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Abstract

Entrepreneurism is widely regarded as being one way in which women can sidestep the sexism of male dominated institutionalised work environments and enter into a world in which men and women operate on a level playing field. Yet, in a corpus of stories of female entrepreneurs' experiences, we noted that being ignored by men was a constant theme. Taking a social constructionist and narrative approach to identity, we analyse the gendered identity work that female entrepreneurs do in these stories and we seek to explicate the process through which female entrepreneurs do not evaluate being ignored by men as sexism-in-action. Using positioning theory as an analytical tool, we analyse these stories at three different levels: the here-and-now interaction between interviewer and story-teller; the there-and-then identity work of the characters in the storyworld; and the wider societal Discourses that the story-tellers enact, and which are enacted by such identity work. Findings indicate that despite making gendered difference, inferiority, and lack of agency relevant, the stories are not evaluated as sexism-in-action because the female entrepreneurs enact a postfeminist and neoliberal Discourse of freedom, autonomy, and choice, rather than a feminist Discourse of discrimination and sexism.

Key words

Positioning theory, narrative, identity, sexism, postfeminism, neoliberalism,

Introduction

As various researchers have commented (for example, Gill and Scharff, 2011; Eikhof *et al.* 2013), entrepreneurship is often regarded as a space in which meritocracy and egalitarianism triumphs. As a result of this, female entrepreneurs can live the ideal of economic liberation fought for by second-wave liberal feminists and they can thus escape the attendant sexism of male dominated work environments. However, contrary to these Discourses, there is growing evidence that female entrepreneurs still experience discrimination and domination and that sexism is as evident in the entrepreneurial world as it is in any other business activity (Gherardi and Perrotta, 2015; Patterson and Mavin, 2009). Therefore, following Marlow (2014) who argues that 'there is a growing need to critically evaluate the potential offered by entrepreneurship as emancipation' (p. 107), we seek to add to debate, already initiated by researchers such as Gill (2014a), Marlow and McAdam (2015), and Dy *et al.* (2017), concerning the observation that entrepreneurialism may not offer the promised escape from sexism. As Marlow (2014) argues, while 'there is now a focus on how not if gendered assumptions affect women's entrepreneurial behaviour, considerable scope still remains to critically analyse the how aspect' (p. 103). To analyse the 'how' aspect of sexism in the entrepreneurial world, we use a sub-corpus of stories drawn from interviews with female entrepreneurs in which they recount experiences of men not talking to them. Yet despite doing identity work in which they often position themselves, and are positioned by others, as different, inferior, and lacking in agency, none of the story-tellers fully evaluate being ignored by men as sexist. Through the analyses of these stories and the gendered identity work that is performed, we seek to explicate[i] the process through which female entrepreneurs do not evaluate being ignored by men as sexism-in-action. To do this, we take a social constructionist approach to identity in which (gendered) identity is considered to be something we 'do' rather than something we 'have' (Fletcher, 2004). More specifically, we

use positioning theory (PT), as developed by Michael Bamberg and others (2008, 2011), to analyse the stories of female entrepreneurs' workplace experiences and the gendered identity work that they do in these stories. PT allows us to analyse the stories at three levels: the identities of the characters in the there-and-then of the storyworld; the identity work of the interviewer and story-teller in the here-and-now of the interview world; and the wider societal Discourses that reflexively emerge from the talk and which, simultaneously, constrain or allow the talk. Thus, following the seminal work of Alvesson and Kärreman (2000), we conceptualise discourse as acting at two levels: discourse (little-d) which is talk in interaction, and Discourse (big-D) which consists of 'diverse frames of reference which inform, constrain, and/or enable our enactments of culturally and contextually appropriate behaviours' (Marlow and McAdam 2015, p. 797). Discourse (big-D) and discourse (little-d) are reflexively linked so that the story-tellers make use of these frames of reference as a resource for designing their talk and evaluating it, and, reflexively, wider societal Discourses (such as, *inter alia*, sexism) are enacted and reflexively constrain and permit what is sayable. Thus, through such an interplay of Discourse and discourse, the story-tellers not only fashion their past (in the storyworld), but they also simultaneously sustain a social world in which particular practices and ideologies are endorsed. By considering the construction of gendered identities at these three intertwined levels, we follow Marlow (2014) who argues that 'it is the socially constructed notion of gender, rather than biological sex, which shapes experiences of entrepreneuring' (p. 106), and we place the contextualised and nuanced manner in which gendered identities are produced in narrative, and the evaluation of these narratives with reference to wider societal Discourses, at the heart of our research.

First, we provide an overview of the literature concerning sexism and the entrepreneurial environment. We then briefly explain the social-constructionist approach to identity and demonstrate how PT is an appropriate methodological tool for analysing gendered identity construction in narratives of entrepreneurial experience. After discussing the sample, we then present the analyses of four stories in which three female entrepreneurs are ignored by their male interlocutors. The findings indicate that despite making classic elements of sexism such as difference, inferiority, and lack of agency relevant, the female entrepreneur story-tellers do not evaluate stories of being ignored by men as sexism. This is because the Discourses they enact resonate with the myth of equality and meritocracy, perpetuated by neoliberal and postfeminist Discourse that, as Gill (2014a) argues, have not only led to the repudiation of sexism, but have also rendered it almost unspeakable. The consequences of these findings are discussed in the final section: conclusions and observations.

Sexism

The exact definition of 'sexism' has been the subject of much debate among scholars. Most agree that for the best part of the last century sexism was viewed narrowly as a form of prejudice rooted in antipathy (Allport, 1954), meaning deep aversion, dislike or hatred of women (Glick *et al*. 2000). Clearly this understanding of sexism did not explain the sexist behaviour of most men who liked women and may even have revered them as wives, mothers, or romantic partners (Glick and Fiske, 1996). Stimulating revisions in thinking, Glick and Fiske (1996) presented a theory of sexism marked by a deep ambivalence, rather than antipathy, toward women. They argued that sexism is a multidimensional construct that encompasses both hostile (antagonistic) and benevolent sexism. Both benevolent and antagonistic sexism are rooted in paternalism, gender differentiation, and heterosexuality, and they share assumptions that women inhabit restricted domestic roles and are the 'weaker sex'. However, benevolent sexism emerged out of an ideology that appeared subjectively positive and flattering toward women and in which women are idealised as 'pure', wonderful

creatures, although childlike, weak and incompetent and, consequently, in need of men to protect them (i.e. protective paternalism) (Becker and Swim, 2012; Becker and Wright, 2011). Further, on the one hand, benevolent sexism promotes a set of interrelated attitudes that position women in restricted professional roles with lower status than their male counterparts. On the other hand, it also values women for their qualities as care-givers and their relational socio-emotional traits (Glick and Fiske, 2001; Becker and Swim, 2011). Consequently, from such a perspective, women are valued, but not for skills that are archetypally associated with entrepreneurship such as analytical thinking and dynamism (Glick and Fiske, 1996, p. 228).

