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Policy, Practice and Scholarship in Higher Education

New Vistas | Policy, Practice and Scholarship in Higher Education

Editor's Note

Volume 9 | Issue 1

We warmly welcome our readers to *New Vistas'* 2023 summer issue. A lot has happened behind the scenes at the journal, and we would like to take the opportunity to share some of these exciting developments. Starting from humble beginnings, *New Vistas* is now indexed in several international abstract and citation databases, including the *Directory of Open Access Journals* (DOAJ). Our articles are thus now reaching an even wider national and international audience, amplifying the potential for our published research to have a real-world impact. As we celebrate the journal's ninth birthday, *New Vistas* remains committed to providing a forum for research, commentary, and scholarly work that engages with the complex agenda of higher education in its local, national and global context. At the heart of the journal lies the recognition of the crucial role that higher education plays in shaping society, as well as the importance of educational and discipline-focused research in driving innovation and progress. We believe that the articles in this current issue continue to build on this tradition, and we are excited to share them with you.

The first set of articles explores current issues within the UK's higher education sector, starting with **Maya Flax**, who draws on her own experiences as an educator in Criminology, in order to identify classroom strategies that could enhance teaching excellence and student success. Her insightful work explores how to overcome the challenges of theory-focused learning content, and how to build rapport with the students, thus creating a space for building personal connections. **Viktoria Magne**, **Rebecca Mace** and **Sharon Vince's** article focuses on improving students' feedback literacy, proposing a reflective dialogue with academic staff in a structured environment that can increase student engagement with feedback. Looking at Educational Technology as a means to extend, enhance and explore the accessibility of learning content and helps in enhancing student experience, **Alison Hawkings'** article proposes podcasting as a promising complimentary method for educators to flip the classroom and support student participation. Building on Hawkings' submission, **Dennis Olsen** interviews Professor Jeremy Strong to discuss and trace the development of Strong's own podcast series *The Joy of Guests*.

The final two articles showcase the strength of disciplinary research at the University of West London, with **Zsofia Nagy** and **Caroline Lafarge** reporting on the results of their cross-sectional study into factors predicting birth satisfaction in Hungary, and providing some important insight into this under-researched topic. Finally, **Martyna Lipińska** and **Rosemary Stock** shine a spotlight on the influence of Hollywood fiction on viewer attitudes towards transgender people, revealing the importance of more thoughtful transgender storylines and portrayals in films and TV series.

We hope that this issue of *New Vistas* will continue to inspire, challenge, and inform colleagues and readers around the UK and beyond. We thank all of our contributors for their insightful articles and are looking forward to receiving new and innovative research in due course for our next issue.

Dr Dennis Olsen and **Dr Dinusha Weerawardane**
New Vistas Editors

New Vistas | Policy, Practice and Scholarship in Higher Education

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Maya Flax | University of West London, UK

Strategies for Enhancing Teaching Excellence: Providing Real-World Examples and Building Rapport

Abstract:

Given the changing demographics of the student body on university campuses, there has been a shift in pedagogical approach in Higher Education. Drawing on the author's own experiences, two strategies of good practice are proposed in order to ensure student success. The first is to draw on examples in explaining theoretical concepts. The second is the importance of building rapport with the students, and creating a space for building personal connections. Attempting to provide teaching excellence will go some way towards mediating the hurdles students face along the way to completing their degree.

There has been an immense shift in pedagogical approaches in Higher Education over the last few decades, with a much greater focus on teaching excellence, particularly in recent years (Bartram *et al.*, 2018). Evidenced-based strategies to achieve teaching excellence have been utilised, and have greatly benefited some lecturers and their respective students (Bartram *et al.*, 2018). However, students' ratings in Module Evaluations Surveys can also be used as a primary gauge for evaluating the quality of teaching. This feedback helps guide changes and serves to inform all academics aspiring to achieve higher student ratings. This article will suggest two other strategies which can be implemented in order to achieve teaching excellence and thereby strengthen student engagement.

