PhD proposal title: Crafty Culture: Domestic Arts and Feminist Activism in Scotland

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Background

The ‘Craftivist Movement’, coined in 2002 (Greer 2014), marries craft with activism. Practices of needlework, such as knitting, embroidery, crochet and quilting, because of their popular connotations with traditional femininity, have been widely (re)-appropriated by feminists and gay rights activists (Pentney 2008; Stoller 2003; Kelly 2015) effectively becoming part of contemporary third-wave feminism. Different from the more politicized second wave, this new form of feminism is a practice-oriented movement, which actively (yet critically) engages with capitalist consumption and the media. In this context, the products of traditional domestic arts are reclaimed as creative projects used in the spirit of feminist goals of empowerment, social justice and women’s community building. Recent examples of craftivist interventions, which have attracted a lot of public attention, are the iconic AIDS memorial quilt project or, just a few months ago, the millions of pussy-hats seen at the anti-Trump women’s marches across the world. Scholarship and research on the phenomenon of craft as activism is interdisciplinary with interests focusing on the history of the crafts movement (Abrams 2006) the historical importance of knitting in women’s community building (Wills 2007), or on craft as a non-violent, typically feminine way of protesting and/or a tool in conflict resolution (Corbett 2013) Communication scholars have also examined the impact that online technology and social media bear on the development of these practices into forms of mainly female
entrepreneurship and/or feminist activism on the global stage (Prince 2016; Baym 2000). Clearly, the new possibilities provided by digital technologies play a major role in affording women –even those who live in remote areas of the globe- the opportunity to associate their craft with contemporary trends in feminist activism such as ecofeminism (Warren 2000), the movement against everyday sexism (Bates 2014) and other current global causes.

Research study

The proposed research would concentrate on the knitwear craft in Scotland to explore whether and how it links with forms of political activism. It will attempt a reconnaissance of the practices in the region and further explore, via the study of groups and communities of interest, how political activism, climate change concerns and ideas about sustainable fashion are interwoven. Secondly it will investigate the links between the Scottish crafters and the wider global phenomenon of craftivism and consider the resonance and impact that these activities have in the local and global political arena. The study will be conducted with the use of qualitative methods, mainly unstructured, individual interviews and focus groups. It could also involve participant observation of events organized by craftivists and an analysis of their forms of communication. Applicants will have a 2:1 or 1st class degree or Masters in Sociology, Women Studies or Cultural Studies, but applications from candidates with other degrees in the Humanities or Social Sciences will also be considered.

Contact Details: If you have any queries about the project please contact the Lead Supervisor, Dr Lucia Ruggerone at l.ruggerone@rgu.ac.uk

Application process: Please send your cv and an expression of interest, that explains both why the proposal appeals and why you are suitable to undertake the research, Dr Lucia Ruggerone at l.ruggerone@rgu.ac.uk by noon on 12th June 2017. Shortlisted candidates will then be invited for interview towards the end of June.

References


