

‘Little feminism, but lots of feminists’: Feminist resistance and the Scottish independence movement

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Abstract

The Scottish independence campaign became a mass social movement against austerity in the lead up to the independence referendum of 18 September 2014. The participation of the radical left in the campaign built up a form of resistance to the British neoliberal status quo. However, little attention has been paid to the role of feminist radicals in the movement. Drawing on feminist theory, this article presents data from interviews with 37 pro-independence activists illuminating feminist strategies of resistance. Feminist participation and practices of resistance in two main forums are examined: firstly, in the cross-class women’s group Women for Independence (WFI), and secondly in the principal left wing organisation, the Radical Independence Campaign (RIC). The possibilities of the alliance with WFI are considered, alongside the constraints of a cross-class group for feminist radicals in resisting multiple interacting power relations. Conversely, in RIC resistance to the marginalisation of women and feminism is examined. This article critically examines contemporary feminist radical resistance to unravel the limitations imposed by a discourse of individualism. As shown in the analysis, while structural understandings of concepts such as capitalism or patriarchy are rhetorically invoked, resistance is primarily focused on self-transformation or persuading others to change their personal behaviour. This emphasis impedes the development of a collective feminist praxis to resist the structures behind individual behaviour.

Keywords: Resistance, feminism, independence, Scotland

Introduction

The Scottish Independence Campaign, advocating a “yes” vote for the independence of Scotland from the rest of Britain in the referendum of 18 September 2014, was one of the largest political movements in

recent Scottish history. While the official pro-independence campaign “Yes Scotland” promoted a vision of Scotland very similar to the British neoliberal status quo, an alternative grassroots movement fuelled by popular resistance to austerity blossomed. The grassroots movement was comprised of many individuals and organisations, but the most prominent among them were the left wing coalition, the Radical Independence Campaign (RIC), and the women’s group Women for Independence (WFI). Despite this there was a lack of feminist politics across the referendum debate (Kenny, 2014; Morrison, 2015). A frequent comment from feminists about RIC was “there’s little feminism, but lots of feminists.” While there was no organised feminist group and little collective effort to advance feminist demands, a high number of self-identified feminist radicals participated in the campaign. This article analyses feminist strategies and practices of resistance in the grassroots of the independence campaign. Focusing on self-defined feminist radicals who aim to resist multiple power relations across class, race, and gender, it explores feminist resistance in broad social movements. This article argues that a discourse of individualism dominates feminist radicalism where structural concepts are rhetorically invoked, but, resistance emphasises the altering of individual behaviour, impeding the development of a collective feminist praxis.

The first section discusses feminist theories of resistance, emphasising the interconnections of multiple sites and levels of feminist activity. The concept of everyday resistance is introduced alongside its interconnection with the constraints of hegemonic power relations. The openings and constraints of feminist radical participation in the cross-class women’s group Women for Independence (WFI) is examined in the second section. WFI is an autonomous grassroots group which is open to and aimed to appeal to all self-identified women¹. Historical continuity is demonstrated in a feminist radical critique of the limits of the appeal to all women. Lastly, the final section considers resistance practices focused in and beyond RIC. It highlights efforts to challenge the internal marginalisation of feminism in the radical wing of the independence

¹ As with many organisations established to campaign for independence, WFI and RIC have continued even after the defeat of the September 2014 referendum.

movement as well as within broader society. However, while feminist radicals undertook individual and everyday acts of resistance, their practices were shaped by hegemonic neoliberal discourses.

As with all social movements the independence campaign is a heterogeneous one with different but sometimes conflicting ideologies and practices, nonetheless a movement that coheres around a common issue (Flesher Fominaya, 2010). Evidently, feminist participants are equally heterogeneous even within the circle of feminist radicals. Discussing feminist resistance in the independence movement is not meant to imply that feminists spoke with a single voice, rather this form of resistance traces broad dominant discourses. Throughout this article the term feminist radical is used to refer to the thirty (30) self-identified left wing feminists who were interviewed to form the data used in this research (see methodology below). Simultaneously, feminists also identified with various ideological positions including those such as socialist, anarchist, and queer. Radical is used in this article, as it is generally used among activists in RIC, as an umbrella term to include differing left wing positions, moreover, it also includes those who do not identify with the traditional left, but, understand themselves to have radical politics opposed to parliamentary liberal democracy. Feminist radicals are those who self-identify specifically as both feminist and radical. Feminist radical is also used to distinguish from the theoretical position of radical feminism – which understands patriarchy as the root of societal inequality – with which none of the interviewees identified.

Feminist Resistance in Social Movements

Alongside the wave of protest movements which have arisen since the 2008 economic crisis, a resurgence of feminist activism has been noted in the Global North (Dean, 2012; Winch, 2015). Much of this renewed feminism has been closely connected to forms of resistance against austerity such as the Occupy movement in the United States (Reger, 2015), the *indignados* in Spain (Gámez Fuentes, 2015), or the 2010-11 UK student movement (Cochrane, 2013). The Radical Independence Campaign (RIC) has been placed alongside these movements, and subsequent political parties such as Podemos in Spain, as new political configurations capable of challenging the neoliberal political consensus (Ali, 2015).

However, feminism has faced marginalisation across these movements, including in RIC (Morrison, 2015; Ng and Toupin, 2013). Feminist activists and scholars have long sought to expose and resist how gendered power relations structure social movements (López and García, 2015; Rowbotham, Segal and Wainwright, 2013). Radical movements are shaped by their social origins, tending to be dominated by white, middle class men, and prioritising analysis of class above other forms of oppression such as gender (Eschle and Maiguashca, 2007). As a result, feminists struggle to render visible and resist power relations both in society as a whole and within mixed gender movements. This dual focus was continued by feminist radicals in the independence campaign, who resisted domination in their own movement as well as in broader Scottish society.

