Manchester Metropolitan University

e-space

Manchester Metropolitan University's Research Repository

Please cite the Published Version

Silverio, SA, Wilkinson, C and Wilkinson, S (2020) The Powerful Student Consumer and the Commodified Academic: A Depiction of the Marketised UK Higher Education System through a Textual Analysis of the ITV Drama Cheat. Sociological Research Online, 26 (1). pp. 147-165.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1360780420970202

Publisher: Sage

Version: Published Version

Downloaded from: https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/628655/

Usage rights: Creative Commons: Attribution 4.0

Additional Information: This is an Open Access article published in Sociological Research Online, published by Sage, copyright The Author(s).

Enquiries:
If you have questions about this document, contact openresearch@mmu.ac.uk. Please include the URL of the record in e-space. If you believe that your, or a third party's rights have been compromised through this document please see our Take Down policy (available from https://www.mmu.ac.uk/library/using-the-library/policies-and-guidelines)

Check for updates

Special Section: Students in Marketised Higher Education Landscapes

SRO

Sociological Research Online
2021, Vol. 26(1) 147–165
© The Author(s) 2020
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/1360780420970202
journals.sagepub.com/home/sro
SAGE

The Powerful Student Consumer and the Commodified Academic: A Depiction of the Marketised UK Higher Education System through a Textual Analysis of the ITV Drama *Cheat*

Sergio A Silverio
King's College London, UK

Catherine Wilkinson
Liverpool John Moores University, UK

Samantha Wilkinson
Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

Abstract

Through a textual analysis of four episodes comprising the 2019 ITV 1 psychological thriller *Cheat*, this article explores a fictional representation of the United Kingdom (UK) Higher Education (HE) setting in a television drama. We discuss our analysis in the context of growing marketisation of UK HE, where academics are increasingly viewing students as powerful consumers. We focus on one of the central characters, final-year undergraduate student Rose Vaughan, and the staff with whom she interacts in a fictional HE institution – St. Helen's College. This article engages with the following themes: 'The powerful student consumer' and 'The commodified academic'. Insight gleaned through the textual analysis of this dramatised depiction of UK HE allows us to attempt to understand how both students and academics might be navigating the neoliberal university and negotiating place and status as (paying) students and (commercial) academics. Although heralded as powerful student-consumers in much literature, our analysis of this television drama shows how students can potentially disrupt the united front often attempted by HE institutions, but

Corresponding author:
Sergio A. Silverio, Department of Women & Children's Health, King's College London, 10th Floor North Wing St. Thomas' Hospital, London SE1 7EH, UK.
Email: Sergio.Silverio@kcl.ac.uk

ultimately are faced with a 'the house always wins'[1] scenario. Our article offers an important contribution to the psycho-sociological literature into how the television drama depicts that the student experience has been transformed and impacted by HE's marketisation. This includes a reconsideration of how the television drama portrays what it means to be a student, by exploring how one student is conceptualised, understood, and represented in the psychological thriller.

Keywords
higher education, marketisation, student consumer, student experience, textual analysis

Introduction

In the past 20 years, the United Kingdom (UK) Higher Education (HE) environment has changed considerably, mostly due to marketisation. Such changes include the ways in which it has become funded and conceived as a public institution (Tomlinson, 2017). Further change is anticipated with the advent of the UK Government's Higher Education White Paper, '*Success as a Knowledge Economy: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*', which aims to re-cast the relationships between government, students, and research contributing to the current HE environment (Boxall, 2016). Through a textual analysis of four episodes comprising the ITV 1 psychological thriller *Cheat*, this article explores depictions of the current UK HE landscape and the lived experiences of being a student in the television drama.

ITV broadcast *Cheat* in March 2019, over four consecutive evenings. The plotline centres on a dangerous entanglement between fixed-term university lecturer Dr. Leah Dale and final-year undergraduate student Rose Vaughan. The storyline is played out within the fictional university, St. Helen's College, although the series is filmed at the prestigious University of Cambridge, UK. At the beginning of the series, we see Leah – rather fittingly – deliver a lecture to her final-year undergraduate students on the topic of power, control, and coercion. It is evident through Leah's interaction with her student Rose that their relationship is strained and sets Leah on edge, demonstrable between the duo's body language when around one another and their conversations early in the series. This is particularly notable when Rose is summoned to Leah's office to discuss a suspected case of plagiarism. Leah begins by stating to Rose her dissertation feels 'different' to essays she had previously submitted. Focussing on the content and style of the dissertation, she invites Rose to share whether she 'had some help'. Rose quickly (and correctly) interprets Leah's questioning as an accusation of cheating. The series then unravels these two female characters' relationships as student and lecturer, involving all aspects of the academic community and each characters' wider lives. The series becomes a 'whodunnit'[2] murder mystery, including Leah's husband as the fatality.

This article proceeds as follows. First, we review research exploring representations of HE in the media. We then consider the current context of UK HE marketisation and what this change in the way academia is delivered has meant for both students and academics. Then, recognising relationships between students and academics are inseparable in both academic literature and our own analysis, we present literature on student-consumers and the commodification and commercialisation of academic selves.

We then outline our textual analytic approach to *Cheat*. In the analysis section of this article, we present findings around the following themes: 'The powerful student consumer' and 'The commodified academic'. We conclude by arguing that insight gleaned through the textual analysis contributes to psycho-sociological understandings of how the student experience has been transformed and impacted by marketisation.

Higher Education as a genre within media

There are a number of films, documentaries, and television dramas focussing on HE settings, with students sometimes assuming the central characters, although many are set in the United States (US) with a focus on fraternity and sorority life. There is a growing body of literature analysing these data. For instance, Conklin (2009) adopts a historical perspective to explore the representation of campus life in feature-length films released between 1915 and 2006 in the US. The author argues that these cinematic depictions of campus life have altered the attitudes and behaviour of college students, serving to both mirror and model collegiate attitudes. Similarly, exploring the portrayal of HE in popular culture and media, Reynolds (2014) positions artefacts of popular culture (including magazine and newspaper articles, movies, and apps) as pedagogic texts able to educate and indeed misinform viewers regarding the purpose, values, and people central to HE (see also Bourke's, 2013, exploration of the influence of college-themed movies on perceptions of international students, and Tobolowsky and Reynolds', 2017, anti-intellectual representations of American Colleges and Universities).