This opens up a paradox, since normative (masculine) Discourses of entrepreneurship also index entrepreneurship in the symbolic sphere of the male (Ahl, 2006), yet within neoliberal and postfeminist Discourse entrepreneurship is viewed as a meritocratic field of economic activity where women can flourish. This implies an interesting catch-22 situation for women, since neoliberal and postfeminist Discourses obscure the primacy of traditional masculinities (Berglund *et al*. 2017, p. 5) yet to succeed in this entrepreneurial world identities that rely on traditionally masculine traits are required. First, both neoliberalism and postfeminism endorse individualism to the extent that there is a near rejection of any social, political or other external constraints or influences on subjects. Second, neoliberalism promotes the notion of the enterprising, autonomous and self-regulating subject and postfeminism views the subject as active, free choosing and self-reinventing. Third, both concepts appear to call upon women more than men to undergo personal transformation, for example, to make themselves more confident or resilient (Gill *et al.* 2017, p.231). For instance, within neoliberal society, women are compelled to become enterprising selves, to improve themselves and embrace the entrepreneurial ideal, and 'within the enterprise culture, otherness and its ensuing disadvantages are seen as matters of individual responsibility and ambition, never as structural phenomena' (Berglund *et al*. 2017, p. 6). This bears resemblance to the promotion of choice and disavowal of structure associated with postfeminism (Lewis *et al.* 2017, p. 213). Thus, the entrepreneurial landscape is shaped by an array of contradictory Discourses (Gill *et al.* 2017) which female entrepreneurs have to navigate.

Recent research has sought to understand how dominant Discourses shape entrepreneurial identity. Studies (for example, Bourne and Calás, 2013; Bruni *et al*. 2004, Chasserio *et al.* 2014; Lewis, 2014) show that women adopt a range of strategies to navigate gendered assumptions and gendered identities which are not fixed or a priori as suggested in normative (masculine) entrepreneurship discourse. Rather, from this perspective, identities are constructed through everyday entrepreneurial practice and are shaped by a wide range of situational, historical, and cultural factors. Another strand of recent critical work has begun to explore the influence of postfeminism, viewing it as 'a cultural discourse that shapes our thinking, attitudes and behaviour towards feminism and women's changing position in contemporary society' (Lewis 2014, p1850). Lewis (2014) identifies three features of postfeminism relevant to the workplace context, notably: 'individualism, choice and empowerment, notions of "natural" sexual difference and retreat to the home as a matter of choice not obligation' (p. 1851). More specifically, as regards the entrepreneurial environment (pp. 1852-1858), she argues that postfeminism sustains a Discourse of: 1) gender neutral meritocracy; 2) maternal entrepreneurial femininity (mumpreneurism) in which women create a professional life in similar ways to males but they still retain a foothold in the domestic sphere (retreatism); 3) 'natural' gendered variation in which female entrepreneurs bring 'motherhood' and entrepreneurialism together; 4) and excessive entrepreneurial femininity in which women must balance the feminine with the masculine – if they are too feminine, they run the risk of pariah status.

Gill (2014a) contends that postfeminist sensibilities foster the myth that 'all the battles' have been won, and that gender equality has been achieved (Kelan, 2009). She illustrates this in a study of cultural workers, showing that despite evidence of sexism women were 'keen to stress there was no sexism', in fact 'sexism was disavowed at every turn' (p. 522). Thus, as many commentators observe (for example, Gill, 2014a; Gill and Scharff, 2011; Gill *et al.* 2017), 'old style' feminist Discourse of discrimination and sexism has been replaced by a 'new style' postfeminist Discourse of autonomy and choice in which 'the autonomous, calculating, self-regulating subject of neoliberalism bears a strong resemblance to the active, freely choosing, self-reinventing subject of postfeminism' (Gill and Scharff, 2011, p. 7). Thus, entrepreneurial neoliberal Discourses of individualism and opportunity for all are intertwined with postfeminist Discourses of meritocracy and egalitarianism. Consequently, as (Gill, 2014a, p. 522) notes, gender is less likely to be evoked as an explanation of entrepreneurial experience, which is more likely to be framed in terms of age or experience, for example. Thus, given the rise of neoliberal and postfeminist Discourses, sexism has become difficult to voice by entrepreneurs and academics alike and Gill (2011) even goes so far as to argue that 'the term sexism has quite literally disappeared from much feminist academic writing, as well as from everyday parlance' (p.62).

However, what is, and is not, sexism is a moot point, since from a social constructionist perspective, phenomena are not 'out there' waiting to be 'discovered' and labelled as if talk mirrors some kind of underlying reality. Rather, language is performative and it builds the social reality that surrounds us rather than just reflecting it. To take a rather well-worn metaphor, language is seen as the building bricks of reality rather than as a mirror reflecting reality (Potter, 1996, p. 97). Taking such a social constructionist approach, as Gill (2000) points out, implies a 'rejection of the realist notion that language is simply a neutral means of reflecting or describing the world, and a conviction in the central importance of discourse in constructing social life' (p. 172). Thus, sexism, and what constitutes it, is also created through language and the naming, or not, of particular practices as sexism-in-action. Consequently, if researchers are to engage with emic understandings of sexism, they must engage with the gendered-identity work that people perform and which informs their evaluations of experiences as sexist, or not. As discussed below, we argue that one way of making tangible the process through which events are evaluated as sexist (or not) is to analyse the identity work in the stories that (female) entrepreneurs tell about their workplace experiences.

Narrative and the social construction of identity

An ideal site for analysing the construction of experience as sexist, or not, is narrative. This is because people's experience of life takes the form of narratives in which they (re)tell experiences and make sense of them. Consequently, as Brunner (1991) notes, 'there seems indeed to be some sense in which narrative rather the referring to 'reality' may in fact create or constitute it' (p. 13). Moreover, what is of key importance to our analyses is therefore the way in which these stories are evaluated as sexism-in-action, or not (cf. Mueni and Clifton, 2017 who argue the same point in relation to sexual harassment). This is because the evaluation of the story and its coda (i.e. its relevance) are key components to story-telling (Labov and Waletzky[ii],1967) and so it follows that we will be able to gain an understanding of the process through which female entrepreneurs construct an emic sense of what is, and is not, sexism-in-action through paying particular attention to how they evaluate stories of being ignored by male interlocutors. Further, the construction of an event as sexism-in-action, or not, depends not only on the evaluation of the experience, it is also dependent on the gendered identity work that the story-teller does and whether the teller constructs male and female

identities as the same or as different and/or whether the teller constructs gendered identities as being relatively superior or inferior to each other.

