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Communities &  
Culture Network+

# Girls Making History

April 1

# 2014

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**CCN + Pilot Project Interim Report**  
**Professor Morag McDermont (UoB)**  
**Helen Thomas (UoB)**  
**Penny Evans (KWMC)**  
**Samantha Payne (KWMC)**

## Executive Summary

Building on the NSPCC's 2009 report into partner exploitation and violence in teenage relationships and McCarry's 2011 report into domestic violence in the Filwood ward of Bristol, GirlsMakingHistory is a collaborative research project between Knowle West Media Centre (in Filwood), University of Bristol and eight young women with personal experience of intimate partner violence and exploitation.

The project seeks to challenge the cultural normalisation of exploitative and violent relationships within communities of young women, finding ways that young women can both understand the processes that have led to their isolation and challenge them in ways that can support other teenage girls.

Through a series of co-produced workshops the young women, along with the researchers, digital and other 'experts', are working towards the co-creation of a digital platform that can support teenage girls at risk of, or already in the early stages of abusive relationships.

Alongside the creation and development of this digital prototype, GirlsMakingHistory is exploring how, through this process of 'up-skilling', the young women can transform their understanding of their own experience, develop new imagined futures and, on a wider scale, transmit these new ways of understanding externally into their 'real' and 'virtual' teenage communities.

## Introduction

Domestic violence and abuse (DVA) remains a significant issue in the UK. Women's Aid report that one in four women will experience domestic violence in their lifetimes with an average of two women each week murdered at the hands of a romantic partner or ex-partner (Woman's Aid, 2013).

The growing normalisation of partner exploitation and violence in teenage relationships is also of significant concern. In 2009 the NSPCC's report into partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships was the first study in Great Britain to provide a detailed picture of the incidences and impact of teenage partner violence. Its findings - 40% of teenagers are accepting aggressive behaviour from dating partners, 1 in 4 girls have experienced an abusive relationship, 1 in 3 girls have experienced sexual violence and overall 88% of young people report some level of intimate partner violence. (NSPCC, 2009) – illustrate a frightening picture.

In the wake of this report and against a background of the highest rates of domestic violence in Bristol, Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC) set up the "Teen Relationships Project" (TRP), a series of workshops with young women in the area who had identified themselves as victims of teen relationship abuse (psychological/emotional, physical and sexual), which aimed to explore the issues and problems of domestic violence for teenage girls.

The GirlsMakingHistory project was developed from TRP, building on the relationships between KWMC, the University of Bristol (UoB), local domestic violence and abuse support services (namely the charity Survive) and a group of passionate young women who, having initially engaged with TRP had the desire to 'do something', to use their expertise and experience in a way that could support other young women.

Originally called Girls@Risk the project underwent a name change at the instigation of the young women involved who wanted to move beyond the negative connotations of the original name to a more forward thinking and inspirational title.

## Research Design

GirlsMakingHistory is using a mixed-methods design including workshops, narrative interviewing and a collaborative ethnography of the projects publicly accessible data.

This research is founded on co-productive principles, namely that all elements of the project and its research should be collaboratively developed. This commitment has underpinned the projects format and required that we approach our design with a reflexive outlook and a willingness to adapt and change our ideas in response to the cross-pollination of learning and expertise that is enabled through this co-productive team.

By utilising the expertise across the team (KWMC, UoB and the young women alike) the project is able to work creatively with digital spaces, examining how these can feature in the lives of teenagers worried about or experiencing intimate partner exploitation and violence with the aim of co-creating a prototype digital platform which will challenge the normalisation of violence and abuse in teenage communities.

The projects central 'publically accessible data' source is the blog which, alongside serving as the publicly facing 'space' of the GirlsMakingHistory project, is a space in which the project members can write reflexive journals under pseudonyms. These, in addition to individual notes, visual maps and images (photographic and drawn), are key tools for reflection on both the process and impact of co-production in the project, and support our mapping of and reflection on our individual journeys through the GirlsMakingHistory project.

In addition to the projects core collaboration we have formed an advisory steering group which gathers together expertise from academics, key stakeholders and organisations across the City (and wider afield) working in this area.