Edgerton et al. (2005) examine popular culture in the US, including rap music, advertisements, and the Internet, and the ways in which they represent and shape issues within HE. With this text, the authors make a key contribution to the critical discussion about the status, role, and power of HE in society at the time. Although not solely focused on HE, Fisher et al. (2008) also analyse the ways in which popular culture frames and (re)presents education. They examine film, television, music lyrics, and fiction to uncover recurrent educational themes in popular culture to explore how they interconnect with debates concerning teacher performance, the curriculum, and young people's behaviour and morality. They explore how experiences of education are both reproduced and shaped in ways that can both reinforce and resist official educational perspectives.

Being the most recent of a body of televisual work focusing on the UK HE environment and one which was commissioned by a mainstream television broadcaster, and aired during prime-time programming, *Cheat* made for a ripe site of academic investigation. *Cheat* was chosen as the subject of our analytic investigation for several reasons. Primarily, the series looked at the interaction between academic staff and students since the introduction of the higher undergraduate tuition fees in UK HE. Second, the airing of *Cheat* coincided with the authors' personal experiences of moving between and within UK HE institutions after some years of working as academic researchers and lecturers. Therefore, the subject matter of the series was not only deemed relevant, but relatable. Finally, the opportunity to study *Cheat* allowed for academic consideration of how the television industry depicts the public understanding of HE in the modern era, where universities and academia more widely strive to be inclusive, public facing, and civically engaged (Wilkinson et al., 2020). The key here was how this public opinion of academia

was channelled through the serialised depiction, as this allowed for dramatisation and artistic licence to be exercised by the producers, directors, and actors. This was in turn unpacked by the research team to discern commonalities to academic reports of the current HE environment as evidenced in published literature, and what was merely pastiche. This dramatisation, therefore, allowed for an immersive experience as to what the relationships between students and staff in UK HE might be like.

The airing and our subsequent analysis of *Cheat* were timely and relevant to the current UK HE context which has seen increased neoliberal working practices (Maisuria and Helmes, 2020), including rising tensions between students, their academic institutions, and the cities in which they are educated; and increased disquiet among academic staff (Bell and Brooks, 2018; Morrish, 2020; Mulhearn and Franco, 2018; Zepke, 2018). *Cheat* therefore provided us with a rare opportunity to explore a dramatised depiction of the current HE landscape, including how students might be navigating this in a UK university setting in relation to the staff who are delivering their expensive education. While our research is not unique in analysing a television series concerned with HE, there is a noted deficit of such research focussing on the UK HE environment, with attention predominantly given to the US. Our article aims to address this deficit.

Marketisation of UK HE

The UK HE system comprised different types of university institutions known as (from oldest to newest) 'Ancient', 'Nineteenth-Century', 'Redbrick' or 'Civic', 'Plateglass', and 'Post-1992' universities. The majority of universities follow a 'Traditional' mode of delivery, including wide-ranging freedom over academic research and curricula, researcher-led scholarship, and exclusivity of student admittance (particularly pertinent for 'Ancient' and 'Redbrick' universities). Juxtaposed against these are 'Post-1992' universities, which are 'New' in their mode of delivery, and whose form and function are viewed as more bureaucratic, more inclined to operate as businesses, and draw in students from a wider section of the society, usually marketing themselves to local, ethnically diverse, and lower socio-economic students (Kok et al., 2010).

The lengthening of the average academic's working day, the escalating workload and work-based responsibility, the growing expectation to undertake complex pastoral and administrative responsibilities (Lawthom, 2015), and a burgeoning number of students annually (Silverio, 2016) have become commonplace in modern-day academia (Tomas and Jessop, 2019). These changes have led some to comment that academia and academics are becoming a new entity – that of the 'neoliberal university'. This neoliberal university is said to displace independent thought and academic freedom with a push for financial profit (Giroux, 2002), despite almost all universities in the UK maintaining charitable status. Increasingly, it has been noted that the 'neoliberal university' requires university staff, students, and the physical and virtual aspects of the university itself, to be 'on brand' (Foroudi et al., 2019), meeting '*relentless pressure to rise in ranking systems and to produce results that make them attractive for donors and businesses that want to cooperate with them*' (Strenger, 2011: 148). In UK HE, the branding of universities has expanded to include teaching 'excellence', judged via a Government-led Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)[3] which is related to the aforementioned increase

in tuition fees, as institutions must show they are offering students a high-quality education and are audited and judged accordingly (Ashwin, 2017). These judgements are based on a strict criterion covering different aspects of teaching quality: encouraging student engagement, the institution valuing teaching, ensuring courses involve rigour and stretch, and providing effective student feedback (Ashwin, 2017).

The rise of students as consumers

In UK HE, September 2012 saw the first intake of students paying up to £9000 per year for their undergraduate education. This decision to 'uncap' undergraduate tuition fees followed The Browne Review which recommended that UK universities should be able to opt to charge tuition fees at, or close to, £9000 per annum (Browne, 2010). Most, if not all, universities opted to charge between £7500 and the full £9000 (now adjusted for teaching 'quality' to allow up to £9250) – approximately three times as much in fees as compared to the 2011 entry. This increase in annual fees re-aligned the student–university relationship, including construction of the student as a consumer, whereby fees became a payment for a product – a university experience and not simply a university education. These new '*student consumers*' (Naidoo and Williams, 2015: 208) became protected by the Government's consumer protection law (see Competition & Markets Authority, 2015) and the demand for universities to treat students as customers increased. The sharp increase in tuition fees provided incoming students the bargaining power to both compare and complain about educative provision on factors such as the student experience, facilities, and graduate destinations, to ensure they receive the best value for money (Williams, 2013), and an excellent product coupled with exceptional customer service (Beaton, 2016). When these standards were assumed to be 'below par', students have demanded reparations for poor or missed tuition (Delucchi and Korgen, 2002) and even engaged with legal counsel when they have not received the grades they believe they deserve (Anderson, 2010).

Some researchers within UK HE (e.g. Bunce et al., 2016) have acknowledged the expectation from students applies greater pressure on academic staff to be omnipresent and respond immediately to student enquiries, often at the sacrifice of one's personal life. The expectation for exceptional quality of teaching and lecture delivery has also emerged among students (Wilkinson, 2020), and lecturers are now tasked with designing and delivering lectures worth £135 per student per hour.[4] What is more, students are periodically encouraged to rate the quality of their provision under the guise of 'student voice' (Tomlinson, 2017). Students also take it upon themselves to rate teaching staff on public websites such as *Rate My Professors* and *Rate Your Lecturer*.

