

Institution: University of Strathclyde		
Unit of Assessment: D27 – English Literature and Language		
Title of case study: Promoting a culture of responsible media reporting and consumption		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013 - 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Dr Sallyanne Duncan	Senior Lecturer	01/09/2002 – present
Dr Petya Eckler	Senior Lecturer	01/08/2013 – present
Prof Karen Boyle	Professor	01/02/2018 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 – December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Working under the research theme of Responsible Media, Eckler, Boyle and Duncan examine social media, body image and mental health; gender equality and representation; and media coverage of traumatic content, such as suicide. The research findings have been translated into accessible resources, such as toolkits for journalists, media guidelines, public talks, blogs, podcasts, MOOCs, and activity packs, which have been actively taken up and used by media companies, journalist associations, third sector organisations, individuals, and government. This has resulted in improved training and awareness of responsible reporting in media, increased public awareness of responsible media consumption, and has informed government policy related to social media and gender equality.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>When Eckler began researching social media and body image in 2013, understanding was poor about the relationship between social media use, body image and eating disorders; other studies later replicated her findings. Her research [R1], in collaboration with colleagues in the US, revealed that more time spent on Facebook meant young women felt more negative about their bodies and compared themselves more to others. For women seeking to lose weight, greater Facebook time also related to more disordered eating symptoms. Eckler subsequently looked at the difference between real bodies in offline environments and ideal bodies in online media. Aiming to inform future recommendations about this behaviour, the project [R2] investigated the common practice of editing/filtering photos of the self, finding that manipulation, though normalised on social media, was judged differently by users based on whether the post was made by a celebrity or a friend and on what type of editing was used, e.g. skin colour manipulation through filters vs. body shape manipulation.</p> <p>Building on her previous research into the ethics of intrusion in the context of reporting on deaths, Duncan's research has more recently focused specifically on responsible reporting of suicide, in collaboration with Dr Ann Luce, Bournemouth University. The research demonstrated that journalists' use of the various reporting guidelines available is uneven and alternative ethical models are needed to accommodate shifting newsroom pressures and working practices. R3 presents a model for responsible suicide reporting that is grounded in news-work and embeds media reporting guidelines within journalistic storytelling practices. This model contains a set of six questions, based on ethical principles in journalism and guideline advice, that journalists can ask of their reporting as they produce their stories. The model was subsequently applied to journalism education, with research demonstrating that journalism students' limited knowledge of suicide guidelines can be addressed by active learning using this model and storytelling as a pedagogy [R4]. This research is the foundation of the advice presented in their Responsible Suicide Reporting Toolkit, a self-help resource for journalists and journalism educators.</p> <p>Boyle's research, grounded in interdisciplinary feminist theory, demonstrates the need for careful consideration of the definitions of gendered violence and victimhood, and for an examination of the meaning of gender and violence for men, whether as victims, bystanders or perpetrators. In R5, Boyle challenges traditional and contemporary representations of gender and violence, arguing that we need to move beyond the now-canonical notion of <i>the</i> continuum of sexual</p>		

violence, to embrace 'continuum thinking' as a pluralistic process that allows us to account for various contexts and connections that relate to gender and violence. This model of continuum thinking is already being widely referenced in multi-disciplinary feminist scholarship and is further developed in Boyle's monograph on #MeToo and the Weinstein case [R6]. This book also looks at media depiction of feminism and feminists in the wake of the Weinstein case, the cultural values associated with men's abuse, and the result of #MeToo for men as victims/survivors and as alleged perpetrators in relation to narratives of victimisation and monstrosity [R6]. Boyle also collaborated with Duncan on a Royal Society of Edinburgh Workshop grant *Tackling Gendered Inequality in Scottish News*. As a direct outcome of the June 2018 workshops held at the University of Strathclyde, Boyle co-founded Gender Equal Media Scotland (GEMS), a coalition of academics (including Eckler), media practitioners and third sector organisations working to challenge and change gender inequality in Scottish media.