To no one's surprise, feminist practices of resistance have often been overlooked in resistance literature, reflecting the marginalisation of feminism in the movements. But, acknowledgement and acceptance of feminist resistance is significant, as it allows us to rethink the concept of resistance in general by highlighting that the private sphere and interpersonal relations are sites of resistance. Feminists have long challenged the traditional understanding of resistance as limited to large-scale, public, overt acts of contestation. Feminist research has drawn attention to women's resistance in the private sphere, for example in the sharing of childcare in communities (Glenn, 1985; Brand, 1987). Such insights into resistance are also brought into feminist resistance within public events such as social movements. Feminists have maintained that resistance, even internal to a movement, must be understood as the range of acts from the daily practices of supporting one another or building solidarity among women and public through confrontational actions such as strikes or rallies (Maiguashca, 2011). As Motta (2011) argues, feminism helps us to re-conceptualise resistance by considering how power works through our subjectivities and relationships and how everyday emotions and acts of support or solidarity can begin to disrupt such power relations. Therefore, the lack of high profile resistance practices such as rallies cannot be taken to indicate the absence of feminist resistance in the Scottish independence campaign.

The concept of the micro-political or everyday politics has been engaged by many resistance scholars. First coined by Scott (1985), the idea

of “everyday resistance” refers to the mundane acts people undertake in their everyday life that oppose power. Scott (1990) outlines how covert or everyday resistance is low-profile, quiet, disguised or invisible. Thus, everyday behaviours of subaltern groups, such as foot-dragging, laziness or avoidance, can actually be acts that aim to undermine domination. The concept of everyday resistance has been further developed within feminist research as it provides a theoretical framework for women’s and feminist’s resistance in daily life. This way feminist critique has expanded the concept of resistance by demonstrating that gendered subjectivities shape the way resistance occurs (Agarwal, 1994). Kandiyoti (1998) further expands the critique of Scott by highlighting how resistance to power relations is also found in interpersonal and intimate relations. These scholars have expanded the site of resistance by including the family, personal, and community, and acts of resistance by including interconnections within those sites.

The concept of everyday resistance is important as it reframes resistance as something which is a part of everyday existence rather than something that exists outside of normal life. Instead of resistance as external to the routine of life, resistance is an integral part of daily activity. Further, Vinthagen and Johansson (2013) note a criticism of Scott creates a dichotomy between everyday resistance and public resistance. Such a dichotomised understanding of resistance overlooks the ways in which everyday and public resistance can become one another, but also how everyday existence exists even within public events such as social movements (Simi and Futrell, 2009). Examining feminist resistance provides productive insights into the range of resistance practices undertaken by women. Feminists have stressed that women’s resistance occurs simultaneously across multiple levels from the everyday to the overt-collective. (Eschle and Maiguashca, 2010). Thus, the everyday should be considered as part of a complex, and overlapping spectrum of resistance ranging from covert acts – even invisible acts – to open rebellion. During the Scottish independence campaign, feminists were not only public activists for the cause, but, they also performed acts of everyday resistance to undermine power relations found within the movement. But, while understanding everyday resistance is an essential aspect of conceptualising resistance as a spectrum of activity, there is a risk in situating everyday

resistance as the (only) form of resistance undertaken by subalterns or marginalised groups such as women (Gutmann, 1993).

Agarwal (1994) reminds us that women's resistance has always included the entire spectrum from covert-individual to overt-collective acts. Moreover, she cautions against romanticisation of everyday acts and questions whether they can have any significant political impact. Similarly, Mittelman (1998: 851) asks this of everyday resistance: "if the consequences are fully felt only in the *longue durée*, how long will that be?" Mittelman makes case that trying to construct collective forms of resistance can be more effective in changing peoples' lives. These researchers highlight the danger of fetishizing everyday resistance, or the failure to consider the spectrum of resistance from the micro to the macro level. It is also important to note that feminists such as Motta (2011) advocate engagement with the everyday as a way to rebuild group solidarity and community, and not just to focus on individual everyday acts.

It is important, therefore, to consider how resistance is interconnected with power, particularly as power works not merely through externally imposed top-down structures such as the state, but, through everyday social relations. Gramsci's (1971) concept of hegemony is useful in considering how resistance faces the constraints of power. Hegemony refers to the process through which social identities, relations and structures are constituted by the dominant classes. Feminist scholars have emphasised the gendered and multiple nature of these processes which maintain men's dominance in society (Ledwith, 2009). Hegemony operates not through external force, but, by the institutions of civil society such as the family, media or school, yet, as a continually changing process hegemony changes through each historical context. As hegemonic processes are never complete, they always exist in tension with alternative understandings of social life. This understanding of hegemony as always in tension with resistance is important in differentiating the concept from the idea of false consciousness which has been criticised as deterministic and unable to account for change (Abrams, 1989).

Such an understanding of hegemony as distinct from false consciousness is important in integrating the concepts of everyday resistance and hegemony. Scott (1990) argued that subalterns are politically conscious and demonstrate autonomous agency in undertaking acts of

everyday resistance, and only maintain a public image of consent to systems of domination. Moreover, Scott explicitly critiques the concept of hegemony, which he frames as determinist or as requiring the absolute internalisation of the ideology of the dominant class by subaltern subjects, therefore, not permitting space for conflict or change. However, Haynes and Prakash (1992) argue that Scott misunderstands the concept of hegemony, emphasising that conflict is an intrinsic aspect of hegemonic processes. Hegemonic ideas, or the common sense of a society, are an effect of a subject’s multiple social positions, but are not absolute, rather allow room for agency and resistance. Everyday resistance, therefore, exists not in contradiction with hegemony, rather can be conditioned by it (Mitchell, 1990). Additionally, the complex tension between hegemony and resistance can result in contradictory consciousness where a subject resists some forms of power relations, but, internalises and reinforces others (Chin and Mittelman, 1997). In light of this, everyday resistance and hegemony are not contradictory concepts, but can be reformulated as complementary. Under correct conditions, various everyday acts can come together in collective open rebellion resulting in structural change. Such resistance emerges in the everyday and can be built to form a collective, counter-hegemonic common sense.

