City Research Online

City St George's, University of London

Citation: Cohen, R. L., Hughes, C. & Lampard, R. (2011). The methodological impact of feminism: A troubling issue for sociology?. Sociology, 45(4), pp. 570-586. doi: 10.1177/0038038511406599

This is the unspecified version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version. To cite this item please consult the publisher's version.

Permanent repository link: https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/2247/

Link to published version: https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038511406599

Copyright and Reuse: Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, unless otherwise indicated, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way. For full details of reuse please refer to City Research Online policy.

City Research Online: http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/ publications@citystgeorges.ac.uk

The methodological impact of feminism: A troubling issue for Sociology?

Rachel Lara Cohen
Christina Hughes
Richard Lampard

As British Sociology seeks to overcome a historical distaste for quantitative research methods, one of the discipline's most dynamic sub-fields may prove troublesome. Feminist research thrives both within and outside sociology. As such it provides new insights and enriches the discipline, something recognized by the 2010 Benchmarking Review of Sociology. Yet, feminist research has long been associated with an antipathy towards quantitative methods. This article explores the extent to which this persists. Methodological patterns in articles from 19 journals in the interdisciplinary field of 'women's studies' are analyzed. Perhaps surprisingly, a large proportion of articles employed quantitative methods. Those engaged with feminist literature or epistemologies were, however, unlikely to be quantitative. This article also highlights the importance of national contexts, suggesting perhaps we should not ask why UK research is so qualitative, but why US research is so quantitative.

Keywords: British sociology, Documentary analysis, Feminism, Quantitative methods, Women's studies

Introduction

The 2010 International Benchmarking Review of UK Sociology suggested with some concern that 'British Sociology remains weak in quantitative methods' (BSA/HaPS/ESRC, 2010: 23). Such disquiet has been a feature of UK Sociology over recent years and has generated debate (e.g. Payne et al., 2004; May, 2005; Payne et al., 2005; Payne, 2007; Platt, 2007; Crompton, 2008; Savage and Burrows, 2009; Erola, 2010). For example, whilst Payne et al. (2004) see British sociology as being stoutly qualitative, May (2005) suggests that the picture is more nuanced, with quantitative articles more often found in journals that relate to specific sub-areas of sociology. The Benchmarking Review notes this methodological pluralism. Nonetheless, it concludes by warning that unless UK sociologists lose their ambivalence, and hostility, to quantitative approaches we will forfeit possibilities for engagement in larger, interdisciplinary or internationally comparative, research.

In contrast, the Benchmarking Review is upbeat about the contribution to the future international significance of UK sociology of another area of study: women and gender studies, characterizing this as 'a very vibrant field' (BSA/HaPS/ESRC, 2010: 15). Importantly, 'theoretical development, epistemology and methodology mark the interdiscipliarity of this sub-field, which has very good transnational knowledge flows' (2010: 16). Thus, methodological development is highly interdisciplinary; sociologists engaged in researching women and gender import ideas and debates from the broader feminist field, thereby invigorating and shaping development in sociology. However, despite the contributions of this field, the relationship between sociology and women's studies 'remains troubling', particularly in the area of social theory where much feminist work is dismissed (2010: 37). The review suggests that this is a loss and that, because of its innovative and cutting edge potential and the already serious contributions made by women's studies to developments in sociology, 'the relationship between sociology and Gender and Women's Studies needs to be strengthened' (2010: 37).

Aside from the brief mention of feminist methodology, quoted above, the Benchmarking Review does not consider the broader characteristics of methodological approaches in women and gender research. This lack of attention to feminist methodologies is surprising given that much feminist research into gender is epistemologically rooted in philosophical and political opposition to the main quantitative approaches and resulting kinds of knowledge (e.g. Oakley, 1981; Stanley and Wise, 1993; Fonow and Cook, 2005). Accordingly, this could, perhaps justly, be considered as contributing to the methodological 'problem' with quantitative methods that the review highlights. As such, gender research remains a rather troubling and troublesome field. It troubles those who believe that a focus on gender is passé or inconsequential to the debates of founding fathers and

contemporary theorists, and it is troubling because it involves the use of technologies at the 'soft' end of the methodological spectrum.

The epistemological opposition of second wave feminists to positivist methods is now well-versed (and summarized widely within feminist and general methods textbooks – e.g. Blaxter et al, 2010; Letherby, 2003; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002). The continuing effect of this critique on what is taught as feminist methods is seen in a recent review of feminist methods textbooks, which finds scant space given to quantitative methods (Undurraga, 2010). However, given the interdisciplinary space of feminism, most feminist scholars absorb both transdisciplinary feminist *and* disciplinary methodological practices (accordingly, feminism is both exporter and importer). Thus the question remains as to what methodological form feminist research currently takes and, therefore, what its future methodological contribution to sociology might be.

The contribution of feminism to the development of sociology has been the focus of two key studies. In the UK, Platt (2007) considered the intellectual and social impact of the women's movement on publications in the main general British sociology journals (*British Journal of Sociology*; *Sociological Review*; and *Sociology)* from the 1950s to 2004. Platt provides a gendered review of trends in published sociology, focusing on women's representation amongst authors, the presence of 'female' topics, such as family, women, feminism and gender, and the methods used. In the US, Dunn and Waller (2000) reviewed gender-content articles published in 15 major North American sociology journals between 1984 and 1993. They distinguish between 'female' topics and 'feminist oriented' research, examining whether there is a distinction in methodological approach between those drawing on a feminist framework (and problematising or challenging women's disadvantage, although not necessarily using an explicitly 'feminist' framing) and those adopting a 'gender issue approach', in which women are simply the object of study.

