Negotiating Boundaries?
Identities, Sexualities, Diversities
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How did this book come to be written? Through the hard work and commitment of a whole variety of individuals, all of whom became interested in the concepts of boundaries and negotiation. Those concepts themselves grew out of a conference on *Sexualities, Identities, Diversities*, the annual conference of the Feminist and Women's Studies Association (Great Britain and Ireland) held at the University of Bradford in July 2006.

The conference was particularly well placed because the University of Bradford has a long history in the study of diversity and a proud record of supporting women's studies. In particular, the Dean of the School of Social and International Studies, John Cusworth—who gave the opening address—has actively worked to retain the study of gender throughout the School. The Head of the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities, Pat Wilkinson, has given unfailing support to feminist and women's studies in the Department, and also made administrative resources available for the conference.

More than fifty international scholars came to give papers from as far apart as Finland and Japan, North America and the Middle East. University staff welcomed visitors and ran unofficial sightseeing tours around Yorkshire in and among the workshops and plenaries. For two days, many people contributed to an atmosphere of bustle and discussion—and enjoyed themselves immensely in the process. Evaluation from conference participants stressed both the friendliness of the experience and the high quality of the papers. Then, of course, the participants went home and the University went back to its usual routine.

But the conference left a legacy. The high quality of the papers started a discussion between the three editors and from there the germ of an idea for this book developed. Owen Heathcote is a researcher in the Department of Languages and European Studies, working on the relations between violence, gender and representation. Clare Beckett and Marie Macey lecture in the Department of Social Sciences and Humanities and research in the field of gender, one focusing on ethnicity, the other on sexuality. The three of us remembered the experience of the conference and discussed the papers—and with some nervousness—approached paper presenters and colleagues to develop the ideas of “negotiating boundaries” into a book.

Of course, the major part of this book has depended on its contributors. We owe a huge vote of thanks to individual authors, who wrote and re-wrote their
papers to a really tight timescale. They answered queries promptly, met deadlines, and by dint of sheer hard work developed the idea of boundaries—and their negotiation—to a new level. We three editors became excited about e-mails and weekly meetings, though our own discussions of the concepts became more complicated and confusing as we went along! We have not yet reached a conclusion, and perhaps this book is only the first step across another boundary—that of taking these concepts further.

In addition to the contributors and editors the final book has been made possible by the hard work and support of many colleagues, including Amanda Millar and Vlatka Kolic at Cambridge Scholars Publishing. The list is long but Libby Wrighton deserves a special mention. The book represents three things—it is a thank-you to those staff at the University of Bradford who have made it possible, in today's restrictive climate, to retain research and teaching in the areas of gender and diversity. It is a way of remembering the wonderful atmosphere of the conference and of paying tribute to all its participants. And it is a collection of cutting edge thinking around the concept of boundaries and their negotiation.
Among the most important features of human society at the present time is the struggle over territory. Despite the lessons that might have been learned from centuries of conflict and two World Wars, nations and other groups continue to see their identities as intimately bound to certain geographical areas that they feel the need to own and circumscribe. The struggle for territory is therefore inseparable from the notion of boundary and that boundary is the subject of constant redefinition. This group preoccupation with territory and boundaries is, moreover, replicated at the level of individuals, who constantly define and redefine their own personal boundaries in relation to the space they occupy, in relation to the society to which they belong, and in relation to their own bodies and sense of self. At both global and personal levels, therefore, the notion of boundary is simultaneously both fixed and yet permeable: the boundary is subject to constant change, whether that change be desired from within or imposed from without.

It follows from the above that the notion of boundary applies not just to the individual or the group but also to the relation between the individual and the group. Although the individual may identify with at least some of the boundaries desired by the group, others may be resented and resisted. Equally, some of the boundaries sought by the individual may not be endorsed or implemented by the group. In either case, the interface becomes contested, seen either as a source of division or a bridge—and perhaps seen as both simultaneously, depending on the individual, the group, the relation between the two, and the prevailing circumstances. Awareness of, and attitudes to, boundaries can vary greatly, being either sensed or ignored according to circumstances—respected, for example, in public but not in private—and crossing boundaries can be seen as either enriching or a battle-zone. The notion of boundary is, therefore, a useful conceptual and methodological tool for studying the actions and self-perceptions
of individuals and groups, and the shifting relationships between them. The notion of boundary thus also offers a useful lever for studying the relation between the status quo and real or potential change. The study of boundaries is, moreover, particularly helpful when presented as experienced, within the physical and corporate human society, rather than as an abstract academic endeavour.