Old-style teaching is for the most part no longer relevant and applicable in today's classroom. Several decades ago, many lectures would be mechanical and sterile, read directly from teaching notes, in the most monotonous of voices, devoid of any PowerPoint slides, videos, visual links or auditory tools (Ayers, 2001). The lecturer would keep the students at arm's length, ensuring that there is a sense of authority and adopt a divisive tone between the lecturer and the students, reinforcing the hierarchical system. Compare and contrast this with the pedagogic approach in Higher Education today, whereby almost all the senses are activated and all types of wisdom are instigated in order to enhance engagement. Many lecturers use various strategies for engagement, from sharing a clear narrative, to being humorous, to calling students by their first names, to using all available technological tools (Frisby & Munoz, 2021). Many lecturers become 'energy creators' (Brighouse & Woods, 1999, p.84) who through their sparkling manner, enthusiasm and commitment, deliver a positive experience or students. However, teaching excellence has not been achieved by all academics, and whilst various evidenced-based strategies for improvement have been suggested, these have not always been implemented.

The learning experience cannot remain static if the demographic of students has evolved. The model once adopted has now become archaic and cannot merely be rehashed. It is no longer functional for our respective audience

The importance of shifting our teaching approach is multidimensional. It lies in the eroding capacity of students to focus, linked to the rise in endless media outlets (Hari, 2022). It lies in the evolving society with its rapid technological developments which the classroom needs to keep in sync (Hari, 2022). Or perhaps it lies with the evolving make-up of the student body, moving away from the typical white student from a wealthy socio-economic background to the broader spectrum of students embodied in the demographics of many University campuses.

The most recent UWL Annual Report on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (UWL, 2021) reflected that nearly half of our students are below the income threshold, with 49 % coming from the most deprived areas, and its multicultural diversity is pronounced (57 % of students are from BAME backgrounds, 6 % from a mixed background, 5 % from other ethnic backgrounds). The learning experience cannot remain static if the demographic of students has evolved. The model once adopted has now become archaic and cannot merely be rehashed. It is no longer functional for our respective audience. This atypical student body therefore necessitates a different and innovative approach to teaching which can encompass diversity. It becomes paramount to be able to gauge our students, their background, their economic circumstances and to be fully cognisant that for most, completing a first degree is a privilege unbeknown to other members of their family. It creates a real sense of pride as well as ongoing

challenges, entailing simultaneously juggling work as well as familial responsibilities, together with ever burgeoning and enticing social media platforms.

As lecturers, we need to ask ourselves what strategies we can put in place to ensure our students' success. Drawing on our own personal experiences and previous literature (Su & Wood, 2012; Ayers, 2012, Choubey, 2011; Frisby *et al.*, 2015), this article shares two practical suggestions for good practice. Good practice in this context is defined as providing a platform for learning excellence, whereas *The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education* defines good practice as that which makes a positive contribution, adding value to the provision of a student's learning experience which is worthy of wider dissemination. In sharing good practice, the first suggestion, aligned to Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development (1978), is the importance of drawing on examples to explain rather abstract theoretical concepts (Ayers, 2001). Providing examples is a tool for simplifying complex notions. Students consider that a good lecturer has the ability to relate the academic theories to real-world examples (Su & Wood, 2012). The lecture should contain content supplemented with 'real world examples, illustrations and applications' and examples should furthermore be 'multicultural and non-gender specific' (Ayers, 2012, p.96). Examples need to be 'easy to understand and should not include advanced concepts' (Choubey, 2011, p.205). A few generations ago, students were assumed to understand these abstract theoretical concepts, or

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otherwise they would have to take ownership over grasping the material. Today, the importance of clarifying the content by providing numerous examples cannot be emphasised enough.

Students who feel secure in having understood the material start to trust the teaching process. It builds their confidence about the material and gives them a sense of belonging. This in turn contributes to the student's overall wellbeing, levels of engagement and ultimately their success (Gopalan & Brady, 2020). Given the increase in mental health issues since the Covid-19 pandemic (Gogoi *et al.*, 2022), more care needs to be taken in ensuring that students feel connected at the most fundamental level. This can be achieved through presenting a clear narrative and ensuring that students fully capture the depth and breadth of the lecture.

