

‘Fish wives’ in UK Parliament: Discursive intersections of (un)respectability, class and gender in newspaper representations of Angela Rayner.

RICKETT, Bridgette and KILBY, Laura <<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9766-1985>>

Available from Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:
<https://shura.shu.ac.uk/35470/>

This document is the Accepted Version [AM]

Citation:

RICKETT, Bridgette and KILBY, Laura (2025). ‘Fish wives’ in UK Parliament: Discursive intersections of (un)respectability, class and gender in newspaper representations of Angela Rayner. *Feminism & Psychology*. [Article]

Copyright and re-use policy

See <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/information.html>

Author authorised – accepted copy

‘Fish wives’ in UK Parliament: Discursive intersections of (un)respectability, class and gender in newspaper representations of Angela Rayner.

Bridgette Rickett, Head of Institute of Social Sciences, Sheffield Hallam University, UK.

b.rickett@shu.ac.uk

Laura Kilby, Associate Dean for Research and Innovation for the School of Business and Creative Industries, University of the West of Scotland, UK.

Laura.Kilby@uws.ac.uk

Citation:

Rickett, B., & Kilby, L. (2025). ‘Fish wives’ in UK Parliament: Discursive intersections of (un)respectability, class and gender in newspaper representations of Angela Rayner. *Feminism and Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09593535251327882>

“Fish wives” in UK Parliament: Discursive intersections of (dis)respectability, class and gender in newspaper representations of Angela Rayner

Bridgette Rickett Sheffield Hallam University, UK* b.rickett@shu.ac.uk

Laura Kilby University of West Scotland, UK Laura.Kilby@uws.ac.uk

*Corresponding author: Bridgette Rickett, Sheffield Institute of Social Sciences, Sheffield Hallam University, Redmires building, Howard St, Sheffield S1 1WB, UK. Email: b.rickett@shu.ac.uk

Abstract

This research develops an intersectional understanding of UK Newspaper coverage of White, working-class origin women politicians through a single case analysis of the reporting of Angela Rayner and her supposed attempt to “distract” the UK Prime Minister. A Dual process discourse analysis was conducted on 74 UK newspaper articles (47,000 words) whose main topic was Rayner and the alleged incident. The two overarching discourses identified - unrespectable “*fish wives*” and respectable “*working-class heroes*”—functioned to both confer and revoke gendered and classed notions of the (un)respectable politician to reproduce the “elite male as norm” and class the gendered double bind. The discourses also functioned to restrict working-class women’s ability to adopt, reject, or demolish elite, masculine standards and caution against working-class women politicians by framing class markers as inherently dangerous (e.g., “inner fishwife”) and unrespectable (e.g. uncouth and hyper-sexualised) compared to White middle-class feminised standards. Finally, these discourses worked to reassert classed and gendered boundaries via portraying working-class women politicians as unworthy and potentially dangerous and normalising (White)

masculinised power and privilege. This technology of governance has implications for voting decisions, our shared understanding of the overall appropriateness of working-class women in positions of power as well as our treatment towards them.

Key Words

Discourse Analysis, Discursive Psychology, Dual process Analysis, Feminist, UK Newspapers, Social Class, Women Politicians

Corresponding author

*Dr Bridgette Rickett, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard St, Sheffield City Centre, Sheffield S1 1WB, b.rickett@shu.ac.uk

Discourse and Media Text Research

Media text research enables us to ascertain how media constitutes influential textual resources from which we can draw upon to construct ourselves and others to inform how we should behave and how to understand others' behaviour. Media texts also reflect and inform knowledge on an infinite range of topics to (re)produce prescribed systems of categorisation to which people are assigned, such as race, gender, sexuality, and social class (e.g., Day 2020; Foster & Kilby 2023; Korkmazer et al, 2020). As such, the media do not simply reflect social realities or the facts, nor do they compromise a neutral source of information; they contribute to the construction, maintenance, and alteration of social realities (Gamson et al., 1992). In sum, the media can persuade us of certain world views that are often underpinned and motivated by the financial and political interests of powerful social groups and institutions (e.g., Bogart, 2017).

Media text, gender and social class bias

A recent systematic review (Van der Pas & Aaldering, 2020) of a subfield of scholarship examining gender bias in the popular media coverage of women politicians reached three key findings, namely, (i) gender stereotypes saturate such coverage, (ii) women politicians receive less coverage than men, and iii) there are sharp gender differences with respect to the attention given to women's private life, appearance, and family compared to their male counterparts.

The homogenised category of womanhood dominates this research; however, a few examples do afford an intersectional understanding of gender bias. For example, while UK Black women politicians receive more coverage than their White counterparts, this was negatively focussed on their ethnicity and gender (Ward, 2017). In addition, US research has found that such raced and gendered representations had negative implications for public support for them (Burge et al., 2020). Relevant to this present research, it has also been found that media coverage of French women politicians derogates and Others via intersections of gender, race, *and* class bias (Galy-Badenas & Gray, 2020).

Discursive Psychology, Gender and Politics in the media

However, it is important to go beyond simply establishing gender bias in media representations. Using a discursive psychological approach highlights the interrelationship between the rhetorical mechanisms underpinning bias in portrayals of women politicians and how broader, embedded, dominant, and powerful societal-level discourses persuade/dissuade readers of the legitimacy of women in politics. Research has established that print media portrayals of men politicians often primarily centre on them as politicians (O'Neill et al., 2016), while other research has found that portrayals of women tend to do the opposite (de-centre them as politicians) (e.g., Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012;

O'Neill et al. 2016). Feminist examination of UK newspaper coverage of the significant increase in women MPs at the 1997 UK general election revealed how this cohort were primarily categorised as “Blair’s Babes” (O’Neill et al., 2016) (Tony Blair was the incumbent UK Prime Minister.) While photos of the first Spanish majority women government (2008) triggered UK newspapers to conclude “when it comes to totty [UK slang for women whom men assess to be sexually desirable], Britain really is the poor man of Europe” (Brown, 2008, p.12). These newspaper portrayals serve to obscure meritocratic narratives of success and simultaneously foreground socially dominant constructions of women as male possessions whose value rests on the ability to fit heterosexual desirability standards (Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012). As such, the male standard discourse is produced and substantiated.

While UK newspapers present women politicians as objects for heterosexual consumption via the male gaze, European and North American media coverage often derogates women politicians via constructions of them as lacking intellect, having morally questionable characters (Bachmann et al., 2017; Sakki & Martikainen, 2022) or as interesting mainly via their private lives and relationships (Garcia-Blanco & Wahl Jorgensen, 2012). For example, Arrieta-Castillo and Berdasco-Gancedo’s (2020) discursive analysis of the Spanish media coverage of the UK’s departure from the European Union, or “Brexit”, found differential portrayals between two UK Prime Ministers, Theresa May and Boris Johnson. Compared to Johnson, despite her extensive experience, May was presented as an unknowing “player” who lacked courage and the necessary masculine aggressiveness.