There are a number of areas where the notion of boundary is particularly appropriate for the study of individuals, groups, and the relations between them. The first of these is covered by the concept of identity, which can be seen as a kind of personal territory an individual adopts or adapts, inherits or creates. The notion of "identity" is, therefore, the overall title of the first section of the book, with identity placed in the plural to indicate its fluid or contested character. Since a key feature of personal territory is the individual body, the "Identities" section is devoted first to the body as a fiercely contested boundary, and particularly the female body for, as Amy Russell points out in the opening chapter: "Cultural, ethnic, political and economic scripts are disproportionately played out on the bodies of women." The boundaries of the actual female body may, as Russell shows, be contested through war and violence, and this leads her to note that where the boundaries of a women's body begin and end is a social construction. In a very different second chapter, Magdalena Sabat argues that a variety of representations of the female body can either simply perpetuate stereotypes of "femininity" or offer alternatives to these stereotypes in new and groundbreaking ways. Whereas both Russell and Sabat expose the violation, and indeed the violence, to which the objectified female body may be exposed, the second part of this section takes examples of both individual and collective resistance and creativity. In Parvin Ghasemi's chapter on the Iranian poet, Forough Farrokhzad, poetic expression is a source of potential liberation from oppression: Farrokhzad creates a new body and a new voice for women, and illustrates individual gains and losses from crossing a social boundary. By using poetry, Farrokhzad crosses another boundary: the work not only describes individual experience but takes that private story into the public arena. Breaking down language barriers is also a key feature in Jennie Barnsley's chapter, where new language is shown to express new ways of conceiving not only the "objective" world but the relation between that world and the spiritual, even the divine—to the extent of re-writing that divine in the form of "godde". Here again, assumed boundaries of gender are crossed and moved by interrogation of the effect of godde, perhaps the ultimate expression of authority and power. At the same time as moving from the body's violent objectivation to an enhanced self-expression, the section thus also shows the very different ways in which new images and new discourses can re-conceive and re-work the boundaries of individual identities.
It can be seen from Section One that one of the most fiercely contested boundaries experienced by individuals and groups is that which concerns sex and sexuality. The boundary, or boundaries, represented by sex and sexuality take two main forms. On the one hand, there is the division between men and women, seen as anatomically different and irreconcilable, a division that is the subject of intense negotiation and renegotiation in the home, the workplace and society. The impact of this division is examined in three chapters: in a survey of women in science, Kathleen Tansey demonstrates that not only women's bodies but also their minds are too often confined within predictable, socially pre-determined channels. Here, the effect of boundaries is charted through the decisions that change the course of the lives of women scientists. In a jointly authored chapter, Victoria Robinson, Jenny Hockey and Alex Hall show that while male hairdressers do not question the binary division, they do adapt gendered behaviours in the different milieus in which they operate. Other professionals, such as fire-fighters, can also be seen to be adapting their gendered behaviours to fit their working "fraternities" and as they shift between home and work. Finally, Maggie Allison charts examples of sexual harassment between men and women in the workplace in France, and shows how women can be disadvantaged by the blurring of the boundaries between sexual harassment and the relatively new notion of "moral harassment". It is evident from this first section that, in some contexts, boundaries need to be questioned and, in other contexts, boundaries need to be reinforced in order to protect the safety of the female body and the integrity of female identity.

The boundaries between men and women are, however, not just about the above-mentioned differences of power and language but also about different ways of being a man and being a woman—the boundaries may be as much to do with sexuality as with sex. Appropriately, then, a second part of this section focuses on the contested or changing boundaries within sexuality rather than between the sexes. In a first chapter of this sub-section, Sally Hines shows the extent to which sex and sexuality boundaries are being questioned, redrawn and creatively remapped in the lives of the transgendered or transgendering people she has interviewed. According to Hines, moreover, such boundary crossing needs to be appreciated through a parallel crossing of theoretical boundaries in the researcher, via "a queer sociological gaze". In the second chapter, Clare Beckett discusses ways in which women describe their negotiation of exit from heterosexual identity—and in some cases from a certain kind of feminism—into lesbianism or into becoming/being a lesbian. Here, crossing boundaries is neither obvious nor easy, but a difficult, if desirable, bridge for those concerned. In the final chapter of this subsection, Owen Heathcote looks at different modes of masculinity, especially fraternity, in French literature and film, where there seem to be increasingly frequent and perhaps equally desirable breaches of the
boundary between French Republican fraternity as civic solidarity and republican fraternity as homoeroticism. This section on "Sexualities", therefore, charts a similar trajectory to that of section one on "Identities": here the movement is from potentially or actually oppressive sexed boundaries to creative sexual, indeed erotic, diversity. The boundary has indeed become a bridge.

Given that the second group of chapters on "Sexualities" all chart different kinds of explorations of sexual diversity, it is appropriate that the next grouping of chapters should confront the matter of "Diversities" and, following the distinction noted at the beginning of this introduction between sought and imposed boundaries, should distinguish between a diversity that is inflicted or contained from without and one which is sustained or inhibited from within. All the chapters in this last section thus deal with diverse approaches to power: power can either be seen or unseen, either felt as an inhibiting external force or absorbed, whether unconsciously, resistingly or even gratefully, into a given identity or group. In their different ways, these chapters thus deal with the issue of hegemony: is power outside or inside the individual or group and, whether seen as external or internal, is that power accepted or resisted? Although—and this is the point of hegemonic relationships—these chapters all demonstrate the difficulty of drawing boundaries between external power and its internalisation, a distinction is still made, in successive subsections, between the diverse relationships between attitudes to external power—or structures and attitudes to internalised power—or ideologies. The first of these subsections, on structural diversities, is represented by four chapters. First, Anna Awiukiewicz-Tomeczak shows how Polish women are gradually releasing themselves from the external but also internalised iconographic representations of womanhood in post-Communist Poland—notably Polonia, Mother Pole and the Virgin Mary. Second, Tom Cockburn charts the changes in the boundaries regulating definitions of childhood and youth and, concomitantly, how those changes impact on attitudes to the care and rights of socially excluded young people. Third, Kristin Aune and Sonya Sharma take a further example of the ways individual men and women react to external, institutional pressure by looking at the limited models of male and female behaviour expected in various evangelical communities. Fourth, and finally, in this subsection, Niels Spierings charts the boundaries imposed on women's participation in the labour market in a variety of Islamic countries, showing how the range of positions is linked to both historical influences and contemporary political structures, including variations in types of Islam and democracy. However, whilst Spierings stresses women's agency in bringing about change, he does not underestimate the power of external agencies in either facilitating or constraining this. Thus, whilst the structural limitations detailed in all four of these chapters necessarily reinforce
and complement the sexed boundaries previously illustrated by Tansey and Allison, these chapters also show how boundaries can—or cannot—be challenged and crossed, whether by women (in Poland and Muslim countries), by men and women (in Evangelical groups), or by young people. Even in the face of structural power, the seemingly socially excluded or marginalised are, perhaps, finding new diversities and new identities.