As a Criminology lecturer who delivers the module Explaining Criminal Behaviour, a new theory is covered on a weekly basis. This could so easily become a monotonous and dull module. However, by illustrating and drawing on real world examples to deliver the narrative, students fully succeed in understanding the material and learning in considerable depth. By way of example, Ceasre Becarria (1738-1794), who was very concerned with the way punishments were being applied in 18th century France, protested against the Criminal Justice policies which were in place, and developed three key concepts of punishment: punishment needs to be certain, swift and proportionate to the harm caused (Paolucci, 1764/1963). In relaying these

three concepts of punishment to the students, a lecturer could coldly verbalise what these three concepts entail and expect students merely to retain the information.

However, by drawing upon examples, the dynamics in the lecture shifts and it becomes a shared experience between students and lecturer. Therefore, the lecturer could describe these three concepts of punishment by drawing on examples. The lecturer could describe an incident in a shop where a four-year-old child stole a sweet under the eyes of the mother. On entering the car, the child said to the mother that she had received the sweet from the shopkeeper. Knowing that there was no possibility of this occurring (as the child was beside the mother throughout), the mother decided, in no uncertain terms, to teach the child that punishment is both certain and swift (the first two dimensions of punishment developed by Beccaria). The mother said to the child that instead of going home for supper, they will go back inside the shop and return the sweet to the manager who was sitting in the back office. The child resisted and the mother had to act assertively in taking the child into the manager's office. Upon entering the manager's office, the child faced the humiliation of admitting that she had stolen the sweet. At this point, the child learnt that punishment was both certain (there was no wavering as to whether they would drive off or face punishment) as well as swift (within minutes, the entire episode was over).

The third principle of punishment, namely proportionality, could be relayed using the case of Michael Faye in Singapore (Ministry of Home Affairs, 1994). Faye was severely punished for causing some criminal damage in Singapore, a minor offence which would have led to a conditional discharge or a small fine if committed in the UK. In Singapore however, Faye was sentenced to four months imprisonment and six lashes of the cane before receiving immediate deportation back to the United States. The lashes of the cane have been described as barbaric and inhuman by critiques of punishment in Singapore (Stone, 1994). The cane is a bamboo stick and the accused is whipped across his lower back until he becomes unconscious. A doctor is present in the room to revive the accused so that he can be fully alert in receiving the final lashes. The case had spread widely in the media and the then American president, President Bill Clinton, pleaded for clemency from the Singapore prime minister Mr. Lee Kuan Yew to waive the punishment of lashes. It was agreed that instead of receiving the six lashes, Michael Faye would be subjected to only four lashes. Singapore is known to be one of the most punitive countries, whereby its laws are unquestionably enforced (Silverstein, 2008). Its laws are described as non-proportionate, with the punishment not fitting the crime. Drawing on this example in explaining the concept of proportionality, or lack thereof, simplified the entire concept for the students. These two examples allowed students to preserve the three concepts of punishment as

their framework and contextualisation of their educational experience. By making practical sense of the concept of punishment using these examples, the content is no longer abstract.

Clarity in sharing the content of the presentation by drawing upon examples, is the first step to promoting positive student outcomes in the lectures. The second practical suggestion in promoting success among our students is building rapport with them (Frisby *et al.*, 2015; Frisby and Martin, 2008). Developing meaningful connections is an essential human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Falherty (2021) highlights that students are becoming increasingly more dependent on building social connections with members of staff. It is therefore paramount to bear in mind this level of dependence by the student, and to reflect on ways in which we can best serve the needs of our students. Rapport has been defined by Frisby and Martin (2010, p.47) as 'an overall feeling between two people encompassing a mutual, trusting and pro-social bond'.

According to Frisby and Myers (2008), rapport entails both enjoyable interactions (feeling positive and liked) as well as personal connection (sensing a strong bond or affiliation). Research has shown that students who have a sense of rapport with their lecturers are much more likely to engage in class, be motivated and approach the learning experience more positively (Frisby *et al.*, 2015; Frisby & Martin, 2008). Anxiety levels are also observed to diminish when participation in class increases (Sidelinger *et al.*, 2016).

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Demonstrating interest in our students, making a conscious effort to remember and call them by their first names, despite it being a large cohort of students, remembering something which they shared in lectures and building upon that in the following weeks, provides them with a sense of acknowledgement and makes the learning experience much more personable. This approach communicates to the students that they are 'endorsed, recognised and acknowledged as valuable, significant individuals' (Ellis, 2000, p.266) which in turn enhances rapport. It encourages openness, approachability and allows for connection in a palatable manner.