In Britain the resurgence of feminist activity after the 2008 economic crisis that formed the antecedents to feminism in the Scottish independence campaign, took place alongside the emergence of new protest movements and an intensification of neoliberal reforms across Britain. Study of the resurgence is in its early stages, but, there appears to be a prominent strand with a clearer left-wing orientation and increased emphasis on global structural concepts such as patriarchy, capitalism or white supremacy with the acknowledgment of difference within such categories (Mitchell, 2013). Resistance practices have tended to focus on the individual, particularly with the emphasis on the tactic of ‘calling out’ (Munro, 2013). Call outs are when individuals publicly challenge the oppressive speech or behaviour of other individuals. Moreover, individuals are encouraged to examine and change their own behaviour and speech to avoid reinforcing privilege. Such practices can be seen as everyday resistance as they are at individual level, usually relatively covert acts that undermine power. However, neoliberalism is also a hegemonic project

which seeks to reconstitute subjectivities (Hall, 1988). Feminist research suggests that women, including feminists, are reshaped as neoliberal, self-responsible, self-managing subjects (Gill, 2008; Gill and Scharff, 2011). It is a combination of the invocation of radical understanding of concept such as patriarchy, but a neoliberal focus on resistance as self-responsibility and individual growth dominated feminist radicalism in the independence campaign. Therefore, while acts aiming to resist gendered power relations existed throughout the campaign, feminist subjectivities remained shaped by hegemonic neoliberal understanding of individualism and self-transformation, despite the explicit opposition of feminists to neoliberalism. In addition, neoliberal subjectivities were also resisted, as some interviewees argued for a collective feminist resistance.

Research and Methodology

This study emerged from my own experience as a feminist activist in Scotland over the past ten years, as well as my own involvement in the independence movement. Currently based between Barcelona and Glasgow, I am a member of and participated in the Radical Independence Campaign. The data presented in this article is taken from thirty-seven qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews with pro-independence activists which is part of a larger study examining feminist organising during the Scottish independence campaign. Thirty of the interviews were with self-identified feminist radicals and four were with pro-independence members of the feminist Third Sector who were also active with Women for Independence. The remaining three interviews were with key male RIC organisers and spokespersons. This article may, therefore, be considered as a piece of insider researcher as I am a member of the group I am researching (Aguilar, 1981). Insider research is particularly open to a charge of bias, as the researcher may experience conflicted loyalties, hesitancy in being negative about their own community or unable to question practices which appear commonplace (Walsh, 2004). However, it must be noted that feminists question the very claim of researcher's objectivity by arguing that all research is inherently biased (Haraway, 1988). As a result, feminist research necessitates the continual reflection on the researchers' own biases and social location.

Also, the insider/outsider binary has been questioned, as community status is always fluid and changing (Naples, 1996). As RIC is a broad coalition I have closer political and personal connections with some groups, and group-members than others. Therefore, I had an ambiguous insider/outsider position that shifted depending on who I was interviewing. My (shifting) insider status may have brought some advantage in overcoming the hesitancy some activists have about having their words misused in an academic context (Eschle and Maignascha, 2010). My identity as a feminist, radical and an independence supporter was cited by several interviewees as a way of making activist feel more comfortable. Of course, participants could have also been nervous about criticising a group of which I am a member, and this may have affected their presentation of ideas. However, during my research I found participants to be more willing to discuss negative aspects of the groups I was a member of – RIC in particular.

It is recognised that the interviews inevitably reflect power hierarchies, and my position as a white, middle class researcher created a particular imbalance between interviewee and interviewer. Nevertheless, power never goes entirely in one direction and in order to limit power hierarchies I ensured all participants had an information sheet, that they were aware of what the research entailed, and that they gave informed consent to participation. Additionally, I sent a copy of the completed transcript to the interviewee to edit as they saw fit, allowing them a degree of control over what information ended up in the public realm. Most interviewees made no changes to their transcripts while others made changes based on ensuring anonymity rather than to the content of the interview. The transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis (Daly, Kellehear and Gliksmann, 1997).

Interviews lasted between twenty minutes and two hours, with participants aged between twenty and seventy-two. All interviews took place during the referendum campaign, between May and September of 2014. I initially recruited participants by approaching my own contacts within the pro-independence radical left in Glasgow and asked them to facilitate further contacts-known as snowballing (Browne, 2005). I also identified key activists and organisations and contacted them via email as well as by asking them to facilitate contacts. Interviews were focused on women’s

participation, feminism in the independence campaign as well as contemporary feminist organising in Scotland more generally. Of the thirty interviews with feminist radicals, twenty were members of RIC at the time of their interview. A further seven had been members of RIC, but, had either dropped out or only peripherally involved due to the marginalisation of feminism or misogynistic behaviour of men in RIC. Three interviewees chose not to join RIC, citing the presence of abusive men and the failure to integrate feminist politics. Of the thirty interviewees, twenty-two participated in WFI, some peripherally, but, others had positions as organisers or more prominent activists. A pseudonym has been assigned to all interviewees in order to preserve anonymity.

Alliances and Constraints:

Women for Independence

During the independence referendum debate many feminist radicals joined the primary Scottish pro-independence women's group Women for Independence (WFI). As indicated by its full name, Women for Independence/Independence for Women, WFI was founded to challenge the male dominance and lack of gendered analysis in the independence movement. A broad coalition open to all self-identified women, WFI provides a women-only space and advocates for more women in Scottish public and political life. RIC organisers and spokespeople have supported and celebrated WFI with their leading organiser, Robert, stating "we have a very close relationship with Women for Independence... [WFI] should obviously be encouraged within the independence debate and in terms of the arguments around it" (interview, June 25, 2014). Additionally, some interviewees praised the role played by WFI in bringing a gendered perspective to the independence campaign. WFI successfully mobilised a high number of women behind a demand for equality of gender participation and representation. Yet, the emphasis on the importance of appealing to all women to win a "Yes vote" for independence was also perceived by some feminist radicals to constrain the development of feminist resistance within boundaries tolerated by the mainstream campaign. The desire to appeal to all women resulted in the marginalisation of working class and women of colour. Alternative forms of feminism

could be framed as antagonistic as they challenged the unity of women and were, therefore, considered negative for the campaign.

Women for Independence state on their website that their aim is to “promote the causes of Scottish independence and other constitutional changes likely to contribute to greater democracy and home-rule for Scotland, gender equality and social justice,” which will be achieved “by working to increase women’s political engagement, nationally and in communities” (Women for Independence, 2015). The organisation was officially launched in September 2012 because the founders felt the “Yes campaign” was not adequately taking a gendered perspective or including women’s voices in the campaign. As a result, WFI was set up as an autonomous movement that is separate from “Yes Scotland,” and with the aim of developing an independent agenda, comprising members with different political outlooks.