As one might expect, Platt's and Dunn and Waller's findings indicate a complex picture of the linkages between methodology, gender research, feminism and sociology. Platt's study shows that as represented in the three journals studied, UK sociology is strongly qualitative. Moreover, '*Both* sexes have always had only a minority of quantitative articles; the difference between the sexes has never been large, through its direction has fluctuated' (Platt, 2007: 968, emphasis in original). Dunn and Waller show that feminist-oriented studies are more likely to be qualitative than 'gender issue' studies. Nonetheless, this US-based study finds that irrespective of whether articles were 'feminist oriented' or 'gender issue', and of first author's sex, the majority of articles were based on secondary, quantitative data – highlighting the strong quantitative bent of US sociology.

These two studies provide useful analyses of publication in sociology journals and the current and historical influence of feminist studies, and particular feminist methodological concerns, within the discipline. However, they have two limitations. First, neither is concerned with the wider picture of the publication of feminist work. Consequently we gain a picture of feminist interests within mainstream sociological

publishing but not insight into the methodological preferences of the broader field from which ideas are imported. Second, because both studies are nationally-based (and address different questions) they lack an international comparative dimension. Given the concerns of the Benchmarking Review to ensure UK Sociology's international competitiveness, a broader examination, internationally contextualizing UK sociology, is needed.

Our internationally-oriented analysis focuses upon articles published in nineteen gender, women's studies, feminist and other women-oriented journals in 2007. The findings indicate a relatively strong quantitative presence. Superficially, this is surprising, given the presumed weakness of quantitative research within feminist studies. Our findings also indicate, however, that only a minority of articles explicitly engage with feminist debates either broadly or in terms of methodological justification. Indeed, it is within articles where no empirical research, whether quantitative or qualitative, is discussed that feminist scholarship is most likely to be found. In order to explore these findings more fully, our analysis considers geographical influence; numbers and sexes of authors; and the relationship to feminism/gender studies of the journals in question. We undertake logistic regression to consider the impacts of these factors, controlling for each other, on the frequency of use of quantitative methods in women's studies publishing.

We began by noting that the dual calls – to strengthen gender research within Sociology and to overcome a qualitative bias – may be at odds. To the extent that this is the case, feminism may continue to be troublesome for sociology: perhaps a sociology that embraces feminism will be even more qualitative and fall further behind in the international race for 'excellence'. Those troubled by this possibility may be somewhat quieted by our initial finding of extensive quantification in research and scholarship on gender and women's issues. Yet our findings highlight, perhaps even more than previous studies, the disinclination of those most fully engaged with feminism to use quantitative methods. Therefore the story is not all salutary. This is, however, complicated by a range of factors. One is the finding of US exceptionalism in the use of quantitative methods in women and gender-related research. In the conclusion we draw on these findings and consider the interweaving politics of methodological approach and disciplinary status.

Methods

We report here on analysis of articles published in gender, women's studies, feminist and other women-oriented journals. Journals were selected on the basis of their inclusion in the 2007 ISI citation index ('Women's Studies' category).[1] Therefore, in contrast to studying 'feminist-oriented' research in mainstream sociology journals (Dunn and Waller, 2000; Platt, 2007) we examine feminism as an interdisciplinary project, exploring the methods employed by authors publishing in explicitly feminist, gender, or women-oriented research spaces. To produce comparability and a temporal focus, articles from each journal's first and last issues of 2007 were analysed, unless an issue was a 'Special Issue', in which case a neighbouring issue

was chosen.[2] We restricted attention to English language publications only. The following analyses relate to 256 articles in nineteen journals, listed in Table 1:

[Table 1]

In this study we focused on and coded the following:

Methodological Approach: Detailed coding of different methodological approaches was adopted. The coding was then simplified into three main categories: Secondary/Theoretical - involving a reliance on theory (without empirical research) or complete reliance on others' research; Qualitative - involving any kind of qualitative analysis (including interviews, textual or documentary analysis, and participant observation); Quantitative - involving any kind of quantification. Where articles involved a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods (with both being of substantial importance) they were coded as both qualitative and quantitative (and subsequently as 'mixed'). All quantitative analyses were then coded for complexity (on the basis of categories used by Payne et al. (2004): descriptive; bivariate; inferential; multivariate).

Engagement with Feminism: This proved one of the most difficult aspects of coding and we return to the wider methodological issues below. Primarily, we sought to make an assessment of whether authors were explicitly drawing on feminist debate and discourse throughout an article and, more specifically, in terms of their methodological approach. We approached this conceptually thorny issue in two ways. First we looked for a simple association through a keyword search for feminist terms. This was coded three ways, according to: a) Whether the words feminism(s) or feminist(s) were used anywhere in the article; b) the total number of times that these words were used; c) whether the authors explicitly positioned themselves as feminist. The last of these is clearly not always easy to judge, and to some extent one might assume this given the location of publication. However, we sought statements that demonstrated an assumed identity with a feminist research community (for example, 'Feminist researchers need to examine…' or 'this follows other feminist research…'). Occasionally the statement was more explicit (for example, 'I adopt a feminist perspective…').