3. References to the research (Strathclyde affiliated authors in bold)

- R1 Eckler, P.**, Kalyango Jr., Y. & Paasch, E. (2017). 'Facebook Use and Negative Body Image among U.S. College Women'. *Women & Health*, 57(2), 249–67. DOI: [10.1080/03630242.2016.1159268](https://doi.org/10.1080/03630242.2016.1159268)
- R2 Kleim, A.J., Eckler, P. & Tonner, A.** (2019). "Too Good To Be True": *Semi-Naked Bodies on Social Media*, in Chiluiwa, I. & Samoilenko, S. (eds.), *Handbook of Research on Deception, Fake News, and Misinformation Online* (IGI Global), 65–86. ISBN: 9781522585350. Available from: <https://bit.ly/35T9AO4>
- R3 Duncan, S. & Luce, A.** (2020). 'Using the Responsible Suicide Reporting Model to Increase Adherence to Global Media Reporting Guidelines'. *Journalism*. DOI: [10.1177/1464884920952685](https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884920952685) [REF2]
- R4 Duncan, S. & Luce, A.** (2020). 'Teaching Responsible Suicide Reporting (RSR): Using Storytelling as a Pedagogy to Advance Media Reporting of Suicide'. *Journalism Education*, 9(1), 18–31. Available from: <https://bit.ly/38Z1Ufc>
- R5 Boyle, K.** (2019). 'What's In a Name? Theorising the Inter-relationships of Gender and Violence'. *Feminist Theory*, 20(2), 19–36. DOI: [10.1177/1464700118754957](https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700118754957) [REF2]
- R6 Boyle, K.** (2019). *#MeToo, Weinstein and Feminism*. Palgrave Macmillan: Cham, Switzerland. [REF2]

Notes on the quality of research: References 1-5 were peer reviewed ahead of publication. In 2020, **R5** was highlighted by the journal *Feminist Theory* as their most cited article of the last three years. **R6** was listed as one of Springer Nature's publication highlights for 2019 and was among the most used publications on SpringerLink throughout 2020. Eckler, Duncan and Boyle are regularly invited to present their research to other researchers and wider stakeholders, including a talk at the Rape Crisis England and Wales Annual Conference (Boyle, 2020), a panel discussion with the Ethical Journalism Network to mark International Mental Health Awareness day (Duncan, 2020) and clinical conferences for NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (Eckler, 2018) and NHS Grampian (Eckler, 2019).

4. Details of the impact

Duncan, Eckler and Boyle used various outlets to publicise the findings of their research prior to journal publication to ensure timely impact. By doing so, their research and resources produced from it have been actively adopted by media companies, journalist associations, third sector organisations, individuals, and government, resulting in the following impacts:

- **Raising public awareness of responsible media consumption**, through Massive Open Online Courses and public talks.
- **Improving training and awareness of responsible reporting in media**, through training of journalists and journalism educators, and provision of guidelines in partnership with NGOs and journalism associations.
- **Influencing policy through Government Advisory Groups**

Raising public awareness of responsible media consumption

Findings from Eckler's research [R1, R2] were publicised in 2014 at the annual conference of the International Communication Association, receiving widespread attention from mainstream media

in 20 countries, including *BBC News*, *Times of India* and *Corriere della Sera*. Capitalising on this interest, Eckler engaged on and offline with young people, parents, teachers and health practitioners to discuss social media use, its consequences, and healthier, responsible personal use. Between 2014 and 31st December 2020, Eckler delivered 23 talks to nearly 700 people and a TEDx Talk with over 1300 views [S1]. Attendees found the talks extremely informative and helpful in confirming suspicions or discovering new ways to address these topics. One college student learned *'That other people go through the same issues as I do'* and many reported changes in their attitudes and planned future behaviours: *'I'll look out more for signs people may be showing leading to worrying behaviour – even if they're not a close personal friend'*; *'I will be much more aware of how much time I spend online'*. An NHS mental health clinician said they would bring *'More focus on the impact of social media in clinical work'*. In collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation, Eckler produced a video of young adults talking about social media, which was shared in 4 clips as part as Mental Health Foundation's 2017 Eating Disorders Awareness Week, receiving 16,000 views, and posted on YouTube as a single video, receiving a further 1000 views [S1]. Resources from all of these events, research relating to mental health and social media use, and accessible blog posts aimed at raising awareness were included on a website launched by Eckler in early 2020, www.healthysocialmedia.org. Within the first year, the site had over 1,200 users and over 3,700 page views [S1].

Working with GEMS colleagues and drawing both on her media monitoring work and research on gender and violence, Boyle led a 7-week Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on FutureLearn, an online learning platform with international reach. Entitled *'Gender Representation in the Media'*, the MOOC ran twice in 2020 and attracted 6,546 learners from 143 countries, with participants sharing nearly 17,000 comments [S1]. Eckler also presented her body image research as part of the MOOC. Feedback on the MOOC was overwhelmingly positive – with 98% of respondents saying they had gained new knowledge and skills, 79% saying they had applied what they learnt, and 88% saying they had shared what they learnt. Learner comments indicated altered behaviour, thinking or work practices, both for learners working within media – *'necessary for all people involved in media'*; *'this will change both my work within the media as well as my everyday life'* – and those experiencing media as a consumer - *'I've totally become a more critical consumer of media as a result of this course'*; *'an incredible eye opener'*; *'a toolkit for analysing media representation'*. Learners described the wider impact that the MOOC had on their lives: one learner had *'learned so much, changed so many of my actions, had so many meaningful, opinion-shifting conversations and debates'*; one participant vowed *'to be more involved in feminist action in real life'*; another was now *'planning to start a local women centric feminist tabloid in my town'*. The MOOC had a particular impact on the Co-Director of a professional football club, who directly contacted Boyle to highlight how the content of the MOOC had benefitted the conversations held as part of their campaign for equality in women's football, stating *'your point about how hard it is to make sexism explicit in something which is entertainment/fun/close to people's hearts really landed with me... You've made some of my difficult conversations a bit more comprehensible'* [S1].