In a second set of chapters in the "Diversities" section, such imposed models and behaviours are shown to be matched by internalised, ideological mindsets which are, nonetheless, perhaps easier to explicate and, therefore, to question. Thus, continuing Spierings's examination of ethnic identities in the previous subsection, Saeed Khan describes the "rediscovery" of Hijab among women as an active, individual decision to denote identity in the public sphere in the USA, comparing this to the situation in a number of other countries where the choice to "cover" (or, indeed, not to cover) is politically determined. Notwithstanding his emphasis on individual choice, however, Khan links the increase in young women wearing the scarf to the bombings in North America (9/11), thus acknowledging the complex interplay between "external" and "internal" influences on apparently personal decision-making. In the second chapter in this section, Marie Macey develops the discussion begun by Khan on Muslim women's choice of dress into a wider debate on the question of women's choices in minority ethnic communities in Britain. She highlights the complexity of the intersection and interaction of "internal" and "external"—structural and ideological—influences and suggests that the permeability (or otherwise) of the boundaries between minority and majority groups is a decisive factor in individual and group choices and the extent to which challenging those boundaries is a realistic possibility. In a final chapter on the evolving "waves" of feminist thinking and action, Wendy O'Brien shows how what constituted the ideological hegemony of a certain kind of "second-wave" feminism is, in fact, being reworked in the discursive response to the sexually upfront behaviours and lifestyles of contemporary young women. Like identities and sexualities, ideologies are not static and can be re-negotiated and renewed in ways that are sometimes difficult to appreciate. Thus, as in previous sections, chapters on imposed boundaries and structured closure are followed by chapters on a perhaps unexpected opening of these very boundaries. Nevertheless, the extent to which a boundary can become a bridge is influenced by material, ideological, individual and group factors and, perhaps most significantly, the differential power of these different forces.

It can be seen that placing the individual section groupings of "Identities", "Sexualities" and "Diversities" within the perspective of "Boundaries" gives a new dynamic to the issues under discussion. However arguably fluid in themselves, identities, sexualities and even diversities can become subject to the
limitations of their own conceptual parameters unless they are juxtaposed in a
different framework, contextualised in particular societies and cultures, set in a
more extended time frame, and articulated within a social system of custom and
practice. For it is by using the notion of boundary to first delimit and *then to
d breach* the otherwise closed notions of identities, sexualities and diversities that
change can be envisaged and progress effected. This book shows the experience
of both being bounded and of circumventing or breaching that boundary. It thus
shows the extent to which a boundary can become not only a bridge but a bridge
with a panoramic view.
SECTION I: IDENTITIES

The Body
Boundaries and borders are becoming an increasingly interesting area of study. Hagemann et. al. argue borders can be: "...discursive practices that create and negotiate meanings, norms and values and form ... lived experiences". (2005:1) Borders and boundaries impact on women's bodies in numerous ways. Borders can be "social, cultural" or "territorial" (Hagemann et. al., 2005:1). Yet, when they impact upon women's bodies they have implications throughout each of these areas. Each of these types of border influences the other types: social borders are constructed based upon cultural assumptions, culture is often defined by territorial boundaries. As Donnan and Wilson remark: "...they may, in fact, be aspects of a single boundary". (1999:19)

It is also important not to dismiss borders as negative simply because they impact on lived experience. Volf argues that although "...radical indeterminacy ... levels all boundaries", "without boundaries we will be able to know only what we are fighting against but not what we are fighting for". (1996:63) The issue is not the borders or boundaries themselves but who creates them, enforces them and how they impact on one's everyday life. When boundaries and borders are constructed they function to include and exclude simultaneously. There must always be an "other" if inclusion is possible, be it on a national or personal level. Hagemann et. al. argue: "...the process of disintegration of the traditional political boundaries seems to give rise to an increasing importance of culturally constructed mental borders". (2005:1) It is these "mental borders" and their prominence in society that will be explored in this chapter.

Volf acknowledges: "...the boundaries that mark our identities are both barriers and bridges". (1996:66) In this way women can be empowered through their identification with each other, as the feminist movement has attempted to show. Physical and behavioural boundaries are also important when examining violence against women. If the female body is without boundaries it is open to abuse as there are no socially guarded boundaries to break when violating a person. George, when asked how to solve the increasing problem of sexual violence against women, argues: "What needs to be taught, say psychologists, is
boundaries. Respect the boundaries of others is key as it is respect for the boundaries they construct around themselves that must be maintained while we critique those boundaries that are arbitrarily applied by another.