Methodological Justification: Secondly, we were interested in whether authors offered their own methodological justifications and if so, whether these involved explicitly feminist or transformative rationales. We therefore sought direct links between a feminist orientation and methodology. As such we identified articles which rationalized their methodological choice as 'feminist', which might for example involve explicitly claiming to be working within a feminist epistemological framework, but might also include a linkage between methodological approach and feminist anti-oppressive or liberatory practice. Articles which rationalized methodological choice on emancipatory or transformative grounds, without explicitly linking this to feminism, were coded as transformative. Transformative goals might, for example, involve selecting methodologies designed to allow women or other oppressed groups voice(s), or methodologies which expose and/or counter

forms of inequality or improve the lives of women through contributions to policy or social movements. Transformative and feminist rationales frequently overlap, but since transformative rationales may spring from other epistemologies (anti-imperialist, socialist, etc.) we separate the smaller number of explicitly feminist methodological rationales from this wider set. Those giving technical rationales (e.g. focusing on reliability and validity, or simply efficacy) were coded accordingly. Many articles did not include a methodological rationale and were coded as having 'none'.

Framing of publication space: Although the journals examined are all categorized as 'women's studies' for the purposes of ISI journal citation reports, some are explicitly 'feminist' titles. As such they may represent a different type of publication space. To investigate this we coded journals on the basis of their titles (see Table 1), differentiating five types of publication space: 'feminist', 'women's studies', 'gender'-related, of or about 'women' in relation to particular issues, and 'other'.

In order to locate the articles in a broader context, we coded several other items including: the number of authors, the national locations and gender (if known) of the first four authors, the specific journal that the article appeared in, and article length.

In the spirit of our emphasis on methodological choice, we reflect briefly on the methods and methodological choices involved in writing this article. Our sole-authored work suggests we include a predominantly qualitative researcher, a predominantly quantitative researcher, and a mixed-methods researcher, but we have all also collaborated with researchers with different methodological approaches to our own. We recognize that our own methodological approaches are based on a combination of elements: epistemology but also pragmatism, existing skills, disciplinary norms and personal preferences. The choice of a quantitative, content-analysis, technique in this instance was made quite pragmatically – we had questions which called for generalization: What methods are being used within the field of women's studies and with what justifications? Nonetheless, when coding quantitatively publications that differed in length, structure, style and audience, the requirement to treat them as equivalent units of analysis felt reductive and, often, frustrating. For example complex theoretical approaches had to be classified simply as 'feminist', or not. Similarly, in order to use logistic regression we restricted attention to a binary outcome, quantitative or not. Moreover, we recognize that this analysis focuses on research by examining (one of) its endpoints: published articles. To the extent that research is a process, including conversations with colleagues and with research participants, reading and writing multiple types of publications, classes and seminars, as well as time spent mulling over ideas, it cannot be 'boiled down' to published articles. Nevertheless, the findings that follow provide a rough-and-ready map of the methodological terrain. And documenting the extent of a situation in a relatively basic way may act as a starting point for understanding its origins and implications, using other, process and case-specific approaches.

Findings

Of the articles examined, more than half (51 percent) used quantitative methods, either alone or in combination with qualitative methods, with 43 percent relying solely on quantitative methods (see Table 2). This was a larger proportion than for articles that relied solely on qualitative methods (38 percent) or solely on secondary analysis/theory (12 percent). In addition, in contrast to Payne et al.'s (2004) analysis of quantification in British sociology journals, over three-quarters of the quantitative articles included statistical testing, and multivariate analyses, not simply descriptive statistics. At first glance this looks like methodological pluralism and suggests a willingness of feminists to engage seriously with quantification.

[Tables 2 and 3]

Yet, despite the fact that all the articles we examined appeared in journals that the ISI citation reports categorize as 'women's studies', the extent to which authors identified themselves as feminist scholars or engaged with feminist literature and methodological debate varied. As Table 3 shows, only one quarter of authors explicitly self-positioned as feminist. Moreover, 40 percent of articles included no mentions of 'feminism' or 'feminist'. Another 35 percent included between one and 10 uses of these words. At the upper extreme, 13 percent of articles included 26 or more references to 'feminism'/'feminist', suggesting close engagement with feminist literature and debates. Discussion of an explicitly feminist standpoint or emphasis, which could include a critique of feminism, is therefore relatively rare in the journals sampled. Perhaps publication in 'women's studies' journals[3] obviates any necessity to defend a feminist position or perhaps the audience for such journals does not require extensive explanation of feminism, whereas in more general publications both may be necessary. There is also, however, relatively little overt evidence of the methodological influence of feminism. What we term 'feminist' justifications were especially rare, given in only 11 percent of articles. Explicit discussion of the relationship between feminism and method does not therefore comprise a common part of published research, even within women's studies journals. Another 24 percent of articles related their methodological choice to transformative goals, but did not frame these as 'feminist'. The remaining two-thirds of articles contained either no methodological justification (27 percent) or other, primarily technical, justifications (39 percent). This raises the question of where the space is for broader concerns around feminism and methodology. Certainly, journals such as *Feminist Economics* have a strong methodological strain and articles such as Power's (2004) point to a set of distinctive feminist methodological concerns amongst feminist economists. However, overall within these journals there appears to be a relative lack of concern with methodology.