## Research Aims

- 📺📺📺 To develop our understandings of 'community' as it is envisioned by teenage girls
- 📺📺📺 To develop our understanding of the potential use of digital tools and of digital realms as supportive spaces employed by teenage girls experiencing intimate partner violence.
- 📺📺📺 To explore how these spaces can be employed as transformative arenas subverting the normative nature of teenage intimate partner violence.
- 📺📺📺 To enable teenage girls to overcome the barriers to discussing the normalisation of violence within teenage communities and understand the value of dissent, through a programme of up-skilling, peer mentoring and co-creation in digital media.
- 📺📺📺 To build confidence in this group of teenage girls to challenge the normalisations of their community and enable them to support, through a wider campaign, other teenage girls at risk of becoming involved in abusive / violent relationships.
- 📺📺📺 To enable the ideas co-developed throughout the project to be tested and put to work in other communities.



**GirlsMakingHistory Skills Audit**

## Workshops

The workshops are the main site of exploration for this pilot project and, as with all other elements of this programme the researchers, digital experts, artists and young women all participate in these workshops together as a collective.

Workshop sessions are facilitated with accessibility in mind, a safe space with the provision of transport, lunch and childcare aid the participation of the young women.

### **April 30<sup>th</sup>**                      **Introduction Session**

Prior to the funding award from CCN+ GirlsMakingHistory held two daylong workshops reflecting on TRP, mapping ideas and exploring some of the digital and online resources currently available for those experiencing DVA.

This first workshop was a re-cap of previous developments and ideas, an opportunity to discuss our research aims and begin collectively designing the workshop series that would run for the duration of the project.

### **May 7<sup>th</sup>**                      **Skills Audit, Blogging and Social Media**

Using cognitive maps, photographs and skills audit movement exercises, GirlsMakingHistory mapped our personal 'journeys' thus far and looked forwards to the strengths we would like to develop and the weaknesses we would like to build on.

The blog, Twitter, Pinterest and a private Facebook account were set up and there was a facilitated discussion on internet safety, digital data and the desirability of creating a digital network where we could talk, share resources and connect with similar interests locally.

In addition there was an exploration of some of the digital initiatives currently in existence which purport to support young women concerned about or at risk of intimate partner violence and exploitation.

### **May 15<sup>th</sup>**                      **Personas, Relationships and Perception**

GirlsMakingHistory created a portfolio of personas (for more information about personas in third sector organisations see [this](#) Innovation Lab article) identifying the life stories and circumstances of the young women we want our digital platform to reach. These were then pooled into two personas which we used going forwards.

We then used the two 'representative' personas to explore ways in which young women might come into contact with the GirlsMakingHistory project.

Working with local artist Joff Winterhart, we engaged in a beauty perception exercise with the artist and another member of the GirlsMakingHistory team highlighting the contradictions in how we see beauty in ourselves and others. We concluded with a facilitated discussion of 'beauty' and the way our appearance could often become a feature of emotional and coercive/controlling abusive relationships and friendships.

## **May 26<sup>th</sup> Audience and 3D Printing**

Using the personas developed in the previous workshop we 'walked through' the relationship each of these personas might have with their boyfriend identifying key moments where abusive and controlling behaviours might take hold and the points at which the persona might begin to think of her relationship in abusive terms.

In a skills and technological awareness exercise we experimented with new technologies through digital printing, using 3D modelling software to print our own 'worry beads'. This was followed by a facilitated discussion of how tactile objects might aid or hinder our persona, time was spent identifying and problematizing some of the safety issues around smart jewellery using the 'find my iPhone' app as a specific example.

## **June 5<sup>th</sup> Feminism 101 and Confidence**

Using two specialised facilitators this workshop ran as two complimentary and interactive sessions.

The first session, facilitated by Trish Caverly (Fem FM founder) focused on confidence, public speaking, how women get their voices heard in public and private spaces and was concluded with a focus on realising our potential and making individual plans to reach our future career and life goals.

The second session facilitated by Dr Constance Fleuriot was an interactive introduction to feminism, its principles, current expressions and recent history in the UK, with a focus on the power of women to say 'No' in public and private spaces.