A re-examination of boundaries is also necessary to break down the public/private distinction, which Jeffreys argues radical feminists see as "...fundamental to male supremacy". (2005:4) These borders remove women from social participation in the public sphere. Martin argues the dichotomies of mind and body, home and work are artificial and "...because of the nature of their bodies ... women interpenetrate what were never really separate realms". (1993:197) This liminal existence between worlds can be seen to demonstrate the importance of boundaries to women and, as they appear to belong to neither site, we must begin to examine exactly what space they do occupy.

This chapter serves to demonstrate how far the body as a constructed self can impact on a person's life to the point where social construction interferes with the human rights of the individual. My aim is not to deny the biological existence of the body. This study, however, will acknowledge that the constructionist argument is especially strong when we discuss women. To the point, I would argue, that the life and death of a woman's physical body (or her child's as a relational body) can often only impact upon a community with regards to its social and symbolic value.4 The boundaries that impact upon a woman's body are of utmost importance as they explain what actions toward her, or by her, can change the social status of her body. Boundaries regulate her social participation and create a divide between social space and intimate space. Yet both are policed and maintained by social constructions of the feminine. Where the boundaries of a woman's body begin and end is a central question to this paper; extending the body out from beyond the skin into the social realm. It is only through examining these boundaries and how they are implemented in everyday life that we can examine how negotiable or non-negotiable they are. What must be remembered, however, is that the factors that affect the social construction of the female body are also constantly being reinterpreted and redefined. It is a belief that boundaries are fixed that limits behaviour.

The Hymen as Boundary

One clearly demarked and symbolically augmented boundary line that affects a woman physically and, in many cultures socially, is the hymen. It is the point at which "...the natural and the cultural coalesce". (Hastrup, 2002:42) The myth of the symbolic hymen, and the virginity it represents, are key religious and cultural concepts. The myth stands that a virgin's hymen will remain intact and across the opening of her vagina until she has had sexual intercourse with a
member of the opposite sex. This boundary line is clearly demarked and ferociously protected by those cultures that value virginity before marriage and often rely on a bride-price as a financial reward for raising female children. The impact of the social value of virginity is played out in numerous different ways in different cultures.

The myth of the hymen does not stand up to medical scrutiny, which proves it can be broken in many ways before sexual intercourse and cannot be used as a conclusive proof of virginity. There is a clear gendered power hierarchy in the construction of the ideal of "the virgin" and the preservation of the myth of the hymen. As Hagemann et.al. suggest: "...gender constructions are primary means of signifying relationships of power that create asymmetry and hierarchy. In this sense, nearly all border discourses are gendered". (2005:1) This is a border discourse that takes place within a woman's body. Yet it is also projected outward through belonging and excluding behaviour toward virgins and non-virgins, a power struggle between an individual's free will and her society.

A further interesting point is that, in these times of plastic surgery, women who have previously been sexually active are having their hymens replaced. They are rebuilding a symbolic boundary, as it appears the symbol is more important than what it represents. Hymen repair is "...currently available free from the public health service in the Netherlands" (Jeffreys, 2005:35) in what Saharso describes as a "deed of multiculturalism" and a "policy measure that is culturally sensitive in that it acknowledges culturally informed suffering". (2003:21) Yet Jeffreys argues that the idea of choice in this situation is a "...fetishizing of choice in western liberal theory". (2005:36) There is a great deal more to this argument about choice and cultural practices; however, this example is simply to serve the purpose of emphasising the pressure society exerts on women to alter their bodies to fit its symbolic ideals. As Jeffreys demonstrates, if the girls do not have a provable virginity they are attributed "...outcast status in which they may hide for a lifetime from a family seeking vengeance for the shame brought upon it". (2005:36) Even the surgeons themselves acknowledge the pressure of society on women. In the "hymenoplasty" section of a cosmetic surgery website they state: "LabiaplastySurgeon.com is sensitive to the needs of women whose cultures and religions embrace this concept". (Jeffreys, 2005:36)

The virginity debate is where the impact of purity and pollution theory is seen most clearly. Virginity is a good example of how a physical penetration of a boundaried space, at this point metaphorically and sometimes physically constructed by the hymen, can completely alter the social (and monetary) value and social participation of a woman. She can change from child to woman, taking on a completely different social identity; she can also, if her virginity is lost without the consent of her family, be cast out of their unit. As Cindoglu
suggests: "...being a virgin bride signifies a woman's purity and her loyalty to her family". (1997:253 my emphasis) Equally, if virginity is an important cultural factor it rarely matters whether a woman consents to sexual intercourse or not. If she is raped or abused it often has the same social implication as if she had chosen to have sex before marriage.

**Case Study 1—KwaZulu—Natal, South Africa**

In reaction to the AIDS pandemic virginity testing has become the norm in some cultures. This ranges from a so-called "expert" coming to one's home, to a sports stadium full of spectators watching a large group of girls be "tested" (Leclerc-Madlala, 2001). It seems a curious anomaly that through the desire to constrain the intimate privacy of a woman's body she must be subject to a public ordeal. Yet, Hastrup suggests that as part of the process of puberty Zulu girls are often examined by their mothers and examine each other for virginity (2002:42). This process then is just a publicising of something that happens within the home. Yet its implications for social control remain the same.