A recurrent theme in the literature concerned with the student consumer is entitlement (Fullerton, 2013; Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010). Academic entitlement has been defined as a '*tendency to possess an expectation of academic success without a sense of personal responsibility for achieving that success*' (Chowning and Campbell, 2009: 982). Oldfield et al. (2019) find that, despite the enormous financial investment by students in their education, attendance and engagement are low. This coincides with Molesworth et al.'s (2009: 377) view of students as seeking to '*have a degree*', as opposed to being learners. However, student entitlement is not wholly negative; it can have a positive impact on a

student's experience of HE, including being more assertive, expectation of transparency, and requirements for well-organised curricula and delivery (Kelly, 2010). When discussing the changing HE landscape, we cannot ignore the repeated criticisms of neo-liberalisation (Smyth, 2017). With the rapid and rampant commercialisation of UK HE which includes the 'student consumer' discourse, reports indicate academia has become an increasingly irregular and precarious environment in which to seek employment (Lawthom, 2015; Wilkinson et al., 2020), and the pressure generated from this style of employment can lead to poor outcomes for both teaching and research. Having provided an overview of literature on students as consumers, we now discuss the commodification and commercialisation of academics.

The commodification and commercialisation of academics

Radical transformation of UK universities occurred during the 1980s, with academics experiencing material and cultural transformations, including the commodification of labour, skills, and relationships to students, colleagues, and scholarly endeavours (Groot, 1997). Groot (1997) contends that academics are resultantly experiencing alienation due to loss of control over many aspects of teaching, learning, and research; anxiety surrounding increased casualisation of the academic workforce; and fear surrounding accountability due to increased appraisals and performance measures (see also Kenny, 2018; Page, 2019). This links with Ball's (2012: 20) contention that for many working in HE, there is a '*growing sense of ontological insecurity*', related to a loss of sense of meaning/purpose in what we do in our roles. According to these authors, key features of the shift towards commodification are loss of autonomy and control to the external power of competition and managerialism, insecurity and casualisation in employment (for instance, increased short-term contracts and hourly paid work), and exposure to increasing judgemental scrutiny.

UK Universities have been responding to the abovementioned changes in the HE landscape by adopting a market-led approach. Central to this has been the commodification and commercialisation of academics. One manifestation of this is increased teaching, less time for traditional research, and more pressure for industry-sponsored research (Pitcher, 2013). This shift has seen a new hybrid of academic entrepreneurship (see Stuart and Ding, 2006). Relatedly, a change in terminology has been experienced, with a discourse of not only education, as discussed in the section above, but also research being positioned as a 'product' or 'service' (Groot, 1997). Extant literature acknowledges that universities are aware of the tensions created between market pressures and academic standards (e.g. Ball, 2012; Miller, 2010; Pitcher, 2013). Ball (2012: 18) reflects how academics now face a '*profound shift in our relationships, to ourselves, our practice, and the possibilities of being an academic*'. There is an increased pressure on material quantities – publication output ('the publish or perish' mentality, Callaghan, 2016) and the generation of funding – rather than intellectual or educational qualities (Chubb and Watermeyer, 2017).

In a competitive knowledge-intensive world, research has become increasingly important to global, regional, and national policy agendas (Leathwood and Read, 2013). It is a high-stakes activity for universities too, with their position in national and global

league tables largely dependent upon research achievements as reflected in citations, grants, and awards. Consequently, academics are under ever-greater pressure to meet the demands of the new research economy (Leathwood and Read, 2013). For instance, Curtis (2007) refers to academic professional power being displaced by a regime of performance management, such as the Research Excellence Framework (REF).[5] Academics are also facing pressure from the REF to marketise their research impact via impact statements (Chubb and Watermeyer, 2017). Such measurements of performance are recent manifestations of the surveillance mechanisms dominating the purpose and direction of academic labour and call into question the authenticity of academic identity and practice (Chubb and Watermeyer, 2017).

Commentators (e.g. Qudah et al., 2019) have reported that academic staff have taken a negative view of the abovementioned changes to academia, reporting low morale, stress, and poor quality of working life. Bryson (2004) found that the satisfaction of many teaching staff has been eroded by work intensification and that of research staff by the insecurity created by casualised employment. Nonetheless, the author highlights that resistance and resilience continue despite the commodifying pressures. Perhaps contrary to this, Dorenkamp and Weiß (2018) recently found that a growing number of postdoctoral academics cite stressful working conditions as reasons they consider abandoning their studies and leaving academia.

Importantly, scholars (e.g. Howe-Walsh and Turnbull, 2016; Nielsen, 2016) highlight a gendered dimension to the commodification of academia, with women disproportionately experiencing job insecurity and limited promotion opportunities. Earlier research by Groot (1997) highlights that the growth of the competitive, individualist, and output-oriented aspects of academic life and activity links to male privilege, while women tend to value co-operative, collective, and process-oriented ways of working. Consequently, female academics co-operating with colleagues rather than focusing solely on career opportunities for herself may not fare well in the 'new' academy (Groot, 1997). Those who will be successful are able to neglect or marginalise activities which are invisible to performance measures (Willmott, 1995), restricting their work to activities providing the greatest measurable, visible output, for instance, publications (Leahey, 2006).

Materials and methods

A textual analysis was utilised of the series *Cheat*, which was set over four, 1-hour-long episodes. Analytic validity was maintained as all three analysts watched the series in full, recorded data independently, and reached consensus on analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). For analytical purposes, each episode was viewed as a unit (see Silverio et al., 2020; Wilkinson et al., 2020, for further examples of use of this analytical approach).