Being part of the learning journey for our students can be tremendously rewarding for both lecturer and student. For most of our students, completing a degree is not easy, a process filled with various challenges along the way. By adopting the two strategies suggested, teaching excellence can be enhanced. Using real world examples promotes greater student understanding, with theoretical concepts no longer being perceived as being abstract, and building greater rapport with students will enhance their engagement. Implementing these strategies will go some way in overcoming the hurdles students face in the process of completing their degree. By committing to teaching excellence, rather than being mechanical and sterile, we infuse the classroom with purpose. In understanding the teaching environment, lecturers can invite students to actively share with them the pursuit of knowledge.

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Key words

Teaching excellence, teaching strategies, example-oriented, building rapport.

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Using reflection to increase student engagement with feedback

Abstract:

There is a plethora of research on effective forms of feedback in higher education, yet student engagement with feedback remains low. This could be explained partly by the low levels of feedback literacy among students. The purpose of the project is therefore to engage students in critical reflection through dialogue with academic staff in a structured environment, thereby increasing feedback literacy and student engagement with feedback.

In educational contexts, formal and informal reflective practices aim to help students question their deeply held beliefs about reality, in order to assess their professional values and their impact on practice. The purpose of engaging in reflective practice is to become a reflective practitioner who initiates positive change in the context of study or work

The provision of feedback is widely practiced in higher education, although student engagement with it remains an issue (Boud & Malloy, 2013). We define student engagement with feedback in terms of feedback literacy, which has recently received considerable attention in academic literature, starting with the seminal work of Sutton (2012, p.33), who conceptualised feedback literacy in three dimensions:

"An epistemological dimension, i.e. an engagement of learners in knowing (acquiring academic knowledge); an ontological dimension, i.e. an engagement of the self of the learner (investment of identity in academic work) a practical dimension, i.e. an engagement of learners in acting (reading, thinking about, and feeding forward feedback)."

The present paper focuses on the third dimension of feedback literacy, as students often find reading and interpreting feedback problematic (Steen-Utheim & Hopfenbeck, 2018). Rather than working from a perspective of student deficit, or one that is rooted in a cultural discourse of individualism, in which students are given uni-directional feedback from teacher to student, we chose to draw on the work of Bakhtin (1981) and develop a dialogical approach, working together with students to develop a critical-dialogic model of education that centers on communication processes as a path to feedback literacy. Dialogic education has become increasingly appealing due to the clear value of dialogue for the development of student thinking. Yet, despite its recognised role in the development of student knowledge and understanding, dialogic education is not observed in many classrooms (Haneda, 2017), nor utilised as a method of feedback. This is often due to time constraints, staff workload, or the practicalities of course delivery, and sometimes it is because less value is attached to talk than to writing. Studies often do not show what dialogic education looks like in practical terms, or they focus on the impact of feedback from a teacher perspective, on how or why they provide feedback, as opposed to the notion of developing feedback literacy within students. However, feedback literacy does not happen through passive reading of feedback provided, but instead, feedback engagement requires active critical participation on behalf of the students (Nicol, 2010). We posit that such a construction of information is possible through reflective practice and dialogic exchange between teacher and student.

Reflective practice is closely related to the idea of learning from experience and is rooted in the works of Dewey and Schön. In educational contexts, formal and informal reflective practices aim to help students question their deeply held beliefs about reality, in order to assess their professional values and their impact on practice. The purpose of engaging in reflective practice is to become a reflective practitioner who initiates positive change in the context of study or work. To that end, we engaged students in a structured reflective exercise, based upon Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle and informed by collaborative and dialogic models of education. Working from a feminist position, seeking to break down any potential asymmetrical power relationship between teachers and students, we specifically focused on the student's role as an active participant in the teaching and learning process. We were guided by the following research question in our inquiry:

How does a structured reflective exercise informed by collaborative and dialogic models of education enhance student engagement with feedback in higher education?

The reflective task

This section will firstly outline the structured reflective exercise, which consists of Part 1: Participating in a reflective conversation using Kolb's experiential learning cycle, and Part 2: Continuing the discussion in class and applying what was learned via reflection. The analysis of reflections will then be conducted utilising reflexive thematic analysis.