Leclerc-Madlana describes the increase of virginity testing in South Africa and suggests that it is no real solution to AIDS as it exerts "greater control over women and their sexuality" and "...helps to draw attention away from the role of men in the maturing epidemic". (2001:533) We see a cultural and political issue embodied by women. Cultural, ethnic, political and economic scripts are disproportionately played out upon the bodies of women. The testing has been given a traditional focus through a rejection of western prevention methods that talk about condom use as "un-African". (Leclerc-Madlala, 2001:533) Due to complaints that the ANC government has not achieved all it should, Thabo Mbeki called for an "African Renaissance" to save the country (Vale and Maseko, 2002:121-142). Although this is not what he meant, people have embraced the term and welcome "Africanist" solutions to societal problems. There are also economic implications to this process. Leclerc-Madlala argues, women who support virginity testing often do so because if their daughters get pregnant outside marriage, or if they have children but pass away because of AIDS, they have to raise the children placing a financial burden on the family (2002:535).

The national agenda is also clearly present, she notes: in the speeches given before the testing there is a reference to the testing saving "the nation" (Leclerc-Madlala, 2002:540). The girls being tested suddenly become not only the embodiment of purity and virginity but symbols of South African identity and national stability. Equally, those girls who "fail" the test can be classed as what I term "the socially infectious body". This theme appears in many stories regarding female sexual behaviour. Hastrup reports that the girls of the same age
and social grouping of a girl who is thought to be a non-virgin must perform a cleansing ritual as "...the seduction of the girl is polluting to the entire group". (2002:42) In this case the non-virgin is seen as "...like a 'rotten potato', and she must be kept away from the virgin girls, as her presence will surely 'rot the bunch'." (Leclerc-Madlala, 2001:540) One tester describes it as: "...her proximity would 'cause the flowers of the nation to wilt'" (op.cit.:540). This terminology suggests that not only would a non-virgin somehow encourage sexual behaviour in others simply through her presence but also that in representing their nation, as these girls are seen to, a non-virgin has the symbolic potential to threaten society at a national level.

It is important to note that in this case study the presence of the hymen is only one of several ways virginity is tested. The test also focuses on the potential that girls may have been abused, or on the fact "...the girl's eyes betray her as someone 'who knows men'". (ib.id.:540) It is interesting that Leclerc-Madlala reports a grading system of A to C is used rather than simply declaring whether a girl is a virgin or not (2001:540). This system does make the distinction of whether a girl has consented: "...active complicity in the sex act may mean the difference between a 'B' and a 'C' grade". (ib.id.:540) However, regular abuse will become a 'C' grade regardless of consent (ib.id.:540). This staggering announcement is followed by the tester warning the mother to watch her daughter—the implication being that the responsibility for the abuse rests with the girl and her mother, not the abuser. Cultural concepts of virginity are played out in the guise of national and culturally traditional attempts to mend society. This case study also demonstrates how virginity, as a symbol, is a means of controlling female sexual behaviour and limiting female freedom because of the threat of sexual abuse, irrespective of consent.

**Nation, Migration and War**

National boundaries create a communal identity for those who live within them. However, national identity is rarely the only identifying factor of the communities within a country. Religion, race and ethnicity create communal identities that have their own sacrality and boundaries.

Bracewell argues: "...scholars have usually treated these two systems [gender and nation] as distinct and unconnected, partly because gender has been seen as irrelevant to the public politics of nationalism". (2000:566) Yet, she argues, recently women are identifying how linking gender to nationalism provides insight into how:

The widespread idealisation of the nation as female, and especially as mother, not only 'naturalises' national sentiment but also strengthens the idea of a natural division between public (male) politics and private (female) domesticity and
reinforces the idea that maternity is women's primary role, legitimates state surveillance and regulation of women's bodies and female sexuality and perpetuates male domination of women. (Bracewell, 2000:586)

It is important to recognise that it is not only the nation that is gendered but the body that is nationalised with border disputes becoming boundary disputes which are played out upon it. Hagemann et.al, would agree with this statement when they argue for the importance of studies that examine: "...the role that territorial borders play in the construction of gender ideologies". (2005:1) Gender and nation are related because, as Bracewell argues, both "...are best seen as relational identities, not reflections of natural or immanent essence but created through a process of highlighting difference". (2000:585)

If we are to examine how national borders impact upon identity we must also ask if women's bodies change status, change the space they occupy, through movement across these borders. Just as a woman who moves to the United Kingdom from an Islamic state may alter what she wears, does this then mean that what was once a body to be covered up within one nation's boundaries is no longer the same body simply because of a change in geographical location? The body is no different and yet the social space it occupies has changed, thus the social implications of the body have changed.

McDowell highlights that for some women displacement may occur without them physically travelling anywhere: "...the displacement experienced is the result of changing economic, social and cultural circumstances" causing a "renegotiation of gender divisions". (1999:2) War is a good example of how during post-conflict periods the roles and spaces women occupy may be forced to change due to changing economic needs. Equally, community and nationalistic identities may be reconstructed. These shifts of space and place have "...radically changed the relationships between individual and group identity". (McDowell, 1999:2) As women negotiate national boundaries they must renegotiate their own identity.