[Table 4]

We examine methodological practice by engagement with feminism in Table 4. What stands out is that those who most explicitly articulate their feminism, however this is measured, are the least likely to employ quantitative methods. Thus only 16 percent of articles in which authors take an avowedly feminist position include quantitative analysis (either solely quantitative analysis or mixed methods), as compared to 63

percent of articles where authors do not explicitly position themselves as feminists. Similarly, articles that do not include a single reference to feminism(s) or feminist(s) are very likely to include quantitative methods (over 80 percent do) but when articles include just one or two uses of the words that falls to about 50 percent. With three to ten mentions it falls again to around 30 percent, and is lower still where there are more references to feminism. Thus, the more authors engage with feminist ideas or literature the less likely they are to use quantitative methods. Concomitantly, they are more likely to use qualitative methods. Additionally, articles with over ten mentions of feminism are the most likely to include no primary empirical analysis at all – perhaps suggesting that feminism is most influential within theoretical, rather than empirical work. These associations between engagement with feminism and method are statistically significant ($p<0.001$).

Different methodological justifications are also associated with the use of different methods (a significant finding: $p<0.01$). Of articles offering 'feminist' methodological justifications, just 15 percent included any quantitative analysis, and half of these also included qualitative methods. In raw numbers, that leaves just two articles rationalizing their methodology as feminist *and* using solely quantitative methods. In contrast, 78 percent of those employing an explicitly feminist justification used qualitative methods exclusively or in part. It is however worth noting that, of those who gave a transformative justification for methodological choice, more employed solely quantitative methods (48 percent) than solely qualitative (28 percent). Thus qualitative and quantitative methods are both used in aid of the broader feminist and/or transformative project. Nonetheless where transformative goals are framed by 'feminist' epistemologies they are overwhelmingly associated with qualitative methods.

The framing of the publication space, as signified by journal titles, is also consequential. Thus quantitative material is relatively unusual in journals with 'Feminist', 'Women's Studies' or 'Gender' in the title, while qualitative studies are much more common. In contrast, journals which simply indicate that 'women' are the object of study (such as *Violence Against Women* or *Women and Health*), but do not link this to a social or critical perspective (as implied the terms feminism/feminist, women's studies or gender) are dominated by articles employing quantitative data. These differences are statistically significant ($p<0.001$).

In Table 4 we also explore the relationship between author characteristics and methodological choices. Other scholars have found differences between British and American sociology (Dunn and Waller, 2000; Platt, 2007; Payne et al., 2005); we similarly find that methodological choice varies geographically. Using the national base of the first-listed author as a proxy for geographical location we found a statistically significant relationship when comparing authors based in the US, the UK and elsewhere ($p<0.001$). The picture seems to be one of both US and (possibly) UK exceptionalism. On the one hand the US has a remarkably quantitative orientation: about 70 percent of articles with a US-based first author include quantitative analysis. On the other hand the UK has a very qualitative focus: almost 80 percent of articles with a UK-based first author include qualitative analysis but only 14 percent

any quantitative analysis. Where first authors were based elsewhere[4] there is a less pronounced qualitative leaning: approximately 58 percent of these articles include some qualitative analysis, while 29 percent include quantitative analysis. Were it not, therefore, for the expectations of the US academy there would possibly be markedly fewer quantitative analyses in women's studies journals.

The number of authors listed for an article also appears related to the methods used. Single-authored articles were found to be unlikely to make use of quantitative methods (just 20 percent did). These were also more likely than multiple-author articles to be entirely theoretical or use secondary methods only (20 percent as compared to less than seven percent). In contrast 70 percent of articles with two authors and 77 percent of articles with three or more included some quantitative analysis (a significant set of differences: $p<0.001$). There are several possible explanations for this. The first is that the finding is somewhat spurious and that the underlying relationship is that types of research that traditionally generate articles with multiple co-authors (e.g. medical research) also tend to involve quantitative data. An alternative explanation is that, given quantitative analysis requires technical skills, less quantitatively-literate authors will not produce single-authored quantitative papers, but, where they recognize the desirability of quantitative analysis, will seek co-authors with relevant skills. Thus the technical skills involved in producing a quantitative article may increase the likelihood that multiple authors are required. An interesting side-note is that articles with just two co-authors were the most likely to include mixed methods: perhaps this form of collaboration is most likely to facilitate the bringing together of different methodological backgrounds and skills.

No significant differences were found according to whether articles were authored by men or women, regardless of whether we looked at first, second or third authors. While, compared to articles with only female authors, articles with a male first or second-author were somewhat more likely to include quantitative analysis, these differences were not statistically significant. This finding echoes earlier research (Platt 2007), and reaffirms that what we have found is not that men or women are more or less inherently 'quantitative' in their methodological orientations.

[Table 5]

The remaining analyses focus on the use of quantitative methods as this has received the most attention within British sociology. We begin with a set of bivariate logistic regressions, and then, to examine the relative importance of relationships identified in these and earlier bivariate analyses, we present a series of nested logistic regression analyses. Throughout, the dependent variable is whether the article included quantitative methods, irrespective of whether any other method was used.