Discursive Psychology, Gender, Class and Politics in the media

Again, there is scant discourse analytic scholarship in psychology that takes an intersectional approach to analysing media coverage of politicians. Yet this small body of work steadfastly evidences the necessity of doing so. For instance, raced and gendered portrayals have been found to discursively undermine Black women's legitimacy as political figures (Dan & Iorgoveanu, 2013; Tolley, 2016). This was evident in French media coverage of women politicians Rachida Dati and Najat Vallaud-Belkacem both reinforced traditional gender stereotypes and constructed them as unworthy via reference to their Maghrebian origins (Galy-Badenas & Gray, 2020). Pertinent to this present research, race, gender and class intersect in such depictions. In this vein, Iqani (2015) found that media discourse around the high profile South African figure, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela trivialised and moralised her considerable accomplishments via constructions of her as an intruder in an elite system, a Black working-class woman who, driven by "expensive tastes", has "sold out" her class and race politics for ostentatious greed.

It is now vital that intersectional feminist discursive scholarship aim to further this work. Aside from the disappointingly little discursive psychology research focusing directly on class and gender in the representation of women working in politics, there is a small corpus of relevant work. This research demonstrates how discourses around gender, class and origin privilege already powerful groups in traditionally White male-dominated work and subjugate others to produce "out-groups". For example, Rickett & Roman (2013) found that narrow constructions of working-class femininities in door supervision work focused on both an assumed lack of autonomy and agency and an excess of ungovernable sexual practices. This finding follows Skeggs's (1997) early feminist sociological arguments that, like most women, working-class women must develop strategies to deal with being positioned as a

sexual object for heterosexual male ownership; working-class women are additionally constructed as hyper-heterosexual (Taylor, 2006) compared to White, middle-class, feminine standards. Other discursive research has explored working-class women's talk around the traditionally White, middle-class masculinised UK Higher Education work, making evident how a recurring "deficient working-class self" discourse coupled with sexist and classist knowledge hierarchies socially segregates and dislodges working-class women's status and respectability (Rickett & Morris, 2021).

In sum, raced, classed and gendered media rhetoric coalesces to derogate women working in elite spaces, and especially women of colour and /or working-class women, as unworthy occupants. UK media has a particular propensity to sexually objectify women in the public eye. This present research applies an intersectional lens to the particulars of the portrayal of working-class-origin women politicians in UK newspaper coverage.

In detail we aim to employ feminist-informed discourse analysis to:

- Explore the intersecting gendered and classed constructions in mainstream UK newspaper portrayals of a high-profile working-class-origin woman politician.
- Identify discourses, discursive strategies, and subject positions related to objectification and hyper-heterosexualisation, and in relation to personhood and practices.
- Consider implications for how classed and gendered portrayal of politicians shape public understanding of their ability to serve in White, elite, male-dominated workspaces such as politics.

Details of the study

Single case media text analysis

Discursive media text analysis was applied to a single case focus on four weeks of UK newspaper reporting about a supposed act that happened during the Prime Minister's Questions Time (PMQs). PMQs are a regular weekly event where the UK Leader of the opposition or a representative asks the UK Prime Minister a series of previously published questions. On the 24th of April 2022, an article published in *The Mail on Sunday* alleged that Angela Rayner, the then Shadow Deputy Leader of the opposition, "distracted" the then UK Prime Minister (Boris Johnson) by crossing and uncrossing her legs. Rayner is a White woman of working-class origin from the North of England, and Boris Johnson is a White man of elite upper-class origin.

Data collection started with a the original 650-word online newspaper article published in the UK Newspaper (Owen, 2022a, The Mail on Sunday , 24th of April 2022) that ran with the headline "Tories accuse Angela Rayner of *Basic Instinct* ploy to distract Boris: MPs claim Labour deputy leader likes to put PM 'off his stride' by crossing and uncrossing her legs at PMQs"). It also features a photograph and a video of Angela Rayner and Boris Johnson during PMQs respectively captioned "It's not clear Boris was thrown off by Rayner's rumoured 'enchantment'" and "Boris blushes under Angela's giddy glare in playful exchanges at PMQs". A second photograph was of the iconic, full-body, front-facing image of Sharon Stone from the US film *Basic Instinct*, sitting crossed-legged on a chair, purportedly without underwear. It was captioned, "Labour's deputy leader has been compared to Sharon Stone in the 1992 neo-noir thriller". The last photograph presented Angela Rayner smiling and cross-legged on a sofa.

Media text corpus

We utilised the *LexisNexis Newspaper* archive to collect the original article in addition to newspaper article responses across a 4-week period. The inclusion criteria were UK Newspaper articles published between 23 April and 21 May 2022 in which the main topic was the alleged act, and Angela Rayner was directly referred to. The search terms “Angela Rayner” + “Prime Ministers Question Time” returned 2221 articles. Each was examined individually and replicated reports were deleted. The remaining articles meeting the inclusion criteria were included in the final dataset. This comprised 74 UK newspaper articles, totalling 47,000 words, the majority (82%) of which were published within a week of the original article. The sample spanned 16 publications, including tabloid, broadsheet, national, and local newspapers. Two national publications accounted for 49% of the overall sample, *The Independent* (31%) and *The Mail on Sunday* (18%). These, alongside *The Guardian*, published the most 1000 word-plus articles. The word count across the sample ranged from 201 to 1250 with an average word count of 556.

Analytic Approach

First, a top-down analysis used a Foucauldian-informed discourse analysis with a feminist and class theorist focus (Rickett & Roman, 2013; Rickett & Morris, 2021; Willott & Griffin, 1997) to identify overarching discourses related to class, race and gendered identities. We had a particular interest in subject positioning, the possible implications for subjectivity and practice, and what discourses might tell us about the wider social conditions within which working-class women politicians are situated. The text was reread several times, chunked (into a section of text that centres on a topic/issue). The chunks were then coded using *nvivo* themes. These themes reflect the words or phrases used repeatedly in them and/or what best represents what is being described (e.g. a ploy to distract). Following this stage,

we identified the ways in which each theme was discussed (e.g. ploy required to overcome state school education). Finally, patterns of language use; first, within each theme, then across the different themes to examine different constructions of class and femininities.

The second phase of analysis used a more traditional *bottom-up* discursive psychology approach (e.g. Edwards & Potter, 1992; Wiggins & Potter, 2017). We re-examined all the transcripts to consider how discursive and linguistic devices were locally deployed. This level of analysis allowed us to explore the action orientation of a discourse and to consider how micro-features of a discourse are embedded and enacted to achieve certain communicative effects (e.g., persuade, ridicule). Our intention was not to complete an exhaustive micro-analysis of every identifiable rhetorical device (e.g. extreme case formulations, three-part lists, strategic vagueness, script formulations), as in classic discursive psychology. Indeed, such attempts are rendered largely futile by the sheer complexity of the structure of any given text. Rather, in keeping with our aims, we worked systematically through each article, focussing on (i) where and how linguistic and discursive devices served to elevate classed and gendered ideological claims, and (ii) how such claims infused the macro discourse with rhetorically persuasive qualities that emboldened the implicit and explicit arguments and assumptions being made. Completing this second phase also challenged our initial assumptions about the macro discourse and our developing sense of the overarching discourses.