The reflective conversation began by inviting level 3 students to participate in a structured reflective exercise that consisted of two parts. In Part 1, students were asked to engage in reflective discussion with a lecturer, following Kolb's (1984) four-stage model of experiential learning, which is itself rooted in the works of John Dewey. The four stages are: a concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. Even though the learning cycle could be entered at any point, students started at the first stage by accessing and reading their feedback carefully in-class, thus focusing on a specific experience. At the second stage of the cycle, the students were asked to reflect on how the feedback made them feel and if it triggered an emotional response. To facilitate the engagement with the abstract conceptualisation stage of the cycle, the students were given a blank action plan with prompts adapted from Cottrell (2013), that included assignment strengths, areas to improve and current priorities as a way of facilitating better conversations in Part 2. Part 2 consisted of a follow-up in class discussion that concluded the reflective task through asking students about their experience with active experimentation, that is, applying the knowledge gained from the reflective process to further assessments. The reflections were analysed using Braun & Clarke's (2019) reflexive thematic analysis.

Results and discussion

This section reports the results obtained from the reflective exercise conducted with level 3 undergraduate students. Students began by exploring a shared concrete experience – reaction to written feedback on a formative assessment task. Students responded to the question 'What has happened?' with comments such as "I need to expand", "Pointless sentences" and "I've been told I need to work on linking." While all the comments from students focused on what they needed to improve upon to achieve a higher mark, thus suggesting that the feedback had achieved its aim of supporting the development of academic skills, the final comment reveals the power relations embedded in the feedback process. Upon receiving feedback, students adopted a passive position as subjects to whom feedback had been "done", rather than as active participants in the process.

During the next phase of the cycle, a student observed "I'd be lost without feedback", whilst another commented "I read 'This is a pointless sentence' but then oh yes, I am repeating myself". One student stated "I feel so bad, but then after I read it, I leave it a day, and it makes sense". Emotional responses to feedback can inhibit the ability to process the information and learn from it (Carless, 2006), so that teaching students to recognise the role of feelings in the cycle and, crucially, how to progress, is salient to feedback literacy.

The next question students were requested to answer was 'What can I do to improve?', aligned with the abstract conceptualisation stage of the cycle. Having detailed their emotional responses to the feedback, students were able to discuss specific strategies for enhancing their learning in the future. These responses included:

"Any time I'm writing, I have a dictionary with me."
"I can think beyond this assignment or this module. When I got my feedback on linking I thought, oh, I should go back to that assignment and work on that as well"

Advancing through the phases of Kolb's cycle, students appeared more autonomous and empowered, discussing their own actions and their centrality to the feedback process. Furthermore, there was recognition of the value of a learning community and the social practices of learning, with students considering how to involve others such as peers and the Study Support team within their learning, as demonstrated by the following comments:

"Next semester, I will go to academic writing support."
"I give parts of my work to a peer to read."

The use of the cycle alongside dialogic feedback appeared to provide students with a tool for contemplating their own power and position within the process, and also to consider the importance of involving others. In line with Hooks (1994), paying close attention to teacher-student power dynamics, who in turn drew on Friere's critical pedagogy, we also aimed to position the students as active participants, and co-creators of knowledge, as opposed to a system of education in which they would perceive themselves as passive recipients into whom knowledge is deposited. They were encouraged to re-consider their role in the community of learning that constitutes the University.

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Key words

Feedback literacy, reflection, higher education, student engagement

Finally, students were asked to reflect on using the learning cycle to respond to feedback. Commenting on the usefulness of the structure, one asserted "It gives a clear path to learning". Another stated "If you're being emotional about feedback, you can't learn from it", suggesting that recognising the emotional response to feedback enabled them to 'manage affect' (Carless & Boud, 2018).

Findings and Implications

Infused with a feminist ethic and grounding our work in critical -dialogic pedagogical theory, we have presented field notes that approach teaching and learning aimed at engaging students in classroom dialogues permeated with equality, collectivity, reciprocity and accountability. We have weaved both collaborative and dialogical theory and practice into the fabric of our work on feedback literacy and found that students responded in an overwhelmingly positive manner to collaborative dialogical feedback practice in the classroom.