The national and social boundaries placed upon a woman can hinder her ability for movement, as Barry argues: "Societal norms can also affect the ability of women activists to travel in safety, particularly during and after a conflict". (2005:87) Movement is of the utmost importance to female social participation. If women cannot travel to meet each other or to get to the resources they need they lose their independence. Barry argues:

Women's movements may also be hampered by cultural restrictions; for example, a woman may not be able to travel without her husband or a male family member without losing her respectability in the eyes of society. Therefore, women have to be able to maintain family and community ties in order to preserve their mobility. (2005:88)
Women and War

Women experience war differently from men. Hynes argues the experience of war causes "unique harm" to women, she cites: "...military brothels, rape camps ... growing sex trafficking for prostitution and ... increased domestic violence", as well as "economic ruin". (2001:431) These often disproportionately affect women due to their roles as carer for extended families and their lack of legal rights to the ownership of money and property. She also comments that widows of war and women refugees are "...particularly vulnerable to poverty, prostitution, the extortion of sex for food by post-war peacekeepers". (Hynes, 2001:431) The breakdown in social structures caused by war means that the subordinate position women occupy prior to the war is intensified in its aftermath. However, the social barriers that contain women's bodies are not simply a prison; they are also a means to security. When they are destroyed by the chaos of war it means women are no longer protected by those boundaries and thus face further discrimination.

If a society does not allow women to be the heads of households then they must look to male partners or relatives to protect them and their children. If these husbands, uncles and brothers are killed during a war women are left unable to provide for their families because they are not recognised as able to work, able to be a family unit, without a male representative. The place women occupy in that society is constructed with a view to that place remaining stable and unchanging. They are mapped into their cultures with fixed parameters of movement physically and within cultural boundaries. War disrupts that stability and corrupts the social space which women occupy.

When wars end women face further discrimination because of the violence they have experienced, or the lengths to which they have had to go to survive. As the Save the Children Fund reports, girls who have been involved with armed conflict find it harder to integrate back into their communities than boys because of the shared knowledge that they will probably have been sexually abused and have learnt to use weapons (Save the Children Fund, 2005:2). They are no longer wanted because it is believed they are "ruined" or "polluted" by their abuse and because it is believed that women should not learn to bear arms. Again it is clear that through bearing arms they have changed the social space they occupy, they have disrupted the "gendered knowledges" applied to them, they are now warriors not carers. The role that has been assigned to them on the basis of their gender is destroyed by the idea they would be able to fight. The Save the Children Fund also suggests: "...families may be forced into publicly spurning their daughters because of external pressures to uphold moral and social codes". (2005:16) The intimate sphere of family life is so influenced by
community opinion that family bonds can be compromised by beliefs about the nature of women who have been sexually abused.

The response to these girls also supports what I would term the "socially infectious body". As Barley reports, there is a distinction made in some cultures between leaky vessels and water-tight vessels. In northern Sudan these terms are also applied to the bodies of women and the home (1995:137). If a woman moves from the illusion of an impervious state to that which is outside her social boundaries she has proved that these boundaries are permeable. And by her very presence it is believed she can cause others to move from an impermeable social status, where their boundaries of behaviour are secure, to a permeable status where the vulnerability of those boundaries is demonstrated. The Save the Children Fund reports: "...communities also fear that somehow the girl associated with armed groups will 'contaminate' or corrupt other girls, encouraging them to have sexual relations without family consent, dowry and official sanction". (2005:21) They report the case of two sisters in the DRC who were both raped and then driven from their homes after their parents asked them how they "could have accepted what had happened" to them, as if the girls were somehow complicit in their rapes. They now live with an aunt: "...when we eat, we eat separately from the other children". (2005:14) The stigmatisation these girls face is reinforced even during the most basic communal activities like eating.

**Case Study 2—Sierra Leone, West Africa**

The Save the Children Fund argues it does not appear to matter that the girls who participated in the conflict were kidnapped and did not choose to join military groups (2005:2). However, this is not the case in all countries, Ahmed Kutubu head of the DDR9 process in Kenema, Sierra Leone maintained girls had little to no problems reintegrating into society after the war as women were considered unimportant by society and thus their contribution to the war was also overlooked (2005). Yet Sengupta reports of those taking place in the DDR process across Sierra Leone only 4.2% were girls (2005:29). It is suspected the actual number of girls taking part in fighting is much higher. The Save the Children Fund reports: "...the total number of girls in armed groups in Sierra Leone was estimated to be 12,056. However, the number of girls going through the formal DDR process amounted to just 506". (2005:19) Sengupta suggests girls are "...wary of joining rehabilitation schemes because of fear that it will expose what had happened to them and lead to further shunning by their home communities". (2005:29) Dr Sonia Spencer, Project Officer UNICEF, argues: "Communities have a lot of sympathy for them [the girls] as long as they did not become promiscuous as a result of what had happened … because, the girls were
forced and could do nothing about it". (2005) The dualistic views presented in this statement demonstrate the problematic status of girls who have been involved in conflict. It is understood that they did not choose to take part in conflict; as such it is their lack of autonomy that saves them. However, if they do not conform to social ideals of behaviour on their return or if they demonstrate sexual autonomy, their communities will reject them on the grounds they have become "promiscuous". Dr Spencer added:

