Foundations of Social Science Research Proforma

by Kate Marston

CPT 898 Summative/Formative Assessment 1.

(You should use this format for the formative assessment in week 6 and the submission of summative assessment 1 on 11/11/15. Figures in brackets are maximum word lengths excluding bibliographic references)

1. Research Question (100 words)

How are lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT+)[1] young people's digitally mediated peer cultures shaping their sexual and gender subjectivities?

My research aims to: 📋 1

- Identify what types of social networking activities LGBT+ young people engage with and which activities they imbue with sexual and gendered meaning

- Explore in what ways and in what contexts LGBT+ young people experience social networking sites as informative, fun, helpful, risky and dangerous 📋 2

- Understand the discursive and material effects of performing LGBT+ identities on social networking sites

89 words   Good

---

[1] The 'plus' in LGBT+ refers to the multitude of minority sexual and gender identities young people identify with beyond lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans.   Good

2. Research Field (150 words)

My research is informed by three interdisciplinary fields:

1. Childhood studies is concerned with concepts of childhood, children's rights, social relations and identities

2. Sexuality and gender studies examines ideas about sexuality/gender, how they shape social roles and identities, the stratification of experiences of sexuality/gender by class, race and age and the construction of sexual/gender cultures and meanings

3. Digital culture studies explores the way digital technologies, including the internet and mobile communication, are shaping everyday lives 3

Academics working across the above fields are part of an emerging tradition of research interested in children and young people's understanding and negotiation of their sexual/gender identities, relationships and cultures and the increasingly central role digital technologies play in this process (for example see De Ridder, 2015; Duguay, 2014; Kofoed and Ringrose, 2012; Van Doorn, 2010). This research creates synergies across a range of disciplines but I will primarily draw from sociology, education and media studies.

140 words

3. Epistemological perspective 1 (150 words)

Symbolic Interactionism ('SI')

- American scholarly tradition influenced by the Chicago School of Sociology and coined by Herbert Blumer (1969) with three basic principles:
    - People act towards things (e.g objects, people, institutions) based on the meanings they have for them `Good`
    - Meanings arise out of social interaction
    - Meanings change through social interaction `Excellent`

- SI is a fragmented school of thought (Fine, 1993) however Goffman's dramaturgy remains an influential subfield (Pascale, 2011).

- Goffman sees social interactions in terms of people performing for each other as though actors in a play, he's interested in impression management and the way people try to project an identity accordant with the expectations of their audience and stage (Goffman, 1959) `Good`

- SI influenced theories of the self: identity is not a bounded immutable entity but a product of interaction. People actively engage in forming who they are, the self is 'symbolic, situationally contingent, and structured' (Fine, 1993, p. 77) `Excellent`

- Methodologically diverse but often associated with ethnography and in-depth interviewing (Sandstrom, Martin and Fine, 2001) `Excellent`

150 words

4. Epistemological perspective 2

Posthumanism

- Rejects the pretension that humanistic man can represent the totality of our species (Braidotti, 2013)

- De-centres the human subject and re-conceptualises it as nomadic, hybridic and relational calling for greater recognition of non-human actors (Braidotti, 2013 Excellent Gabriel and Jacobs, 2008)

- The subject is a multiplicity, a temporary grouping of relations to other bodies and things (i.e an assemblage) that is always in process, changing, moving (i.e Good becoming) (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988)

- Onto-epistemological approach: social inquiry does not simply describe the world as it is but enacts it (Law and Urry, 2004, p. 391), researchers are entangled Excellent within the assemblage they seek to study therefore what is known is also being made differently (Ringrose and Coleman, 2013)

- Methodologically enacts 'micropolitical investigations' ((Braidotti, 2007, p. 69), engaging with the messy realities of the social world and accounting for complexity (Ringrose and Coleman, 2013)

- Utilises traditional research methods (e.g ethnography, interviews etc) often in creative and participatory ways translating a 'heteroglossia of data'[2] (Braidotti, Excellent 2007, p. 68)

- Risks ignoring 'pressing human-centred policy problems' (Gabriel and Jacobs, 2008, p. 536) and the coexistence of multiplicities with 'grinding stability and exploitative continuity' (Blackman et al, 2008, p. 19) Excellent

152 words

---

[2] Heteroglossia describes the coexistence of two or more voices within a text, especially contradictory or conflicting voices. Excellent

4

5. How has the perspective identified in box 3, above been used in your field of research? (150 words)

- SI is increasingly used to understand online identity (see Duguay, 2014; Van Doorn, 2011; Robinson, 2007; Fernback, 2007; Miller, 1995). `Good`

- Utilising Goffman's impression management framework Duguay (2014) explores LGBT+ identity disclosure on SNS and the way SNS flattens 'spatial, temporal and social boundaries' resulting in collapsed social contexts (p. 2).