WFI focused resistance practices on providing women a voice in the independence campaign. WFI provided speakers for formal political meetings, but, also organised informal events such as coffee mornings to attract women marginalised by male dominance in traditional political settings. Moreover, their online forums and blog provided a further space for women to enter political discussion. The importance WFI as a woman only space was noted by several interviewees. One of the self-identified working class feminist Kerry stated, “you can converse in a different way” (interview, 10 June, 2014) in the absence of men, particularly in a less confrontational manner. Additionally, women did not need to spend as much of their time and energy justifying and explaining feminism as they did in mixed gender groups. Such women-only spaces allowed women the space to discuss and develop certain feminist ideas, and build confidence in women to articulate such ideas in the public sphere.

WFI encouraged women to self-organise events, providing space for women to develop alternative modes of political participation. RIC activist Kerry noted the value of the space provided by WFI stating:

I want to have one [a women’s meeting] that isn’t specifically about independence, just women I know and just interesting motivated women, that’s so broad, basically every women I have ever met, basically I want

to start that where everyone brings something to eat, we all sit down together, break bread and talk about the state of the world and what is important to us rather than the specific constitutional question (interview, 10 June, 2014)

The open structure of WFI permitted Kerry the space to go beyond the political confines of the independence campaign and permit women to define what they considered political. Yet, other activists expressed frustration at a sense that feminism was placed outside of the political realm by WFI:

it turns into we don't want politics, we want community ventures with discussion groups, where women feel included, it doesn't really tackle the real issues it just sort of invokes this wonderful world of women having chats. (Alison, interview, 06 May, 2014)

In this view WFI meetings did not always advance a feminist understanding of gender equality. However, Kaplan (1982) developed the idea of a "female consciousness" where women may reject politics, yet, be drawn into activism around conventional understandings of women's roles as they demand the rights that go with that role. Such activity can result in further politicisation with the awakening of a gender consciousness. Thus, drawing women into self-organisation can allow the space for the development of a feminist consciousness.

Nonetheless, the relatively narrow political standpoint of the national WFI campaign was experienced as a constraint on the development of a feminist radical resistance by some interviewees. In particular, a central point of tension emerged as to whether WFI only aimed to encourage women to vote "yes" in the referendum or if it was also using the independence debate to promote gender equality. Alison attended early WFI meetings, but, later dropped out because she felt it had a very narrow political focus, and had this to say:

I was at the meeting where we were setting that up [WFI], and there were problems because people had different types of feminism but also because some people called themselves feminists and other people from the SNP just thought they needed a women's group and I feel like

Women for Independence developed along very shaky lines because of that disagreement, so one of the first things they decided, or really the only thing that anyone could agree on was a listening exercise which was about listening to women and what they wanted, which I felt was a bit conservative and didn't really work because no one really did it and I think after that Women for Independence, it became more and more just a group of women, sort of older women, who used to be involved in politics and wanted to be involved in politics and maybe is now seen a bit, like a group of careerists or people who just want their voices to be heard but isn't necessarily very open. (Interview, May 6, 2014)

While WFI officially aims to enhance gender equality, that aim frequently became subsumed in merely persuading women to vote “yes”. While listening to women is an intrinsic aspect of feminist organising, if it is detached from feminist ideology it can have a conservative pull because it will arch towards reinforcing rather than challenging the status quo of women's opinions. Due to differing political views it was difficult to gain general agreement on political aims resulting in the decision to focus primarily on equality of gender representation and participation. Sophie, in response to being asked for her opinion on WFI, commented,

The difficulty is, pretty much the only things we do agree on are the total basics like women should be represented more, a bit on anti-austerity with the more left-liberal ones, so what do you do? You go to the lowest common denominator 'cause that's what you can agree on and we all end up talking incessantly about representation even though we all know it's kinda bullshit. Meanwhile we have this mass of politicised young women wanting something much more. (Interview, 11 June, 2014)

Rather than representing the unity of women and feminists to promote a certain demand, the focus on representation is framed as shutting down a broader conversation about gender. O'Keefe (2013) discusses the concept of “lowest common denominator” politics where in order to build unity and facilitate dialogue, feminists appeal to the lowest common uniting factor among women and their gender. Yet, this appeal sidelines contentious topics, complex identities, and differing priorities for

differing groups of women. The written material of WFI was relatively sparse, coming largely in the form of leaflets and blog. The leaflets and blog, alongside endorsing the anti-austerity and anti-nuclear position of “Yes Scotland,” promoted the importance of gender equality in representation (McAngus and Rummery, 2015).² Moreover, speeches from key WFI representatives largely focused on encouraging gender equality in representation, and the enshrining of gender equality in a proposed Scottish constitution (McAngus and Rummery, 2015). While these positions are important aspects of feminism, the relatively narrow focus supports the view of some interviewees that there was a limited space for alternative feminism that prioritised different issues.

The inclusiveness of WFI was called into question by some interviewees who argued that efforts to include everybody resulted in the exclusion of many. In this view, including all women resulted in a tendency to overlook the real existing power relations which divide women. Some activists protested that the class-neutral approach of WFI in fact privileged middle class women’s voices. RIC activist, and self-identified working class feminist, Teresa, mentioned that she didn’t go to a local WFI event “because of the venue and the types of women it attracted, certainly she [the speaker] was speaking to those women but she wasn’t talking to me” (interview, June 16, 2014). The respondent noted that sometimes left wing speakers were promoted by WFI, but, the overall politics made her unlikely to attend events. Working class, black, and socialist feminists have criticised women’s and feminist movements for being dominated by middle class, white women that side-lines working class or black issues (hooks, 2000; Brenner, 2000). White, middle class women are more likely to have their voices heard, are more likely to take leadership positions, and their issues are seen as universal, whereas others are considered sectional. Several women of colour discussed a similar dynamic of marginalisation with Faiza citing a “tokenistic” attitude in

² In the aftermath of the independence referendum WFI has expanded its political focus to some extent. A new website and blog launched in early 2015 discuss support for Syrian refugees and anti-fracking campaigns. Moreover, WFI as an organisation agreed to formally support the reform of abortion laws and an end to women’s imprisonment. <http://www.womenforindependence.org/blog>

WFI and across the independence campaign (interview, 13 May, 2014). Teresa described in detail the problem with building an organisation simply around those who identify as women:

In general it's no enough to just be a woman, it's no enough to identify as a woman, it's not enough and that's what I meant by women who become like men who don't do anything to further women, it's no enough to have the workings of a woman and to identify yourself as a woman, you have to be about women, and I've done stuff about people experiencing domestic abuse, working with children actually experiencing domestic abuse, or their mothers have experienced it and they've grown up in that household you know, ...but you know what, I want to work with women and where are women just now? Women are in poverty and I'm in welfare rights, so I'm working with women day in, day out... it's about, I hate empowerment, I hate that word but you know what I mean, furthering women, that's what it's about, I'm actually working with women every single day (interview, 16 June, 2014)

Women are never constructed solely as women, but their identity is always classed and racialized (Skeggs, 1997). However, WFI was perceived to marginalise the viewpoints and politics of left wing, working class, and women of colour. As a result, it controlled the political space for feminism, which minimised the ability of feminist resistance to challenge dominant power structures in and beyond the independence campaign.