At the request of Girlguiding Scotland (45,000 members), materials from the MOOC were adapted and supplemented with new bespoke content by Boyle to form their Media Mindful activity pack, through which Guides can earn the Media Mindful badge [S2]. The Media Mindful campaign – launched in October 2020 – aims to empower girls to: 1) challenge gender stereotypes and negative portrayals of women and girls in the media; 2) equip them with the skills to be critical about what they are reading, watching and creating; and 3) take action to ensure media is more equal and fair. In response to the launch, a Scottish Parliament Motion was submitted commending the campaign and the Scottish Minister for Older People and Equalities said: *'The Scottish government is fully committed to creating a gender equal future and I'm proud to stand with Girlguiding Scotland and I commend them on this programme which will empower young women and girls to call for an end to sexism on our screens and on our pages'* [S2]. In the 3 months from launch to 31st December 2020, the Media Mindful website had 1225 hits and 303 girls and young women across Scotland gained the badge [S2].

Improving training and awareness of responsible reporting in media

Since 2017, Duncan has delivered training and talks on responsible reporting of suicide. A talk to the National Lottery Communications team on the model developed in R3 left participants considering *'changes in the format of our visual and written stories'* and keen to *'share this with*

my colleagues' [S1]. The benefits of training delivered to journalism students at the University of the West of Scotland and the University of Strathclyde was summarised by one student as *'very helpful to see the consequences of stigma-driven language and make a choice, both as a journalist and someone who consumes media, about the information I'd want to be portrayed respectfully'* [S1]. Research into journalism students' perspectives of suicide [R4] was converted by Duncan and Luce to a toolkit for journalists, journalism students and journalism educators around better media reporting of suicide. Freely available online, the toolkit can be used as a self-learning and teaching device. Launched in August 2020, the toolkit was accessed over 4500 times by 31st December 2020, with a large proportion of users coming from UK, USA and Australia [S1]. It was also sent directly to journalism organisations and suicide prevention charities worldwide including the National Union of Journalists (35,000 members), BBC Academy (2,000 BBC journalists), Society of Professional Journalists (7,500 members), Samaritans (UK and Ireland) and the International Association for Suicide Prevention (professionals/volunteers in 50 countries). In September 2020, the toolkit was added to the list of external resources for journalists promoted by the Independent Press Standards Organisation, the largest independent regulator of the newspaper and magazine industry in the UK [S3]. Director and CEO of the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN), a UK charity and global coalition of more than 70 groups of journalists, editors, press owners and media support groups, committed to embedding the toolkit in reporting practices that EJN promote around the world [S4]. Summarising the benefits of Duncan's research for journalists, the Director stated:

'Your toolkit, with its realistic, readily accessible advice, offers a pragmatic forum for journalists to ethically audit the stories they write about these sensitive topics... your work with Dr Luce has not only moved the dial in terms of tackling some of the stigma in conversations around suicide and mental health, but offers a practical clear set of guidelines for journalists and those at all levels of our industry.' [S4]

Duncan has also been contacted by the American Association of Suicidology, the US's leading non-profit membership association dedicated to the promotion of understanding and prevention of suicide, following the release of the toolkit. The Director of Public Relations and Media noted how the toolkit encouraged journalists to *'think about responsible suicide reporting routinely as they produce their news content, thus embedding the key principles of suicide prevention in their reporting'* [S5]. As a result of this benefit, the Association *'have disseminated it to our members in the suicide prevention arena... We also willingly informed journalists at news organizations we work with on a regular basis about the benefits of the toolkit, including the Washington Post, USA Today, and multiple online outlets'* [S5].