Lecturers may also find that student responses trigger reflections on their own teaching and feedback practices. In the activity outlined above, almost all students identified academic writing skills as the main area for them to develop, rather than other strands of the assessment such as analysis or criticality. Many students discussed "secretarial" aspects of writing, such as spelling and grammar, as an area to be improved, with a minority stating that academic aspects, or the way in which ideas were conveyed to the reader, needed development. This in turn provoked a reaction in

the authors, who began to question; is the feedback I provide centred solely around academic writing skills? How can I improve feedback to support the progression of critical thinking in students? The model therefore supports a feminist approach to education in which the entire learning community engages in the feedback, and not only the student.

Conclusion

This research has several implications for enhancing student engagement with feedback in higher education, as well as future directions for research, and potential applications of the reflective and dialogic approach.

We argue that the use of dialogic feedback presents feedback as a two-way process which promotes students as active and autonomous learners in the process, rather than as passive recipients. Utilising Kolb's (1984) cycle alongside dialogic feedback allows students to approach the process within a structured framework, and reflect on the emotional response, which could otherwise inhibit feedback literacy. The process outlined may also support students in feeling connected to a learning community in which they can depend upon peers and wider university services to support them. Furthermore, the cycle can be employed by educators to consider their own role in the feedback process, furthering the collaborative aspect of the process.

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Lend me your ears!

A step-by-step guide to podcasting as a teaching and learning intervention in Higher Education

Abstract:

The post-Covid landscape has provided educators with new opportunities to engage with technologies and innovations in order to extend, enhance and explore the accessibility of course content to meet student needs and preferences. Podcasting is a thriving innovation worldwide as a recreational activity, but is also extending its reach into industry sectors, including Higher Education teaching and learning. This article proposes podcasting as an additional and complimentary method for educators to flip a classroom and support student access.

P odcasts present the UK with one of the main growth trends in the media sector in 2023, according to a new report from market research and analytics firm YouGov (2022). This is confirmed by insight from similar agencies, such as Ofcom (2022), Statista (2022), and Edison Research (2021), who all see the popularity of podcasts as far from having peaked.

What has podcasting got to do with teaching and learning in Higher Education? It is about engagement, supporting self-directed investigation, creating long shelf-life content, and reflecting the needs and wants of our audience – the learner (Drew, 2017). According to YouGov's Global Media Outlook Report 2022, people aged between 18 and 24 years are expected to further increase their consumption of digital media in 2023. Nearly half of young people who have maintained their level

According to Edison Research's Infinite Dial 2021 Report four out of ten people in the UK listen to a podcast once a month, 25 % listen to one weekly, and 70 % are familiar with the format. The report also found that 59 % of listeners are aged 16 years and over

Image courtesy: Alison Hawkings ©

of streaming audio(-visual) content and interaction with social media in 2022, stated that they are likely to increase their online activities even more in 2023 (YouGov, 2022). Over the past decade, podcasts have become one of the most popular forms of (audio) entertainment in the UK. According to Edison Research's Infinite Dial 2021 Report (2021), which included an analysis of the UK's consumption for the first time, four out of ten people in the UK listen to a podcast once a month, 25 % listen to one weekly, and 70 % are familiar with the format. The report also found that 59 % of listeners are aged 16 years and over. Using a podcast as a teaching tool, either in conveying or engaging students with learning content, or as a method in other relevant projects (research, industry or creative work) is worth considering in a 21st century HE teaching environment (Turner, 2015). For many, this can almost be seen as a way of enhancing and/or extending the flipped classroom (AdvanceHE, 2017) – a pedagogical approach with which most educators in Higher Education will probably be familiar.

Using audio recording practices within the context of Higher Education is certainly nothing new (Berry, 2016; Bonini, 2015). Since the pandemic, who hasn't added an audio to their lecture slides at some point? At most universities, it has become part of good practice to record in-person lectures and make these available via the institution's virtual learning environment (VLE), thus increasing the accessibility of learning content and accommodating students' various styles of learning (Marchisio *et al.*, 2022.)

While lecture recordings might lend themselves to the distribution of some forms of learning content, they are certainly not the only audio recording practice at our disposal, and might even not be the ideal solution for practice-based teaching and learning scenarios that occur in many courses across the country. A question that every good educator ought to ask themselves when planning and designing interventions is: how can we really engage, excite and support our students? One way is to give students a unique experience which is different from face-to-face delivery, but still supports self-directed participation (Kaplan, Verma & Sargsyan, 2020).