Additionally, WFI has been unable to launch a substantial challenge to the political outlook of the “Yes campaign” due to a narrative of unity in order to gain a “yes” vote. WFI has repeatedly emphasised their autonomous status and especially from the SNP driven “Yes Scotland,” and WFI members has criticised the SNP on policies related to gender. Thus, WFI activist Eilidh, referring to an SNP proposal to introduce 30 hours of free childcare per week for one to five year olds, said women were “understandably resentful that women and the women’s vote was being summarised by a move on childcare” (interview, 12 September, 2014). Moreover, WFI launched a campaign after the referendum against SNP plans for a new women’s super-prison. However, there was little

overt criticism of the overall politics of the SNP, and by extension the mainstream “Yes campaign.” This ambiguity in critique of the SNP is partially due to WFI containing SNP members. However, it is also due to the attempt to appeal to all women, with WFI activist Hannah stating “you could have a Tory [conservative] women and she is voting no but she is still a woman ...it doesn’t mean you can’t talk them round [to a yes vote]” (interview 22 May, 2014). This appeal to unity means while some individuals in WFI have, or rhetorically invoke, radical politics, but, these are not promoted at the collective level by the group. The separation from the SNP has been further called into question in the aftermath of the referendum. After the defeat of the campaign many Yes campaigners joined the SNP quadrupling its membership in six months (The Scotsman, 2015), and this number included many WFI campaigners. In the British General Elections of May 2015 the SNP won an unprecedented 56 out of 59 seats. As 11 of the 21 women SNP MPs elected were connected to WFI, including a co-founder and prominent organiser. But, questions have been raised about the maintenance of critical distance from the governing party.

The appeal to unity within the independence campaign in order to win the Yes vote” also operated to frame WFI as the ‘acceptable’ face of women’s organising which in turn marginalised other feminisms. Sophie discussed how “They’re [WFI] a little bit wet, but [that is] also needed” (interview, 11 June, 2014) in order to win a “Yes vote” precisely because they do not promote an antagonistic or challenging vision of feminism. Many RIC feminists expressed a desire for a feminism which would challenge dominant structures of capitalism or misogyny. Yet there was a strong sense of worry from about being considered sectarian or harming the unity of women’s voice by organising separately. For instance,

I don’t know if there would need to be a separate, maybe an internal feminist thing but I think there is a problem if it is an external visible thing and you have Women for Independence, it’s seen as duplicating the same areas. (Siobhan, interview, 27 May, 2014)

I know one of the reasons they [RIC] don't talk about women's issues that much is because there's Women for Independence and you don't want to step on people's toes, you know they have their niche and RIC's got theirs. (Hannah, interview, 22 May, 2014)

WFI is framed as sufficiently representing 'women's issues' and women's voices in the campaign. The idea that women may have different, sometimes competing, political visions is lost and alternative feminist organisations are framed as having a negative impact on the movement. While this was effective in building WFI as a strong organisation which involved a high number of women, the politics of WFI were also seen as the only possible form of women's resistance.

Participation in Women for Independence allowed feminist radicals to build connections with a wide group of women across Scotland. The creation of a self-identified women only space allowed for women to organise and raise different political issues which were marginalised in the rest of the movement. Moreover, the openness of WFI resulted in a mass mobilisation of women who became involved in political discussion in the public sphere often for the first time. The increase in women in the public sphere disrupted the dominance of male voices and bodies, which demonstrated a form of feminist resistance with their presence. This way, WFI also illustrates how resistance is always intersectional as they resist gendered power relations while accommodating others of different class or race. As with previous debates between various radical and liberal feminisms, the success of WFI in promoting a limited resistance to gendered power relations existed in tension with its marginalisation of a radical conception of feminism. The appeal to unity resulted in the promotion of a class and race neutral understanding of feminism, which formed other feminisms as contentious and negative for the "Yes movement." WFI therefore functioned well for both "Yes Scotland," and RIC as they allowed both aspects of the campaign to present themselves as taking women seriously and incorporating demands for equal gender representation without having their central politics challenged. Women's dissent was managed, as expression was given to certain demands while closing down space for a broader political discussion.

Building a Feminist Radical Resistance?

The limits of WFI meant many feminist radicals sought other forums to advance alternative forms of resistance. Activity was predominantly, but not exclusively focused around the Radical Independence Campaign, which made a class-centred discussion rather than a nationalist one for independence. However, feminism was marginalised within RIC (Morrison, 2015). Thus, feminist radicals sought to challenge the lack of a gendered, race and LGBTQ+ analysis in RIC, but also in Scottish society more broadly. There was no explicitly pro-independence feminist radical organised group, yet, many feminists participated in various forms of feminist collectives alongside the independence movement. Resistance focused on two main interconnected areas: first by ensuring women's equal representation and participation, and second by challenging misogynist behaviour within and beyond RIC. But, this section argues that the dominance of a discourse of individualism limited feminist political praxis. While there was rhetorical invocation of systemic structures of oppression, such as capitalism or patriarchy, undue focus was placed on persuading individuals to change their personal speech and acts. Contesting individual behaviour or speech is an example of everyday resistance as it is an individual, covert act aiming to undermine gendered power relations. However, the focus on individual self-responsibility, rather than collective action to challenge power in interpersonal or intimate relations, also reflects neoliberal personhood illustrating how such individual acts remain shaped by hegemonic neoliberal patriarchy.