## **June 12<sup>th</sup> Dissent, Gender and Branding**

Using a range of media resources as inspiration (e.g. Ted talks [violence against women it's a men's issue](#) and the [Buffey vs Edward](#) short film by rebellious pixels) Dr Constance

Fleuriot

returned to facilitate a discussion around everyday sexism and the ways in which women can dissent from those norms.

In the second half of this workshop Sammy Payne (KWMC media expert) facilitated a branding exercise using various visualisation and emotive association exercises alongside thinking about how the personas we had designed would respond to brands, slogans and other outward facing engagement attempts.

## **July 3<sup>rd</sup>                      Desirable Jewellery**

Building on the desire of the young women to explore 'smart' jewellery (wearable technology) and its application with young women concerned about or experiencing intimate partner violence and control, GirlsMakingHistory worked with Viv Kuh (creative producer/tech/performative interfaces) and Heidi Hinder (artist and maker) to develop our understanding of what makes jewellery desirable.

Through reflecting on our own meaningful jewellery, exploring design features of fashion jewellery, creating individual jewellery designs and in-depth questioning of how our personas could use a piece of smart jewellery as well as the practical and safety implications of wearable technology, GirlsMakingHistory developed our understanding of how wearable technology could feature within the project. This workshop reflected heavily on the advice of the advisory group with regards to wearable tech and came to the conclusion that marketable jewellery to fund the GirlsMakingHistory digital platform was a way to move forwards with this idea.

## **July 10<sup>th</sup>                      DVA and the Law**

Bringing in the expertise of UoB law lecturer Lois Bibbings this workshop looked at law, women and DVA in both theory and practice. Using real stories and focusing on teenage relationships this workshop began to look at some of the issues that had emerged from previous workshops regarding ways to work with the police, the limits of police action and how the law around DVA affects children and families.

## Future Workshops

**July 17<sup>th</sup>**

### **Design Fiction Challenge**

Using the ideas and designs that have emerged from the previous workshops GirlsMakingHistory will be working with a group of designers, artists, engineers and creative thinkers to develop innovative yet practical digital designs that could affect positive impact on our personas at one of her key information finding/help seeking points. This workshop will result in a demonstration of proof of concept.

**July 24<sup>th</sup>**

### **Healthy Relationship Game Design**

Using our knowledge of what an unhealthy relationship can look like combined with the [Crush](#) campaign and One Space's work around the [Freedom Programme](#) GirlsMakingHistory will create a prototype game, testing the users' knowledge of intimate partner violence and control, focused specifically on the subtleties of coercion and control.

The game will be considered against the personas and building on the extensive background thinking that has happened in previous workshops we will think about what would attract her to the game. We will begin to consider how local signposting might be incorporated into the prototype.

**July 31<sup>st</sup>**

### **Game Post-production**

This workshop will be a space in which to complete the game prototype and evaluate its strengths and weaknesses.

We will look at ways forwards for the GirlsMakingHistory project including funding opportunities, collaborations and other ideas.

We will think about the interview schedules that will be used in the narrative interviews that will happen in early August and schedule these dates. In addition we will set a date for the celebratory September workshop when we can think about and plan public dissemination events, review our prototype and review the research reports which will be emerging.

**August 2014**

### **Interviews with all team members**

**September 2014**

### **Celebration: Prototypes, Public Speaking and Reports**

## Advisory Group

A key feature of GirlsMakingHistory has been establishing an advisory/steering group which can widen the knowledge and expertise pool, build connections with relevant local initiatives and provide a space in which the project can benefit from the outside eye of a critical friend. Furthermore, alongside raising awareness of the GirlsMakingHistory project in the locality and wider areas, the steering/advisory group presents the opportunity for possible future collaborations.