As previously noted, we adopt a social constructionist approach to identity, whereby entrepreneurial identities, as with any other identity, are talked into being and are performed through interaction with colleagues, business contacts, family, and so on. Thus, as Fletcher (2006) argues, identity 'derives theoretically from the relationality between people, institutions, material objects, physical entities and language rather than the private sense making of particular individuals' (p. 422). In short, identity from this perspective is not something that we have within us, a kind of inner-self that is then reflected in talk, rather identity is something that is performed through a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic means (Butler 1988, 1999). Moreover, narratives are widely regarded as a key site for such identity construction (see Van De Mieroop and Clifton, 2016 for a succinct overview of narrative from a social constructionist perspective). This observation has not been overlooked by entrepreneurial scholars (for example, Downing, 2005; Fletcher, 2007; Gartner, 2007; 2010; Steyaert and Bouwen, 1997) who have produced a series of papers that take a narrative approach to entrepreneurial identity (for an overview, see Larty and Hamilton, 2011). Most prominent are Hjorth and Steyaert's (2004) collection of papers on narrative and discursive approaches to entrepreneurship and a special issue of the *Journal of Business Venturing*, edited by Gartner (2007), in which scholars provide narrative analyses of an entrepreneurial success story. Other examples include: Essers and Benschop (2007) who use biographical narratives to analyse the construction of entrepreneurial identity in the case of female entrepreneurs of Moroccan and Turkish origin in the Netherlands; Johansson (2004) who uses narratives drawn from interviews with entrepreneurs to analyse the construction of entrepreneurial identity and experience; Hytti (2003) who provides a monograph which includes the analyses of several stories in which entrepreneurs construct their identities; Jones *et al*. (2008) who look at how social entrepreneurial identity can be constructed through narrative; and Marlow and McAdam (2015) who consider the construction of gendered identities in technological start-ups. However, such work often falls short of providing fine-grained linguistic analyses of the process of identity construction, rather it uses extracts of data to exemplify the main trends that emerge from the analysis of the stories. In other words, it uses the narratives as a resource for theorizing about entrepreneurial identities, rather than providing fine-grained analyses explicating how identities are constructed *per se*. Consequently, such research often omits to analyse 'just how' entrepreneurial identities are constructed in talk. This is because the focus is often on the entrepreneur rather than the process of storytelling through which entrepreneurial identity emerges (Steyaert, 2007). Further, Larty and Hamilton (2011, p. 222) point out that much research into entrepreneurship and narrative is dominated by narratives of the 'individualised, 'heroic', masculine entrepreneur, thus marginalizing the voice of female entrepreneurs. Therefore, in order to add to the narrative turn in entrepreneurship research, and to go some way to addressing some of its lacunae, we both give voice to female entrepreneurs by presenting their stories as data, and we use positioning theory to provide fine-grained linguistic analyses of the in situ construction of gendered entrepreneurial identity.

Method: Positioning Theory

In order to make the discursive construction of identity and the evaluation of these stories visible, and thus analysable, we use Positioning Theory (PT). PT refers 'broadly to the close inspection of how speakers describe people and their actions in one way, rather than another and, by doing so, perform discursive actions that result in acts of identity' (Bamberg *et al*.

2011, p. 182). The particular form of PT we use here, following Bamberg *et al.* (op cit.) traces its roots back to Davies and Harré's (1990) seminal paper on the discursive production of selves. Davies and Harré's work used made-up data for its analyses and placed the emphasis on Searle's (1969) notion of speech acts which considers the illocutionary force (i.e., intended meaning) of the utterance. In contrast to this, Bamberg and others (op cit.) use only naturally-occurring talk as data and they draw on the fine-grained textual analyses inspired by conversation analysis (Deppermann, 2013). This approach, bracketing cognitive notions of mental constructs and intended meanings, considers what the utterance actually achieves in talk and how it 'does' identity. Furthermore, following Bamberg and Georgakopoulou (2008, p. 385), acts of identity exist at three different levels which they sum up as follows:

- Level one: how characters are positioned within the storyworld;
- level two: how the speaker/narrator positions himself/herself and others within the here-and-now of the interactive situation;
- level three: how the speaker/narrator positions a sense of self/identity with regard to dominant Discourses.

First, within the storyworld, characters in the narrative are positioned relative to other characters, words are put into their mouths via reported speech, and events are (re)constructed. Thus, the story itself becomes a site of identity work in which (gendered) identities are talked into being. Second (and unlike Davies and Harré's seminal work), PT pays close attention to the relation between the interviewer and the interviewee in the here-and-now of the interview talk and it considers narrative as a social practice in which identities are co-constructed through the interplay of questions, responses, and other discursive features of talk. Thus, following Cicourel (1964), an interview is considered to be a form of social interaction that is necessarily influenced by both the interviewee's and interviewer's hidden assumptions and the 'interviewer is seen as actively and unavoidably engaged in the interactional co-construction of the interviewee's content' (Gubrium and Holstein, 2001, p. 15). However, since in this paper the interviewer uses minimalist-passive interview techniques and thus takes a non-directive role, the co-construction of the stories is minimalised. Yet, despite this observation, the stories are no doubt recipient-designed not only for the co-present (academic) interviewer but also in relation to what Minister (1991, p. 29) calls the ghostly audience – i.e., the non-present audience to whose normative gaze the story may later be made available. However, since story telling is necessarily a context-bound speech event, the co-constructed nature of the story is a *sine qua non* of *all* interview based research. Therefore, we argue that, rather than imagining the interview to be an asocial transmission of the interviewee's 'true-self' that is 'in there somewhere' just waiting to be expressed, it is sufficient to take account of the co-constructed nature of the elicited story by analysing not only the interviewee's turns at talk but also the interviewer's talk. Third, as already mentioned in the introduction, PT pays particular attention to the way in which the talk in the storyworld (level one) and in the interview world (level two) are intertwined with wider societal Discourses. This is because the story-tellers use particular Discourses as resources for story-telling and doing identity work. These Discourses constrain and permit what is sayable in the storyworld and interview world, yet reflexively these 'micro' practices of talk (re)enact wider societal Discourses. Thus, through analysing identity work in the storyworld and the evaluation of these stories (as sexism-in-action, or not) in the interview world, the researcher can make visible the story-teller's emic orientation to sexism in the entrepreneurial world.