The Radical Independence Campaign was originally launched as a one-day conference in Glasgow in November 2012. As a loose and broad coalition of the Scottish left, RIC comprised socialists, anarchists, Greens, and independent activists from varying social movements and organisations. The success of the conference led to the development of autonomously operating local groups across Scotland. A national forum made up of representatives from local groups was established in early 2014 that met every 4 to 6 weeks, and directed national activity. RIC held traditional political meetings with formal speakers alongside alternative events with comedians, singers, and theatre performers. Significantly, RIC organised a series of mass canvasses in the most deprived areas of Scotland. Polling data suggested that citizens of poorer areas were more

likely to vote yes to independence, but they also had with a very low voter registration and turn out in elections. RIC sought to mobilise those communities behind their vision of decisive political and social change (Sangha and Jamieson, 2014; Lynch, 2015).

In the early stages of the campaign a 50:50 policy was adopted and implemented by RIC organisers. This meant that at least 50% of people on any RIC platform had to be women. However, the integration of 50:50 illustrates the limits of focusing on technocratic strategies of resistance. Levy has called approaches to gender relations technocratic when solutions are “disconnected from the critical process surrounding gender relations” (1998: 254). Clearly, feminists in RIC had a critical understanding of gender relations. Yet this perspective tended to be side-lined as 50:50 was used to promote the image of a gender equal movement without examining how inequality in the campaign was reproduced. The integration of 50:50 has not, therefore, been used to increase the feminist politics of the campaign, instead they have been used to marginalise them (Morrison, 2015). The quick, top-down implementation also resulted in the initial feminist-led surge fading from view. Alison commented that in the early stages,

There was quite a lot of voices within things like RIC that were wanting there to be more women but I feel *quite* strongly that now that has died down a lot ...and there is a sort of, there is a feeling that that is done or that the message has got across and there’s not an awful lot of criticism (emphasis in original interview, 6 May, 2014)

As the central focus had been on 50:50, its quick integration caused some difficulty in expanding past the single issue into a broader feminist movement. While the implementation of 50:50 has resulted in RIC having a high proportion of high profile women organisers and speakers that challenge male domination of the left, it has not increased the power of feminism within the movement.

A key focus of feminist resistance in RIC was the creation of a “safer spaces” policy. RIC is not free from power relations, and gendered behaviours continue to structure the campaign just like in other mixed gender social movements (Eschle and Maignushca, 2010). A safer spaces policy is an agreed code of behaviour adopted by a group which typically

includes a statement against oppressive language or behaviour and action to be taken if the code is violated, thus, aiming to create a safer more inclusive environment for those from oppressed groups. A safer spaces policy was adopted by RIC, although not without opposition from some men, as described by Samantha who was a representative at the national forum,

[W]e had national forum of RIC when all the national groups come together, someone had put forward a safer spaces policy which was really just a policy that branches could and should adopt to say 'eh we won't tolerate people being bad to each other within this campaign and here are some procedures if that does happen' and we had a discussion at that national forum where exclusively men said 'I don't understand why we need this, it's a silly idea' and literally shouted across the whole room at each other about how safer spaces was a ridiculous idea, meanwhile the women in the room sat back for a little while, rolling our eyes and crossing our arms and thinking it was ridiculous and after they had all done their shouting bit we stepped in and said this is why, and it passed, it is policy. (Interview, 10 June, 2014)

The prevalence of everyday patriarchal behaviour from RIC men in shouting over women is evident, as is the everyday resistance to such behaviour through acts such as eye rolling. Moreover, the policy provided an opportunity to discuss the behaviour of activists and raise awareness of how women and other oppressed groups may be marginalised. The educative value of safer spaces was emphasised by other activists in creating a space to discuss everyday behaviour, which is otherwise difficult to raise in political meetings.

However, initial resistance from some men towards safer spaces policies does not mean that the policy cannot be used by men instrumentally. Organisations could implement a safer spaces policy to provide the superficial appearance of adherence to feminist politics but fail to change the underlying structures which sustain gendered inequality. A clear example of the potential for safer spaces to be used to project the image of a feminist conscious organisation while not tackling the underlying issues can be found in the attitude towards safer spaces by key

organisers who are men in RIC. Iain emphasised that he was committed to the agenda of safer spaces which was necessary for the safe and successful running of an organisation. However, while discussing safer spaces and misogyny internal to the left he stated,

All of this [safer spaces and misogyny on the left] is part of a big learning curve not just for individuals but for the entire left, not just for the left in Britain, but actually for the left internationally, and I think generally we've done quite well, and I think the reason we've done quite well, the way I would evidence that is that we've not had incidents piling up, so despite the breadth of it, the nature of it, the numbers of people involved and so on, we've not had issues piling up, we've really had one issue and as I say I think there are mental health issues attached to that [the man in question], so that, do you know what I mean, I'd say that the days of saying to women, oh just get on with it, that's over. (Interview, 23 June, 2014)

However, stress was placed on the fact that only one person was reported as a problem to the safer spaces committee as evidence that there was not a significant problem with misogynist or patriarchal behaviour in the movement. Yet, many interviewees talked at length about problems they faced with men, for example, repeatedly interrupting and ignoring women in meetings or demanding they be given the right to make a speech rather than allow more people to participate in a discussion. Iain therefore overlooks the power relations which may make it difficult to report behaviour. Instead, RIC is promoted as having a strong feminist consciousness with few problems with internal misogyny without having a serious commitment to tackling the dominant behaviour of men in the movement.

Safer spaces when detached from a wider critical feminist movement can have an individualising impact on feminist resistance. Some feminist activists mentioned reservations to the entire process as they felt that a disproportionate level of feminist energy was diverted into writing a document that basically asked members not be sexist. The focus that was given to safer spaces is representative of the emphasis on reforming individual behaviour in men (and women) disassociated from critique of the structures that reproduce such behaviour. (Baden and Goetz (1997)

highlight the potential for the deployment of gender in policy formation to have a depoliticising impact when gender-disaggregated data is used but without consideration of power, ideology, and how subordination is reproduced. A similar pattern can be traced in the adoption of safer spaces by social movements. While the different experiences of genders are taken into account, it overlooks, and even obscures questions of why and how oppression is reproduced.

