

"In every known society ... Men may cook or weave, dress dolls or hunt hummingbirds, but if such occupations are appropriate for men, then the whole society, men and women alike votes them as important. When the same occupations are performed by women they are regarded as less important" (Margaret Mead, 1954)

“Only” Women’s Work? Understanding the Significance of Women’s Craft Businesses in West Wales

Abstract

“Mumpreneurs” are on the rise (Telegraph, 2014). Since the 2008 recession, the number of women in self-employment has risen by 40%. Many proprietors are sole employers with over a third living in rural communities. Many businesses started as a “creative outlet,” for stay-at-home mothers, growing into flexible employment fitting around family life (Independent, 2017). In West Wales, an area of low employment, a small army of women create their own paid work by running craft or “hobby” businesses. Traditionally craft has been culturally invisible, perceived as “amateur” and without market value. Women’s creativity has also been perceived as domestic, non-professional and degraded as only “women’s work” (Adamson, 2007, pp139-160). It would seem, a craft business run by a woman may be doubly devalued. Women’s contributions to society are far greater than recognised and although frequently denied formal authority women exercise all kinds of informal power (Rosaldo et al,1974, pp1-19). Behind idealised images in the media and the statistics, are gritty powerful stories of women putting food on the table. With craft being the “essence of the maker” (Pink, 2016, p.63), I aim to understand the lives of women running craft businesses in West Wales, highlighting the significance of their contributions to lives, families and local communities.

Research Design

“Craft is an intersection of the senses” (Howes, 2011)

With Sensory Anthropology being both a methodology and a practice (Pink, 2015, p11). I shall take a sensory approach incorporating

- Engaging Participants as Collaborators rather than Research Subjects
- Auto-ethnography and paying attention to my own sensory subjectivity
- Informal Interviewing as a “Social Event” or conversation.
- Sensory Elicitation – using craft and photographs
- Embodied Participation – paying attention to sights, sounds, tastes, smells and textures
- Acting as a Sensory Apprentice – attending craft workshops
- Visiting sensory environments (Pink, 2015, pp71-75):

Theories

- Butler: Gender as a Performance (1990)
- Ingold: Making (2013) and Meshworks (2010)
- Pink: Sensory Ethnography (2015)
- Dundon and Hemer: The Intersections between the Senses, Embodiment, Emotions, Space and Place (2016)

Ethics

The 7 Principles of Professional Responsibility espoused by the American Association of Anthropology: Do No Harm, Transparency, Informed Consent, Weighing Competing Ethical Considerations, Making Results Accessible, Protecting and Preserving Records, Maintaining Ethical and Professional Relationships

References

Adamson, G (2007) *Thinking Through Craft* Oxford New York: Berg
American Anthropological Association, (2018), Statement on Ethics
Butler J.P. (1990) *Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*, London: Routledge
Christie, S. (2014) Rise of the 'mumpreneurs' as childcare costs hit £12,000, *The Telegraph*
Hemer S.R. and Dundon A, (2016) *Emotions, Senses, Spaces Ethnographic Engagements and Intersections*, University of Adelaide Press: South Australia
Howes, D. (2011) “The Craft of the Senses” *Craft Forward*, California College of the Arts, San Francisco (Available @. Accessed 6 December
Ingold, T. (2010) *Bring things to life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials*
Ingold, T. (2013) *Making Anthropology Archaeology Art and Architecture*, London New York: Routledge
Margaret Mead (1954), Introduction, in Rosaldo, Lamphere, and Bamberger, (1974) *Woman, Culture, and Society*, California: Stanford University Press
Pink, S (2016) *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, 2nd ed. London, California, New Dehli Singapore: . Sage Publications
Rosaldo, Lamphere, and Bamberger, (1974) *Woman, Culture, and Society*, California: Stanford University Press
Sheffield, H (2017) Etsy: How the online Marketplace is supporting female entrepreneurs, *The Independent*