Further, following Bamberg's (2011) taxonomy for analysing narratives, we analyse the stories presented in this paper according to how the characters in the storyworld and the story

telling world navigate the dilemmas of sameness and difference, and agency. First, through navigating along an axis of sameness and difference, the teller is able to position himself/herself in relation to others and so establish (gendered) in-groups and (gendered) out-groups and a sense of belonging. Second, the dilemma of agency relates to whether the self is constructed as an active agent directing his/her life, or as an undergoer of external forces. Since gendered lack of agency and gendered difference/inferiority vis-a-vis men are often considered to be the cornerstones of sexism (Jost and Kay, 2005), difference and agency are especially relevant when looking at how a story is constructed as sexism-in-action, or not.

Sample

The sample consists of eight women entrepreneurs located in Wales who were identified through a leadership development programme (for both men and women), in which they had participated. The sample size was informed by qualitative studies of a similar nature (Hamilton, 2006) that advocate focusing on participants that are 'information rich' (Patton, 1990). Previous studies showed that with purposive sampling, women entrepreneurs, through the telling of their (professional) life stories, reveal the dynamics of gendered experience and the subjective meaning given to those experiences (Hamilton, 2006).

The interviews were conducted and transcribed (see appendix one for a list of transcription symbols used) by the first author of this paper following a technique devised by Schütze (2008). The interviews began with a single initial narrative-inducing question – participants were simply asked to tell their life story. Minimalist-passive interview techniques were then adopted to allow the participants to determine the most salient aspects of their experience (Elliott, 2005, p 6) and to narrate them without interruption. Thematic questioning followed the stories and then non-narrative questions were asked. This was done most frequently to elicit insights into the subjective meaning given to experience (Gabriel, 2000) and to facilitate reflective insights (Reimann, 2003). Each interview took between one and three hours, resulting in a rich and very large corpus of data. For reasons of space, and to make visible the detailed analyses undertaken, this article focuses on segments from three interviews. These both reflect themes in the larger corpus of data and provide succinct examples of the phenomena for discussion.

Whist carrying out the transcripts and without having an a priori idea of key themes, we noticed that a recurrent theme that came up was the story of being ignored by men. In all, we isolated eleven stories of this nature which we selected for analysis in more detail. To do this we used the principle of unmotivated looking (Psathas, 1995, p. 45) whereby the researcher has no well-defined a priori research agenda, other than, in this case, to analyse the identity-work of female entrepreneurs in stories of being ignored by their male interlocutors. Research was thus data driven, and no a priori hypotheses as to what we sought to find guided our analyses. However, we also recognise that, inevitably, our own understandings of feminism, entrepreneurism, discourse analysis, and so on, no doubt affected what we 'noticed' and that in writing a research paper we are necessarily entextualising selected extracts of the interviews and juxtaposing them with our subjective knowledge. Whilst acknowledging this, we argue that, following Potter and Wetherell (1987), the best way to deal with it is 'to simply get on with it, and not get either paralysed or caught up in the infinite regress possible' (p. 182).

Analyses

We present here four stories in which three female entrepreneurs recount their experiences of being ignored by male interlocutors.

Sally

Sally comes from an affluent middle class entrepreneurial family, which inspired her to encourage her husband (Stewart) to set up a business in the IT industry when he became unhappy in his job. For several years Sally had an 'invisible' role (Hamilton, 2006), providing moral support and maintaining the accounts, while pursuing her own career as an 'expert' in e-banking and caring for their children. The business grew, and Stewart said he could no longer cope alone, so, after the birth of their third child, he persuaded Sally to join the business full-time as the managing director. This freed Stewart up to focus on IT contracts, while Sally dealt with financial, operational, and strategic aspects of the business. They employ a predominantly male workforce of IT specialists.

Analysis one

In line one, the interviewer asks 'so what do you think your experiences have been in terms of being a woman in business?' This question sought to dig deeper into the challenges Sally had recalled in telling the story of her transition to managing director in what she described as a very masculine environment.

Extract 1

1. Interviewer	so what do you think your experiences have been in terms of being a woman in business?
2. Sally	there are still loads of blokes out there that still think I'm not in charge, loads of them just
3.	go to Stewart, and part of that is just the technical side I think because he can fix their
4.	problem ((tapping table)) so if I go to them I can't fix their problem but what I have found is
5.	that they will speak to the boys and they will speak to Stewart when they have a technical
6.	problem and then when they are not getting the results that they want they'll come to me.
7.	So I'm kind of seen as the fixer, so if they're not getting what they want from the lads they'll
8.	come to me and go "Sally can you help me cos they're not doing what I want." And I don't
9.	know, I can't decide if that's because they think I'm in charge of, because almost like a
10.	motherly kind of thing?@ I don't know, but it doesn't bother me, but there is that divide,
11.	everybody thinks that it's Stewart's business and that I'm just doing the accounts but that's
12.	how we started and lots of our customers have been with us since we started so it could just
13.	be historical.

In line two, Sally provides the abstract to the forthcoming story by stating that there are 'still loads blokes out there that still think I'm not in charge'. In so doing, the extent of the issue is thus drawn to the interviewer's attention: the booster 'loads' indicates the widespread nature of the issue and the adverb 'still' emphasises the duration over time. The story is that 'loads of them just go to Stewart', and this is explained because 'part of that is just the technical side I think because he can fix their problem ((tapping table)) so if I go to them I can't fix their problem' and that (lines 5/6) 'they will speak to the boys and they will speak to Stewart when they have a technical problem'. Making relevant a gendered division of labour based on knowledge (Bradley, 2007), and shaped by the micro-politics of identity construction within this traditional male industry (Essers and Benschop, 2007), Stewart and the boys (staff) are addressed in relation to technical issues. This reflects the gender normative assumptions of masculine technological expertise that permeate the IT industry (Jones and Conroy, 2015) and despite her previous career experience, her identity as an 'expert' is not legitimatised (Marlow and McAdam, 2015).