Aside from 50:50 and safer spaces there were many other small instances of resistance from feminist radicals in and beyond RIC during the referendum campaign. These acts were varied but included raising comments and issues in branch meetings, running branch or public talks on feminism, writing and circulating blogs and online activity such as Twitter debates. However, such acts were undertaken at the individual level, so they depended on a small number of confident feminists advocating a feminist message. Women were often isolated and without a substantial feminist support network behind them. Interviewees such as Aileen mentioned a pressure to “be the voice” (interview, 5 July, 2014) of feminism and ensure she raised a feminist point or analysis of a topic under discussion. In another case Melissa stated she felt she was “speaking for feminism a lot” (interview, 9 June, 2014). These two quotes illustrate how feminist women are often labelled the ‘feminist’ separate from the rest of the group and their voice is considered to be the voice of feminism. While feminists undoubtedly helped prevent the complete marginalisation of feminism in RIC and the broader campaign, they were also side-lined into being representative of women and delegitimised as full members of the movement.

The development of a collective feminist resistance was impeded by a dominant focus on the reform of individual behaviour as the primary resistance strategy. Many feminists advanced the idea that to stop the oppression of women, men must change their own personal behaviour. For example, Alexandra stated,

I can say that the only way that this feminism can become understood is if men listen and then realise their privilege and realise that their performance of gender in everything, if its kicking about the office, jumping about the roof of the Scottish parliament, getting eccied [tak-

ing drugs] at parties, everything, the way they perform their gender impacts on women and LGBT, trans people, whoever, and understand that is a social construct and it's not a given, and they need to realise how, how they act might disempower women (interview, 27 June, 2014)

While understanding gender as a social construct is shared by many feminists, challenging patriarchy by asking others to recognise their privilege and change their behaviour was the primary form of activism for many feminists. Similarly, Zainab when asked about feminist activism discussed how she had asked men to “listen to women” (interview, 21 June, 2014), and learn how to change their speech and acts. Challenging individual manifestations of misogyny has long been an important aspect of feminist activism as they reproduce gendered power relations. However, an often reductive focus on personal behaviour was found in many feminist radicals where other forms of activism were indefinitely side-lined due to the belief that men in the movement had to change first. Bergfield (2013) has called this “the negation of politics” as it ignores the societal level to challenge individuals. Reed (2010) identified a similar pattern in anti-racist activism and argued calls for recognition and reformation of individual behaviour is a form of non-political politics which is satisfied with the naming of inequality rather than specifying the mechanisms which produce them. As a result, challenging inequality is reduced to individuals signalling their own goodness – a public recognition of how privilege works in their own life or the lives of those around them.

At its extreme the focus on self-transformation can be debilitating to building a wider feminist movement as it marginalises projects of movement-building. Smith (2013) discussed how the confession of privilege in anti-racism and feminist organising comes to substitute for political action to dismantle structures of domination. Confessions of privilege comes from awareness of power structures, but, collective action is displaced by the emphasis on individual transformation, even reinforcing privileged subjects as the subjects capable of self-reflection. When asked about her involvement in feminist activism, non-RIC aligned feminist radical, Lorna, stated “I have checked my privilege” (interview, 15 May, 2014). She explained she was aware of and read up on how her whiteness gained her advantage within the feminist and other movements. Her

activism focused on challenging others, particularly in activist groups but also in other spheres, online and offline, to see their privilege and change their behaviour. Such emphasis also frames activism in terms of the self-responsibility and self-transformation that are emblematic of neoliberal subjectivity (Gill and Scharff, 2011). Mhairi's feminist group was not collectively affiliated to the independence campaign, but when asked about their activity she commented:

We're trans inclusive, an intersectional feminist group, and online on the Facebook group there's an account that's been set up to ban anyone who is transphobic or homophobic or anything if they cause problems in the group (interview, 4 July, 2014)

Resistance to manifestations of privilege again focuses on calling participant's behaviour to account. Written material from feminist radicals during the independence campaign was limited, reflecting the marginalisation of feminism in RIC, but, also possibly the lack of formal feminist organisation. Nonetheless, the literature which emerged, primarily in the form of blogs, displayed a tendency towards centring individual behaviour. Thus, in the only blog post by an RIC group directly addressing feminism, McFarlane (2015) discussed "making space feminist" (p. 3). While mentioning that independence participants could attend feminist events or provide childcare, the post gave substantial space to how individuals may change their behaviour in order to make campaign space more inclusive of women. Outside of RIC, a pro-independence feminist radical voices were the non-RIC aligned blog "A Thousand Flowers" (ATF) founded on 8th of March 2013, international women's day. ATF is described as a personal blog rather than part of a movement, but, was one of few explicitly pro-independence feminist radical voices in the independence movement. During the independence campaign ATF wrote several critiques of misogyny in the left, yet the solutions tended to focus on the personal level. For example, men were encouraged to "drop the macho crap" (ATF, 2013a), people to educate themselves on privilege (ATF, 2013b) and safer spaces policies encouraged (ATF, 2014). It is not to suggest that groups should not strive to be inclusive or challenge oppressive speech or acts. However, the response to structural domination has been individualised and does not consider how to challenge the

systems which reproduce oppression. Interviewees agreed when asked that patriarchy (or capitalism or white supremacy) is structural and needs to be challenged collectively. Yet, aside from rhetorical invocation, there was very limited focus on systems of oppression or how they might be challenged. Any transformational politics will involve changing the way individuals behave, yet this must be part of a broader movement that seeks to challenge structures underpinning such behaviour.

Feminism is not a homogenous group, and some interviewees – including both members and non-members of RIC – critiqued what they perceived as individualism in practices of feminist resistance. For example, Sophie commented how she believed a focus purely on individuals had been debilitating for the feminist movement in general and around independence:

[Women] go to these meetings because they see something wrong in the world and they want to do something about it, and they don't want to spend the whole time poring through everybody's sexual history to see if they might be a predator, but nothing about structure or how to change it, and that's why I found it difficult to engage in the end because there's no way you're going to get any working class women turning up to those meetings and staying very long, and by working class I mean essentially most people who work, because they just couldn't be bothered with it, it's so time consuming and it's minutia that goes nowhere, like I couldn't deal with it because coming back from work after a day and listening to someone...[sentence unfinished on recording, interview, 11 June, 2014].

The claim of feminist radicals to be inclusive is called into question as a class divide is identified in feminist meetings. The centring of individual privilege contradictorily works to marginalise those women with less privilege. The minutia in focusing on small acts of privilege or oppression is experienced as exclusionary rather than inclusionary, and does not reflect the priorities of working class women. Similarly, Manjit pointed out there were ‘really only a few’ (interview, 28 May, 2014) women of colour involved in RIC, and also in various feminist groups. She questioned the very outcome of their emphasis on inclusion.