Boyle was invited to contribute to Zero Tolerance's Media guidelines on Violence Against Women, published in 2019. These guidelines include a language guide, to avoid the tensions and misinterpretations highlighted in Boyle's research [R5], and advice on interviewing victims/survivors respectfully. Since publication on Zero Tolerance's website, the guidelines have been downloaded 4884 times [S6]. Building on her work on the Weinstein case [R6] Boyle also developed guidelines with Rape Crisis Scotland on reporting sexual assault trials responsibly [S7]. Ahead of Alex Salmond's high-profile sexual assault trial, the guidelines were shared with all Rape Crisis Scotland's organisational media contacts and all 17 Scottish Rape Crisis Centres, who were encouraged to circulate the guidelines amongst their networks [S7]. As a result, Rape Crisis Scotland has held *'ongoing conversations with key Scottish news agencies, freelance journalists and documentary makers about responsible reporting... and [have] seen a number of news organisations link to Rape Crisis campaigns and headlines in their reporting, something that the guidelines advocate which has not been usual practice in Scottish media'* [S7]. Rape Crisis Scotland were also contacted by journalists to express their appreciation for the guidance and have used the guidelines as a tool to begin broader conversations about representations of sexual violence. After the Salmond verdict, Boyle participated in a podcast for Engender with Rape Crisis Scotland and journalist Dani Garavelli, which was made available on Spotify and the Engender webpage [S7], and contributed research insights to a subsequent podcast on reporting of domestic abuse during the COVID-19 pandemic [S8]. Boyle was also invited to speak at the Rape Crisis England & Wales annual conference in December 2020, which had over 700 attendees [S1]. Boyle's talk on reporting of sexual violence and sexual assault trials was described as *'important,*

practically useful and insightful, with 82% of respondents to the feedback survey noting the webinar was *'very useful'* [S1].

Influencing policy through Government Advisory Groups

In 2019, Eckler organised a public event with Mental Health Foundation Scotland giving a voice to young people and focusing on solutions for a healthy social media [S9]. The event, hosted at the University of Strathclyde and attended by 48 participants from 15 organisations, brought together people from various professional and personal backgrounds to develop specific ideas and suggestions for maintaining a healthy social media presence for young people. As a result of her ongoing collaboration with Mental Health Foundation Scotland and her expertise, Eckler was invited to join the Scottish Government's Healthy Body Image for Children and Young People Advisory Group [S9]. From August 2019 to February 2020, the Group undertook a review across Scotland to understand more about body image and how it can affect children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. The Group reported to Scottish Government in March 2020 in the form of recommendations and advice, drawing upon Eckler's research and referencing the follow-up report from the 2019 event at Strathclyde [S10a]. In response, the Scottish Government committed to *'take action to address the impact of social media and body image on young women'* in the 2020/21 Programme for Government [S10b]. The Associate Director for Mental Health Foundation Scotland noted that the collaboration with Eckler had *'raised the profile of this area of work and led to new research developments and significant policy influencing'* [S9].

In 2018, the First Minister's National Advisory Council on Women and Girls (NACWG) published a report and recommendations for the Scottish Government on tackling gender inequality in Scotland. This included the recommendation to *'Create a resourced media body in Scotland to hold the media to account and provide guidance on gender equality'*. In 2019, Scottish Government accepted this recommendation and outlined their proposal to work alongside GEMS to do so; the Government have funded a one-year Development Worker post, based at Engender, to take this work forward [S8]. The wider work of GEMS is also spotlighted on the NACWG website [S8]. Boyle was invited as a subject expert to the NACWG Accountability Days in 2019 and 2020, where she provided insight and constructive challenge on the ongoing implementation of these recommendations [S8]. A further recommendation by NACWG to develop a 'What works' Institute for changing public attitudes to girls' and women's rights saw Zero Tolerance asked to take forward its development. Zero Tolerance invited Boyle as one of four academics from across the UK to participate on the Research Advisory Group for the project [S6]. Between June and September 2020, the Group advised on how the organisation might operate, and the final report was submitted to Scottish Government in November 2020, providing *'a vital foundation from which an organisation to tackle social attitudes around gender equality can develop'* [S6].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- S1** Collated feedback from training, MOOCs and talks, and page views for www.healthysocialmedia.org and the Responsible Suicide Reporting toolkit.
- S2** Corroborating statement from PR & Policy Officer, Girlguiding Scotland (26/11/2020).
- S3** Independent Press Standards Organisation. Resources for journalists. <https://bit.ly/2N9AVou>
- S4** Corroborating statement from Director & CEO of the Ethical Journalism Network (30/11/2020).
- S5** Corroborating statement from Director of Public Relations & Media, American Association of Suicidology (09/11/2020).
- S6** Corroborating statement from Co-Director, Zero Tolerance (30/11/2020).
- S7** Corroborating statement from Press & Campaigns Officer, Rape Crisis Scotland (27/11/2020).
- S8** Corroborating statement from Communications & Engagement Manager, Engender (30/11/2020).
- S9** Corroborating statement from Associate Director, Mental Health Foundation (20/11/2020).
- S10** Collated sources relating to the Scottish Government's Healthy Body Image for Children and Young People Advisory Group
 - a. Recommendation report from the Scottish Government's Body Image Advisory Group on Good Body Image, March 2020. <https://bit.ly/39ESLJ3>
 - b. Scottish Government. *Protecting Scotland, Renewing Scotland: The Government's Programme for Scotland 2020-2021*. 1st September 2020. <https://bit.ly/3r9YBrv>