However, in the continuation of the story, the complicating action of the boys ignoring her is partially resolved because 'when they are not getting the results that they want they'll come to

me' and so she concludes that they (the blokes) ascribe her the identity 'fixer' (line 7). The coda is downgraded (line 9: I don't know, I can't decide), but the evaluation, incidentally contradicting her abstract that 'loads of blokes out there that still think I'm not in charge', is that 'they think I'm in charge of because almost like a motherly kind of thing?@'. This evaluation thus aligns with much of the thinking that underpins benevolent sexism, specifically complementary gender differentiation in which women are differentiated from men on account of their relational abilities (Becker and Wright, 2011) and which is also found in postfeminist Discourses of the female entrepreneur and natural sexual variation (Lewis 2014). In other words, because she does identity work that genders a woman's role in the entrepreneurial environment as a 'motherly kind of thing', this invokes the gendered Discourse of the caring female boss who is deemed not to have the technical skills, but who does have the motherly caring skills (Ahl, 2006) that enable certain problems to be fixed. She has agency in terms of being able to fix things, but this agency is relevant in the gendered (motherly) field, not in the male gendered technical world. Thus, in the storyworld, she makes relevant a divide based on gender lines which talks into being a form of benevolent sexism in which women have soft, rather than hard skills. This is consistent with a postfeminist Discourse of feminine difference (Lewis, 2014), and in which technical expertise and specialist knowledge are markers of successful men, of authority and status, whereas women are homemakers (Bradley, 2007, p. 91). Sally accepts this divide, and her positioning in the entrepreneurial world in a motherly role, because 'it doesn't bother' her (line 10). She then accounts for this because, 'everybody thinks that it's Stewart's business and that I'm just doing the accounts' (line 11). Thus, she performs gender and entrepreneurship in accordance with social norms (Liu *et al*. 2015), and positions herself in a subservient role, compared to her husband. Further, despite encountering benevolent sexism from male interlocutors she does not identify it as sexism, rather she evaluates it in terms of history since this was how they started out (lines 14-16: 'that's how we started and lots of our customers have been with us since we started so it could just be historical'). Thus, rather than seeing gender as an explanation of being ignored, she makes sense of this in terms of the company's history and so preserves the myth of gendered equality within the entrepreneurial world. This evaluation is commensurate with Gill's (2014a) observation that rather than seeing gender as an explanation for workplace experience, women are more likely to evaluate events in terms of age and experience. Consequently, in this case, despite making gender-difference relevant, Sally invokes a postfeminist Discourse of entrepreneurial meritocracy to evaluate the story in which she is ignored for historical reasons rather than gendered ones, and this explains why she is ignored by men in certain technical situations.

Analysis two

In the second fragment analysed, which is a continuation of the interview with Sally, the interviewee tells another story of not being spoken to. However, she de-genders the story by doing identity work that does not make gender relevant to the story, arguing that this is the kind of experience that could happen to anyone and therefore is not sexist. Thus, once again she normalizes her experience and renders sexism invisible.

Extract 2

24. Sally Who are other people? There's a few other people that will phone and only speak to
25. Stewart and I say "do you want to speak to me", "no it's alright" and then Stewart says
26. "you'll have to speak to Sally", when they finally get through to him. Well you know, yes I
27. tried to tell you that it would be me, but I think it's less of an issue than people think it is if
28. I'm honest and I'm sure that there are some blokes who people won't talk to in business for
29. whatever reason.

In line twenty-four, Sally makes a transition to another story of not being spoken to (lines 13-24 have not been analysed for reasons of space). Interestingly, in making this transition, the referent that is made relevant is 'people' which de-genders the introduction to the upcoming story. In this story, people will phone and only want to speak to Stewart. The complicating action is that when Sally asks 'do you want to speak to me', the people in the story don't. The resolution is that when they do get through to Stewart, he says 'you'll have to speak to Sally'. In the storyworld, Stuart is therefore positioned as having agency, whereas Sally passively accepts that people in the storyworld do not want to talk to her and she is positioned as having a lack of agency. The evaluation of the story is that 'it's less of an issue than people think'. The referent of 'it' is ambiguous, but since the interviewer's question (line one, extract one) was 'what do you think your experiences have been in terms of being a woman in business' it is understandable as still referring to the gendered issue of women in the entrepreneurial world. Moreover, in the coda of the story, which gives the story's meaning in the here-and-now of the interview world and which invokes wider Discourses, she states that 'there are some blokes who people won't talk to in business'. This evaluation dissolves the difference between men and women in the entrepreneurial environment so that women are not the only victims of not being spoken to. Consequently, the issue of being ignored is not specifically gendered; it is 'for whatever reason' (line 29) and it cuts across a potential gender divide and so produces a Discourse of gendered equality within the entrepreneurial world. Thus, despite not being talked to, Sally does not see this as a specifically gendered issue and so she renders sexism invisible. Consequently, wittingly or unwittingly, she normalises her experience of not being spoken to by men. Moreover, by making sense of her experience in non-sexist terms she contributes to enforcing a form of sexism and the myth of equality and meritocracy within the entrepreneurial world, promulgated through neoliberal and postfeminist Discourses.

Heather

After many years working in low paid and uninspiring jobs, Heather and her husband (Dave), purchased a run-down business in the hospitality and tourism industry in a popular rural tourist location which was suffering from the decline of the mining industry and which also had high levels of socio-economic deprivation. Over an eight-year period, they transformed and expanded the business. Dave is responsible for the building and maintenance work. Heather takes a hands-on role: she manages all aspects of the business; deals with customers; and she occasionally does the cooking. She leads a predominantly female workforce.

Analysis three

It is of note that Heather's success has met with backlash from some members of this traditional Welsh community. In addition to 'not being spoken to' by certain antagonists, a local group of men belonging to the Freemasons[iii], who regularly frequent the premises for their meetings, taunt Heather by sharing their view that she does not own the business. Her uncle publicly (and incorrectly) claims to have some form of stake in the business. Her father, who has always been abusive, regularly issues putdowns, such as 'you're f---ing useless' and 'you're a waste of space'. Here, we focus on the theme of 'not being spoken to' in the telling of a story about a representative from a supplier company who visited the business with a colleague to introduce him to the 'owner'. The following analysis shows that Heather fails to evaluate the experience at all and thus indexes sexism as a taboo subject.

In the previous turn (omitted for reasons of space), the interviewee has told a story in which she recounts that she was not spoken to and was not taken seriously by people on account of her age. In line 59, the interviewer specifically reframes this in terms of gender: 'Do you think anything, any of it was to do with you being a girl or a woman?' This leads into a similar

story of not being talked to that is specifically gendered, which is discussed below. However, Heather fails to evaluate the story or provide a coda and as such she leaves the relevance of the story in the here-and-now of the interview world hanging, thus failing to make sense of her experience in terms of sexism.