### Advisory Group Members

- 👤 Louise Boyce: Operation Bluestone – Bristol Rape and Sexual Violence Assault Team
- 👤 Lois Bibbings: Law School UoB
- 👤 Kirsten Cater: Computer Science UoB
- 👤 Chlo : [Speak Out Project](#)
- 👤 Lucy Collins: Widening Participation UoB
- 👤 Emma Dawson: Places for People (young mother's housing)
- 👤 Jess Dicken: Safer People - Public Health, NHS Bristol
- 👤 Marianne Hester: Centre for Gender and Violence UoB
- 👤 Becky Lewis: Barnardos - BASE/BYL Project/ Safe Choices
- 👤 Melanie McCarry: Social Policy University of Central Lancaster
- 👤 Karen Morgan: Centre for Gender and Violence UoB
- 👤 Annie Oliver: Single Parent Action Network UK
- 👤 Christine Barter: Centre for Gender and Violence UoB

See appendix 1 for summary report of advisory group meeting.

### Other Key Partners

- 👤 [Bristol Youth Links](#)
- 👤 [Next Link](#)
- 👤 [Survive](#)
- 👤 [One Space](#)
- 👤 [Young Mothers Group Trust](#)

GirlsMakingHistory is closely associated with the Productive Margins: Regulating *for* Engagement research project which is a collaboration between the Universities of Bristol and Cardiff and nine community organisations across Bristol and South Wales. The progress of GirlsMakingHistory is regularly shared with the Productive Margins Community Research Forum (the site of co-producing research ideas in the Productive Margins programme) and

some of the community organisations involved in Productive Margins are involved in the advisory group for the project

The methodologies of the project are being further developed in the designs of projects within the partner organisations of Productive Margins and the trialling of the game prototype will be supported by two particular Productive Margins partners: Single Parent Action Network's young Somali women's group; and through the North Merthyr Partnership, with communities of teenage girls in the post-industrial valley communities of South Wales.

## Dissemination

Beyond the advisory group and prototype sharing GirlsMakingHistory is also engaged in the following dissemination work:

### Social Networks

 The website: [www.kwmc.org.uk/projects/girlsmakinghistory](http://www.kwmc.org.uk/projects/girlsmakinghistory)

 Following us on Twitter: @GirlsMHistory

 The blog: [girlsmakinghistory.wordpress.com](http://girlsmakinghistory.wordpress.com)

### Press/ Conferences/Events

 GirlsMakingHistory is featuring in the August issue of the [4YP Bristol newsletter](#) which circulates to all individuals, services and organisations working with young people in the local area.

 GirlsMakingHistory presented alongside the Productive Margins research programme at the recent [AHRC Connected Communities Festival](#) in Cardiff (see appendix 2) and have also hosted a workshop and talk at [Single Parent Action Network](#) and [Southville Community Development Association](#) as part of the Productive Margins Forum series.

### Further Funding and Collaboration Opportunities

 KWMC have submitted a bid for the GirlsMakingHistory project which is currently with the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner's office.

 GirlsMakingHistory is developing links with the [Stiritup](#) project, a parallel European research initiative.

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## Appendices

### 1 - Summary Report Advisory Group Meeting July 2014

#### **Background:**

The project emerged from some work KWMC were part of which identified that teenage girls were most likely to seek support from other teenage girls when worried about unhealthy relationships.

KWMC wanted to do some further work on this and visited multiple local organisations (including schools, young offenders institutes, young mums groups and local DVA organisations) to scope how digital platforms might be imagined and used as a tool to support teenage girls at risk of or in abusive relationships.

From this the GirlsMakingHistory (which was initially known as Girls@Risk) project was founded, initially unfunded, the project secured six months of research council funding in partnership with Bristol University through the [CCN+](#) which ends in September 2014.

The project is working with a core group of young women all of whom have self-identified as having experience of abusive relationships who are attending a series of workshops at KWMC through which a digital platform will be prototyped.

The two ideas that have emerged thus far are a healthy relationship game (app etc.) that might feed into the [Bristol Ideal](#) and/or a piece of wearable technology.

#### **Discussion**

##### **Wearable Tech**

There were general concerns about the idea of wearable tech embedded in jewellery, whether this is jewellery that can function as a rape alarm or some sort of alert messaging system similar to the [Cuff](#).

It was pointed out that this jewellery seems to be aimed at the 'high end' violence and sexual violence rather than the low level controlling behaviours which are most endemic in teenage relationships.

There is a big risk that the jewellery could be used against young people and a tool to control.

If it's very expensive they also won't be able to afford it and we don't want to develop a product that isn't able to be used.