After the completion of both stages of analysis, and a synthesis of our findings, we arrived at and labelled two main over-arching discourses: *Fishwives – gendered and classed unrespectability in parliament* (discourse 1), and *working-class heroes – gendered and classed respectability in parliament* (discourse 2).

This dual approach aligns with that of Critical Discursive Psychology (e.g., Edley & Wetherell, 2001; Locke & Budds, 2020; Wetherell & Edley, 2014; Wetherell, 1998). As Locke and Budds (2020) argue, using these two (often presented as opposing) approaches, enables an analysis to address the dual concerns of discourse which focus (i) on macrolevel issues that consider wider societal discourses and the repertoires and subject positions inherent in these, and (ii) the micro, rhetorical and agentive aspects of the discourse. As Locke and Budds (2020) contend, this dual interrogation permits a more comprehensive analytic picture of the focal topic. While this approach has mainly been employed in health research, we sought to examine how well it would fare in the context of identities and social inequalities research.

Findings

Fishwives – gendered and classed (un)respectability in parliament.

This discourse dominated and drew upon broader rhetoric that evokes socially located narratives of working-class women as inferior, manipulators, and self-determined temptresses in relation to elite heterosexual men (Peace, 2003). These features establish Rayner within the historically located White, gendered and classed discourse of the “loose and vulgar tongue(d)” and undisciplined “fishwife” (Cameron, 2003, p., 451; Sangster (2007). For example:

Extract 1

“If she curbs her inner fishwife, she's got the charisma to go far”. (Article 60, Platell, 2022, p. 19).

In extract 1, Rayner is explicitly characterised as harbouring a potentially career-sabotaging “inner fishwife” that requires discipline via self-policing (“curbs”). The following analysis, in

Extract 2, shows how this characterisation was also implicitly alluded to via discursive markers of unrespectability, which deviate from elite masculinised standards.

Extract 2

“The exchanges between Ms Rayner and Mr Johnson – which take place when leader Sir Keir Starmer is absent – have become a highlight of the Commons calendar, pitching the comprehensive school-educated Labour MP against the Old Etonian”.

(Article 1, Owen, 2022a)

Historically, in British politics education is structurally embedded in the creation and maintenance of a dominant, White and masculinised, British class hierarchy. Access to elite (private) educational institutions is the backbone of inter-generational reproduction and maintenance of social class hierarchies and creates a pathway from educational elitism into professional political careers, particularly for men. Extract 2 summons up this history to construct a spectacle that is counted upon to be a battle between opposing, intersecting classed and gendered subjects: “comprehensive” school Rayner versus “old Etonian” (private school) Johnson.

In the next extract, a contrast structure (Drew, 1990) sets the differential abilities gained from traditional elite fee-paying schooling against the gains derived from modern, public-funded (state) schools.

Extract 3

“One MP said: ‘She knows she can’t compete with Boris’s Oxford Union debating training, but she has other skills which he lacks.’” (Article 1, Owen, 2022a)

A deficit framing (cf. P. R. Brown, 2019; Cushing, 2022) of Angela Rayner’s professional capabilities (“she knows she can’t compete”) to uphold the class-driven status quo where

“Oxford Union debating training” is prerequisite to a successful British, political career. Moreover, Angela Rayner is positioned as having to overcome this deficit by turning to “other skills” that Boris Johnson “lacks”. Given the focal claims and the wider context of this media story, the clear implication is that these skills are linked to the performance of her (hetero)sexuality.

Extract 4

“The paper likened the claims to a scene from the 1992 erotic thriller *Basic Instinct* and said she was trying to put the PM “off his stride””. (Article 18, Calvert, 2022)

Extract 5

“Rayner was adopting a ‘Basic Instinct’ style ploy towards Johnson, in a reference to the Sharon Stone 1992 film in which she flashes a policeman during an interview”. (Article 24, Mason et al., 2022)

Extract 6

“Ms Rayner likes to distract the PM when he is at the dispatch box by deploying a fully-clothed Parliamentary equivalent of Sharon Stone’s infamous scene”. (Article 1, Owen, 2022a)

The above extracts re-write the accustomed practice of Rayner sitting opposite the then prime minister into a heterosexually charged, pornified show (see Anderson, 2011) laden with sexual suspense (extract 3 – “erotic thriller”). She is also re-written as a *femme fatale* (extract 5 and 6 – “deploying” a “ploy”) intent upon hindering Johnson’s performance (Extract 4 - put him “off his stride”). While the prime minister is revised as a man weakened by masculinised hyper-heterosexual desire. For example:

Extract 7

“Angela has very fine legs (sorry Ange, but I'm female, and allowed to say that). She's an attractive woman, so colleagues are going to notice her and fancy her, and since most MPs are male, lumpen and think they're still at boarding school, they'll make stupid vulgar cracks about Angela's assets”. (Article 60, Finnegan, 2022)

Extract 8:

“It started with the classic, unforgettable image of Sharon Stone and her kryptonite muff next to a picture of Rayner in silky stockings”. (Article 66, Long, 2022)

In extract 6, “vulgar cracks” from male colleagues towards “attractive” women working in UK politics are normalised. An embodied elicitation of upper class/elite “boarding school” masculinised desire is infantilised and ridiculed (“they’re still at boarding school”). In addition, heterosexually desirable, feminine bodies become an “asset” (extract 7) to be weaponised against elite men’s uncontrollably hyper-sexualised, infantile minds. Such parodying can be read as subversive and empowering (Rickett & Roman, 2013). However, it also justifies sexual harassment in the workplace since infantilised, upper-class men do not fall under adult standards of appropriate behaviour and “attractive” women, as provocateurs, should expect to be subjected to it (Rubchak, 2009).

A nod to a “political correctness gone mad” narrative (extract 7 – “I am a woman and allowed to say that”) legitimises the narrow focus on Rayner’s body which becomes hyper-sexualised and devalued. Her black tights become “Silky stockings” (extract 7) enclosing a “kryptonite muff” (extract 8) – “muff” being a vulgar U.K. slang euphemism for a woman’s pubic area, while “kryptonite” is a term that has been recently repurposed as a metaphor for women who “sap” the power of successful male politicians. For instance, research has

found that strong, intelligent women were positioned as Obama's kryptonite in the reporting of the former US president (Thornton, 2010). As such, via the deployment of such terms, feminised power over weakened elite, male politicians being both bestowed and delegitimised via a highly eroticised and degrading heterosexual male gaze.