Extract 3

59 Interviewer Do you think anything, any of it was to do with you being a girl .. or a woman?
60 Heather Yeah yeah with some people actually, because I remember falling out with the chap from
61 [names company], the rep from there and ehm because he come mmh anyway he knew
62 who I was because he deals with my uncle when he's got his [names business] and he'd
63 come in and he eh an he said to me, yo-yo- that's it, he'd come in with his boss, he was like
64 an area boss, so he brought his boss in, and anyway he said "I've brought my boss in to
65 introduce" he said eh to Dave he said, oh say's Dave isn't here (Tsk) so anyway he just
66 turned round and he said "oh never mind" he said "we'll catch him again", so I just thought
67 to myself 'why couldn't he introduce him to me?'@ you know and that and that really did
68 bug me you know because I just thought oh when Dave come back I said "that bloke's
69 bloody arrogant" bla bla bla he said "why?" I said "cos he come here" I said and he said to
70 me "I've brought my boss to introduce him to Dave" ehm, so he said "well why didn't he
71 introduce him to me" yeah exactly, why didn't he introduce him to me? You know, oh no
72 just because Heather's come out of the kitchen with her bloody pinny on, yeah! But you
73 know but that's what it was cos I'd come out the back and I thought eh, anyway so then
74 when I spoke to my uncle you know I said to him you know I'm really peed off with that, an
75 he said "why?" he said to me he said "for him to come in with that fella" I said, I am just as
76 much a eh boss in this business I said, an just totally, you know
77 Interviewer Mmh
78 Heather "oh I'll have to bring him in again and introduce him to Dave" and I just thought, you know I
79 was stood there, didn't even, didn't even say hello to me! And I just thought oh my God. So
80 no I think yeah some people, ehm can be, a bit definitely, but ehm but the masons done it

In line 60, Heather specifically aligns (yeah, yeah) with the interviewer's suggestion that being ignored in the workplace was 'to do with you being a girl or a woman'. Thus, Heather and the interviewer make gendered difference relevant to the storyworld. In the continuation of her turn, Heather introduces the antagonist, a sales rep, who comes in to introduce his area boss to Dave. The sales rep is specifically gendered through the use of the referent 'chap'. The complicating action is that he comes in with his boss and says 'I've brought my boss in to introduce …. to Dave'. Dave, however, is not there, so the chap says 'oh never mind…..we'll catch him again' and he walks out. Heather, in contrast to her husband, is therefore positioned as 'not worth talking to'. The positioning of the characters in the storyworld therefore makes difference relevant. Through the reported dialogue, Dave is positioned as worth talking to and she is not. Moreover, Heather positions herself as the undergoer, lacking in agency: the world, in the form of the male supplier, acts on her, rather than vice-versa. The specifically gendered male antagonist asks to speak to Dave and not being able to do so walks out without addressing Heather. Significantly, she has room to challenge the rep's actions. For instance, by drawing on her 'legitimate power' (French and Raven, 1959) as co-owner, she could have demanded an introduction and/or threatened to close her account with the supplier. However, despite these possibilities, she chose to passively stand there (line 79) without taking any action, so making relevant her lack of agency in the entrepreneurial world.

This incident sets up a puzzle for Heather, because she asks herself 'why couldn't he introduce him to me?' (line 67). The evaluation and answer to the puzzle come in lines 71 and 72: she is not spoken to because 'Heather's come out of the kitchen with her bloody pinny on'. This makes a gendered identity and gendered difference relevant. First, as Benwell and Stokoe (2006, p. 208) point out, identity is also linked to space, and certain locations make relevant certain identities. In this case, the interviewee comes out of the kitchen, but not only

does she come out of the kitchen, she is wearing a pinny[iv] which also indexes gender. This is because, as Jayyusi (1984, p. 69-70) argues, clothing can display and make relevant particular identities, and women dressing appropriately 'as entrepreneurs' is often perceived to be key to accomplishing legitimacy (Marlow and McAdam, 2015). In this case, her clothing and location make relevant her identity of 'woman' which, differentiating herself from the male antagonists, instantiates a form of benevolent sexism in which a woman's rightful place is doing housework rather than waged work and/or having a management role (Bradley, 2007).

The story continues when she speaks to her uncle and tells him that she is 'really peed off'. Her uncle asks 'why' and she explains that she is peed off 'for him to come in with that fella' because 'I am just as much a boss in this business'. Thus, the story is one of a disjunction of identities (Jayyusi, 1984, p. 123) whereby two alternative identities are potentially relevant (i.e., entrepreneurial [boss of own business] or gendered [woman]). In this case, Heather ascribes to herself the identity boss in which case she and Dave are positioned as equal, but in the storyworld the (male) antagonists have made relevant her gendered identity and so position her as different, and inferior (not worth talking to) in relation to her husband and business partner.

Thus, through interaction in the storyworld, the characters have made relevant a traditional sexist Discourse of masculine superiority and difference. Heather then projects an evaluation: 'an just totally' (line 76). However, instead of delivering an evaluation, she continues the story: 'oh I'll have to bring him in again and introduce him to Dave'. This acquiesces to the positioning of the male sales rep: she is not worth talking to, so she'll introduce them to Dave. The coda of the story which provides the meaning of the story and its relevance to the here-and-now of the interview is therefore projected but is unspoken: 'so no I think yeah some people, ehm can be, a bit definitely' (line 80). Significantly, Heather de-genders this evaluation using the generic 'some people' and without giving a specific evaluation of the story's relevance she shifts to a different topic (the Freemasons). Thus, she does not condemn being positioned as different, inferior and lacking in agency as sexism-in-action and so renders it invisible.

Kate

The professional business services company that Kate leads was originally created in the family home by her mother, a single parent, who needed to financially support the family. Eventually, it was relocated to premises in the local town. After graduating from university, Kate had a successful career in marketing and then she took over the business when her mother retired. There followed a period of intense competition from national chains during which Kate strove to maintain her client base. Kate succeeded, and finally, one-by-one, the nationals closed. Since then the business has expanded and she has opened a second branch. Kate leads a predominantly female workforce, plus one male manager (John). Her spouse is not involved in the business.

Analysis four

Since starting her own family, Kate has found it challenging to balance the dual roles of childcare and business, but that has not thwarted her ambition to expand the business further. This theme prompted a line of questioning which led to a story of being ignored by male business contacts. Though she explicitly evaluates this as sexism-in-action, the importance of this is downplayed and so her criticism of sexism in the workplace is not driven home.