The latter stages of the referendum debate saw a few tentative attempts to self-organise feminist radicals with an orientation towards challenging structures of oppression. There were some attempts to organise autonomous women's space, online and offline. Aileen, for example, set up a women-only Facebook group for pro-independence feminists to provide a "place for women to discuss issues connected with feminism and independence" (interview, 5 July, 2014). Stephanie discussed attempts to develop a radical form of the WFI meetings,

there are a bunch of women in the RIC group who are a bit mental, and we are trying to sort out our own women for independence thing where we can enjoy ourselves a bit (interview, 9 June, 2014)

Stephanie emphasised that the event would allow them the space to establish the crucial issues for themselves as women and local community organisers. However, she also indicated connections to systemic issues mentioning the need for action against rent prices. Additionally, Boyd and May (2014) published a short manifesto called the "Scottish Independence: a feminist response" aiming to resist both the marginalisation of gender in RIC, and the dominance of individualism in feminism. Moreover, the book sparked a review post on a local RIC group blog arguing for the campaign to integrate feminist politics (Radical Independence Dumfries and Galloway, 2014). Other interviewees spoke of a desire to have an organised 'left wing women's group' (Teresa, interview, 16 July 2014). In the aftermath of the referendum the Scottish Left Project was started by some RIC activists as a forum to discuss advancing a socialist challenge in Scotland. An autonomous women's group was also established indicating some potential for the development of a collective feminist praxis. It remains to be seen whether this will develop an alternative understanding of feminist resistance in the pro-independence left.

Feminist politics are not fixed but exist in a constant state of flux inside and outside of RIC, and feminist radicals do not speak with one voice. RIC feminists had significant success in promoting 50:50 and safer spaces policies. These policies have drawn some attention to issues of representation of women, and highlighted how radical spaces continue to be structured by gendered power hierarchies. Yet, the individualist focus of feminism resulted in undue stress on the public recognition

of privilege. The dominant understanding of resistance as self-transformation divorced from transformation of social, political, and economic structures impeded feminist praxis. Much feminist resistance was thus reduced to discussing individual privilege in themselves and others; such discussions only reflected the imprint of neoliberal subjectivity. While a structural understanding of oppression continued to underpin understandings of privilege, political projects to develop resistance at the systemic level were indefinitely displaced. Nonetheless, alternative conceptions of resistance continued to exist, with many interviewees declaring a desire to go beyond the focus on the self. Albeit in a very late stage of the campaign, the formation of autonomous space began to provide a voice and build the knowledge of individual privilege into a collective project to transform the structures that reproduce power relations.

Conclusions

As a mass populist movement against austerity, Scottish independence provided an unexpected arena in which radical activists could publically challenge the dominant economic, social, and political consensus. Despite feminist politics not featuring prominently in any aspect of the independence campaign, feminist radicals were active across multiple forums during the referendum debate. Feminists in contemporary Scotland still struggle on multiple fronts, facing marginalisation of feminism within the RIC and the marginalisation of class within WFI. How to enact intersectionality remains a key point of tension in developing strategies of resistance as feminists in and beyond WFI and RIC struggled to foreground working class and women of colour. As argued by Chin and Mittelman (1997) social identities are always multiple and cannot be understood as additive but they are combinations of identities that express different resistances. What constitutes resistance can depend on the complex intersection at which any given subject is located, as her position is always a combination of different relations of subordination and domination. Feminist resistance undermined certain power relations, particularly the gendered power relations, but reinforced others such as class, and race. Yet, as Coleman and Tucker (2012) maintain, what is understood as resistance depends on the specific context in which a particular act emerges. Thus, the multiple, overlapping and sometimes

contradictory perception of resistance reflects the complexity of the particular social location in which individual feminists find themselves. The analysis, therefore, supports the view that resistance is always intersectional and context specific.

As the independence movement continues to unfold post-referendum, alternative feminisms remain overlapping and in tension with one another. Nevertheless, the dominance of certain conceptions of resistance, and the focus on representation and individuals, have thus far limited the advancement of feminist radicalism as a collective project. Feminist radicals undermined gendered power relations at the individual level by challenging themselves and others to consider the power relations in gendered behaviour and speech. As discussed at the start of this article, individual and everyday acts of resistance such as the challenging of patriarchy by feminists illustrate how resistance existed not only in the large public events but in the day to day activities of the campaign. While everyday resistance has traditionally been understood more or less as an internal process and to exist at a smaller scale, examining feminist resistance reveals a more complex image of everyday and public resistance as intricately intertwined. Moreover, the emphasis on interpersonal relations in feminist resistance exclude the range of sites and practices of resistance. There is also an ambiguity in the categorisation of the calling out of behaviour as an act of everyday resistance given that such acts can sometimes occur in the public sphere. Scott (1985) gives the covert or disguised nature of acts as one of the defining features of everyday resistance. Yet, this ambiguity reinforces the idea that resistance exists on a spectrum and can move between levels, or even occupy several levels at the same time.

It is maintained that an analysis of the individual and collective levels is necessary to fully conceptualise resistance. A focus only on the everyday, individual practices of resistance can obscure how such acts are constrained by hegemonic processes. Conceptualising hegemony as an open and fluid process means everyday-covert and collective-overt resistance can be understood as interrelated. Considering the collective level permits an understanding of feminist individualism also as a reflection of neoliberal subjectivities. Feminist radicals tended to reproduce discourses of self-responsibility, self-transformation and self-dependence

in their calling out of patriarchal or other oppressive behaviour. The presence of these discourses again illustrates the intersectional nature of resistance, which existed even when feminist radicals challenged patriarchy. The idea that power relations are structural is left aside or reduced merely to the rhetorical. Such discourses reconstitute and reinforce neoliberal power relations, which are recognised to also reconstitute patriarchal relations (Elson, 1992; Gill, 2008). Transformative resistance must, therefore, attempt to reconstitute collective practices that can effectively undermine neoliberal individualism. As argued by Motta (2011), those aiming for collective practices must remain aware of the individual everyday level and how acts such as sharing or emotional support can provide space for redeveloping collectivity through community. Nonetheless, if these spaces are to grow into a counter-hegemonic movement they must also build beyond the level of individuals to become a collective project.

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