In addition, as shown in the extract below, interesting discursive features also make plausible that Rayner is a possible danger to both the masculinised power system embedded in the traditional, elite British ruling classes (Reeves & Friedman, 2024) and traditional White bourgeois standards of femininity (Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008).

Extract 9

"In addition to the original Conservative MP who spoke to the newspaper, three other MPs alleged that it was Mrs Rayner herself who joked about her "tactic" during a night on the Commons terrace. The Mail on Sunday has spoken to four MPs, who all gave the same account of what she said, including the use of a startling slang colloquialism". (Article 15, Hodges, 2022).

Extract 10

"Now, it transpires that about a week later on the booze-fuelled terrace of the Commons, Rayner was seen by at least four MPs joking about her "Sharon Stone" ploy to disarm the PM. Could it be that she had read my article and was enjoying being portrayed as a sexy politician and compared with a Hollywood star?" (Article 61, Owen & Hodges, 2022)

Extract 11

"Talking in such crude terms ... they cannot be repeated in a family newspaper". (Article 61, Platell, 2022, p.19)

Extract 12

“Three other MPs who were part of the group on the House of Commons terrace, one of them a woman, have come forward to corroborate the account of Angela Rayner's remarks”. (Article 52, Hughes, 2022).

Here, a coded appeal Others Rayner's language (extract 11, “cannot be repeated in a family newspaper”) as unfit for consumption by the everyday working-class family reader of *Mail on Sunday*. Furthermore, consensus building (Potter, 1996) legitimises the claims about Rayner's supposed use of “crude” (extract 11), and “startling” “slang colloquialism” (extract 9) via reference to multiple sources (“at least four MPs” - extract 10; “three other MPs” - extract 9).

Therefore, Angela Rayner is further delegitimised via moralising discourse that frames her as both delighting in engaging in sexually manipulative practices (“Mrs Rayner herself who joked about her “tactic”, extract 9) and an enthusiastic member of a masculinised Westminster drinking culture “on the booze-fuelled terrace” (“one of them a woman”, extract 12). In sum, she is positioned as unsuitable as a politician because of her purposeful transgressions from idealised, White, middle-class, feminised, standards of respectability (R. Brown & Gregg, 2012; Lennox et al., 2018; Skeggs, 2005).

Working-class heroes – gendered and classed respectability in parliament

This, significantly less prominent, discourse promotes even-handedness through a counter-characterisation of Rayner as a hard-working woman on the receiving end of sexism and classism. However, while Rayner is depicted as a down-to-earth woman of the people and a respected debater and politician, she nevertheless remains marked out as a classed, gendered Other within the elite space of UK politics.

Extract 13

“Ms Rayner, 41, a socialist grandmother who left school at 16 while pregnant and with no qualifications before becoming a care worker, has frequently landed blows on the Prime Minister during sparky – some say flirty – exchanges. (Article 1, Owen, 2022a”)

Extract 14

“By mentioning the standout achievement of Ms Rayner's career - that she has managed to break into the inner circle of Westminster's power elite despite leaving school at 16 without qualifications after becoming pregnant”. (Article 64, Owen, 2022b)

Extract 13 (from the originating article) uses age as a temporal anchor against which the subsequent detail is judged. Setting aside the political positioning (“socialist”), we learn that Rayner is a “grandmother” at “41”, who “left school at 16 while pregnant”. This anchoring draws on socially located norms where, first, contemporary White middle-class women complete higher education, then establish a career, and then start a family. Women who do not follow this sequenced trajectory are derogated (Wilson & Huntington, 2006). These norms sit within a wider narrative of working-class mothers as lazy, wilfully oblivious, morally corrupt and, finally, to blame for any current or future health and social problems encountered by their children (Rickett, 2016). This use of temporal anchoring, therefore, powerfully invokes socially situated, classed and gendered understandings to construct a morally questionable mother.

Extract 14 is from a response article published by the same author in the same newspaper. The author claims bemusement at criticisms following the original article, with a notable

footing shift (Goffman, 1981) referring to Angela Rayner's "standout achievements". Yet, her character is re-marked as morally dubious via a reformulated version of the same biographic description. A character deficit framing is offered where Angela Rayner "managed" to access elite politics, "despite" herself, delivered via a three-part list (Jefferson, 1990) that renders her knowable as someone who left "school at 16 without qualifications after becoming pregnant".

Discussions about Angela Rayner's education remain a focal concern of the *working-class hero* discourse. This counter-narrative offers a superficial celebration of a working-class hero. An alternative reading reveals mundane reliance on classed and gendered ideals that do little to go beyond that of working-class women's success *despite* assumed classed and gendered deficits. This is further illustrated in the following extracts.

Extract 15

"She may have missed out on the overrated union debating society experience, but she has all the brains and passion she needs to floor the rogue prime minister in open combat". (Article 38, O'Grady, 2022)

Extract 16

"Rayner went to a rather better finishing school for aspiring politicians than even the Oxford Union - she was a Unison shop steward. As a union rep she learned how to deal with entitled blokes, how to make and win an argument, and above all, how to think on her feet and throw in the occasional sharp barb". (Article 38, O'Grady, 2022)

Extract 15 contests the classed and gendered dis-respectability discourse, while simultaneously constructing an educationally subordinate subjectivity of someone who has "missed out." This deficit framing of working-class education is contrasted with the elite

standard (“debating society experience”). In turn, this classed hierarchy is challenged by claiming that Rayner has “all the brains and passion she needs.” Ideals around passion are coupled with heroic “fighter” discourse (“floor the rogue prime minister in open combat”). However, such socially situated discourse also serves to delegitimise women politicians (Frasca, et al., 2022) as either too hegemonically masculine (Lünenborg & Maier, 2015) or too emotional. Both subject positions deviate from White, middle-class, feminised standards.

Extract 16 frames Rayner’s education as rooted in her working-class professional background as a “union rep”. A three-part list argues that she is equipped to deal with “entitled blokes” and “make and win an argument” to present her as overcoming her state education via a celebratory, narrative that challenges elite ideals of what is valued as good education. However, this rhetoric also obscures her formal education, her intellectual competence, and her significant political acumen developed through extensive experience in senior political roles.

Extract 17

“She also has a line in working-class, small ‘c’ conservatism on crime, antisocial behaviour and terror. This is no Islington Lefty”. (Article 38, O’Grady, 2022)

Extract 18

“Rayner’s media appearances also display an admirable tendency not to take any nonsense from journalists. She’s rare for someone on the left in being willing to go on the offensive, and for not apologising for not being a Tory”. (Article 38, O’Grady, 2022)

In extract 17, Rayner's ideologies are explicitly categorised as shaped by her working-class origins, thereby departing from normative middle-class left-wing ideology. The contrast structure offered between Rayner as a "working-class" Labour politician and an "Islington Lefty" (a reference to a mainly middle class, left-voting area in North London, UK) centres upon a framing of her as willing to tackle "crime, anti-social behaviour and terror". Rayner is positioned as a woman who is unapologetically and fearlessly claiming a working-class left position of politics ("small c"). In extract 18, she is presented as "not take(ing) any nonsense," qualities couched as "rare" for a left-leaning (middle-class) politician. As such, Rayner is portrayed according to notions of working-class personhood ("admirable"). Yet, the development of such claims relies on framing her as an outsider and an Other, both as a politician and a working-class woman.