However, there are families which rejected them out-right and really would not have anything to do with them. Several NGOs provided them with skills training so that they can fend for themselves and their child(ren), others gave up the children for adoption, a good number re-located to other areas because of the fear of stigmatisation. Well, because of the loss of their virginty, association with the rebels, they are stigmatised to the extent that for the majority, it may be difficult for them to marry, but again this attitude depends on families and communities. (2005)

A survey conducted in Sierra Leone by Amowitz et.al. supports this statement. They suggest that of the women they interviewed, 9% reported a personal account of sexual assault. Of these, 35% did not report their assault. Amowitz et.al. recount 64% did not report their sexual assault because of "feelings of shame or social stigma", and 28% because of "fear of being stigmatized and/or rejected". (2002:519) They also argue that:

…sexual violence in war has increasingly been recognized as a means of demoralizing individuals, families and communities and is used as a weapon to disable an enemy by dissolving bonds between family and society. (Amowitz et.al., 2002:520)

Again, it is violence that destroys their social value and isolates the individual, removing them from their social setting.

In contrast to what Dr Spencer claims, the case studies in the Save the Children Fund report (2005) suggest that the reaction to girls who have been involved in conflict implies a social message that it is not the conscious decisions made by a woman that matter but something physical about her, or something in her nature that can be removed through the actions of another. This belief supports the argument that it is the symbolic value of a woman that is important in society. The physical, individual reality of the person is neglected in favour of the image others have constructed. As such the motive or intentions of a woman are not taken into consideration: the criterion is provided by someone other than the individual and as such it is their interpretation of her actions that create her social reality. Equally, the girls themselves have changed, they no longer see themselves as children but as "wives" and as such wish to be
treated differently (Save the Children Fund, 2005:20). Yet they have not proceeded through the socially regulated passage into adulthood and thus do not fit within any communal identity and are often rejected by their communities.

**National/Religious Boundaries**

Bayes and Tohidi ask the question: "...why is it that politics in Catholic and Muslim contexts are so often played out on women's bodies?" (2001:2) Nowhere is this more explicit than in situations of war where rape is used for the purpose of genocide from the political desire to construct nations based upon religious and ethnic divisions. It is clear it is impossible to divide this subject cleanly between religious embodiment and national embodiment. National boundaries are often constructed due to the religious groupings within a country. Equally, war fought over land usually has a religious component either in its instigation or in its propaganda. As Bauman describes: "...in complex situations of social strife, one can often find ethnic, national, or migratory boundaries transformed into religious ones". (1999:23)

On a theoretical level the boundaries of the female body can be extended to a national level. Suddenly the rape of women of a certain culture in land disputes becomes an act of invasion, signifying their conquering. The land is taken from one ethnic group by the subjugation of its women. Rape and sexual violence are most often used to signify the capture of human property, deracination, enhancing military morale and demoralising the enemy.

**Case Study 3—Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia**

If we examine the term "genocidal rape" we must scrutinise the way it is used in conflict and what implications it has for the bodies and social participation of women because it is used as a political tool. Allen defines genocidal rape as a "military policy of rape for the purpose of genocide". (1996:vii)

What can the use of rape tell us about the spatial implications of the female body? Allen outlines the use of rape as an example to others, as punishment and as torture leading to forced pregnancy (1996:vii-viii). She argues the goal of the "rape camps" that were created to force pregnancy were twofold, first: "the death of the victim contributes to the genocidal goal; in the second, the birth of a child does, for the perpetrator—or the policy according to which he is acting—consider his child to be only Serb and to have none of the identity of the mother". (1996:vii) The idea that a child can inherit none of its identity from its mother then creates the idea of its mother as "...a sexual container" where the rape itself cancels "every aspect of the mother's identity—her national, 'ethnic,' religious, and even genetic identities". (Allen, 1996:xiii) Women are seen as
responsible for the propagation of each ethnic group and as such hold the key to that group's domination (literally by numbers) of the land. Through this focus on their reproductive power they are used as pawns in war and their other contributions to social life are de-valued. Yet when they become pregnant through rape they are viewed as harbouring the other within, or as Draper describes pregnancy: "...the experience of simultaneously being self and yet Other". (2003:743) Through rape, members of the opposing group can mix their genetics with those of the race they wish to eradicate, literally uprooting/displacing the original community. Yet, as Allen comments: "...no baby born of such a crime will be only Serb ... moreover, it will be raised within its mother's culture—if her culture survives anywhere". (1996:87) It is clearly then up to the community within which the baby is born to decide how its identity will be constructed. However, Allen reports many women did attach value to the same beliefs as the Serbian soldiers and fear their children will be Serbs, ending their pregnancies with dangerously late abortions or with mothers abandoning their babies (1996:98). Carpenter argues that the children born of these rapes should not be forgotten, as they too are "victims of genocide". (2000:429) This tells us this is not only a gender issue but it impacts on all those who have relational identities to the women who were raped.

