wife, you know? He met my parents, you know, he, I thought he was my friend."

Maya

Calling out pay inequity, and exposing sexism in the workplace feels like a betrayal, both by the victim and the employer, which is why responses are reminiscent of research that

explores the treatment of whistleblowers (Alford, 2001). The traitor, or protagonist, is immediately rejected by the organization, quicky followed by our colleagues and peers, and we become the outcast, we are ousted as ‘other’, or the ‘Black Swan’ who must be cast out of the organization.

> "They became even more enraged that I was stating these things, that I was saying there was a problem, and then I became really the Black Swan. I was really the person that they didn't want around anymore because she's, she's the Black Swan. She's going to say there's something wrong. And so that became really kind of the challenges. How do we get her out of here?"
>
> Ursula Burns

We understand that women who speak out will become the target for an attack by those who seek to maintain the status quo (Nguyen, 2023). Those with power will use their power to influence others in the organization, in an attempt to isolate them and deny their stories as the fiction of a troublemaker (Alford, 2001), circulating rumors and turning colleague’s against them.

> "I was trouble, because I was, I was, you know, I was asking questions and, you know, I was troubled. The one in particular [COLLEAGUE’S NAME], I think he was worried that they would take his pay rate off him. Because there were meetings where he'd been taken into a side room and told that he was paid more than me due to a mistake. And that he either was prepared to be red circled, have his pay red circled, and or they would take it all back off him as back pay as an overpayment."
>
> Phyllis

People take sides and we experience the pain and hurt of not being listened to, and being branded a liar, as we experience gas lighting from colleagues and HR. These consequences amplify the harmful emotional affects of injustice, and lead women towards prolonged psychological trauma such as PTSD.

> "People stopped coming to lunch with me. People stopped having breaks with me. People avoided me. Colleagues that I'd worked with for 15 years. Avoided me."

Phyllis

Women experience the courtroom as being placed in direct opposition with opposing male views of workplace sexism. The theater of the courtroom serves to further expose the systemic sexist attitudes of the men that we work with, and we see our colleagues in a new light, and begin to understand the ‘big fight’.

> "I think companies go automatically into defense, and automatically into, without even any consideration. How do we show that this wasn't, this isn't us, and this is not what happened. There was no kind of open-minded willingness to engage with any. They just entrenched, and that was kind of contagious. Because I I still cannot understand why the other three guys, who were my peers, I still cannot understand why they came out fighting. Now obviously they've been briefed, and you're loyal to your organisation, but I, I cannot reconcile how they came out fighting."

Titanium

Women experience the bullying affects of being a solitary voice within the organization, and in the courtroom, a lone voice that is easily silenced and discredited by the pack of wolves lurking to tear them apart.

> "And so there were three or four of the white guys that would always gang up on some of our calls or what have you. If I presented my monthly report, they would essentially call out my monthly report and say it was garbage, that there were plenty of things wrong in my group the whole 9 yards. So they were they along with my boss were. This gang now, so it wasn't just my boss, it was a pack of wolves that would come after me and try and convince me that I sucked, that my group sucked, that what we were doing sucked, the whole 9 yards. And so it became a number of people that were kind of now on this band to see if they could run me out"
>
> Ursula Burns

We begin to recognize our friends and colleagues as tricksters, willing to exploit their loyalties to gain favour and position in the organizational hierarchy. Individuals that betray their friends and colleagues to serve their own interests, particularly for money, position or prestige are vilified, taking onboard the traits that we find the most disgusting, and representing the villain in the stories that we tell about our experiences.

> "I suddenly realised that the reason he had liked JOB ROLE with me and be my friend is because I served a purpose to him, because I didn't compete with him. Because I was happy to to sit alongside and let him feel superior. I didn't realise I was letting him feel superior, but I clearly was. Because I wasn't kind of trying to kind of compete. I didn't. There was no

> competition. We both had, you know, we had our roles to play and. And I do think that a lot of men are like that. I'm afraid it's a narcissistic trait as well. This kind of your your useful to me when you're feeding my narcissism. But as soon as you stop feeding my narcissism another competitor against me, you will be discarded. Yeah, And I will trample all over you. And that is exactly what we know it is. It's a it's a very ruthless thing."
>
> Maya

We cement our own position as the protagonist, seeking out and exposing the truth, which we experience as sexism, so that we can enlighten others in the hope that they will see our truth. In full knowledge of the consequences of being cast out of the organization, and possibly even from our future careers.

> “People like myself, that are are both truth seekers and truth speakers, that may then border on they, somebody they would consider to be a whistleblower. They do not want them in the organisation and so where they identify anybody that is a truth seeker or truth truth sayer, they run them out of the organisation."
>
> Ursula Burns

Sexism in Action

Women make sense of their unfair treatment at work, such as pay inequity, alongside wider social constructs and the context of the organisation (Van den Bos, 2005; Van den Bos and Lind, 2013; Weick, 1995). The discovery of pay inequity, and the sense-making that surrounding our unfair treatment, exposed the sexism that was hidden beneath a neo-liberal

façade, forcing us to re-evaluate the gendered hierarchies that serve to sustain inequality and silence women. Exposing sexism is critical to women's sense-making following pay inequity situations (Gill et. Al., 2017), we come to regard this unveiling as the moment on enlightenment, from whence we can see things more clearly, where sexism and the gendered hierarchies and practices that support it are made visible.

> You start to see it everywhere. You know, I start to become far more switched on to all forms of discrimination as well. Before, I wouldn't have exactly, I wouldn't have denied that it existed, but I wouldn't have been actively noticing it happening unless it was something really blatant. You start to see the inequality, the power discrepancy, how people are trapped in their situations. It becomes quite overwhelming, actually. And I I made myself, yeah, I've made myself unwell at times, and I think this is quite common.
>
> Ada Lovelace

We begin to see sexism everywhere, and each new discovery serves to trigger more memory, sensemaking and emotional responses that move us towards our feminist path.

> "So do you know what I think? I'm if you look you'll find, and I think a lot of the time it's truly there, but I also think I'm paranoid. And I'm, I'm, I'm looking for it. But when you look for it, you find it everywhere. Everywhere. Yeah. So it's a lens by which I view everything."
>
> Titanium

The word ‘paranoid’ explains being in a constant state of feeling threatened, but without sufficient evidence of what the threat is, or where it is coming from, and thus being able to ‘see’ or ‘sense’ the threat of sexism that others deny can make us feel like we are the victim.

> “It was just like I can't describe it, it was just like victimization then in the workplace. They just, I was the target. I had the big target on my back……it didn't stop. The impact of how I was coming from it, because mentally it breaks you. But you know, you've been through it. It's just, it's soul destroying, and, and, you question whether, the, the amount of times I've questioned myself and thought what are you doing?”
>
> Ursula

We begin to question what is driving the sexism that we are experiencing, seeing it as an invisible force that is being acted out by an unconscious set of powerful actors, most of whom cannot even see, or comprehend, how their actions are affecting women. Sexism, therefore, provides us with the context within which we can explain a systemic inequality, leading us away from the notion of being culpable for our own unfair treatment (neo-liberal individualisation and choice), and allowing us the space within which to maintain our own sense of worth (Lewis et. Al., 2017). If women can come to view our pay inequity as a systemic inequity facing all working women, rather than an attack on oneself and one’s own work, we can continue to take pride in what we do, and not succumb to our own undervaluing, as we have been by society and the organisation. We can now see how the acceptance of sexism in the workplace supports women sense making and overcoming the paradox presented by post feminism.

> “I think part of the problem is and is white men. That's, that's where the power generally sits, yeah. Even if they're not discriminatory, or deliberately discriminatory, they don't understand. They haven't got the capability of understanding because they can never have experienced that discrimination themselves.”

Ada Lovelace

We find that all men are culpable for our exploitation, if only through their own ignorance and question whether anyone can truly understand the plight of others if they have not experienced for themselves. We discover that highlighting the sexism we see only serves to distance us from the people we care about, and so we work hard not to become the feminist killjoy of rhetoric (Ahmed, 2017).

> “And I've I, I've, I've had to come to terms with this with my dad. So my dad is. Is is wonderful. He's a, he's a wonderful person. He wouldn't dream of discriminating against anyone and he obviously kept, you know, he loves me and is worried about what's happened to me and everything, but I can't. I can't quite get him to understand what it is. No, however much he wants to and have as much choice. And that's because I'm I've realised. You. In some aspect of it yourself, you're it's it's impossible to describe, to really get your head around what? Yeah, constant microaggressions. The constant not really being believed. The fact that you have to do twice as much work to prove the point is, I mean, you can't really understand what that's like unless you've experienced it in some way. And that's the problem. Even with men who want to help the situation, you still need that representation there because they can't understand it and therefore they

> can't. Like, you know, they they can't fully drive the change, however much they want to."

Ada Lovelace

Our individual sensemaking can bring us towards reflections about the broader societal context for gender equality. As we go about our everyday lives, events and news takes on new meaning for us as we consider what this tells us about progress. We compare gender equality to racial struggles against oppression from throughout history. We can see similarities between these struggles. And prepare ourselves for long, hard and arduous battle.

> "I went to an art exhibition and modern art exhibition and and there was a quote and, I think it's from Martin Luther King's wife, I can't remember the exact quote, but basically he was talking about you know one, it was talking about the the battle for racial, racial equality, but that that it has to be on every generation you know? That it's not something you just win and that's it. And I kind of feel that with women too. That you know, there's something so fundamentally biased in our society. It's it's It's still designed by men for men……..and there's still this awful misogyny that we see, and even more so now in society. I mean, appallingly police and all that, but it's a wider culture thing. Appalling. And I I just feel like all the gains we've made, you know, it's kind of like, we have to keep on regaining.

Maya

Discussion

Women's experiences of the workplace have been missing from research into pay inequity, leaving us blind to the cultures and contexts that mean it continues to endure despite legislative and practice changes designed to thwart its survival. We have found that such stories, captured as women face into their own sense-making of their experiences, reveals the hidden sexism and gendered hierarchies that work in tandem to sustain women's undervalue, as well as obstruct women's equality of opportunity. The research finding take a critical stance on the organisation through the perspective of women employees acting as the protagonists that stand against the gendered hierarchies and sexist cultures that undervalue and expose them to its traumatic affects (Berg, 2006). Setting individual women in opposition against the monolithic organisations aimed at silencing them, both inside the company, and through our courtrooms, within a society that denies the existence of sexism, is akin to a suicide mission that will serve to destroy the mental health of women victims, as well as potentially dismantle their relationships.[4] Thus, we are presented with an unsustainable and immoral future for our current practices for dealing with pay inequity, or discrimination claims more broadly.

Recommendations have continually been made to the research community to focus our future research on capturing the actual experience of employees so that we can provide a

[4] Since conducting this study, I have reflected on what it means to explore the emotional consequences of sexism, and how these painful stories of abuse and trauma can act as motivating factors that lead women towards a battle against the sexism that they experience. Specifically reflecting on Hillebrandt and Barclay (2013) reference to specific emotions, such as shame and disgust, I present stories that depict these emotions but have come to realise how difficult it is to probe deeply into the intimate within a research setting, particuarly due to its upsetting nature, both for the participant as well as the researcher.

more accurate description of the phenomenon (Ambrose and Schminke, 2009; Tornblom and Vermunt, 1999). Hillebrandt and Barclay's paper in 2013 makes explicit the need to explore individual 'sense-making' of the experience, and how this might be connected to both positive and negative emotions. They refer to specific emotions that should be explored by future research: (a) fear, (b) anger, (c) guilt, (d) shame, (e) sadness, (f) disgust, and that a longitudinal view of the emotional impact could bring even greater insight (Hillebrandt and Barclay, 2013). Alongside calls for more theoretical work into the intersecting topics of emotions, sense-making and injustice within organisational management theory, we also put forwards a set of challenges to academics, policy officials and practitioners to address the questions that arise from these findings. Ideas for further exploration may include:

1. Reflecting on Hillebrandt and Barclay's (2013) recommendations on positive and negative emotions of injustice, future studies should consider how these emotions, such as shame and disgust, might be crucial in counteracting sexism in the workplace. Addressing questions such as, how can women fight against the sexism that they experience at work?
2. Support to practitioners and legal teams in developing alternative approaches to settling pay dispute outside of current gendered hierarchies and practices (HR grievance and tribunal courts). This could involve listening to women's experiences and addressing the sexism that they expose, whilst also protecting them from the backlash of perpetrators that will attempt to silence them.
3. New theory development to consider the antecedents to sexism, such as gendered hierarchies and practices, that can support women and organisations to detect, expose and respond to insidious forms of everyday sexism that is harming women.

4. Development of new educational programmes that makes everyday sexism visible to a broader audience, with supporting content on how its negative affects are currently affecting women and girls across society.
5. I feel that the time has come for us to take more action in support of women and girls who are currently suffering from the negative affects of pay inequity and everyday sexism by providing more practical tools to support them, such as through:
    a. Creating a support network
    b. Sharing stories
    c. Providing advice and guidance on tackling colleagues
    d. Career and financial support
    e. Psychological support for those who are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

These authors consider qualitative research approaches will provide us with a deeper insight into women-specific experiences, and thus help us to begin to redress the inequality of our historical influence on organisation management theory, as until women's voices are heard, and we are recognized as representing half of the paid and unpaid labour-force, our organisations will be stunted in their ability to solve the enormous challenges that we are facing as we move into more uncertain times.

Conclusion

Recognising that gender pay inequity is a phenomenon that is experienced exclusively by women, as well as admitting the prevalence of this phenomenon across businesses today, is the first step towards understanding why this specific study is so important for progressing research in this field. This paper sought to explore and describe how women experience pay inequity through the capture and presentation of narratives from 12 women who experienced

the phenomenon for themselves. This research adds a social constructionist perspective to the age-old debates on inequity and injustice, but also provides findings that reveals how women's unfair treatment at work is experienced as a sexism that is integrated into the very fabric of the gendered organisation. We assert that organisations fight aggressively to maintain the status quo (post-feminist ideologies) that denies sexism in the workplace, and that the consequences on women victims are high, with gas-lighting effects from the organisation and wider society resulting in women questioning their own sanity (Calder-Dawe and Gavey, 2016). These women's narratives provide us with rich descriptions about the way that women construct emotional and economic bonds with organisations, jobs and people, which inevitably become entwined with their social construct, contributing to perceptions of social congruence and self-worth (Huseman et al. 1987). Women are faced with post feminist sensibilities and social discourses that proclaim equity and equality that jar against their personal experiences of the gendered organisation (Gill et. Al., 2017). This leads to the shattering of women's ideologies, triggered by the discovery of pay inequity (Cropanzano and Ambrose, 2015); a response that is not mirrored by the organisation, perpetrators, or even colleagues they love and respect as friends. We find that women's post feminist sensibilities present them with a paradox that they must navigate through and beyond to make sense of their experiences and survive the anxiety and stress that will lead to the devasting psychological affects of prolonged injustice (Berg, 2006).

Women's sense-making bring them towards an understanding of wider societal constructs around sexism that is working against them where they expose a hostile sexist social construct that denies gender inequality to protect the status quo (Antunovic, 2019; Nguyen, 2023). We research provides us with insight into women experiences of pay inequity that leads to negative emotional affects, social exclusion and the loss of jobs and careers. With the pay inequity experience having a profound and traumatic impact on women's lives.

Here we liken this experience to an ‘eye-opening’ or revelatory moment that informs how women create the social constructs that come to inform their experiences of their everyday lives.

The authors argue that key to women’s sensemaking of pay inequity is the discovery and exposure of the hidden forms of sexism that perpetuates their ill-treatment. A sexism that works in harmony with gendered hierarchies and practices designed to attack those who speak out against sexism and protect it’s perpetrators. We witness aggressive retaliation from the organisation and its gendered hierarchies who fights to conceal the sexism that exists by deny its existence and silencing the women who discover it. Leaving many women alone to face the psychological consequences that prolonged exposure to sexism can cause, and further ostracised through the paradox of seeing sexism all around them, in a post feminist society that denies it exists. Through this research, and the generous sharing of stories by our participants, we feel honoured to have provided much needed voices that speak of women’s experiences at work, which we believe has been missing from academic debates, in the hope we can stimulates new theory across a topic that has been dominated by the quantitative research of pay gaps for too long.

The women in these stories have begun the painful and time-consuming task of putting themselves, and their lives back together, and from the ashes of these stories we can find the growth of new stories, new careers, new lives emerging stronger than before, as they take on the important lessons that we have learnt, and have taken solace in the stories and support of others. This paper, and these stories, bring to life why these women believe pay inequity still exists today, pointing directly toward their perceptions of sexist organisational cultures, and the power structures that serve to maintain the status quo. These stories provide us with insight on the connections that women make to their own pay inequity discovery, and

the sexism present within the organisation. They speak of a power and hierarchy that colludes and conforms to targets women personally when they speak out against sexism and discrimination, and we come to understand the consequences on their lives and careers.

Chapter 6: Hung out to dry: Gender Washing

I developed this findings paper in response to a call for papers that consider the emerging topic of Gender Washing within organisational management context, which came from the Academic Journal Gender, Work and Organisation. Here I again use a living story paradigm to create a story that describes how women experience gender washing through the grievance and legal systems that they encounter as a result of their pay inequity claims. The paper was submitted into the journal's academic review process on Monday 26th March 2024, and we are still waiting for a response from the reviewers.

Rebecca Burke, Kingston Business School, Kingston University

J. Miguel Imas, Kingston Business School, Kingston university

Abstract

This paper exposes the practice of organisation gender washing with an aim toward making it visible and meaningful on how this is experienced by women in organisations. The paper is based on long and intensive interviews with UK women from different industries and professional backgrounds who have been exposed to gender washing practices such as pay inequity; and, being forced to face into the incongruous practices that serve to gas, silence and isolate them (Vershinina, 2020). The paper reveals that gender washing is practised in response to women calling out pay inequity, through the use of gendered HR practices (texts) and organisational rhetoric (discourse). Equally reveals that gas lighting tactics of organisations, combined with cruel personal attacks, become a pattern of collective practices that dominate women's experiences of HR grievance and tribunal court processes. Finally, reveals that women are pushed into agreeing to non-disclosure agreements or tribunal agreements from threat of 'slaps' (legal threats to financially ruin victims of crimes), whilst under significant psychological and emotional stress, which then renders them powerless in their pursuit of justice, and voiceless to tell their tales. The paper makes a strong contribution to the emerging

feminist critique research on gender washing practices, exposing the sexism and discrimination that still prevail in organisation and advancing the use of gender washing as an analytical construct.

Keywords: *Gender-Washing, Pay Inequity, Critical Human Resource Management, Constructionist, Feminist, NDA, Tribunal, Equal Pay Law, Psychological Harm, Emotional Affect, Pay Inequity*

Introduction

Women's participation in the labour force has grown exponentially throughout this last century, having a positive effect on both organisations and society (Jones et al., 2006). Gender research and feminist scholars have, indeed, contributed to this success in reducing intellectual barriers that place women as second to men in most educational, industrial, and corporate settings (e.g., Fotaki, 2021; Harding et al., 2013). Yet, despite all this progression, we continue to find women relegated to the lower echelons of business in almost every workplace the world over (Argys and Averett, 2022). Studies continue to demonstrate that despite the achievements that women make through their higher educational accomplishments, practical and entrepreneurial skills, and the successful leadership of global businesses, these talents rarely translate into the pay and promotions that are made available to (mediocre) men (Thomas, 2021). Moreover, women are still exposed to harmful sexism and sexual discriminatory practices (Guschke, 2023), hitherto, to the oppressive nature of the gendered organisation (Acker, 1990) that underpinned the inequity predicated on the sex of women (bodies) and the gendering of their performances (Pullen et al., 2017). It seems, as Fox-Kirk et al. (2020) suggest organisational gender equality, equity and non-discrimination against women, even when "good practices" are introduced in the workplace (Grzelec, 2022) remain a "myth". Something similarly suggested by Martin (2011), asserting that the prevailing historical nature of gender inequality, discrimination and sexism is still unsolved. Then, examining and understanding how gender is practiced as well as gender practices in workplaces (Martin, 2003) remain of high significance for the way in which we come to understand organisational gender issues such as equality, equity and inclusion that impact on women.

This has special relevancy when it comes to one recent phenomenon employed by organisations to sustain oppressive and discriminatory practices against women, "gender washing" (Fox-Kirk et al., 2020). Gender washing is difficult to define but encompasses discourses that highlight three key issues as identified by Walters (2022). First, it is a communicative practice; second, it is intentional; and, thirdly, presents a deceptive view of organisation's policies, practices and procedures that retain (mask) the masculine and heteronormative power relations in detriment of gender equity and equality (Walters, 2022). Gender washing practices silence women voices by pretending to advance equity and equality initiatives that are subsequently underfunded, unsupported, isolated and ultimately become symbolic gestures that leave discriminatory and sexist challenges face by women in workplaces unresolved (Ozkazanc-Pan, 2019).

Gender washing can also be thought as a useful analytical construct that contributes towards a feminist-interpretivist approach (e.g., Lazar, 2007; Meyenburg and Selmanovic, 2020) to organisation. Following, Bell et al., (2019), gender washing feminist stance reflects a means to theoretical development that questions and explores patriarchal social formations product of hegemonic masculinities and neoliberal capitalism (Thym et al., 2023), interrogating how they oppress and exploit women (Russell, 2022). It invites an understanding that explains the gendered inequities, inequalities and violences that affect women at work (Padavic et al., 2020). We consider this approach to be significant in evaluating and analysing practices deployed by organisations to wash away women's experiences and stories of discrimination, such as in cases of pay inequity. It can be used conceptually to expose gender washing practices, as well as provide us with rich insights into how these are used against women to induce negative psychological affects (Hosang and Bui, 2018).

In this paper we address gender washing as both an "analytical construct" and a "practice" based on 12 in-depth interviews with women who have lived through pay inequity (Klein et al., 2021) and experienced gender washing. As analytical construct, the feminist-interpretivist approach taken allowed us for the development of a conceptual framework that supports a deeper understanding of the stories of those who have experienced these oppressive and aggressive practices in response to pay inequity claims. As a practice that is used politically through public discourse (communicative practice) (Walters, 2022), seeking to maintain a positive corporate image, alongside HR policies that are used as defensive tools to present a façade of equity and fairness to a general audience of employees, customers and stakeholders who believe in the neo-liberal ideal (Fox-Kirk et al., 2020). In addition, we find

how gender washing can be transformed into a "weapon" and used intentionally to silence those who dare to speak out against the gender-based violence they experience.

Over 30 hours of in-depth interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis and grounded theory analytical approaches as presented by Glaser and Strauss (2017). We then adopted a narrative approach to presenting the findings, focussing on using storytelling as a technique that enabled the connection of four main findings into chapters that depicted a 'living story' (Grace et al., 2013), and allowed for the sharing of the authors own experiences of pay inequity alongside the other participants of the study.

The paper is organised as follows. First, we examine the main theoretical construct of this paper around the notion of "gender washing". Second, we address the methodological design and analysis, which leads us to a discussion and final conclusions.

Gender-Washing: A Deceit Practice of Organisation

In this paper we address gender washing as both a practice and as an analytical feminist construct. The practice of gender washing was first coined by Martha Burk in 2011 during a protest march and has become grounded in critical human resource discussions (George, 2010; Smith, 2005). Gender washing is defined by Fox-Kirk et al., (2020) as a particular organisational process that perpetuates the myth that an organisation is practicing equity and fairness (p.2). Thus, we may conclude that it is perceived and experienced mostly by women and marginalised individuals, as those who can see beyond the structures and cultural practices that define policies, procedures and norms within organisations and into the discrimination that lurks beneath. For example, Ito and Uranaka (2023) expose how some Japanese banks adopt gender washing to "inflate" the number of women in leadership roles; and Sterbenk et al., (2022) point out some of the incongruencies in so called "femvertising", which have been adopted specifically to provide the illusion of gender equality. Most relevant to this study however, is the research discussed by Weinhold and Brodtmann (2017), which analysed specific gender strategies adopted within the IMF (International Monetary Fund), where the findings discovered that most of the recommendations and policies used for tackling gender equality where simply a way to mask the persistence of gender inequalities that remain common in organisations the world over. Furthermore, they added that strategies employed by the IMF "instrumentalise" women and girls as well as feminism without having any "real" change in policy, understanding or impact to address the real problem of gender inequality.

It seems that organisations wanting to protect their own interests and reputation will adopt gender washing practices, and that they will do this to external audiences through political discourse, such as communicating inflated and misleading gender credentials through marketing and social media channels (Giugni and Tracey, 2021); as well as to their own employees through the practice of gender-related policies, such as diversity, equality and inclusion policies that purport to prevent the unfair treatment of women and minorities (Walters, 2022). Where individuals within organisation seek to expose the sexism that they have experienced for themselves (e.g., Bourabain, 2021), or other such discriminatory behaviours or practices, organisations have also adopted gender washing tactics as a means of 'damage control', and will then weaponize HR policies against individual victims in an attempt to control the messaging or discourse to hide their failures to uphold the equality laws they are obliged to adopt, and protect employees from psychological harm (Callahan and Elliott, 2020).

In an analytical sense, gender washing can be explained diagrammatically in the following way.

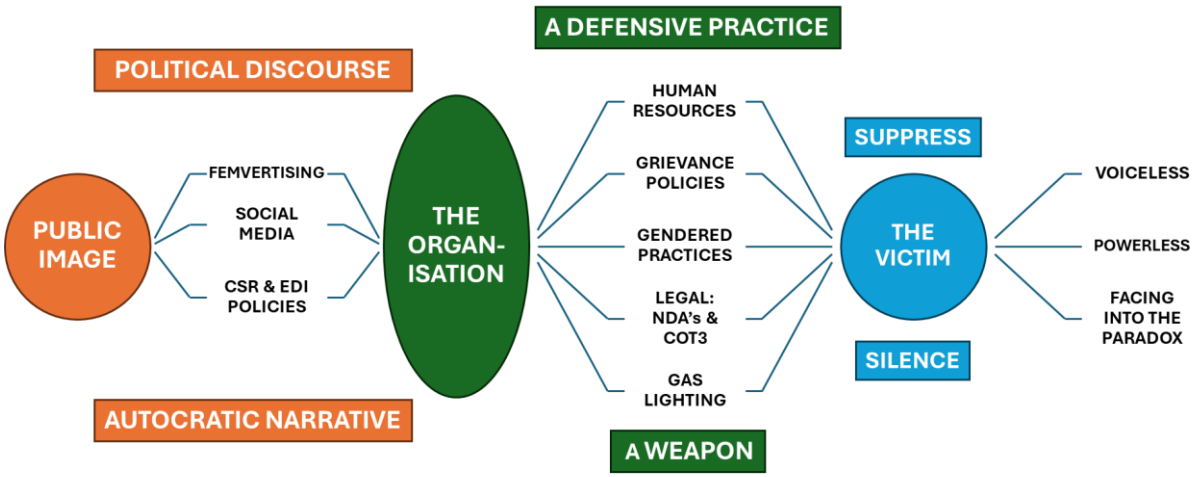


Figure 1: Diagrammatic representation of how genderwashing is experienced by women victims of pay inequity

Figure 1 presents a diagrammatic conceptual representation of the complex ways in which gender washing is understood and experienced by women who call out their own pay inequity and inequalities (Ryan, 2023). Starting from the left of the diagram, it shows how the autocratic organisation is able to (i) control the public image through social media, femvertising and corporate social responsibility reporting, (ii) use HR policies to provide employees with the illusion of equality and protection against discrimination, and (iii) targeted towards individuals who speak out against them.

The conceptual representation (diagram) exposes how gender washing practices are employed to hide, or make invisible the ongoing discrimination, violence and sexism that persists in organisations, attempting to legitimise or "wash clean" the "image or reputation" of organisations (Fotaki and Pullen, 2023). This has become a pervasive strategy among large corporations and government institutions as a way of silencing women voices or dissent from mainstream policies. For instance, McCarthy (2017) examined CSR (corporate social responsibility) empowerment economic programmes in Global South locations concluding that most of these programmes are a "myth", i.e., continue to marginalise and "stereotype" women, depriving them of agency and voice while claiming to empower them. Gender washing then creates the "illusion" of change or progression in women rights, equality or emancipation, whilst sanctioning the traditional power structures of organisations to continue to operate through the oppression of marginalised groups, such as women (Diehl et al., 2016). Gender washing therefore acts as a defensive barrier that seeks to disguise the structural sexism present in organisation (Yarrow and Davies, 2022). It draws power through collective practices that work in harmony to silence women's voices (Simpson and Lewis, 2005). For instance, organisations deploy gendered HR policies, NDA's (non-disclosure agreements) and COT3 agreements to nullify resistance to the 'fake' organisational narratives, driven from the structural power sources that serve powerful individuals and 'the organisation' itself (Martin, 2003).

Women in the UK who find themselves testing the integrity of Equal Pay Laws; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies, or taking tribunal action against their employers to seek justice for their ill treatment discover the veracity of gender washing as a suppressive strategy first hand (Fox-Kirk et al., 2020). The UK's inadequate equal pay laws, combined with organisation defiance, means that we are consistently failing to recognise, and therefore address, the systemic discrimination that women face when calling out sexism (Yarrow and Davies, 2024). This constant state of denial results in us never addressing the structural sexism that fuels women's mistreatment at work (Kreis, 2020), and thus we continue to subject women to emotional and psychological harm (Charles, 2013). Women continue risk their careers, reputation, financial security and sanity when fighting equal pay claims through the courts, who fail to listen to their testimonies, nullify their experiences, and finally dismiss their claims and deny them the justice that they deserve (Kreis, 2020). Such as in the case of the Nike and girl effect campaign that aimed to empower girls from developing countries but received a backlash from some female employees who spoke out against Nike's

unethical child labour and poor working conditions in the global south mainly affecting women and girls (Bauer, 2024).

Gender washing perpetuates the organisational power imbalances that exist, undermining women's rights, agency and equality in organisations, and thus provides a political discourse in support of the organisation, presenting false claims that relate to gender equality, and as Grzelec (2022) suggests, seeks to "window-dress" or simply "wash" away the stories of women that challenge equality credentials. Gender washing has become a powerful tool that helps to retain all aspects of gender inequality, having far-reaching detrimental and negative effects on women from both an economic and organisational perspective, as explained by Martin (2011), as it can be used in this way to suppress gender-related development through education attainment or equity of income, as well as hinder gender empowerment, such as through effects of promotion, and the number of women that we might see in leadership positions.

But perhaps most importantly, the negative affects of gender washing can serve to increase the emotional and psychological harms caused to women who are already victims, for example by creating 'gas lighting' effects that have been frequently associated with pay inequity experiences (Gracie, 2019). Gas lighting within the organisational context refers to the cumulative effects of workplace abuse (Wisdom and Nabors, 2024). This abuse is not only exhibited by leaders or supervisors but is also evident in gendered HR policies that invalidate women's experiences of sexism (Ford et al., 2021). Additionally, HR and legal teams may engage in collective practices that isolate, confuse, and disorient women through prolonged grievance processes (Kukreja & Pandey, 2023).

The organisation's rhetoric that sexism is an individual matter, as implied through the use of HR grievance processes targeted at individuals, rather than corporate-wide investigations that focus on exposing systemic sexism. HR policies point towards individual miscreants which pushes women towards the individualisation of the problem where they blame themselves for their own mistreatment. Rendering them powerless to call it out as systemic sexism and faced with notions of gender fatigue (i.e. discrimination against all women on the basis of gender) (Lewis et al., 2017). Ignoring or nullifying women's experiences (i) renders women voiceless, and therefore powerless, in their own, and our collective battles against sex discrimination in the workplace (Gill, 2014), and (ii) the

experience forces women to live within a paradox where their lived experiences and how the organisation presents its public self are at odds with each other (Kelan, 2009). This is why we believe Fox-Kirk called for (grounded) theory research that has been born from women's experiences of how gender washing is affecting women working today (Fox-Kirk, et al., 2020) as well as how gender washing continue to enact sexism is a significant call that we intend to answer through the findings of this study.

Methodology

The research adopts a feminist and social constructionist stance (Gergen, 2000) to present the findings captured of the lived experiences of 12 women (including one of the authors) who discovered, reported and challenged their own pay inequity situations at work and through the courts. We have adopted a qualitative methodology to illuminate our understanding of the ways in which gender washing is described in workplace contexts and use these deep and rich narratives of women's pay inequity experiences as a proxy from which to gain further knowledge of how it is practiced, as well as it's harmful affects. Specifically, we seek to answer two questions from this study:

How is gender washing perceived and experienced? (Walters, 2021).

And

What are the affects of gender washing on women? (Pullen et. al., 2016)

Participants controlled the telling of their own stories, in their own words, whilst being guided by an indigenous outsider who herself had experienced her own pay inequity in 2017 (Acker, 2001). Interviews were held to understand whether participants met the criteria and understood the purpose of the study, including the interview and analysis process, and to explain the researcher's own pay inequity experiences and motivations behind the research, before subsequent interviews captured women's experiences in more detail, providing reflexive discussion and sensemaking.

This study represents both an academic and personal journey that joins women's experiences together in order create new knowledge that will bring us closer to equality and freedom for all (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2006). The researchers have developed empathetic and supportive relationships with each participant, asking semi-structured open-ended questions that were sensitive to the needs of the storyteller, and avoiding any unnecessary distress during the telling of difficult and emotional personal stories. A total of 30 hours of interviews were video recorded between 2019 and 2023 presenting stories from 12 women from a range of business contexts, the presentation of the analysis here follows a story-telling approach (Rosile et, al., 2013) which has been designed to capture the discovery, reporting and responses following a pay inequity dispute at work. The narratives captured are at points descriptive, and at other times reflexive, as encouraged by the author, and allowing for a deeper reflection of individual experiences, and supporting a deeper understanding of how women make sense of what had happened to them (Mills et, al., 2010).

Data Analysis

The authors reached women with pay inequity experiences through personal and charitable networks that support women who are pursuing legal claims against employers who have discriminated against them. The 12 participants are diversified through seniority, industry sector, age and ethnicity. Each story has been manually transcribed and uploaded into the MAXQDA software where a thematic analysis has been completed as supported by a grounded theory process (Glaser and Strauss, 2017). The author's own experience of pay inequity was used to guide a consistent coding across the transcripts, which identified 8 codes, supported by 30 sub-codes that capture the full extent of the gender pay inequity experience. In addressing the risks associated with the first author being a female victim of pay inequity herself there are challenges associated with the strong connection between the

researcher and data associated with this study. Although this could result in those parts of the data that echo the experiences of the researcher becoming more prominent in the findings presented; there is, however, a greatly reduced risk in the researcher missing the underlying meaning of what is being expressed by the participants through the description of their own experiences, and emotions. This risk is also diminished by the grounded theory approach itself, where new insights have 'emerged' from the data in the form of themes, rather than forged from preconceived ideas in the researcher's mind (Glaser and Strauss, 2017). In addition, the presentation of relevant findings that directly link gender washing concepts to the narratives provide us with the confidence of our interpretations (Richie et al, 2014). Post study the authors have come to understand that the conditions for the capturing of such descriptive narratives is possibly because of the closeness of the first author to the topic, and therefore the supportive and empathetic approach taken to the interviews themselves (Oakley, 1981; Roberts, 2013).

This paper explores genderwashing practices as decsribed by the female victims of pay inequity, taking care to preserve both the language, and the rich description, that is present within the narratives themselves. The grounded theory approach allowed for the emergence of four sub-themes (or sub-codes) from the data, alongside a general dialogue on genderwashing, these are: (i) Organisational Rhetoric, (ii) HR Policy, (iii) Gas Lighting and (iv) NDA with 10 of the 12 participant transcripts underpinning the data presented in the findings section, and an average of six participants transcripts containing data relevant to each theme. A total of 99 segments were coded across 10 transcripts with the most narrative focussed on gas lighting.

Findings

In this section, we focus on presenting a living-story that represents women's experiences of Gender-Washing (Rosile et, al., 2013), provided through the use of chapters representing the sub-themes that emerged through the analysis process (Glaser and Strauss, 2017). The authors use women's stories here as a proxy for describing how Gender-Washing is experienced by women within organisational contexts. The five sub-themes, or sections, have been summarised below;

1. Protecting the Corporate Image: Here we present the stories that describe how the organisation portrays itself through marketing and advertising, and how this façade is at odds with women's lived-experiences.
2. Empty Policies: We explore how gendered HR grievance policies are used to deny and nullify women's stories of sexism in the workplace.
3. Gas Lighting Effects: this section provides stories of the gas lighting that women experience in the workplace, described here as a collective practice that points to using discourse gender-washing approaches.
4. The Crest of the Law: Women's experiences of going to court can highlight where gender-washing is present, and how it is used as a textual means of prevent women's truth from being heard and believed.
5. Gagging the Voiceless: This section uses women's stories to describe how NDA's (Non-Disclosure Agreements) and other legally binding agreements are used by organisations and the courts to prevent women from speaking their truth.

Two other sub-themes emerging from this analysis (Revolution and Women's Skills) describe how women are beginning to respond to the gender-washing that they have experienced. These responses develop after considerable sense-making, and explore a forward-thinking approach, thus these themes are discussed in within the discussion section of this paper.

Protecting the Corporate Image

Protecting and maintaining a positive corporate image, particularly through corporate social responsibility agendas has been touted as instrumental for businesses attempting to out-perform each other in highly competitive industries (Streimikiene et al., 2021). Public opinion can bend customer loyalty, can swing favour, pendulum style, from for to against overnight, impacting on company profits and stakeholder perceptions. Thus, most companies will deploy extensive advertising, marketing and communication resources in order to create and maintain a corporate image (Hussein et al., 2020). We spend so much time and expend so much of our energy at work that our jobs become part of our identity, affiliated to who we are, and as such brings purpose and meaning into our lives and sense-making (Mills et., al, 2010). However, our experiences of the organisation are not limited to public images and discourses alone. Our experiences of work are shaped by the practices, attitudes and behaviours that we observe as what people do, or what they say (Martin, 2003). When our lived experiences allow us to observe practices that are gendered, or what people say and do as harmful to women, we are presented with a paradox (Van Der Brink and Strobbe, 2009).

> "I think at that point I could not reconcile what they were saying publicly with what they were doing."
>
> Ada Lovelace

Large, international, monolithic enterprises have considerable resources and political influence over the regions of the world where they operate. They frequently will have enormous resources at their disposal, all of which will be deployed in order to maintain a positive corporate image if necessary (Hussein et al., 2020).

> "The COMPANY NAME is an organisation that won't be questioned, and I see it happening in public as well. If you question, if you criticise the

> COMPANY NAME it will just dig its heels in. And it doesn't matter. It will never do a U-turn, will never reverse. It will just dig its heels in more, and more, and more, however wrong it is. Because nobody questions the COMPANY NAME."
>
> Ada Lovelace

The sheer might and scale of organisations support the aggressive approaches, or legal 'SLAPPS' (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation) that are frequently used against those who dare to discredit the corporate image that they have invested so much in creating and protecting (www.gov.uk). Ada describes her perceptions of what will happen to her if she 'dare to challenge them'.

> "These aren't organisations that want to change, they're organisations that want to crush you if you dare to challenge them, and they will, and they do it successfully."
>
> Ada Lovelace

Despite the very real threat of harm, many women tell stories of their anger and frustration with marketing that deliberately creates a false image of the company.

> "I feel cheated, and I hate if a COMPANY NAME van or lorry or an advert comes on for COMPANY NAME. And they portray themselves to be this family run business, and it's all, you know, you look at their adverts, and it's all about, you know, the household and the families, you know? And I I could. Oh my God. I can't describe to you how angry that makes me feel. I want, I want to put my foot through the telly. I could quite happily drive down there

> and put a match to it, because they portray themselves to be something that they're absolutely not. And that destroys me,"
>
> Phyllis

Phyllis wants to tell the world her story, so that everyone will know what 'these people are really like', and thus remove the effects of the gender-washing created by false marketing. Individual women understand that they are not able to fight back against the aggressive and threatening practices frequently adopted by corporations to protect their corporate image (Bazzichelli, 2021).

> "That kills me. If I could get it out there on big banners across the sky and tell everybody what these people are really like, I would."
>
> Phyllis

The pervasive nature of corporate marketing force women to face into the façade, sometimes daily, whilst held captive to their own experiences. And thus, women are forced to endure and relive the paradox that gender-washing creates.

> "Everywhere, you know the COMPANY NAME and the trucks and the. And so it's it's one of those things where, and this company, the damage is one thing, to have the systemic practices that they have, that are so pervasive and horrible in the company. It's another that the company itself is so pervasive. It controls media, controls video now. It controls so much, you know, that we watch."
>
> Ursula Banks

Empty Policies

Martin (2011) suggested that sexism is viewed as illicit, socially unacceptable even, and thus we come to understand the prevalence of the subtle forms of gender bias that now dominates women's experiences of the workplace (Martin, 2001, 2006). These imperceptible gendered practices are not visible to all, but become exposed to those who experience sexism first-hand (Acker, 2006). Women will usually be forced to submit an employee grievance about the sexism that they have experience requiring them to explain what they have experienced to senior male leaders who currently benefit from the status quo (Cortis et, al., 2022). HR grievance processes that seek to deny and nullify women's voices by collecting contradictory stories from privileged senior male leaders are experienced as an augmentation of the gendered practices that perpetuate sexism in the workplace (Holck, 2016). Sarafina describes her reaction to the outcome of her grievance.

> "It was through the grievance process. Which sounds like it was not robust anyway. The grievance process came back with a result in it, which was basically, he wasn't, he was not guilty of bullying and harassment, but he was partially guilty of a use of offensive language, some race related. Yeah. And I was just like, are you kidding me? And I remember just sitting there, and just like, just, just, having this out of body experience and just being like really upset. Like are you fucking serious?"
>
> Sarafina

Sarafina likens the discovery of 'the result' to a process that happens outside, or separately, from her own experiences, which emphasized through her words 'out of body experience'. Grievance policies aim to detach the victim from their story, which serves to

dehumanise and disconnect women from their experiences (Amstutz et. al,. 2021). Official reports, documentation and evidence is captured in relation to their complaint, drowning out women's voices with multiple 'other' stories that contradict and nullify them. The use of the legal language that surround these practices, such as 'hearings', 'investigations' and 'appeals' create a textual erasing of the truth, and invalidate women's stories. Organisational power structures are used to 'wash-clean' the blemishes that come from sexism accusations and gendered practices exposed by the whistleblower (Bazzichelli, 2021). Grievance processes ignore the emotional and psychological harm caused to the victims of workplace abuse, sometimes to the point of requiring women to reconcile directly with the perpetrators of their unfair treatment, or their abusers. An approach that assumes an equality that has been called out as absent.

> "At the end they're, they're like, oh, we think it's conducive, or some crap like that, that both parties work towards a solution. We recommend mediation. And that both parties find a harmonious way of moving forward and working together. I'm like, I'm not, I'm not working with them again."
>
> Sarafina

By asking Sarafina to 'work towards a solution' with the person she has accused of racial and sexist abuse pushes her into the psychological danger of a continuation of the very abuse that she is trying to protect herself from through the grievance process (Pullen et, al,. 2017). Sarafina faces into the gendered HR practices that serves as a mechanism to protect the perpetrators of sexist and racist behaviours, or those with power (Cortis et, al,. 2021). She interplays the words 'power' and 'voice' to denote her silencing (Piderit and Ashford, 2003). She understands that if she has no voice, they (or the organisation) are free to control the

narrative and ‘set the rules’, which she understands to have broader consequences than her own grievance.

> “I had no power. I had no voice. I was in their world. They set the rules, you know? And in the moment it hit me, I was just like, yeah, they control their world"
>
> Sarafina

We see how Sarafina begins to make sense of how her experiences and her own silencing when trying to speak out, which presents itself as something altogether more institutionalised than she first considered (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). She now looks at her colleagues, peers and the senior leadership team in a new light which causes her to conclude that her story will not be heard, and power will prevail. Here we can begin to understand how the recognition of institutionalised mechanisms that work against women, such as systemic sexism, serves to reinforce the silencing affect, leading women towards abandoning their hopes for being heard, for justice, and therefore leads towards inaction (Stamarski and Son Hing, 2015).

> “They all mocked and they all closed ranks, you know, and it was just like in my mind there, like my gut told me, you're never gonna get a fair hearing at this company. You never ever gonna get a fair hearing."
>
> Sarafina

Ursula describes how she reported discriminatory practices and behaviours to her boss and HR once she had discovered patterns and practices that concerned her.

> “So I did go to my boss and tell him I thought the culture in our group, and I told him in the presence of an HR person, that the culture in this group was

> terrible. That there was clearly some pattern and practice of discrimination in this group, because there was quite a tide of people that had come and stated that they were discriminated against both physically and emotionally."
>
> Ursula Banks

Following her reports of discrimination she experiences a change in how she treated by her boss and colleagues denoted by the metaphor of a black swan. She realizes that by calling out the discrimination she has positioned herself as ‘other’ and against the organisational rhetoric, making herself a target for those who are trying to protect the illusion of a gender equality, and who must force her into silence by removing her (Piderit and Ashford, 2003).

> “They became even more enraged that I was stating these things. That I was saying there was a problem. And then I became really the Black Swan. I was really the person that they didn't want around anymore, because she's, she's the Black Swan. She's going to say there's something wrong. And so that became really kind of the challenges. How do we get her out of here?"
>
> Ursula Banks

Preventing her from having an opportunity to tell her story, and thereby denying her truth.

> “They could have treated me with the dignity and respect. To give me the benefit of the doubt. To this day, to this day, they have never spoken to me. They have never asked me about my allegations. Nobody has ever interviewed me about my allegations. Nobody's ever interviewed me in that employee relations complaint against NAME."
>
> Ursula Banks

Ada Lovelace recognized that organisational policies (what organisations say they do) directly contradicted the organisations behaviours and practices (what people actually do) (Martin, 2003), describing how pay is allocated based on an individual's decision, and so company pay policies are ignored (Acker, 2000).

> "Regardless of the grading structure, regardless of all these other, you know, bits of, I suppose, structural bits and process bits of information which is supposed to mean that people get paid, you know, equitably. Actually, in reality, it all came down to the decision of one person."
>
> Ada Lovelace

Ada Lovelace describes her experience of how HR dealt with her equal pay complaint, she indicates poor priority and process, a theme that is repeated across many women's narratives.