As the following extracts attest, this second discourse also presents her physical appearance as a portal to her character.

Extract 19

"I like her - she is funny, different, powerfully charismatic. In ordinary times, in an ordinary parliament, she might easily end up capturing our hearts as, say, a foxier, more capable John Prescott". (Article 66, *The Sunday Times*, 01/05/2022)

Extract 20

"Angela Rayner is a clever and talented politician who doesn't need curly hair extensions and split skirts to pack a punch. Describing her as sexy when she chooses to flash her enviable legs is not misogynistic, it's the simple truth". (Article 61, Long, 2022)

Extract 19 starts by contesting deficit discourse to re-frame Rayner as “funny, different, powerfully charismatic” with traditionally feminine ideals of emotionality (capable of “capturing our hearts”), before switching to an overtly sexually objectifying characterisation of her as “foxier” than a high profile working-class male political figure John Prescott (a previous deputy Labour leader). Therefore, any countering of derogatory and damaging feminised and classed ideals to enable a respectable subject position—albeit via gendered and classed stereotypes around emotionality (Reay, 2004)—is rapidly undermined by the objectification of a working-class woman who stands only in relation to men and their sexual desires.

Similarly, extract 20 frames Rayner as “a clever and talented politician”, offered within a contrast structure which refers to her embodied self. This structure discounts the relevance of Rayner’s appearance to her professional capabilities, while actively homing in on her fashion tastes and simultaneously side-stepping accusations of sexist objectification (as “plain speaking,” “not misogynistic,” and “the simple truth”). The pairing of fashion and capabilities evokes gendered markers of class (“curly hair extensions and split skirts”) to conspicuously position Rayner as lacking the embodied White, middle-class cultural capital required to be a respectable parliamentarian, such as making what may be understood as proper, modest, respectable, and tasteful choices of presentation (Pilote & Montreuil, 2019).

Extract 21

“Angela Rayner, I would suggest, is not remotely prudish, and a clever northern lass like her is not going to have a fit of the vapours because some creep makes an adolescent joke about a notorious cross-legged moment, made famous by Sharon”.
(Article 60, Finnegan, 2022).

In this extract, “northern” - broadly euphemistic for the White working-classes (Spracklen, frames a “clever Northern lass” in relation to intersecting classed and gendered hierarchies. The phrases “not remotely prudish” and “a fit of the vapours” (extract 20) invoke a sexist parody of White, middle-class and feminised ideals (Mitchell, 2011). Knitted into this extract is the production of sexual harassment as innocuous and assailable. “Creeps” who harass women continue to be minimised as “adolescent.” Their behaviour is framed as a “joke” that a working-class woman can and should laugh off. Thus, once framed *as* a working-class woman, Rayner is denied the right to be impacted by sexualised abuse *because* of who she is.

Discussion

In setting out to explore the constructions of gendered, classed portrayals of a high-profile White working-class-origin woman politician, we responded to calls for feminist psychology to be explicitly intersectional and focus our analytic gaze toward ideological dead spots that have the consequences of reproducing gendered and classed social hierarchies (Mirza, 1997). As such, we aimed to make crucial inroads into understanding the intersecting, expansive, and damaging repercussions of the male standard (Gilligan, 1982) in the world of UK politics.

Following earlier arguments (e.g., Locke & Budds, 2020; Edley & Wetherell, 2014) we argue that our dualistic discourse analytic approach permits a more sophisticated understanding of how the micro and macro aspects of discourse jointly shore up the intersectional subjectivities within media portrayals of women politicians. Moreover, it is clear the approach fares well when applied to media portrayals of classed, gendered identities and social inequalities.

The predominant discourse (“fishwives”) marked out gendered, classed (and at times raced) borders of respectability (Jensen & Ringrose, 2014). The production of such borders repurposes previously established classed (e.g. Iqani, 2015) and gendered (e.g., Backmann et al., 2017) societal discourses to delineate who is to be valued/devalued in parliament. As found by earlier feminist research, the devaluing of working-class women relied heavily upon a hypersexual framing (Skeggs, 1997; Taylor, 2006) and moralising notions of the right/wrong kind of mother and type of schooling (Rickett, 2016). In sum, Rayner was redrawn as a woman who embodied an inherently deficient “inner self” which predisposed her to be immodest, uncouth, not “ladylike” enough and thereby deviant from ideal, White, middle-class womanhood (Day, 2020).

Previous discourses objectifying women politicians (e.g., O’Neill, et al., 2016) have constructed them as passive, sexualised, beings to be gazed upon, their worth associated with the capacity to conform to White, middle-class, feminised beauty standards (Gurrieri et al. 2016). We found a discursive shift in both sexual objectification *and* self-objectification, embedded in a neoliberal-postfeminist framework, which positioned Rayner as sexually empowered and agentic. This appropriation of a feminist discourse of women’s sexual liberation changes the position of women-as-victims-of-the-male-gaze to that of women-as-freed-by-sexual-liberation (Gill, 2007; 2008). This re-positioning is underpinned by heterosexist scripts around pleasing and teasing men, with mundane items, contexts, and practices hypersexualised via gender-based parody. We align with previous theorisation that these sexual scripts, or *political pornification*, police transgressions from gendered boundaries of appropriate behaviour by trivialising and grounding women who rise “above their station” by acquiring political power (Anderson, 2011). Furthermore, this scripting serves to regulate working-class femininities by drawing upon gendered *and* classed

constructions of womanhood, which, in turn, shore up sexual objectification and channel it through the White, heterosexual, elite, male gaze. As such, we argue that working-class women are particularly vulnerable to pornified portrayals. This argument is in line with previous findings indicating that White working-class women (Skeggs, 1997; Williams, 2021) and working-class women of colour (via the “ho” and “jezebel”; Hill Collins, 2004) are particularly regulated by hyper-sexualisation and unfavourable comparisons with White middle-class women.

The second “working-class hero” discourse counters the first to celebrate White working-class, feminine subjectivities as equal to or even superior to men and women elite/middle-class counterparts, and repositions Rayner as a respected, worthy parliamentarian.