The bivariate logistic regressions are presented in the first column of Table 5. These show that, consistent with the above analyses, the use of quantitative analysis is negatively related to feminist self-position, references to feminism, methodological justification (whether feminist, transformative or technical), and publication in a

journal identified as feminist, gender, or women's studies, rather than about 'women'. Several author characteristics also appear important. These include the number of authors and US author location (both positively related to the use of quantitative methods). Neither UK author location nor author sex seems to have a specific effect.

The first multiple logistic regression model (Model 1) only includes author characteristics. Having a US-based first author multiplies the odds of including quantitative methods by about six (p<0.001). There was not, however, a significant or substantial difference between authors based in the UK[5] and in other countries. Thus this is a story of US exceptionalism, not UK math(s)-antipathy. As suggested by bivariate analysis, the number of authors also has a significant effect (p<0.001); a multiple-authored article has odds ten times higher of including quantitative analysis than a single-authored article. Surprisingly, given that the bivariate logistic regression did not suggest this, a male first author also increases the odds of including quantitative analysis (p<0.05).

In Models 2 to 4 we add variables which in different ways measure authors' identification with feminism. Model 2 includes the binary variable identifying articles in which the author explicitly self-identifies as a feminist. We find that such articles are significantly (p<0.01) less likely to include quantitative analysis than articles in which authors do not self-identify as feminist. When, however, we include a variable that measures the number of times that an article mentions feminism/feminist (Model 3), the effect of feminist self-identification becomes insignificant, suggesting a refinement to the above: what is most important in determining methodological choice is not whether authors are themselves feminists, but whether they engage with feminist literature. Feminists are, of course, more likely to do this. When variables measuring engagement with feminism are included the effect of the first author's gender disappears. This suggests that the effect of gender (in Model 1) related to the greater engagement of female first authors with feminism. Author sex remains insignificant in all subsequent models (Models 2 to 5).

In Model 4 a variable indicating authors' methodological rationale is added, taking account of both whether this is given and what it is. The reference group is those providing no justification. In comparison authors providing a feminist or transformative methodological justification are significantly less likely to use quantitative methods (p<0.05). It is, however, worth noting that even providing a purely technical justification is associated with lower odds of using quantitative methods (p<0.05). Therefore greater methodological reflexivity appears to lower the odds of using quantitative methods. Of course, the causality may be more complex than this. To the extent that reflexivity about methods, and especially methodology, is core to qualitative research but less so to quantitative, perhaps we are simply measuring different norms of documenting methodological practice. However since reflexivity has been a core element of feminist research practices, this perhaps suggests that if a space for feminist quantitative methods is to emerge it will require the development of a methodological discourse that justifies the use of a

quantitative approach. In lieu of this, the norm of methodological reflexivity may continue to push feminist researchers towards qualitative analyses.

In the final model (Model 5) we add journal identification. The reference category is publication in a journal that includes either 'feminist/feminism', 'gender', or 'women's studies' in the title. Articles in journals about 'women' have odds over five times greater of including quantitative analysis than those in journals titled 'feminist', 'gender', or 'women's studies' (p<0.001). Thus the framing of the publication space is important. Publication space also accounts for about a third of the multiple-author effect, which diminishes with the addition of this variable, but remains significant. Notably, however, the effects of publishing in a journal about 'women', rather than a feminist/gender/women's studies journal, are much lower than in the bivariate logistic regressions (the odds are increased five-fold as opposed to thirty-fold). This suggests that much of the journal effect actually relates to differences in the extent to which articles within these journals engage with feminism.

Conclusions

Much research relating to women and gender is quantitative. But this is only part of the story. Firstly, most quantitative studies are published in journals *about* women, not feminist or gender analysis journals. These publishing spaces take women as object, not subject of research. Articles written from an explicitly feminist perspective or with feminist or transformative methodological justifications very rarely employ quantification. There is, therefore, little here to suggest that feminists use quantitative methods. Although it is of course possible that, faced with well-entrenched norms within specific publication spaces, they do so outside of feminist-oriented journals and without making their feminism explicit.

Secondly, is not the affective sway of the proposition that research on women and gender includes quantification something to pause and reflect upon? Why, fifty years after the beginning of the second wave, might the feeling that feminists count be so gratifying? Why, also, is it a cause for unease that UK sociology is so qualitative? Might we not instead suggest that there is something odd about the approaches of US-based scholars, who appear so tenaciously fixed on quantitative research? Perhaps, despite all the critique and developments of recent decades that old hard/soft, what counts and what doesn't, dichotomy still holds some sway.

Given its familiarity, we will not re-rehearse debate about the relative benefits of qualitative versus quantitative research that were a feature of Second Wave Feminism and UK Sociology in the 1970s and 1980s. There is now a broad, entirely reasonable, public consensus that methods should match research questions and no researcher should doggedly adhere to a one-for-all methodological approach. However, Payne (2007: 905) comments, correctly, that much recent methodological debate within sociology continues to assert a preference for one method over the other in an 'all other methods are totally wrong' way. Perhaps, therefore, we should accept that these divisions continue to seriously trouble us.