> "It went into a black hole"
>
> Ada Lovelace

She considers a more sinister is going on when she was told that she was not allowed to have anything in writing regarding her pay inequity complaint, which sent alarm bells ringing.

> "No paper trail. Well, that's not true. There was a paper trail, but I wasn't allowed a paper trail, so I was. I was saying, I I just knew it was dodgy."
>
> Ada Lovelace

Women's stories tell of the well-practiced art of the 'cover-up'. Organisations seeking to bury or hide organisational sexism once exposed, and then invoke gender-washing tactics in an attempt to wash clean the evidence, so that the company's image can remain, untainted (Hussein et al., 2020). Denying the lived experience of women, in favour of organisational

reputation saving, pointing to the routine de-valuing of individual employees by nullify their lived experiences and erasing, or preventing access to, the company records that support women's accounts (James and Wooten, 2006). Withholding (or indeed materializing) information is a form of power that organisations use to silence women. Ada understands that withholding this information will prevent her story from being believe, or even from being told, either publicly or in the courts.

> "I felt lied to you. I felt How dare you withhold this from me? This is supposed to be a transparent process. You're, you're publicly saying you've launched this new pay inquiry process to give transparency, and yet you would not put anything writing and you've withheld why the decision was reached"
>
> Ada Lovelace

The hidden nature of gender-washing practices are explained by Ada through the story she tells of being questioned by a male colleague about why she didn't report these events to the Head of Diversity and Inclusion at her place of work (Piderit and Ashford, 2003, Morrison and Milliken, 2000). She describes her shock at his naivety, and put's it down to his 'position of privilege' as a senior white male. As someone who has never been ignored or silenced she explains how he has 'no concept of how this works', and he fails to see the invisible forces that prevented her from speaking out (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). EDI representatives and policies provide a facade that is used to serve and sustain workplace discrimination by countering women's stories of discrimination (Cortis et, al., 2022), with good news stories that maintain the 'gender wash' effects.

> "I think he's like a second in command and he did not understand. I remember him saying to me when I said, you know, he said, well, why

> didn’t you just go to the Head of Diversity and Inclusion and say something? That's what I'd have done. Like you have no concept of how this works. It doesn't matter who I speak to. It doesn't matter what I said. I've been through all the channels. I've spoken to everyone. You don't understand the mechanism involved. And it doesn't matter what the woman says, she will never be listened to. And that for a man speaking from his position of privilege in life, where if he has a problem, he goes and says something to someone and he's listened to."
>
> Ada Lovelace

Individual’s who are willing to stand against, or silence, women’s stories that are perceived as detrimental to the organisation’s reputation are generously rewarded. Promotions and very public celebrations are bestowed upon the perpetrators of sexism, and their Gender-Washing bed-fellows. This misuse of power and hierarchy sends a clear message to other employees about rewards and retributions of speaking out (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). Sarafina’s describes how her perpetrator was promoted whilst under investigation by the company for race and gender discrimination.

> “This guy, he was being investigated for two grievances. I opened my company e-mail like a week later, right? Like he gets an e-mail from the Director congratulating him on getting a new role to everybody."
>
> Sarafina

Gas Lighting Effects

Gas lighting is a term that has become synonymous with women's pay inequity experiences, such as the pay inequity stories chronicled in Carrie Gracie's book, 'Equal' (Gracie, 2019). Gas lighting stories tell of deliberate attempts to mislead, confuse and contradict women's stories, so that they can be manipulated into doubting their own reality (Gracie, 2019). These techniques have harmful psychological affects that lead to anxiety, depression or post-traumatic responses leading to longer-term impacts on the lives and careers of women (Pullen et, al,. 2017). One alarming characteristic of gas lighting is that the victim is unaware that it is happening, leading women towards questioning their own memories and experiences, and into anxiety and depression. Ada describes her own experience of collective gas lighting practices, as were adopted by the HR, legal and other teams involved in her discrimination.

> "I'd not realised at the time, but, this is where the damage is really done. I was being heavily manipulated and gas lit deliberately. They were deliberately trying to make me question my own recollection, my own sanity. [Who are they?] Everyone involved, right? My boss. HR. The Independent consultancy firm. Named people that were brought in, yeah. And this, I think is, is, frightening, and it is the thing that I've become most interested and focused on over time since I've left. An organisation that will gas light. And I mean that in the Jewish sense of the word. I don't mean just lie. I mean they are trying to make you lose your grip on reality. And it works."
>
> Ada Lovelace

Ada clearly remembers the moment when the fog lifted, and explains how she felt 'overwhelmed' when her legal counsel described the gas lighting tactics that are frequently

adopted to silence women in disputes over gender discrimination and pay (Gracie, 2019). She could now make sense of what was happening to her, and this brought a sense of relief when her lived experiences were finally validated.

> "He was the first person who not only acknowledged that what was happening to me was real, and why it was happening, but also pointed out all these other things that were happening, that I hadn't picked up on, that they were doing to try and put pressure on me. In that, manoeuvre me, and shut me down. And at the time, I could have hugged him. Yeah, yeah, it was overwhelming."
>
> Ada Lovelace

Ada maintains that gas lighting practices are not confined to HR and legal teams, but a collective practice, that is intentionally targeted at employees that challenge the company's rhetoric by raising complaints of discrimination. We open the door on women's working environments are gas lit by design, providing a prison within which sexist's can prey on their victims without fear of reprisal. Women liken the experience to that of an abusive relationship, where the victim is trapped with no way out.

> "It is institutionalized to the highest level. This is not something that's done accidentally, or by one person. And when you tell them, which I did, how ill I'm becoming, they just ramped it up again, so they know it's working. And I think it's so pervasive, and I think it's happening huge scale. Yeah, not just the COMPANY NAME but organisations. But I didn't know that at the time. I hadn't. This is something that, a realisation I came to, probably a year or so after I'd left. At the time I just, it the, the, having somebody, the

> solicitor, say I wasn't insane, it was real. It was actually worse than I thought it was, was. Just overwhelming relief because I felt like I had, I was, losing my mind. And that is what really, really just so that in my view, is what's caused all the long-term damage. Yeah, it's it's abusive"
>
> Ada Lovelace

Gas lighting is therefore a practice that occurs within an organisational context that has been designed to amplify its toxic affect on its victims (Fletcher, 1999; Martin, 2001; Prokos and Padavic, 2005). Sarafina's story explains how the perpetrator of her gas lighting appeared unaware of what he was doing, when interviewed about his racist and sexist abuse.

> "He was so shocked, so shocked of being accused of gas lighting somebody. But that's what he did. Tell me one thing, do another and then confuse me and then, oh, it's your fault. Like, who does that, you know?"
>
> Sarafina

Denying the abuse of colleagues at work is of course what we would expect from someone guilty of illicit behaviour in the organisation, but Sarafina's story also uncovers a lack of understanding of some perpetrators of the collective practices that are ingrained into their own experiences of the company. Sarafina's considers her perpetrators as narcissists who either don't understand or don't care about how they are affecting other people.

> "I just think that's who he was. Genuinely speaking because, cause the whole thing of purpose, intent and effect. That's just who he is. Because one of the things that I've had to come to terms with through this process is there are people in this world that literally, they will destroy people's lives and go home and sleep, and think they've done nothing wrong. So that's just who

> he is. He says things, doesn't really think about it, and tries to hide what he's doing."
>
> Sarafina

Here we come to understand that it is the combination of individually-driven sexism (Martin, 2006), working in harmony with the enactment of gendered HR practices, that create untenable situations for women after the discovery of pay inequity (Stamarski and Son Hing, 2016). While individual sexist or discriminatory behaviours in isolation may seem inconsequential, the combined impact of Gender-Washing collective practices can have harmful emotional and psychological affects (Pullen et, al., 2017), regardless of what its initiator intends.

The Crest of the Law

Most of the women interviewed for this study, including the first author, had taken their equal pay, gender and race discrimination claims to the UK tribunal courts as a means of seeking justice for their illegal treatment. These stories describe their personal experiences of the justice system.

> “Something that I've always looked up at is the law, being the law. And I'm a firm believer in the law. And I'm a firm believer in policies and procedures. And, you know, I follow those things because that's what we're supposed to do. I run my house like that. I, I'm, I have got values. I am like that. Somebody says, the law says you don't do this, then you don't do it."
>
> Phyllis

Taking an employer to through the UK tribunal court process takes years and can costs women their emotional wellbeing and financial stability. We find that women will sacrifice their career, livelihood and savings to tell their story in court, believing in a fair and transparent hearing, where their story will be heard, and social justice will be restored.

> “They knew that they'd broken the law and they were willing to try and save face. Yes, I I mean, a senior business partner, name of HR Business Partner, threatened me, told me to drop it. She said that it would cost me a lot of money and it would cost me my career. Now, I believe that she was telling me that because she wanted me to drop it. Because she knew that if it did go to court, I would win equal pay."
>
> Phyllis

Some of the most harmful affects of pay inequity experiences happen in the courtroom, where women discover the true extent of the gendered practices that they are up against. Women’s stories expose our tribunal courts as extensions of the gendered practices that serve to protect the perpetrators, and continue to abuse the victims of pay inequity (James and Wooten, 2006). Linking the sexism that is present in the macro (societal) and meso (organisational) worlds together (Diehl and Dzubinski, 2016), through the use of Gender-Washing practices to deny the presence of sexism so that it remains hidden from view. Business legal teams are well practiced at creating gender washed images, rotating comparators and colleagues whose stories deny and nullify women’s experiences.

> “Suddenly that law that I'd held in such high regard. I, I don’t. I certainly do not hold the law in that high regard anymore, no. You know, that Crest of the law, that everything that it stands for. I just think it's all bullshit, it's all

rubbish. You. You're somebody that, you're another thing that stands there and says, well, we do this, this and this. But you don't. You don't. You don't say what. You don't do what you say you're gonna do. You're not who you say you are. And I feel cheated by that as well."

Phyllis

Like lambs to the slaughter, woman after woman, stands at the alter of the tribunal courts, sacrificing her life, career and sanity to fight her equal pay claim, only to have her experiences denied, ignored and silenced. Yet, both our equal pay laws, and the gendered practices that surround how this law is enacted, continue to invite and pay attention to the Gender-Washing practices of organisations, supporting its use in silencing women's lived experiences by denial rhetoric and the mobilisation of stakeholders and resources in relatiation (James and Wooten, 2006). We come to understand a tribunal court system that fails to recognise how gender and race discrimination is actually practised, and falls foul of the gender-washing tactics that are at play. Women's cases are both represented and heard by legal teams that mirror the social demographic profiles of the perpetrators (that of aging, white, privileged men), never experienced the type of discrimination being presented to them in court and benefited from the current status quo (Cortis et, al,. 2021). Women understand how a lack of diversity puts them at a disadvantage when describing their lived experiences in court.

"I would love to see like the portion of lawyers or barristers in this country that actually represents the demographics of the people who are dealing with these things. Because it matters a lot, you know. Because when I switched lawyers, like the way second laywer spoke to me, and the way she interacted with me, was different than the previous guy that was my lawyer.

And that helped me a lot, you know? And it's just people see things based on like their lived experiences or their position in society."

Sarafina

This lack of diversity across the legal industry forces women into the minefield of self-representation in court, particularly when faced with the alternative of representation by a legal team who fail to understand, or empathise, with their lived experiences, as described by Sarafina.

"My lawyer was, you know, no offence to anyone, but just like a middle age white guy, where every time I would cry when I was, would talk to him, he would like, you know, I could feel him just like being annoyed and just not give me proper advice, you know? It was just, you know, and I actually resented him for the longest time. And then I fired him, and that's when I started representing myself."

Sarafina

Self-representation, or representation from inexperienced legal teams, exposes the complexities of our legal system, which again presents an inequality. Here Sarafina explains how women's experiences are discounted as invalid in court if they don't adhere to arbitrary rules and technicalities which are used purposefully, and maliciously, to deny women's access to court services, and hinder their ability to tell their stories and be heard through the process and plaintiff retaliation of firms (James and Wooten, 2006).

"It's all about who knows the rules the best. And I automatically I start off I'm at a disadvantage because I wasn't like educated in law to know the rules.

> You know, I'm playing catch up, and it's all about rules. There are timelines and limits, which if you think about it, if something happened to you, you don't know this, you know, and most people don't even realise what happened until like months down the line. But then you can't do anything about it, you know? And it it's, it's crazy to me, you know? Like they can get away with the law on technicalities, but not only that, like they have all the money in the world which they can easily access."
>
> Sarafina

For many women the final 'nail in the coffin' in their condemnation of the law stems from a realisation of the limited powers of tribunal courts to hold organisations to account. Fines and audits are the only penalties that can be enforced, which even then can take years to settle (James and Wooten, 2006).

> "Then it's like, what are the consequences? You know, just go ahead, screw people's lives. We'll fine you. And then you just move, move on with your merry way. And it literally just hit me like a week or so. I'm like, no one gets arrested? They can screw things up, cheat, steal, do whatever, and they're good."
>
> Sarafina

Gagging the Voiceless

The widespread use of Non-Disclosure Agreements or NDA's to silence women's stories of sexual harassment in the workplace has been ridiculed in recent years, leading to a

ban across a number of American states of the use of NDA's, specifically in relation to sexual harassment following a number of high profile scandals in the media (Bell et. al., 2018). This has not affected the UK Tribunal court systems' prevalent use of the COT3 agreement. An instrument used to silence women in the same way NDA's are, which contain threatening legal clauses (including SLAPPS) that will be invoked if the 'respondent' (or victim) fails to write the courts to dismiss her claims, agree not to bring any further claims against the company, and to never discuss her case in public.

> "We were forced to. We were forced to settle. I didn't want to settle. I didn't want to settle. I certainly didn't want to sign their, their COT3 agreement that they, they, kept banding about, trying to keep us shut, our mouth shut. Telling us that, you know, we weren't allowed to say anything derogatory about them. They weren't allowed to say anything derogatory about us. Like I said to them, I don't give a shit what you got to say about me. I want to be able to say to the world what you were like. I wanna tell the truth about you, what your culture is like. You. You are not a family run business that cares about families. And I wanna be able to keep my tongue, and be able to say that that was really, really important to me. But my own legal team were hammering me. Trying to make me sign that agreement. Telling me that it was normal, that it's part of it."
>
> Phyllis

The practice of forcing women to sign legally binding documents to prevent them from sharing their own lived experiences of important aspects of their lives or careers feels like a breach of human rights (Mendonca-Richards, 2019). We understand that we are being silenced, in order to protect the company's false public image, and thus we are finally forced into participating

in the Gender-Washing practices ourselves. Our backdated pay becomes the ‘hush money’ used to prevent us from speaking about what happened, and we understand that our silence acts as an enabler to the company in continuing its exploitation and abuse of women and minorities. But for many women the involvement of money when seeking out social justice can be problematic because of the connotations of being paid to keep the company’s dirty secrets.

> “I don't think it's fair that someone can go and try to fuck up my life, or fuck up someone else's life, and then all you have to do is throw money at it. Nothing's been learned, and then you just get to walk away. I just think that's wrong, you know, and the law is the law.”
>
> Sarafina

But not all of us have been gagged. And perhaps this is where hope lies for our future.

> “I knew I would have to go public to make an impact. And so it was always my intention to, to be, to speak publicly about it. And that's why I knew at the point of doing it, I was like, this is, this will be the end. And it might be the end of a career in that field as well, I don't know. I knew I personally couldn't cause enough financial damage to elicit change. And knowing what I know now, multi-million pound impact is not enough to elicit change."
>
> Ada Lovelace

This paper presents the stories that describe how women experience pay inequity, and how these experiences expose gender-washing tactics that seek to silence or denounce women’s accounts of their own lives. The organisation has learned to gender wash in harmony with our court systems to provide accounts of the organisation that denies the discrimination

experienced by its employees. When both the organisational and societal mechanisms that are in place to protect women from inequality are failing, it is hard to imagine what can be done to prevent the women and girls in our future from suffering from the same harm that has affected the lives and careers of the women that took part in this study. Even collective action against employers, where women may combine their experiences and voices in order to be heard, are largely ignored by organisations as described by Ada here.

> "The messages from people like me, and others in the team who could see that this had to be stopped essentially were ignored and, in my view, ended up in a massive cover up."
>
> Ada Lovelace

But perhaps the dawning of a new age of social media heralds a change in who holds the power to control the narrative. Ada Lovelace describes how she believes that the Gender-Washing 'façade' of her company is slowing eroding as the company's sexist practices become exposed through mainstream and social media. But she also points to wider dissociation effects that she believes is happening at her old employer.

> "There's this idea of the COMPANY NAME, the principles of the COMPANY NAME and what the COMPANY NAME stands for. But what the COMPANY NAME does is, and, and, that is what was happening internally, and that I now see is what's happening externally as well, and they're really becoming clearer and clearer to people. People are stopping. People who previously have defended the COMPANY NAME to the hilt, now won't because the COMPANY NAME isn't doing what the COMPANY NAME says it's there to do."
>
> Ada Lovelace

The idea that large corporations no longer have control over their corporate image, or what is portrayed about them in the media, is certainly gaining traction, and public trust in organisational rhetoric has been waning for a number of decades (Kang and Hustvedt, 2014). Social media campaigns such as #metoo (Burke, 2022), and the everyday sexism project has provided a platform for forcing discriminatory stories out into the open. As women we believe that we can bring positive changes forward, particularly where the discrimination is visible to us. We can help others to 'see the light'.

> "My 2 step kids were vehemently against me joining the company because they had, all they had read online. They're like, this company's terrible. They're terrible to their people. And so, they were trying to protect me saying why are you going there? Like, why are you gonna go to work there? You don't belong working there. It's a horrible company. And and I said, oh, you guys, you know me, right? I'm strong. I can make a difference. I can help change things, right? I can, I can help people there. I can help them see the light. And so candidly, you know, I came there with very high hopes, thinking that I could be an agent for change. They asked me to come there and be an agent for change. The guy, this boss, part of his diatribe of getting me to come there was we need somebody that thinks differently, that acts differently, that will be an agent for change. But he didn't really mean that."
>
> Ursula Banks

The practice of actively recruiting women into known harmful and discriminatory environments under the pretence of seeking to change the culture can be seen across a number of stories, and works to support gender-washing agendas. This pitches individual women against the organisation, using them as sacrificial lambs to the corporate cultures that will

devour them, whilst reminding others of what happens to those that speak out. But in Ursula's case, the organisation hadn't reckoned on the consequences of providing a beacon of hope within such a toxic environment.

> "Once they saw this very large tidal wave, 650 people signing a petition in this group saying we want an independent investigation. There was a whole group that started an independent investigation. They wrote to the CEO. They implored the CEO to investigate this business unit and said there is a problem here. Ursula may have been the catalyst for us to talk about the problem, but Ursula is not the problem. There was a problem long before Ursula got here, and there will be one long, long after Ursula is fired. Unless you take issue with this."
>
> Ursula Banks

Ursula, as with all of the women in this study, continues to lead the fight for equality, instilling a hope that together we can begin to open our eyes to the sexism present in our organisations, and push back against the Gender-Washing narratives veils it.

Discussion

This study has responded to the call for more empirical studies that help us to understand where Gender-Washing is present in the organisational context, and through women's stories we have located this illusive predator. What we have found is that Gender-Washing becomes visible when women's report their experiences of sexism in the workplace, and that although some Gender-Washing is ever-present across the organisations marketing and internal communications, other types of Gender-Washing are brought into action when the

organisations reputation has been threatened. Specifically we find that GR grievance and legal practices (such as the use of NDA's) have been designed to adopt Gender-Washing tactics that will deny and nullify women's experiences of sexism, whilst simultaneously silencing them from sharing their stories with others. The psychological affects of gas lighting, when combined with settlements and payoffs, leave women facing into the violence of being forced to become part of the Gender-Washing façade, unable to speak the truth, and protect others from it's harmful grasp.

The authors put forward these empirical findings in order to fill two gaps in our current understanding of the complex phenomenon of Gender-Washing. Initially we discover evidence of the mechanisms that serve to promote the Gender-Washing agendas of organisations. Here we find that alongside the corporate image, which is supported by permeating advertising and marketing, we can also point to specific practices which gender wash by design. Specifically we find that it is exactly those practices which profess to protect women from sexism in the workplace (such as grievance policies and processes), are created with the intention denying and nullifying women's voices, and the widespread practice of NDAs and SLAPPS continue to be used to silence them forever. But secondly this research helps us to begin to understand how Gender-Washing is experienced by those women able to see it. What we find are stories of betrayal and destruction, where women's stories, their voices and their rights are discarded in favour of maintain a false façade for the organisation. We find that these harmful Gender-Washing practices are leading women into a dark and lonely places, where they will question their own sanity, before eventually sacrificing their careers and livelihoods in order to expose the truth. We find that individual women are taking on the burden of thwarting and exposing the pervasive Gender-Washing of massive corporations. leaving themselves exposed and fending off the predators alone. We must support their efforts.

Future research on this topic should therefore be aimed at exploring how we can identify, locate and disrupt the harmful gender-washing practices of organisations. As it is through its exposure that it becomes powerless. Women recount the moments when they discover how they are being manipulated by the organisation's Gender-Washing, and through their own sense-making can begin the process of exposing the underlying sexism so that it becomes visible to all. As this research shows, sharing stories of women's experiences remains our most effective means of sharing the knowledge and teachings that could benefit our future generations, and begin to bring about the type of social change require to tackle the sexism and gendered practices that still permeates our workplaces, and that are harmful for women.

Conclusion

This paper presents a novel feminist-interpretivist approach to the study of gender washing through the exploration of women's experiences of pay inequity. We find that gender washing, when used as an analytical construct can provide new meaning and interpretations of organisational practices that work against women's equality. Analysing women's experiences at work through this lens has exposed a myriad of ways in which gender washing is used, some of which have already been established across the literature, such as its use as a political discourse to protect the corporate image (Hussein, 2020; Walters, 2022; Fotaki and Pullen, 2023), as well as the use of HR policies designed to portray an illusion of equality and fairness (Weinhold and Brodtmann, 2017; Fox-Kirk et al., 2020; Kukreja & Pandey, 2023). We contribute empirical findings in support of the gender washing practices that we describe as 'gas lighting', where women describe prolonged and targeted attacks designed to deny and nullify their experiences of pay inequity and sexism in the workplace, where we also learn about the harmful psychological affects that such weaponised gender washing practices have on women, before they are silenced forever through the use of NDA's and COT3 agreements, which we also identify as another 'type' of gender washing practice.

As we listen to women's voices describing their lived experiences of sexism and other discrimination we see patterns emerge in the way that both the organisation, and the courts respond to them. By standing up and bravely telling their stories we learn that these women

become the target of defensive denials and personal attacks, and that such gender-washing tactics reside at the heart how the organisation silences women. We find that gender washing works in harmony with gendered HR practices, and the law, both of which profess to protect women from discrimination. We also find that when the organisation is alerted to the sexism, racism and harassment prevalent across the business, they will respond by mobilize their resources in an effort to deny and nullify women's stories in ways that increase and perpetuate harmful psychological affects. These stories expose the institutionalised and collective practice of gas lighting, demonstrating how gender-washing is used to intensify its affects, by further contradicting and nullifying women's lived experiences. The authors call for the research community to pay attention to the dangers of being caught in the gas-light, so that we can focus our efforts on addressing these detrimental cycles of denial. We should seek to provide safe spaces for women to call out discrimination, so that more stories can be heard, and we can work together to unveil and eradicate such gender washing practices from our workplaces.

These authors believe that women who are forced to navigate and make sense of the complex cultures and practices that sustain discrimination can provide us with deeper insights into the practices that are working against their fair treatment, and provide us with the necessary lessons on what can be done to combat it's harmful affects. The brave women who participated in this study all felt that many of the harmful psychological affects of their experiences could be lessened by the process of story-telling and listening. As it is through telling our stories that we gain the support of others, and through listening that we come to empathise and reflect on what is actually being said. The validation that comes from sharing our stories and being heard helps us to realise that we are not alone, so that we can begin the long journey of healing and recovery.

> "But what I also learned is that like, you know, it's sometimes you just have to be brave and as soon as one person comes and say something,

> you realise there's so many. So many other stories out there, it's just they probably thought, oh no one's going to believe me."
>
> Sarafina

This is the reason why the authors, and our participants, believe that studies of this kind can be of benefit, not just for the academic community and the advancement of theory, but because that by simply sharing our stories we can begin to shine a light, call out, and then recognise, the harmful practices that shape how our organisations use gender washing to respond to sexism (Martin and Collinson, 2002).

> I think I would feel that something had been achieved. Because at the moment, in terms of impacting the COMPANY NAME, nothing has been achieved. I don't mean to say that what I've done hasn't had an impact. I know that it has on other women. And ultimately that's what's needed, is a mass revolt basically, from, from women everywhere. I think it's the only way forward, isn't it?"
>
> Ada Lovelace

Ada's comments provoke a final thought on the profound and lasting impact that these type of experiences can have on women's perceptions, politics and priorities. As we face into this new, naked reality, beyond the gender-washing and into the world, we discover a renewed passion to have our voices heard, and to change things for the better, and in the distance we hear a revolution calling.

> "I've become more revolutionary in my thinking around everything. The older I get, the more I'm like, I think revolution is the only way forward.

Yeah, in terms, not just in terms of equal pay, but in terms of the the mess that we are in as a planet and as a world and politically."

Ada Lovelace

Although this paper was responding to a journal call, it became clear that gender washing lies at the heart of how women perceive the organisations response to sex discrimination or gender pay inequity claims. How the company portrays itself publicly, versus how they operate to silence women who speak out against pay inequity, provides women with greater clarity on the ways in which organisations continue to evade claims of pay inequity, and wash away the evidence that women's stories provide through a combination of threats and hush money attached to NDA's and COT3 agreements, and subsequently employees, customers and shareholders buy into the false corporate image, and for this reason we welcome the moves made by the Higher Education Authority in the UK to restrict the use of nondisclosure agreements (NDAs), particularly in cases involving harassment, discrimination, and bullying where universities in the UK have pledged to end the use of NDAs to silence complainants in cases of sexual harassment, bullying, and other forms of misconduct. This initiative, supported by the government and campaigners, aims to ensure that victims can speak out without fear of legal repercussions (Donellan, DfE, 2022). Similarly, the UK government has introduced legislation to crack down on the misuse of NDAs in the workplace. This includes prohibiting NDAs from preventing individuals from disclosing information to the police, regulated health and care professionals, or legal professionals.

Chapter 7: Sacrificial Lambs: An Emotional Tale of Pay Inequity.

Introduction

With this final findings chapter I seek to answer the second questions driving my research, which is:

2. **Why do pay inequity experiences result in trauma for women?**

This chapter explores my personal emotional journey, building on the findings from the previous two chapters, and culminating in a reflexive auto-narrative that brings our voices together to describe the pain, hurt and emotions of pay inequity experiences. I reference here in the title 'sacrificial lambs' as I consider the slaughter, feasting and waste that denotes how women are treated by their organisations, and then the psychological trauma that many women will experience following their pay inequity experiences, discarded onto the redundancy and retirement heaps of our lives and careers. I have constructed this chapter specifically to accentuate my personal principles and values in support of writing differently, as an auto-narrative (Daskalaki, 2012). As a first-hand witness to the phenomenon, and a subsequent scholar of the theory that surrounds it, I feel compelled to share my personal journey, but in particular I think it may provide some helpful insight into how our stories connect to each other.

This reflexive journey has been both a powerful tool for my own healing, which I hope will present an illuminating journey for others, whether they be academic, practitioner or victim, particularly in recognition that my story represents but a single story among the many thousands of victims of pay inequity worldwide. I present stories taken from 12 women's stories of pay inequity, and position them so that they follows the key aspects of my personal journey since I discovered my own pay inequity in 2017, nearly 7 years ago at the time of writing this paper. This moment has come to represents a moment of transition, a turning point, in my personal psychology, and my career that would come to changed the

direction of my life. I now consider these experiences to have passed along with the intensity of my emotional responses, and thus this paper is reflexive; however, I am still far from concluding on many aspects of my experiences and find myself still oscillating between the painful memories and joyful discoveries that have charted my course over these past years. To adequately situate this paper, I include a short review of the literature on the emotional affects of injustice, as from my readings, this theoretical basis is the one that speaks the most to my own experiences. However, what I really hope is that this paper sheds some much needed light on the complexities of the emotional affects that are so pervasive to women's experiences of injustice, such as my own experience of pay inequity; and how our personal history, social context, perspectives and relationships all contribute towards the shapes and colours of how we experience traumatic events, and eventually make sense of the world and our existence within it. How we react comes from our particular vantage point, and the actions that we take are those that appear available to us at the time. But I am in no doubt that my experience of pay inequity represents one of the most traumatic experiences of my life so far, and I consider its consequences in terms of a deep and profound impact on my life and career. I believe it is our sentient ability to make sense of the situations in which we find ourselves, of how we process our emotions and use them to change the way that we feel about ourselves and our lives, and it has been this process that has pulled this particular experience apart from the everyday experiences of my life. I believe that sense-making is not just a cognitive process about the 'facts' of the event, but an emotionally-driven steering wheel that directs our attention to specific details that help us to uncover meaning, and that remains in our psyche from that moment on, guiding us forwards until the emotional response no longer serves us, which, in the case of inequality at least, will remain relevant for several lifetimes at least, and so it continues. The rest of this introduction will therefore provide a short review of relevant literature on emotional affects of injustice before I provide some

personal context to my story. We then embark on my personal reflexive journey that has used the stories of 12 women's experiences of pay inequity, and combined them into a single living story that represents my own story. We conclude on this journey at the point where our reflexivity and emotions meet and find that some emotional affects remain and serve as motivations for future action, and that there is a healing power in the stories of others, and a solidarity that we seek out from their support.

Emotional affects, as used within this context, are considered to represent the emotional responses that we, as women, experience following episodes of injustice. This might be related to our initial discoveries of pay inequity, but can also be relevant to subsequent unfair treatment, such as by colleagues or the grievance process. Emotional affects can be short-lived and intense, such as rage, or more lingering and fluctuating such as bouts of sadness and depression, however, all of the emotional affects described within this chapter come from the language and words of real women from the real world, and thus may not perfectly match to the theoretical language that is present within the literature.

Emotional Affects of Injustice

Centuries of struggles to redress the inequality that has emerged through the introduction of capitalism, and its subsequent patriarchy ideals, began as early as the middle-ages and continues to affect our experiences of the world, particularly in relation to our participation in the labour markets (Lerner, 1986). The social and economic inequalities that separated us in the middle-ages are reminiscence of the vast divides that have emerged both within and across global boundaries today and is bound to continue its evolution to remain one of the most important struggles presented to each new generation (Frederici, 2004). As organisations continue to undermine and exploit the labour and skills of the low-powered and fiscally poor, in favour of gaining yet more wealth for the privileged and elite classes, we are

seeing ever deeper divides emerge that demonstrate the vast inequity that pushes our peoples and planet into the social and environmental crises that will come to mark this centuries legacy (Guterres, 2023). Such inequalities trigger a sense of injustice for or from those who will suffer from the physical or emotional harm that inequality can elicit (Cropanzano et. al., 2010). This sense of injustice remains an important social psychological concept that constructs our experience of the world in which we live, and the organisations that we work within (Rosile, et. Al., 2013). A plethora of empirical research supports our understanding of specific homogenous groups' cognitive responses to inequitable situations, such as those that related to the pay and rewards we receive from our labour (Adams, 1965; Tata, 2000; Werner and Ones, 2000; Leventhal and Lane, 1970; Cook and Emerson, 1972). The literature has considered social exchange and affect theories from the cognitive reactions to 'unfairness' when evaluating procedural injustice, such as organisational processes that are perceived to be biased, as well as how we might interpret our treatment by others, such as an inappropriate organisational response to our injustice termed interactional injustice (Cropanzano and Ambrose, 2015). This research points to the complex cognitive evaluations that are associated with episodes of injustice, which lead us towards specific emotional responses that are dependent on several dynamic factors, such as uncertainty, context and relationships (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). And so as researchers reading across this field we continue to consider individual emotional affects of injustice as a complex and dynamic interaction between the individual, their social context, and the motives that are perceived (Cropanzano et. Al., 2010; Huber and Kell, 2022). Such levels of complexity could be considered as a barrier to further theoretical progression, as emotional responses become difficult to predict, due to the socially constructed nature of individuals, and therefore the nature of changing emotional affects, that will continue to mediate responses over time and within different context, that render it almost impossible to predict how individuals will respond to specific

episodes of inequity (Hillebrandt and Barclay, 2013; Pellerin and Cloutier, 2015; Brockman, 2021). An interesting theory that follows on from research that focusses on the negative affects that victims experience when facing unfair treatment at work (Mannix, et, al., 2005; Huber and Kell, 2022), develops our understanding of the potential 'blind spots' that emerge when other people (those positively impacted by the injustice) and 'happy' about the decision or injustice event, fail to recognise the injustice, blind to the emotional affects on others, and serving to protect their own source of happiness (Cropanzano and Ambrose, 2015; Phillips and Jun, 2022).

The cognitive appraisal model, and it's associated affective events theory (Weiss et, al., 1999; Krehbiel and Cropanzano, 2000), have been challenged for its lack of a coherent empirical basis for other emotions associated with injustice outside of anger, which has thus far been the focus of research attention (Archer and Mills, 2019); however, we do see studies that consider the wider spectrum of emotions that are also associated with episodes of injustice, such as fear, sadness, disgust, shame and guilt (Mikula et. Al. 1998). Clearly inequity situations can present us with the 'winners' (overpaid) and 'losers' (underpaid); and therefore lead us to positive affects (happy to be overpaid), as well as negative affects (unhappy to be underpaid). These difference become important for theories which are based in social constructionism, as those differences in perceptions can also help us to understand how victims are treated by their perpetrators and colleagues after reporting pay inequity, who may be inclined to play-down or deny its existence (Cropanzano and Ambrose, 2015).

We have come to understand the importance of perceptions of injustice to the emotional well-being of individuals within the organisational context, and that episodes of injustice can lead toward the types of negative emotional affects that cause harm to women's lives and careers (Folger and Cropanzano, 1998; Huber and Kell, 2022; Pellerin and Cloutier, 2018; Mikula et, al., 1998; Barclay and Whiteside, 2011). Research across the field has more

recently appreciated the social constructionist views that underpin individual sense-making as a psychological construct that will frequently follow episodes of injustice, and thus a merging of theories has become more prevalent (Van den Bos, 2003; Van den Bos and Lind, 2013; Weick, 1995), crucial in evaluating emotional affect and mediating responses of individuals when faced with injustice (Cropanzano and Ambrose, 2015). This study seeks to illuminate current theoretical thinking at this juxtaposition of knowledge by presenting real-world stories of women's lived experiences through 'episodes of injustice' that follow their discovery of pay inequity. This approach will allow for an exploration of the real-world and dynamic interactions between injustice and affect. The authors present stories that provide the topic with much needed insight into the complex interplay between the cognitive and emotional responses elicited from both procedural and interactional injustices, as perceived from women who discovered their own pay inequity at work. As we can see from chapter 5, as the sexism is unveiled around them, women begin to make sense of the gendered hiracrchies and practices that surround them. These stories trace the actual event, or 'alarm phase activation', which results in women critically evaluating the social structures that support the injustices that become apparent to them (Mannix et. al., 2010). What women discover as they break down the organisational practices that profess to protect them, is a deep-rooted sexism that has led to both procedural and interactional injustices that shape their emotions and responses to the situation. Eventually leading to retaliation through the courts.

It is at this point that we see more clearly the important role that emotions play in stimulating affective solidarity between women who experience sexism and workplace trauma (Åhäll, 2018). This research, and the authors own experiences, demonstrates how deep emotional connections can be fostered through our shared experiences, and how these connections can become the starting point for the cultivation of collective resistence to opression (Burnette & Figley, 2016). Linda Åhäll's (2018) work discusses the role of

emotions in global politics and the importance of feminist methodologies in understanding the politics of emotion. Åhäll critiques the marginalization of feminist knowledge in international relations and emphasizes the need for a feminist approach to affective-discursive analysis (Åhäll, 2018). There are strong links between this research and the findings of this study and in so doing find that affective solidarity provides us with the conceptual foundation for understanding how the emotional bonds and shared feelings of the women across this study, and across organisational and social boundaries, can unite us and draw us into wider social movements, such as the #metoo movement or #blacklivesmatter, that have been critical for sustaining activism in the face of adversity (Page & Arcy, 2019). This research explores the role of emotions in the public sphere, particularly in the context of networked societies, and discusses how emotions influence social ties, community, and solidarity, with specific reference to the impact of social media on these dynamics (De Blasio & Selva, 2019), Facilitating transnational solidarities and transnational activism, where activists from different cultural and geographical backgrounds come together, navigating differences in race, ethnicity, religion, and class to build cohesive movements (Åhäll, 2018). However, whilst affective solidarities can strengthen movements, they also present challenges, specifically in relation to differences in political agendas, cultural backgrounds, and economic barriers, these differences can create tensions both within and between socially cohesive groups, leading to conflict and confusion (Çağatay et, al., 2022). Nevertheless, such solidarity is becoming more and more crucial for addressing global inequalities and can therefore have the potential to foster the type of collective action that can bring about lasting change (Hemmings, 2012). Particularly considering recent trends where there has been a resurgence of interest in feminist solidarity, particularly in response to neoliberalism and rising nationalism (Litter & Rottenburg, 2021). Movements like the Women's March and the Global Women's Strike emphasize the role of solidarity in countering misogyny and

xenophobia (Mendes et, al., 2018) and therefore this research which provides deeper insights into the complex and dynamic nature of affective solidarities in activism, can be used to highlight both its potential, as well as the challenges that we will all face as we move into an uncertain future.

The problem with gender equality

As an aging member of generation X, I was raised upon the stories of my mother, and my immigrant grandmothers, who would tell us stories of their youth (Norquay, 1998). The struggles for survival, the lack of independence, the social expectation on young women to forsake their education and careers to support their husbands and families. We were the lucky ones. Born generations later and positioned to reap the rewards from the struggles of our forebearers. I was told stories of how one of my grandmother's worked part-time in a local factory, whilst my other grandmother, who was a qualified teacher, had taken on administrative work to help to provide for her family. I remember how astonished I was that only two generations before me it was considered unacceptable, and shameful, for women to work whilst married with children. So much so in fact that one of my grandmother's kept her job a secret from my grandfather for decades. Secretly leaving for work after my grandfather and being sure to be back in the house before he returned in the evenings. I'm not sure that my grandfather ever found out, but later in her life she explained to me how every penny that she earned went into feeding and caring for her children during the difficult times of post-war Britain, and I am of course very proud of the sacrifices that my grandmothers made for me and our family. I have reflected a lot on the stories of my grandmothers since discovering my own pay inequity at work, as I find these stories help me to understand how an understanding of equality and equity is socially constructed, that one person's ideas of equity can differ from another's, especially when considering the influencing factors of time and place. My

grandmothers lived through a certain time and place that seemed so foreign to me in the late 1990s, somewhere in the distant past, and so as I entered the workforce for the first time I was assured that I would not experience the same, that those problems had been solved by the first and second waves of feminism, and that I was now free to enjoy the economic, sexual and social freedoms that women, my grandmothers, had fought so hard to achieve.

Yet my recent experiences of pay inequity, and the practices, attitudes and behaviours that surrounded the organisation's response to my claims, seemed to echo of the stories I'd been told as a child. Women's participation in the labour market, although hard fought and won, was an intricate illusion designed to placate women, and that many of the sexist attitudes of women in the workplace have remained to this day, hidden in the background. Echos of how women should be grateful for even having a job, lucky if we were barely tolerated by our senior male colleagues and rated on our appearance rather than our abilities. When I experienced that discrimination first-hand, in a form that I couldn't ignore as benign or accidental, I began to realise how this feeling of not being welcome, of being tolerated, had in fact always been there, and that my claims of pay inequity simply exposed the differences in how I was being treated. As different, as other, as someone who didn't belong there, as a woman. My colleagues and organisation rallied hard to put back in my place, that place of silent ignorance, through their denials and gas lighting, but these thoughts haunted me from that moment on. I began to lose my sense of belonging and identity in the world, which came in waves of intense sadness, the feeling that I'd lost something important, something that I can't go back to, that cannot be replaced, and I'm now forced to face my future without it.

With hindsight I think what I resented the most was what had been taken from me. My grandmothers stories gave me an understanding of the social and structural sexism that had affected their lives; yet, the discourse that surrounded the first and second waves of

feminism had led me to believe that the problem of gender inequality had been solved for my generation, and so we did not need to learn or understand about the complexities of sexism, and thus I had pushed my grandmothers stories to the back of my mind. This created a shift in my awareness of the very existence of sexism, by pushing these thoughts to the back of my mind I had forgotten the stories that might help me to understand when I was being discriminated against, and the language that I needed to call it out. Eventually I had lost my ability to perceive sexism altogether. The social narratives that deny the existence of inequality are particularly pervasive in that they make us close our eyes and ears to the sexism around us, and by shutting off our senses we remain helpless to call it out or fight against it. It disappears from plain sight, cast to the shadows, until an unfortunate incident shines a light on its insidious presence across the echelons of our organisation, and in the minds of the people that run it. This is how my own experiences of pay inequity helped me to open my eyes and see the sexism that surrounded me.

This explains why I struggled to identify and name sexism and when I eventually did begin to understand what I was experiencing. I stumbled into sexism in such a clumsy way that I do believe that I may have missed it altogether, despite years of research into the topic of pay inequity, if not for the enlightenment that historical feminist hadn't left within the pages of their legacies. The experience felt like a revelation, I found such comfort in those books that I felt they had been written especially for me to discover at this very moment in my life, providing so much solace and sense. But it wasn't until I began to enthusiastically point out the sexism that surrounds us to my family, friends and colleagues, that I began to understand the trickery of perception. The sexism that I heard and saw around me was not visible to others, it didn't grab their attention in the same way, it was every day and insipid, and indistinguishable from rest of the noise that we absorb through our busy lives. The more I advocated for people to see and explore the sexism around us, the more seperated I became

from the people that I loved, from organisations, from the rest of society. I noticed the wariness, the fatigue, when I mentioned the inequalities I perceived in the world around me, I understood what the eye rolls and 'knowing looks' between my family and friends meant when the topic of sexism arose, and I responded eagerly with my thoughts and experiences. I was greeted with the very few, but extremely well-publicised, stories of 'sexism' towards men and boys floating around the media, demonstrating how the malignant effects of a post-feminist sensibility had solidified in the minds of my favourite and beloved people. I began to internalise much of what I thought, and I stopped talking about what I was seeing to keep the peace. I understood the gender fatigue around me, and I didn't want to allow my story to be tainted, misinterpreted, used against me and so I became silent for a while.

It is within this post-feminist context, and within a context where we regularly dismiss the voices and experiences of women, that I now present twelve important stories from women who have journeyed through the lonely corridors of the organisation, and our UK Tribunal courts, to seek justice for the pay inequity and sexism that they experienced. These stories continue to educate and enlighten me, and it was by joining these women on their journeys that I came to make sense of my own experience. It is my hope that these stories will do the same for many other women and girls in our future. I now realise that through the generous sharing of our deep descriptive and often painful stories, and the adoption of auto narrative analysis techniques, we have come closer towards exposing the inequality blind spots that prevent others from seeing sexism in a post feminist context. These stories describe the complex practices and people that discriminate against us in ways we had never imagined when entering the workforce. Although I recognise that the experiences and psychological affects of pay inequity can be multiplied by the very innovative and creative ways in which women are discriminated against in today's corporate settings, I believe that our stories can be weaved together into a single living story that represents the whole, a holistic experience

and journey, where we all recognise the important landmarks. Through this research I have come to understand that my social constructionist epistemology denies a homogenous work life for women, but that when women experience sexism we do share in some of the emotional responses and psychological affects, and thus these stories point to a similarity in how we perceive, experience and respond to pay inequity, as well as how we are treated by the organisations in which we work. They point to the emotional responses of sadness, anger and pain. And they point to the traumatic and lasting emotional and psychological affects that women carry with them throughout the rest of their lives and careers. And the reflexive nature of the human sensibility that continues to push us towards the resolution and healing that we so desperately need.

‘Why did I trust them?’

Pay has historically been something that has been kept secret in organisations. Discussing your pay with your fellow colleagues was even contractually forbidden, but this lack of transparency was irradicated in the Equal Pay Act 2010 (Equal Pay Act 2010), when it was understood how this secrecy led directly to the discrimination of minorities and women. However, culturally, we are still not comfortable with sharing pay and reward information with colleagues (Schnaufer et, al., 2022, Park and Bryant, 2024). It is clear that most women do not know what their colleagues earn, and given our persistent tendencies towards pay secrecy it is unlikely that most of us would ever find out (Brown et, al., 2022; Park and Bryant, 2024). Whether it is our equal pay laws, or societal denials of sexism that puts women on a perceptive back-foot is not clear, but either way the shock we experience when we discover we are paid less than our male peers is visceral (Starlicki et, al,. 2013). An experience that, for most, triggers the beginning of our understanding that sexism really does exist, and now we feel cheated.

"Shocked. Didn't believe it. Disbelief and um, let down, right, really let down. So I asked if I could see his pay slip and he showed me it. Ohh I felt, I felt really cheated."

Phyllis

We remember why and when we had stopped looking out for sexism in the workplace, and our memories point to the impressions from the important women in our lives, who told us that the inequality problem had been solved, why would they lie to us?

"I think the first time it happened, I was in shock and really disappointed. Because I kind of was brought up and raised that we were the generation that all these ceilings have been broken through etcetera, and it was real shock. And I was in my mid 20s and that was just such a shock."

Mary Seacole

We assumed, that since we had been allowed to participate in the labour market, that we had also been attributed the equality that goes with that participation, but we discover the elaborate façade where the organisation and society work together to conceal the truth. We have been cheated out of our just rewards through a conspiracy designed to fool us into working harder for less.

"I've been used, I've been mugged off and I was being cheated and lied to, and I wasn't valued at all. So I I was really upset by this, really angry by this."