- Central to her study is: `Good`

  - Understanding how LGBT+ young people act towards their SNS profiles based on the meanings they have for them e.g participants identified indications of sexual identity on their SNS profiles rather than Duguay assuming sexual meaning (Duguay, 2014, p. 7) `Excellent`

  - Seeing how these meanings arise out of social interaction e.g how her participants posted, commented, tagged with others reactions in mind (Duguay, 2014, pp. 7 - 9)

  - Recognising how her participants actively negotiate the meanings that arise e.g she looks at the different strategies participants employ to manage sexual identity disclosure (Duguay, 2014, pp. 9 - 11)

- Duguay observes participants in real SNS situations and seeks to develop 'thick descriptions' of meaning-making through semi-structured interviews `Excellent` (Duguay, 2014, p. 6).

145 words

6. How has the perspective identified in box 4, above been used in your field of research? (150 words)

- Gender and sexuality researchers are embracing posthumanism (see Coffey, 2013; Kofoed and Ringrose, 2012; Renold and Epstein, 2010; Barad, 2003). `Excellent`

- Renold and Ringrose (2011), for example, draw on the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987) and Braidotti (2006) to explore young femininities. They:

  o Critique contemporary discourses of 'sexualisation' for 'obscuring the messy realities of lived sexual subjectivities' (Renold and Ringrose, 2011, p. 392) `Excellent`

  o Explore human and non-human actors: bridging the separation of young people's online and offline experiences (Renold and Ringrose, 2011, p. 395) `Excellent`

  o See young femininities as 'always in-movement' (becoming) illustrating 'disruptions of predictable developmental linear transition of girl-teen-woman' (Renold and Ringrose, 2011, p. 403)

  o Map the socio-cultural-material connections (assemblages) through which femininities are experienced, observing the range of performative spaces available to their participants (the street, sitting room, online, school) (Renold and Ringrose, 2011, p. 395) `Good`

  o Explore 'schizoid subjectivities'[3] and contradictory femininities such as participants simultaneously performing sexual knowingness and sexual innocence (Renold and Ringrose, 2011, p. 396 - 397)

  o Aim to expand the 'methodological imagination' (Renold and Ringrose, 2011, p. 394) bringing together data from two creative `Excellent` ethnographic studies to explore subversive 'micro-movements' in the case studies of three young females (Renold and Ringrose, 2011, p. 392)

148 words

---

[3] Derived from Braidotti's concept of the 'schizoid double pull' which describes the 'simultaneous displacement and refixing of binary gender oppositions' (Braidotti, 2006, p. 49) `Excellent`

7. Choice and justification of epistemological framework for research question in box 1.

My research question could be explored from either epistemological framework. I identify with the posthumanism of Braidotti, Deleuze and Guattari because I:

- believe the subject is not a bounded immutable entity however unlike SI I do not think the subject can actively structure itself [Good]

- see subjects as always 'becoming' relationally to other bodies (e.g peers, family, teachers etc) and things (mobile phones, SNS, clothes etc) (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980) [Good]

- reject the clear demarcations drawn between humans and technology. For SI digital technologies are 'simply backdrops to social action' (Gabriel and Jacobs, 2008, p. 530). I see humans and non-humans as 'intra-acting'[4] rather than interacting (Barad, 2003, p. 803) [Good]

- respect posthumanism for staying with the complexity and contradictions of young people's sexual/gendered lives, recognising different textures rather than converting data into something 'smooth, coherent and precise' (Ringrose and Coleman, 2013, p. 5)

- endeavor to contextualise posthumanist research within macro power relations (e.g the ongoing pathologising of LGBT+ young people) whilst shedding light on micro subversions to highlight the vulnerabilities of oppressive norms [Excellent]

150 words   💬 4

---

[4] Intra-action is a concept coined by Barad (2007) to describe how individual entities or agents do not 'preexist their acting upon one another' (interaction) but emerge from within the relationship (intra-action) (Kleinman, 2012, p. 77; see also Kerr, 2014).

Bibliography   Excellent

Barad, K. 2003. Posthuman Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter. *Signs* 28(3), pp. 801 – 831.

Blackman, L., Cromby, J., Hook, D., Papadopoulos, D., and Walkerdine, V. 2008. Creating Subjectivities. *Subjectivity* 22(1), pp. 1 – 27.

Blumer, H. 1969. *Symbolic Interactionism*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Braidotti, R. 2013. *The Posthuman*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Braidotti, R. 2007. Feminist epistemology after postmodernism: critiquing science, technology and globalisation. *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 32(1), p. 65 – 74.

Braidotti, R. 2006. *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*. 1st ed. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Coffey, J. 2013. Bodies, body work and gender : Exploringa Deleuzian approach. *Journal of Gender Studies* 22(1), pp. 3 – 16.

Deleuze and Guattari, 1988. *A Thousand Plateaus*. 1st ed. London: Athlone Press.

De Ridder, S. 2015. Are digital media institutions shaping youth's intimate stories? Strategies and tactics in the social networking site Netlog. *New Media & Society* 17(3), pp. 356 - 374.

Excellent

Duguay, S. 2014. "He has a way gayer Facebook than I do": Investigating sexual identity disclosure and context collapse on a social networking site. *New Media & Society* , 16(6), pp. 1 - 17.

Fernback, J. 2007. Beyond the diluted community concept: a symbolic interactionist perspective on online social relations. *New Media and Society* 9(1) pp. 46 – 69.