In this context, how might methodological influences within women's studies impact upon sociology in the future and should we be concerned? Following Dunn and Waller (2000) we think it important to distinguish between feminist and gender issues approaches because feminist identification continues to signal positionality within a specific set of debates. Distinctions such as this, and our distinction between feminist and transformative epistemologies, help to contextualize the wider women's studies field as set against a smaller field of feminism. This broader terrain, as the journals indicate, stretches across psychology, economics, health studies and geography. These are highly quantitative disciplines; much of the quantitative research within women's studies may be attributable to disciplinary effects. Indeed, our recent research highlights the ongoing hostility experienced by feminist researchers in these quantitative fields when they attempt to introduce qualitative approaches (Hughes and Cohen 2010). Within such disciplinary spaces the recognition of gendered power is contentious, while the search for a non-hierarchical, non-objectifying emancipatory methodology remains central to the politics of feminists' everyday methodological choices. Thus, the 'new language of methodological pacificism' that Oakley (2004: 192) advocates remains distant. In such a situation, should Sociology be troubled by the qualitative emphasis that we found in much feminist, as opposed to women and gender-related research; might this prove contagious?

In thinking about this we need to consider trends in the incorporation, or not, of feminist research within Sociology. Platt finds 'a rising proportion of articles on 'female' topics written by women' (2007: 971) in UK sociology journals and suggests this might indicate women's withdrawal 'into a feminist ghetto'. Platt is, however, primarily concerned with content defined broadly; women's increasing focus on 'female topics'. As such this finding provides little hint as to whether feminism, as an interdisciplinary field, is influencing sociology. More pertinently, albeit in the US context, Waller et al. (1998) find a diminishing influence of feminism within mainstream sociology journals in 1984-1993, relative to 1974-1983. Consequently they note that despite an assimilation of feminist scholarship into sociology 'a feminist revolution in sociology is not likely to occur anytime soon' (Waller et al., 1998: 43; see also Dunn and Waller, 2000). Indeed, given that feminism is influenced by the wider field of research on women and gender, which is dominated by quantitative analyses, it may be as likely that feminism is assimilated into a quantitative paradigm as that feminist qualitative preferences come to overwhelm a quantitative sociology.

We use the concept of assimilation carefully because we want to return here to another finding: that the presence of methodological reflexivity is linked to a lower probability that articles use quantitative methods – whether that reflexivity takes a feminist, transformative or technical form. Explicit reflexivity in relation to epistemological issues is a strength of much qualitative research. It is uncommon within quantitative publications, in part, perhaps, because of the extensive technical issues that need to be addressed within their methods sections. This poses a problem for feminist researchers, who emphasize the importance of reflexivity

(Lovell, 2000). We suggest that wholesale adoption of quantitative research practices by feminists is unlikely without the development and legitimation of a more reflexive quantitative discourse. Such a discourse would begin by justifying the use of quantitative methods on the basis of *ends*, including feminist ends. For example, quantitative analyses enable systematic, population-level gender inequalities to be exposed; necessary information if we want to fight for change (see, e.g, Scott, 2010).

Furthermore, and more radically, such a discourse would also involve epistemological justifications. This would enable feminist researchers to reflect upon the quantitative research *process*, including the social history and political context of particular analytic techniques. For a rare example of a reflexive, feminist-influenced, approach to quantitative analysis see Ryan and Golden (2006). Because, however, Ryan and Golden's discussion of reflexivity is published separately from their substantive analysis, even here, the feminist incorporation of reflexivity into quantitative analysis remains incomplete. Were, however, such reflexivity normalized it would not simply facilitate the inclusion of feminist researchers within a quantitative paradigm, but also critical approaches to the choice of statistical measures and techniques. Consequences might include, for example, a redirection of attention from 'outcome based' research (Abbott 2005), towards analysis of the ongoing processes of social life.

Such change requires considerable shifts in the normative practices of both quantitative researchers and feminists. Of quantitative researchers it requires greater reflexivity and engagement with feminism. Of feminists, and feminist publishing spaces, it requires renewed interest in shaping quantitative sociology. Therefore, whilst it seems important to argue for such a shift, we remain cautious as to how quickly, and even if, it might occur. Our pessimism increases when we consider the continuing competition between methodological paradigms, discussed above; a competition exacerbated by governments' and funding councils' tendency to prioritise quantitative approaches (Lather 2006). In this respect we confront three dangers: 1) we reconcile our differences but continue to live separately – not speaking or learning; 2) we return to the paradigm wars that marked feminism and sociology in the 1970s and 1980s; 3) we are all forced into embracing quantification, without facing up to 'the short-comings of *all* methods' (Payne, 2007: 912). As we attempt to avoid these futures, we argue that feminism has much to add because of its strong commitment to reflexive questioning and because it can ask new feminist questions within quantitative frames. As such feminism continues to be troublesome but may also enrich quantitative sociology and the wider discipline. We hope that the task of establishing how it might do so is encouraged by learned societies such as the BSA as well as funders, such as the ESRC and British Academy.

References

Abbott, A. (2005) 'Process and temporality in sociology: The idea of outcome in US Sociology', in G. Steinmetz (ed.) *The Politics of Method in the Human Sciences,* pp. 393-426. Durham: Duke University Press.

Blaxter, L., Hughes, C. and Tight, M. (2010) *How to Research* (Fourth Edition). Buckingham: Open University Press.