Phyllis

This realisation heralds the beginning of the psychological and emotional journey that the discovery of pay inequity, and sexist treatment, invokes in us. We experience extreme emotions, that have physiological affects on us. We feel anger.

> "Can you see how pink my cheeks are? I'm I'm just so steamed. I have not thought about this for about 15 months and I am so steamed up. You can hear it, can't you? Because I'm all kind of. I'm so steamed up talking about it."
>
> Titanium

We feel hurt. Our values and beliefs of our worth and how the world works begin to crumble into ashes as our lives and careers go up in flames. Strong emotions can feel like physical pain to us.

> "It kind of punches you in the chest. It's like, Oh my God, how? And then you start reading about it, cause you think how is it that I've been such an idiot?"
>
> Katie

We see our ignorance as a weakness in the neo-liberal world that tells us that we only have ourselves to blame for what we see and experience, and it becomes something that we are ashamed of, how could I have been so stupid?

> "I think there was a bit of a pang of what? Slight embarrassment perhaps? Feel, feeling like a mug."

Katie

The social shame of inequality in neo-liberal environments make us turn our anger inwards, on ourselves. We blame ourselves for our own ignorance of our colleagues pay, for not negotiating more, for believing that the big problem of inequality in the workplace had been solved and thus closing our minds to the possibility of discrimination.

> "And that that was the bit I found really frustrating, because I just thought, well why have I been so stupid? Why have I been so naive? I haven't, I've seen that this stuff is going on, why didn't I question it more? Why did I trust them? All those feelings."
>
> Florence Nightingale

'Talk yourself off a ledge.'

A slow unravelling begins, which has us questioning our past experiences, it feels like waking to a new dawn casting an entirely new light on the world, changing our perceptions, driving us towards re-interpreting our experiences from this new and different perspective. We begin to re-imagine ourselves and our careers in light of this new 'truth', the enduring presence of sexism, we feel confused and lost in this new world, and this affects us profoundly. We face denial and disbelief when we present our stories of sexism and pay inequity in the workplace, and begin the long and lonely fight towards seeking justice through HR and court systems that also deny the existence of sexism. We experience anxiety which affects our mental health and relationships.

"He knew how it was affecting me. I mean, I'm, was taking anti-depressants and I'd increased my dose I think by that point. And but I was going back to, when I'm anxious and stressed my, my, it's sort of manifests as me getting very irritable, cranky, flying off the handle."

Katie

This depression we feel comes from a deep feeling of loss, and of being lost. Our stories are changing, what we know and think is unravelling, and we face into the inertia of the change. We are forced to live and work alongside those who have betrayed and undervalued us, we are living a lie, pretending to go along with the façade, where everyday tasks and interactions become loaded with contradictions that push you towards the edge.

"I literally go from, you know, like, I don't know if you had this, but you know, you see someone's email, and like this like, you know, this is knot of dread, you know like, it just takes over you, and then you think God, I have to like build myself up to read it. And then you read it. And then you say to yourself, I should not overly focus on this. I should know not to, like, over-think this. I need to step back. And so it's just constant self-discussion, where you're trying to talk yourself off a ledge, you know, and save yourself."

Ruth Bader-Ginsberg

We shift into 'survival mode' to continue to function in our jobs, support our families, and maintain our relationships. We go against our instincts to call the injustice out, and keep our heads down and our mouths shut.

"But you know, I was still employed by them while all this was going on, right? So of course, I was hearing all of this, and so I was going through my own issues at the time. So my main thing was to stay employed until I find my exit, yes? Yeah, survival right?"

Ruth Bader-Ginsberg

Isolated, denied and living a lie has a massive impact on us. It makes us feel hopeless. We are not in control of our own lives, and we struggle to see a way out.

"I was depressed, I was having suicidal thoughts, and I was isolated. And they were just pretending to care, when I know they didn't care because their behaviour stated or showed otherwise."

Sarafina

Organisations go to great lengths to avoid admitting gender pay inequity. Women's reports will be ignored, kicked down the road until someone who cares can deal with it. As with most gender-related crimes, this type of injustice is expensive and complex to fight through tribunal courts, and therefore there is very little threat of retribution and so women are left fighting their corners against the neo-liberal corporation who find their complaints inconvenient and irritating, adopting victim blaming tactics.

"It felt what should have been a very clear, in my mind, should have been very clear cut. We're underpaying Katie, let's sort it out, or let's give her a good reason why she's underpaid. It felt like it was an attack on me. And that's, how they viewed me in the business."

Katie

Women’s pay inequity experiences make us feel like the odd one out, the only one, and we internalise this as personal failure. We doubt ourselves and tell ourselves that it is our fault, and that we are not good enough, that we don’t deserve to be paid as much as the men for doing the same job.

> "The feeling of questioning, you know, you know, you're in that, sort of, you, you, end up questioning yourself, and, and, I would be maybe I'm not doing a good job? Maybe, this isn't what they want? And I suppose being constantly, sort of, trying to understand what is my role here? Am I doing enough?"
>
> Katie

And the practices that have us continually proving ourselves worthy. We are afraid that we will succumb, loose confidence, and be overwhelmed.

> "It's been horrible, and I think it is that whole thing about being having to feel like you need to prove yourself endlessly, it takes it out of you."
>
> Maya

We harbour thoughts about giving up and we take precautionary steps that protect us from the emotional harm that is raining down on us.

> "Like so you expect the fact that you're not being paid properly, but then you see how awful they can be and you think, I don't know if I want to go through that?"
>
> Ruth Bader-Ginsberg

‘There goes my week.’

At times of crisis, I can always be found seeking solace in my family and friends, who unfailingly provide me with the support and guidance that helps me to step back and make sense of my experience. We talk to those people closest to us about how we are feeling and use their responses to help us to validate and temper our own emotional responses. We embark on an emotional rollercoaster ride, which the people closest to us find confusing and disorientating.

> “Long story short, I, I really went through a lot of anger, which drove, you know, it drives bad behaviour in some cases, etcetera. It’s certainly caused, you know, challenges in my relationship and things of that nature. But I went through a lot of anger.”
>
> Ursula Banks

We are conscious of a shift in how we view ourselves, as well as how we are viewed by others that it begins to affect our everyday lives. We begin to question the thoughts of strangers.

> “And then, walking down the street everybody I saw I was like nobody, you know, because it never occurred to me to ever think I was better than anybody else. And I think that that was a common, you know, for that was for me, that was something that was the most gutting, the most, you know, surprising revelation about how they must really think.”

Maya

This leads to feelings of anxiety, where danger is lurking everywhere we look, and that constant fear will drive our thoughts, emotions and behaviours.

> "There are things that I can't really enjoy and when people are being nice. I almost have to use logic to process how that works, because otherwise, like, my anxiety takes over and then there goes my day, or there goes my week, or there goes like me thinking, like catastrophizing, is something's going to happen to me, you know?"
>
> Sarafina

And sadly we loose our ability to trust the people in our lives.

> "I just felt that I couldn't trust anybody."
>
> Phyllis

We know that it's affecting our relationships, but we feel helpless to change it.

> "My partner she feels like the strain, the days of negativity, it colours a lot of what I've done and said, and how I act."
>
> Ursula Banks

And we begin to dislike the person we are becoming:

> “I was just taking it home and complaining, which is also then, like, you know, it’s tough on a relationship, right? So it has, you know, so then I was just, and also I was gaining a bit of weight, and I’m drinking a lot. So, you know, my coping mechanism was complaining, crying a lot of like self-conversations, you know consumption? Um, so indulgence if you will. And then also in internalizing some things right.”
>
> Ruth Bader-Ginsberg

And we begin to blame ourselves for what we are putting our friends and families through.

> “It’s damaged my family. I mean my family are lovely and everything, but it had a huge impact on them because it went on for so long and it consumed me. And, I know my, my son was quite young, but my daughter I know is very proud of me for fighting it. But, but there was also, you know, this kind of it, it was consuming. I was constantly having to take calls or write emails, or, and I was, my husband and I always talking about it, and, and I I yeah, it impacted me.”
>
> Maya

This experience has cost us more than our careers. Many relationships don’t survive the strain of living through a traumatic experience, and certainly all parties understand that things can never be the same again.

> “Yeah. And it it already is I mean, it already is, you know, we, my partner, I have struggled with staying together.”

Ursula Banks

But we quickly realise that there is no going back. Something has shifted. Something has changed which can not be changed back. The world is a different place for us, and we are a different person. My own experiences during this time became stuck in a loop, with my feelings of loss happening over and over again. I am reminded of the 'old me' through the everyday, I hear family stories, I update my CV, I look at old photos, and I feel sad about what I've lost. Sometimes prolonged lingering on these emotions made me feel physically sick, or sometimes I might feel pain, but most often I am overcome with a sense of hopelessness and depression which can last for hours, or sometimes days. I am a different person, I am changed from this experience, and so my story must also change, and we must move on with our lives. Most of us have lost confidence in ourselves and our abilities.

> "I don't value myself at all, which is difficult for me to say, but I don't. So I have confidence issues. I've got trust issues. I have to justify, feel like I have to justify everything that I do. And my manager now is like, um, you know, OK, that's no problem. I go to them with silly things because I have no confidence. I don't trust my own decisions and it's affected me massively."
>
> Phyllis

Many of us have created new way to navigate our lives and careers, which we have designed to protect us from the harm of sexism and pay inequity in the future. We have evolved to become a newer version of ourselves, one that is now more aware of the social constructs that impact on our working lives.

> “I don’t really like see people the same way again. My mind kind of like doesn’t work the same way again. It’s like, it’s very difficult for me to relax in a work environment. It’s hard to enjoy working because like I’m suspicious of people. But not only that, like it’s made me a lot more self-aware, and a lot more assertive, because in my head I was like it’s because I was very low key that he thought he could bully me, it’s because I was this, you know? And all that stuff. So I’m like, I need to protect myself.”
>
> Sarafina

Through our own reinvention, we have become stronger and more resilient. We take comfort and inspiration from other aspects of our lives, realising that our jobs and careers are not the entirety of who we are. We can take meaning from the other roles that we perform in our lives, such as the role of being a mother as explained by Ruth Bader-Ginsberg.

> “I say to myself – I have two kids who need me. I have a husband who needs me. My parents who need me right? And so, I need myself, because I only get one life right? So I have a choice. I can be trapped in the past. I can think about why is this so hard? Why does this have to be so hard, my path. And I can feel like a victim. Or I can say – what can I control? And what can I change? And if I focus on those things, you know, I can have a positive outcome. Even if the court case doesn’t go my way. Because, as we know, the process is difficult and so we don’t know. There may be no successful outcome from mediation. There may be no successful outcome at court even. If there was an appeal that might not be successful, right?

> But what else can I do to make this a success in my own definition of success, right? To stay sane, to be present, to be positive."
>
> Ruth Bader-Ginsberg

By choosing not to be the victim, despite the wounds and scars that we carry with us, we are actively deciding to take the path of reinvention, following the neo-liberal narratives of choice. Sarafina refers to her daily struggles against the power that others have over her in the organisation. But for women, we can not escape the patriarchal powers inherent in society that sustain our unfair treatment, and now that we can recognise the everyday sexism around us, we know we must fight to remain true to our experiences.

> "Now I'm just like, I don't care, like, I'm not letting people have that kind of a power over me. But again, it's still like a daily thing, you know, like it's a daily thing."
>
> Sarafina

'Put me in my place.'

We consider what is happening and have difficulty coming to terms with the reality that we are faced with. The wider social conditioning referred to by Sarafina puts women into an impossible position, the deep shame associated with the experience of sexist behaviours has been a critical aspect of how women have, and continue to be, silenced by those with louder voices in positions of power. We have been taught to believe that we are to blame for our own unfair treatment.

"For some reason, you know, the way we've been socially conditioned in terms of like, shame. Someone hurts me, but I'm the one who feels bad, you know? Like, it's just, I had to really think that through as well, you know? There's, there's all of that, that like benefits miscreants, it just does. And as soon as I realised it, I was just like, no."

Sarafina

Women live in fear of violence, and we understand that stepping outside of the social order is punishable by those wanting to maintain the patriarchal status quo. A social prison where we must abide by the social norms or risk being put in our place.

"And I sat there and I just thought, okay that this, they're doing it now. This is, this is, their now gonna tear strips off me, and, and really try and put me in my place, where they want me to be."

Katie

Here we see the ‘woman’s place’ as belonging outside of the organisation, serving the domestic needs of the family, just like our grandmothers had told us. Thereby removing women’s agency in the world. This is a familiar place. We are familiar with this feeling of not belonging, and being pushed out.

"I think like when you have it just happen once you can, you can park that, or you can compartmentalize that. But for me, because it happened more than once, in different forms, you know, it builds on each other till point you are like. So it becomes then a question of whether you want to persist

with more of the same, or whether you've been driven to a point where you actually have to make a significant shift in your life, right?"

Ruth Bader-Ginsberg

Our pay inequity experiences, and the organisation's response to our complaints, help us to expose further sexism, and it's nature as insidious in our lives, and therefore something that we can never be free of. The battle now extends into new territories as altruistic ideals of equality begin to form in our minds, and we consider how to bring this fight forth, to expose the sexism we are experiencing so that our post-feminist paradox can cease. Deciding to take a stand against an organisation for gender pay inequity is an incredibly brave thing to do. The emotional labour that is involved in speaking out against the organisation, and the discriminatory acts that define women's experiences of the workplace, in a neo-liberal post-feminist context is enormous. Relationships and careers suffer, causing such a lot of pain and hurt that it almost never seems worth it in the end. We have frequent moments of doubt where we want to give up, and believe that we might be able to go back to how things were before the injustice happened, thinking that we've achieved nothing.

"I'll never stop feeling angry about it, and I've made a load of enemies, and I've achieved nothing. I've achieved absolutely nothing out of it. God, I've never thought of that before. I don't think I have. I got my 50 grand. That wasn't what I went in for."

Titanium

We understand that we are embarking on a fight for which we do not know the rules, and that we will most likely loose. Risking both emotional and psychological harm. But we

still go to war in the hope that the inequality that we experience will come to light and help to change things for the better. We are afraid for ourselves and our families, and find ourselves trapped between these fears and our fight for equality. It is ourselves that we must face in the mirror every day after all. And so we stand and fight. Because if we don't, then we too are perpetuating the lies and become the perpetrators of future inequities.

> "I saw myself a little bit as being an enabler……. In previous instances, actually, you know what I was doing? I was allowing them to do this over and over and over again. I was, I was part of the problem, right? There's no point in complaining if you just keep, you know, allow the same system to percolate and exist. "
>
> Ruth Bader-Ginsberg

But for most of us we are compelled to fight, as to do anything else would be inauthentic to ourselves, our stories, our ideologies. We begin to feel confident in our decision. We are doing the right thing. Not just for ourselves, but for future generations of women, who we bring to the forefront of our minds and who give us the courage to carry on.

> "My thinking was that it was just so wrong, and I can't let them get away with it. I've got a daughter. I can't let her go through the same thing that I've gone through."
>
> Florence Nightingale

We seek validation from the people that we care about that we are doing the right thing, for the right reasons.

> "I talked to my step kids before I ever move forward on this to get their feedback. And they're both girls. they're both really pretty girls. They're both, one is gonna be in the tech space, the other is becoming a psychologist. And they both said the same thing, we would think less of you if you didn't pursue this. So I, you know, as I say, I got their blessing that they thought it was appropriate to pursue this. I didn't want for them to have to go through this, right?"
>
> Ursula Banks

There is a very conscious switching of intent at this point in our story, from our own battle to one that is fought for the next generation. The hurt, pain and suffering are more bearable if we believe that we are making things better for the next generation and form beliefs that there will be a greater good that will come from this awful experience. But the protagonist's journey is long and hard and we realise that we may not survive this battle, certainly not unscathed. And so we must be willing to sacrifice whatever it takes, our jobs, lives, careers, financial security and emotional health to be at peace with our decision to fight, and to stay true to ourselves and what we believe in.

> "I was clear because I, I, tried everything and my whole thing is if I've done all that I can, I won't have any regrets you know? Even if I fall and land on my face. I'll never regret making my own decision, you know? And I, I walked in. The very few times in my life where have I ever taken anything like on a moment by moment basis, but that that was one of them. Because if I thought of like the time, emotions and money, like, I think that would have crippled me emotionally even more, you know?"

Sarafina

‘A Troublemaker.’

Finding out you are being treated unfairly by your organisation, and people you have held in high regard, can be traumatic. The experience is inevitably protracted, through lengthy HR grievance processes designed to deny women’s stories, and then carried through many years fighting expensive court cases trying to evidence the unseeable, to the unbelieving. Leaving us with a sense of paralysis to move forwards.

> "Basically, I don't really know what the future holds and I'm very frustrated by it because the, the motivation is there. I'm not struggling psychologically, I've got ideas as loads of stuff I want to get on with, or to try, but physically I'm being held back. Umm, and that is difficult. I've learned all this stuff, yeah, I've, I've changed my way of thinking, I could set out on a new course, except I can't."
>
> Ada Lovelace

The psychological affect can spread into our lives where we loose confidence in our skills and value within the company.

> "What's next? And that's really the stage I would say that I'm in now. Of the wonderment of, you know, where does this leave you? Does it leave you feeling as though you're inadequate? That you're an imposter? That you're, that maybe you were worthless? You know, that maybe, you know, maybe you weren't as good as you thought you were? You know, maybe

you finally hit the place that kind of rooted you out, you know, or whatever. And, and I realized that's insanity. That's insanity. And I've, I've positioned that for the insanity that it truly is."

Ursula Banks

Coupled with our exhaustion from the legal battles which take several years to go to court and be heard.

"I think it's also that yes it all consuming because you're make, you, you have to fight, that you're kind of constantly fighting. And, and it makes you feel resentful that you're having to do that, and that you're being knocked back, and they're not, you know? They're trying to get out of it and that. And, and, and also I felt enormously resentful about how much it had knocked my confidence, and how, how much it impacted my sense of finding a new job, and and yeah, I have really lost a lot of confidence over the years."

Maya

For many of us our working lives will never be the same again. We have sacrificed our careers, and for me that was in absolute terms.

"Otherwise, this was all for not, because my, the destruction of my career is done. I'll never recreate, I can never fix that. Sure, if the lawsuit someday is dismissed, gone, settled, that's fine. But in the meanwhile, it's destroyed my career. So, I can't rectify that. I cannot rectify that my career is destroyed."

Ursula Banks

In the UK, tribunal hearings are public, and therefore stories about you, and your equal pay case circulate through mainstream media when popularity or interests dictate. Organisations conduct social and other media checks on staff members regularly before issuing job offers, meaning that anybody, including a potential employer, can see that you have taken a previous employer to court over equal pay. This negatively affects your future job prospects as you are branded a ‘trouble maker’, or more specifically, someone who will call our gender discrimination when they experience it. Our careers are irreparably damaged, and for many of us we will never work at the same level in an organisation again. The very visible and devastating punishment handed out to women who dare to speak out against organisations is an important part of the process that preserves the patriarchal powers in play within our society. Without such consequences women will not be deterred from speaking out, or fighting their corner, and thus we are reminded of the fear of the witch hunts of the 16th and 17th centuries across Europe.

> "I mean I do think it has a stigma, because even though you know some people think oh well, you know you stood up yourself, great. Other people think, umm. So if you the opportunities are not, um, I think they're not as fruitful. Or in the evaluation process, it's not as clear cut that you are the best choice. There's always like reservation, so um, you know. I do think that it follows you. Which also means like, you know the, it's more of an incentive to either work for a woman-run business, or work for a really progressive male, or work for myself, so that you can avoid all of that following you."
>
> Ruth Bader-Ginsberg

But lets not forget that our social media profile can act as a tool for any organisation to find out the opinions and actions of anybody we choose. We can fear such rejections, or we can consider the benefits of how this could help our careers, by weeding out those organisations that do not align to our personal values or beliefs.

> "A friend of mine said to me recently, actually a friend from (the company), there's one person I still speak to. He said, do you think maybe they don't want to interview because they they think you're a troublemaker because of what you write on Twitter? I mean if you look at what I write, I tweet about once every three months. And I I'm not very prolific at all, but I have probably written in my time about 10 tweets about equal pay. And he said maybe you're not getting that job, maybe you're not getting an interview for that job because of what you write on Twitter and they think you're a troublemaker. And I said. Gosh, I hadn't really thought about like that. And if that is the case then good because I don't wanna work for anybody that thinks that me standing up for this kind of thing is a problem."
>
> Titanium

But either way we can not deny the devasting impact that a lost career can have on our financial stability, particularly if we have a family that rely on us.

> "I'm trying to look at it like, um, you know, I, I'm on terrible wages, I earn terrible money, it's nowhere near what I was earning before, and I'm having to work six days a

week. I work six days a week to make sure that I can cover, you know, my bills and and things that I gotta pay. To do that I have to work six days a week."

Phyllis

‘Ammunition and armour.’

"I have to say this is a really this is a life changing event. It's been transformational for me. And it's taking me on a different path, and I have to embrace it was meant to happen, and so I'm not going to be sad about it. I'm just going to figure out how to make it work for me over the long run, and make a difference for others, so that no one else has to go through this. Well, not no one else, because everyone like other people will go through it. But like if one other person doesn't have to go through it, then I think that's a win."

Ruth Bader-Ginsberg

A positive outcome is an important part of our stories and provided us with motivation as we have journeyed through this experience. We have learnt important lessons that we provide us with protection as we proceed on our own career journeys. Something as simple as checking company gender reporting, and clarifying job descriptions.

"It made me look at the organisational structure to see how represented women were in that structure. I looked at their equal pay report. And I also ensured that when I joined I had a job description."

Florence Nightingale

Or negotiating extra pay.

> "When they offered me the job, I negotiated, so I asked for an extra two grand and they offered, and then they agreed straight off."
>
> Florence Nightingale

It has influence how we treat other in the organisation, specifically in terms of pay equity and transparency.

> "I'm definitely aware now of this issue and I will if, you know, I'm sure I will be in a position where I'm hiring people, I will make sure that the Job, the salaries are disclosed at the outset. I will make sure that nobody in my team experiences inequity."
>
> Katie

We no longer trust HR as being on the side of the employee, and a team we should be wary of.

> "It's affected how I see management. I see them as very much, and, not on board at all. Umm. It's made me very weary, and very wary. Yeah, weary and wary."
>
> Maya

As well as on the lookout for the mono-cultures that are all-white male leadership teams.

"Male-orientated environment, I I just wouldn't want that again. If I've got a team of men that are managers, I would. There's no way I'd work for them. No way."

Ursula

Despite these considerations we understand that we can never fully protect ourselves from pay inequity, or sexism in the workplace.

"But I still feel a little bit powerless actually, you know, I still, I haven't asked the question of (new company) whether I'm paid the same. Yeah, I've got a direct peer and I still haven't asked if we are pay the same."

Florence Nightingale

I lost my court case. The company I worked for continues to use the same gendered practices, with the same people making the same gendered pay decisions. And so I have asked myself time and time again, was all worth it? Especially if nothing has changed.

"That company, now, you know what I've just found out? They are paying women unequally in (country), in the (country) factory. I've just found that out because I talked to people in the companies one or two, and that they've learned nothing. They've learned nothing at all. And so I feel completely unsatisfied, aggrieved, emotional."

Titanium

I think about the many daily struggles of women across the globe today, and throughout history. Women like my grandmothers, doing the best they could, with the cards

that they had been dealt, and desperately wanting to believe that their struggles were worth it. That they were securing a better world and future for their daughters and granddaughters. I too want to believe that my struggles will result in some small change that will improve the lives and chances of the women and girls in our future. I understand too that the women sharing their stories in this study also want to believe that.

> "I would do it again, definitely. But I would say that it's not right for everybody to do it, because for me, it was worth it. It really was. I needed to. I needed to do it, I think. You have to think very carefully about the impact it will have on whether it's worth it for you. Umm. And what really worries me, Rebecca, is I don't think anything has changed."
>
> Maya

And that perhaps our life choices and the decisions that we take will have positive impacts that we are unable to fathom from our narrow perspectives of this world. But perhaps everything does happen for a reason.

> "I would say just as a side note and you know, kind of in in conclusion, I believe in my heart I was the right person for this job. I believe in my heart that you are put in, you're, you're put in circumstances for a reason. And I think I was put here for a reason."
>
> Ursula Banks

My decision to pursue a PhD in pay inequity was born from this deep and profound feeling that I needed to do something to make our experience meaningful, our struggles worth it.

"I've got this urge to, and I never had it before, but I have now, so I don't know why, I don't know where it's come from. I'm not saying I haven't helped people before, but this time rather than investigating and dismissing the grievances, and, and I I'm I want to help people. I wanna help people push back at the system. Push back at at being treated badly. I wanna help people. I wanna you know, give people ammunition and armour to to push back and fight, and don't accept what you've been told. And you know, that that's where my passion is, I think."

Phyllis

I felt compelled to capture and share the stories of women's experiences in the workplace. I see my research as a natural step on my personal journey toward transforming the negative affects of sexism into something useful and helpful. I see our collective stories as a means of gathering the important lessons from our experiences so that we can pass these onto the next generation. So that we can warn them of the dangers.

"I think until you see it yourself or experience something like that, you can't, you can't really understand it. Um, so I do want to sort of promote, make awareness around it, if that yeah, that's what I would like personally."

Katie

We can provide them with the support that we know they will need when going through their own journeys.

"I'd want to provide support to other women that are going through the process."

Florence Nightingale

Sometimes women who we know, who we work with, are going through what we went through, and we can offer our support.

"I wanted to give back so I have, then went on to help quite a few women, some who work with me, some in other parts of the COMPANY, and I would always talk to anyone who wanted to talk about it."

Maya

We can provide mentorship to other women, and use our intellect towards supporting the cause.

"In the short term I'm doing what I can to mentor other women. And I'm doing what I can to not only be well read about all the contributing factors that go into how we end up in these situations, but then figuring out how I'm going to in my future help, you know? Create change."

Ruth Bader-Ginsberg

So imperative was this need to support other women, that Sarafina is considering retraining as a lawyer in order to help other women who may not be able to afford the legal fees to protect themselves.

> "I just like made it my mission wherever I can, if I can support, if I can provide my advice, I will do it, you know? And one of the things that I want to do, like in the however long it takes me, is I want to retrain as a lawyer. Because like, for me, if I encounter someone else like that, and I can help somebody genuinely, I'd do it for free."
>
> Sarafina

But ultimately we all want to use our skills and experiences to create change that will redress the imbalance that women face when entering the workplace. Recognising that this is driven by work cultures that embrace diversity and celebrate our differences.

> "I want to put money into women-led businesses, so that we can create different types of working environments, that allow people to be different, and be comfortable."
>
> Ruth Bader-Ginsberg

The 'strong voices of other women alongside me.'

I took comfort from and was grateful my grandmothers' stories of sacrifice at my lowest ebbs on this journey; and I also think that they took comfort from their beliefs that their own sacrifices made the world a better place for my mother, me, my sisters and daughters. The first and second waves of feminism had indeed brought about the dawning of a new age of equality for women, and I believe this age to be one where women are free to pursue their own dreams. Of careers and corporations that are forged on the principles of equity. However, the freedoms to dream of a different future, provide little to push us towards

the social transformation required to bring about that new future, and thus women are still stuck between their dreams and their day jobs. My grandmother's stories have allowed me to dream of a better future, one that I can almost touch, but remains just out of reach on the tip of the horizon, waiting for the next wave of feminism, and the social change that it must bring. For surely if we can dream it, then we can build it? However, life is not all dreams and career aspirations. The damage that has been caused to women as a result of these fictional stories of equality in the workplace is hurting women and providing more ammunition to the perpetrators in our battle against pay inequity and sexism.

And yes, I am still angry about that, but I think that our anger is a good thing. The emotions of healthy individuals help us to regulate ourselves and can be used to teach us how to respond to situations. My anger has been an important motivator for me over this past seven years of this research project. I have become accepting and in awe of its strength and resilience. Of how it expands and evolves, each time I hear of the horrible ways in which women are treated by their organisations and colleagues, each time I am told that sexism doesn't exist anymore, each time I am presented with examples of 'sexism' against men and boys, I can feel it growing and manoeuvring in and around my perceptions. And I have no doubt that it is anger that keeps me moving forwards on this path of research.

I do not want to leave this paper, and particularly my concluding thoughts, here alone. I have experienced a great deal of support and solidarity from the women whom I have met on this journey. Their stories have helped to heal my own wounds as I explained at the start of the paper, but I am also indebted to a great many other women who supported me through some of the darkest moments of my life so far. And to these women I will be forever grateful. The desperate loneliness of being the only one who can perceive the vast inequity that surrounds us can only be broken by others who can see what we see, and who believe our stories. As without the tender care and support of other women, we would not be here.

"It's only when it became a movement, and I felt I had strong voices of other women alongside me, fighting for the same thing, and who'd suffered the same kind of feelings as me, yeah, totally got it. And yeah, it just was, it transformed my ability to fight. And I hurtled forwards, I really did."

Maya

It is through joining our voices with those other women, that we begin to see a glimmer of hope that things could change. That maybe, if we all came together, we might be able to get our voices heard and begin to create some positive change.

"I loved meeting (female supporter). I really loved talking to you. I I made contact with (another equal pay victim) at some point. I loved that solidarity, and in that I felt there was, maybe we had some strength. So I really, really would love that to be, if I could encourage somebody to network a little bit, like I tried to, I felt like we maybe could create some kind of platform at least, have a voice, if not to get to justice. So, so that's something that I would like to have come out of this."

Titanium

Women’s shared stories can have a real impact, not just on supporting women who have experience pay inequity, but also on other women who also believe in an equal and just society for themselves and future generations. Women are looking towards more action-orientated forms of activism in order to get their stories heard and to stimulate an environment that is driving change forwards.

"I don't mean to say that what I've done hasn't had an impact. I know that it has on other women. And ultimately that's what's needed is a mass revolt basically from, from, women everywhere. I think it's the only way forward, isn't it?"

Ada Lovelace

Here we come to understand the importance of storytelling as a powerful tool that can help to build the solidarity required for affective activism. Stories provide a point of emotional connection through empathy which helps to mobilize a sense of solidarity among activists (Woods, 2024). Through sharing personal experiences and narratives that resonate emotionally with others, the emotional connections that follow can inspire empathy and motivate people to join and support the cause (Åhäll, 2018). Effective storytelling can challenge dominant narratives and offer alternative perspectives and by presenting compelling stories, activists can shift public opinion and raise awareness about social issues (McDavis-Conway & Hopkins, 2019). Thus, we can see that this type of storytelling provides a platform for marginalized communities to share their experiences and struggles, which can empower individuals and groups by validating their experiences, highlighting their resilience, creating a collective identity, and fostering a sense of belonging that serves to strengthen the movement, providing unity and purpose. Examples are campaigns like #WakandaTheVote, inspired by the film "Black Panther", which has been used to demonstrate how storytelling can be leveraged to mobilize communities and drive political action (Wright & Neimand, 2018) further illustrating how storytelling can be a strategic and impactful component of affective activism.

The psychological impacts of workplace trauma, such as pay inequity, has so far received little attention from academic research, a problem that will no doubt continue whilst organisations use non-disclosure agreements as a way of preventing women from sharing their stories of pay inequity and sexism in the workplace. However, as this research shows, pay inequity and sexism is harming women, leaving lasting psychological affects that can

damage their future careers, and impact on their relationships and lives. This deeper understanding of the phenomenon should stimulate a moral urgency and I call for more research that helps us to understand the complex forms that sexism takes within modern workplaces, and how women's stories about their experiences of HR and legal practices can offer us a deeper understanding of how our organisations are failing them.

> *I cannot hide my anger to spare your guilt, nor hurt feelings, nor answering anger; for to do so insults and trivialises all our efforts.*
> *(Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider)*

Chapter 8. Conclusion

Introduction

And so, as I draw towards the destination for my PhD journey, I consider both the route taken to answer the research questions, how these findings can be used to plug the holes in our current knowledge, and what this new knowledge might mean for the path ahead. I have organised my concluding narrative thoughts of this painful journey that resulted in this PhD thesis, the following way. I reflect, first, on the questions that I have chosen to guide my work. Second, I built on what I have learned and what others can learn, i.e., my contribution to the realm of organisation and management, exploring what I learnt about feminism, post-feminism, sexism and finally trauma. Third, I leave these pages with some final reflections on the feminist project upon which I embarked, and those feminist projects that now lie ahead of me. Therefore, to begin our conclusions I take you back to my original research questions that sought to understand:

1. **Why are women paid less than men for doing the same job?**

This first question has received extensive academic attention since the enactment of the Equal Pay Act (Equal Pay Act, 1970) and the fact that, to this day, the law still fails to protect women from unfair pay and treatment at work (Manning, 1996; Schäfer and Gottschall, 2015). As such pay inequity remains a reality for women working in the UK, despite several Government initiatives designed to 'name and shame' the main offenders through the gender pay gap reporting, but all such efforts have had little to no effect on the stubbornness of businesses to pay women less (Manning and Swaffield 2008; Tharenou 2013; Mumford and Smith 2004; Alkadry and Tower 2011; Rubery 2017; Anderson et, al., 2023).

There has been much debate across the field on the causes for such pay differences ranging from the gender segregation of occupations (Mumford and Smith, 2004; Metcalf, 2009; Alkadry and Tower, 2011; Rubery, 2017), to how women are penalised as mothers (Manning and Robinson, 2004; Sigle-Rushton and Waldfogel, 2007; Myck and Paull, 2001; Cory and Stirling, 2012, Magnusson and Nermo, 2017; Fuller and Cooke, 2018; Bygren and Gähler , 2012; Lundberg and Rose, 2000). Although this research points to a number of possible causes for substantial gaps in women's pay the sheer abundance of research that considers the phenomenon best explored using positivist philosophies and quantitative methodologies have left gaping holes in our understanding of women's lived experiences, repeating the bad habits that serve to ignore and silence women's voices and experiences from academic enquiry, and thus failing to provide the deeper understanding that is necessary for us to probe deeper into the problem. As it is through the constant prodding and poking of problems from different angles that new light can be shed on the topic, supporting future researchers to not only develop new and relevant theories pertinent to our current organisational contexts, but to also eliminate outdated thinking that could potentially hinder our progress towards a better future (Burke, 2023). This study set out to address this void in the literature by seeking out women who had experienced pay inequity for themselves, and then asking them about their experiences, and the reasons they believed that they were paid less. This research has provided the topic area with exactly what was missing, descriptive narratives of women's experiences that provide us with the deep insight from which we can begin to develop new theory. Exploring women's stories reveal contemporary businesses contexts that conceal a subtle form of sexism that is understood as present within the fabric of the culture and practices upon which the business is built (Bates, 2014; Basford et. al., 2013). Unearthing this sexism is central to women's experiences of pay inequity as our discoveries become a turning point allowing us to make sense of what has happened to us, providing cultural and structural

reasons that help to explain why it exists and persists. These stories demonstrate the reflexive way in which women experience this phenomenon, and we discover we feel betrayed by the post-feminist paradox we are now face with, a paradox that leads us beyond the walls of the institution and into the relationships and communities that surround us (Gill, 2011, 2014; Gill et, al., 2017; Lewis, 2014; Lewis et. al., 2017; Savigny, 2019; Yarrow and Davies, 2022; Castelao-Huerta, 2022; Shymko et. al., 2023; Das et. al., 2023; Kelan, 2008, 2009). Connecting this research to conversations within the fields of post feminism, provides important empirical contributions that help us to understand more about how women make sense of sexism within modern workplace contexts. In addition, I believe that this research provides empirical findings relevant to emerging conversations that seek to better understand how gender washing strategies are adopted by businesses wanting to shirk their equality responsibilities (Weinhold and Brodtmann, 2017; Fox-Kirk et al., 2020; Callahan and Elliott, 2020; Giugni and Tracey, 2021; Walters, 2022; Ito and Uranaka, 2023; Sterbenk et al., 2022). I have found that women's stories are awash with examples of sophisticated and collective gender washing strategies, deliberately deployed to silence women, and to sabotage our efforts in seeking justice through the courts, and that the tactics that are deployed by Human Resource departments (Ainsworth and Pekarek, 2022), such as the grievance process become even more effective at silencing women within a post feminist context (Gill et, al., 2017).

2. How do pay inequity experiences affect women?

By approaching this topic through the lens of the social justice theories (Rawls, 1971), more specifically equity theory (Adams, 1965), I have discovered a complex web of interrelated studies that explore cognitive responses to pay inequity (Festinger 1954, 1961; Leventhal 1980; Walster and Walster 1975), and since most of the empirical research on the

topic thus far have focussed on cognitive studies, performed within laboratory settings, mostly dealing with quantitative data that lead us towards treating individuals in a homogenous way, this study has blown open wide the door into studying this topic as a lived experience that triggers emotional responses over time. Previous research failed to speak to the emotional harm that I implicitly understood as central to my own pay inequity experiences, a knowledge gap now filled with stories that I believe will be cherished by other victims of pay inequity. Theoretical debates have been occurring around the emotional affects of social injustice (Cropanzano et. al., 2010) which points to a complexity in establishing individual emotional responses as they are driven by dynamic factors, such as individual perceptions, relationships, levels of uncertainty and context (Cropanzano et. Al., 2010; Huber and Kell, 2022). I present stories that point towards an injustice experienced in episodes over time, and within changings contexts (Hillebrandt and Barclay, 2013; Pellerin and Cloutier, 2015; Brockman, 2021), tackling the challenges of complexity head on through my research design by seeking out women willing to 'bare all' and discuss the emotional challenges that they have faced throughout their long an arduous battle. I do believe that much of the success of this research can be attributed to its personal nature and through the story-telling approach used for the presentation of findings. I provide new knowledge that describes the emotional affects of pay inequity, pointing to the episodic nature of its discovery and the organisational responses, and unearth how these affects combine to drives the harmful consequences on women, specifically how out treatment leaves us silenced, traumatised and exhausted, unable to make sense of what has happened to us (Mannix, et, al., 2005; Huber and Kell, 2022).

I began this journey from within the depths of our social justice theories, looking backwards on the knowledge creation from decades of research that sought to find empirical evidence for pay inequity and the gender pay gap. The catacombs of these age-old theories provided me with abstract and inconclusive studies, pushing me toward a different set of

questions that moved me further away from my own questions about how is pay inequity affecting women today? How do we make sense of what has happened to us? And who is culpable for its continued existence? This PhD has afforded me the time, space, strength and motivation to ask these probing questions, repeatedly, to women from all over the country, women who are bound together through their shared experience of pay inequity. The analysis phase of this project represented a new dawn for the project, and my personal journey of discovery, for embedded in these women's stories were harrowing tales of the sexism and harassment that had led to their mistreatment. Whilst exploring these stories I began to understand how I had been blind to the sexism surrounding my own experiences, and I felt liberated at finally being able to uncover what I had subconsciously felt was bubbling under the surface all along. These memories will keep me company, and act as my driving force, as I now complete my PhD thesis and move into this next chapter of my life. These stories have enticed my research into topic areas that were just beyond my field of vision at the start of this journey, where I stood within the narrow confines of equity theory, moving me into new theoretical realms and allowing me the freedom to question the very construction of knowledge, my personal beliefs and perspectives, before introducing me to a new community of thinkers where I intend to stay.

I came back to my exploration of the fascinating and enlightening realms of feminism, my happy place, a place where I sought solace during my darkest moments, and somewhere I now understand I will remain until I depart this earth. I feel privileged to have gained the trust and support of so many women who have suffered at the hands of the organisations they believed would treat them fairly, and honoured that they decided to share their stories with me. We have shared our tears through our ongoing struggles, and I hope that we will all eventually find peace and resolutions so that we can finally heal from the trauma that we carry with us. Through this study, and hopefully many more, I commit to continuing to

expose inequalities wherever I find them, and dedicate the rest of my life's work to reimagining the workplace, and other aspects of our daily lives, as a place that protects women and girls in the future from this type of harm, so that they can be free from the shackles of sexism, free from the pain caused by inequity, and free to thrive on this sacred planet.

> *In the transformation of silence into language and action, it is vitally necessary for each one of us to establish or examine her function in that transformation, and to recognize her role as vital within that transformation. (Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider)*

The findings from this research highlights the importance that feminist theories have in supporting our understanding of how women experience the world, and that attempting to understand the world of business without this lens leaves women's experiences unheard and ignored, or worse women stories denied and silenced, forcing them into the darkness that occupies many corners surrounding current organisational management theory. It is important that we recognise how silencing women's voices and denying their experiences at work is a type of gender violence that has harmful negative affects, permeating across all aspects of our lived experiences. Our sense of self, meaning and livelihoods are created and experienced within the world of work; we form attachments to our organisations, and the people within them, and want to believe that we are valued equally, and appreciated for our talents and skills by those we respect and care for. When we discover pay inequity we blame ourselves and fall prey to the collective gendered practices that organisation's adopt as defence mechanisms that serve to deny and silence us. Methodical and protracted grievance and legal

processes push us, the victims, further into the darkness, where we are left to defend our own reality against those who can not, or will not, see our truth.

The systematic and collective silencing of women's lived experiences of the organisation has left a void in our collective knowledge that will take great efforts and focus to fill. Without these voices we have lost much of the knowledge, language and deeds that we need to tackle not just pay inequity, but work-based inequalities more generally. This study represents just one topic, across the vast domain of organisation theory, that can benefit from listening to the experiences of women. By providing the voiceless with a voice, and paying close attention to what is being said, we can come to understand the world as experience by women better. These insights can help us to bridge the gaps that have emerged from the centuries of the silencing of women, bringing us closer towards the language that helps us to make sense of our experiences, as well as deeds that address the harmful affects that inequality continues to have on working women today. We all have a responsibility to seek out these voices so that they can be heard, and inequalities that are hiding in plain sight can be seen in the clear light of day. Now we can begin the process of creating a new language for understanding this phenomenon, and in doing so bring about the important actions that are desperately needed for our equality, and for our healing. In the words of Audre Lorde;

> *And where the words of women are crying to be heard, we must each of us recognise our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and share them and examine them in their pertinence to our lives. (Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider)*

Using feminist theories and methodologies to challenge the gendered practices of organisations is a tradition that has been emerging over these past four decades (Fotaki, 2021;

Fotaki and Pullen, 2023), with feminist scholars patiently and consistently voicing the gender blind spots in current organisational theory and practice (Acker, 1995). Although the methodological approach cannot be claimed as a finding of this research, feminist theory and approaches have guided me through development of the research design and the analysis of the stories captured, supporting a deeper exploration of women's experiences sense making. In addition, the highly reflexive nature of this particular study could be considered complementary to the relatively few recent studies that uses feminism to bridge our current knowledge (Fotaki and Pullen, 2023). For pay inequity specifically, I am confident that this study provides an entirely new and novel methodological and theoretical approach to the topic, generating valuable insights and new and novel podium from which we can consider theoretical advancements that will tackle the very real problem of pay inequity.

I began by identifying two major gaps in the literature in pay inequity as identified in the paper presented as chapter 2, highlighting a failure to acknowledge female perspectives on gender pay inequity in the workplace, or to explore women's lived experiences (Burke, 2022). More recent research emerging from broader social science arenas have afforded me an understanding of the complex factors operating within organisations that result in gendered practices, or individual experiences of sexism, leading me towards findings that show how gender is indeed a social institution (Acker, 1992), designed to encourage the enactment of specific practices or patterns of behaviour that serve to constrain women, and hinder their ability to be seen and heard within the organisational context (Martin, 2004). An example of this has been evidenced through a number of studies that provide us with insight into the experiences of women in modern workplaces, such as the subtle violence experienced by female professors (Castelao-Huerta, 2020), sexism within contemporary business schools (Yarrow and Davies, 2022), or normalised sexual harassment in male dominated environments (Haas and Timmerman, 2022). I hope too that research provides

further insight into recent social and media movements that have provided a voice to the lived experience of women. Social movements such as 'The Everyday Sexism Project' founded in 2012 by Laura Bates, began as a research project, but quickly spiralled into a platform for women to voice and share their experiences of sexism, sexual harassment, abuse, and domestic violence (Bates, 2012). The '#MeToo' movement (Burke, 2017), also become an international campaign providing a safe and anonymous space for the reporting and denouncing sexual assault, rape and harassment within TV and media industries. Highlighting the damaging cultures of silence that surrounded sex discrimination and abuse particularly in Hollywood (Burke, 2017). Social movements can quickly evolve into international movements, with millions of followers becoming aware of the everyday struggles of marginalised people all over the world. The sheer volume of contributors and reports indicates a sexual harassment problem of pandemic proportions, that far outweigh any previously reported statistics on the topic. The overwhelming impression created by these collective stories paint a picture of complicit cultures, that promote the collective practices of denial, expulsion, ritual humiliation and the silencing of women (Bates, 2012). Lengthy, complex and expensive legal processes make justice inaccessible for most women, and the threat of counter legal attacks and non-disclosure agreements (NDAs and COT3s) aim to silence and distort the magnitude of the problem. In summary this thesis claims the following contributions to knowledge:

1. Advancing and supporting feminist and critical organisation theories that tackle how women's voices are missing from debates and knowledge of women's experiences in the workplace, specifically gender washing, sexism and emotional affects of injustice.
2. A new and novel methodological approach to the topic of pay inequity (feminist and qualitative).

3. The female perspective on the topic of pay inequity which has led to a deeper understanding of women's experiences of sexism in the workplace (sexism).
4. Empirical findings on the types of gender washing practices used to silence women's stories of discrimination (gender washing).
5. Empirical findings on two new gender washing practices (gas lighting and NDAs).
6. Innovative use of gender washing as an analytical construct that can aide our understanding of how pay inequity and sexism is experienced in organisations.
7. Deep insight into how pay inequity experiences are a form of subtle violence that leads to lasting psychological harm (psychological affects).
8. A deep reflexive exercise on my own personal sense-making of my pay inequity experiences, leading to a deeper understanding of the power of storytelling as mechanism for healing and resistance.