Extract four

1. Interviewer Can I just ask you one last question, ehm – in terms taking the business forward now, ehm
2. being a woman, how easy is that for you? What challenges do you face do you think? Does
3. it make any difference?
4. Kate Eh – does it make any difference? I don't think it really does make any difference. I think
5. it's probably in my favour because I can multi-task@ You know I thrive when I'm juggling a
6. thousand and one things, and I am juggling a thousand and one things most of the time, ehm
7. – I don't think there's any negative side to being a woman really. Ehm – certainly not that
8. I've felt. Well you know occasionally you get somebody whether it be a client or a
9. candidate but you know if there's John and I in a meeting they'll talk to John, ehm –
10. which always makes me chuckle, particularly if it is a supplier or something because it's me
11. that has the final say and you know they can try and butter John up as much as they want
12. but you know he's not the one making the decision thank you very much. Ehm – so
13. things like that just kind of amuse me and you know you just play your little games with
14. them and then not give them the business!@
15. Interviewer ((Laughs))
16. Kate But to be honest I don't come across a lot of sexism or anything like that, it's ehm – the
17. challenges are more from you know just managing it all, you know running a home,
18. a family and a business.

In line one, the interviewer makes gendered identities relevant to the talk by asking about the challenges in 'taking the business forward' as a woman. In line four, the interviewee replies by saying that 'I don't think it really does make any difference'. Through denying gendered difference, she thus challenges one of the pillars of sexism, namely that women are different from men, and in doing so she evokes a standpoint that seeks to 'undo gender' (Deutsch, 2007). Paradoxically, in line five, she then does identity work that evokes a Discourse of difference (Lewis, 2014), because she claims that being a woman in business is 'probably in my favour' because she can multi-task. This therefore invokes a Discourse of gendered identity and difference in which women have skills that men do not – namely the positive ability to multi-task – which is consistent with a postfeminist Discourse of natural sexual variation, that is not necessarily in conflict with an entrepreneurial identity.

By contrast, in line eight, she introduces a story of a gendered difficulty: the difficulty being a situation in which she is ignored by male interlocutors. However, she downgrades the temporal importance of this with the modifier 'occasionally'. The complicating action in the story is that: 'if there's John and I in a meeting they'll talk to John' (line 9). The evaluation of this is to 'chuckle' which orients to the complicating action as laughable because 'they can try and butter John up as much as they want but you know he's not the one making the decision'. Thus, by making the decisions, having the final word, and deciding who gets the business or not, she positions herself as the one who has agency and acts on the world. The story is then explicitly oriented to in terms of sexism when, in the coda of the story (line 16), she argues that 'to be honest I don't come across a lot of sexism or anything like that'. So, whilst she tells a story which she evaluates as sexism-in-action, she downgrades the extent and importance of such sexist behaviour in an entrepreneurial environment. The real challenge is: 'just managing it all, you know running a home, a family and a business' (line 17). Thus, on the one hand, she tells a story in which sexism in the entrepreneurial world is challenged and triumphed over and which therefore invokes a feminist counter narrative of female superiority. Yet, on the other hand, in the here-and-now of the interview world, she mitigates this by calling into question the extent of the issue which she also downgrades in relation to other issues such as running a home and family. Thus, she instantiate the 'mumpreneur' identity (Lewis, 2014, p. 1855) in which women have to create a professional entrepreneurial identity, but in which they still have a foothold in the domestic sphere. Consequently, at the third level of analysis, Kate invokes a Discourse of entrepreneurship as something competing with the other (possibly more) primary role of mother and homemaker. Thus, she makes relevant one of the subcomponents of benevolent sexism (i.e., complementary gender differentiation [Becker and

Wright, 2011]), in which a working woman's place is in the home with the family as well as running a business. And, as a female entrepreneur herself, she is ambivalent to the sexism that surrounds her.

Observations and conclusions

This paper has sought to add to research (op cit.) that seeks to challenge the assumption that the entrepreneurial world is a level playing field for women seeking to avoid the gendered constraints of the organisational world. Following Marlow (2014, p. 103), the focus of such research has now moved from establishing if gendered assumptions affect women's entrepreneurial behaviour to exactly how this is achieved. Giving voice to female entrepreneurs and treating the stories of women entrepreneurs as the object of our research, rather than as a resource for theorizing about gendered entrepreneurial identity, we have sought to add to this debate by explicating the process through which female entrepreneurs do not evaluate experiences of men not talking to them as sexism-in-action.

First, the evaluation of the stories as not being sexism-in-action is quite surprising considering the gendered identity work that all the story-tellers perform in the positioning of the characters in the there-and-then of the storyworld. On the one hand, the analyses revealed that there are differences between, and within, the stories which indicates that (gendered) identity is something that is fluid and adaptive rather than something that is unitary and essentialist and that is 'in there somewhere' simply waiting to be reflected in talk, as if talk was some kind of asocial conduit for identity. On the other hand, when the stories are taken together, the three story-tellers do identity work that makes gendered difference relevant to the interaction in the storyworld. In her first story, Sally does identity work that makes relevant gendered difference in which men ignore her when dealing with the 'technical side' of things, yet they come to her with relational problems. Thus, she makes relevant 'natural' sex differences in the dichotomy of males being more technical and females being more relational, which is one of the key issues in benevolent sexism (Glick and Fiske, 1996) and postfeminism (Lewis, 2014). However, paradoxically, in her second story, Sally dissolves difference and de-genders being ignored by men. She presents not being talked to as an issue anybody can face and thus draws on a postfeminist and neoliberal Discourse of gendered meritocracy in the entrepreneurial world. Heather makes gendered difference relevant, but in this case inferiority also becomes relevant. She is positioned as having her place in the kitchen whereas her husband is positioned as the boss of the company. This talks into being a gendered distribution of roles. Moreover, these roles are also hierarchical: her husband is the boss, she is 'just' the cook. In the final story, Kate also makes gendered difference relevant: she can multi-task and run a family as well as a business. However, running a family and a business and multi-tasking are not necessarily negative and so inferiority is not reproduced in the storyworld. Rather, Kate enacts a form of benevolent sexism in which women have different challenges and qualities, but inferiority is not enacted. Second, in terms of agency, Sally has agency but only in a motherly, relational domain and not in a masculine technical domain. Heather, also makes her lack of agency vis-à-vis her male interlocutors relevant. This is because she does not know how to handle the situation and so she allows herself to be ignored by her male suppliers. On the other hand, Kate has the last word and is agentive in triumphing over being ignored by male interlocutors by not giving them the business. Thus, whilst Heather and, to a lesser extent, Sally position themselves, and are positioned, as undergoers subservient to men in a traditional feminist paradigm of sexism-in-action, Kate is able to invoke a counter narrative in which the woman comes out as the winner.