There are data issues - who receives the data (or emergency alert) and who has responsibility to act? Young people often don't have a 'safe' person to send a message to and the 'safety' of another person is subject to change particularly when relationships are chaotic.

We also need to be very careful that we are not putting the onus on young women to keep themselves safe rather than on perpetrators not to offend. Furthermore there's evidence that rape alarms etc. make young people take more risks.

Skyguard alarms are already in use to alert police to come out straight away.

If the wearable tech isn't a good option for development can we adapt the young women's designs and ideas to make a marketable piece which can be used to fund the GirlsMakingHistory game prototype.

**ACTION: Re-consider the use and function of wearable technology in this context. Discuss issues with young women and consider the possibility of a marketable piece of jewellery.**

### **Digital Game**

The young women would like to create a digital game which could pick apart the subtleties of coercion, control and emotional abuse.

Coercion and control are particularly prevalent in teenage relationships: recognising these behaviours, and the subtle incremental increases, is and should be the focus of GirlsMakingHistory. This sort of abuse is often mis-recognised and minimised by young women and their friends/family.

We would hope that this could raise awareness in the wider community of friends and family so that everyone recognises early indicators.

With our limited time and resources we will only be able to prototype the game at this stage of the project.

Could we find a way to incorporate local signposting into the game (subtly) so that we could 'join-up' relevant initiatives and websites in one space?

**ACTION: Continue with planned workshop 'Tech Mash-up' (July 24th) to develop game prototype.**

### **Relationships with Police**

Young people need to be aware that there are different arms and specialisms of the police. Operation Bluestone is about protecting young people. There are ways to anonymously report crimes and concerns. Sexual health reporting at The Bridge is partially funded by the police.

SARCAS is a useful website signposting to sexual abuse resources.

**ACTION: Workshop on the 10th June with Lois Bibbings looking at young women the Law and police services.**

### **Joined Up Working and Future Thinking**

There are a number of DVA and sexual violence services and experts in Bristol; the steering group is hopefully a way to link these up and to ensure that GirlsMakingHistory is working within what's happening locally.

Avon and Somerset have a new rape campaign that is to be released soon. Does this link into the Bristol IDEAL?

It would be useful to 'map' all local initiatives and national resources but at the moment GirlsMakingHistory does not have the resources to do this.

### **ACTIONS:**

**Draw on the expertise of the steering group to build knowledge and relationships (this may involve us contacting some of you individually).**

**Seek new funding opportunities for GirlsMakingHistory to develop the game beyond the prototype stage.**

**Send round doodle poll at the end of July to schedule next steering group meeting for early September.**

## 2 – GirlsMakingHistory Postcard

### AHRC Connected Communities Festival



#### Girls Making History

Girls Making History is a collaboration between the University of Bristol, Knowle West Media Centre and eight young women who have personal experience of relationship violence and abuse.

It's all about girls making history through experimenting with artists, technologists, producers, and creators and is a six month pilot which began in April 2014.

The project looks at the ways in which teenage girls can challenge norms of domestic violence which are becoming endemic in teenage relationships, through creating a digital platform. Everything from the design, the physical creation of the digital platform, the campaign, to the research angle is being co-produced and one of the project's core aims is to harness the expertise of the young women taking part, finding new ways to identify unhealthy relationship behaviours and to prevent young women from entering abusive relationships.

We know that Britain's young women are at risk of sexual, emotional, and physical violence. This group wants to find ways to challenge the normalisation and acceptance of domestic violence and abuse.

[www.kwmc.org.uk/projects/girlsmakinghistory](http://www.kwmc.org.uk/projects/girlsmakinghistory)

Twitter : @GirlsMHistory

Blog: [girlsmakinghistory.wordpress.com](http://girlsmakinghistory.wordpress.com)

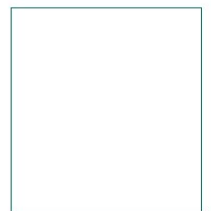
**TUESDAY 1ST JULY 2014**

10.45, 14.45

**WEDNESDAY 2ND JULY 2014**

15.00

**LOCATION:** Boardroom 3, Motorpoint Arena, Mary Ann St, Cardiff



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