My findings from this study are presented as stories, all of which demonstrate an original contribution to each area of knowledge in unique and unexpected ways. In addition to the topical discussions contained within the papers, relevant and interesting discussions about each of these findings were also a main consideration for the focus group session held on 1st February 2024 with 6 participants from the study which have been included as ***Appendix R and S***, providing a novel insight into how working women have interpreted the theory and concepts that emerged from this study, and a glimpse into how it will be received by similar 'lay' audiences, handing our academic theory and concepts over to them for acceptance and challenge. The discussion I present toward the very end of this thesis will look directly into our collective future, considering women's views on feminism and activism as ways of connecting, support and instigating change. I have been listening to these women

talk about their experiences for over 4 years now, exploring our experiences and stories from all angles, and being guided to this point by their words.

What I've Learnt About Feminism

Feminist theory has provided both a social platform a well as a moral code that continues to aides my understanding of how I identify and understand the oppressive gender norms present in our society. It has given me a deeper knowledge of how we relate to each other in the world, helping me establish what it means to be a woman living in a world that has a patriarchal history and ideals. I want for this research to help others to understand how individuals experience pay inequity, and how these experiences impact on their professional and personal lives (Ahmed, 2017). I want this research to describe what it means to be a woman working within the gendered social institution that is today's corporate Britain, and I want to shed a light on how women come to understand and make sense of their situation. I have found that pay inequity experiences present women with an opportunity to expand their own feminist consciousness, stimulating and reconnecting those feminist neurons that had lay quiet or dormant. We become conscious of the gender that is happening all around us in new and revealing ways. We try out this new feminist consciousness in other areas of our lives, discovering a world that is made for others, a world where we are strangers, where we don't feel quite right, or at home. We sense the uncomfortable and unsettling feeling of becoming 'other', as we drift towards becoming strangers to the life we once knew. I have become estranged to the shapes and memories of my previous life. I spent my days feeling through the unfamiliar, the contradictory, facing into the conflict presented by the gendered institution (Martin, 2004), until my own enlightenment and sense making brought me back, towards new and different aspects of my identity, different ideas and concepts, that helped me to make

sense of what had happened to me, and accept where I had landed, providing me with the solace I needed to heal from this painful and difficult journey (Ahmed, 2017). Sense-making takes time, and as women we are forced to live through the consequences of the disruption that pay inequity discoveries provoke, fighting against the confines of the gendered institution, and facing into the paradox as an abyss. Women will instinctively voice their experiences, but we find that in doing so we become the enemy from within, within the home, within the workplace, within society (Gill, 2014). Identifying as a Feminist in a post-feminist context is problematic. Women who experience this unravelling are riddled with the emotional turmoil that comes with letting go of previously coveted hopes and dreams. Realising that much of what had previously brought pleasure and joy, such as family, successful careers, material wealth, are built on a system designed to oppress women (Federici, 2004). And we experience this loss as traumatic. Fundamentally changing the way we perceive ourselves, our worth and what brings meaning to our lives. Dismantling the foundations of previous experiences, and setting ourselves into opposition with our old lives and knowledge, those that we care about and love accuse us of playing the gender card, and attempt to shut us down and ignore us (Donaghue, 2015). Thus, I feel that one of the contributions this thesis makes is to support and expand further the application of feminist approaches to address the injustices experience by women in organisations.

What I've Learnt About Post-feminism

Academic's have responded to these stories by starting new conversations that are centred around the experiences of women (Kelan 2008a, 2009; Kelan and Jones, 2010). This research takes a different approach to our academic forefathers, seeing that different epistemologies, and deeper descriptive knowledge of particular phenomenon can be garnered from listening to the voices, and exploring the stories, of those marginalised groups most

affected by it (Mills, 2005; Mills et, al., 2010). What we are beginning to understand from such research is that the lived experiences of marginalised groups frequently contradict the social narrative that has been adopted. The concepts of post-feminism and neo-liberalism provide some, although generic, explanations for some of the harmful social narratives that work against women's voices being heard, or listened to, by the majority of people within western cultures (Boje, 2005). However, more specific and contextual studies, such as this study, will help to uncover how these paradoxes play out for women who suffer from harassment or exploitation at work, and expose the gendered practices that serve to sustain post-feminist and neo-liberal attitudes that make progress so difficult to achieve (Lewis, 2014; Lewis et, al., 2017).

Here I have taken the concept of post-feminism and used it as a lens to help me to understand, and possibly even represent, this new era of feminism, and to understand how this concept can be used to explain women's experiences within a social context that is different to that of our second wave feminist mothers and grandmothers. I adopt the assumption about the 'common sense of post-feminism', thereby adopting an analytic perspective that takes account of contemporary research approaches to the topic that explore post-feminism with a focus on women's experiences, specifically in relation to the organisation and culture (Gill, 2011, 2014; Gill et, al., 2017; Kelan, 2008, 2009a; McRobbie, 2009; Fotaki 2021; Fotaki and Pullen, 2023). I find from this research that the current post-feminist context presents women with 'sensibilities', perceptions, feelings, emotions, that are described in the stories we tell about how we experience the world, but that, without language, we can't quite make sense of what is happening to us (Jones and Clifton, 2018). It is perhaps enough for me to have simply considered the post-feminist context of this study, and how this context provides a timebound socio-cultural context, which will continue to change, and within which women will continue to experience their everyday lives. I have

come to recognise that as the world of business continues to evolve and transform, so too does our social and cultural normality, and so too will women's experiences of our lives within these contexts, impacting on how we come to make sense of our own realities (Boje, 2005).

These research findings join the contemporary conversations that striding towards bridging some of the gaps that exist between social psychology and organisation management theory. Social constructionist approaches can be seen through the emerging literary streams that bring post-feminism into conversations that speak to women's experiences of the workplace. Building further, this study brings topics such as everyday sexism, gender washing, gendered practices and practising gender together, so that we can witness how each can play individual roles, or work in harmony together, to shape women's pay inequity experiences, creating barriers for women to be valued and rewarded equally in the workplace, and exposing the social institution that keep women in their place (Martin, 2004). These findings are made visible only through the careful unpicking of the meaning inherent in these stories, and from women's own sense-making, which have informed the themes as they emerged from this vast, rich and unique datasource (Devanjit and Haradhan, 2022; Charmaz, 2008). Through the analysis and presentation of these findings I have attempted to preserve the feelings that are present in the words alongside the meaning that emerges to provide a deeper insight into the affects on women (Gilmore et, al., 2019; Kociatkiewicz and Kostera, 2023). It has been through the adoption of this feminist approach to writing differently that I have discovered that we have lost the language of sexism, articulating our experiences in relation to our own perceptions and emotions, but falling short of labelling and categorising what we perceive. Such rich narratives have described a lived-experience that places gender at the centre of our discovery of pay inequity and how we are treated by our organisation, and beyond into our tribunal courts. These stories provide us with authentic and untainted

perceptions of women's experiences of pay inequity in the workplace, which has been largely ignored by academics researching this phenomenon (Walster and Walster, 1973). It is my belief that through these stories we can get closer to the ways in which organisations are working against women and provide some much needed support to the women who find themselves at the sharp end of its negative affects. I want for this research to 'speak' to women first and foremost, helping them to make sense of their experiences, and providing some much-needed support at the point when gas-lighting and gender washing has left them confused and alone. My research contributes to providing an understanding of the broader social and organisational practices that impact on women's experiences and perceptions at work, and thus can help women's navigation through these turbulent waters, sharing a map and compass that will guide them on their sense making journey, that have been shared from the experiences of others.

What I've Learnt About Sexism

Studies into the sexism present across the media and film industries have helped to shine a spotlight on the various forms that sexism and sexual harassment manifest within corporate settings (Burke, 2022), but has also taught us the many ways in which women are silenced, with a widespread erosion of a social 'permission' to speak of sexism (Jones and Clifton, 2017; Gill, 2014), we find ourselves persecuted for even mentioning its existence (Jones and Pringle, 2015). Whilst studies that trace sexisms progress through male-dominated arenas, such as televised sports, point to a gender-bland sexism that is superficial in nature, seeking always to avoid any claims of direct sexism, with intention to denigrate female efforts to report sexism as lacklustre or unimportant (Musto et. Al., 2017). Such recent studies help to draw our attention to the new and subtle forms of sexism that colour women's

experiences of their workplaces. Studies that have examined the perspectives of our young people reveal how everyday sexism has been perforated into the lives of secondary school students, who actively prioritise boys' experiences by diminishing girls' experiences of sexual harassment and inflate the relatively minor harm that men may experience through being accused of sexual crimes, thereby positioning men as the victims. This serves to diminish and nullify the disproportionately harmful affects that sexism, and sexual harassment has on women and girls (Calder-Dawe and Gavey, 2015). Such studies have been of vital importance in moving theory forwards, towards a contemporary framing of complex social phenomenon, and beyond conversations that have focussed on motherhood and choice for far too long (Nguyen et, al., 2023). Serving to further stimulate gender stereotyping and diminishment, and harmful patriarchal perspectives that prevent the advancement of women and lead to the everyday sexism that not only hinders women's progress, but also serves to impact on their emotional and psychological well-being (McLaughlin et, al., 2017; Berg, 2006).

Everyday sexism, such as (i) mansplaining, where men assume they know more, leading to condescension; (ii) idea appropriation where women's ideas are sometimes taken and presented by men receiving more acceptance; (iii) exclusions which make women feel left out of decision-making processes due to gender, age, or hierarchical structures; and (iv) the allocation of gendered roles where women are frequently assigned tasks based on stereotypes, such as caregiving roles, while men are given leadership responsibilities, further feed into the myth of meritocracy that pushes women into shadows (Bates, 2012; Das et al., 2023). These examples highlight the subtle, yet impactful ways sexism manifests itself in contemporary working environments, never formally reported, but so continuous and manifold that they are rendered unseen and unspoken (Bates, 2012; Jones and Clifton, 2017; Gill, 2014).

Other key findings from studies into sexism within French business schools, shows that not only are tasks allocated on the basis of gender, with men receiving more esteemed roles, and women being assigned operational functions with less recognition, but that contributions were valued differently based on gender. Resulting in men's efforts being more visibly rewarded and women's efforts often taken for granted (Yarrow and Davies, 2022; Jones and Pringle, 2015). Such studies make visible the structural barriers, in the form of organisational practices, that serves to sustain sexism and prevent women from advancing, leading to lower recruitment and slower promotions (McLaughlin et, al., 2017). Alongside these more recent studies on everyday sexism we also see research that highlights how contemporary management practices actually encourage the silencing of women's reports of sexism, leading to a collective reluctance to even admit sexism exists, and therefore address its harmful affects on women (Shymko et. Al., 2023). The silencing of women's voices and stories have been shown to have detrimental affects on all workers, not just those women that are targeted because they speak out about pay inequity. This research shows a manifestation of gender issues within the workplace that can trigger negative emotional responses amongst all of the workers who become aware of them (including men) but is most impactful on perpetuating patriarchal power structures that harm women's emotional well-being (Fitzgerald et. al,. 1997).

This study intends to join Gill and others in reviving our discussions on sexism so that women's real world experiences can continue to inform theoretical debates, but to also advocate for the use of feminism as an authentic, appropriate and effective stance that can aide the development of new theory on many age-old debates, such as pay inequity (Ahmed, 2017), and provide us with intersectional and transnational approaches designed to dismantle both the structural and emotional sources of sexism. Gill calls for a broader, intersectional analysis of sexism, considering its interplay with other forms of discrimination and the

importance of understanding media's role in societal power dynamics (Gill, 2011). Sexism in the workplace is a pervasive issue that affects countless individuals across every border, industry and sector. It manifests in many forms, from overt discrimination and harassment to subtle biases and hidden inequities, but its affects spread like a virus within our societies, harming our families and our planet (Guterres, 2023). Studies, such as the one conducted by the British Medical Association (BMA) reveal alarming statistics where 9 in every 10 female doctors report experiencing sexism at work. This not only undermines professional relationships but also impacts the mental health and job satisfaction of those affected (Rimmer, 2021). The consequences of such hostile environments can lead to a culture of silence, where individuals fear repercussions for speaking out, further perpetuating the cycle of discrimination (Shymko et, al., 2023).

To combat sexism, it is imperative for us to address both structural and institutional factors that contribute to its prevalence. This includes collectively challenging the norms and practices that enable sexist behaviour, re-educating our youth and society on these new, subtle and hidden forms of sexism, and re-imaging our gendered workplaces, and gendered practices with inclusive foundations. When we hear reports of incidents of sexism we should listen and believe those brave enough to speak out, particularly within the toxic gendered cultures that would silence them and use their stories to promote social justice and the type of activism that can bring about the transformation needed (Liu, 2022). Encouraging open dialogue and transparency can help us to acknowledge the problems that sexism is creating for women, so that we can worth together towards a solution for all. Furthermore, it is vital to support those who have experienced sexism, ensuring they do not face vengeance for reporting incidents to their employers, and providing counselling services, legal assistance, and career development opportunities that counteract the negative impacts on them. By taking a proactive stance against sexism, organizations can not only improve the workplace

environment but also set a precedent for societal change. In conclusion, sexism in the workplace is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach to eradicate. It calls for a collective effort from individuals, employers, and policymakers to create work environments where everyone, regardless of their sex, has fair access and opportunity to progress. Only through sustained action and commitment to equality can we hope to see a significant reduction in workplace sexism and its harmful affects, and thus this thesis provides an insightful contribution across the field of everyday sexism, and how these experiences are perceived by women within organisations where women report pay inequity.

What I've Learnt About Trauma

"Social Justice and the Experience of Emotion" is a book that examines the emotional roots of justice perceptions. The authors, Cropanzano, Stein, and Nadisic, review social scientific research on justice perceptions and take a historical perspective from their standpoint in 2012. They consider relevant work from various fields, including management, philosophy, social, organizational, personality, and evolutionary psychology, with the book seeking to integrate scholarship on justice and affect, focusing on empirical theories related to fairness, mood, and emotion. Most of the literature in the book is drawn from social and organizational psychology, with additional insights from management, personality, and evolutionary psychology and as such it provides an early look at how justice and human emotions are interconnected and helps us to understand how this relationship can lead to well-being, better relationships, and more effective work organizations and communities (Cropanzano et, al., 2011). For instance, it considers how emotions may play out over time, and within specific contexts, where we see that workers who are forced to mask feelings of injustice may experience negative impacts on job performance and well-being, but

recognition and fair treatment can lead to greater satisfaction and success (Cropanzano and Ambrose, 2015). Through their review of the research, we discover how emotions play a crucial role in shaping our perceptions of justice, as well as how we respond to injustice, and that when people experience unfairness their emotional responses influence how they evaluate situations and interact with others. The authors delve into the emotional response individuals have when faced with injustice, and we see how responses can range from anger and frustration to feelings of betrayal or sadness (Cropanzanoe et, al. 2011). Understanding these affective responses is essential for comprehending how we respond to situations of injustice. Although the book examines justice perceptions from a range of different contexts, including organizational settings, interpersonal relationships, and societal structures, it has been criticised for its lack of theoretical precision which limits its value in supporting studies that seek to unpick these complex interactions (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). The book does, however, identify social and organisational contexts as important factors affecting the emotional consequences of injustice, and thus we need pay attention to the what, where and who of situations of injustice in order to fully appreciate these interactions (Cropanzano et. Al., 2011).

A number of theoretical and methodological gaps emerge from this comprehensive study of the literature on this topic, which are reminiscent of the gaps that the broader pay inequity topic also suffers from and identified in the literature review titled, '*Pay Inequity: Past, Present and Future'* and contained in Chapter 2. One could argue that the book would benefit from more rigorous empirical studies as the topic currently relies heavily on theoretical frameworks and historical analysis that potentially don't 'fit' to the complexities of current contemporary workplaces.

Therefore, the contribution made here focusses on the real-world emotional responses that originate from situations of injustice, providing us with significant insights for theoretical

development across the topic. Historical studies have presented us with contexts that relate to specific historical periods (such as industrialised nations) and assumes a homogeneity of responses (such as assuming men and women would respond in the same way), which has not adequately been address within the context of broader social justice issues (Hillebrandt and Barclay, 2013). As with much of the research that surround the social exchange and equity theories, I have found similar gaps in that the knowledge base has favoured a positivist and quantitative methodological stance, with gaps evident when we attempt to approach the topic from a social constructionist perspective, as this study provides (Wang, 2016).

Studies that have assessed the cognitive appraisal model have found that anger and frustration are heightened when procedural injustice is perceived (Krehbiel and Cropanzano, 2000), however, such studies test their hypotheses in simulation situations, rather than understanding how emotions are affected in the real world following an injustice, such as with pay inequity situations. Research also suggests that people do not perceive injustice in situations where they are keen to maintain the status quo, but that personal levels of uncertainty can amplify an individual's reaction to injustice, which describes certain events that can trigger an 'alarm phase' that leads individuals to switch from defending the status quo to critically evaluating the fairness of their social systems (Mannix et. al., 2010). I have presented my own and other stories where women explain this very denial, referenced by one of the participants as the 'trump effect', where injustice seems only visible to the victims, and constant denials are used to wash away the sins of the past.

The challenges associated with attempting to measure affect and injustice dynamically over time highlights the complexity of the task. Some key challenges that have been identified with empirical research for injustice and emotional affect can be drawn from the fact that both affect and justice perceptions are dynamic, changing and evolving over time, which further complicates their measurement using laboratory-based and post-event

assessments techniques (Hillebrandt and Barclay, 2013). These challenges point to the need for a methodological shift that can capture the unfolding process and variation over time, beyond cross-sectional designs. Through this research we have come to understand that injustice and affect is not only triggered by an 'alarm phase', but that such experiences can unfold in episodes, with a series of related events organized around a central theme, such as a pay inequity discovery, which is then followed by a HR grievance procedure, and then a legal dispute or court case. I present women's stories of the real world where I have developed a nuanced approach designed to capture the full experience, and thus I have captured the justice perceptions that have driven women's emotional responses over time (Hillebrandt and Barclay, 2013). I have found that the 'cold', or purely cognitive view of injustice is countered with a 'hot', visceral, emotional response that I recognise as more closely associated with injustice situations I have experienced in the real world. Adrenalin fuelled emotions such as outrage, horror, shock, resentment, and anger fluctuate as we oscillate between the emotional and cognitive processes that help us to make sense of our experiences (Van den Bos, 2003). When we consider additional factors, such as perceptions and beliefs, we can begin to understand that there are a multitude of processes and factors that will integrate into how individuals actually experience injustice (Barclay and Whiteside, 2011). This research provide evidence of how we can take a closer look at how injustice is experienced by women according to their specific context and perceptions, utilising a phenomenological approach towards its study, so that we might consider the positive psychology interventions that will help us to cope with the psychological harm that such negative and challenging experiences can evoke, such as trauma (Sin and Lyubomirsky, 2009).

Final Thoughts – My Feminist Journey

Feminism, at its best, is a movement that works to liberate all people who have been economically, socially and culturally marginalised by an ideological system that has been designed for them to fail. (Reni Eddo-Lodge)

The conclusions have brought me closer to reflection across my own feminist journey over these past 7 years, and I have now come to realise that it is through the feminist ontology and writing differently that I have been able to bring together my body and spirit, the essence of myself, and release the shackles that had held me in my place for the decades before I experienced my own pay inequity. These shackles were pulled tight, making sure that I never deviated from the gendered institutions that caged me in. My exploration of feminist thought and theories through every stage of this research has guided me onto a well-trodden path, a path that many others have walked down, a path where they survived hurt and ridicule, only to thrive and share their knowledge and perspectives with the next generation. I breathe deeply, that sigh of relief, when we understand that we are not alone. I have found many others on this path, and I now understand that what had made me feel so alone at the start, has now become the thing that has finally brought me to my tribe. I have come to understand the importance of providing space for women who suffer from the loss and loneliness that such social institutions can create, and that this can be the driving force behind a feminist project. Such spaces grant some much-needed refuge and solace during important times of need, but they can also become points of historical and academic reference, where women's stories can be shared and heard, preserved. Perhaps through the sharing of stories we can develop a new language and forms of communication that fit what we are experiencing and how we are feeling right now. But most importantly we can join ourselves with others who understand and care about the same things that we do. Who can see the

world from the same feminist consciousness, and who don't roll their eyes when we point out inequalities but embrace the need for change and are willing to attach their life's mission to the cause. My feminist influences are loud and proud, their voices ring throughout history, the likes of Silvia Federici, Sylvia Plath, Bell Hooks, Audre Lorde and more recently Magret Atwood, Rupi Kaur, Malala Yousafzi and Sara Ahmed whose company I have kept close on this research journey gently pushing and guiding me from the sidelines, to ensure that feminism remains at the heart of where this research has been grounded. For although there are the habitual, the familiar, that can be found in feminist stories through the ages, there is the ever-changing context and environment of our people on this planet that continues to present us with new and complex forms of oppression, requiring us to stay alert and responsive to the challenges that hinder our progression towards true equity. And so, I have actively considered our contemporary era, one of socially-driven connections and social media, where our roles as labourers and consumers dominate how we are counted in society, and where big business has come to dominate the social discourse. It is within these noisy and complex contexts we must find each other, and set about the important tasks of revival and transformation. A feminism that fits to the shapes and colours of this modern life, and that has the force of the collective will of the people behind it, will mean that we will no longer feel alone.

Chapter 9. References

Acker, J. (1995) Decisions Without Hierarchy - Feminist Interventions in Organizational Theory and Practice. .

Acker, J. (1992) 'Gendered Institutions - From Sex-Roles to Gendered Institutions ', Contemporary Sociology-A Journal of Reviews, 21(5), pp.565–569.

Acker, J. (2006) 'Inequality Regimes Gender, Class, and Race in Organizations', Gender and Society, 20(4), pp.441–464.

Acker, J. (2000) 'Gendered Contradictions in Organizational Equity Projects', Organization (London, England), 7(4), pp.625–632.

Acker, J. (1994) 'In the Way of Women: Men's Resistance to Sex Equality in Organizations . Cynthia Cockburn The Promise and the Price: The Struggle for Equal Opportunity in Women's Employment . Clare Burton', Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 19(2), pp.504–506.

Acker, S. (2001) 'In/out/side: positioning the researcher in feminist qualitative research', Resources for Feminist Research, 28(3), pp.153–172.

Adams, J.S. (1965) 'Inequity in social exchange', in Advances in experimental social psychology. Elsevier, pp. 267–299.

Adams, J.S. (1963) 'Towards an understanding of inequity', The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 67(5), pp.422–436.

Adams, J.S. and Jacobsen, P.R. (1964) 'Effects of wage inequities on work quality', The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 69(1), pp.19–25.

Adams, J.S. and Rosenbaum, W.B. (1962) 'The relationship of worker productivity to cognitive dissonance about wage inequities', Journal of Applied Psychology, 46(3), pp.161–164.

Ahmed, S. (2017) Living a feminist life. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ainsworth, S. and Pekarek, A. (2022) 'Gender in Human Resources: Hiding in plain sight', Human Resource Management Journal, 32(4), pp.890–905.

Alexander, A.C. and Welzel, C. Empowering Women: Four Theories Tested on Four Different Aspects of Gender Equality.

Alford, C.F. (2002) Whistleblowers: Broken lives and organizational power. Cornell University Press.

Allan, J. (2020) 'Light, Energy, and Gendered Oil Gluttony: Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel's Challenges to Petrocapitalism', Modern Fiction Studies, 66(1), pp.101–121.

Amado, C.A.F., Santos, S. and São José, J.M.S. (2018) 'Measuring and decomposing the gender pay gap: A new frontier approach', European Journal of Operational Research, 271(1), pp.357–373.

Ambrose, M.L. and Schminke, M. (2009) 'The role of overall justice judgments in organizational justice research: A test of mediation.', Journal of Applied Psychology, 94(2), pp.491.

Amis, J.M., Mair, J. and Munir, K.A. (2019) 'The Organizational Reproduction of Inequality', ANNALS, 14(1), pp.195–230.

Amstutz, N., Nussbaumer, M. and Vöhringer, H. (2021a) 'Disciplined discourses: The logic of appropriateness in discourses on organizational gender equality policies', Gender, Work, and Organization, 28(1), pp.215–230.

Amstutz, N., Nussbaumer, M. and Vöhringer, H. (2021b) 'Disciplined discourses: The logic of appropriateness in discourses on organizational gender equality policies', Gender, Work, and Organization, 28(1), pp.215–230.

Andiappan, M. and Treviño, L.,K. (2011) 'Beyond righting the wrong: Supervisor-subordinate reconciliation after an injustice', Human Relations, 64(3), pp.359–386.

Anjum, G. and Aziz, M. (2024) 'Advancing equity in cross-cultural psychology: embracing diverse epistemologies and fostering collaborative practices', Frontiers in Psychology, 15.

Antunovic, D. (2019) '"We wouldn't say it to their faces": online harassment, women sports journalists, and feminism', Feminist Media Studies, 19(3), pp.428–442.

Archer, A. and Mills, G. (2019) 'Anger, Affective Injustice, and Emotion Regulation', Philosophical Topics, 47(2), pp.75–94.

Women in the workforce : what everyone needs to know(2022) Old Saybrook, Connecticut: Tantor Media, Inc.

Babic, A. and Hansez, I. (2021) 'The Glass Ceiling for Women Managers: Antecedents and Consequences for Work-Family Interface and Well-Being at Work', Frontiers in Psychology, 12 pp.618250.

Bain, C. (2020) 'Gender inequalities in food standards', in pp. 46–56.

Barclay, L. and Whiteside, D. (2011) Moving beyond justice perceptions: The role of experience and intensity. Volume 7 edn.Information Age Publishing.

Bartos, R. (1986) 'Qualitative research: what it is and where it came from', Journal of Advertising Research, 26(3), pp.RC–3.

Basford, T.E., Offermann, L.R. and Behrend, T.S. (2014) 'Do You See What I See? Perceptions of Gender Microaggressions in the Workplace', Psychology of Women Quarterly, 38(3), pp.340–349.

Bates, L. (2012) Everyday Sexism. 1st ed. edn.Simon & Schuster Ltd.

Bauer, R. (2024) How Women at Nike Changed Everything, and What It Should Mean to Your Organization. Available at: https://www.gildcollective.com/blog/2018/8/14/whatwelearnedfromnike (Accessed: .

Bazzichelli, T. (2021) Whistleblowing for change : exposing systems of power and injustice. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.

BBC. (2018) 'BBC women face 'veiled threats' over equal pay queries', BBC Website, 30 Januar. Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-42858624 (Accessed: 27/06/2024).

Becker, G.S., Murphy, K.M. and Tamura, R. (1990) 'Human Capital, Fertility, and Economic Growth', The Journal of Political Economy, 98(5), pp.S12–S37.

Bell, E., Meriläinen, S., Taylor, S. and Tienari, J. (2019) 'Time's up! Feminist theory and activism meets organization studies', Human Relations (New York), 72(1), pp.4–22.

Belle, D. and Doucet, J. (2003) 'Poverty, Inequality, and Discrimination as Sources of Depression Among U.S. Women', Psychology of Women Quarterly, 27(2), pp.101–113.

Bennedsen, M., Larsen, B. and Wei, J. (2023) 'Gender wage transparency and the gender pay gap: A survey', Journal of Economic Surveys, 37(5), pp.1743–1777.

Benschop, Y. and Brouns, M. (2003) 'Crumbling Ivory Towers: Academic Organizing and its Gender Effects', Gender, Work, and Organization, 10(2), pp.194–212.

Berg, S.H. (2006) 'Everyday Sexism and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Women: A Correlational Study', Violence Against Women, 12(10), pp.970–988.

Berger, P.L. and Luckmann, T. (2011) The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge. Open Road Media.

Berridge, S. (2008) 'What does it take? Auto/biography as performative PhD thesis', Forum, Qualitative Social Research, 9(2),.

Bies, R.J. and Barclay, L.J. 'Doing justice: Moving from the pain and trauma of injustice to healing', Organizational Psychology Review, 14(2), pp.323–345.

Bird, S.R. (2011) 'Unsettling Universities' Incongruous, Gendered Bureaucratic Structures: A Case-study Approach', Gender, Work, and Organization, 18(2), pp.202–230.

Blau, F.D. and Kahn, L.M. (2007) 'The Gender Pay Gap: Have Women Gone as Far as They Can?', Academy of Management Perspectives, 21(1), pp.7–23.

Blau, F.D. and Kahn, L.M. (2000) 'Gender Differences in Pay', The Journal of Economic Perspectives, 14(4), pp.75–99.

Boje, D.M. (2018) Organizational Research : Storytelling in Action. Boca Raton, FL: Routledge.

Boje, D.M. (2005) 'Sensemaking and Senseimposing', Tamara (Las Cruces, N.M.), 4(1), pp.5.

Borgogna, N.C. and Aita, S.L. (2024) 'Are sexist beliefs related to mental health problems?', The Social Science Journal, 61(2), pp.405–419.

Borrell, C., Artazcoz, L., Gil-González, D., Pérez, K., Pérez, G., Vives-Cases, C. and Rohlfs, I. (2011) 'Determinants of Perceived Sexism and Their Role on the Association of Sexism with Mental Health', Women & Health, 51(6), pp.583–603.

Bourdage, J.S., Goupal, A., Neilson, T., Lukacik, E. and Lee, N. (2018) 'Personality, equity sensitivity, and discretionary workplace behavior', Personality and Individual Differences, 120 pp.144–150.

Brockman, A.J. (2021) '"La Crème de la Crème": How Racial, Gendered, and Intersectional Social Comparisons Reveal Inequities That Affect Sense of Belonging in STEM', Sociological Inquiry, 91(4), pp.751–777.

Brown, M., Nyberg, A.J., Weller, I. and Strizver, S.D. (2022) 'Pay Information Disclosure: Review and Recommendations for Research Spanning the Pay Secrecy–Pay Transparency Continuum', Journal of Management, 48(6), pp.1661–1694.

Budler, M., Župič, I. and Trkman, P. (2021) 'The development of business model research: A bibliometric review', Journal of Business Research, 135 pp.480–495.

Burke, R. (2023a) 'Be Fair: A qualitative Investigation of Pay Inequity Experiences', European Conference on Research Methodology for Business and Management Studies, 22 pp.236–244.

Burke, R. (2023b) Pay Inequity: Past, Present and Future.

Burke, T. (2022) Me Too Movement. Available at: https://metoomvmt.org/ (Accessed: 02 2022).

Burnette, C.E. and Figley, C.R. (2016) 'Historical Oppression, Resilience, and Transcendence: Can a Holistic Framework Help Explain Violence Experienced by Indigenous People?', Social Work, 62(1), pp.37–44.

Bygren, M. and Gähler, M. (2012) 'Family Formation and Men's and Women's Attainment of Workplace Authority', Social Forces, 90(3), pp.795–816.

Çağatay, S., Liinason, M. and Sasunkevich, O. (2022) 'Solidarities Across: Borders, Belongings, Movements', in Çağatay, S., Liinason, M. and Sasunkevich, O. (eds.) Feminist and LGBTI+ Activism across Russia, Scandinavia and Turkey: Transnationalizing Spaces of Resistance. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 143–190.

Calcea, N. (2023) 'Eight out of ten firms pay men more than women', Bbc.Co.Uk, . Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-65179430 (Accessed: .

Callahan, J.L. and Elliott, C.J. (2020) 'Gender hegemony and its impact on HRD research and practice', Human Resource Development International, 23(5), pp.469–472.

Capdevila, R. and Zurbriggen, E.L. (2023) 'Introduction: Feminist Theorizing on Power, Gender, and Psychology', in Zurbriggen, E.L. and Capdevila, R. (eds.) The Palgrave Handbook of Power, Gender, and Psychology. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 1–9.

Cambridge English Dictionary. Available at: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/feminism (Accessed: 4th July 2024).

Carrell, M. and Dittrich, J. (1978) 'Equity Theory: The Recent Literature, Methodological Considerations, and New Directions', Academy of Management.the Academy of Management Review, 3(2), pp.202.

Charles, K.K., Guryan, J. and Pan, J. (2022) 'The Effects of Sexism on American Women: The Role of Norms vs. Discrimination', The Journal of Human Resources, pp.920.

Charles, N. (2013) 'Doing Gender, Practising Politics: Workplace Cultures in Local and Devolved Government: Doing Gender, Practising Politics', Gender, Work, and Organization, 21 pp.368–380.

Charmaz, K. GROUNDED THEORY IN THE 21 5T CENTURY Applications for Advancing Social justice Studies.

Clark-Saboda, J. and Lemke, M. (2023) 'Revisiting Acker's gendered organizational theory: what women overcome to stay in the superintendency', Frontiers in Education (Lausanne), 8.

COHEN, R.L. and GREENBERG, J. (1982) 'chapter 1 - The Justice Concept in Social Psychology', in GREENBERG, J. and COHEN, R.L. (eds.) Equity and Justice in Social Behavior. Academic Press, pp. 1–41.

Cohn, S. (1985) The Process of Occupational Sex-Typing The Feminization of Clerical Labor in Great Britain. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Conley, H. (2014) 'Trade unions, equal pay and the law in the UK', Economic and Industrial Democracy, 35(2), pp.309–323.

Conley, H. and Page, M. (2018) 'The Good, the Not So Good and the Ugly: Gender Equality, Equal Pay and Austerity in English Local Government', Work, Employment and Society, 32(4), pp.789–805.

Conny Herbert ANTONI, X.B. (2022) 8TH REWARD MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE - REWARDS IN TURBULENT TIMES, 1st December 2022. https://www.vlerick.com/en/, .

Cook, A. and Glass, C. (2014) 'Above the glass ceiling: When are women and racial/ethnic minorities promoted to CEO?', Strategic Management Journal, 35(7), pp.1080–1089.

Cortis, N., Foley, M. and Williamson, S. (2022) 'Change agents or defending the status quo? How senior leaders frame workplace gender equality', Gender, Work, and Organization, 29(1), pp.205–221.

Costa Dias, M., Joyce, R. and Parodi, F. (2020) 'The gender pay gap in the UK: children and experience in work', Oxford Review of Economic Policy, 36(4), pp.855–881.

Crenshaw, K. (1998) 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics', in Phillips, A. (ed.) Feminism And Politics: Oxford Readings In Feminism. Oxford University Press, pp. 0.

Cropanzano, R. and Ambrose, M.L. (2015) The Oxford handbook of justice in the workplace. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Cropanzano, R. and Mitchell, M.S. (2005) 'Social Exchange Theory: An Interdisciplinary Review', Journal of Management, 31(6), pp.874–900.

Czarniawska, B. (2007) 'Narrative inquiry in and about organizations. Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology', Inquiry (Chicago), 44(4), pp.383–404.

Czarniawska-Joerges, B. (1998) A narrative approach to organization studies. Thousand Oaks, CA ;: SAGE.

Daskalaki, M. (2012) 'Personal Narratives and Cosmopolitan Identities: An Autobiographical Approach', Journal of Management Inquiry, 21(4), pp.430–441.

De Blasio, E. and Selva, D. (2019) 'Emotions in the Public Sphere: Networked Solidarity, Technology and Social Ties', in Fox, B. (ed.) Emotions and Loneliness in a Networked Society. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 13–44.

Dembele, L., Nathan, S., Carter, A., Costello, J., Hodgins, M., Singh, R., Martin, B. and Cullen, P. (2024) 'Researching With Lived Experience: A Shared Critical Reflection Between Co-Researchers', International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 23 pp.16094069241257945.

Desmet, P.T.M. (2011) In money we trust? The use of financial compensations to repair trust in the aftermath of distributive harm. Orlando, Fla. :.

Deutsch, N.L. (2004) 'Positionality and the Pen: Reflections on the Process of Becoming a Feminist Researcher and Writer', Qualitative Inquiry, 10(6), pp.885–902.

Diehl, A.B. and Dzubinski, L.M. (2016) 'Making the Invisible Visible: A Cross‐Sector Analysis of Gender‐Based Leadership Barriers', Human Resource Development Quarterly, 27(2), pp.181‐206.

Distribution by VERBI GmbH. MAXQDA Available at: (Downloaded: August 2023).

Donaghue, N. (2015) 'Who Gets Played By 'The Gender Card'?: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Coverage of Prime Minister Julia Gillard's Sexism and Misogyny Speech in the Australian Print Media', Australian Feminist Studies, 30(84), pp.161–178.

Eldh, A.C., Årestedt, L. and Berterö, C. (2020) 'Quotations in Qualitative Studies: Reflections on Constituents, Custom, and Purpose', International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 19.

Fabrizio, S., Kolovich, L. and Newiak, M. (2018) Pursuing Women's Economic Empowerment. International Monetary Fund. Available at: https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/Policy-Papers/Issues/2018/05/31/pp053118pursuing-womens-economic-empowerment (Accessed: 09/05/2024).

'Families That Work: Policies for Reconciling Parenthood and Employment', (2005) The Social Service Review (Chicago), 79(2), pp.400.

Fay, M.A. (2010) 'Mary Jo Maynes , Jennifer L. Pierce , and Barbara Laslett . Telling Stories: The Use of Personal Narratives in the Social Sciences and History . Ithaca : Cornell University Press . 2008 . Pp. ix, 186. Cloth $55.00, paper $19.95', The American Historical Review, 115(2), pp.496–497.

Federici, S. (2004) Caliban and the witch : [women, the body and primitive accumulation]. 1st edn. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia.

Ferry, N. (2024) 'Where is the patriarchy?: A review and research agenda for the concept of patriarchy in management and organization studies', Gender, Work & Organization, n/a.

Festinger, L. (1954) 'A theory of social comparison processes', Human Relations, 7(2), pp.117–140.

Figart, D.M., Mutari, E. and Power, M. (2002) Living wages, equal wages: Gender and labor market policies in the United States. Psychology Press.

Figueiredo, H., Rocha, V., Biscaia, R. and Teixeira, P. (2015) 'Gender pay gaps and the restructuring of graduate labour markets in Southern Europe', Cambridge Journal of Economics, 39(2), pp.565–598.

Ford, J., Atkinson, C., Harding, N. and Collinson, D. (2021) '‘You Just Had to Get on with It’: Exploring the Persistence of Gender Inequality through Women’s Career Histories', Work, Employment and Society, 35(1), pp.78–96.

Fortin, N.M., Bell, B. and Böhm, M. (2017) 'Top earnings inequality and the gender pay gap: Canada, Sweden, and the United Kingdom', Labour Economics, 47 pp.107–123.

Fotaki, M. (2021) 'Feminist research changing organizations and societies: taking stock and looking to the future', European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 30(3), pp.390–399.

Fotaki, M. and Pullen, A. (2023) 'Feminist Theories and Activist Practices in Organization Studies', Organization Studies, .

Fox-Kirk, W., Gardiner, R.A., Finn, H. and Chisholm, J. (2020) 'Genderwashing: the myth of equality', Human Resource Development International, 23(5), pp.586–597.

Fredman FBA KC, S. (2022) '1Equality: Concepts and Controversies', in Fredman FBA KC, S. (ed.) Discrimination Law. Oxford University Press, pp. 0.

Friedan, B. (1963) The Feminine Mystique. Norton & Co. edn.

Fuller, S. and Cooke, L.P. (2020) 'Workplace Variation in Fatherhood Wage Premiums: Do Formalization and Performance Pay Matter?', Work, Employment and Society, 32(4), pp.768–788.

Fuller, S. and Cooke, L.P. (2018) 'Workplace Variation in Fatherhood Wage Premiums: Do Formalization and Performance Pay Matter?', Work, Employment and Society, 32(4), pp.768–788.

Garcia, A. (2005) 'Counter Stories of Race and Gender: Situating Experiences of Latinas in the Academy', Latino Studies, 3(2), pp.261–273.

Gill, R. and Scharff, C. (2011) New Femininities : Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity. 1st edn. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Gill, R.-.(.C. (2014) 'Unspeakable Inequalities: Post Feminism, Entrepreneurial Subjectivity, and the Repudiation of Sexism among Cultural Workers', Social Politics, 21(4), pp.509–528.

Gill, R., Kelan, E.,K. and Scharff, C.,M. (2017) 'A Postfeminist Sensibility at Work', Gender, Work, and Organization, 24(3), pp.226–244.

Julia Gillard's misogyny speech: 10 years on – with Mary Beard (2022) Directed by Julia Gillard. [ideo]. London: Global Institute for Women's Leadership.

Gilmore, S., Harding, N., Helin, J. and Pullen, A. (2019) 'Writing differently', Management Learning, 50(1), pp.3–10.

Gilmore, S., Harding, N., Helin, J. and Pullen, A. (2019) 'Writing differently', Management Learning, 50(1), pp.3–10.

Giugni, L. and Tracey, P. (2021) Selling Liberation: Gender Washing and Tainted Markets' Legitimation (1920s-2010s). Academy of Management.

Glaser, B. and Strauss, A.L. (2017) The discovery of grounded theory : strategies for qualitative research. London, England] ; New York, New York: Routledge.

Global Gender Gap Report 2020. (2020) Available at: https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf (Accessed: 19/10/2021 2021).

Golden-Biddle, K. and Locke, K. (2006) Composing qualitative research. 2nd edn. London: SAGE.

Government, U.K. (2020) Tribunal Statistics Quarterly - October to December 2019. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2019 (Accessed: 20 2020).

Government, U.K. Factsheet: strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs). Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/economic-crime-and-corporate-transparency-bill-2022-factsheets/factsheet-strategic-lawsuits-against-public-participation-slapps (Accessed: 25 2024).

Grace, A.R., Boje, D.M., Carlon, D.M., Downs, A. and Saylors, R. (2024) 'Storytelling Diamond', Organizational Research Methods, 16(4), pp.557–580.

Gracie, C. (2019) Equal: How we fix the gender pay gap. First edn. England: Virago.

Greenberg, J. and Leventhal, G.S. (1976) 'Equity and the use of overreward to motivate performance', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 34(2), pp.179–190.

Greenberg, J. and McCarty, C. (1990) 'The interpersonal aspects of procedural justice: A new perspective on pay fairness', Labor Law Journal, 41(8), pp.580.

Guenther, L.(. (2017) Epistemic injustice and phenomenology in The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice. 1st ed. edn.Routledge.

Guillaume, C. (2015) 'Understanding the variations of unions' litigation strategies to promote equal pay: reflection on the British case', Cambridge Journal of Economics, 39(2), pp.363–379.

Guschke, B.L., Just, S.N. and Muhr, S.L. (2022) 'Organizational norms of sexual harassment and gender discrimination in Danish academia: From recognizing through contesting to queering pervasive rhetorical legitimation strategies', Gender, Work, and Organization, .

Guterres, A. (2023) 'Secretary-General's address to the General Assembly', United Nations, September 19. Available at: https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2023-09-19/secretary-generals-address-the-general-assembly (Accessed: .

Hamedi, A. (2014) 'The Concept of Justice In Greek Philosophy (Plato and Aristotle)', Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 5(27 (P2)), pp.1163.

HAMMARSTRÖM, A. and PHILLIPS, S.P. (2012) 'Gender inequity needs to be regarded as a social determinant of depressive symptoms: Results from the Northern Swedish cohort', Scandinavian Journal of Public Health, 40(8), pp.746–752.

Harding, N., Ford, J., & Fotaki, M. (2013) 'Is the 'F'-word still dirty? A past, present and future of/for feminist and gender studies in Organization.', Organization, 20(1), pp.51–65.

Hardy, C., Phillips, N. and Clegg, S. (2001) 'Reflexivity in Organization and Management Theory: A Study of the Production of the Research `Subject', Human Relations (New York), 54(5), pp.531–560.

Harris, S.G. (1994) 'Organizational Culture and Individual Sensemaking: A Schema-Based Perspective', Organization Science (Providence, R.I.), 5(3), pp.309–321.

Healy, G., Tatli, A., Ipek, G., Özturk, M., Seierstad, C. and Wright, T. (2019) 'In the steps of Joan Acker: A journey in researching inequality regimes and intersectional inequalities', Gender, Work, and Organization, 26(12), pp.1749–1762.

Hegtvedt, K.A. and Isom, D. (2015) 'Inequality: A matter of justice?', in New York, NY, US: Springer Science + Business Media, pp. 65–94.

Helms Mills, J. (2005) 'Organizational Change and Representations of Women in a North American Utility Company', Gender, Work, and Organization, 12(3), pp.242–269.

Helms Mills, J., Thurlow, A. and Mills, A.J. (2010) 'Making sense of sensemaking: the critical sensemaking approach', Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics, 5(2), pp.182–195.

Hemmings, C. (2012) 'Affective solidarity: Feminist reflexivity and political transformation', Feminist Theory, 13(2), pp.147–161.

Henderson, L.K., Craig, J.C., Willis, N.S., Tovey, D. and Webster, A.C. (2010) 'How to write a Cochrane systematic review', Nephrology, 15(6), pp.617–624.

Higgins, J.P.T., Thomas, J., Chandler, J., Cumpston, M., Li, T., Page, M.J. and Welch, V.A. (2019) Cochrane handbook for systematic reviews of interventions. Hoboken, New Jersey: The Cochrane Collaboration.

Hill Collins, P. (2022) Black feminist thought : knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment. 30th edn. New York: Routledge.

Holck, L. (2016) 'Putting diversity to work: An empirical analysis of how change efforts targeting organizational inequality failed', Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, 35(4), pp.296–307.

Holland, D. and Ell, K. (2023) Close the Gender Gap to Unlock Productivity Gains. Moody's Analytics. Available at: https://www.moodysanalytics.com/-/media/article/2023/Close-the-Gender-Gap-to-Unlock-Productivity-Gains.pdf (Accessed: 09/05/2024).

Homans, G.C. (1958) 'Social Behavior as Exchange', American Journal of Sociology, 63(6), pp.597–606.

hooks, b. (2015) Feminist theory : from margin to center. 3rd edn. New York ;: Routledge.

Hosang, G.M. and Bhui, K. (2018) 'Gender discrimination, victimisation and women's mental health', The British Journal of Psychiatry, 213(6), pp.682–684.

Huber, F.A., Kell, P.A., Kuhn, B.L., Lannon, E.W., Palit, S., Payne, M.F., Hellman, N., Sturycz, C.A., Güereca, Y.M., Toledo, T.A., Demuth, M.J., Hahn, B.J., Shadlow, J.O. and

Rhudy, J.L. (2022) 'The Association Between Adverse Life Events, Psychological Stress, and Pain-Promoting Affect and Cognitions in Native Americans: Results from the Oklahoma Study of Native American Pain Risk', Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities, 9(1), pp.215–226.