Data were recorded using a coding grid which enabled descriptions of the visual data to be recorded alongside verbatim transcription of the verbal data, including also the episode number and the timing of the key dialogue. We produced a coding frame with three columns, the first was focused on 'depictions of students as consumers', the second assessed the key 'student–staff interactions', and the final column brought together all data evidencing 'marketised HE' from within the series. The use of this coding frame was not restrictive and did not prevent 'additional discovery-oriented work' within the

episodes (Derry et al., 2010: 16). We were cognisant of references which we did not previously consider appropriate to our analysis and recorded them in a separate document for future analysis. Inter-rater reliability of both the observations and data collection as well as the analysis was highly consistent between the researchers, and interpretive pluralism was avoided (see Silverio et al., 2019). Discrepancies in analysis and/or interpretation – though few – were resolved through collective watching and discussion, as well as reflexive re-analysis.

This article presents a less traditional methodological approach, that is, an analysis of a television drama about a fictional UK HE institution, in the field of HE. This may limit its factuality and generalisability when relating findings to extant UK HE institutions; however, this approach enables a legitimate and rigorous, empirical interrogation of these non-traditional data (Silverio et al., 2020). Not forgetting an early pioneer of academic investigation into the visual arts, Laura Mulvey, and her 'male gaze' theory (Mulvey, 1975), empirical investigation of non-traditional data (such as that derived from the performing arts, literature, and visual media) is becoming increasingly more common in HE research (see, for instance, Bourke, 2013; Fisher et al., 2008). Furthermore, *Cheat* is not a complete pastiche take on the UK HE system and there are many aspects which are factual, believable, and steeped in reality, albeit dramatised. Thus, the analysis presented in this article keeps good company in further pushing the bounded notion that only traditional sources of data are of empirical importance, and in doing so allows for interpretation of material and data which would otherwise not be subjected to academic critique.

Results and discussion

Herein, we present the results of our textual analysis of *Cheat* around two key thematic areas: 'The powerful student consumer' and 'The commodified academic'. The most illustrative quotations have been presented for each theme.

The powerful student consumer

Writing more than two decades ago, before the commercialisation of HE as we know it, Scott (1999) posits a seemingly timeless question, '*Is the customer "always right?"*' regarding the role of academics as service providers. Based on our analysis of *Cheat*, we are inclined to answer, 'No'.

Early in Episode 1, Leah is seen playing tennis with a colleague, Amy, and after exchanging a story about a recent date, Amy changes the conversation to an impromptu one about the student Rose:

> Amy: So, this girl, Rose Vaughan . . . you know her dad's company part-funded the new wing of the library.
> Leah: Really?
> Amy: Two hundred grand or something stupid like that.
> Leah: Wow.

The exchange between the two colleagues (who are also friends) comes as a warning shot from one friend to another, despite them both clearly being aggravated by the fact

one student's father's company has been able to fund an enormous part of the university's development. While nothing explicit is said, the body language and facial expressions (ones of rolling eyes and fed-upness) have been directed to make the audience know this is something with which both colleagues are uncomfortable, and moreover believe it is morally reprehensible. Leah's uneasiness with this becomes apparent later in the episode when she discusses the matter with her husband (and fellow academic), Adam:

> Leah: She's the one whose dad built half the bloody library.
> Adam: [Laughs] Wow! You really don't like her, do you?
> Leah: It's not fair that she can just get away with it and everyone else has to work their bollocks off.

This fact – that Rose's father has paid towards the new wing of the library being installed – is also raised by Leah against Rose, in an exchange they have regarding Leah failing Rose on an essay on the suspicion she has cheated:

> Leah: Or maybe I should ask your father. He clearly cares a lot about your education.

While this comment is rebuffed by Rose as her situation being no different to that of Leah's, insofar as Leah is teaching at the same university as her own father used to, Leah later ends the conversation with:

> Leah: You know, you could've just paid for a lower mark and I wouldn't have blinked an eye. Had to have the best though didn't you?

Here, we see an enactment of academic prestige, suggesting it is no longer good enough in UK HE to attend a good university, but students are demanding that their degree classifications are also the best (Anderson, 2010). The representation of the student as consumer is extended here, as Rose has now been accused of purchasing an exemplary essay. However, in this case, the power of the student consumer falters, with Leah choosing to exert her academic judgement to challenge the provenance of the essay. In what appears to be a tipping of the balance of student consumerism, handing back power to traditional academic values, Leah is seen to win this exchange, but has only further angered her paying student.

Although Leah is certain she will challenge Rose about having bought the essay, she is advised against this by her mum (Angela) who fears she will jeopardise her chances of securing tenure:

> Angela: Sweetheart, sweetheart, you are so close to securing this post, don't . . . don't rock the boat now. What's the point?

Leah's mother is shown to disagree with Leah (and Leah's father who wholeheartedly supports Leah's decision to challenge Rose), emphasising research is what now counts at

universities, perhaps alluding to pressures from the REF in the UK and the notion of 'publish or perish' (see De Rond and Miller, 2005), and implying that Leah should not be fighting battles on the teaching side of academia. This can be linked to other literature (see Wilkinson, 2019) which reflects on how negative feedback from students could halt opportunities for a permanent academic position, especially to untenured early career academics or those on precarious contracts. The reality of this comes to light in Episode 3 when Leah's colleague Stephan states that discussions of making Leah's position permanent are being postponed owing to the ongoing situation with Rose:

> Leah: What happens now, when will I hear about the permanent position?
> Stephan: We're going to have to delay talks about your position here in light of recent events surrounding Rose Vaughan.

This brings to light the power students may hold as consumers (Beaton, 2016; Naidoo and Williams, 2015) by depicting Rose's consumer status having powerful ramifications for Leah's career. A complaint *against* a student – as seen in *Cheat* – can very quickly be turned to be viewed as a complaint *by* the student, with the university rushing in an attempt to limit reputational damage among the student body. This links to Nixon et al.'s (2018: 940) interpretation of students as '*agentic*' subjects, who can work for or against the academic institution they attend.

Further depiction of the powerful student consumer in *Cheat* can be seen during an exchange in Episode 2 between Rose and Ben (a university porter) where we see Rose complain that someone (Leah) has been in her room (identified through a yellow rose petal found on her dormitory room floor, which matched the yellow rose she had previously left on Leah's desk):

> Ben: Hello, hello.
> Rose: Someone's been in my room.
> Ben: What, broken in?
> Rose: Yeah. I think so.
> Ben: Right, you need to tell security.
> Rose: Can't you just get me the CCTV from the corridor?
> Ben: You're supposed to report the incident and they'll investigate it properly.
> Rose: So, you don't have access to the footage?
> Ben: Well I do, but I'd lose my job if they caught me.
> Rose: Ben, someone's been in my room. Do you not understand how scared that makes me feel? [short pause] You said you'd always help me.
> Ben: Yeah, sorry. I'll look into it.
> Rose: Promise?
> Ben: Yeah. I promise.