However, this celebratory interpretation is hindered since this discourse also justifies sexual harassment of women politicians. It is trivialised and normalised. A “boys will be boys” narrative is classed (Murnen et al., 2002) to establish elite men as having little agency over their behaviour provoked by a powerful and agentic White working-class women femme fatale. Finally, post-feminist scripts (Gill, 2007, 2008) around agency are heavily classed and gendered to position working-class women as particularly “tough” and able to shrug off sexual harassment, compared to their “fragile” middle-class counterparts.

Furthermore, discourses identified in this research question working-class women's rights to be in public office by a rewriting of the “male as norm” (Gill & Gill, 2007) into an elite/upper class male norm standard (politician). Here, a classed production of the double bind (Campus, 2013) requires working-class women to conform to the restrictive ideals of both working-class femininity (van Zoonen, 2006) and middle-class, White feminised standards. These requirements constrain working-class women’s ability to adopt, reject, or demolish the elite, masculinised standards. Thus, discourse identified in the present research

functions to, first, position working-class femininities as “unrespectable,” and second, caution that transformation from such working-class unrespectability to middle-class “respectability” (i.e., via a career in politics) is futile due to both inherent classed and gendered deficiencies (e.g., “inner fishwife”) and embodied (un)respectabilities (e.g., a dangerous femme fatale). Therefore, class and gender boundaries are reasserted by positioning working-class women as unsuitable, unworthy, and potentially dangerous incumbents of the political elite.

However, elite hegemonic gender identities cannot be separated from whiteness (Hamilton et al., 2019). It is important to note that both post-feminist scripts and quasi-heroic discourse has not been identified in the media reporting of Black, working-class politicians. Instead, discourse of contamination and revulsion (Palmer, 2020) is deployed to justify particularly sexually violent threats towards them (e.g. the Black, working-class, UK women politician Dianne Abbott, Kuperberg, 2018).

Future work should look to expand our findings in the following three ways. Our analysis did not scrutinise variations to intersections of class and gender. For example, our analysis concentrates on reporting of a Labour (left-wing) politician largely written in centre to right-wing newspapers (Ponsford, 2024). Future exploration of women politicians of working-class origin with differing political allegiance would develop valuable further insight across both the political spectrum and the U.K. newspaper media. Moreover, a focus on women of colour of working-class origin was beyond the parameters of this research, but it is now crucial to develop earlier discursive work (e.g., Galy-Badenas & Gray, 2020; Iqani, 2015) to examine media constructions to determine how/if they serve to even further marginalise minoritised women politicians

Finally, we are not simply positioned by existing media discourses—we negotiate ourselves within them to strive to achieve a desired identity (Court & Court, 1998; Day et al., 2012; Rickett & Thompson, 2024). Intersecting ideologies of gender can be subverted through alternative/counter discourses that position us in more powerful ways (e.g., Eckermann, 1997; Rickett & Morris, 2021). Discourse, a crucial site for active resistance to ideologies, opens possibilities for positive action and social change (Day et al., 2012; Wetherell, 1998). As such, future research could fruitfully examine if and how intersecting media discourses are countered and reworked by women working in politics to reshape understandings of themselves as worthy and respected politicians.

In conclusion, the media content analysed in this study can be understood as a technology of governance aiming to persuade us of the classed, gendered (and raced) ideologies are stitched into societal norms that, in turn, shore up hierarchies. These are often underpinned, motivated, and served by financial and political interests of powerful social groups and institutions (Bogart, 2017) disproportionately occupied by elite White men (Reeves & Friedman, 2024). Our research furthers and nuances our knowledge that social class, gender, and race collude to shape the portrayal of working-class women who work in elite spaces to derogate them as unrespectable. This process potentially sustains the elite masculinity power and privilege of elite masculinities and femininities and therefore configures our shared understanding of the (in)appropriateness of working-class women in positions of power and influence. In doing so, this discourse invites particularly classist and misogynist readings of and treatment toward them - and ultimately have the potential to prejudice our voting decision against them.

References

- Anderson, K. V. (2011). "Rhymes with blunt": Pornification and US political culture. *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 14(2), 327-368. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41940542>
- Arrieta-Castillo, C., & Berdasco-Gancedo, Y. (2020). Brexit and female leadership in Spanish digital media from a linguistic perspective. The case of Theresa May's decline. *Communication & Society*, 243-257. <https://doi.org/10.15581/003.33.2.243-257>
- Bachmann, I., Harp, D., & Loke, J. (2018). Covering Clinton (2010–2015): Meaning-making strategies in US magazine covers. *Feminist Media Studies*, 18(5), 793-809. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2017.1358204>
- Bogart, L. (2017). *Commercial culture: The Media System and the Public Interest*. Routledge.
- Brown, D. (2008) 'EU get our vote', *The Sun*, 17 Apr., p. 12
- Brown P. R. (2019). Understanding how deficit discourses work against implementing participatory approaches in Australian Indigenous policy. *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 54 (4), 401–417. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.78>
- Brown, R., & Gregg, M. (2012). The pedagogy of regret: Facebook, binge drinking and young women. *Continuum*, 26(3), 357–369. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2012.665834>
- Burge, C. D., Wamble, J. J., & Cuomo, R. R. (2020). A certain type of descriptive representative? Understanding how the skin tone and gender of candidates influences black politics. *The Journal of Politics*, 82(4), 1596-1601. <https://doi.org/10.1086/708778>
- Calvert, A. (2022). PM writes to Angela Rayner to insist 'Basic Instinct' claim was not in his name. *The Independent*. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/boris-johnson-mail-on-sunday-mail-on-sunday-labour-instinct-b2064575.html>

- Cameron, D. (2014). Gender and language ideologies. In S. Ehrlich, M. Meyerhoff & J. Holmes (Eds), *The handbook of language, gender, and sexuality* (pp.279-296). John Wile & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118584248.ch14>
- Campus, D. (2013). The double bind. In: *Women Political Leaders and the Media*. Palgrave Studies in Political Leadership. Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137295545_5
- Cushing, I. (2023). Word rich or word poor? Deficit discourses, raciolinguistic ideologies and the resurgence of the ‘word gap’ in England’s education policy. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 20(4), 305–331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15427587.2022.2102014>
- Dan, V., & Iorgoveanu, A. (2013). Still on the beaten path: How gender impacted the coverage of male and female Romanian candidates for European Office. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 18(2), 208-233. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161212473508>
- Day, K, Johnson, S., Milnes, K. & Rickett, B. (2012). Exploring women’s agency and Resistance in Health-related Contexts. *Feminism and Psychology*, 20 (2), 238 – 41. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353509359761>
- Day, K. (2020). Class discourse and the media. In K. Day, B. Rickett & M. Woolhouse, *Critical social psychology of social class*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-55965-6_4
- Drew, P. (1990). Strategies in the contest between lawyer and witness in cross-examination. In: J.N. Levi & L. E.G. Walker (Eds.) *Language in the judicial process. Law, Society and Policy*, vol 5 (pp. 39 – 64). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-3719-3_2

Eckermann, E. (1997) 'Foucault, Embodiment and Gendered Subjectivities: The Case of Voluntary Self-starvation', in A. Peterson and R. Bunton (eds) *Foucault, Health and Medicine*, (pp. 151-69). Routledge.