Fine, G. 1993. The Sad Demise, Mysterious Disappearance, and Glorious Triumph of Symbolic Interactionism. *Annual Review of Sociology* 19(1), pp. 61 – 87.

Gabriel, M. and Jacobs, K. The Post-Social Turn: Challenges for Housing Research. *Housing Studies* 23(4), pp. 527 – 540.

Goffman, E. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City: Anchor.
Kleinman, A. 2012. Intra-actions. *Mousse* 34(1), pp. 76-81.

Kerr, S. 2014. *Three Minute Theory: What is Intra-Action?* [Online]. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v0SnstJoEec. [Accessed: 02 November 2015].

Kofoed, J. and Ringrose, J. 2012. Travelling and sticky affects: Exploring teens and sexualized cyberbulling through a Butlerian-Deleuzian-Guattarian lens. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 33(1), pp. 5 – 20.

Law, J. and Urry, J. 2004. Enacting the social. *Economy and Society* 33(3), pp. 390.

Miller, H. 1995. The Presentation of Self in Electronic Life : Goffman on the Internet. In : *Embodied Knowledge and Virtual Space Conference*. London, June 1995. London: University College London.

Excellent

Pascale, C. 2011. *Cartographies of Knowledge: Exploring Qualitative Epistemologies*. 1st ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Renold, E. and Ringrose, J. 2011. Schizoid Subjectivities? Re-theorizing teen girls' sexual cultures in an era of 'sexualisation'. *Journal of Sociology* 47(4), pp. 389 – 409.

Renold, E. and Epstein, D. 2010. Sexualities, Schooling and Schizoid Agendas. In : Martinsson, L., and Reimers, E., eds. *Norm-struggles : Sexualities in Contentions*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.

Ringrose, J. and Coleman, R. 2013. *Deleuze and Research Methodologies*. 1st ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Robinson, L. 2007. The cyberself: the self-ing project goes online, symbolic interaction in the digital age. *New Media & Society* 9(1), pp. 93 – 110.

Sandstrom, K., Martin, D., and Fine, G. 2001. Symbolic Interactionism at the end of the Century. In: Ritzer, G. and Smart, B. eds. *Handbook of Social Theory*. 1st ed. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Van Doorn, N. 2010. The ties that bind: the networked performance of gender, sexuality and friendship on Myspace. *New Media & Society* 12(4), pp. 583 – 602.

Excellent

Foundations of Social Science Research Proforma

FINAL GRADE

85/100

GENERAL COMMENTS

Instructor

This is an excellent answer which clearly demonstrates a high level of achievement in meeting the learning outcomes for this module. You write with a maturity and succinctness which is often missing from discussions of post humanism.

Your answer is very well referenced and is clearly based on extensive further reading. Noteworthy is that as well as providing concise and critical descriptions of two epistemologies you are also able to talk about how these perspectives have been used by other researchers in the creation of knowlegde both in your field and across the social sciences.

It is pleasing to note that you have responded so well to the guidance given on how to complete this assessment in lectures and seminars. I'd like to use your paper as an exemplar next year.

Nevertheless there is room for improvement.

The second of your three aims in box one fits uneasily alongside the precision of your other aims: are the experiences you list here an exhaustive list or merely illustrative.

In box two you explain that your research will be located across three inter-disciplinary fields. In the words you have available to you it would be impossible to do these areas justice when trying to explain them. It might have been better to say that your research sits at the intersection of these three fields but for the purposes of this assessment I shall focus on just one .... This will enable you to engage more directly with the key debates in your field (however defined) and at the moment you could be doing that much more convincingly. For example how similar or different is your research to that of Duguay or Renold and Ringrose? Where is the gap in the litertature which your work fills?

You can improve your mark by:

Noting my comments above and in the text.

Say something about research design and reflect

upon your research aims in box seven.

Comment 1
A clearly stated research question and aims.

Comment 2
Is this an exhaustive list?

QM Good
Good

QM Good
Good

Comment 3
Three quite wide fields: some examples of influential papers that might be relevant to your work would help you achieve some focus here.

QM Good
Good
Additional Comment   see my comment above

QM Good
Good

QM Excellent
Excellent

QM Good
Good

QM Excellent
Excellent

QM Excellent
Excellent

QM	**Excellent**
	Excellent

QM	**Good**
	Good

QM	**Excellent**
	Excellent

QM	**Excellent**
	Excellent

QM	**Excellent**
	Excellent

QM	**Excellent**
	Excellent

PAGE 5

QM	**Good**
	Good

QM	**Good**
	Good

QM	**Excellent**
	Excellent

QM	**Excellent**
	Excellent

PAGE 6

QM	**Excellent**
	Excellent

QM	**Excellent**
	Excellent

QM	**Excellent**
	Excellent

QM	**Good**
	Good

QM **Excellent**
Excellent

QM **Excellent**
Excellent

QM **Good**
Good

QM **Good**
Good

QM **Good**
Good

QM **Excellent**
Excellent

Comment 4
More needed here about research design

QM **Excellent**
Excellent

QM **Excellent**
Excellent

QM **Excellent**
Excellent

QM **Excellent**
Excellent