The exchange sees Rose leverage both professional obligation and personal guilt within Ben (who had also been in her room earlier in the episode), in a step way beyond what other HE scholars have described as 'emotional labour' (see Ogbonna and Harris, 2004), which itself falls outside of an academic's job description and remit. This leverage

is later reprised when Rose phones Ben at the University to ask him to help cover-up the fact that she has murdered Adam.

To summarise this theme, it is poignant to return to the beginning of Episode 1, where Leah is delivering a lecture on power and coercion, and where, even at the very beginning of this series, we see the mention of consumerism:

> Leah: And power manifests itself in various ways of course. The way we respond to authority, to hierarchy, to financial incentives, and more dangerously, to the use of force or threat.

While Rose is never financially exploitative of Leah, she is represented as a powerful student consumer. By right of their *de facto* position within the university system – a powerful consumer has the ability to use their voice against the institution in which they are learning to remove the 'financial incentives' – their fees and the fees of future students through complaints (Nixon et al., 2018). Although it is important to analyse these data with a focus on the student in a marketised HE environment, other foci exist. The second theme analyses the ways in which academic characters in *Cheat* are depicted as commodified and commercialised as part of the neoliberal aggressive marketisation of UK HE. As shown both above and now below, the sum of the powerful 'student-consumer' and the corralled 'commercially valuable academic' as depicted in *Cheat* lead to a greater marketisation of the HE system than each part alone.

The commodified academic

This theme captures trends in *Cheat* which depict the modern academic as having commercial value. This commercial value can be achieved by various means in academia (see Fyfe et al., 2017; for a discussion of commercial interests, academic prestige and the circulation of research, and Meyers and Pruthi, 2011; for a discussion of academic entrepreneurship), but ultimately leads to the commodification of the jobbing academic. With students more likely to be located in the UK HE scene as consumers who pay for their education, rather than simply learners, we start to understand how academics become seen as commercial entities with a 'market value'. The theme of 'The Commodified Academic', therefore, provides insight into how we can better understand the 'student-as-consumer' role, by understanding how students may view their money is spent (i.e. in exchange for lecturers' time and lecture content), even if this is not strictly true.

In *Cheat*, we see grant income foregrounded as an important factor of academics being commercially viable. During an exchange with Adam, Leah invites her husband to read the dissertation she suspects Rose has plagiarised, although she is refused by Adam who recounts that he is working on a grant:

> Leah: Why don't you read it? See what you think.
> Adam: No, darling, I'm working on the grant, OK?
> Leah: I thought you sent that in weeks ago.

Adam: It's a two-million-pound grant, Leah, it's five year's work. I wanna make sure we nailed it.

Adam is portrayed as second guessing and therefore second checking his grant application before submitting it (see Holligan, 2011: 64, for a description of '*academics' frenetic attempts to submit successful bids for funding*'). This sub-plotline is recurrent, and in Episode 3, we see Adam receive the news the grant has been successful via a telephone call, to which he is visibly excited and confirms he will "*be sure to let everyone know*", as well as attempting to tell Leah via telephone calls which she refuses to pick up (due to an argument). In a later conversation between the husband and wife, Adam announces something which, in mainstream UK HE contexts, would be almost unheard of, the fact that he has turned down the grant funding (to spend time working on his marriage and the baby they have just found out they are expecting):

Adam: Look, I haven't had a chance to tell you, but um . . . We got the grant, The Hurst Foundation. But I want you to know that I turned it down.
Leah: You shouldn't have done that.
Adam: Well I wanna be there for you and the baby.

Grant income in HE settings is viewed as prestigious, given that relatively few grant applications are successful in the current academic climate (see Kenny, 2018). The notion that an academic would turn down a grant may be evidence of some artistic licence being taken by the scriptwriters, but also speaks to the wider plotline that Adam is an established academic and no longer has to prove his worth by being a commercially viable commodity (see Willmott, 1995). In contrast, Leah regards Adam's actions and the idea of having a baby at this point in her career as terrible, as she does not yet have the security of being tenured. This echoes experiences of women in Armenti's (2004) research into tenure and parenthood.

In Episode 2, there is a different focus for this theme we have named 'The commodified academic'. During a formal staff dinner, Leah is seated with Adam and her colleagues Stephan and Amy. The scene opens with Stephan commenting on Leah's book manuscript:

Stephan: I'd say it's ready to take to the publishers. I think you'll have a lot of interest.
Leah: You think people'll go for it?
Stephan: You know I do. [Leah smiles] I can't believe this guy hasn't read it yet [Stephan gestures to Adam]. Have a word with yourself Adam. [long pause] Adam?
Adam: Sorry? [smiles]
Stephan: You still haven't read Leah's book?
Adam: Oh err, I-I'm gonna read it, just as soon as I finish watching this series of the 'Bake Off'. I thought I'd made that clear? Of course, I'm gonna read it. Looking forward to it. Long time coming. She's worked very hard.

The scene is abruptly ended by Rose entering into the conversation, but the pressing of the urgency needed in the book's submission by Leah's colleague and the way in which he scorns Leah's husband for having not read it are apparent. This conversation echoes work by Cronin and La Barre (2004) and subsequent international scholarship (see Giménez-Toledo et al., 2016) which has suggested that the scholarly monograph remains an essential prerequisite for seeking academic promotion and coveted tenured positions.

The final episode returns to the discussion of authoring books, with Rose now in prison for Adam's murder, and 2 years having passed. Leah is seen being lauded for her newest book which has enabled her to secure her tenured lectureship:

> Stephan: To mark the release of Leah's new book, her second in just under three years – which of course is highly embarrassing for the rest of us. Now, this latest work really is a remarkable achievement and it was a privilege to be involved in some small capacity. So, without further ado, to Leah!
> Crowd: To Leah [cheering and clapping].
> Leah: Thank you. Thanks, everyone. Thanks Stephan.

This allows not only this sub-plotline to draw neatly to a close but, when related to real HE, can also be seen as Leah experiencing a rite of passage as an independent academic in her own right, in what Sugimoto (2014: 365) describes as an '*academic genealogy*' (or a family tree of academics, their supervisors, and their '*academic ancestors*').