Huseman, R.C., Hatfield, J.D. and Miles, E.W. (1987) 'A New Perspective on Equity Theory: The Equity Sensitivity Construct', The Academy of Management Review, 12(2), pp.222–234.

Hussain, S., Melewar, T.C., Priporas, C.V. and Foroudi, P. (2020) 'Examining the effects of advertising credibility on brand credibility, corporate credibility and corporate image: a qualitative approach', Qualitative Market Research, 23(4), pp.549–573.

Imas, J.M. (2004) Authoring the organisational decision-making genre : writing managers' stories in Chile. London School of Economics and Political Science (University of London). Available at: (Accessed: .

Ito, K. and Uranaka, T. (2023) 'Japanese banks face ‘gender washing’ spotlight on its managers', Apr 19. Available at: https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2023/04/19/business/japan-banking-gender-washing/ (Accessed: .

James, E.H. and Wooten, L.P. (2006) 'Diversity Crises: How Firms Manage Discrimination Lawsuits', Academy of Management Journal, 49(6), pp.1103–1118.

Jeon, G. and Newman, D.A. (2016) 'Equity sensitivity versus egoism: A reconceptualization and new measure of individual differences in justice perceptions', Journal of Vocational Behavior, 95-96 pp.138–155.

John, R. (1971) 'A theory of justice', .

Johnson Ross, F. (2018) 'From municipal feminism to the Equality Act – Legislation and gender equality work in UK local government 1980-2010', Women's Studies International Forum, 66 pp.1–8.

Jones, D. (2000) 'Disappearing Acts: Gender, Power, and Relational Practice at Work', Women in Management Review (Bradford, West Yorkshire, England : 1992), 15(5), pp.303–307.

Jones, L., Snelgrove, A. and Muckosy, P. (2006) 'The double-X factor: harnessing female human capital for economic growth', International Journal of Emerging Markets, 1(4), pp.291–304.

Jorgensen, K., Strand, A. and Boje, D. (2013) 'Towards a Postcolonial-storytelling Theory of Management and Organisation', Philosophy of Management, 12(1), pp.43–66.

Kelan, E.K. (2009) 'Gender fatigue: The ideological dilemma of gender neutrality and discrimination in organizations', Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences, 26(3), pp.197–210.

Kelan, E.K. (2008) Gender Fatigue -- Camoflaging Gender Discrimination in Organizations, pp. 1.

Kelan, E.K. and Jones, R.D. (2010) 'Gender and the MBA', Academy of Management Learning & Education, 9(1), pp.26–43.

Kim, D., Yang, C. and Lee, J. (2013) 'Equity Sensitivity and Gender Differences', Indian Journal of Gender Studies, 20(3), pp.373–392.

Kinnunen, V.E., Wallenius‐Korkalo, S.S. and Rantala, P.M. (2021) 'Transformative events: Feminist experiments in writing differently', Gender, Work, and Organization, 28(2), pp.656‐671.

Klein, F. B., Hill, A. D., Hammond, R., & Stice-Lusvardi, R. (2021) 'The gender equity gap: A multistudy investigation of within-job inequality in equity-based awards.', Journal of Applied Psychology, 106(5), pp.734.

Kociatkiewicz, J. and Kostera, M. (2023) 'Writing Differently: On the Constraints and Possibilities of Presenting Research Rooted in Feminist Epistemologies', Gender, Work, and Organization, .

Kreis, A.M. (2020) 'Defensive glass ceilings', The George Washington Law Review, 88(1), pp.147–203.

Kukreja, P. and Pandey, J. (2023) 'Workplace gaslighting: Conceptualization, development, and validation of a scale', Frontiers in Psychology, 14.

Lapum, J.L. (2008) 'The performative manifestation of a research identity: Storying the journey through poetry', Forum, Qualitative Social Research, 9(2),.

Laxminarayan, M. 'Interactional justice, coping and the legal system', International Review of Victimology, 19(2), pp.145–158.

Lazar, M.M. (2007) 'Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis: Articulating a Feminist Discourse Praxis1', Critical Discourse Studies, 4(2), pp.141–164.

Le Ber, M.J., Gardiner, R.A. and Howe-Walsh, L. (2023) 'Guest editorial: From intent to action: new directions in women and leadership research', Gender in Management, 38(7), pp.841–854.

Lee, I. and Pratto, F. (2018) 'Gendered power: Insights from power basis theory', in Gender, sex, and sexualities: Psychological perspectives. New York, NY, US: Oxford University Press, pp. 149–170.

Lee, J., Heilmann, S.G. and Near, J.P. (2004) 'Blowing the Whistle on Sexual Harassment: Test of a Model of Predictors and Outcomes', Human Relations (New York), 57(3), pp.297–322.

Lerner, G. (1987) The Creation of the Patriarchy. Oxford University Press edn.

Leventhal, G.S. (1980) 'What should be done with equity theory?', in Social exchange. Springer, pp. 27–55.

Leventhal, G.S. and Lane, D.W. (1970) 'Sex, age, and equity behavior', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 15(4), pp.312–316.

Leventhal, G.S., Michaels, J.W. and Sanford, C. (1972) 'Inequity and interpersonal conflict: Reward allocation and secrecy about reward as methods of preventing conflict', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 23(1), pp.88–102.

Lewis, P., Benschop, Y. and Simpson, R. (2017) 'Postfeminism, Gender and Organization: Postfeminism and Organization', Gender, Work, and Organization, 24 pp.213–225.

Linstead, S. (2000) 'GENDER BLINDNESS OR GENDER SUPPRESSION? A COMMENT ON FIONA WILSON'S RESEARCH NOTE', Organization Studies, 21(1), pp.297–303.

Littler, J. and Rottenberg, C. (2021) 'Feminist solidarities: Theoretical and practical complexities', Gender, Work, and Organization, 28(3), pp.864–877.

Liu, H.Y. (2023) '"When nobody listens, go online": The "807" labor movement against workplace sexism in China's tech industry', Gender, Work, and Organization, 30(1), pp.312–328.

Lorde, A. (2019) Sister outsider. UK: Penguin Books.

Magnusson, C. and Nermo, M. (2017) 'Gender, Parenthood and Wage Differences: The Importance of Time-Consuming Job Characteristics', Social Indicators Research, 131(2), pp.797–816.

Martin, P.Y. (2006) 'Practising Gender at Work: Further Thoughts on Reflexivity', Gender, Work, and Organization, 13(3), pp.254–276.

Martin, P.Y. (2004) 'Gender As Social Institution', Social Forces, 82(4), pp.1249–1273.

Martin, P.Y. (2003) '"Said and Done" versus "Saying and Doing": Gendering Practices, Practicing Gender at Work', Gender & Society, 17(3), pp.342–366.

Mcdavis-Conway, S. and Hopkins, R. (2019) Storytelling, Imagination and Activism.

Mckay, A. and Mills, M. (2022) 'Love, care, and solidarity: understanding the emotional and affective labour of school leadership', Cambridge Journal of Education, 53(3), pp.311.

MCLAUGHLIN, H., UGGEN, C. and BLACKSTONE, A. (2017) 'THE ECONOMIC AND CAREER EFFECTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT ON WORKING WOMEN', Gender & Society, 31(3), pp.333–358.

McRobbie, A. (2009) The aftermath of feminism : gender, culture and social change. Los Angeles, Calif.] ;: SAGE.

Mears, C. (2012) In-depth Interviews In Research Methodologies and Methods. Sage.

Mendes, K., Ringrose, J. and Keller, J. (2018) 'MeToo and the promise and pitfalls of challenging rape culture through digital feminist activism', The European Journal of Women's Studies, 25(2), pp.236–246.

Mendonca-Richards, A. (2019) 'Privacy and NDAs: the use of non-disclosure agreements in the wake of the #MeToo movement', Entertainment Law Review, 30(4), pp.109–111.

Meyenburg, I., & Selmanovic, S. (2020) 'Gender and Inequality in the Workplace: Lessons from Institutional and Marxist-Feminist Perspectives.', Handbook of Labor, Human Resources and Population Economics., pp.1–28.

Meyerson, D.E. and Fletcher, J.K. (2000) 'A Modest Manifesto for Shattering the Glass Ceiling.(Brief Article)', Harvard Business Review, 78(1), pp.127.

Milazzo, A. and Goldstein, M. (2019) 'Governance and Women's Economic and Political Participation: Power Inequalities, Formal Constraints and Norms', The World Bank Research Observer, 34(1), pp.34–64.

Milner, S., Pochic, S., Scheele, A. and Williamson, S. (2019) 'Challenging gender pay gaps: Organizational and regulatory strategies', Gender, Work and Organization, 26(5), pp.593–598.

Mohajan, D. and Mohajan, H.K. (2022) 'Feminism and Feminist Grounded Theory: A Comprehensive Research Analysis', Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People, 11(3), pp.45.

Mohanty, C. and Moallem, M. (2006) Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity.

Mohanty, C., Moallem, M. and Moallem, M. (2006) 'Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity', Feminist Studies, 32(2),.

Morrison, E.W. and Milliken, F.J. (2000) 'Organizational Silence: A Barrier to Change and Development in a Pluralistic World', The Academy of Management Review, 25(4), pp.706–725.

Mumford, K. and Smith, P.N. (2009) 'What determines the part-time and gender earnings gaps in Britain: evidence from the workplace', Oxford Economic Papers, 61(-1), pp.i56–i75.

Musto, M., Cooky, C. and Messner, M.A. (2017) 'From Fizzle to Sizzle!: Televised Sports News and the Production of Gender-Bland Sexism', Gender & Society, 31(5), pp.573–596.

Norquay, N. (1998) 'Family immigration (Hi)stories 1 and the construction of identity', Curriculum Studies, 6(2), pp.177–190.

O'neil, D.A. and Hopkins, M.M. (2015) 'The impact of gendered organizational systems on women's career advancement', Frontiers in Psychology, 6.

Oelz, M., Olney, S. and Tomei, M. (2013) Equal Pay - An introductory guide. Geneva: International Labour Organisation.

Oikarinen-Jabai, H. (2003) 'Toward Performative Research: Embodied Listening to the Self/Other', Qualitative Inquiry, 9(4), pp.569–579.

Okereke, G. (2020) 'Gender wage gap in contemporary America. ', International Journal of Gender and Women's Studies, 8(2), pp.61–75.

Ozkazanc‐Pan, B. (2019) 'On agency and empowerment in a #MeToo world', Gender, Work, and Organization, 26(8), pp.1212‐1220.

Page, A. and Arcy, J. (2019) '#MeToo and the Politics of Collective Healing: Emotional Connection as Contestation', Communication, Culture and Critique, 13(3), pp.333–348.

Park, T. and Bryant, P. (2024) 'Exploring Pay Transparency and Communication: An Introduction to the First of Two Special Issues on the Topic of Pay Transparency', Compensation and Benefits Review, 56(1), pp.3–6.

Parter, C. and Wilson, S. 'My Research Is My Story: A Methodological Framework of Inquiry Told Through Storytelling by a Doctor of Philosophy Student', Qualitative Inquiry, 27(8-9), pp.1084–1094.

Pellerin, S. and Cloutier, J. (2018) 'The effects of rewards on psychological health in the workplace: Underlying mechanisms', Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences, 35(3), pp.361–372.

Perugini, C. and Pompei, F. (2024) 'Pay incentives, intangibles, and gender wage inequality', Industry and Innovation, 31(6), pp.695–726.

Phillips, L.T. and Jun, S. (2022) 'Why Benefiting From Discrimination Is Less Recognized as Discrimination', Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 122(5), pp.825–852.

Piderit, S.K. and Ashford, S.J. (2003) 'Breaking Silence: Tactical Choices Women Managers Make in Speaking Up About Gender-Equity Issues', Journal of Management Studies, 40(6), pp.1477–1502.

Polachek, S.W. (1981) 'Occupational Self-Selection: A Human Capital Approach to Sex Differences in Occupational Structure', The Review of Economics and Statistics, 63(1), pp.60–69.

POMERANTZ, S., RABY, R. and STEFANIK, A. (2013) 'GIRLS RUN THE WORLD? Caught between Sexism and Postfeminism in School', Gender & Society, 27(2), pp.185–207.

Prokos, A. and Padavic, I. (2005) 'An Examination of Competing Explanations for the Pay Gap among Scientists and Engineers', Gender & Society, 19(4), pp.523–543.

Pullen, A., Helin, J. and Harding, N. (2020) Writing differently. . Emerald Publishing Limited.

Pullen, A. (2018) 'Writing as Labiaplasty', Organization (London, England), 25(1), pp.123–130.

Pullen, A. (2006) 'Gendering the Research Self: Social Practice and Corporeal Multiplicity in the Writing of Organizational Research', Gender, Work, and Organization, 13(3), pp.277–298.

Pullen, A. and Rhodes, C. (2008) 'Dirty writing', Culture and Organization, 14(3), pp.241–259.

Pullen, A., Rhodes, C. and Thanem, T. (2017) 'Affective politics in gendered organizations: Affirmative notes on becoming-woman', Organization (London, England), 24(1), pp.105–123.

Randall, D.M. and Short, J.F. (1983) 'Women in Toxic Work Environments: A Case Study of Social Problem Development', Social Problems, 30(4), pp.410–424.

Randall, D.M. and Short, J.F. (1983) 'Women in Toxic Work Environments: A Case Study of Social Problem Development', Social Problems, 30(4), pp.410–424.

Refugees' Stories: Empathy, Agency, Solidarity Kerri Woods (University of Leeds).

Rimmer, A. (2021) 'Nine in 10 female doctors in UK have experienced sexism at work, says BMA', BMJ (Online), 374 pp.n2123.

Rodriguez, J.K. and Guenther, E.A. (2022) Gendered Organization Theory. Oxford University Press.

Rosile, G.A., Boje, D.M., Carlon, D.M., Downs, A. and Saylors, R. (2013) 'Storytelling Diamond: An Antenarrative Integration of the Six Facets of Storytelling in Organization Research Design', Organizational Research Methods, 16(4), pp.557–580.

Rothwells, S., Collinson, D. and Knights, D. (1991) Managing to Discriminate. HOBOKEN: Wiley.

Rubery, J. (2017) 'Why is Women's Work Low-Paid? Establishing a framework for understanding the causes of low pay among professions traditionally dominated by women', .

Ryan, M.K. (2023) 'Addressing workplace gender inequality: Using the evidence to avoid common pitfalls.', British Journal of Social Psychology, 62(1), pp.1–11.

Savigny, H. (2019) 'Cultural sexism and the UK Higher Education sector', Journal of Gender Studies, 28(6), pp.661–673.

Sayers, J. (2010) 'Social constructionism: sources and stirrings in theory and practice', Gender in Management, 25(8), pp.700–702.

Schäfer, A. and Gottschall, K. (2015) 'From wage regulation to wage gap: how wage-setting institutions and structures shape the gender wage gap across three industries in 24 European countries and Germany', Cambridge Journal of Economics, 39(2), pp.467–496.

Schnaufer, K., Christandl, F., Berger, S., Meynhardt, T. and Gollwitzer, M. (2022) 'The shift to pay transparency: Undermet pay standing expectations and consequences', Journal of Organizational Behavior, 43(1), pp.69–90.

Scullion, H. and Linehan, M. (2005) International human resource management : a critical text. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sharkey, A., Pontikes, E. and Hsu, G. (2022) 'The Impact of Mandated Pay Gap Transparency on Firms' Reputations as Employers', Administrative Science Quarterly, 67(4), pp.1136–1179.

Shotter, J. (2010) 'Movements of Feeling and Moments of Judgement: Towards an Ontological Social Constructionism', International Journal of Action Research, 6(1), pp.16.

Simpson, R. and Lewis, P. (2005) 'An investigation of silence and a scrutiny of transparency: Re-examining gender in organization literature through the concepts of voice and visibility', Human Relations (New York), 58(10), pp.1253–1275.

Sin, N.L. and Lyubomirsky, S. (2009) 'Enhancing well-being and alleviating depressive symptoms with positive psychology interventions: a practice-friendly meta-analysis', Journal of Clinical Psychology, 65(5), pp.467–487.

Skarlicki, D.P., Hoegg, J., Aquino, K. and Nadisic, T. (2013) 'Does injustice affect your sense of taste and smell? The mediating role of moral disgust', Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 49(5), pp.852–859.

Soderquist, K.E., Papalexandris, A., Ioannou, G. and Prastacos, G. (2010) 'From task-based to competency-based: A typology and process supporting a critical HRM transition', Personnel Review, 39(3), pp.325–346.

Sprague, J. (2016) Feminist methodologies for critical researchers : bridging differences. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Stamarski, C.S. and Son Hing, L.S. (2015) 'Gender inequalities in the workplace: the effects of organizational structures, processes, practices, and decision makers' sexism', Frontiers in Psychology, 6 pp.1400.

Sterbenk, Y., Champlin, S., Windels, K. and Shelton, S. (2022) 'Is Femvertising the New Greenwashing? Examining Corporate Commitment to Gender Equality', Journal of Business Ethics, 177(3), pp.491–505.

Streimikiene, D., Lasickaite, K., Skare, M., Kyriakopoulos, G., Dapkus, R. and Duc, P.A. (2021) 'The impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Corporate Image: Evidence of budget airlines in Europe', Corporate Social-Responsibility and Environmental Management, 28(2), pp.925–935.

Tata, J. (2000) 'Influence of Role and Gender on the Use of Distributive Versus Procedural Justice Principles', The Journal of Psychology, 134(3), pp.261–268.

The Equal Pay Act , Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1970/41/enacted (Accessed: .

The Office for National Statistics, (. (2022) The Gender Pay Gap Report. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/gender-pay-gap-reporting-overview (Accessed: 16 2023).

The Oxford Handbook of U.S. Women's Social Movement Activism. (2017) Oxford University Press.

Thibaut, J.W. and Walker, L. (1975) Procedural justice: A psychological analysis. L. Erlbaum Associates.

Thomas, D. (2021) 'Women in finance say ‘mediocre’ male managers block progress', FT.Com, .

Thompson, L. (2023) 'A Feminist Psychology of Gender, Work, and Organizations', in Zurbriggen, E.L. and Capdevila, R. (eds.) The Palgrave Handbook of Power, Gender, and Psychology. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 45–62.

Thornburg, E. (2019) '(Un)Conscious Judging', Washington and Lee Law Review, 76(4), pp.1567–1665.

Thym, A., Longlands, H., & Collier, R. (2023) 'Hegemonic masculinities and the hegemony of men in business and finance organizations: Persistence of and challenges to patriarchal power.', in Routledge Handbook on Men, Masculinities and Organizations. Routledge., pp. pp. 235–248.

Tilton, C. (2018) 'WOMEN AND WHISTLEBLOWING: EXPLORING GENDER EFFECTS IN POLICY DESIGN', Columbia Journal of Gender and Law, 35(2), pp.338–368.

Toole, B. (2022) 'Objectivity in feminist epistemology', Philosophy Compass, 17(11), pp.n/a.

Törnblom, K.Y. and Vermunt, R. (1999) 'An integrative perspective on social justice: Distributive and procedural fairness evaluations of positive and negative outcome allocations', Social Justice Research, 12(1), pp.39–64.

UK Government Factsheet: strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs). Available at: Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/economic-crime-and-corporate-transparency-bill-2022-factsheets/factsheet-strategic-lawsuits-against-public-participation-slapps (Accessed: 25/03/2024).

UK Government (2020) Tribunal Statistics Quarterly - October to December 2019. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-october-to-december-2019 (Accessed: 20th July 2020).

UK Public, G.A. (1970) Equal Pay Act 1970.

Valenziano, L. Equity and Access in the Workplace: A Feminist HRD Perspective.

Van den Bos, K. and Lind, E.A. (2013) 'On Sense-Making Reactions and Public Inhibition of Benign Social Motives. An Appraisal Model of Prosocial Behavior', in SAN DIEGO: Elsevier, pp. 1–58.

Van Den Brink, M. and Stobbe, L. (2009) 'Doing Gender in Academic Education: The Paradox of Visibility', Gender, Work, and Organization, 16(4), pp.451–470.

Van Den Brink, M. and Stobbe, L. (2009) 'Doing Gender in Academic Education: The Paradox of Visibility', Gender, Work, and Organization, 16(4), pp.451–470.

Vartika (2022) 'Understanding Gender and Organizations: A Literature Review', in Marques, J. and Dhiman, S. (eds.) Leading With Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Approaches, Practices and Cases for Integral Leadership Strategy. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 167–181.

Vershinina, N., Markman, G., Han, L., Rodgers, P., Kitching, J., Hashimzade, N. and Barrett, R. (2022) 'Gendered regulations and SME performance in transition economies', Small Business Economics, 58(2), pp.1113–1130.

'Voice of the women's liberation movement', (1968) Voice of the Women's Liberation Movement.

Walster, E. and Walster, G.W. (1975) 'Equity and social justice', Journal of Social Issues, 31(3), pp.21–43.

Wang, B. (2016) 'The social and historical construction of social constructionism: Prof. KJ Gergen in dialogue', Culture & Psychology, 22(4), pp.565–573.

Weatherall, R. (2019) 'Writing the doctoral thesis differently', Management Learning, 50(1), pp.100–113.

Weick, K.E.(.E. (1995) Sensemaking in organizations. Thousand Oaks ;: Sage Publications.

Weinhold, L. and Brodtmann, C. (2017) 'The Gender strategy of the IMF: The way to go towards gender equality or a mere instrumentalisation of feminism?', Exploring Economics, .

Weiss, H.M. and Beal, D.J. (2005) Reflections on Affective Events Theory. Emerald (MCB UP).

Wheeler, K.G. (2002) 'Cultural values in relation to equity sensitivity within and across cultures', Journal of Managerial Psychology, 17(7), pp.612–627.

Wisdom, J.P., Nabors, N., Frederick, C.M. and Harms, P.D. (2024) 'Women's Traumatic Experiences of Leadership: Case Studies and Hypothesized Mechanisms', Psychology of Leaders and Leadership (Print), 27(2), pp.268–287.

Woodiwiss, J., Smith, K. and Lockwood, K. (2017) Feminist Narrative Research: Opportunities and Challenges . 1st ed. edn.Palgrave Macmillan UK.

World, E.F. (2022) World Economic Forum. Available at: https://www.weforum.org/ (Accessed: 02 2022).

Wright, S. and Neimand, A. (2018) 'The Secret to Better Storytelling for Social Change: Better Partnerships', .

Yarrow, E. and Davies, J. (2022) 'A typology of sexism in contemporary business schools: Belligerent, benevolent, ambivalent, and oblivious sexism', Gender, Work, and Organization, .

Zayer, L. (2021) 'Storytelling beyond the ivory tower', Journal of Marketing Management, 37(3-4), pp.382–386.

Župič, I., Budler, M. and Trkman, P. (2017) Characterization of business model research: Bibliometric analysis and the future agenda, 18 June 2017 through 21 June 2017. Association for Information Systems Electronic Library, AISeL, pp. 719.

Zupic, I. and Čater, T. (2015) 'Bibliometric Methods in Management and Organization', Organizational Research Methods, 18(3), pp.429–472.

Åhäll, L. (2018) 'Affect as Methodology: Feminism and the Politics of Emotion1', International Political Sociology, 12(1), pp.36–52.

Chapter 10. Appendices

Appendix A – Ethics Approval Letter

Kingston University London

4 January 2021

Dear Mrs Rebecca Burke

Your application 1596 -The prevalence of pay inequity, and the harm it causes to women has been reviewed. After careful consideration the review panel (on behalf of the University Research Ethics Committee) has agreed a favourable ethical opinion.

Should you make any changes to your project that impact on your ethics application, please submit an application for amendment.

Please be aware that it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that all aspects of the research (including future use of data) are fully compliant with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

We wish you every success in conducting this project.

Yours sincerely,

KUREOS Administrator

on behalf of the Kingston University Research Ethics Committee

The considerations presented to the ethics committee in relation to this study are summarised below:

1. Participants will be asked questions about their personal experiences of redundancy, unequal treatment by current or previous employers which may cause discomfort and upset.
    a. The researcher has herself experienced unequal pay at work and so can empathise with the experience of participants. This will be openly shared with each participant to support the building of trust and rapport.
    b. Full explanations and an openness to questions regarding the nature and intentions of the research will be formally and informally communicated to each participant.

c. The in-depth interviews will be conducted in private and recorded on audio equipment for later transcription allowing for a free-flowing and empathetic conversation with the participant.
d. The participant will be able to stop the interview at any time, and the time to conduct the interview will be limited to no more than 2 – 3 hours.
e. The participant will be granted with full permission to withdraw their consent to take part in the study at any point prior to publication.
f. The participant will also be invited to a follow-up focus group to discuss the analysis of the results with other similarly affected women should they wish to do so.

2. Participants may provide information about current or previous employers that may damage the reputation of the company.
    a. All employer details and any identifiable characteristics about the company will be removed to provide complete anonymity.
    b. All participant personal details and data will be stored, transferred and handled in compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018.
    c. Documentation of privacy and protection procedures (in compliance with the DPA) will be issued to participants to provide reassurance that storage, handling and transfer of data will be secure at all times.
    d. Participants will have the right to withdraw their permissions to their personal data at all times at which point it will be destroyed in line with the DPA 2018.
3. Participants may provide information about individuals at their current or previous employment that could damage their reputation.
    a. Personal details involving specific roles or named individuals will be removed from the data as part of the process to provide anonymity.

b. Any information which might link a participant's data to a specific employer or another employee will be removed from the data as part of the process to provide anonymity.

4. Some participants, particularly those who have settled their equal pay dispute outside of the tribunal courts, may have signed a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) as part of their settlement.

The full process for creating anonymity and protecting personal data will be documented and explained, and therefore the risks or non-compliance with any such agreement can be decided on by the participant prior to agreeing to participate in the study.

Appendix B – Data Management Plan

1. Existing data

The research objectives require qualitative data that is not available from other sources. Some data exist that can be used to situate and triangulate the findings of the proposed research (for example, newspaper articles, court listings and hearing documentation), and which will supplement data collected as part of the proposed research. However, qualitative and attitudinal data are generally rare or of insufficiently high quality to address the research questions without the primary research of this study.

2. Information on data

For these reasons, the research project involves the collection of primary qualitative data mainly throug:

1) semi-structured interviews; and

2) focus group discussions with people identified through profiling techniques

3. Public data

Where possible, we will use online electronic archives. Key search terms and their translation into the relevant languages, inclusion and exclusion criteria for items, variable codes and metadata will be refined and agreed at the start of the project. A sufficiently detailed dataset will be generated, with progress logged and documented so that any potentially contentious categorising decisions, difficulties faced in categorising items, and qualitative insights which do not fit the spreadsheet format can be explained. Data will be inputted and stored in Excel format, to ensure accessibility to other researchers in the future.

1. Semi-structured interviews with individuals

The Principal Investigator (PI) anticipates undertaking 20 in-depth semi-structured interviews in the UK from a sample frame developed through personal contacts and snowballing for additional participants. Data will be collected and stored using digital audio recording (MP4) on either a mobile phone or laptop device, and only once participants have signed their consent on the consent form. Interview notes will be typed up by the PI, as will the full transcription of the interview.

2. Focus group discussions matched to profiles

The sample frame for the focus group participants will be derived from the list of participants within the study. Numbers of focus groups will depend on geographical locations and availability of participants, as well as have some reliance on how quickly a robust pattern of findings emerge; and the scope for identifying and convening the appropriate groups. Focus groups will involve the PI and will be conducted in an informal meeting place or as a recorded online video meeting. The event will be transcribed and documented using Excel spreadsheets that carefully record each voice / contributor and thereby taking account of multiple voices, interruptions, labelling of participatory and visual activities, and so on.

All transcripts will be in Microsoft Word, and since the PI is fluent in English, this will also be the main language in which interviews and focus groups will be conducted, so

that transcriptions will be translated into English only. The metadata, procedures and file formats for note-taking, recording, transcribing, storing visual data from participatory techniques, and anonymising semi-structured interview and focus group discussion data will be developed and agreed at the start of the project with all interview and focus group transcripts coded into the NVivo software for analysis.

3. Quality assurance

The Principle Investigator will be responsible for overall quality assurance, undertaking all of the activities required to ensure quality control. Quality will be assured through routine monitoring by the supervisor and PI, and periodic cross-checks against the protocols by the supervisor. Standards and systems for note-taking, recording (if possible), transcribing and storing visual data from participatory techniques such as drawings, photographs and video, use of metadata, systems for downloading and storing SMS data (a potential follow-up research tool) will also be defined. Focus groups and interviews will always be transcribed by the PI, and therefore the quality control for the collection, transcribing and storing of the qualitative data for this study will be assured by the PI checking through each transcript for consistency with agreed standards.

4. Backup and security

The data will be backed up regularly; which will include regular email sharing with the supervisor, so that up-to-date versions are stored on the Institutions server (Box). Qualitative data will be backed up and secured by the researcher on a regular basis, and metadata will include clear labelling of versions and dates. There are some potential sensitivities around some of the data being collected, so the project will establish a system for protecting data while it is being processed, which will include the use of passwords and safe back-up hardware.

5. Ethical issues

A letter explaining the purpose, approach and dissemination strategy (including plans to share data) of the research, an accompanying consent form (including to share data), and a self-assessment depression scale questionnaire will be prepared online and emailed to each participant ahead of the interview. A clear verbal explanation will also be provided to each interviewee and focus group participant before recording begins. Commitments to ensure confidentiality will be maintained by ensuring recordings are not shared; that transcripts are anonymised and details that can be used to identify participants are removed from transcripts or concealed in write-ups. As the highly focused nature of the research means that many participants may be easily identifiable despite efforts to ensure anonymity or confidentiality; where there is such a risk, participants will be shown sections of transcript and/or report text to ensure they are satisfied that no unnecessary risks are being taken with their interview data. However, as is often the case, interviewees may be more comfortable if some sections of their interview are not recorded or made public. In such circumstances, recording will be paused or sections of text will be expunged from shared transcripts, and an indication made that this is the case.

6. Expected difficulties in data sharing

All of the transcripts will be in English only (see above), which will limit the accessibility of the data.

7. Copyright/Intellectual Property Right

The institution and Principal Investigator (Rebecca Burke) will jointly own the data generated. Online and archival sources will be cited and clearly acknowledged in the database and research outputs. Permission will be sought from secondary sources to share the findings of the research on public websites.

8. Responsibilities

The Researcher will direct the data management process overall, with responsibility for ensuring metadata production, day-to-day cross-checks, back-up and other quality control activities are maintained. The researcher will also be responsible for routine supervision of the dataset development. Data extraction, processing and inputting for the dataset will be undertaken by the researcher. The researcher will be solely responsibilities for collecting and transcribing focus group and interview data, with the supervisor supporting with advice as necessary. The researcher will be finally responsible for dealing with quality and sharing and archiving of data.

9. Preparation of data for sharing and archiving

The most appropriate means of sharing the data generated through the project will be through secure institutional storage systems. The project will have a dedicated secure and password protected space on the Institutional network to facilitate this, and all other involved institutions will also be encouraged to follow strict data protection and sharing guidelines.

Appendix C – Participant Information Sheet and Social Media

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

***Principal Investigator:* Rebecca Burke**
***Academic Institution*: Kingston University, London, UK**
***Supporting Faculty*: Business and Social Sciences**
***Supervisor*: Dr Qi Wei**

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in a study about the social and psychological impacts of pay inequity and the harm that it causes to women who have experienced this phenomenon within the UK.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

To explore the experiences of women of pay inequity in the UK

This objective will seek to contribute your voice to the current literature surrounding equal pay. It's aims are to provide a platform for your story, combined with many other women, to provide a narrative on how the inequity was discovered, what attitudes, behaviours and cultures allowed it to happen, and how the experience has impacted on your life and future career.

To understand the consequences of pay inequity on women's lives and future careers

This study will invite around 20 women, from across the UK, who have experienced pay inequity at their places of work. Each interview should take no longer than 2 hours, and has been structured to capture your story through an open discussion about your experiences, which will be framed around some key questions. Examples of some of the questions are provided below:

- Please explain how you discovered you were not being paid fairly.
- How did the injustice make you feel?
- Who do you hold responsible for the pay inequity?
- Do you believe that the tribunal process was fair?
- How to you believe equal pay can be achieved within UK businesses today?

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN ASKED TO DO?

You have been invited to participate in an anonymous, face-to-face, or video conferenced interview session to tell your story. The session is intended to be semi-structured, and informal, and will last between 90 and 120 minutes, which will be arranged at a date, time and location (or online) of convenience to you and your work / family commitments. My plan is to begin from **Monday 13th February 2021**, being flexible to the needs of each participant, but ideally completing most of the 20 interviews by **31st March 2021.**

Ahead of your interview time I will email through a consent form that you will need to complete to confirm your willingness to participate in the study, as well as a short psychometric test designed to measure levels of depression which will help me to better understand some of the emotional impacts of the experience on you.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN ON THE DAY?

Whether your preference is for a face-to-face or video conference interview, I will need your permission to audio record the session so that I can later transcribe this into textual data for analysis. The interview will be structured around your story, with prompting open questions that will ask about your personal experiences. We can take as many breaks, re-record sections that you are not happy with, or reschedule the entire session, at any time if you are not happy. Please do also feel free to ask as many questions as you like about me, the study, the process, or indeed anything at all, as it is my priority to make sure that you are happy and content with your contribution.

You will reserve the right to withdraw your participation and your data from the study at any point until its publication in 2023.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO YOUR DATA?

With your consent I will audio record the interview and save the file as a MP4s in a secure, password protected file location within Kingston University internal folder structure, saved with an coded file name unrelated to your personal details. This data will only be accessible to the Principal Investigator of this study, Rebecca Burke. I will then transcribe each audio file into a word document, which I will then 'anonymize' to remove any data relating to people or places, or other data that might make either you or one of you colleagues recognisable. This data will only be accessible to the Principal Investigator of this study, Rebecca Burke. This cleansed data will then be used for thematic analysis by myself during the course of the following year. The anonymized data will be analysed within the University's Nvivo system, supporting a grounded theory approach to the development of new themes and theories that will provide insight into the impact of pay inequity on women in Britain today.

Your responses will not be discussed with anyone, including other participants of the study; and your identity will not be discussed with anyone, including the PhD Supervisor or anyone else participating in the study.

RESEARCH ETHICS

The research has received a favourable ethical opinion from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences at Kingston University London. If you wish to complain about any aspect of how you have been treated in this research, please contact Professor Jill Schofield who is the Dean of the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences at Kingston University London. Professor Schofield's contact details are as follows:

Dean's Office, Faculty of Business and Social Sciences, Kingston University London,
Penrhyn Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT1 2EE.
Email: j.schofield@kingston.ac.uk Tel: 020 8417 9000 ext. 65229.

Any questions relating to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) or how the University is processing personal data should be addressed to the University's Data Protection Officer by e-mail: DPO@kingston.ac.uk or by post:
Data Protection Officer, Vice Chancellor's Office,
River House, 53-57 High Street, Kingston Upon Thames, Surrey KT1 1LQ

FINAL COMMENTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to answer as many or as few questions as you feel comfortable with, and you may withdraw your participation at any time, either before or after the interview and right up to the potential publication in 2023.

Thank you for your time, and I do hope that you decide to partake in this important research and I get to speak with you soon.

Please email your response to K0539163@kingston.ac.uk if you would like to discuss in further detail.

Many thanks

REBECCA BURKE

LinkedIn Join now Sign in

Rebecca Burke has shared this draft with you. Please do not share it without the author's permission.

Have your say about fair pay.

Today we launch a study that seeks to find women from across the UK who have experienced injustice at the hands of their employer. This study will seek to:

Explore the experiences of women of pay inequity in the UK

If you have experienced unfair treatment at work, or discovered that you have been paid unfairly by your current or a previous employer, we would like to hear your story.

LinkedIn Join now Sign in

behaviours and cultures you believed allowed the inequity to exist and persist, and how the experience has impacted on your life and future career.

By capturing your story we hope to explain:

The affect that pay inequity is having on women working in Britain today.

To do this we would like to invite women from across the UK who have experienced pay inequity at their places of work for an online 'face-to-face' interview which has been designed to capture your story, in your own words, through an open discussion about your experiences. We will ask some prompting questions, such as:

- How did you discover you being treated unfairly?
- How did the injustice make you feel?
- Who do you hold responsible?
- What was your experience of the human resource team and processes?

This study will be delivered in partnership with Kingston University and has received ethical approval to proceed as outlined above. All personal data and interview content will be anonymised so as to protect your identity, and the online interview will be arranged at a date and time that is of convenience to you and your work / family commitments.

If you have experienced this type of unfairness at work, and are interested in participating in this study, please do either message me directly on LinkedIn, or send your details for me to contact you via my University email: K0539163@kingston.ac.uk

Thank you,

Rebecca

© 2020

Accessibility
Privacy Policy
Copyright Policy
Guest Controls
Language

About
User Agreement
Cookie Policy
Brand Policy
Community Guidelines

Appendix D – NHS Depression Scale Form

Patient's Name:

Date:

Instructions:

Choose the best answer for how you felt over the past week.

1. Are you basically satisfied with your life?	YES / **NO**
2. Have you dropped many of your activities and interests?	**YES** / NO
3. Do you feel that your life is empty?	**YES** / NO
4. Do you often get bored?	**YES** / NO
5. Are you in good spirits most of the time?	YES / **NO**
6. Are you afraid that something bad is going to happen to you?	**YES** / NO
7. Do you feel happy most of the time?	YES / **NO**
8. Do you often feel helpless?	**YES** / NO
9. Do you prefer to stay at home, rather than going out and doing new things?	**YES** / NO
10. Do you feel you have more problems with memory than most people?	**YES** / NO
11. Do you think it is wonderful to be alive?	YES / **NO**
12. Do you feel pretty worthless the way you are now?	**YES** / NO
13. Do you feel full of energy?	YES / **NO**
14. Do you feel that your situation is hopeless?	**YES** / NO
15. Do you think that most people are better off than you are?	**YES** / NO

(Sheikh & Yesavage, 1986)

Scoring: Answers indicating depression are in bold and underlined; score one point for each one selected. A score of 0 to 5 is normal. A score greater than 5 suggests depression.

Sources:

• Sheikh JI, Yesavage JA. Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS): recent evidence and development of a shorter version. Clin Gerontol. 1986 June;5(1/2):165-173.

• Yesavage JA. Geriatric Depression Scale. Psychopharmacol Bull. 1988;24(4):709-711.

• Yesavage JA, Brink TL, Rose TL, et al. Development and validation of a geriatric depression screening scale: a preliminary report. J Psychiatr Res. 1982-83;17(1):37-49.

Appendix E – Participant Depression Form – Responses

PARTICIPANT DEPRESSION FORM - RESPONSES

Code Name	Results / Score (> 5 indicates depression)	Are you basically satisfied with your life?	Have you dropped many of your activities and interests?	Do you feel that your life is empty?	Do you often get bored?	Are you in good spirits most of the time?	Are you afraid that something bad is going to happen to you?	Do you feel happy most of the time?	Do you often feel helpless?	Do you prefer to stay at home, rather than going out and doing new things?	Do you feel you have more problems with memory than most people?	Do you think it is wonderful to be alive?	Do you feel pretty worthless the way you are now?	Do you feel full of energy?	Do you feel that your situation is hopeless?	Do you think that most people are better off than you are?
	SCORES	No = 1	Yes = 1	Yes = 1	Yes = 1	No = 1	Yes = 1	No = 1	Yes = 1	Yes = 1	Yes = 1	No = 1	Yes = 1	No = 1	Yes = 1	Yes = 1
Pilot test 1	n.a.	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Ruth Bader-Ginsberg	7	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Pilot test 2	n.a.	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Titanium	4	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Florence Nightingale	0	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Ada Lovelace	7	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Phyllis	5	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Ursula	8	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Saraphina	5	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No
Mary Seacole	3	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Katie	1	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No

Appendix F – Participant Consent Form – Responses

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - RESPONSES

Completion time	Your name (Forename and Surname)	I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.	I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.	I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview up to the publication date of the study, in which case the material will be deleted.	I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	I understand that participation involves a semi-structured interview with the opportunity to attend an individual or group follow-up session.	I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
2/1/21 14:34:16	Ruth Bader-Ginsberg	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2/3/21 11:48:48	Pilot test 2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3/24/21 10:58:44	Titanium	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3/30/21 21:02:42	Florence Nightingale	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4/15/21 12:03:16	Ada Lovelace	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2/5/22 11:58:43	Phyllis	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3/10/22 15:05:34	Ursula	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2/6/23 10:33:41	Sarafina	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6/28/23 22:54:04	Mary Seacole	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7/18/23 10:45:24	Katie	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2/27/24 17:39:21	Ursula Banks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2/29/24 11:54:56	Rebecca Burke	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2/29/24 12:30:35	Maya	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - RESPONSES

Completion time	Your name (Forename and Surname)	I agree to my interview being video and audio recorded.	I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.	I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my	I understand that anonymised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the researchers PhD dissertation, conference presentations, published papers and media articles.	I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be r	I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained on an access controlled and password protected internal folder structure at Kingston University, and that all pers
2/1/21 14:34:16	Ruth Bader-Ginsberg	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2/3/21 11:48:48	Pilot test 2	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3/24/21 10:58:44	Titanium	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3/30/21 21:02:42	Florence Nightingale	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4/15/21 12:03:16	Ada Lovelace	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2/5/22 11:58:43	Phyllis	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3/10/22 15:05:34	Ursula	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2/6/23 10:33:41	Sarafina	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6/28/23 22:54:04	Mary Seacole	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7/18/23 10:45:24	Katie	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2/27/24 17:39:21	Ursula Banks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2/29/24 11:54:56	Rebecca Burke	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2/29/24 12:30:35	Maya	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - RESPONSES

Completion time	Your name (Forename and Surname)	I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from 2024 by for exam board reasons.	I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.	I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.	I have received (by email) and read the 'Participant Information Sheet' and give my consent to take part in this study (please type your name as consent).
2/1/21 14:34:16	Ruth Bader-Ginsberg	Yes	Yes	Yes	Anonymised
2/3/21 11:48:48	Pilot test 2	Yes	Yes	Yes	SJ
3/24/21 10:58:44	Titanium	Yes	Yes	Yes	Anonymised
3/30/21 21:02:42	Florence Nightingale	Yes	Yes	Yes	Anonymised
4/15/21 12:03:16	Ada Lovelace	Yes	Yes	Yes	Anonymised
2/5/22 11:58:43	Phyllis	Yes	Yes	Yes	Anonymised
3/10/22 15:05:34	Ursula	Yes	Yes	Yes	Anonymised
2/6/23 10:33:41	Sarafina	Yes	Yes	Yes	Anonymised
6/28/23 22:54:04	Mary Seacole	Yes	Yes	Yes	Anonymised
7/18/23 10:45:24	Katie	Yes	Yes	Yes	Anonymised
2/27/24 17:39:21	Ursula Banks	Yes	Yes	Yes	Anonymised
2/29/24 11:54:56	Rebecca Burke	Yes	Yes	Yes	Rebecca Burke
2/29/24 12:30:35	Maya	Yes	Yes	Yes	Anonymised

Appendix G – Participant Information Form – Responses

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET - RESPONSES

Start time	Completion time	Email	Name	Your name (forename and surname)	Your email address	Your current location (city)	Current job title (or most recent)	Current (or most recent) industry sector. For example, Finance, Telco, Public	Your age range
1/27/21 13:09:31	1/27/21 13:11:04	Anonymised	PILOT	Pilot Test	Anonymised	Anonymised	Test	It	36 - 45
2/2/21 10:41:55	2/2/21 10:42:43	Anonymised	PILOT	Pilot Test	Anonymised	Anonymised	Head of Employee Relations and Diversity	Charity	46 - 55
2/3/21 11:49:02	2/3/21 11:49:43	Anonymised	PILOT	Pilot Test	Anonymised	Anonymised	Doctoral student	Education	36 - 45
2/7/21 14:45:53	2/7/21 14:47:55	Anonymised	PILOT	Pilot Test	Anonymised	Anonymised	HR	charity	46 - 55
2/1/21 14:35:27	2/1/21 14:36:25	Anonymised		Ruth Bader-Ginsberg	Anonymised	Anonymised	Managing Director	Professional Services	36 - 45
3/24/21 10:58:50	3/24/21 10:59:17	Anonymised		Titanium	Anonymised	Anonymised	Chief Executive	Food manufacturing	46 - 55
3/30/21 21:02:51	3/30/21 21:03:37	Anonymised		Florence Nightingale	Anonymised	Anonymised	Sales Specialist Team Leader	Telco	36 - 45
4/15/21 12:03:25	4/15/21 12:04:16	Anonymised		Ada Lovelace	Anonymised	Anonymised	Head of Product	Broadcasting	36 - 45
2/5/22 11:58:53	2/5/22 12:04:43	Anonymised		Phyllis	Anonymised	Anonymised	Microbiology Business Support Manager	NHS	46 - 55
3/10/22 15:05:50	3/10/22 15:07:15	Anonymised		Ursula	Anonymised	Anonymised	Co-ordinator NHS	Public	56 - 65
2/6/23 10:33:49	2/6/23 10:34:46	Anonymised		Sarafina	Anonymised	Anonymised	Senior Pricing and Proposition Manager	Telco	26 - 35
		Anonymised		Ursula Banks	Anonymised	Anonymised			
6/28/23 22:54:15	6/28/23 22:55:06	Anonymised		Mary Seacole	Anonymised	Anonymised	Chief operating officer	Training provider - healthcare	36 - 45
7/18/23 10:45:34	7/18/23 10:47:11	Anonymised		Katie	Anonymised	Anonymised	Director of Property	Finance	36 - 45
2/29/24 11:46:27	2/29/24 11:47:32	Anonymised		Rebecca Burke	Anonymised	Anonymised	Programme Director	Telecommunications	46 - 55
2/29/24 12:30:40	2/29/24 12:31:44	Anonymised		Maya	Anonymised	Anonymised	Lead Presenter	Media	46 - 55

Appendix H – Pay Inequity Interview Questions

1. **What is their story? What happened to them?**
   a. ***How did you discover that you were being paid unfairly?***
   b. Did you believe that the organisation treated its employees fairly and with respect?
   c. Did you believe that you were being fairly paid for your job?
   d. Why did you believe that you were paid equitably in relation to others in the business?
   e. How did you compare your job and pay to that of others within the company?
   f. What led you to believe that you were being paid unfairly? How did you find out?
   g. How did you confirm your suspicions?
   h. Do you believe that you had been singled out?
   i. How did the business react when the inequity was discovered
   j. Do you think that the business experienced distress? How? Why

k. How did the business react towards you once you had voiced your concerns?
l. Do you think the businesses attempted to 'minimise' the harm it had caused to you?
m. Did the business deny responsibility?
n. Did you demand compensation?
o. Did you retaliate? How? Why?
p. Did you try and justify the inequity to yourself?