Genocidal intention is not the only reason why sexual violence in conflict zones is so prevalent. It can also be used by those who know their opponents hold certain beliefs about women who have been raped. These beliefs appear to not just be a national concept but a culturally implicit religious belief about the value of the self and how others can affect it. If a culture understands a woman to be "ruined" or "contaminated" from rape then its use in war time will be a method for the destruction not only of family lines but of family groups. As Hynes illustrates:

In the late 1980s 'genocidal rape' was coined to describe the new extreme of men's inhumanity to women in war when Serbs intentionally detained and raped Muslim women in camps to destroy them and their people by sexually 'contaminating' the women. (2004:432 my emphasis)

When families are destroyed social groups are destroyed. This then makes post-war rebuilding harder for those groups who hold these beliefs. However, Allen argues that press stories of communities rejecting raped women are only a "...very partial picture" as "...there is quite simply no more community and no more family to react". (1996:98) If the community is destroyed there is no one to police a woman's behaviour except herself through guilt. That is not to say that the women who experienced these things were from one religious or ethnic background, thus demonstrating that the construction of limiting ethnic or
Imposing Boundaries upon the Female Body

national boundary categories is not entirely useful for attempting to understand this situation.

Seifert points out: "...it has also been proved that rapists tend to depersonalize their victim". (1994:56) However, she argues: "...the victim is a proxy for 'woman' pure and simple". (Seifert, 1994:56) I would argue that in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia the victims of rape were symbolic of their country rather than of women, their bodies became depersonalised and nationalised in the same process.\(^\text{14}\) As Parin highlights, the propaganda that was used to sustain the fighting had already focused on identity and faith as key features to cause depersonalisation and division. He argues:

...what the admired (or feared) political or spiritual leaders say and repeat becomes an emotionally charged possession, 'faith.' The common 'faith' acquired by identification, strengthens the feelings of belonging, identity, and group cohesiveness. (Parin, 1994:49)

This is a good example of inclusive and exclusive boundaries put to negative use. With this unification of "faith" there came further division between "insiders and outsiders". Using the emphasis on identity the propaganda machines could create an ethnic historical identity that was only partially based upon truth. These myths are a powerful force for action; Parin describes how: 

"...the falsified image [of propaganda] … had reality value". (1994:42) Yet, as Allen illustrates, all theories of embodiment are inverted when we are debating the soldiers who raped women as part of genocidal rape. She concludes that the real reasons behind the prevalence of rape in this conflict, based upon the language used by the rapists, may well have been that: "...the perpetrators are raping because the women are Muslim or Catholic just as much as because they are women". (Allen, 1996:98) It appears that the nationalistic mask that the violence wore was only part of other entrenched religious and ethnic prejudices that were projected upon the bodies of women.

**Conclusion**

When examining the lived experience of women with reference to the social construction of their bodies three things became apparent. First, if we are to follow a constructionist argument and allow the female body no more ontological value than a social construction, we leave women with no intrinsic value as their foundational existence. This phenomenology endangers the lives of women through neglecting their intrinsic worth as individual human beings rather than gendered human beings.

Second, if the myth of the symbolic value of a woman\(^\text{15}\) is allowed to propagate throughout communities there is a danger women will become only
that value. If that symbolic value is then compromised they are removed from
the space they previously occupied; they end up in a social "no-man's land" as
there is no space that exists for a woman who does not fit within the boundaries
of these "gendered knowledges". It is at this point women become vulnerable to
violence and abuse because they appear to no longer possess any social value.

Thirdly, we must acknowledge the wide variety of roles, and as such, social
spaces, which women occupy. These roles must be seen as flexible and can be
self-defined. If women are to participate fully in social life and to deal with
events like war they need to be able to negotiate their own complex positioning
in the social sphere without having to live within the unreliable and subjectively
constructed boundaries of others.

There is a need to acknowledge the politics and power hierarchies present in
any study of the social construction of space. When that space is the body these
influences are all the more strongly felt. Bodies remain a challenging and
important area of study. As Nast and Pile conclude:

… bodies and places remain as indeterminate and unstable as they are distinct
and enduring; open to analysis, but always beyond the limits of categories or
orders to finally seal them up and close them down. (1998:5)

By conducting a spatial study of female participation we can see how social
constructions of gendered bodies inhibit women's participation in public life if
they are "sealed up and closed down" by being given authority from the meta-
narratives of our time: religion, nation and gender. The focus I have placed upon
the body attempts, as Rich describes it: to locate "…the grounds from which to
speak with authority as a woman. Not to transcend this body but to reclaim it".
(1987:213) Practical case studies give a clear demonstration of how important
and relevant this subject is. They also demonstrate that theory can be useful, as
Rich describes it: "…the seeing of patterns, showing the forest as well as the
trees". (1987:213) Through theory we see themes like the "socially infectious
body", "social policing" and "the symbolic value of the female body" reoccur in
nearly all of the case studies. It becomes clear that these are the issues that form
the foundation of the discrimination women are facing. Yet Rich goes on to
critique the abstractions of theory and this is a good illustration why the case
studies in this chapter were necessary. She argues theory falls to the earth like
rain: "…but if it doesn't smell of the earth, it isn't good for the earth".
(1987:214) Through the lives of women I hope I have returned theory to the
earth.

Locating women in their homes, their bodies, their religions and their
nations acknowledges that although oppression is global, its implementation is
local and must be broken down into these spheres of influence. The case studies
in this paper are just a few of the hundreds I have come across which repeatedly