The second and final theme of this analysis frames the characters within *Cheat* as academics with a commercial value through their commodification, and how the student consumer may (ab)use their status as a fee payer to navigate, negotiate, or indeed manipulate the HE institution for their benefit. By focusing some analytical attention on the academics and the depiction of their commodification in *Cheat*, we are able to better understand the portrayal of consumer power students have. We argue it is important to analyse both student and academic roles when considering the student consumer role in a marketised HE system because, without academics, there would be nothing for students to consume and, likewise, it is now well versed that much of the infrastructure underpinning the UK HE landscape relies on student tuition to fund academia as we know it. Therefore, without this second theme, the analysis above would be incomplete.

In summary, what the series demonstrates is a characterisation of the increasing commercialisation and commodification which takes place within UK HE and which is faced by academics within that system. The commodified academic and the commercial value attached to academics is intrinsically linked to the marketisation of UK HE as universities drive staff to produce more outputs through voluminous successful publishing of journal articles and book chapters, while drawing in substantial research income via grant funding (Chubb and Watermeyer, 2017). Here, academics become commercial entities and, in being so, are an integral part of the marketised HE environment.

Conclusions

In this article, we have presented findings from a textual analysis of the four episodes comprising the ITV 1 psychological thriller *Cheat*. Our analysis is focused on one short dramatised television series and we do not claim it is illustrative of the broader lived experiences of students in UK universities. However, *Cheat* provided us with a rare opportunity to explore the circulating discourses surrounding current UK HE through a depiction which entails a close focus on one student navigating this landscape. Aside from the plotline of *Cheat* leading to her being a murderer, the character of Rose has many characteristics which could be deemed problematic in the evolving UK HE system. Rose is portrayed as being able-bodied and therefore physically able to navigate the HE institution and curriculum unlike many students with disabilities enrolled in UK HE institutions today (Osborne, 2019). She is also characterised as white and upper middle class, two factors which make her assimilate with her university and the majority of her peers who are depicted as attending it. This of course does not reflect the structural racism (Mirza, 2018) and elitism (Brim, 2020) which exists as a hurdle for many students in UK HE, even today where many students from non-white and/or low socio-economic status backgrounds find the UK HE system to be the '*impenetrable hub of imperial white knowledge production*' (Mirza, 2018: 3). Rose is depicted as heterosexual which some have argued can be a further advantage in the HE system (Allen et al., 2020; Seal, 2019). And finally, Rose has added privilege, by the fact the character is shown to be a 'traditional' student in the sense she is neither a commuting student, nor is she represented as a mature student (who may have family and/or caring responsibilities, and may also be working to contribute to the household finances) – both factors which scholars highlight as being a boundary to equal opportunity in UK HE (Holton and Finn, 2018; Merrill, 2019, respectively). While the focus on one character who is adorned with many privileges, in this television drama and our subsequent analysis, will not necessarily reflect the whole range of students who are currently navigating the UK HE system, it does enable an examination of the representations of how those students who do possess those privileges may hold the HE system to account for their financial investment in their education (see Nixon et al., 2018).

This leads to the particular focus of our analysis, which has shed light on one dramatised representation of the commercialised landscape in the UK's current HE system for students, and how it can be navigated, negotiated, and (ab)used. Our analysis of *Cheat* contributes to a circulation of existing representations of HE, although predominantly in the US (e.g. as analysed by Bourke, 2013; Conklin, 2009; Reynolds, 2014), that to some extent reflect reality, but could in turn shape expectations of staff and students and reinforce the relations that are depicted. It has also depicted the possible resultant vulnerability of student selves when they – with or without justification – attempt to challenge academics and academic institutions. Although heralded as powerful student-consumers in much literature (e.g. Beaton, 2016; Naidoo and Williams, 2015), our analysis shows how the student at the centre of our analysis disrupted the united front often attempted by HE institutions, but ultimately was faced with a 'house always wins' scenario. As such, our article offers an important contribution to the psycho-sociological literature, providing insight into one representation of how the student experience has been transformed and impacted by marketisation.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Sergio A Silverio https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7177-3471

Notes

1. A 'House Always Wins' Scenario is one in which – although usually related to gambling establishments – the 'gaming' system is designed so that players lose more than they win, and therefore, the owners of the establishment always win more than they pay out in prizes.
2. A 'whodunnit' is a storyline about a murder, in which the reader or viewing audience does not know who the murderer was until the end.
3. The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is the system used by the UK Government to assess the quality of the teaching conducted by UK Higher Education (HE) institutions.
4. This cost is based on an approximate calculation from Taylor (2011), where a £9000 tuition fee is divided by the product of number of contact hours per week and the number of teaching weeks in a year to achieve the answer.
5. The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the system used by the UK Government to assess the quality of the research conducted by UK HE Institutions.

References

Allen L, Cowie L and Fenaughty J (2020) Safe but not safe: LGBTTIQA+ students' experiences of a university campus. *Higher Education Research & Development*. Epub ahead of print 2 February. DOI: 10.1080/07294360.2019.1706453.

Anderson P (2010) Can you get a refund if university fails to deliver? Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/money/2010/dec/18/refund-if-university-fails-deliver (accessed 29 December 2019).

Armenti C (2004) Women faculty seeking tenure and parenthood: Lessons from previous generations. *Cambridge Journal of Education* 34(1): 65–83.

Ashwin P (2017) What is the teaching excellence framework in the United Kingdom, and will it work? *International Higher Education* 88: 10–11.

Ball SJ (2012) Performativity, commodification and commitment: An I-spy guide to the neoliberal university. *British Journal of Educational Studies* 60(1): 17–28.

Beaton F (2016) Who pays the piper? Who calls the tune? Implications of policy for the future academic workforce. Available at: https://www.srhe.ac.uk/conference2016/abstracts/0249.pdf (accessed 29 December 2019).

Bell AR and Brooks C (2018) What makes students satisfied? A discussion and analysis of the UK's national student survey. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 42(8): 1118–1142.

Bourke B (2013) Coming to America: The influence of college-themed movies on perceptions of international students. *College Student Journal* 47(3): 462–469.

Boxall M (2016) Higher education white paper: The big changes [online]. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2016/may/16/higher-education-white-paper-the-big-changes (accessed 27 March 2017).