BSA/HaPS/ESRC. (2010) *International Benchmarking Review of UK Sociology*. Swindon: ESRC. http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/Images/Sociology%20IBR%20Report_tcm6-36279.pdf (accessed 30.08.10)

Crompton, R. (2008) 'Forty Years of Sociology: Some Comments', *Sociology*, 42(6): 1218-27**.**

Dunn, D. and Waller, D. (2000) 'The Methodological Inclinations of Gender Scholarship in Mainstream Sociology Journals', *Sociological Spectrum* 20(2): 239-57.

Erola, J. (2010) 'Why Probability Has Not Succeeded in Sociology', *Sociology* 44(1): 121-38.

Fonow, M.M. and Cook, J. (2005) 'Feminist Methodology: New Applications in the Academy and Public Policy', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30(4): 2211-36.

Hughes, C. and Cohen, R. (2010) 'Editorial. Feminists Really Do Count: The Complexity of Feminist Methodologies', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 13(3): 189-96.

Lather, P. (2006) 'Paradigm Proliferation as a Good Thing to Think With: Teaching research in education as a wild profusion', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 19(1): 35-57.

Letherby, G. (2003) *Feminist Research in Theory and Practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Lovell, T. (2000) 'Thinking feminism with and against Bourdieu', *Feminist Theory*, 1(1): 11-32.

May, C. (2005) 'Methodological Pluralism, British Sociology and the Evidence-based State: A Reply to Payne et al.', *Sociology* 39(3)**:** 519-28.

Oakley, A. (1981) 'Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms', in H. Roberts (ed.) *Doing Feminist Research***,** pp. 30-61. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Oakley, A. (2004) 'Response to Quoting and Counting: An Autobiographical Response to Oakley', *Sociology***,** 38(1): 191-2.

Payne, G., Williams, M. and Chamberlain, S. (2004) 'Methodological Pluralism in British Sociology', *Sociology,* 38(1): 153-63.

Payne, G., Williams, M. and Chamberlain, S. (2005) 'Methodological Pluralism, British Sociology and the Evidence-based State: A Reply to May', *Sociology* 39(3): 529-33.

Payne, G. (2007) 'Social Divisions, Social Mobilities and Social Research: Methodological Issues after 40 Years', *Sociology* 41(5): 901-15.

Platt, J. (2007) 'The Women's Movement and British Journal Articles, 1950-2004', *Sociology* 41(5): 961-75.

Power, M. (2004) 'Social Provisioning as a Starting Point for Feminist Economics', *Feminist Economics* 10(3): 3-19.

Ramazanoglu, C. and Holland, J. (2002) *Feminist Methodology: Challenges and Choices*. London: Sage.

Ryan, L. and Golden, A. (2006) ''Tick the Box Please': A Reflexive Approach to Doing Quantitative Social Research.' *Sociology* 40(6):1191-1200.

Scott, J. (2010) 'Quantitative methods and gender inequalities', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 13(3): 223-36.

Savage, M. and Burrows, R. (2009) 'Some Further Reflections on The Coming Crisis of Empirical Sociology', *Sociology* 43(4): 762-72.

Stanley, L. and Wise, S. (1993) *Breaking Out Again: Feminist Ontology and Epistemology*. London: Routledge.

Undurraga, R. (2010) 'How quantitative are feminist research methods textbooks?', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 13(3): 277-81.

Waller, D., Dunn, D. and Watson, J. (1998) 'The Incorporation of Gender Scholarship into Sociology', *The American Sociologist* 29(3): 43-58.

Tables

Table 1: Journals included in study

Journal Identi-fication	Journal title	N (Articles)	Journal Identi-fication	Journal title	N (Articles)
Feminist	Feminism and Psychology	11	Women	Journal of Women and Aging	11
	Feminist Economics	9		Journal of Women's Health	26
	Feminist Review	16		Psychology of Women Quarterly	19
	Feminist Studies	12		Violence Against Women	12
Gender	Gender and Society	11		Women and Health	13
	Gender, Place and Culture	14		Women's Health Issues	13
	Gender, Work and Organization	9	Other	Sex Roles	24
	Journal of Gender Studies	11		Social Politics	10
Women's Studies	European Journal of Women's Studies	9		Signs	12
	Women's Studies International Forum	14	***All***		***256***

Table 2: Methodological Approaches

Methodological Approach		
Theoretical/Secondary sources (*only)*	31	12%
Qualitative	96	38%
Quantitative	109	43%
Mixed: Qualitative & quantitative	20	8%
Specification of the Quantitative Analyses:		
Descriptive	126	98%
Bivariate	114	89%
Inferential	108	85%
Multivariate	97	76%

Table 3: Feminist orientation or influences within the articles

Engagement with Feminist Literature: Number of mentions of 'Feminism'/'Feminist'			**Explicit 'Feminist' Self-positioning** (anywhere in the article)	68	27%
			Methodological Justification		
None	101	40%			
1-2	44	17%	'Feminist'	27	11%
3-10	45	18%	Transformative[#]	61	24%
11-25	33	13%	Other (e.g. Technical)	100	39%
26+	33	13%	None	68	27%

#: Not explicitly 'feminist'.