Edley, N., & Wetherell, M. (2001). Jekyll and Hyde: Men's constructions of feminism and feminists. *Feminism & Psychology*, 11 (4), 439–457.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353501011004>

Edwards, D., & Potter, J. (1992). *Discursive psychology*. London: Sage.

Finnegan, J. (2020). Laugh off Stone-age misogyny. The Express.

<https://www.express.co.uk/comment/columnists/richard-and-judy/1603467/misogyny-angela-rayner-brigitte-macron-piers-morgan-judy-finnigan>

Foster, E., & Kilby, L. (2023). 'Speaking as a mother': A membership categorisation analysis of child-centric talk in a UK daytime television talk show. *Feminism & Psychology*, 33(4), 550-568. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09593535231173232>

Frasca, T. J., Leskinen, E. A., & Warner, L. R. (2022). Words like weapons: Labelling women as emotional during a disagreement negatively affects the perceived legitimacy of their arguments. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 46(4), 420-437.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/03616843221123745>

Galy-Badenas, F., & Gray, F. E. (2020). Media Coverage of Rachida Dati and Najat Vallaud-Belkacem: An intersectional analysis of representations of minority women in the French political context. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 43(2), 181–201.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2020.1740900>

Gamson, W. A., Croteau, D., Hoynes, W., & Sasson, T. (1992). Media images and the social construction of reality. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18(1), 373-393.

<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.18.080192.002105>

Garcia-Blanco, I., & Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2012). The discursive construction of women politicians in the European press. *Feminist Media Studies*, 12(3), 422-441.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2011.615636>

Gill, R. (2007). Post-feminist media culture: Elements of a sensibility. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10: 2, pp. 147–166. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549407075>

Gill, R. (2008). Empowerment/sexism: Figuring female sexual agency in contemporary advertising. *Feminism & Psychology*, 18 (1), 35–60.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353507084950>

Gill, R., & Gill, R. C. (2007). *Gender and the Media*. Polity.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Harvard University Press. [ISBN 0674445449](https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353507084950)

Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk*. University of Pennsylvania press.

Gurrieri, L., Brace-Govan, J., & Cherrier, H. (2016). Controversial advertising: transgressing the taboo of gender-based violence. *European Journal of Marketing*, 50(7/8), 1448-1469. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-09-2014-0597>

Hamilton, L. T., Armstrong, E. A., Seeley, J. L., & Armstrong, E. M. (2019). Hegemonic Femininities and Intersectional Domination. *Sociological Theory*, 37(4), 315-341. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275119888248>

Hill Collins, P. (2004). *Black sexual politics: African Americans, gender, and the new racism*. Routledge.

Hodges, D. (2022). No Mister Speaker: In the name of a free Press. The Mail respectfully declines the Commons Speaker's summons for The Mail on Sunday to appear over its Angela Rayner report, as it emerges she laughed about Sharon Stone comparisons. Mail Online. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10756857/Mail-declines-Speakers-summons-Rayner-report-emerges-laughed-Stone-comparison.html>

Hughes, D. (2022). Angela Rayner rejects idea she 'enjoys sexist slurs' after calling Basic Instinct meme 'mortifying'. The Independent. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/angela-rayner-basic-instinct-joke-b2066417.html>

Iqani, M. (2015). "The consummate material girl?" The contested consumption of Winnie Madikizela-Mandela in early post-apartheid media representations. *Feminist Media Studies*, 15(5), 779-793. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1025804>

Jefferson, G. (1990). List construction as a task and resource. In G. Psathas (Ed.), *Interaction competence* (pp. 63–92). International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis and University press.

Jensen, T., & Ringrose, J. (2014). Sluts that choose vs doormat gypsies: Exploring affect in the postfeminist, visual moral economy of My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding. *Feminist Media Studies*, 14(3), 369-387. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2012.756820>

Korkmazer, B., De Ridder, S., & Van Bauwel, S. (2020). Reporting on young people, sexuality, and social media: A discourse theoretical analysis. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 23(3), 323-339.

Kuperberg R. (2018). Intersectional violence against women in politics. *Politics & Gender*. 14(4), 685-690. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1743923X18000612>

Lennox, J., Emslie, C., Sweeting, H., & Lyons, A. (2018). The role of alcohol in constructing gender & class identities among young women in the age of social media. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 58, 13-21. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2018.04.009>

Locke, A., & Budds, K. (2020). Applying critical discursive psychology to health psychology research: a practical guide, *Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine*, 8 (1), 234-247. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21642850.2020.1792307>

Long, C. (2022). The Battle of Basic Instinct was no battle at all, just an excuse for endless showboating. *The Times*. <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/politics/article/the-battle-of-basic-instinct-was-no-battle-at-all-just-an-excuse-for-endless-showboating-mvcxs2rqg?msocid=25c94d086bef630739a858bb6aa>

Lünenborg, M., & Maier, T. (2015). ‘Power Politician’ or ‘Fighting Bureaucrat’: gender and power in German political coverage. *Media, Culture & Society*, 37(2), 180-196. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443714557979>

Mason R., Bland, A., & Hall, R. (2022). Tory whips ‘asking questions’ to find MP behind Angela Rayner claims. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/apr/25/angela-rayner-sexism-misogyny-tory-whips>

Mirza, H.F. (1997). *Black British Feminism: A Reader*. Routledge.

Mitchell, K. (2011). Raunch versus prude: contemporary sex blogs and erotic memoirs by women. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 3(1), 12–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2011.627692>

Murnen, S. K., Wright, C., & Kaluzny, G. (2002). If “boys will be boys”, then girls will be victims? A meta-analytic review of the research that relates masculine ideology to sexual aggression. *Sex roles*, 46, 359-375. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1020488928736>

O'Grady, S. (2022). Snobbery over Angela Rayner’s debating skills isn’t just vile, it’s plain wrong. *Independent*. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/politics-explained/angela-rayner-oxford-union-boris-johnson>

O’Neill, D., Savigny, H., & Cann, V. (2016). Women politicians in the UK press: not seen and not heard? *Feminist Media Studies*, 16(2), 293-307. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1092458>

Owen, G. (2022a). Tories accuse Angela Rayner of Basic Instinct ploy to distract Boris: MPs claim Labour deputy leader likes to put PM 'off his stride' by crossing and uncrossing her legs at PMQs. *Mail on Sunday*. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10746873/Tories-accuse-Angela-Rayner-Basic-Instinct-ploy-crosses-uncrosses-legs-PMQs.html>

Owen, G. (2022b). Monstered by Angela Rayner's online trolls: Mail On Sunday Political Editor GLEN OWEN recounts his week of vile abuse at the hands of the Left’s Twitter warriors. *Mail Online*. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-10771069/GLEN-OWEN-recounts-week-vile-abuse-hands-Lefts-Twitter-warriors.html>