Brim M (2020) *Poor Queer Studies: Confronting Elitism in the University*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Browne J (2010) *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education: An Independent Review of Higher Educational Funding and Student Finance*. London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office.

Bryson C (2004) What about the workers? The expansion of higher education and the transformation of academic work. *Industrial Relations Journal* 35(1): 38–57.

Bunce L, Baird A and Jones SE (2016) The student-as-consumer approach in higher education and its effect on academic performance. *Studies in Higher Education* 42(11): 1958–1978.

Callaghan CW (2016) 'Publish or perish': Family life and academic research productivity. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management* 14(1): 1–9.

Chowning K and Campbell NJ (2009) Development and validation of a measure of academic entitlement: Individual differences in students' externalized responsibility and entitled expectations. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 101(4): 982–997.

Chubb J and Watermeyer R (2017) Artifice or integrity in the marketization of research impact? Investigating the moral economy of (pathways to) impact statements within research funding proposals in the UK and Australia. *Studies in Higher Education* 42(12): 2360–2372.

Competition & Markets Authority (2015) Higher education undergraduate students: Your rights under consumer law. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415732/Undergraduate_students_-_your_rights_under_consumer_law.pdf (accessed 29 December 2019).

Conklin JE (2009) *Campus Life in the Movies: A Critical Survey from the Silent Era to the Present*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company.

Cronin B and La Barre K (2004) Mickey Mouse and Milton: Book publishing in the humanities. *Learned Publishing* 17(2): 85–98.

Curtis B (2007) Academic life: Commodification, continuity, collegiality, confusion and the performance based research fund. *New Zealand Journal of Employment Relations* 32(2): 1–16.

De Rond M and Miller AN (2005) Publish or perish: Bane or boon of academic life? *Journal of Management Inquiry* 14(4): 321–329.

Delucchi M and Korgen K (2002) 'We're the customer – We pay the tuition': Student consumerism among undergraduate sociology majors. *Teaching Sociology* 30(1): 100–107.

Derry SJ, Pea RD, Barron B, et al. (2010) Conducting video research in the learning sciences: Guidance on selection, analysis, technology and ethics. *Journal of the Learning Sciences* 19(1): 3–53.

Dorenkamp I and Weiß EE (2018) What makes them leave? A path model of postdocs' intentions to leave academia. *Higher Education* 75(5): 747–767.

Edgerton S, Holm G, Daspit T, et al. (eds) (2005) *Imagining the Academy: Higher Education and Popular Culture*. Oxon: RoutledgeFalmer.

Fisher R, Harris A and Jarvis C (2008) *Education in Popular Culture: Telling Tales on Teachers and Learners*. Oxon: Routledge.

Foroudi P, Yu Q, Gupta S, et al. (2019) Enhancing university brand image and reputation through customer value co-creation behaviour. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 138: 218–227.

Fullerton DS (2013) What students say about their own sense of entitlement. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* 135: 31–36.

Fyfe A, Coate K, Curry S, et al. (2017) Untangling academic publishing: A history of the relationship between commercial interests, academic prestige and the circulation of research. Available at: https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/19148/1/UntanglingAcPub.pdf (accessed 28 January 2020).

Giménez-Toledo E, Mañana-Rodríguez J, Engels TC, et al. (2016) Taking scholarly books into account: Current developments in five European countries. *Scientometrics* 107(2): 685–699.

Giroux H (2002) Neoliberalism, corporate culture, and the promise of higher education: The university as a democratic public sphere. *Harvard Educational Review* 72(4): 425–464.

Groot J (1997) After the Ivory Tower: Gender, commodification and the 'academic'. *Feminist Review* 55: 130–143.

Holligan C (2011) Feudalism and academia: UK academics' accounts of research culture. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 24(1): 55–75.

Holton M and Finn K (2018) Being-in-motion: The everyday (gendered and classed) embodied mobilities for UK university students who commute. *Mobilities* 13(3): 426–440.

Howe-Walsh L and Turnbull S (2016) Barriers to women leaders in academia: Tales from science and technology. *Studies in Higher Education* 41(3): 415–428.

Kelly P (2010) Age of entitlement: How does physician assistant education change to accommodate the Generation Y student? *The Journal of Physician Assistant Education* 21(4): 47–51.

Kenny J (2018) Re-empowering academics in a corporate culture: An exploration of workload and performativity in a university. *Higher Education* 75(2): 365–380.

Kok S-K, Douglas A, McClelland B, et al. (2010) The move towards managerialism: Perceptions of staff in 'traditional' and 'new' UK universities. *Tertiary Education and Management* 16(2): 99–113.

Lawthom R (2015) *Women In, Through, Within Science: Walls, Ceilings, Communities, and Colonies*. Windsor, ON, Canada: Keynote presented at the annual conference of The British Psychological Society [BPS] Psychology of Women Section [PoWS]. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Wm9uA73WEo

Leahey E (2006) Gender differences in productivity: Research specialization as a missing link. *Gender & Society* 20(6): 754–780.

Leathwood C and Read B (2013) Research policy & academic performativity. Compliance, contestation and complicity. *Studies in Higher Education* 38(8): 1162–1174.

Maisuria A and Helmes S (2020) *Life for the Academic in the Neoliberal University*. London: Routledge.

Merrill B (2019) *Gender, Change and Identity: Mature Women Students in Universities*. London: Routledge.

Meyers AD and Pruthi S (2011) Academic entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial universities and biotechnology. *Journal of Commercial Biotechnology* 17(4): 349–357.

Miller B (2010) Skills for sale: What is being commodified in higher education? *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 34(2): 199–206.

Mirza HS (2018) Racism in higher education: 'What then, can be done?' In: Arday J and Mirza HS (eds) *Dismantling Race in Higher Education: Racism, Whiteness and Decolonising the Academy*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 3–23.

Molesworth M, Nixon E and Scullion R (2009) Having, being and higher education: The marketisation of the university and the transformation of the student into consumer. *Teaching in Higher Education* 14(3): 277–287.

Morrish L (2020) Academic freedom and the disciplinary regime in the Neoliberal University. In: Dawes S and Lenormand M (eds) *Neoliberalism in Context Governance, Subjectivity and Knowledge*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 235–253.

