How walking can be used as a feminist research method and why the political analysis of environments and gendered subject positions is important

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Walking as feminist political research

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Outline

• **Topic** – Feminist psychogeographical walking
• **Rationale** – reasons for doing feminist psychogeography
• **Theory** - social spaces as political spaces/gendered subject positions/environment and experience
• **Methods** - developing new methods in psychology
• **Implications** – questions and issues
Researcher standpoint

• My position as a deconstructionist psychologist
• Politicising research
• Importance of reflexivity
• Integration of work/life understanding
The situationists and psychogeography

- What is psychogeography?
- Who are the situationists?
- Situationist practices
Feminist geographers & psychologists

• Lack of research on feminist study of place in psychology and in psychogeography
• Documenting women’s experiences of places and tackling gendered inequalities
• Wording – flaneurs and flaneuse (Wolff, 1985)
• ‘Walking as a masculine freedom’ (Wilson, 1992: 68) ‘object of erotic vision’ (D’Souza and McDonough, 2006: 6)

- Dérive walking method
- Gendered subject positions, structural demands of work/life
- Difficulties in disrupting work/life patterns
- Head gear and ‘spoil yourself directives’
- ‘Academic’ dérive account
Group of Lesbian Feminists (2005)

- (Grup de Lesbianes Feministes) Spanish anti-capitalist lesbian and feminist collective
- Street interventions (i.e. Sapho) and political writing
- Against positioning of women as ‘consumer-market subjects’
- Social spaces as political spaces
- Useful theoretical and practical ideas
The Women’s Design Group and the Loiterers Resistance Movement

- Women’s Design Group (www.wds.org.uk/index.htm) and the Loiterers Resistance Movement
- Regeneration/built environments effecting women safety, street lighting, alleyways …
Mapping out feminist methods

- Theoretical basis and concepts
- Theory informs research
- Reflexivity and gendered subject position
- Politically based research
- Informed by the situationists and critical research/social activist groups
• Example research questions and aims
  • ‘How are experiences of social environments shaped by gendered subject positions?’
  • How do women experience places?
  • Are particular places gendered?
  • Do particular places enact certain types of gendered behaviours?
  • What would non-sexist environments look like?
• **Data methods**
• Individually or in a group
• Site specific or general disorientation
• Photography, diaries, stories, maps, dice, cards
• Referring to other research, i.e. Burnett et al (2004)
Conclusions

• What does walking change?
• Connections with art, activism and public concerns
• Importance of tackling gendered inequalities in everyday life