2. **How the injustice affected them? Moods and emotions.**
   a. ***How did the discovery affect you personally? How did it make you feel?***
   b. Did you have an emotional reaction? Initially / and then later?
   c. Why did you feel that way? How did you make sense of it?
   d. Did your emotions change over time? Were your emotional changes related to specific events?
   e. Did your emotions change when you began to make sense of what had happened?
   f. Did you experience any positive emotional responses? Did anything make you feel better during this time?
   g. Did you experience: (1) disgust, (2) fear, (3) shame, or (4) sadness at any point? When and why?
   h. Did your emotional response impact on your behaviour in any way? Please explain.
   i. Did your emotional response impact on your attitudes in any way? Please explain.

3. **Who they hold responsible and why.**
   a. ***Was there a particular individual, or group of individuals, that you hold responsible for the pay inequity? Why?***
   b. Who do you believe is responsible for the inequity? Why?
   c. Do you believe the inequity to be intentional? Why?
   d. Can you talk through what you believe to the cause of this behaviour individuals?
   e. How did you expect the businesses to respond to your accusation of pay discrimination?
   f. Did the business attempt to restore the pay equity? How?
   g. Did the business attempt to justify their actions? How?
   h. Did the business attempt to use a mediator to restore equity and trust?
   i. Do you believe that the level of pay inequity is comparable to the level of distress felt by the exploited?

4. **The attitudes, behaviours and culture that enabled pay inequity to exist and persist.**
   a. ***Did you perceive any specific factors regarding the culture of the organisation that you think may have contributed to the existence and persistence of pay inequity for women?***
   b. Do you think that businesses discriminate against women? If so, how?
   c. What do you think are the key factors that allow inequality / inequity to exist and persist?
   d. Do you believe that the organisation felt any remorse / distress for how they treated you?
   e. Reference to the following causes:
      1) Occupational segregation
      2) Organisational structure
      3) Gender pay gap
      4) HRM and pay systems
      5) Organisational culture
      6) Glass ceiling
      7) Institutional sexism

8) Individual behaviour
9) Bias and sexism
10) Patriarchal society

5. **<u>How it made them feel about their job, life, relationships?</u>**
   a. ***How has this experience impacted on your life?***
   b. How did it impact on your behaviour at work?
   c. How did it impact on your personal relationships?
   d. Did the experience have any financial impact on your life?
   e. Long-term versus short-term impacts?
   f. How did it impact on your views of society?
   g. How do you feel about the corporate world and business in general? Has this been affected by your experience?
   h. Have you forgiven the business for the way they treated you? Why? When?

6. **<u>What can we do to prevent pay inequity in the future?</u>**
   a. ***What are your thoughts on how 'fair pay' can be achieved within today's businesses in the UK?***
   b. Do you believe that the organisation allocated pay to employees fairly?
   c. Do you believe that pay decisions made by individuals were done with 'fairness' in mind?
   d. Do you think that your organisation treats / treated it's employees equally?
   e. How to you believe equal pay can be achieved within UK businesses today?
   f. Do you think that pay should be dependent on individual characteristics?
   g. How did it affect your attitude or beliefs about the organisation / individuals?

Questions arising from the Equal Pay literature have been developed by the author from the key themes that emerged, together with a view to capturing the experience of women through the tribunal process in the UK (which has not been done before):

7. **<u>What was their experience of the UK Tribunal Courts process and representatives</u>**
   a. ***Do you believe that businesses are held to account for pay inequity through the UK courts?***
   b. Do you believe that our Equal Pay Laws prevent pay discrimination in the UK? If not, why?
   c. Why / when did you decide to litigate?
   d. Did you have any support throughout the litigation process? From whom?
   e. Did you seek legal advice? Who from?
   f. What advice did you receive from legal experts?
   g. Did you settle? How did that make you feel?
   h. Can you describe your experiences of the Tribunal Courts System?
   i. Do you believe that the tribunal process was fair? If not, why not?
   j. Who was present in court, and what role did they play in the proceedings?
   k. Did the judges understand the inequity you presented? If not, why not?
   l. Did the judges make a fair judgement on the case? If not, why not?
   m. How did you feel throughout the court proceedings?
   n. What were the emotional impacts of the court case on you? On your family?
   o. What were the financial impacts of the court case?
   p. Has the case impacted your career? If so, how?
   q. Do you believe that Equal Pay Law and the courts deter employers from treated employees inequitably?
   r. Do you believe that the process can be improved?

Appendix I – MAXQDA Code System Export

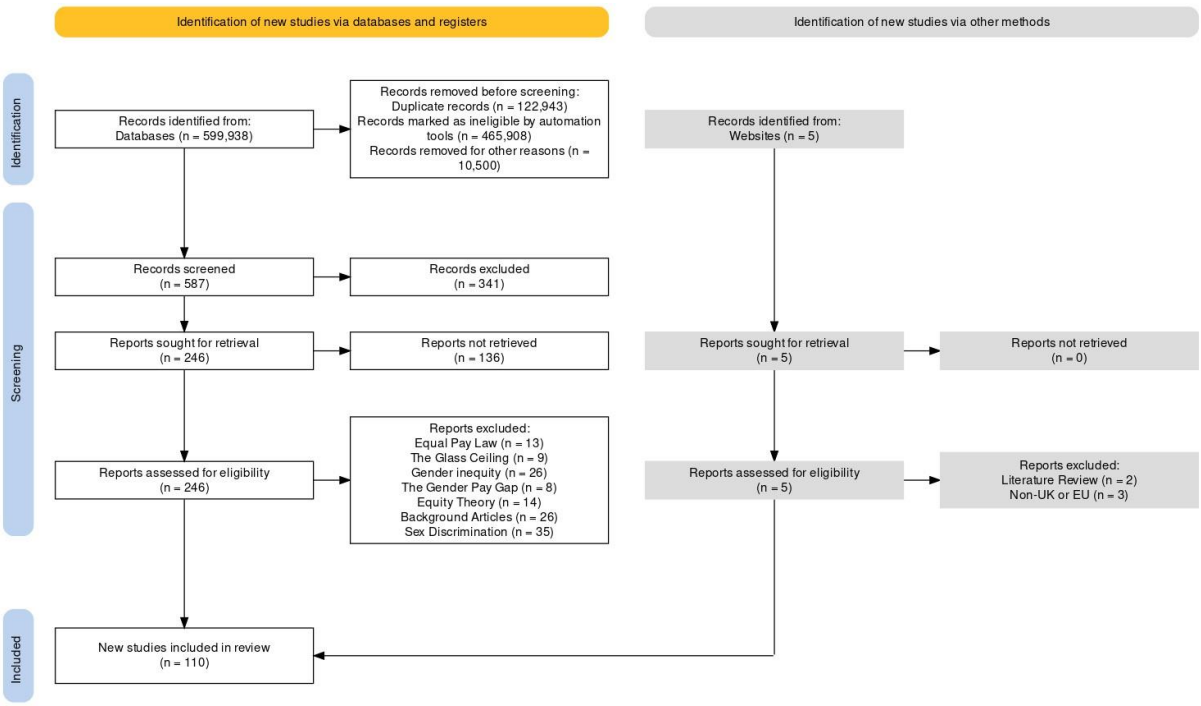
Code System	Memo	Freq
Code System		2932
Focus Group	Focus Group Session participants	0
Burke, Rebecca L	Author	260
Ruth Bader-Ginsberg	Focus Group Participant 1	56
Katie	Focus Group Participant 2	204
Titanium	Focus Group Participant 3	12
Mary Seacole	Focus Group Participant 4	60
Ursula	Focus Group Participant 5	20
Thesis Section Analysis	Coding to support Thesis structure	0
Introduction	Focus Group comments relating to thesis Introduction	1
Methodology	Focus Group comments relating to thesis methodology section	11
Conclusion	Focus Group comments relating to thesis conclusions	22
Lessons Learnt	Focus Group comments relating to participant lessons learnt	18
Themes and Theories	Focus Group comments relating to the 3 findings / themes: Sexism, Psychological Harm and Gender Washing	0
Sexism	Focus Group comments relating to theme of sexism	37
Psychological Harm	Focus Group comments relating to theme of psychological harm	14
Gender Washing	Focus Group Comments relating to theme of gender washing	22
HR Policy	Women's lived experiences of the grievance and other HR processes that profess to protect women and other minorities from discrimination, bullying and harrassment within the organisation.	19
Organisational Rhetoric	Women's experiences of the public image and discourse of the organisations that have treated them unfairly, and how this rhetoric is at odds with their lived experiences of the organisation.	19
Gas lighting	Deliberate attempts by the organisation to mislead or silence women through mantra's that either ignores, nullifies or denies their lived experiences. Frequently leading towards women believing that they are the ones at fault and / or deserving of their own mistreatment.	29

Code System	Memo	Freq
NDA	Non-Disclosure Agreements - women's lived experiences of how NDA's are used to silence women in relation to their pay inequity discovers and sexism stories.	10
Revolution and going public	Activism and how women speak out in the public domain through social and print media channels	21
Handbook	Considerations for future work	3
Culture	The culture of the organisation as perceived by individual women	0
Explicit behaviours	What people talked about, or how people openly behaved, and regonised as the behavioural norms in the business	118
Implicit norms and behaviours	Perceptions about culture that are not talked about, but somehow understood by individuals	74
Power and heirarchy	Stories relating to how the hierarchy and power structures were manifested within each organisation as perceived by individual women.	106
Legacies, legends and stories relating to culture	These are stories passed down from employee to employee to explain or normalise the behaviours of individuals, teams or the whole organisation	54
Structure	Hierarchy and structure as related to roles and responsibilities in the business	1
Role and responsibilities	These statements explain what individuals in the business actually did as their day to day work	93
Team	Stories relating to peers or subordinates within the teams where individual women worked	80
Heirarchy	Where statements about the corporate structure relate to the hierarchy of the team or business overall.	15
The Discovery	Perceptions and information relating to how individual women discovered they were being paid unfairly	2
Job Comparison	How women have evaluated their job and their worth to the company (including any comparisons with colleagues)	82
Comparator responses	The response that women perceive from those who they considered their peers, with equitable roles and responsibilities.	42
Finding out	The moment, or moments, when the individual finds out how much their comparator is being paid.	32
The Individual's Response	Stories about how the experience has impacted on the lives and careers of women	2
Impact on career	How has the pay inequity experience impacted on the future career of individual women?	68
Impacts on lives	Has this experience impacted on the lives, specifically the relationships and perception and plans of individual women	49

Code System	Memo	Freq
Cognitive decision making	How did the experience drive particular decisions about what to do about the pay inequity	105
Emotional response	Stories about how the pay inequity and subsequent treatment made individual women feel, emotionally.	120
Resolution and healing	What have individual women done to help to make themselves feel better, or have they been offered some sort of resolution? Did this work?	129
The Organisational Response	The oganisation's response to the pay inequity and the women who report it	2
Indications and suspicions of inequity	Stories about how women initially suspected that they were being paid unfairly or treated differently from their male peers	47
Company structure / grading information	How individual understood their grades relative to that of their colleagues, and what this meant for pay	60
Organisational peoples response to the pay inequity raised	How did the teams, management and HR respond to the claims of pay inequity as perceived by individual women	202
Recruitment process	How were the women, and others, recruited into the business?	43
The grievance process	Stories and statements about the grievance process for the business and perceptions about it's effectiveness for dealing with pay inequity	150
Validation of pay inequity	Stories relating to when individual women found out for sure that they were being paid unfairly	50
The Law	Experiences of tribunal court processes and hearings, or similar for public bodies (like a select committee)	14
Affects on the individual	Stories and description of how the court process was experienced by individual women.	100
The court process	Stories and description of the tribunal court (or similar) processes	186
Personal Reflections	Description relating to the individuals view of themselves, and how they perceive themselves within the organisation as as individuals.	2
Future recommendations	What women think could help to prevent this type of injustice happening in the future.	92
Others perceptions of me	Statements relating to how individuals believe that other see them in the workplace	82
Perceptions of the self and self worth	Statements relating to how I perceive myself at work, and my sense of self worth or value	140
Personal support networks	How others have featured in the stories of these women, in a supporting role.	107

Code System	Memo	Freq
Who do we blame?	Who women consider the most responsible for the pay inequity and unfair treatment?	10
Sensemaking	How have women begun to make sense of what has happened to them?	104
Who do we blame for pay inequity?	Society, Organisations, individuals, processes can all play a part in this complex phenomenon, but who do we really blame?	89
Who made the pay decision?	Individuals or teams involved in the pay decision	54

Appendix J – Literature Review – Search Filters



SUBJECT AREA	TOTAL PAPERS	KEY PAPERS	EXCLUDED PAPERS
Equal Pay Law	33	18	15
The Glass Ceiling	38	26	12
Gender Inequality	26	0	26
Gender Pay Gap	80	40	40
Equity Theory	43	21	22
Background Articles	30	4	26
Sex Discrimination	36	1	35
Doctoral Thesis	5	0	5
(2 cross-referenced)	**291**	**110**	**181**

Appendix K – Full Literature Review Analysis (additional file)

Attached as a separate Excel spreadsheet to submission.

Appendix L – Full Transcripts (additional files)

Attached as separate PDF files for 11 x participants plus 1 x Focus Group session

Appendix M – Focus Group Session Slides – Research Summary

Slide deck presented to 6 participants: Ruth Bader-Ginsberg, Katie, Mary Seacole, Ursula, Titanium, Ada Lovelace the full transcript for this session is available as an attachment to this submission *(note that Ada Lovelace joined the call but did not contribute and so is not listed on the Focus Group transcripts).*

Greetings and Check In

Welcome to this final phase of the study:
The journey so far:

- 2017: I discovered my own pay inequity
- 2019: It went to court for the 1st time
- 2020: It went to court for the 2nd time
- 2021: I discovered I lost my case
- 2021: I began my PhD
  - 4 x Interviews in 2021
  - 3 x Interviews in 2022
  - 4 x Interviews in 2023

Research Outline

Literature Review
- A review of all existing pay inequity literature to understand what is already understood about the topic.

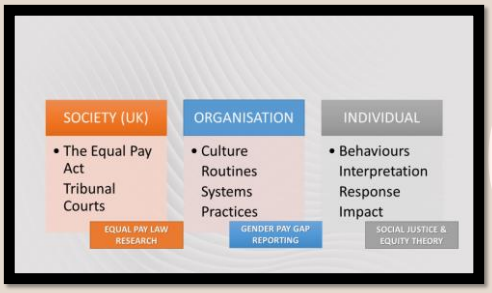
Methodology Paper
- A paper and presentation outlining the social constructionist and feminist approaches taken to the study.

Theoretical model
- Thematic analysis of the full interview transcripts, creating a coding structure for use across the topic area.

Findings Papers
1. Exposing Sexism
2. The emotional affect of pay inequity on women
3. Pay Inequity and Gender washing

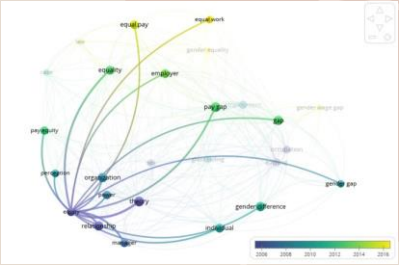
Conclusions
- Providing an interlinking chapter that will pull all of the papers together into a single thesis ready for final examinations.

Literature Review



Equity Theory – 1960s - 2008

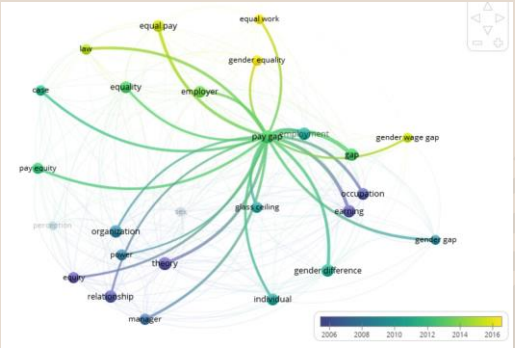
1. Individuals will tend towards matching their inputs to their rewards (Equity Norm) *(Adams, 1965)*
2. Linked to cognitive dissonance theory points to our drive towards resolving inequity *(Carrell and Dittrich, 1978; Huseman et. al. 1987; Leventhal, 1980)*
3. We also see evidence of inequitable pay decisions happening where personal gain could result *(Wálster et.al. 1973)*



Conclusion:
- Equity theory research focusses on the cognitive behaviours / responses that can result from unfair treatment– i.e. motivation and productivity.
- Quantitative methods that try and ascertain an homogenised response to inequity.
- Do we all respond to gender pay inequity in the same way?

Gender Pay Gap – 2008 - 2016

1. The majority of studies within the systematic review present hypotheses to explain the Gender Pay Gap.
2. These studies point to:
   a. Socio-cultural reasons such as occupational segregation *(Mumford and Smith, 2004; Metcalf, 2009; Alkadry and Tower, 2011; Rubery, 2017)*
   b. The motherhood penalty *(Manning and Robinson, 2004; Sigle-Rushton and Widfogel, 2007; Myck and Paull, 2001; Cory and Stirling, 2012)*
   c. Economic theory such as human capital theory *(Manning and Swaffiled, 2008; Tharenou, 2013; Olson, 2013)*



Conclusion
- Data is based on very large or public sector organisations.
- Reporting interventions have failed to eradicate the gender pay gap.
- Structural cause research has failed to provide any workable solutions to the problem.

Equal Pay Law – 2016 onwards

- Tribunal court case data shows over new cases per year.
- A number of high-profile cases have filtered into mainstream media generating a dialogue:
  - Pay inequity still exists and persists
  - Women are willing to stand up against their employers
- NDA agreements are no longer the silencing tool for women's experiences in the workplace
- 'Me-too' era has helped women to overcome the shame, guilt and blame associated with sex discrimination.
- Social media has provided a platform for sharing stories and connecting with others who share similar experiences

Conclusion
- If cases are raised and go to court the law has failed in protecting women from pay inequity.
- Legal interventions will only work if combined with cultural / societal changes.

Gaps in the Literature

THEORECTICAL

Research has failed to capture the lived experience of pay inequity

METHODOLOGICAL

Quantitative methodologies have narrowed research to homogenised responses

PERSPECTIVE

The voices of women who have experienced gender pay inequity are missing from the research

RESEARCH PROJECT

A study to capture the lived experiences of pay inequity using a feminist and qualitative methodology.

Methodology

- DATA COLLECTION
  - Qualitative
  - Semi-structure Interviews of 1-2 hours
  - 10 – 20 participants – network, research and snowball techniques
  - Feminist approach:
    - Open and trusting environment
    - Empathetic and supportive
    - Authentic
- ANALYSIS AND THEORY DEVELOPMENT
  - Thematic analysis allowing for the emergence of insight potentially related to existing theory.
  - Grounded theory development surrounding new areas of insight.

Presentation of findings

INTRODUCTION

- Introduce the 'characters'
- Consider narrative describing 'true events'
- Linked together by a plot
- Past, present and future

CHALLENGE / PROBLEM

- CONTEXT: Real people trying to earn a living
- DISCOVERY: How did you find out about the pay inequity?
- DISCLOSURE: who did you tell?

PLOT DEVELOPMENT

- RESPONSES: How did your organisation respond?
- How did the Tribunal Court respond?
- How did your friends and family respond?
- How did you respond?

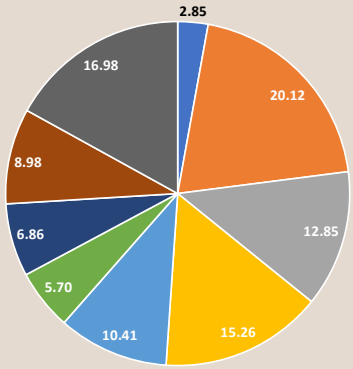
CONCLUSION

- AFFECT: How did it make you feel?
- IMPACT: Short and long term impact on life and career
- SENSE-MAKING: Why did it happen?
- RESOLUTION: How was it resolved?

Theoretical Model

SUMMARY STATISTICS

- 11 Interviews
- Nearly 30 hours of Interview
- 2,738 coded segments of text
- 9 Top-level Codes
- 36 Sub-codes



Genderwashing
The Organisational Response
Culture
Personal Reflections
The Law
The Discovery
Structure
Who do we blame?
The Individual's Response

Culture

The culture of theorganisationas perceived by individual women

1.1 Power and heirarchy	Stories relating to how the heirachy, and power structures were manifested within each organisation as perceived by individual women.
1.2 Legacies, legends andstorys relating to culture	These are stories passed down from employee to employee to explain or normalise the behaviours of individuals, teams or the whole organisation
1.3 Explicit behaviours	What people talked about, or how people openly behaved, and regonised as the behavioural norms in the business
1.4 Implicit norms and behaviours	Perceptions about culture that are not talked about, but somehow understood by individuals

Structure

Heirarchy and structure as related to roles and responsibilities in the business

2.1 Hierarchy	Where statements about the corporate structure relate to the heirarchy of the team or business overall.
2.2 Team	Stories relating to peers or subordinates within the teams where individual women worked
2.3 Role and responsibilities	These statements explain what individuals in the business actually did as their day to day work

3. The Discovery

- Perceptions and information relating to how individual women discovered they were being paid unfairly
- 3.1 Finding out
  - The moment, or moments, when the individual finds out how much their comparator is being paid.
- 3.2 Job Comparison
  - How women have evaluated their job and their worth to the company (including any comparisons with colleagues)

4 The Individual's Response

- Stories about how the experience has impacted on the lives and careers of women
- 4.1 Resolution and healing
  - What have individual women done to help to make themselves feel better, or have they been offered some sort of resolution? Did ths work?
- 4.2 Impact on career
  - How has the pay inequity experience impacted on the future career of individal women?
- 4.3 Impacts on lives
  - Has this experience impacted on the lives, specifically the relationships and perception and plans of individual women
- 4.4 Cognitive decision making
  - How did the experience drive particular decisions about what to do about the pay inequity

Finding Out

How we respond

7 The Law

- Experiences of tribunal court processes and hearings, or similar for public bodies (like a select committee)
  - 7.1 Affects on the individual
    - Stories and description of how the court process was experienced by individual women.
  - 7.2 The court process
    - Stories and description of the tribunal court (or similar) processes

8 Who do we blame?

- 8.1 Who made the pay decision?
  - Individuals or teams involved in the pay decision
- 8.2 Who do we blame for pay inequity?
  - Society, Organisations, individuals, processes can all play a part in this complex phenomenon, but who do we really blame?
- 8.3 Sensemaking
  - How have women begun to make sense of what has happened to them?

Tribunal Experience

Blame and sense-making

The Organisation

5 The Organizational Response

- 5.1 Recruitment process
  - How were the women, and others, recruited into the business?
- 5.2 Company structure / grading information
  - How individual understood their grades relative to that of their colleagues, and what this meant for pay
- 5.3 Organisation/peoples response to the pay inequity raised
  - How did the teams, management and HR respond to the claims of pay inequity as percieved by individual women
- 5.4 The grievance process
  - Stories and statements about the grievance process for the business and perceptions about that
- 5.5 Validation of pay inequity
  - Stories relating to when individual women found out for sure that they were being paid unfairly
- 5.6 Indications and suspicions of inequity
  - Stories about how women initially suspected that they were being paid unfairly or treated differently from their male peers

Reflections

6 Personal Reflections

- Description relating to the individuals view of themselves, and how theypercieve themselves within the organisation as as individuals.
- 6.1 Future recommendations
  - What women think could help to prevent this type of injustice happening in the future.
- 6.2 Perceptions of the self and self worth
  - Statements relating to how I precieve myself at work, and my sense of self worth or value
- 6.3 Personal support networks
  - How others have featured in the stories of these women, in a supporting role.
- 6.4 Others perceptions of me
  - Statements relating to how individuals believe that other see them in the workplace

Gender washing

9.1 Gas lighting and individualisation	Deliberate attempts by the organisation to mislead or silence women through mantra's that either ignores, nullifies or denies their lived experiences. Frequently leading towards women believing that they are the ones at fault and / or deserving of their own mistreatment.
9.2 HR Process	Women's lived experiences of the grievance and other HR processes that profess to protect women and other minorities from discrimination, bullying and harrassment within the organisation.
9.3 Organisational Rhetoric	Women's experiences of the public image and discourse of the organisations that have treated them unfairly, and how this rhetoric is at odds with their lived experiences of the organisation.
9.4 Legal Process	Women's experiences of the tribunal court system and processes in relation to their pay inequity disputes or sexual discrimination claims.
9.5 NDA	Non-Disclosure Agreements - women's lived experiences of how NDA's are used to silence women in relation to their pay inequity discovers and sexism stories

Findings 1 – Exposing Sexism

- Introduction
- Justice and Equity
- Post feminism and Everyday Sexism
- Setting the Scene – The Gendered Organisation
- A Woman's Worth
- Discovering Pay Inequity
- Equal Work for Equal Value
- The Protagonist
- Sexism in Action

In a post feminist era, sexism has been relegated as a problem of the past, an idea that is supported by a plethora of organisational policies denouncing discriminatory behaviours, and thereby obscuring the everday sexism that affect women's lived experiences. This study shows how women's lived experiences of pay inequity helps us to understand the subtleties of how gender discrimination is paradoxically experienced by women working in ostensible gender-neutral organisations today, by unveiling the sexist attitudes, discriminatory behaviours, gas-lighting and procedural humiliation invoked by colleagues, and supported by the post feminist context prevalent across social and organisational cultures. This research seeks to contribute to the debates that surround the lived experiences of post feminism, by providing scholars with a deeper understanding of how women navigate the contradictory realities of everyday sexism in a post feminist organisational context. This research also brings into sharp focus the traumatic affects that pay inequity experiences have on women's lives, and the longterm impact on future careers, so as to stimulate debates on regulatory interventions and organisational practices that identify and target the perpetrators of gender discrimination in the workplace, rather than the victims.

Findings 2 – Emotional Affect

As women we expect to be valued fairly for the contributions that we make to businesses and society more broadly. We have even dared to dream that we should be paid equitably with our male colleagues, for doing the same job, since the introduction of the Equal Pay Act in 1970. Despite this we are aware of the gendered nature of the organisations, and that true equity between men and women in terms of pay is multiple decades away from being achieved. Yet we still participate in the labour market as if we were equal partners, with women giving as much, if not more, to our jobs as our male colleagues in order to compete for the best jobs in a highly competitive marketplace. This article explores how women experience unfair treatment at work, specifically in relation to pay inequity, and in so doing attempts to chart a course through their journeys which helps us to understand their lived experiences. The living story paradigm has been adopted, and combined with some autobiographical references of my own experiences, in order to provide readers with a greater depth of the understanding of why these experiences are so traumatic for women, and unpick some of the underlying sensemaking that women will rely on to support the healing process.

1. Women's Voices
2. The problem with gender equality
3. Betrayed and hurt
4. Depression
5. Not good enough
6. Fighting back
7. Broken lives
8. Picking up the pieces
9. The phoenix rising
10. Conclusion

Findings 3 – Gender washing

1. Introduction
2. Methodology
3. Findings
   a. Empty Promises and Policies
   b. Organisational rhetoric and accountability
   c. Gas lighting and individualisation
   d. Gender washing through the courts
   e. Non-Disclosure Agreements and the silencing of women's experiences
4. Discussion – Going Public

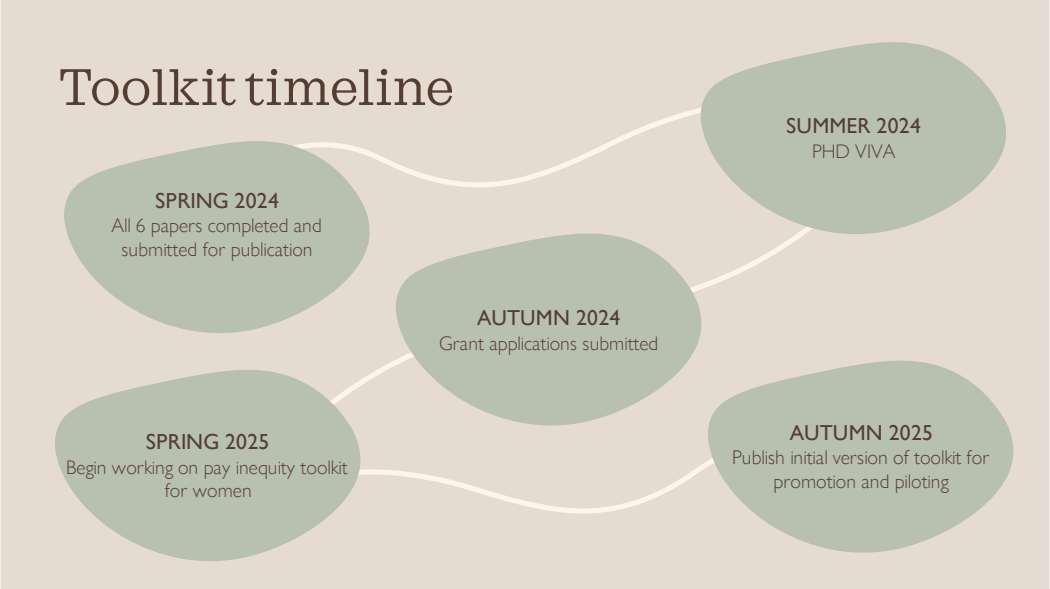
The authors find that women's experiences of pay inequity is grounded in a 'veiled' sexism that is either unseen, or ignored, by HR and organisational hierarchies and leading to the denial of women's lived experiences. We have seen from previous research that gender practices within the organisational context result in confusing and contradictory situations for employees (Benschop and Doorewaard, 1998a; Korvajärvi, 1998). These authors argue that gender pay inequity experiences present women with a visible and tangible example of the realities of the gender practices that are prevalent across our organisations, and as a result lead women into absurd and paradoxical situations that they can not make sense of (Vershinina, 2020). Women's stories of pay inequity are frequently ignored, or nullified by the organisation, as they make visible the gendered practices that the organisation will deny exist. Genderwashing occurs as these organisations use HR policies (texts) and organisational rhetoric (discourse) to add weight to their vicious denials of sexism, which result in 'gas lighting effects' on the women brave enough to call out the paradox (Fox×Kirk et. Al., 2020). Such gas lighting effects, together with vicious personal attacks, are routinely used throughout the HR grievance and tribunal court processes that support the gendered practices that have been exposed, thereby pushing women towards individualising their experiences, and into the arms of a pay-off and Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) that will silence them forever.

Thoughts and feedback

- Immediate thoughts and reactions to the study's outcomes.
- Does this research reflect your experience of pay inequity?
  - Which area resonate the most with your personal experience?
  - Do any parts not feel right / relevant to your own experiences?
  - Is there anything missing from the theoretical framework presented?
- How can this research be used to make a real impact on women's live?
- Would you like to get involved in the next phase of this research?
  - How would you like to contribute?

A toolkit for women

- Focused on explaining and validating their experiences.
- Giving women a language with which to articulate what is happening to them.
- Point them to charitable support and networks to support them through the process.
- Provide them with practical advice on what to do and where to go when they experience pay inequity at work.
- Provide tools and techniques for managing their personal health and wellbeing through this traumatic process.
- Providing them with practical tools for career changes and progressions.


Toolkit timeline
SPRING 2024
All 6 papers completed and submitted for publication
SUMMER 2024
PHD VIVA
AUTUMN 2024
Grant applications submitted
SPRING 2025
Begin working on pay inequity toolkit for women
AUTUMN 2025
Publish initial version of toolkit for promotion and piloting

thank you
Rebecca Burke
K0539163@kingston.ac.uk
r.burke@kingston.ac.uk

Appendix N – Slide Deck presented to the European Conference for Rewards Management in Brussel in December 2022

Pay Inequity: Past, Present and Future

PRESENTED TO THE 8TH EUROPEAN REWARDS MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE ON 1ST AND 2ND DECEMBER 2022 BY REBECCA BURKE

Why am I obsessed with Pay Equity?

- Personal experience of pay inequity in 2017 which led to two tribunal hearings.
- Many women reached out to me when my story went public to tell me about their own experiences of pay inequity.
- I began to realise that there were some distinct similarities, namely:
  1. the way that the pay inequity was handled by the organisation.
  2. The emotional affect on the individual that resulted from the pay inequity experience.

QUESTION: How is pay inequity affecting women working in the UK today?

Business Response

Individual Response

Methodology

Systematic Review

- To establish the body of knowledge across the domain.
- Understand theoretical context of the literature.
- Establish areas of knowledge that emerge as themes from the review.
- Match the literature to the research questions presented.

Bibliometric Review

- Provide visual networks to aide understanding and presentation of theoretical areas.
- Understand theoretical trajectory – Overlay Visualisations.
- Establish gaps within the 'heatmap' viewed through the density visualisation.

Pay Inequity: The Distant Past

Equity Theory:

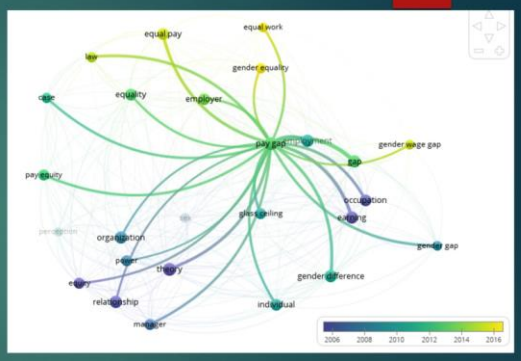
1. Individuals will tend towards matching their inputs to their rewards (Equity Norm) *(Adams, 1965)*
2. Linked to cognitive dissonance theory points to our drive towards resolving inequity *(Carrell and Dittrich, 1978; Huseman et. al. 1987; Leventhal, 1980)*
3. We also see evidence of inequitable pay decisions happening where personal gain could result *(Walster et.al. 1973)*

Thoughts / conclusions / discussions:

- People will make inequitable pay decisions if they perceive a benefit to themselves.
- Pay inequity can cause individuals to increase / decrease their performance / productivity.

Pay Inequity: The not so distant Past

1. The majority of studies within the systematic review present hypotheses to explain the Gender Pay Gap.
2. These studies point to:
   a. Socio-cultural reasons such as occupational segregation *(Mumford and Smith, 2004; Metcalf, 2009; Alkadry and Tower, 2011; Rubery, 2017)*
   b. The motherhood penalty *(Manning and Robinson, 2004; Sigle-Rushton and Widfogel, 2007; Myck and Paull, 2001; Cory and Stirling, 2012)*
   c. Economic theory such as human capital theory *(Manning and Swaffield, 2008; Tharenou, 2013; Olson, 2013)*



Thoughts / conclusions / discussions:

- Not particularly helpful for my study regarding how women experience pay inequity as there is little here about the individual or even business responses to pay gaps once established.

Pay Inequity: The Present

- Tribunal court cases appear to be rising (but we have not yet got any data for 2022 as of yet).
- A number of high-profile cases have filtered into mainstream media generating a dialogue:
  - Pay inequity still exists and persists
  - Women are willing to stand up against their employers
- NDA agreements are no longer the silencing tool for women's experiences in the workplace
- 'Me-too' era has helped women to overcome the shame, guilt and blame associated with sex discrimination.
- Social media has provided a platform for sharing stories and connecting with others who share similar experiences.

Thoughts / conclusions / discussions:

- Some women's groups are calling for full pay transparency in the future – is this possible?
- How can the 'current climate' help to support our future research efforts?

Pay Inequity: The Future

How is pay inequity affecting women working in the UK today?

RECORD PAY INEQUITY NARRATIVES TO CAPTURE THE LIVED EXPERIENCED

SOME SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

- What happens when women find out that they are being paid unfairly?
- How does the business respond to the situation?
- How does that make women feel at the time of the discovery?
- What are the longer-term impacts of the pay inequity experience on women's lives and careers?

Thoughts / conclusions / discussions:

- What are the challenges to this research approach? Which methodology would suit this study?
- How could this data lead to 'real-world' interventions (societal, organisational or individual)?

APPENDICES

ADDITIONAL CONTENT FOR QUESTIONS

PHD Study – Theoretical Background

THE INDIVIDUAL
(or personal moderators)

1. Gender / Power Standing *(Sprecher, 1992; Heatvedt, 1990)*
2. Leadership (Autocratic) *(De Cremer, 2007b)*
3. Self-Value Orientation *(Stouten et. al. 2005; Lange, 1999)*
4. Affect Intensity *(Van den Bos et. al. 2003)*

a) Experiential Intuitive System
b) Rational Cognitive System

THE EVENT OR SITUATION
(In)justice type

1. Distributive Injustice *(Adams, 1963, 65; French, 1964; Homans, 1961, 1974; Rawls, 1971)*
2. Procedural Injustice *(Thibaut and Walker, 1975, 1978; Leventhal, 1980; Barsky and Kaplan, 2007; Zapata et. al, 2009)*
3. Interactional Injustice

a) Interpersonal *(Aquino et al. 2006; Reis, 1986)*
b) Informational *(Bies and Shapiro, 1987)*

THE AFFECT
(on the Individual)

- Moods (PANAS model) *(Watson and Clark, 1988; Feldman, 1995a)*
- Discrete Emotions *(Haidt, 2003b; Lerner et. al. 2006, 1998; Weiss and Cropanzano, 1999)*
- Attitudes and behaviours
- Affective Processes
- Appraisal Processes

Abstract

Pay inequity continues to cause harm to working women in the UK today. With ineffective legislation, the decline of collective bargaining powers, continual recessions, the rise of gig-economy working and the unaffordable costs of litigation- is it any wonder that equal pay for women remains an elusive ? By asking questions of the justice and affect theories within social psychology disciplines we gaps in our understanding of how pay inequity is affecting women working in Britain today, and why there remains a void in offering 'real world' practitioner solutions to eradicating the injustice so as to protect the women workers of or future from the harm it causes. A qualitative and feminist research design will tackle these 'blind spots' in our knowledge through the use of in-depth interviews which will record the narratives of women who have experienced this phenomenon for themselves. Thematic analysis and grounded theory techniques will be used to unlock the connections between individual characteristics, the experience of injustice and its long and shortterm affects. This will provide us with a unique dataset from which to develop new theories that focus on what went wrong, and the emotional response it triggered. Supporting the development and testing of hypotheses on which organisational interventions will prevent such affects, thereby protecting the women of our future from this type of harm.

My PhD questions and approach

50 years after the Equal Pay Act's enactment, what do we understand about the impacts on unequal pay on women in Britain today?

[redacted]

PhD Research Questions

1. Are we keeping a record of the narratives of these women and their experiences so that we can learn from them in the future?
2. Are there really common working environments, cultures, attitudes and behaviours that allow for pay inequity to exist and persist?
3. Could this knowledge help us to identify where and how pay inequity exists?

Research Approach

1. Identify the social and psychological impacts of inequity
2. Possible explanations of pay inequity
3. Primary research conducted with women who have experienced the phenomenal themselves

Hypothesis / assumption testing for future research

4. Could this knowledge help us to solve the problem when it has been found to exist? Or even before it has started?

Action Research / Case study within business context

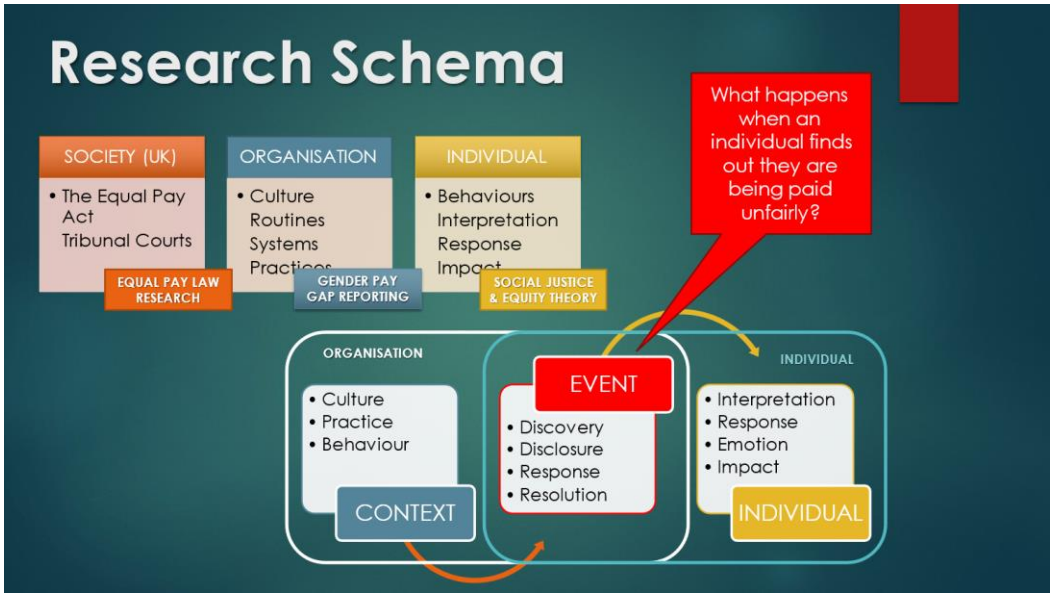
Problem statement:
"Challenging your employer on the grounds of equal pay takes considerable effort and money, not to mention emotional investment and risking your livelihood." (Hilsenrath, 2020)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do we prevent pay inequity in the future?

- What can the individual do?
  - Understand that pay inequity is a real problem for minorities
  - Be transparent about your pay with colleagues performing the same or similar roles
  - Request pay transparency within your own organisation
- What can corporations and public sector employers do?
  - The Gender Pay Gap reporting
  - Action plans for closing the gap
- What is the role of HR Leaders and Mangers?
  - Recruitment
  - Pay setting
  - Bonuses and other rewards
- What can government and society do?
  - Generate awareness through charities, campaigns and events
  - Improve legislation, access to legal routes, as well as legal outcomes for minorities seeking justice

Appendix O – Presentation to the European Research methods Conference in September 2023



Methodology

- **DATA COLLECTION**
  - Qualitative
  - Semi-structure Interviews of 1-2 hours
  - 10 – 20 participants – network, research and snowball techniques
  - Feminist approach:
    - Open and trusting environment
    - Empathetic and supportive
    - Authentic
- **ANALYSIS AND THEORY DEVELOPMENT**
  - Thematic analysis allowing for the emergence of insight potentially related to existing theory.
  - Grounded theory development surrounding new areas of insight.

Analysis into Theory

Rich insights emerge from the data which will illuminate our understanding of the specific events and perceptions that surround the pay inequity experience. Substantive theory will emerge from the complications and perceptions that we are guided to by our narrators, combined with the authors own personal experiences to provide readers with insights into the phenomenon *(Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2006)*.

For example:

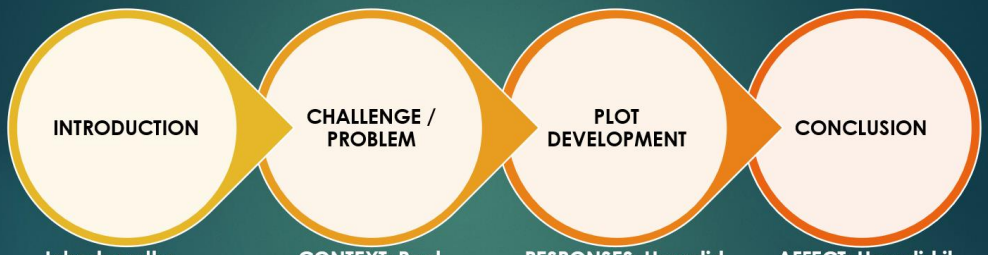
Participant describing her perceptions of management

"So there seemed to be as a kind of a unwritten set of unwritten rules which you were expected to abide by as graduates, and the managers had ultimately power over you and could determine your career there."

Further explanation of what we can understand from this description:

Recognition of power structures are implicitly understood by employees, which are not written down, but are perceived through the actions and behaviours of others

Presentation of findings



- Introduce the 'characters'
- Consider narrative describing 'true events'
- Linked together by a plot
- Past, present and future

- CONTEXT: Real people trying to earn a living
- DISCOVERY: How did you find out about the pay inequity?
- DISCLOSURE: who did you tell?

- RESPONSES: How did your organisation respond?
- How did the Tribunal Court respond?
- How did your friends and family respond?
- How did you respond?

- AFFECT: How did it make you feel?
- IMPACT: Short and long term impact on life and career
- SENSE-MAKING: Why did it happen?
- RESOLUTION: How was it resolved?

Conclusions and next steps

- 9 Interview and 3 full transcriptions completed.
- The participants are particularly open with me, and have expressed their willingness to participate in the study as something they can do to help.
- The stories, and the story-telling, is very emotional at points.
- Insights into culture, practices and emotional affect are all beginning to emerge from the analysis.
- I am considering stopping the interviewing at 10 as the data is very rich with insights and I feel I may not be able to do it justice.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE DATA
(in progress)

LEADING INTO

GROUNDED THEORY DEVELOPMENT
(summer 2023)

REBECCA BURKE
K0539163@KINGSTON.AC.UK

Thank you for listening

APPENDICES

FURTHER INFORMATION

Research Questions

1. At what stage in the process of the research degree are you currently engaged?
2. What is your research problem and/or research question?
3. Why is your research problem and/or research question important and to whom is it interesting?
4. Which established authors in your field of study have influenced your thinking the most?
5. How would you describe your underpinning research philosophy? Are you an interpretivist or a positivist or do you perceive yourself to be a multi -methods person?
6. What sources of data have you accessed and how have you processed the data?
7. What are your principal findings and what application might there be for your findings?
8. Do you have any comments about the limitations of your research and future related research?

CONTEXT → DISCOVERY → DISCLOSURE → RESPONSE → RESOLUTION

- **Business**
  - Please tell me about the organisation
  - What was the culture and environment like?
- **Your job**
  - Who did you work with? Your boss? Team?
  - What job did you do?