Mulhearn C and Franco M (2018) If you build it will they come? The boom in purpose-built student accommodation in central Liverpool: Destudentification, studentification and the future of the city. *Local Economy* 33(5): 477–495.

Mulvey L (1975) Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. *Screen* 16(3): 6–18.

Naidoo R and Williams J (2015) The neoliberal regime in English higher education: Charters, consumers and the erosion of the public good. *Critical Studies in Education* 56(2): 208–223.

Nielsen MW (2016) Limits to meritocracy? Gender in academic recruitment and promotion processes. *Science and Public Policy* 43(3): 386–399.

Nixon E, Scullion R and Hearn R (2018) Her majesty the student: Marketised higher education and the narcissistic (dis)satisfactions of the student-consumer. *Studies in Higher Education* 43(6): 927–943.

Ogbonna E and Harris LC (2004) Work intensification and emotional labour among UK university lecturers: An exploratory study. *Organization Studies* 25(7): 1185–1203.

Oldfield J, Rodwell J, Curry L, et al. (2019) A face in a sea of faces: Exploring university students' reasons for non-attendance to teaching sessions. *Journal of Further and Higher Education* 43(4): 443–452.

Osborne T (2019) Not lazy, not faking: Teaching and learning experiences of university students with disabilities. *Disability & Society* 34(2): 228–252.

Page D (2019) The academic as consumed and consumer. *Journal of Education Policy*. Epub head of print 29 March. DOI: 10.1080/02680939.2019.1598585.

Pitcher HS (2013) Managing the tensions between maintaining academic standards and the commercial imperative in a UK private sector higher education institution. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 35(4): 421–431.

Qudah S, Davies J and Deakin R (2019) Can we get more satisfaction? Improving quality of working life survey results in UK universities. *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* 23(2–3): 39–47.

Reynolds PJ (2014, August) Representing 'U': Popular culture, media, and higher education. ASHE Higher Education Report, John Wiley & Sons, San Francisco, CA.

Scott SV (1999) The academic as service provider: Is the customer 'always right?' *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 21(2): 193–202.

Seal M (2019) *The Interruption of Heteronormativity in Higher Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Silverio SA (2016) Penny for your thoughts? The real cost to psychological support in British universities since the increase in tuition fees. *Psych-Talk* 88: 20–22.

Silverio SA, Gauntlett W, Wallace H, et al. (2019) (Re)discovering grounded theory for cross-disciplinary qualitative health research. In: Clift BC, Gore J, Bekker S, et al. (eds) *Myths, Methods, and Messiness: Insights for Qualitative Research Analysis*. Bath: University of Bath, pp. 41–59.

Silverio SA, Wilkinson C and Wilkinson S (2020) Further uses for grounded theory: A methodology for psychological studies of the performing arts, literature and visual media. *QMiP Bulletin*, 29: 8–19.

Singleton-Jackson JA, Jackson DL and Reinhardt J (2010) Academic entitlement: Exploring definitions and dimensions of entitled students. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences* 5(9): 220–236.

Smyth J (2017) *The Toxic University: Zombie Leadership, Academic Rock Stars and Neoliberal Ideology*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Strenger C (2011) *The Fear of Insignificance: Searching for Meaning in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Stuart TE and Ding WW (2006) When do scientists become entrepreneurs? The social structural antecedents of commercial activity in the academic life sciences. *American Journal of Sociology* 112(1): 97–114.

Sugimoto CR (2014) Academic genealogy. In: Cronin B and Sugimoto CR (eds) *Beyond Bibliometrics: Harnessing Multidimensional Indicators of Scholarly Impact*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, pp. 365–382.

Taylor R (2011) The £135 lecture – But is it worth it? Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/education/mortarboard/2011/apr/29/university-lecture-fees-worth-it (accessed 29 March 2019).

Tobolowsky BF and Reynolds PJ (2017) *Anti-Intellectual Representations of American Colleges and Universities*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Tomas C and Jessop T (2019) Struggling and juggling: A comparison of student assessment loads across research and teaching-intensive universities. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 44(1): 1–10.

Tomlinson M (2017) Student perceptions of themselves as 'consumers' of higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 38(4): 450–467.

Vaismoradi M, Turunen H and Bondas T (2013) Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing & Health Sciences* 15(3): 398–405.

Wilkinson C (2020) Imposter syndrome and the accidental academic: An autoethnographic account. *International Journal for Academic Development*. Epub ahead of print 13 May. DOI: 10.1080/1360144X.2020.1762087.

Wilkinson C, Silverio SA and Wilkinson S (2020) The neoliberal university and the neurotic academic: A textual analysis of ITV Drama *Cheat. Journal of Further and Higher Education*. Epub ahead of print 22 April. DOI: 10.1080/0309877X.2020.1751093.

Wilkinson S (2019) The story of Samantha: The teaching performances and inauthenticities of an early career human geography lecturer. *Higher Education Research & Development* 38(2): 398–410.

Williams J (2013) *Consuming Higher Education: Why Learning Can't Be Bought*. London: Bloomsbury.

Willmott H (1995) Managing the academics: Commodification and control in the development of university education in the UK. *Human Relations* 48(9): 993–1027.

Zepke N (2018) Student engagement in neo-liberal times: What is missing? *Higher Education Research & Development* 37(2): 433–446.

Author biographies

Sergio A. Silverio is an Academic Psychologist and Research Associate in Social Science of Women's Health at King's College London's Department of Women & Children's Health. As a qualitative methods expert, Sergio advises on qualitative research internationally and has a reputation for achieving high quality qualitative and mixed methods research, resulting from cross-disciplinary and multi-institutional collaborations.

Catherine Wilkinson is a Programme Leader for Education Studies at Liverpool John Moores University. Catherine is a Senior Lecturer, teaching across at Education Studies and Early Childhood Studies degree programmes. Catherine has an established reputation for making cutting-edge contributions, conceptually and methodologically, to research 'with' children and young people and uses this research to inspire teaching she delivers.

Samantha Wilkinson is a Senior Lecturer in Childhood and Youth Studies at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her diverse research interests include: Young people and identity; Airbnb; alcohol consumption practices and experiences; and innovative qualitative methods when researching 'with' participants, including: Drawing-elicitation interviews; mobile phone methods; and video methodologies.

Date submitted 10 February 2020
Date accepted 2 October 2020