Owen, G, & Hodges, D. (2022). Revealed: Damning testimony from four MPs of Angela Rayner's vulgar joke about Sharon Stone ploy. *Mail Online*. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10765051/Damning-testimony-four-MPs-Angela-Rayners-vulgar-joke-Sharon-Stone-ploy.html>

Palmer, L. A. (2020). Diane Abbott, misogynoir and the politics of Black British feminism's anticolonial imperatives: 'In Britain too, it's as if we don't exist'. *The Sociological Review*, 68(3), 508-523. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380261198924>

Peace, P. (2003). Balancing Power: The discursive maintenance of gender inequality by wo/men at university. *Feminism & Psychology*, 13(2), 159-180.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353503013002003>

Pilote, A. M. & Montreuil, A. (2019). Its 2019 what is the proper way for politician to dress. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/its-2019-whats-the-proper-way-for-politicians-to-dress-126968>

Platell, A. (2022). Oh, do stop playing the misogyny card , Angela - it's not true. pp. 19. *Mail on Sunday*.

Ponsford, D. (2024). Partisan publishers: Why Keir Starmer will have an easier election than Neil Kinnock. *Press Gazette*, March 13th, 2024.

Potter, J. (1996). *Representing reality: Discourse, rhetoric and social construction*. Sage Publications, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446222119>

Reay, D. (2004). Gendering Bourdieu's concept of capitals? Emotional capital, women and social class. In L. Adkins, & B. Skeggs (Eds.), *Feminism after Bourdieu* (pp. 57–74). Blackwell.

Reeves, A., & Friedman, S. (2024). Born to rule: The making and remaking of the British elite. In *Born to Rule*. Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674297708>

Rickett, B. & Roman, A. (2013). 'Heroes and matriarchs': A Discourse analysis of female door supervisors' talk around violence. *Gender, Work and Organisation*. 20 (6), 664-667.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12002>

Rickett, B. (2016). Feminist psychology – post-structuralism, class, and maternal subjectivities: Where are we and where should we go next? *Feminism and Psychology*. 26 (3), 320 – 326. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353516641140>

Rickett, B., & Morris, A, (2021). ‘Mopping up tears’ in the academy - Discourse in working-class, female lecturers talk around emotional labour and belonging in contemporary UK Higher Education. Discourse. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2020.1834952>

Rickett, B., & Thompson, L. (2024). Beyond the academic imposter syndrome: A feminist relational discourse analysis of accounts of (un)belonging from UK working-class women academics. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2024.2406339>

Ringrose, J., & Walkerdine, V. (2008). Regulating the abject: The TV make-over as site of neo-liberal reinvention toward bourgeois femininity. *Feminist media studies*, 8(3), 227-246.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14680770802217279>

Rubchak, M. J. (2009). Ukraine’s ancient matriarch as a topos in constructing a feminine identity. *Feminist Review*, 92(1), 129-150. <https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.2009.5>

Sakki, I., & Martikainen, J. (2022). ‘Sanna, aren't you ashamed?’ Affective-discursive practices in online misogynist discourse of Finnish prime minister Sanna Marin. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 52(3), 435-447. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2827>

Sangster J. (2007). Making a fur coat: Women, the labouring body, and working-class history. *International Review of Social History*, 52(2), 241-270.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020859007002933>

Skeggs, B. (1997). *Formations of class & gender: Becoming respectable*. Sage Publications Ltd.

- Skeggs, B. (2005). The making of class and gender through visualizing moral subject formation. *Sociology*, 39(5), 965-982. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038505058381>
- Spracklen, K. (2018). Theorising Northernness and northern culture: the north of England, northern Englishness, and sympathetic magic. In *Northernness, northern culture and Northern narratives* (pp. 4-16). Routledge.
- Taylor, Y. (2006). Intersections of class and sexuality in the classroom. *Gender and Education*, 18(4), 447-452. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540250600805179>
- Thornton, M. C. (2010). 'He loves strong, intelligent women. They're his Kryptonite:' Michelle Obama, gender, race, and the black press. In D. Cunnigen and M. A. Bruce (Eds.) *Race in the age of Obama* (pp. 29-53). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Tolley, E. (2015). *Framed: Media and the coverage of race in Canadian politics*. UBC Press.
- Van der Pas, D. J., & Aldering, L. (2020). Gender differences in political media coverage: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Communication*, 70(1), 114-143. <https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/iqz046>
- van Zoonen, L. (2006). The personal, the political and the popular: A woman's guide to celebrity politics. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 9(3), 287-301. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367549406066>
- Ward, O. (2016). Intersectionality and press coverage of political campaigns: Representations of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic female candidates at the UK 2010 general election. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 22(1), 43-66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/194016121667319>

Wetherell, M. (1998). Positioning and interpretative repertoires: Conversation analysis and poststructuralism in dialogue. *Discourse and Society* (9), 387–412.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926598009003005>

Wetherell, M., & Edley, N. (2014). A discursive psychological framework for analyzing men and masculinities. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* (15), 355–364.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037148>

Wiggins, S., & Potter, J. (2017). Discursive psychology. In C. Willig, & W. Stainton-Rogers (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology* (p. 93–109). Sage.

Williams, H. (2021). ‘You can spot them a mile off’: young women’s negotiations of class and the sexual culture of shame. *Sexuality & Culture* 25, 1273–1289.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-021-09824-x>

Willott, S., & Griffin, C. (1997). ‘Wham bam, am I a man?’ Unemployed men talk about masculinities. *Feminism & Psychology*, 7(1), 107–128.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353597071012>

Wilson, H., & Huntington, A. (2006). Deviant (m) others: The construction of teenage motherhood in contemporary discourse. *Journal of Social Policy*, 35(1), 59-76.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279405009335>

Biographical Note

Dr Laura Kilby is a Professor of Social and Discursive Psychology at the University of the West of Scotland. She draws on analytic methods that cohere with a Discursive Psychology approach to examine both textual and visual discourse. Her research examines core areas of identity including race, gender, sexuality, and social class and the intersections of such to explore how people experience forms of everyday exclusion or marginalisation in relation to

their identity. She has a particular interest in examining how identity work features in media and political discourse to achieve ideological ends and the implications of this for gender equity.

Dr Bridgette Rickett is Head of Institute of Social Sciences at Sheffield Hallam University in the UK. Her research practice employs critical and feminist-informed qualitative methods to understand how discourses can shape our identities, relations, and experiences. A key aim is to examine situated inequalities, particularly within the intersection of social class and gender. Bridgette is the founder and chair of POSCUPI, a collaboration between UK psychologists who examine the policy and practice implications for the psychology of social class. In the latter role, Bridgette works with organisations to enhance inclusion for both women and working-class origin employees.