- How did you find out that you were being treated unfairly?
- Were there any clues about why you were being treated unfairly?
- Who do you believe is responsible for your unfair treatment?

- What happened when you reported it to the company?
- Did anyone attempt to rectify the situation?
- Did anyone listen to you? Who?
- Could your employer have done things differently?

- How did your employer / individuals in the business respond?
- How did you respond to what was happening to you?
- How did it make you feel?
- Can you remember the emotions that you experienced at that time?

- How did the experience affect you? At work / at home?
- How has this experience impacted you?
- Have you been able to resolve this?
- What was your experience of going to court?
- How do you feel about it now that time has passed?

Questions

PHD Study – Theoretical Background

THE INDIVIDUAL
(or personal moderators)

1. Gender / Power Standing *(Sprecher, 1992; Heatvedt, 1990)*
2. Leadership (Autocratic) *(De Cremer, 2007b)*
3. Self-Value Orientation *(Stouten et. al. 2005; Lange, 1999)*
4. Affect Intensity *(Van den Bos et. al. 2003)*
   a) Experiential Intuitive System
   b) Rational Cognitive System

THE EVENT OR SITUATION
(In)justice type

1. Distributive Injustice *(Adams, 1963, 65; French, 1964; Homans, 1961, 1974; Rawls, 1971)*
2. Procedural Injustice *(Thibaut and Walker, 1975, 1978; Leventhal, 1980; Barsky and Kaplan, 2007; Zapata et. al, 2009)*
3. Interactional Injustice
   a) Interpersonal *(Aquino et al. 2006; Reis, 1986)*
   b) Informational *(Bies and Shapiro, 1987)*

THE AFFECT
(on the Individual)

- Moods (PANAS model) *(Watson and Clark, 1988; Feldman, 1995a)*
- Discrete Emotions *(Haidt, 2003b; Lerner et. al. 2006, 1998; Weiss and Cropanzano, 1999)*
- Attitudes and behaviours
- Affective Processes
- Appraisal Processes

Abstract

Pay inequity continues to cause harm to working women in the UK today. With ineffective legislation, the decline of collective bargaining powers, continual recessions, the rise of gig-economy working and the unaffordable costs of litigation- is it any wonder that equal pay for women remains an elusive ? By asking questions of the justice and affect theories within social psychology disciplines we gaps in our understanding of how pay inequity is affecting women working in Britain today, and why there remains a void in offering 'real world' practitioner solutions to eradicating the injustice so as to protect the women workers of or future from the harm it causes. A qualitative and feminist research design will tackle these 'blind spots' in our knowledge through the use of indepth interviews which will record the narratives of women who have experienced this phenomenon for themselves. Thematic analysis and grounded theory techniques will be used to unlock the connections between individual characteristics, the experience of injustice and its long and shortterm affects. This will provide us with a unique dataset from which to develop new theories that focus on what went wrong, and the emotional response it triggered. Supporting the development and testing of hypotheses on which organisational interventions will prevent such affects, thereby protecting the women of our future from this type of harm.

My PhD questions and approach

50 years after the Equal Pay Act's enactment, what do we understand about the impacts on unequal pay on women in Britain today?

[redacted]

PhD Research Questions

1. Are we keeping a record of the narratives of these women and their experiences so that we can learn from them in the future?
2. Are there really common working environments, cultures, attitudes and behaviours that allow for pay inequity to exist and persist?
3. Could this knowledge help us to identify where and how pay inequity exists?

Research Approach

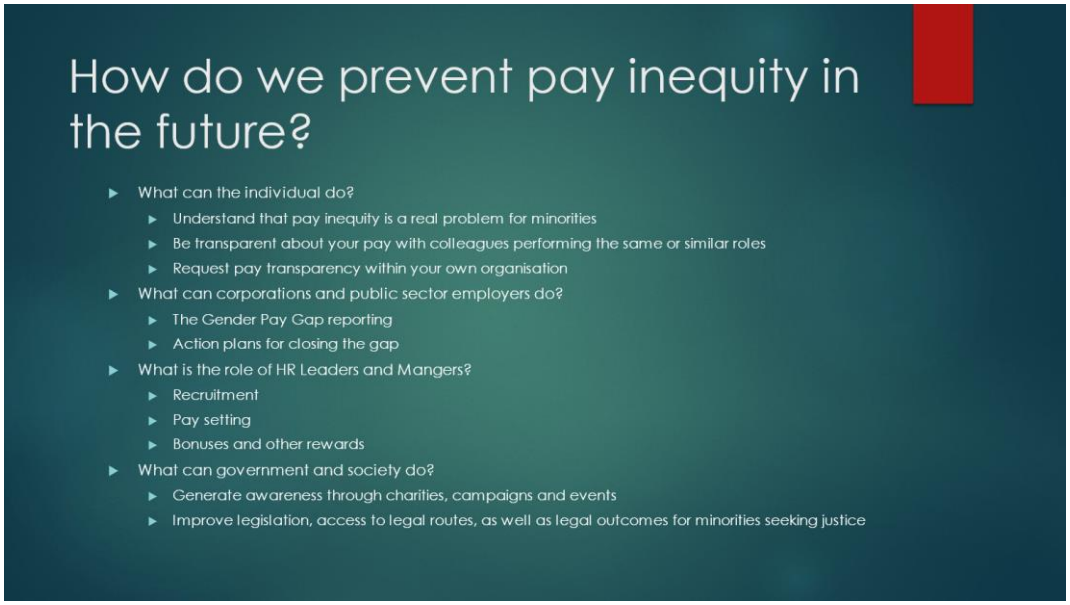
1. Identify the social and psychological impacts of inequity
2. Possible explanations of pay inequity
3. Primary research conducted with women who have experienced the phenomenal themselves

Hypothesis / assumption testing for future research

4. Could this knowledge help us to solve the problem when it has been found to exist? Or even before it has started? → Action Research / Case study within business context

Problem statement:
"Challenging your employer on the grounds of equal pay takes considerable effort and money, not to mention emotional investment and risking your livelihood."
(Hilsenrath, 2020)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS



Appendix P - Hidden Sexism Abstract for GWO conference

Exposing Sexism at Work: A [Hi]story that never Ends

Rebecca Burke, Kingston Business School, Kingston University (R.Burke@kingston.ac.uk)

J. M. Imas, Kingston Business School, Kingston University (j.imas@kingston.ac.uk)

"I think part of the problem is and is white men. That's, that's where the power generally sits, yeah. Even if they're not discriminatory, or deliberately discriminatory, they don't understand. They haven't got the capability of understanding because they can never have experienced that discrimination themselves." (Anonymous interviewee).

In a post-feminist era (McRobbie, 2004), it seems, sexism has been relegated as a problem of the past (Anderson, 2014). This is illustrated by a plethora of work policies denouncing discriminatory behaviours against women since the 1970s in the UK. For example, the enactment of UK's Equal Pay Act in 1970, as a result of second wave liberal feminist protest for social and economic freedom, can be considered part of women's rights fought and won during the previous century (Kelan, 2009). The Sex discrimination Act of 1975 equally allowed women (some) equal rights in the workplace (Gregory, 1999). Sexism, i.e., prejudice and discrimination against women, was assumed to be "history" in the United Kingdom as well as the rest of the Global North, especially for those women who were young, white and heterosexual (Calder-Dawe and Gavey, 2016).

Yet, as pointed out by Calder-Dawe (2015), the apparent extinction of sexism allows gendered inequalities to thrive. It simply remains, hiding in plain sight (Williamson, 2003) or under what Scharff (2019) describes as preparing girls for "sexism".

Sexism and the fight against discrimination, oppression and injustice remain in both Global North and South. As this call suggests, it is important then to make space and hear those women experiences that unveil how these discriminatory practices continue to exert divisions in society and organisations. The research we present here attempt to do that.

Following more recent feminist traditions (e.g., Fotaki and Pullen, 2023; Bell et al., 2019; Meriläinen, Tienari, and Greedharry, 2023) and a social constructionist approach (Gergen, 1985; Misra and Prakash, 2012), in this paper we address sexism by focusing on women's lived experiences of injustice and inequity in so called gender-neutral organisations. Based on 12 in depth and reflexive interviews (Pessoa et al., 2019), we explore these women's story telling experiences of pay inequity in order to understand the subtleties of gender discrimination through sexist attitudes, discriminatory behaviours, gas-lighting and procedural humiliation invoked by colleagues, and supported by a post-feminist context prevalent across social and organisational cultures.

The paper seeks to contribute to the debates proposed in this call by providing a deeper understanding of how women navigate the contradictory realities of everyday sexism in a post-feminist organisational context. We share these women stories, so we do not succumb to living within our 'Barbie-like' reality (Barbie movie, 2023); where we simply ignore or individualise the sexism that we experience everyday (#everydaysexismproject), until one day our eyes are opened, and we are faced with the realities of the sexism that surrounds us in our everyday lives and places of work. Our histories are not yet finished!

References

Anderson, K. J. (2014). *Modern misogyny: Anti-feminism in a post-feminist era*. Oxford University Press.

Bell, E., Meriläinen, S., Taylor, S., & Tienari, J. (2019). Time's up! Feminist theory and activism meets organization studies. *Human Relations*, *72*(1), 4-22.

Calder-Dawe, O. (2015). The choreography of everyday sexism: Reworking sexism in interaction. *New Formations*, *86*(86), 89-105.

Calder-Dawe, O., & Gavey, N. (2016, March). Making sense of everyday sexism: Young people and the gendered contours of sexism. In *Women's studies international forum* (Vol. 55, pp. 1-9). Pergamon.

Fotaki, M., & Pullen, A. (2023). Feminist theories and activist practices in organization studies. *Organization Studies*, 01708406231209861.
Gergen, K. J. (1985). Social constructionist inquiry: Context and implications. In *The social construction of the person* (pp. 3-18). New York, NY: Springer New York.
Gregory, J. (1999). Revisiting the sex equality laws. In *New Agendas for Women* (pp. 98-118). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
Kelan, E. K. (2009). Gender fatigue: The ideological dilemma of gender neutrality and discrimination in organizations. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences/Revue Canadienne des Sciences de l'Administration*, *26*(3), 197-210.
McRobbie, A. (2004). Post-feminism and popular culture. *Feminist media studies*, *4*(3), 255-264.
Meriläinen, S., Tienari, J., & Greedharry, M. (2023). Feminist theorizing in organization studies: A way forward with Marta Calás and Linda Smircich. *Organization*, *30*(6), 1188-1194.
Misra, G., & Prakash, A. (2012). Kenneth J. Gergen and social constructionism. *Psychological Studies*, *57*, 121-125.
Pessoa, A. S. G., Harper, E., Santos, I. S., & Gracino, M. C. D. S. (2019). Using reflexive interviewing to foster deep understanding of research participants' perspectives. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *18*, 1609406918825026.
Scharff, C. (2020). Prepare her for sexism. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, *27*(1), 3-8.
Williamson, J. (2003). Sexism with an alibi. Guardian.

Submission confirmation email sent on 3rd January 2024

GWO2024 | Submission confirmation

Dear Rebecca,
Thank you for your interest in Gender, Work and Organization 14th International Interdisciplinary Conference being hosted by the Shannon School of Business, Cape Breton University. This email confirms that you have successfully submitted the following:

Submission title: Exposing Sexism at Work: A [Hi]story that never Ends
Submission ID: 220

You can edit your submission until January 9th, 2024, 23:30 (AST), by editing your submission form.

The GWO 2024 organizing committee

Appendix Q – Methodology Paper

BE FAIR: A qualitative investigation of pay inequity experiences (published on 11th September 2023)

Citation: Burke, Rebecca. (2023). Be Fair: A qualitative Investigation of Pay Inequity Experiences. European Conference on Research Methodology for Business and Management Studies. 22. 236-244. 10.34190/ecrm.22.1.1216.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376459610_Be_Fair_A_qualitative_Investigation_of_Pay_Inequity_Experiences

Abstract: *This study explores the topic of pay inequity, with a particular focus on how it impacts on women working in the UK today. Theoretical and methodological gaps exist across the literature, which to date have focussed on quantitative approaches to hypothesis connected to (i) equity theory (Adams, 1965; Homans, 1958), (ii) the gender pay gap (Olson, 2013; Metcalf, 2009; Rubery, 2015) and (iii) equal pay law (The Equal Pay Act, 1970). This study seeks to address these gaps by taking a feminist and qualitative approach to the collection of narratives that describe the lived experience of female pay inequity victims. Semi-structured interviews are used to collect the rich narratives and unique perceptions of women who have experienced this phenomenon for themselves, and provides us with deep insights into the events, behaviours and perceptions that surround their experiences (Blaikie, 2007; Oakley, 1981). This paper provides justification for the methodological approach, and how it has been used to address the gaps in our knowledge that are preventing the theoretical advancement of the topic. As this study is currently in the data collection and analysis phase for a PhD project, no findings are presented in this paper.*

Keywords:

Pay Inequity; Equal Pay; Women; Qualitative; Gender; Feminist.

Word Counts:

Abstract: 194 *Main body: 4,652*

Introduction

This study aims to provide a new perspective on the topic of pay inequity and how it is experienced by women working in the UK. The paper provides a summary of the current landscape, and how we have historically approached the topic of pay inequity, before highlighting the knowledge gaps that exist and how this study has been designed to tackle them *(Burke, 2022)*. The methodology section comprises the main content of this paper, which seeks to justify the qualitative approach *(Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2006)*, and feminist standpoint *(Blaikie, 2007; Oakley, 1981)*, as relevant and appropriate to the study. Due to the novel approach taken to the research, the author has provided examples of how the author will present her findings, before concluding on the paper. The discussion section will consider the impact of the research, and challenge the existing research methods community for their critiques, ahead of completing the analysis of the data for this project. The author has conducted 9 interviews so far, resulting in nearly 20 hours of audio-visual files which she is part way through transcribing. Alongside the transcription, the author has begun the analysis of the data from a qualitative perspective which is helping to shape the storylines and plots that will become part of the findings paper for her PhD thesis which is expected to complete in 2024.

The author provides a diagram or schema view of the research landscape *(Figure 1)* to support the readers understanding of how research currently falls into the three main perspectives (societal, organisational and individual).

Figure 1: Schema-view of pay inequity research.

2.3.1.1 Existing Pay Inequity Research

Historically pay equity research has been associated with the broader social justice theories since the emergence of Homans' distributive justice theory in 1958 *(Homans,1958)*. Answering Homan's call for empirical evidence, Adams et.al hypothesized and tested for cognitive behaviours driven by homogenous responses to pay inequity situations and giving rise to equity theory in the mid-1960s *(Adams, 1965; Walster and Walster, 1975, Leventhal, 1980)*, before reaching a theoretical 'black hole' towards the end of the last decade, that had already been considered as early as the 1978 by Carrell and Dittrich. In this paper they question the assumption of an homogenised response to injustice, and call for a critical realist approach explaining how pay inequity is experienced out in the real world *(Carrell and Dittrich, 1978)*. Cropanzano et.al in 2011 shed a fresh perspective on responses to social injustice that broadens the theoretical remit of the topic. Providing an analysis of research that connects this type of injustice to an emotional affect, and thereby rejecting the phenomenon as driving cognitive responses alone *(Cropanzano et. al, 2011)*. Progress within the social psychology space has since been stunted, giving way to research on the UK's gender pay gap reporting and equal pay law *(Thornburg, 2019)*.

Quantitative research and analysis of the Gender Pay Gap reporting interventions has dominated the UK's journal article landscape since the Office for National Statistics (ONS) began reporting it in 1998 *(ONS, 2023)*, with nearly two thirds of all articles published in the UK focussing on this data. A variety of structural causes for the gap have been established through this research *(Rubery, 2017)*; but the data sources have been problematic; which has hindered our ability to generate substantive theory, as well as develop any testable hypothesis or meaningful interventions to take forwards within academia or across our organisational practices *(Sharkey, et.al., 2022).* Perhaps not surprisingly, research on the efficacy of the UK's equal pay laws were delayed for over 50 years since its enactment in 1970, this being

despite hundreds of thousands of tribunal court cases flowing through the courts. However, upon closer inspection of the literature as can see that the complexity, length and expense of such cases have meant that we are only just beginning to shed some academic light on our legal practices; which are already beginning to expose the very similar barriers to equity that women experience when entering the UK's tribunal court system, as they do when entering the world of work *(Thornburg, 2019)*. There has, however, been some consensus across this research community that these research efforts have been siloed and fragmented. The research thus far tells of a homogenisation of our cognitive responses to pay inequity, which can be empirically tested using hypothetical scenarios *(Adams, 1965; Walster and Walster, 1975, Leventhal, 1980)*. Here we see 3 gaps emerge:

1. Perspective - Women
2. Theoretical – The lived experience
3. Methodological - Qualitative

Methods

As we consider the broad body of literature that surrounds organisational theory, we can see that pay inequity research shares some important characteristics with other methodological approaches within the business research community. Demonstrating a preference for empirical research, using a quantitative methodology, that focuses on the creation and testing of hypotheses in our search for universal truths. For the researcher whose aims might be in establishing the facts, or truth, of given theory; this approach is entirely relevant and appropriate; however, this same approach can be problematic when faced with the challenge of developing new theory, or gain deeper insights, into the lived experiences of a particular phenomenon, such as pay inequity *(Ritchie, et al., 2014)*. We must, then, consider how to adopt a new approach to research that embraces the use of different methodologies; methodologies that may be unfamiliar to the existing research community, but relevant and appropriate to the study in question. Knowledge development here could be considered an

incremental process, that strives to build on what has gone before, and yet still allows for researchers to take entirely new approaches, that seek to explore new avenues to advance theoretical development, yet still continue to drive our knowledge forwards. Different methodological approaches can alienate individual researchers, and even and divide research communities, which is not the intention of this paper. Therefore the main purpose of this paper will be for reviewers to primarily consider (1) whether this approach is appropriate for the specific topic of interest – pay inequity as experienced by female victims in the UK. Although there could be a further discussion prompted by this paper regarding the need for us to create more space for how we might use similar feminist and qualitative approaches to better understand female experiences within the workplace.

2.3.2.1 Research Approach

As qualitative researchers we focus on building a bridge between the world of academic theory, and the experiences of individual agents out there in the world of business. This work involves the careful articulation of theoretically relevant insights that have been gathered directly from the lived experiences of individuals, either through observation or, as in this case, through the use of rich and descriptive narratives that serve to deepen our understanding of the business world and the agents working within it *(Bartos, 1986)*. Business research has additional layers of complexity, when we consider the cultures, practices and behaviours that surround the organisation *(Sathe, 1983; Schein, 1983a)*, and therefore a qualitative approach could help us to understand how these factors interact to create the unique experience of individuals operating within the organisation as shown in *Figure 2*. In contrast to the 'fact finding' approaches found in quantitative methodologies, here we will present a qualitative approach that seeks to illuminate our understanding of the specific interactions that exist between women who experience pay inequity, and the organisations that have treated them unfairly *(Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2006)*. This

approach therefore rejects the positivist notion that there is an 'objective reality' that is experienced in the same way be everyone *(Ritchie, et al., 2014)*. Instead, the author seeks to gain theoretical insights from the rich and deep narratives of those women who experienced pay inequity for themselves. Bringing into focus the narratives of individual women from across a variety of industry sectors, so that they can share their unique perspectives of the organisation, events and responses that were integral to their personal experiences of pay inequity *(Ritchie, et al., 2014)*. A grounded theory approach to the analysis of this unique dataset will be used to plug the perspectives gap in our knowledge identified earlier so that we can seek to connect these insights to the existing literature and beyond *(Glaser and Strauss, 1968)*.

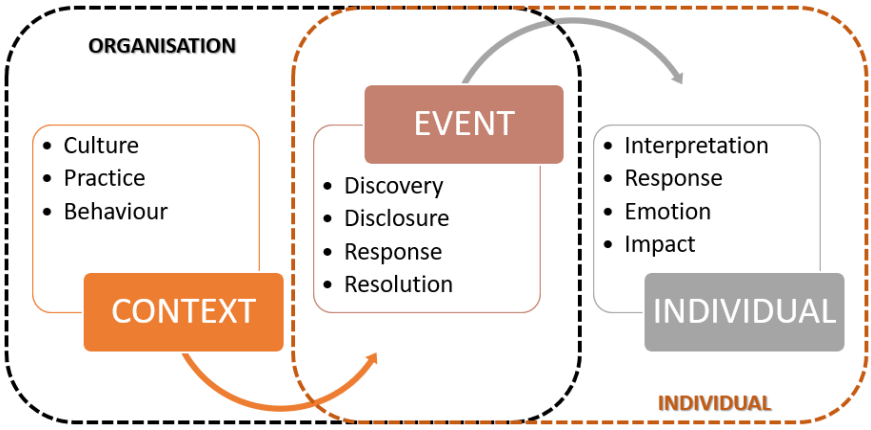


Figure 2: Pay Inequity – Organisation and Individual Interactions

Traditional research methodologies have been built upon a masculine paradigm that seeks to gather data to assimilate facts about a given phenomenon. The objective and emotionally distant male researcher has been the character most frequently displayed in business research methodology books, who will gather information and remain objective and distant to interviewees, so as to prevent accusations of biases *(Roberts, 1997)*. The adoption of such masculine approaches to research, and then using these techniques to interview women about experiences that are related to their gender, is problematic. This study will only

interview female participants, describing their personal experiences of a uniquely female phenomenon (pay inequity as experienced by women), as interviewed by a researcher who has also experienced pay inequity in the workplace. The author has therefore reconsidered her approach to the data collection, so that it is sensitive to the needs of the participants, and relevant to the context of the study. Traditional approaches to semi-structured interviews that create an objective and hierarchical relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is an inauthentic way for this research to be conducted. Interviewees must be in control of their own stories or narratives, and trust the interviewer to tell their story in their own words, otherwise the process could be construed as exploitative and judgemental *(Roberts, 1997).* The author's own experiences pay inequity have shaped the research design and approach, resulting in two complementary roles; (1) the role of supportive fellow victim, and (2) the role of non-judgemental researcher. Ultimately a feminist, empathetic and supportive approach has been successfully adopted throughout the data collection process, which has aided in building the necessary rapport and trust with each female victim who have decided to share their story.

2.3.2.2 Data Collection

A 30 minute to 1 hour Introductory session is held with each potential participant to understand whether their experience meets the criteria of the study, as well as to explain the study, interview process and to build rapport. This approach focusses on retaining supportive relationships with each participant, and helps ensure that an empathetic and supportive environment can be created for the interview itself, being sensitive to the needs of the storyteller, and the environment that will put her at ease. It is essential that there are high levels of trust between the researcher and participant throughout the story-telling process, as this can be helpful to women who need to tell their stories without fear of being misrepresented or judged.

Most of the interviews conducted so far have been online due to the restrictions imposed by the Covid 19 lockdown restrictions imposed across the UK during 2020 onwards, with full video recordings for each interview resulting in the transcription of around 20 hours of data across 9 interviews so far. Although more problematic from a rapport-building perspective this has allowed for the scheduling of interviews at convenient times to the participant, and usually within the comfort of their home environments.

In-depth semi-structured interviews are used to capture the narratives of women to allow for some consistency to the flow and structure of the transcription data across the study. Open ended questions are used as prompts throughout the story telling process, with participants providing some contextual information about the company, industry and teams they worked with prior to starting their story at the beginning (discovery) and then being guided through the phases of disclosure, response and resolution as shown in *Figure 5.* Each interview will typically last around 2 hours, and are conducted informally and in a comfortable environment, reflecting a conversation rather than an interview, but with the participant in control of the narrative, and will be encouraged to tell their story using their own language. This allows for the capture of individual perceptions of the events, responses and emotions pertaining to the whole experience, as well as any relevant reflections or sense-making at the time, and afterwards.

2.3.2.3 Participant Selection

Due to the secrecy that continues to surround employee pay data, finding women who are aware of any pay inequities can be problematic, and will therefore be limited to those women who have discovered the injustice by accident, either by unwitting colleagues, or Human Resource (HR) errors. This means that even if women suspect that they are being undervalued, they are not able to prove this without confirmation from the organisation, and requiring a legal process for the data to be disclosed. This study will therefore need to seek

out women who have discovered pay inequity, reported it to their employers, and then also started legal proceedings so that they have received confirmation of the pay inequity. These women's pay inequity experiences are kept secret at the organisational level (senior management and HR), and any associated 'pay corrections' that happen are accompanied by a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) to prevent employees alerting their fellow employees to the problem, and thereby potentially triggering a barrage of claims, such as we have seen with the hundreds of women with outstanding claims against the BBC *(Benjamin, 2018)*. It is therefore only those women who decide to take their employers to a tribunal court, and hold a public hearing, that become visible to the general public, that become possible participants for the study. In addition, the author has reached out to a number of charitable women's organisations that have access to women with pay inequity issues, which has allowed for a snowballing approach to connecting with women that have had pay inequity experiences, and crucially, are also willing to share their story. The has meant that so far each potential participant meets the criteria of having experienced the whole process (from discovery to litigation) and can therefore answer the questions developed for the study as outlined in *Figure 4*. A broad cross-section of women with differing types of experience-levels, ages, ethnicities and seniority and from across a wide spectrum of industry sectors have so far come forwards to tell their story.

Current job title (or most recent)	Current (or most recent) industry sector	Age range
Managing Director	Professional Services	36 - 45
Chief Executive	Food manufacturing	46 - 55
Sales Specialist Team Leader	Telco	36 - 45
Head of Product	Broadcasting	36 - 45
Microbiology Business Support Manager	NHS	46 - 55
Co-ordinator NHS	Public	56 - 65

Senior Pricing and Proposition Manager	Telco	26 - 35

Figure 3: Participant information: Job title, sector and age

2.3.2.4 Ethical considerations

There are universal ethical rules and values that apply to the approach and engagement of possible participants for a study of lived experiences, which are considered alongside some additional responsibilities such as recognising that pay inequity experiences can lead to a workplace trauma that can have a lasting impact on the mental well-being of women. The author feels a responsibility towards providing a voice that will speak to the experiences of the female victims of pay inequity in the UK, and believes that each story has a right to be heard. I have also found that I have been willing to share my own experiences with participants where appropriate in order to demonstrate empathy, and support participants through the telling of their own stories. This study design and approach has been ethically approved by the Kingston University ethics committee.

2.3.2.5 Interview Questions

In order to address the perspective (women) and theoretical (lived experience) gaps that have emerged from the literature review, this study has been designed to capture the narratives of women who discovered that they were being paid unfairly. A qualitative approach supports the data collection activities through the use of semi-structured interviews; which will provide a rich narrative of the lived experience of female pay inequity victims. This data capture includes narratives which describe how and when the pay inequity was initially discovered, what happened once this was disclosed to the business, and any responses they observed in themselves and others throughout their experience. Finally questions about the impact that the experience has had, and continues to have, on these women's lives and careers will help to provide insight into the female perspective on this phenomenon, and how such experiences can reshape our thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours

towards society, the organisation and other individuals. A summary of the interview questions framework is included as *Figure 4*.

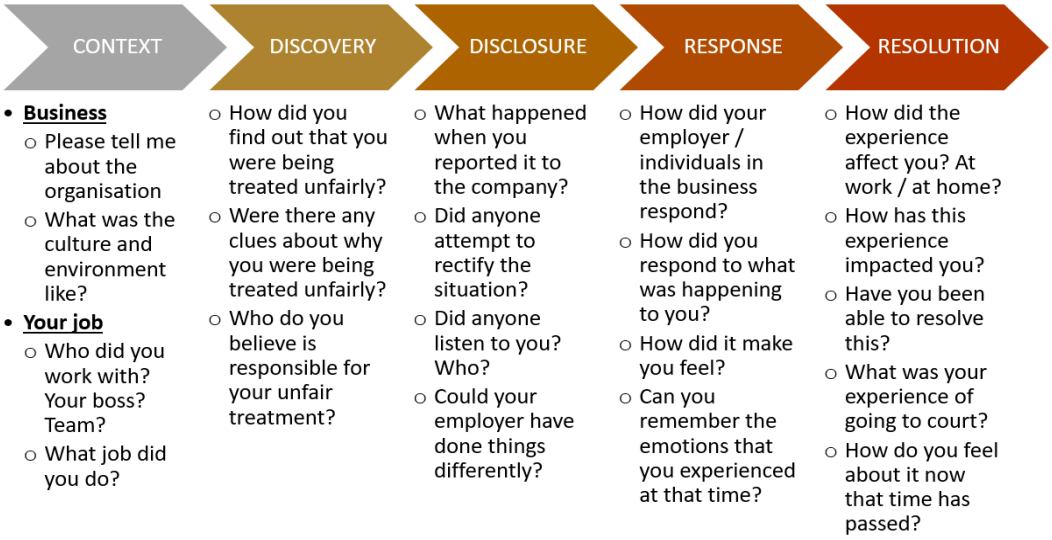


Figure 4: Interview Question Framework: Pay Inequity phases linked to interview questions.

Data Analysis

Nine interviews have been conducted so far which confirmed that the data collection and analysis phases can be conducted in parallel, as we will see from the findings section below. Deep insights and theoretical perspectives are already emerging from the rich narratives that are being collected, and therefore we can see that the grounded theory process has already begun for this project *(Glaser and Strauss, 1968)*. Interviews are transcribed in full before being upload into the thematic analysis software NVivo *(NVivo - Lumivero)*. Each interview is transcribed manually as soon as possible after the interview to support familiarity of the research with the data, as well as ensure the 'steady flow' of data through the NVivo system to support the emergence of themes as per the ground theory development approach *(Glaser and Strauss, 1968)*. The majority of challenges associated with this approach to analysis will be surrounding in the interpretation of the data, not least because the author has her own experiences of the phenomenon and may therefore influence the findings that emerge from the analysis phase of the project. Mechanisms to preserve the specific language and

descriptors used by participants will be implemented throughout the transcription and analysis process to ensure that the results remain true to participants own words and voices *(Glaser and Strauss, 1968)*. The author will refrain from linking the findings back to existing theory or concepts too early in order to avoid fitting any potentially new substantive theory development into 'old theoretical boxes', and thereby enabling a phenomenologist approach *(Richie et al, 2014).*

2.3.3.1 Consideration of the risks associated with the research analysis

Risks to this analysis approach fall mainly into two categories; (1) risks associated with the authenticity and interpretation of the data, and (2) risks associated with the emergent nature of the findings which could lead to unforeseen gaps in the data collection process. In addressing the first risk we can see that as a woman, and as a victim of pay inequity, there exists a strong connection between the researcher, and data associated with this study. Although this could result in those parts of the data that echo the experiences of the researcher becoming more prominent in the findings presented; there is, however, a greatly reduced risk in the researcher missing the underlying meaning of what is being expressed by the participants through the description of their own experiences, and emotions. This risk is also diminished by the grounded theory approach itself, where new insights are expected to 'emerge' from the data, rather be forged from preconceived ideas in the researcher's mind. In addition, appropriate presentation of the findings can also reduce this risk by linking every substantive theory statement to actual accounts provided across the data *(Richie et al, 2014).* With regards to the risk of unforeseen gaps, the authors are satisfied that the interview approach and questions adequately cover the range of experiences that participants face in relation to this phenomenon. The author's own experiences and the use of a set of pilot interviews has also eradicated the need for any major rework to the research questions or approach used thus far.

Findings

2.3.4.1 Structure of the findings

The presentation of the findings from this study will follow qualitative approaches that will primarily consider the academic audience; however, we must also consider that these findings could contain important insights that may influence our practices around pay inequity situations within the organisation. It will therefore be necessary to ensure that the richness and complexities of the findings are readily accessible and understandable to both sets of audiences. Adopting a qualitative approach to the research leads us as authors to consider imaginative ways to present the findings in a way that can be understood by the readers, such as the theorised storyline approach *(Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2006).* As the grounded theory process has already begun, so too has the theorised storyline development, leading the author to begin to develop a framework for presenting the findings in the form of a story as shown in *Figure 5.*

Figure 5: Theorised storyline adapted from Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2006

2.3.4.2 Presentation of the results

Rich insights emerge from the data which will illuminate our understanding of the specific events and perceptions that surround the pay inequity experience. Substantive theory

will emerge from the complications and perceptions that we are guided to by our narrators, combined with the authors own personal experiences to provide readers with insights into the phenomenon *(Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2006)*. A careful display of insights alongside the narratives will aim to take readers through the grounded theory process, whilst also connecting the narratives to any substantive theory development, knowledge claims, or existing concepts or theories where they may already exist. Some examples have been taken from the actual transcripts part participants in this study in order to illustrate how this data will be presented within the finished article *(Figure 6,7 and 8)*:

Recognition of power structures are implicitly understood by employees, which are not written down, but are perceived through the actions and behaviours of others:

"So there seemed to be as a kind of a unwritten set of unwritten rules which you were expected to abide by as graduates, and the managers had ultimately power over you and could determine your career there."

Figure 6: Example of presentation style for qualitative *(taken from participant transcription data)*.

In additional, the author will consider how metaphors have been used by participants within their narratives, or how these could be used more broadly across the data, to support and aide the understanding of readers *(Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2006)*. An example of the participants use of metaphor is provided below:

Here we can consider organisational inaction around employee perceptions of 'bad behaviour' (in this case sexist and racist comments). The 'bad apple' metaphor has been used to explain that if an individual's discriminatory behaviour is not deal with, it can spread to the rest of the team; and therefore impacting on the behaviours of the whole team. This metaphor describes how one bad apple, can cause the whole apple cart to rot prematurely if not removed:

"To me that if they notice a bad behaviour and they don't deal with it. That should be the repercussion. You'll have bad apples in every place, but like they should deal with that. But they don't, you know, they just don't for the most part in my opinion."

Figure 7: Example of use of metaphor as taken from participant transcription data.

An example of how we might link the data to existing concepts that relate to the topic area has been used below to illustrate how such findings will be presented within the final research paper.

Many employees are not aware of the prevalence of pay inequity experiences due to the success of non-disclosure agreements to silence employees from talking about it. This silence supports the 'gas-light' effect that can characterize the organisational response to the problem. Here we can see the impact that meeting others with a similar experience can have on validating responses experienced by victims:

"When you talk to other people and you realise, oh, I'm not crazy and you start sharing experiences, you realise like there's a pattern, you know"

Figure 8: Linking data to existing concepts across the topic area (*taken from participant transcription data)*.

The findings will initially be constructed as per the phases that have emerged from the initial research design as outlined above (context, discovery, disclosure, response, and resolution). This will ensure that readers can follow the normal continuum present in the story-telling process, i.e. that of the past, the present and the future. The 'resolution' element of each narrative can help us to understand what might have changed for the individual as a result of their pay inequity experiences, these can help us to understand the 'endings' to story. As the story flows from the discovery of the pay inequity, through the efforts that are made to put the pay inequity right, and into how this experience has fundamentally changed the lives and careers of those women impacted *(Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2006)*, we can discover both the short-term and long-term affect that this type of social injustice is having on women, as well as describe or potentially explain any patterns that may present themselves from the data. The author hopes to provide a framework that references the perceptions and experiences that accompany pay inequity experiences, identifying areas for substantive theory development, that can provide us with a focus for our future research efforts.

Discussion

Every researcher and author is driven by the desire for their research to have an impact on the real world, which can also provide and opportunity for broader communities of researchers, practitioners and even the general public to become interested in the topics that we study. Generating a deeper understanding, or simply providing an awareness of a

phenomenon, can help to bring debates into focus that may otherwise remain silent or outdated. For centuries decisions on where our curiosity can wander, and how we can come to 'know' this world and each other, have been driven by the biases of the patriarchal foundations upon which our society has been built. This has limited the exploration of specific types of phenomena, as well as diminished or silenced the voice of female perspective. This paper questions the ontological assumption that our experiences of the world are the same, and presents an alternative methodological approach which embraces the idea that our experience of the world is uniquely created from the events, behaviours and perceptions that qualitative research has been designed to capture. This study therefore does not only address the gaps in the literature, but also seeks to redress the imbalance of perspectives that has emerged from society's historical biases.

This study is as ambitious in its methodological approach, as it is in its expected impact. There is a great deal of responsibility that comes with the collection and representation of personal stories, particularly those that may impact how we come to understand the phenomenon, and influence the future research and practices affecting future generations of women workers. This research approach has has been specifically designed to be respectful to the time and energy that the retelling of personal stories require; and mindful that, for some, this process has involved the recall of painful memories and emotions. Every participant so far has sincerely expressed their desires for this research to produce some meaningful insights that can help the academic and practitioner world move forwards on this topic. Whether through new theory development, or through new policies or interventions, that can help to prevent other women from experiencing the type of harm they have experienced throughout their ordeals both within the workplace and through the UK courts. Change does not happen by individuals acting on their own, but as communities and experts coming together to prioritise all forms of discrimination, particularly those that cause lasting

harm, and perhaps we are now capable of finding ways to protect our children from the inequity that women have suffered for generations.

References

Adams, J.S. (1965) 'Inequity in social exchange', in Advances in experimental social psychology. Elsevier, pp. 267-299.

Bartos, R. (1986) 'Qualitative research: what it is and where it came from', Journal of Advertising Research, 26(3), pp.RC-3.

Benjamin Kentish (2018) BBC gender pay gap: 170 female employees demand apology over salary differences and 'culture of discrimination'. Available at: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/bbc-gender-pay-gap-employees-apology-bbc-women-nuj-tony-hall-select-committee-a8184306.html (Accessed: 20th July 2020).

Blaikie, N. (2007) Approaches to social enquiry: Advancing knowledge. Polity.

Burke, R. 2023, Pay Inequity: Past, Present and Future (unpublished).

Glaser, B. and Strauss, A.L. (2017) The discovery of grounded theory : strategies for qualitative research. London, England] ; New York, New York: Routledge.

Golden-Biddle, K. and Locke, K. (2006) Composing qualitative research. 2nd edn. London: SAGE.

Homans, G.C. (1958) 'Social Behavior as Exchange', American Journal of Sociology, 63(6), pp.597-606. Available at: https://dx.doi.org/10.1086/222355.

Metcalf, H. (2009) Pay gaps across the equality strands: a review. Equality and Human Rights Commission Manchester.

Moore, S. and Tailby, S. (2015) 'The changing face of employment relations: equality and diversity', Employee Relations, 37(6), pp.705-719. Available at: https://dx.doi.org/10.1108/ER-06-2015-0115.

Oakley, A. (1981) 'Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms', Doing Feminist Research, 30(6), pp.1.

Olson, J. (2013) 'Human Capital Models and the Gender Pay Gap', Sex Roles, 68(3-4), pp.186-197. Available at: https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11199-012-0208-5.

Ritchie, J.et al. (2014) Qualitative research practice : a guide for social science students and researchers. Second edition / [edited by] Jane Ritchie, Jane Lewis, Carol McNaughton Nicholls, Rachel Ormston.. edn.Los Angeles : SAGE.

Roberts, H. (2013) Doing feminist research. Routledge.

Roberts, H. (1997) Doing feminist research. London: Routledge.

Rubery, J. (2017) 'Why is Women's Work Low-Paid? Establishing a framework for understanding the causes of low pay among professions traditionally dominated by women', .

Sathe, V. (1983) 'Implications of corporate culture: A manager's guide to action', Organizational Dynamics; Organ Dyn, 12(2), pp.5-23. Available at: https://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616(83)90030-X.

Sharkey, A., Pontikes, E. and Hsu, G. (2022) 'The Impact of Mandated Pay Gap Transparency on Firms' Reputations as Employers', Administrative Science Quarterly, 67(4), pp.1136-1179. Available at: https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/00018392221124614.

The Office for National Statistics, (ONS) (2023) The Gender Pay Gap Report. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/gender-pay-gap-reporting-overview (Accessed: 16th March 2023).

Thornburg, E. (2019) '(Un)Conscious Judging', Washington and Lee Law Review, 76(4), pp.1567-1665.

Appendix R – Focus Group 'Hot Topics'

The Individual's Response – Focus Group Discussion

Author's comments:

> *Number two was the impact it had in our careers and I think that in almost every case we have all suffered in some way, either through a period of unemployment or a downgrading of job. That we've all suffered in some way from our pay, our pay inequity situation. I think only one of us is still working in the same organization. All of us end up leaving. And, and also what, what we find is it isn't, it doesn't just have an impact on our career, but because of the public nature of a public hearing, if we go to court, then we are also named. And, and become branded as troublemakers in the general public perception, and so that has actually hindered some of us being able to, you know, progress our careers at the level we were at before.*

Mary Seacole explains that she feels that although she's capable of more, she feels that she needs to recover from her experiences:

> *I think I've got. I've got my. I've gone into a more, more, junior role. And, I don't know, it's really obvious that I'm kind of capable more. But I'm in a public sector organization, so it's kind of, you know, the, the, culture is quite different. But yeah, it's that kind of, I keep kind of, like, I keep kind of going around. I'm still in this little loop at the moment where I'm like, you are capable of more, you could be giving more, you could be doing more, but I'm kind of still in that sort of*

recovery phase. I think I just kind of need to find myself, and work out what it is, and it's kind of a safe place to do that. And then, yeah, work out what I'm doing with my life, I think. But yeah, it's. I do regularly get asked why are you in this role?

Ruth Bader-Ginsberg added her thoughts:

Well, I mean like, I think it's definitely true that all of us have taken a step back. I mean, I don't think anyone taken a, you know, a massive job and a promotion after this. And like just, you know, sail into the sunset and absolutely flown. Right? Because it's, it's actually, yeah, it's it's it's very difficult to go through what we go through. For especially when it drags on for ages, and fly. It's very difficult. Your energy can only go in so many directions. And umm, you know, and then when you, when, as you go through it, you know, depending on how much you're working on your case, or even afterwards, is you're recovering again. So like to take on a really huge role is not that appealing. Partially because we have the corporate trauma. So that's one, you know, obstacle to overcome. But also just, you know, you are just trying to figure yourself out. You're, you're a little bit lost. Like I too, you know, starting, when I, when I started my company, and and even when I'm doing now like, you know, I still my clients you know ask me to jump, and I still jump. But umm people do still ask me like what are you doing? Because I'm not, definitely not anywhere close to my potential, or what I could be doing. But I just don't have the energy to do that right now. I needed to just recover. And then when I'm ready,

you know, I can go back to that again. I feel it within me. I just need a bit of time out. A bit of space to be lost. And that's OK.

The Law – Focus Group Discussion

Author's comments:

Actually, I've just been writing that today, about the legal process and the fact that hearsay, and hearsay seems to stand up in court and then. And the fact that people who have no experience or direct link to the case, or have ability to pass evidence which will bear judgment on, OK on that case. Which is over the person who is the victim, who has experienced it. And it's very, and I think you know, it comes back to what we were talking about before about the, the, ridiculous evidencing elements of the legal process, and the grievance process, becomes farcical when you consider what actually is happening. You know what we're doing is we're explaining how we've been treated, and only us know how we've been treated. OK. But, but, the legal process in the agree, it's process asks everybody else. OK. How we've been treated, and takes that as evidence of how we've been treated over our own voice. And I find that, you know, very, very at odds with, and well and, and it's because it's almost like we're, we're, we, we can't be trusted. Our voices aren't, you know, we we're probably lying. And we, you know, we can't be trusted to tell the truth. And so that's why we need this man's opinion and this senior man's opinion and this senior man's opinion on whether she's, you know, that's really what happened. But of course, there's also ulterior motives for those people.

They're defending themselves. They don't wanna, they're not gonna come to court and go yeah, I'm, I'm a racist. I'm sexist. Yeah, I've, you know, been underpaying my, you know, staff for years, and breaking the law, yeah, of course I have. That isn't gonna happen. Yet the court is set up in a way that believes that is what will happen, and when when they ask all these people did you? You know? OK, so the law in in this, this is. Basically not not all of us went through the court process, by the way, but most of us did. And we talked about those experiences up until the point that I'm obviously holding interviews with you. I'm and what that, how that affects us. And most of us have very, quite horrific stories, of the legal process to be fair. Of how sort of stacked against and, you know, the odds we are, going into those processes. And and you know, how I think, how shocked we are at how ineffective and farcical some of them are. So there's certainly quite a lot of affects that that experience has on us as individuals. So we talk about, you know, the stress, the anxiety, the money, the financial situation of, of, you know, spending a lot of money on court cases. The time out of work or family commitments. So we talk about a big, kind of element of the effect that it has on us, and our relationships and you know, et cetera. And as well as then the court process itself and how farcical it is. So they're the two kind of subcodes that I've got in play for that particular part. But it also comes out in the gender washing paper. The law bit, because I think it's one of those other facades that make us feel like we're being looked after in society. And, but once you lift the lid on, you find that isn't as, isn't what it, isn't what it says it is

when you go through the process, yeah. Has anyone got any more kind of thoughts on the legal process? Perhaps?

Ruth Bader-Ginsberg's comments:

I think what I was surprised about was the the how high the threshold was to prove some of the allegations. Some things that I thought were, you know, obvious or straightforward could be easily twisted into something else. Well, I know you think this or these four things will be enough, but actually you know you needed X&Y in writing….So you know the threshold, and then having to say to them, do you have the monetary strength? The financial help? Like the, sorry, the the mental fortitude to go through this, right, for many years? Because it can drag on for many, many years. But I I think on the other hand, there was a lot of self reflection on my part because as the as the plaintiff, you know, you have to be perfect, and that UM is hard. Right. Because the minute that there is a flaw in your leadership, or there's a flaw in your in your character, or whatever it might be, it could be like one line in your performance appraisal, and that's what they would pick on. You know what I mean and to try and, you know, show that you are troublemaker or your there was a problem with her. See this one line, out of the 5 to 7 pages, right? Like this is it.

Katie's comments:

It's a huge decision. No, it's not something you undertake lightly, and it's it's astounding, I think that anybody would dumb it down to say it.