Table 4: Methods employed, according to characteristics of authors and articles (percentages)

	Methods employed					
	Theoretical & secondary	Qualitative only	Quantitative only	Mixed methods	Total	(N)
Explicit feminist self-position* **						
Yes	25.0	58.8	11.8	4.4	100.0	(68)
No	7.4	29.8	53.7	9.0	100.0	(188)
Mentions of feminism/feminist* **						
0	5.0	12.9	72.3	9.9	100.0	(101)
1-2	6.8	43.2	38.6	11.4	100.0	(44)
3-10	6.7	62.2	24.4	6.7	100.0	(45)
11-25	21.2	66.7	9.1	3.0	100.0	(33)
26+	39.4	42.4	15.2	3.0	100.0	(33)
Journal identification* **						
Feminist	18.8	60.4	16.7	4.2	100.0	(48)
Gender	17.8	57.8	22.2	2.2	100.0	(45)
Women's Studies	17.4	73.9	4.3	4.3	100.0	(23)
Women	5.3	6.4	74.5	13.8	100.0	(94)
Other	10.9	39.1	43.5	6.5	100.0	(46)
Methodological justification **						
Feminist	14.8	70.4	7.4	7.4	100.0	(27)
Transformative	14.8	27.9	47.5	9.8	100.0	(61)
Other	12.0	41.0	38.0	9.0	100.0	(100)
None	8.8	27.9	58.8	4.4	100.0	(68)
First author location* **						
US	9.1	21.0	59.4	10.5	100.0	(143)
UK	14.3	71.4	7.1	7.1	100.0	(28)
Other	16.5	54.1	25.9	3.5	100.0	(85)
Number of authors* **						
1	20.2	59.6	17.5	2.6	100.0	(114)
2	4.0	26.0	54.0	16.0	100.0	(50)
3 or more	6.5	16.3	67.4	9.8	100.0	(92)
First author sex						
Male	11.8	23.5	55.9	8.8	100.0	(34)
Female	12.2	39.6	40.5	7.7	100.0	(222)
Second author sex						
Male	6.9	6.9	79.3	6.9	100.0	(29)
Female	5.3	23.0	58.4	13.3	100.0	(113)
Third author sex						
Male	6.3	18.8	68.8	6.3	100.0	(32)
Female	6.7	16.7	65.0	11.7	100.0	(60)
All (N)	12.1 (31)	37.5 (96)	42.6 (109)	7.8 (20)	100.0	(256)

Chi-square test for significance of association: ***: $p<0.001$, **: $p<0.01$

Table 5: Results from logistic regression analyses focusing on whether an article includes quantitative analysis

	Bivariate Log. Reg (OR)	Model 1 (OR)	Model 2 (OR)	Model 3 (OR)	Model 4 (OR)	Model 5 (OR)
First author nationality (ref=other)	1.00***	1.00***	1.00***	1.00***	1.00***	1.00***
US	5.58***	6.08***	6.15***	5.87***	6.61***	5.13***
UK	0.40	0.89	0.86	0.72	0.79	1.09
Number of authors (ref = 1)	1.00**	1.00***	1.00***	1.00***	1.00***	1.00**
Two	9.23**	10.23***	8.60***	7.54***	8.62***	5.61**
3 or more	13.38**	11.47***	7.89***	4.99***	5.76***	3.11*
Male first author	1.97	3.46*	2.21	1.86	2.00	1.76
Feminist self-position	0.114***		0.20***	0.57	0.73	0.72
Mentions feminism(ists) (ref = no)	1.00***			1.00***	1.00***	1.00*
1 to 10 times	0.15***			0.23***	0.22***	0.36*
11 or more times	0.04***			0.10***	0.10**	0.17*
Methodological justification (ref=none)	1.00*				1.00*	1.00*
Feminist/transformative	0.46*				0.29*	0.24*
Other	0.52*				0.33*	0.37*
Journal identification (ref = fem/gen/ws)	1.00***					1.00*
Women	30.51***					5.47**
Other	4.04***					2.15
Constant		0.08***	0.15***	0.47	0.93	0.51
Increase in df		5	1	2	2	2
2LLR		237.4	222.1	204.8	196.8	187.3
Increase in 2LLR			15.3	17.3	8	9.5
Significance of increase in 2LLR		***	***	***	*	**

OR = Odds Ratio

-2LLR = -2 Log Likelihood Ratio

Asterisks by coefficients indicate overall significance or significance of differences from reference category

***: $p<0.001$; **: $p<0.01$; *: $p<0.05$

[1] The top seventeen journals by Impact Factor were selected. Our focus on the ISI citation index reflected our desire to use a recognised index which, arguably, is growing in importance in an environment of heightened citation-consciousness and also to capture the feminist and gender field's diversity. Two further journals, *Signs* and *Feminist Studies*, were chosen on the basis of the authors' knowledge of the field of feminist studies, and an assessment of their importance. Our sampling procedure indicates the necessity of caution in relation to citation-based impact indices in interdisciplinary fields. Some disciplines (e.g. medicine, sciences, psychology, economics) have higher citation rates *per se*, affecting the tabulated rankings.

[2] We analysed all full articles but excluded book reviews, editorials and brief commentaries.

[3] Unless contrasted with 'feminist', 'gender' or other types of journal, we use the term 'women's studies journals' to refer to all journals categorised as such by the ISI.

[4] Those coded 'other' included: 18 from Canada, 22 from Australia, 28 from Europe and 17 from elsewhere. Variation in proportions employing different methods between these groups was statistically insignificant.

[5] Bivariate analysis showed UK authors to disproportionately write without co-authors. Since single authors are less likely to use quantitative methods this may account for some of the difference.