Second in the here-and-now of the story-telling world, despite doing identity work that mainly makes difference and, to a lesser extent, inferiority and lack of agency relevant, the stories are not evaluated as sexism. Sally fails to evaluate her story of being ignored in the workplace as sexism and she evaluates this in terms of 'historical reasons'. Further, in her second story, she de-genders the story so that being ignored by men is not sexism, rather it is a generic problem that both males and females face. Heather fudges the evaluation of her story of being ignored by the sales rep and shifts to another topic without providing a clear evaluation. Finally, Kate is the only person in our data to evaluate not being talked to as sexism. However, this evaluation is mitigated since whilst evaluating the experience as sexism, she downgrades it (I don't come across a lot of sexism) and she upgrades the challenges of running a family and a business.

Third, at a Discursive level, the story-tellers connect with a postfeminist Discourse in which sexism 'has disappeared from everyday use' (Gill, 2014a, p 517) - with the exception of Kate who does define being ignored by men as sexism-in-action. Sally, in her first story, makes difference relevant, and in doing so enacts a Discourse of natural sexual variation which aligns with a postfeminist Discourse of motherhood as an asset within the entrepreneurial world (Lewis 2014, p 1856). Paradoxically, in her second story, she denies gendered difference thus invoking the egalitarian world of the entrepreneur which is another feature of postfeminist Discourse and part of the 'denial' of sexism which renders it invisible. Heather invokes a Discourse of difference, inferiority, and lack of agency commensurate with 'old style' Discourses of gender, but through failing to evaluate this as sexist, she also renders the sexist nature of identity work she performs invisible. Kate, while recognising the sexist nature of her experiences, plays sexism down and does identity work that makes a postfeminist Discourse of difference, but not inferiority, and 'mumpreneurism' in which she has to juggle the home and work relevant. Reflexively, by making use of a postfeminist Discourse in the storyworld, the story-tellers (re)enact it: being ignored by men is attributed to other issues such as 'historical reasons', or it is de-gendered and becomes something that can happen to anyone, or the event is simply left unevaluated. Thus collectively the three story-tellers enact a postfeminist Discourse in which the playing field is even and in which 'inequalities become – quite literally – unspeakable, as a version of success as based on equality of opportunity and merit is normatively demanded' (Gill, 2014b, p. 120).

In sum, despite the gendered identity work that is performed, the evaluations are fairly consistent: sexism does not exist. Paradoxically, as Simpson and Lewis (2005) point out, 'the "unsaid" can thus be illustrative of power being articulated' (p. 9) and there is a power of invisibility that accompanies a norm. Thus, through not evaluating being ignored by male interlocutors as sexism, the story-tellers fail to challenge their own subordination. This, we argue, is because they are caught between Discourses of sexism and postfeminism and the story-tellers may not wish to portray themselves as disempowered. If they did so, this would suggest that others have power over them and it would run counter to the notion of empowerment which lies at the heart of postfeminist rhetoric, even though ironically 'this seemingly empowering mode of thinking undermines strategies for social change' (Pomerantz *et al.* 2013, p.203). Further, as Gill (2014a, p. 523) speculates, if women did mention sexism then 'the neoliberal mythology would be punctured and perhaps also the speaker's intelligibility as an entrepreneurial subject'. Consequently, through privileging postfeminist Discourses of egalitarianism and meritocracy, 'mumpreneurialism', and natural gendered variation, the story-tellers deny sexism and render it invisible. The upshot of favouring such neoliberal and postfeminist Discourses is that the story-tellers fail to challenge their own subordination and so the myth of egalitarianism 'becomes part of the very mechanism through

which inequality is reproduced' (Gill 2014a, p. 523). The consequence of this is that a form masculine hegemony (Gramsci 1971), in which sexism is silenced, is reproduced. Moreover, since Discourses are frames of reference which inform, constrain, and/or enable contextually appropriate behaviours (Marlow and McAdam 2015), the rendering of sexism invisible in entrepreneurial environments has important implications for entrepreneurial practice. This is because, if postfeminist and neoliberal Discourses are enacted in stories as a way of understanding experiences, this understanding will also inform practices to the extent that female entrepreneurs will fail to interpret being ignored by men as sexist. As a result of such sense-making, the action of being ignored will go unchallenged and will become accepted and acceptable entrepreneurial practice.

We thus end this paper by joining calls by other researchers writing about sexism who argue that if the insidious and hegemonic nature of sexism is to be challenged this should, *inter alia*, be done by rising awareness of how women *can be* complicit in its enactment (for example, Becker and Wright, 2011; Becker and Swim, 2012). And so we argue that 'using postfeminism as a critical concept, helps us to understand how many women consent to the *status quo*, by underplaying and silencing structural inequalities' (Lewis *et al. 2017*, p. 219). This is because hegemony only works when the dominated group accept their domination as natural (Gramsci, 1971). More specifically, such normalisation is (re)constructed in the storyworld because the social norms of who speaks to whom and who is, or is not, worth speaking to in a particular (entrepreneurial) situation legitimise asymmetric social relations and differences in power. And it is through the acceptance of these differences in power, both in everyday social interaction and in the storyworld, that they are taken for granted, rendered invisible and normalised (Fairclough, 1989, p. 2). Only once the extent of sexism is out in the open and is labelled and treated as such can it be challenged, and only when this happens can entrepreneurship offer a true venue of social change (Calás *et al.* 2009).

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Appendix one. Transcription symbols used

..	pause lasting 0.2 seconds
@	laughter
(Tsk)	alveolar click
[words]	words changed to protect respondent identity
((words))	description of actions

[i] Explicate is used here rather than explain. As Fox (2008, p. 91) argues: "Explaining is often understood in terms of causality: what factors cause what phenomena? But explicate means to show by unfolding something, making it visible in a more detailed way".

[ii] Whilst not arguing that stories have to be made up of certain constituent parts, we find it useful to use Labov's (Labov and Waletzky 1967) terminology to describe certain elements of the stories. Labov and Waletzky specified that structurally stories should have the following constituent parts: an abstract (how does the story begin); an orientation (setting the scene: who, what, when, and where); complicating action (the dilemma); resolution (how was the dilemma resolved); evaluation (so what); and coda (what is the relevance of the story to the here-and-now).

[iii] The Free Masons are one of the world's oldest and largest, non-political, non-religious fraternal and charitable organisations.

[iv] Pinny is the diminutive form of pinafore which is normatively associated with women. It is defined by Wikipedia, for example, as being "short for pinafore, may be worn by girls as a decorative garment and by both girls and women as a protective apron".