It's just somebody chancing their luck, when we all know, you know, the hours of scrolling, and Googling, and reading and, you know, benchmarking and, you know, checking your facts before you kind of go into this battle. And it's. Yeah, it's astounding that anybody would dumb it down to be such a frivolous thing. And that and then going, going legal, and then, you know the, you know, that's, you know, at your own personal risk as well, just. Yeah. They, they. They they. Yeah, it's, uh, it. It was for me. It was a good cop, bad cop routine, and had I, had I, believed them, and I really wanted to believe the one that was playing good cop, they would have hung me out to dry the minute I withdrew my. They, they they, they wanted me to not appeal, because then I would have been out of time and all of that. And had I, and I was, I nearly did, because I couldn't put myself through it. But that with hindsight, they would have, you know, they would have being very happy, because I would have had nowhere to go, and they could have just made me redundant. Which is what they would have done. I think and and and that in itself needs to be. You know that behavior and ACAS talk about it, but do the courts really look at that and go, you're clearly dodging this. You're clearly not giving the answers. And if I were a judge, I'd sit there going you're wasting my time. Where you could have resolved this by just answering fairly, but they entertain it. This is it. The risk it it's. I knew I had to show them I meant business. That was, I was tactical in the I knew I had to call their bluff. In a in a way that's well, no, not call their bluff, but I had to show them that I meant business. Because they were, I think they, they were trying to

run me out of time. And they were trying to scare, you know, they didn't. I don't think they thought I was serious. So I had to follow through, because I've been very clear that I was, you know, prepared to. And I think they thought I was just bluffing them. And but I suspect for, and from for me in my job I work with solicitors, so I understand how to instruct a solicitor, and I understand that process, because I deal with it, not in an employment tribunal way, but on on other matters. So. But I suspect for a lot of women, that's incredibly daunting. Cause actually it was, as much as I'd do it for a day job, I still I don't, it was still daunting. It was still. I was still unsure of the next steps, and what all this legal jargon means.

Future recommendations – Focus Group Discussion

Mary Seacole's comments:

Is this something as well around, I guess thinking back to my 20 something self is is is you know the there is that shock and that it still happens. I mean, that was 28 years ago, but you know, I was really shocked at the time. And I think, you know, some of the younger colleagues that, that you have you mentioned Katie, who kind of, so can't really conceptualize that this could this sort of thing could happen. Is, is it kind of how we, before they get there in a position that they need help and they need guidance; is actually kind of make make it, get them before then. So it's it's actually then realizing that they they need help or support. It is that that yes, these things are still

happening, and it's very prevalent, and umm, I don't know. Yeah. Some, make some tick tocks.

Katie's comments:

How do you get to them? Is it almost like getting to sort of school leavers, and before they get into the world of work. And how do you prep them? And it's not just girls, it's boys as well, isn't it? You know what, what behaviours? And you see, I think, I think it kind of goes beyond just, it's and going back to the society point isn't it's all encompassing because actually toxic masculine cultures are, you know, what needs tackling. And you know and and coming from that will hopefully come, you know, true gender equality. You know, all sorts of things that you kind of yeah forget. Get a theater production or something, or make a make a uh, almost like a comedy out of it. Because it is so comedic in a way. If you if you think about the behaviours and what happens. But you know, you can imagine the the meetings of right, how are we gonna get out of this one? And almost humouring. Yeah. This is it's almost it's like observational, isn't it? It's that observational humour of, I mean one one thing that and I. It was it was a rumour at the time. And I remember. So when I had, when they pulled me into a room to have my off the record chat. It was the, it was the what, the the COO and the HR director, and the rumour was that they were both having an affair. And they'd been conducting this, they'd been conducting all the investigations and everything. And so I I kind of sat there sort of, with bit with this knowledge, so thinking,

well, if I do have to go through with all of this, I've completely undermined your case, because you're, you're both, you know, conflicted, because you're in this relationship. But, and I just remember thinking it, you stupid, and just like everybody's talking about you both, and here you are having, running this investigation, that's a complete sham, and you're probably talking about it in bed together.

Who do we blame? – Focus Group Discussion

Author's comments:

Who do we blame? So I mean this is quite a complex point which I'm not sure I've adequately addressed in any of the papers I've written so far. Umm. And I think initially we blame individuals. Then we blame the organization, and then we blame society, and we all seem to go through this. It's them. It's them. They made the pay decision and then we realized, oh hang on, this is like an institutional structural or company level issue. They're all trying to cover it up and they're all, you know, collectively and it together. And then we go to society, you know the law. And then we realize, hang on, it's actually a societal level issue. And so, you know. But still, we don't, or know, we still seem, we still seem to hang our, hang our blame on individuals. We still feel that there are individuals. And we've just had that conversation here now, I suppose in this meeting where we do kind of, there were people that actively did, or did not, do things, that contributed to our horrible experiences. And we blame them. We do

blame them, for not doing, or doing, things to harm us. And that, I think, is quite a natural, normal thing. Yeah, I still have quite strong emotions. You know, still feel a lot of anger when I think about my comparators and boss particularly, and how they conducted themselves in and outside of the court process. That was just plain, you know, nasty behaviours, which you're right, can only be kind of viewed as people being mean and nasty. So, and if that's how they choose to behave, then I still feel I'm in a position to be able to judge them on that alone. But yeah, I think you know, organizational wide, you know, those kind of behaviors being endorsed, and you know even promoted, I find quite sickening as well. Yeah, I have violent thoughts. Yeah. Ohh. Are we all getting thoughts of violence?

Katie's comments:

They they blamed me when I raised it. They said. You've got you. You've got yourself to blame. You negotiated your pay. And and I was like, yes, but thinking I did it in a fair environment. More fool you. I think it's systemic in society. I think I think we've all got, yeah, we we should speak up about these things. I know it's difficult. But it's this silencing, and this fear of speaking up. It just is perpetuating it. So It's hard to put it on one person. But it's it's that societal influence, isn't it, I think.

Ruth Bader-Ginsberg's comments:

I mean, I blame my boss and all of his cronies, umm and his boss. And everyone was just greedy, and trying to save their own ass. So I don't know. I I lead differently. I am different. I just wouldn't. I just wouldn't behave like that. And I I think it was really hard to see some of the communications, because then you really like, then you realize how much you were betrayed, and or lied to. And it's just, it's just like you've seen it. You can't unsee it. I will. I will never not feel negative thoughts towards those people. I can't. I can't, you know. So it is individual for me, because I think they could have made a difference. I have had, you know, bosses who have, you know, done things differently. So they chose to be like that. I I do hold them responsible. The organization is, was, them because they were, they were all in the C-Suite etcetera. So yeah, they organization was to blame as well for not having better policies in place. Umm. And then that goes also goes back to society. But I'm not, I'm not so angry at society really. Umm, there are good people out there doing great things. And we each of us have the power to do that too, right? Every day we wake up, and tomorrow's a new day, and we can, we can do something better, and we can contribute to something positive. So. I don't know, I I I. I'm not. I am I I'm. I'm hopeful that you know I can leave a positive legacy. What form and how I do it? I mean, I've helped people think, rethink about how they have their HR for startups. I think that's a positive contribution. So it's not always about being loud. Sometimes it's just about make making sure there's structure and change in place, so pushing things in the background. Umm as well so. (...) As yeah. I kind

of catches me in funny moments, like all of a sudden like 4 days ago I saw a corporate backpack from my old company and I just wanted to say and I found it triggering. I wanted to, oh wait, set it on fire. I was like. Do you think they'll listen anyway? I'll probably get arrested.

Mary Seacole's comments:

Yeah, I have something similar. I saw on LinkedIn, the company I used to work for had released a, had released a report about gender pay, pay and equity in the sector of the clients that we work with, and I was like, oh right. Yeah. Yeah. Yes, I know exactly. It just be like, I'd somehow voice note my response by accident!

Appendix S – Focus Group Further Findings

This research project gathered over 30 hours of interview data from 12 women's separate experiences of pay inequity at their place of work. The careful transcription and coding of this data provided the author with 2,661 coded segments of data that were then built into a coding system that provided 8 high-level codes that are supported by 30 sub-codes which related to specific aspects of women's experiences. In order to validate these findings the author conducted a focus group session with those participants that were both able and willing to join an online session that was scheduled for the evening of Thursday 1st February 2024. Previous interest in attending an additional focus group session was considered and asked within the interview process, with all participants expressing an interest in remaining in contact with the author, and being invited to a follow-up focus group when the findings had been developed. This session had 6 attendees (not including the author), with

one of the attendees wishing to remain anonymous, and therefore although she listened throughout the session she did not contribute to the conversation, but sent me an email following the event to explain that she was in support of what had been relayed by the focus group participants. This focus group session provided the author with an opportunity to summarise and present the findings of her research to those closest to the experiences that it is attempting to describe. If the findings are understood and accepted by this group of women, the author considers this an important factor in validating the research findings, and making sure that no meaning has been lost through the data collection and analysis phases of the project. A copy of the slides that were presented in focus group session have been included as ***Appendix M.*** These slides walk the participants through the codes and sub-codes that were captured throughout the data analysis phase, and presented within the findings sections of this paper. The codes were presented and then summarised by the author before allowing the participants to then discuss whether these codes represented their personal experiences. The 3 hour focus group session was recorded within MS Teams, fully transcribed and anonymised, before being uploaded into the MAXQDA system for analysis. The focus group session was coded in three ways to support the analysis of the data, these are; (i) coded against the original 8 codes (these are Culture, Structure, The Discovery, The Individual's Response, The Organisational Response, The Law, Personal Reflections, Who do we blame?) and the 30 sub-codes that emerged from the study; (ii) coded against the three thematic areas that have emerged from the narrative, or story-telling analysis, and presented within the findings papers (these are 'Gender Washing', 'Sexism' and 'Psychological and Emotional Affect'; and (iii) coded against various sections of the thesis as presented by the author (these are; Introduction, Methodology, Conclusion and Lessons Learnt). In addition there were some discussions about the next steps for this research which have been captured as two additional codes, these are; (i) Revolution and going public, and (ii) Handbook. The

results of the coding activity show a total of 500 coded segments from the 3 hour focus group session. Providing another rich source of data which helped to both validate the original findings, as well as provide a new insights around the themes and theories relevant to the topic, and that this research is seeking contribution towards.

Five of the six women involved on the call openly shared their thoughts and experiences with the other participants, and in many instances re-counting their stories previously captured through the initial interview with the broader audience. We can see from the summary provided as Table 13 that the analysis of this data has been formatted into the following areas that provoked the most discussion (and have received the highest number of codes) amongst the participants have been summarised into the sections below. A summary of participant responses to the codes and sub-codes that have received the most discussion have been presented alongside the code-level analysis presented in the thematic analysis chapter, with this section focussing on discussions that tackle the themes and theories that have emerged from this research.

Table 14: Heatmap displaying the frequency between participants contributing thoughts to specific sub-codes.

Code Matrix Browser

Code System	Burke, Rebecca L	Ruth Bader-Ginsberg	Katie	Titanium	Mary Seacole	Ursula	SUM
Thesis Section Analysis							0
Introduction	1						1
Methodology	13		9		5		27
Conclusion	18	8	7		2	2	37
Lessons Learnt	34	19	22		9		84
Themes and Theories							0
Sexism	23		15	4	8		50
Psychological Harm	10		2	2			14
Gender Washing	25	4	3		8	8	48
HR Policy	2		1				3
Organisational Rhetoric	1		1				2
Gas lighting	13		5	1	3		22
NDA	2		2				4
Revolution and going public	18	3	15	2		5	43
Handbook	26	2	23				51

Note: Heatmap displaying the frequency between participants contributing thoughts to specific sub-codes, which was automatically generated by the MAXQDA system. The higher the number, the redder the cell, and the greater the frequency of sub-codes being found together in the data.

Focus Group Transcripts

Introduction and Methodology

Author's comments:

> *When these papers come out, you'll see with each of these sections basically what I've done is I've taken your voices. And tried to, tried to find which of your voices best articulates our shared experience of that thing, and the journey. So all of you were talking at different points, in this kind of singular narrative, that combines our whole experience together. But it tells, and clearly, I've chosen those voices not just because of the clarity of what you're saying, and, but also,n many ways, because of the shocking nature of what you're saying about your experiences. So there's this kind of sort of pathway that we end up going through, in each of these papers, which you know, you can, you can see from just the emotive language of the sections on this particular paper, which, you know, point to the affect, the emotional affect on us as women. This points to the sexism prevalent across all of the experiences, and and of course, you know, pay equity is a sexist experience. It's a gendered practice. Paying women less than men is discrimination OK? And so that really is the point of this paper. But the emotional affect then goes deep into what, what happens to us*

emotionally, as we go through that journey. And you know how our voices are silenced. And you know what that does to us, you know, emotionally and and mentally. And then this final paper talks about this kind of paradox that we're left with between what the world is saying about these corporations, but what we know to be true. And how we are the ones that end up having to navigate, and deal with those, you know, dichotomies, and what that it means for us. And then each of the, kind of, papers end up with conclusion sections where I try to end on the quite positive recommendations that you've made around each of these different subject areas. So I try to kind of then bring our collective kind of ideas about what to do together, so that we don't leave on a, and it's all shit, and there's there's nothing that can be done about it, kind of note. I try and leave on a, you know. You know, we've done this deep reflective thinking, and we're a group of intelligent, you know, thoughtful women, that have gone through this experience, you know, faced into these realities. And so we are, in many ways better place, best place, to think about the solutions for this. And that's where those kind of concluding sections come from. So I've tried to kind of make it that you know that that that those kind of stories, those narratives, so they're the kind of three, one is about the culture and sexism, the other is about the emotional impact. And then finally about this, you know, weird paradox of what companies say they are and what they actually are doing.

Mary Seacole's comments:

I hadn't really realized that I was still there thinking about how I could help other people, and I was like, actually, you know, I've I've experienced this, but I just didn't have a a framework for it. So yeah, I think it's, it's, it's helpful seeing all the findings reflected back. Because I think yeah, it's just it it, again this helps with that, the healing process, and the reflections, and the I'm the moving on and and things. And I I'm I'm just so impressed with you, Rebecca, in terms of, I know I get to kind of step away from it, and I need to do that. And just kind of almost forget it it's ever happened sometimes. But you, you're living and breathing it. This constantly for years. And you know, you're, you're choosing to immerse yourself in it, which is absolutely, absolutely brilliant. And I hope you are able to find some healing and things through it as well. And and it's it's been helpful for you as well because it's been incredibly helpful for me, I know.

Katie's comments:

But do you? Do you have to come out of it? Because this this not your. Is this not your purpose to cause? If you I, you've helped. I found it incredibly helpful and I'm sure all the other women who've participated have as well and, you know that is so much more to be done and you've got this platform now. I think I think it's brilliant. I think it's if, if only I had something like this. Just, you know, just reading those slides very briefly. It it just makes sense of it and that's so important. I just, just, knowing what's at play is so powerful. So I

think, yeah, it's great. It's it's, it's. It's the good of of a bad situation, isn't it?

Post-Feminism and Everyday Sexism

Author's Introduction:

I think that's probably one thing about a lot of the stories that you told me, you know, all of you point to extreme sexism, and quite toxic male dominated environments, but a lot of you speak of that as if it's the norm. And I think that, for people who don't work in those cultures or, maybe not us, but other women and other men who haven't experienced that, it's quite shocking. Particularly around the power hierarchy elements. There's quite a lot of exposing what sexism looks like these days, through your stories of what we consider normal 'everyday' behaviour. You know people, aggressive masculine behaviours, almost ritual humiliation in public, the sort of power, you could call gendered power structures and mechanisms that were prevalent in a lot of your stories. So yeah, they are, in my view, they end up being sexist cultures. But we haven't been given the language of that, and certainly a lot of us, and our stories, call out these highly gendered practices as sexism essentially, but we don't actually call it that. We describe, we tell a story about what happened, and I think it's a bit to do with the fact that in a post feminist world, where we're told organizations are gender neutral and everybody's equal that perhaps they've taken that language of sexism away from us. So, we don't know how to label it. And in fact, I think, some of us even talk about the fact that being able to give some of these things a label has been quite an important part of the reflexive sense making process. Because we've had to reclaim these words and this way of thinking, that we'd abandoned because we believed it didn't exist. And so we're not looking out for it, are we? When we, when we're working every day, it becomes the norm. Yeah, I think it certainly comes out in that masculine environment, and certainly it comes out

in the gender washing section that we'll talk about later, where there's this sort of sense of needing to deny, because of maybe legal ramifications? But certainly because people feel it reflects badly on them, the automatic response is to deny.

Titanium's comments:

There's another thing for me that I don't know if it, if it fits into that, is about a complete inability to self-reflect, and accept where my personal experience is. I think everybody knows that there is sexism, and there is inequality at work. And it's over there, but that's not us, that's not what we do. And that's the the complete inability for the people in my organization to even stop for a second, when I said hang on a minute, I don't think this is right. No, no, no, no, no, no, you don't understand. You know that, that's not how it is over here. That happens elsewhere, but it doesn't happen here. And nobody ever stopped for a second and said ohh, the fact that she's paid less than those men does, is. That nobody stopped for a second to self-reflect……No, no, no, that doesn't happen here. This is no moment to stop and go, could that be me being sexist? There's no moment of pause.

Katie's comments:

That feels right to me. It it it certainly just, you know, the behaviours and and working in a very different organization now to where I was I see it even more, because I'm now in the place that has a really good culture….But when I was in it…..you kind of question yourself, and think well, is this normal? That doubling down, aren't they? It's the Trump effect, isn't it? If I just keep saying it didn't happen, it didn't happen. And I think that's……because they have to hold that stance because if they give, you know, that's weak, and, you know, they they might have to admit and then, oh, God, then we're in hot water. So we'll just keep saying no.... I do think that's a male trait. Men are very, are less likely to go, go, did I get? Maybe I could have done that differently? You hear a lot more women say that than men…..But I found the the most interesting behaviour I found was of the the more junior women in the team. So, sort of

early 20s, who were just starting out in their career. And you could see how they would sort of behave like the boys, and have that banter, and sort of be one of the gang. And I I remember their attitude towards me, how it turned, and I I was astounded. And I almost wanted to sort of scream at them and go, this will happen to you if you if you let this carry on. But then I couldn't because they probably just think I was some crazy woman.

I hadn't. I was naive to all of that. And yeah, and I guess there's that conditioning. If you start your career out and it in that environment you're gonna learn how to navigate it. Whereas me, I was clueless. I just turned up. Thought I'd do a good job. Be myself. Be honest. And I'll get by. And more fool me. The drinking, the Golf Club…. I mean it's it's still astounding, isn't it? Just to kind of think how obvious some of these things are when you talk them through? And, yet they're, they're kind of, they're almost……. under the surface. And nobody can quite put their finger on, but when you're going over it now, it's, it's like but that's so, so obvious.

Mary Seacole's comments:

I think I think there's that that, that kind of instinctive denial isn't there? That they, that happens initially. But I know my situation, I think there was certainly then conversations. They obviously had to say OK, Mary may or may not be wrong, but you need to deny this. And it it kind of felt like that then they were aware, aware of of how they needed to protect their initial response, and and just keep keep that line.

Psychological and Emotional Affects of Pay Inequity

Author's comments:

So all of us talk about how stressful the process is, how alone and isolated we are. How we go through anxiety-inducing legal processes or grievance processes, our anger or frustration at the situation. All of those emotions play out in our personal lives, of course. And we talk

about how it affects our relationships, and how we feel about ourselves, the people around us, all those things. And I think that's quite an impactful finding as well.

So it's handing these women over as sacrificial lambs, because it's like a willing sacrifice, isn't it? It's almost part of the toxicity, the lack of humanity around people, you know? So, we talk quite a lot about what happens around power and hierarchy that plays out in quite visible threats. Anybody spectating on a woman being vilified like that in an organization can see the ritual humiliation, the ostracization, the effects of what happens if you speak out against the organization. So it becomes a deterrent. And through the displays of power and hierarchy that follow somebody speaking out, it sends a direct message to everybody else in the organization to keep quiet, otherwise they will suffer the same consequences. And in opposition to the ways in which women are treated publicly, we see the perpetrators of a lot of women's discrimination end up being promoted or befriended and accepted into the inner circles at the top of the organization. And that's a very visible thing to everybody in the organization. It sends these messages to the people, that if you keep your mouth shut and support us then we will promote you and reward you. But if you speak out, then we will exclude you, vilify you, and we will drive you out of this organization. And so, there are quite a lot of our stories that, tell of these legends or legacies of what happens to these people that speak out. And I think this is quite a powerful explanation as to why people don't put themselves forward. There's a lack of courage and bravery on that point. But certainly, in our stories particularly, you can draw a direct line between the legends and the stories we tell about the culture, and why people aren't speaking out. And generally it's self-protection.

Titanium's comments:

That's another thing. I I wanted to mention another thing, and I don't know how this fits, but the other thing that's kind of interesting is what happens to everybody else. Because

you can have loads of support in an organization, or you felt like you had loads of support, until you asked people to stand up and be counted. And I think this is, this is not a sexism thing. This is a broader issue in society, and as soon as you say you know you've seen this, would you be able to support me on this point? Everyone goes. Oh, no, no, no, because it might impact me. And I don't think that's peculiar to this particular topic. But I was amazed at the number of people who were in my team I thought, you know, I don't mean that in like a reporting way, I mean like on my side kind of thing, who, who had, I thought, had my back. Who wouldn't stand up and be counted because it would impact them personally.

Katie's comments:

I think it in the environment I was in there was a, there was a very clear, you know, it was business for them. And whatever they had to do, they would do it. They were ruthless in how they approached business. They were ruthless in how they treated each other. And I think that was, that was an institutional behaviour, because of the the sector…and how business was done generally. And then, you know, a woman with what? That doesn't further our business aims…. We'll trounce her, and you know, by hook or by crook, we'll get what we want.

Author's comments:

But what we do know is that there are many millions of women that will experience this, but they won't do anything with it. And they'll move jobs or, you know, put up and shut up or whatever. But I do. I do honestly believe that, you know, we are sold a narrative by our corporations. That gender discrimination doesn't exist. Race, racism doesn't exist. Everybody's paid equally. There's a rhetoric and a narrative that comes from every organization that we join. And so, and we believe it, because society more or less tells us that as well…..So when someone calls it out, they're like, well, you're lying. It assumes you're lying, basically, and then looks to falsify or nullify what you've said, bit by bit…. which is clearly dehumanizing.

You'll note from …. the media… that people rarely take it all the way to court … that's quite rare. So what I've tried to uncover in here is what our drivers are for doing that, and I think what I find out is that a lot of us actually believe in the legal process. At the start of the process, we all believed we would be heard and listened to, and that that would be enough for us to win the case. And I think what almost all of us found is that that's not how the legal process works. And I think a lot of us were shocked at that fact. And that was almost like a double, that was the kind of double effect. We thought the organization was fair and we discovered it wasn't. And then we believed the law was fair, and actually that isn't either. So it leaves us with this kind of paradox of questioning what we can trust in terms of what we're told in our own lives.

Gender Washing Practices

Human Resource and Legal Practices

Author's comments:

By denying what they're doing, they're silencing women's experiences.....But clearly denial goes in the favour of the organization as well. But it's not just denial, it's then cover-up. I think on reflection women are realizing that there's something wrong if they (the organisation) are then attempting to cover it up… But the thing is that the nature of the law, the nature of grievance processes, is that it takes the voice of the superior white man, over the voice of women. So it's easy, too easy and thoughtlessly done, to just negate women's voices. It's automatic for many men of privilege who think, that doesn't agree with my worldview, and so they will negate you, and tell you you're wrong.

Ursula's comments:

No, I was totally delusional at the beginning, and thinking that it was the right thing to do. And that, that, that the outcome would be a truthful and honest one, and and it absolutely wasn't, it wasn't. And it it it affected me and my family. Quite, quite frankly it it

had a massive impact on my mental health, and the way I respond to to everybody now, you know, within the workplace.

Mary Seacole's comments:

Yeah, I have something similar. I saw on LinkedIn, the company I used to work for had released a, had released a report about gender pay, pay and equity in the sector of the clients that we work with, and I was like, oh right……It think its just this disconnect, isn't it? Between how most organisations present themselves, to how they feel they should be, to the reality. And the reality underneath this, a lot of this, hasn't changed for a very long time.

Author's comments:

Interestingly, as women we I think we believed when we worked in organizations that if we told our bosses, or HR team, or anybody, that something bad had happened to us then we would be believed and we wouldn't be put on trial as a liar, which the grievance processes and the law does. Gas lighting is wherever anyone tries to tell you that what you're saying is not valid. So, the HR process, or the grievance process does that. It basically takes your story, and then collects everybody else's story, to say that your story is false.

Katie's comments:

Is that it's almost you put your, you put your case, and then they just have to undermine it, and chip away at it, and just find something to to to go against what you've said. And and they will. They will. They will rally around each other and look after themselves, tow the company line.

Author's comments:

The organization rhetoric, so obviously the company image, the corporate image out there. A lot of us talk about, you know, the family friendly brand. Or the, you know, the the, you know, the the trusted, you know, beloved media organization. Or the, you know, the, you know, we talk a lot about these corporate images that are being presented to us about these

places that we worked in. And how they are not in line with, they're at odds with, our own knowledge of that organization.

Katie's comments:

I heard after I left, one of my colleagues, who I'm still in touch with, she said that they would say things like, well, Katie didn't really make much of an impact while she was here. And I thought, and and I had to sort of say, I don't, I can't, I can't hear stuff like that. Because it just, I want to, urm, scream at them. But it was, you know, and now, now I'm not so close to it, I kind of I see it for what it is. And I I kind of think about it in terms of, well actually if the fact they're saying that, I must have had an impact for them to say that. So I'm I try and see it for what it is.

Author's comments:

It's almost like they're trying to take control of your story again. I can see that there are some stories that we tell about the devastation to our teams, and ourselves, of leaving. And the disruption that it causes for us to suddenly leave or to leave in these circumstances. But I think that there is this common element of the company taking back control of the narrative. In fact, some of our stories talk about how we're not allowed to say, we just disappear into the night. And I also see that as a form of controlling the narrative. The organization trying to control the narrative, and cover up what's actually gone on. And so there are elements of that reminiscent of power and the hierarchy, and the culture of the organization.

Gas Lighting

Author's comments:

And so I've tried to look across all of our experiences, and think about which one of, which of those experiences point to this kind of paradox, that we end up being faced with as victims, you know, victims, victims of sexism, racism or pay inequity. And here we see gas lighting clearly is a deliberate attempt of organizations to silence our stories, and retain the,

you know, the the organizational rhetoric of, you know, no, we are a good organization, we don't discriminate against our employees, you are a liar, et cetera. And so that, and and that results in what is called individualization, where then we sort of turn inward on ourselves and think, well, it must be, it must be me, then. I must be the only one, you know, that feels this way, or is experiencing this. And that clearly then leads to you thinking thoughts of going insane or, you know, whatever as a result of being your, you're lived reality not measuring up to what you're being told is real. And so you know that, that is a, we we've all got actually whether we've noticed it or not, there are quite a few of us that talk about gas lighting without actually calling it gas lighting.

Mary Seacole's comments:

Umm. Yeah, it's like the point about, you said about gas lighting, and that and some of us not realizing that we were on the receiving end of that. I I think it was probably a few weeks after I spoke to you, and did my interview, I went to a coaching day and there was a session about coaching people who've been the victims of gaslighting. And I was just like that was me. I just didn't.

Titanium's comments:

But it's kind of self-gaslighting as well.

Author's comments:

And then the legal process, of course, through the court systems, where we tend also to not be heard, and to not be listened to. And and the fact that the legal process itself of course makes you believe, or think that you're protected. That's a form of gender washing, because it doesn't actually do that in the way it should. And then non-disclosure agreements, and all the COT3's. I think some of us are familiar with at the end of the tribunal process, our obviously a way of silencing us and you know preventing us from telling our stories, which

means that they, you know, the organizational rhetoric or corporate image can remain intact. Despite obviously, what's happened in court.

Katie's comments:

I think that almost, that part of me wants them to know that actually I'm not afraid of them, and I will fight back. But in a clever way, that they can't then come and, you know, tell me your, for breaching the NDA they forced, you know, made me sign. And, but I'll do it in a different way. That they can't pin it on me. And I kind of do want it to go on them a bit. And I want them to be afraid. Because I think if they do it to other women, there's gonna be this momentum. It's a bit like the me-too effect. Where women actually, in numbers, can be very powerful. And you you can look what happened to Harvey Weinstein, and look what happens to all these big, powerful men.

Ursula's comments:

It took best part of three years, 3 1/2 years, and we come out the other side and I still have my voice. So for me it was a win. It. That was the massive win. Umm, you know, it it's it's just how you process it, and you have to fight for what's important to you, you know. It might, that might not be important to somebody else. It might be that they just want it over with, and they don't care what they do, but for me it was massive.

Feminism and Activism

Author's comments:

There is something in us women, as women, which has pushed us to do it. We knew it was going to be hard. We knew it was going to hurt, we knew it. But we did it anyway. And I think there must be a driver within us that clearly isn't within everybody. Because a lot of our stories do not just at the time point to the fact that we want to put it right, and we want to tell the world, and therefore protect others from the harm that these organizations are causing.

But, actually, a lot of you reflexively, at the end of your stories, then talk about what you want to do now, in terms of helping others. That the experience has ignited a kind of 'sisterhood' flame, of feelings that compel us to do something to help others, and which I think is a really interesting point.

Titanium's comments:

It's something for me about. About what? My duty to society and sisterhood, and who follows on, I felt like it was. I wasn't just doing it for me. I thought I had to do it because there's people behind me.

Ruth Bader Ginsberg's comments:

I just don't think all of a sudden that it makes sense to conclude that we're all, we all come out and get outside really angry, really whatever. I've definitely been angry, but I found that, you know, I don't want, actually don't want to be forever tainted by my corporate trauma. I need for me to really be able to give back to the next generation. I have to, I have to be emotionally, mentally, physically well. And to be that person I have to, I have to forgive and become powerful. But be, umm, just be more. I'm not, I don't wanna be, you know, masculine about it. But I, I've just gotta be more, it's, it's business, it's business, less emotional. I'm just less emotional about it……Umm, but you know, there was just so you know, there were a lot of, there was a lot of like more wider reflections on just my entire kind of persona. And and also how to be smarter. Because unfortunately you know, you just do have to be savvier, right. There are different ways to fight back. And sometimes it's not so overt.

Katie's comments:

I think there's all, I mean, I certainly feel that I've got that burning, you know, anger that propels me forward. And I I find myself talking to other women about their situation, and it's amazing how, but I've noticed that people are not as afraid, and I don't feel afraid anymore. Because I feel, actually I have a daughter, and sort of, come in for her. I've got to do

something because I'm damned if it's gonna happen to her, and that's what drives me on. I think that almost that part of me wants them to know that actually I'm not afraid of them, and I will fight back……. I found the post office, watching the post office scandal. Like the, it's almost you know, all these people who were not heard, not listened, and they were like watching it. I was just getting so cross, for them in, again injustice of it all. And I, sort of anything like that, I kind of hope that one day, it almost it takes for something like that for people to actually go, ohh gosh, that wasn't. You know, it's that, it's like the like, watching people smoke on an aeroplane. Like you're almost like ohh my God, that's horrific. Who would do that? And you kind of want like this situation, of like, oh my God, you would actually do that to a woman, who's just asked to be paid fairly? You would treat her like that? That's horrific. You kind of, I want to get to that point.

Conclusion

Author's comments:

I didn't realize, going into this research just how powerful women, you know, women's stories are. And you know, there's, there's just, there's a million, multitude of stories in each one of your stories. You know, you retell, and retell things that have happened. You retell things that other people have told you. And your whole narratives are a combination of stories. Each of them, you know, quite impactful because of the fact that you're telling it as a story, right? And there's a point to it. There's a, there's a moral there. And it's a very captivating way of getting information across to people. I think them, and you're right, that being silenced in the way that we were almost I think, calls for, you know, calls to that in us. I think the, the #metoo movements was powerful because it, because of the NDA situation, which is all about silencing, you cannot speak your truth. You cannot tell people about what happened, you know, social media has opened up this avenue of people sharing these powerful stories, without fear of retribution.

So maybe that in, you know, that does feed into the concluding kind of elements of this research. That our voices are taken from us. Our stories are taken from us. And so, you know, this healing process is about reclaiming our voices. And telling as many people, as well as listening about, what happened to us. Maybe that's the kind of, you know, where we end up. I mean, I have I think most of us have ended up going into different jobs or whatever. I I certainly have had, you

know, moments where I just think, and you know, I don't want to, don't wanna work anymore. I've kind of lost my mojo for the corporate world a bit, I have to say. And I know I'm doing my PhD. That's where my passion is at the moment. And that's been a life saver for me. And but I'm now, I'm not afraid of the corporate world, I just, I just don't feel it's, it's it has anything for me anymore. And that's because I'm, you know, now, considering I'm not, I'm not, I kind of, it's lost its shine. It's glamour. It's it's lost something. I don't know. I I'm not as ambitious. I'm not ambitious at all anymore. It's, you know, there's actually I think for me it's changed me quite a lot in terms of where I wanna be And how I wanna work. And how I wanna spend my time in the future. Work was everything for me, and now it's not important. And I'm I'm counting down the days to retirement, which is never where they thought I would be.

Ruth Bader-Ginsberg's comments:

I I don't know. So for me, I think it's not a straight line. So I think there have been phases where I have definitely been energized, and I've certainly, you know, felt that I wanted my voice to be heard. But, you know, as as a situation drags on or life takes over and it hangs over you, and you're constantly, like pouring over legal documents or whatever, it might be, and your life is kind of suspended in a way. And then people keep asking you about it, and there's a wariness that sets in, right? Because the organization has two very powerful weapons that they can utilize right. Rather than, you know, admitting, you know,

that they're at fault, you know, they use time, and they use money right, to wear you down. And I I think it's not always the case that all of a sudden you you come out of it on the other side and you're just louder and pulling other women, you know behind you, with you. I think you might start out thinking that that's where we'll end up. But depending on how your experience, you know is, I mean, I've certainly found that I've just had to withdraw into myself at times, right? And as part of the healing process. As part of, you know, keeping my family and my relationships together, and my own mental health intact. Like I've absolutely had to not take on other people's baggage, because, as you know, the the good and the bad is that when people know you've been through something, even if they've denied your experience, they come crawling to you for advice, right, when they experience something themselves, right?I just don't think all of a sudden that it makes sense to conclude that we're all, we all come out and get outside really angry. Really, whatever. I've definitely been angry, but I found that, you know, I don't want, actually don't want to be forever tainted by my corporate trauma. I need for me to really be able to give back to the next generation. I have to. I have to be emotionally, mentally, physically well. And to be that person I have to, I have to forgive and become powerful. But be, umm, just be more, I'm not, I don't wanna be, you know, masculine about it, but I I've just gotta be more, it's, it's business, it's business, less emotional. I'm just less emotional about it. I've gotta leave something behind. So draining, but I mean it's absolutely the case that it's life changing, right? It's life changing and

and so. Yeah. And almost like you know, I mean my case is still not over, but but even when it is, at some point I I do feel like I my poor husband and my children need time with me. Just, you know, baggage free.

Katie's comments:

And yeah, but I and I kind of think now and I think they, I hope they don't, I really don't wish what I went through on anybody to be honest, cause it's not very nice. But I bet they will go through something similar, but unless something drastic happens. There are very different mindsets depending on where you're at in it, and it's just hugely emotional, and all the emotions. Principles. And say it's going, it's sticking true to what you believe in. So I I had to stand up for myself. But I I I I'm don't have it, cuz I'm, I'm downstairs now, but behind me, and I haven't put it on the wall, I bought myself a poster, which is, it's a woman's lips and it says I'm speaking. Because I was just, you know, put down, shut up the whole time I was there. And it was just, it's like my defiance poster of now I'm talking, and I'll be heard.

Ursula's comments:

I think it's important to remember, though, that they they there's always an end goal. And I think everybody needs to, I mean everybody I'm presuming has been through a similar sort of thing, but for me it was it was catalyst. I mean the toll it took on my family was

horrendous, but it was it was so important to keep my voice. So I fought for that and the NDA doesn't include me not speaking.

Lessons Learnt

Author's comments:

Yeah, I think. A lot of us, at the point that I interview, have, are moving, and looking forwards, starting to look forwards. And I think we're quite, we're kind of hyper aware of how this experience has shaped our views, and of what we can do, and where we go next. And yeah, I think you know, you, you, point at red, red flags. There is this very real kind of sort of realization point for all of us in our narratives, where we feel like our eyes have been opened to something, that we can't, then close again. And as a result, you know, even things like finding a new job, going into work everyday, has this sort of different feel to it as a result of, you know, having been treated that way. We now are, you know, feel vulnerable, but also, very aware of all of those sort of inequalities around us. And that has affected our own career aspirations, of where we wanna work , and you know, what we wanna do next. I think some more than others, but yeah, certainly that probably needs to come out here, and the personal reflection bit, so it's like the reflection and looking forward, the lessons learned like you say.

You know, because the language of sexism, and in this post feminist era, neoliberal era, we're kind of told that there is no gender inequality. That everything is fair. That we were kind of lulled into that sense of security, though, weren't we? Where, and you know, the the, the, the narratives were all telling us otherwise. So it was. I felt like we had the odds against us in that sense. And you know, maybe now that our eyes are opened, we, our eyes were open to the game that

we're playing as well, right. That, of course, we should be able to play it better, as a result of the experiences we've had. But yeah, and it I think you know it's it's it's nice to think that you're there, you're getting there with that, cause we we want meaningful lives with successful careers and all those things for ourselves and our families. And you know, I think we've gotta believe that there's, you know, there's there's hope to get to where we want to be. But wherever that is, yeah. I think, and maybe I'm not a good person to reflect on this because of the fact I've been sort of stuck in my research, and will continue to be there for a while. Then it's maybe, it's maybe it, although it helped my initial recovery, maybe it's starting to hinder my longer term recovery. Because. Yeah, I think. The the world isn't changing. Organisations aren't changing. And so I know I'm gonna go back into a place that is not too dissimilar from where I left. And so I think that to me, that still fills me with dread. And I think it's because, even though I know how it is, and the, and I did try doing it, I just couldn't stomach it. It didn't make me feel joy. It didn't make me feel good about myself. But I also, you know, now I'm facing, you know, early retirement, selling the house, downsizing in my in my 40s, 50s, so yeah, I think everything comes with a consequence, doesn't it? Well, and so I think I'm concluding on our personal reflections that we will all end up in different places, but we will all have learned something that has, you know, fundamentally changed us in some way. Yep. Yeah, it's what I found. When, when? When I did go back into and I I don't forget I work in Telco, so I do also consult and do some work for telco

companies. That that's the word I, I've I've. Although I could do it, I found it triggering. So the things that people said and did were reminiscent of bad memories. That triggered an emotional a negative emotional response didn't feel good. And even though it wasn't the same situation…… I mean, I think that feeling of loss. Certainly I felt I lost my identity because my my, my identity was so well, you know, connected to what job I did. And by completely changing the job I did, I kind of was like, what am I then? If I don't do this, then who am I? And yeah, I did feel that for quite a while. Certainly I think. Yeah. I I I think I've had to find other stuff that I enjoy doing that I'm quite good at, and and and or that I'm interested in. And slowly I've put myself back to a whole person again. Where I feel like I've got meaning, and you know, my mojo back. But it's in in a completely different space to where it was before. Which you know, when you blow things up, and you put them back together again, sometimes they resemble, no doubt, where where they started, but maybe other times they are completely different. And yeah, I think that's where we're on, our journeys may differ. That we some of us might end up in a fairly similar position at the end, and some of us might end up in a completely different space. But that's fine, right? Because if it's always we gone through the sort of, the reflective sense making part, then where we end up is where we meant to be, yeah.

Katie's comments:

Do you think? Is it having more, it's it's that awareness is it? Is it being more, is that having more empathy? So you understand. But I'm I'm very aware that I used to be that woman that would say, ohh there's never, you know, all my bosses have been male and they've supported me, and you know, I wouldn't be where I am if it wasn't for that. And then. Through my own experiences, I'm now, I realize well, the fact that all of my bosses were men. It's a problem.And so it it's having, it's it's I guess it's experience isn't it? And that better understanding, and being able to look at things in a multifaceted, and and and see how things and and and actually it's. I guess it says, it's a bit like that adage, as you get older, you become more cynical, because you see things in different ways, and you haven't got your rose tinted glasses on anymore. And umm. It is a bit of a, yeah. Yeah, exactly. Yeah, far more complicated. And yeah, you can't unsee it. But then that the fact you see it enables you to hopefully do something about it. And yeah, it's it's not a nice experience, but it it's certainly taught me a lot in how, you know, a lot of these, you know, male traits that, you know, get seen as normal. And and actually I need to be stronger at, you know, calling it out. In a in a way that isn't going to upset too many people. Yeah. No, I agree. I think I'm just. I'm a lot more mindful of giving myself to work it, you know, 100% as I as I did and. Uh, I think it's definitely made me realize what's important. And. And I have to probably be more more kind of black and white about work. And you know it it it doesn't define me. It's it's not everything. I go and I get out of work what I want from it. Whereas before I think I

used work to, you know, it was, I was, I am proud of my work. I I I enjoy my my job, the job I do, and do well. But it was, I think the biggest thing was realizing that some, when you hold something so sacred, and then your your your told that you're not as good, or you're not as good as the men who have been paid 50% more than you. Or, you know, that you go, hang on a minute, and then you come out the other side and go, OK well they were able to do that to you, and it it it was a false reality, but don't put yourself in that situation again, because you're only gonna get hurt. So you have to be you have to be more business like. You have to be less emotional towards it. Yeah, yeah, the the nobody's gonna get out of me what I've I gave before, and I I gave a lot, umm, but I'm not gonna be that person because when the chips are down, they weren't there. Oh I'm. I'm very much, you know, don't you know? I I do not expect, you know people. If if I see people in my team, colleagues online late, I'll say don't. You know it will, I'll try and you know be that, you know, voice of reason to try and help them realize that it's, you know, there are other important things, and try and help them balance. But some some people like it, something it works for some people, and I have, I have to say I'm, you know, in a much more. I work for charity now, so that that's probably speaks for itself, and a charity that's very in tune with this. So I'm not fighting against it. But I I I wouldn't go back to the corporate world. I don't, it you know the the big kind of, the city working, of everybody marching into the office and working until 8:00 o'clock at night. No chance. And I find watching anything which resembles kind of, white

privileged men, and we've got some friends who fit that, and I find them really, I find them really hard now to do. Because I just think, you don't, you don't umm understand the power you hold….. and I have to temper myself sometimes, because I I kind of have to remind myself of this, you know, not every white man is is them, and that, that's I'm conscious of it. But I'm, I find I react to that. And I have to work in the city again now which, and again, I hate, because it just reminds me of that environment of, you know, the machoism……But is there a bit? Is there a bit more? Is there also a bit about that whole restorative justice where people do kind of go, we got it wrong, and they do. And and that might be the way to stop this? In that people aren't afraid of going, oh, you know what, we we should have done things better.

Author's comments:

I think I did go round that circle at the start of this study where a lot of a lot of you in your stories point to the fact that if they just admitted it and put it right, nothing would have happened. Nothing more would have happened. And I think I believed for quite a while that the answer could be that simple. But what gets uncovered through the analysis is the there's some quite instead of deeper rooted sexism, and discriminatory practices, that are cultural and, you know pretty much wedded to the way that we do business now…….The restorative justice point you've just made is actually not possible in the current context, business context. And so and so, although it seems like the most

obvious, easy, accessible solution, people's behaviour would need to change first. And as a project manager, I know that the hardest thing to do is to change people's behaviour. Changing systems or processes or you know, it's easy. But changing the way people think or behave is extremely difficult. And they need a reason. And this is why, you know, with really successful culture change projects like, you know, smoking ban or you know, there's been some real u-turns in behaviour, they end up being driven at a societal level, and there's an element of disgust or danger involved, which you know, seat belts, smoking, etcetera.

Mary Seacole's comments:

I think I think I've there's probably this sort of reflections around the the personal lessons learned. You know, I think perhaps when I think back, it, you know, there were perhaps there's some red flags and things that I should have been more aware of in recruitment processes and things. I I I don't know. It's just kind of like, actually, you know what, what you learn from this. And. And I think that only came on much later on, but it's it's that. Yeah. What. What have I learned from this? And and yeah. Yeah. I think it also kind of makes you, I don't know, reflect on, well was I ever unconsciously complicit in some of this behaviour? Or have contributed to this sort of thing? Unknowingly? I don't know, it just, doesn't it make you think about, well, you know, would that situation there, when you know, before I had children, and perhaps I wasn't quite as understanding about this woman's situation. Was? did I? Was I behaving in that way? That was

kind of umm, you know, you just makes you, makes you think about how very small reactions, or comments and things, in the past. And then you, I'm I'm just sort of hyper aware of these things now. Going into new organizations and things as well as. Just. Not just about sexism, but just, you know, I guess it's the saying that standard, the standard you walk past is standard you accept, isn't it? And it's just kind of this, you know, is that acceptable? Is, you know, is that, you know, and it's calling things out if they're not. I'm it just makes you hyper aware of things that perhaps wouldn't, say, be obvious before.

Ruth Bader-Ginsberg comments:

I mean, I run my own company. And and so I think that was a good balance for me, to be able to not have to deal with politics, and worrying about political capital. And you know, I could eat what I killed, and that made me feel, you know, stressed on the one hand, but then also satisfied. And because I was able to just, you know, disconnect from all of the infrastructure that just hadn't worked for me, or many women that I know. And then, you know, I feel as though I am ready. You know, I'm ready to go back into a major corporate, if that's where I need to be for the sake of my family. Umm. Over the next couple of years. So I would definitely wasn't ready, and I think, you know, we talked about self reflection, and you know we talk about, you know, kind of the things that we now can't unsee. And whether that really hinders, or prevents us, from taking on, you know, either certain responsibilities or, you know, giving so much of ourselves….. I am a

different person now, and I bring a, you know, a different leadership style to the table. Umm, but you know, there was just so you know, there were a lot of, there was a lot of like more wider reflections on just my entire kind of persona. And and also how to be smarter. Because unfortunately you know, you just do have to be savvier, right. There are different ways to fight back. And sometimes it's not so overt. And sometimes it's not so you know. UM, yeah, like off off putting, quite frankly. You have to kind of, you have to play at their game, and you have to, you have to suck up a few things, in order to get what you need to achieve over the line. Right. And so I could have been I. Could have been savvier? Absolutely.