In his article *Podcasting: Considering the evolution of the medium and its association with Radio*, Berry (2016) suggests that content published in podcast format is distinctly different from radio. Therefore, as a podcast is not broadcast across airwaves but transferred as a digital media file, it is free from many formal broadcast regulations, such as Ofcom's Broadcasting Code in the UK. This gives podcasters freedom to format, to choose content, and to talk to audiences in their own way. For the listener this can be the main attraction of a podcast – the informality of construction combined with self-direction. Listeners can schedule their interaction in their own time and control its delivery i.e., play, rewind, fast forward (McClung & Johnson, 2010). This underpins one of our main goals as educators: to encourage and develop confident self-directed learners. Podcasts can become part of an educators' arsenal of content for asynchronous learning, thus playing a part in promoting investigation (Madson & Potts, 2015), providing students with a concentrated burst of reinforcing content and aiding in the consolidation of knowledge. Indeed, Adbous, Facer and Yen (2017) believe podcasts to be a dynamic way to extend course materials and student experiences, a statement with which I agree entirely. In my experience, podcasting is not a replacement for in-class teaching, but a means to provide content that allows students to further reflect and engage with the topic at hand, as part of asynchronous learning activities. It spaces out the learning process, blends the formal with the informal and empowers students.

Image courtesy: Alison Hawkings ©

So, what steps should you take to get your podcast started?
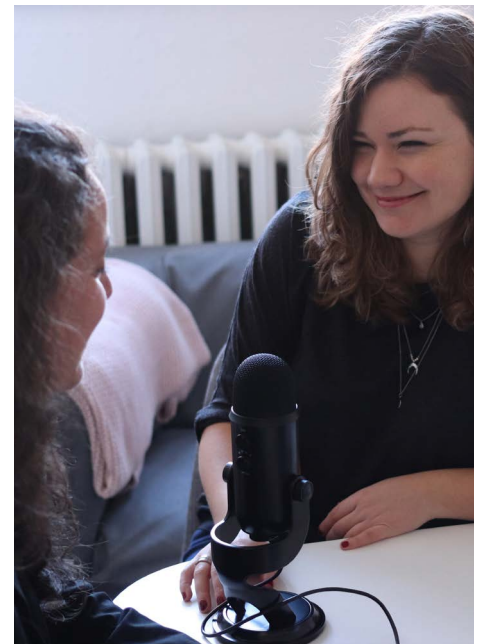
Why a podcast and why this topic?

It is easy to give in to puffery, so ask yourself what would best support your subject area/course/ department? Do you need to share information; is it a teaching and learning intervention to extend the flipped classroom; is it to boost student engagement? Your choice of topic and angle should be driven by a genuine need. This might be some niche in your specific field; it could be about employability in your sector; or it could be about sector ethical practice, for example.

Check out the podcast landscape before you set your mind on a specific topic (use the search function on any popular podcast app and run some keyword searches matching your topic/angle). While it is natural wanting to experiment at the beginning to see whether something is a good fit for you and your students, it is advisable that the topic/angle that you choose not be too narrow, as building momentum and engaging audiences usually takes more than one episode. Based on my personal teaching experience, I would recommend a topic/angle to be one you can see delivering for at least three episodes and that potentially keeps you going for the long run, perhaps across modules.

Pick your podcast name

The name of your podcast will be what your audience sees first, even before they listen. If you have a recognisable brand, you may want to add 'podcast' or 'show' to the brand name. Or you could pick a name that resonates with your sector. For example if you teach Law, *The bench*, or *de jure* may be appropriate; in hospitality, names such as *Menu Masters*, *a la carte*, or *Covers* may resonate; in Performing Arts: *Turntables*, or *Ad-Lib*; finally, in bio sciences and clinical pathways monikers such as *mid-wif*, or *Forensis* could work. Here, the title itself grounds the content in its discipline. This can also help with Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) — which might not help your podcast reach your own students, but in particular, if your longer-term aim is to build reputation or disseminate your project/research findings beyond your own class, SEO is crucial for reaching larger audiences. Lastly, you could opt for a name that may or may not have an industry connection. These can be successful, but may be harder in the education sphere. For example: *Law Stuff*, *Techno*, or *The Surgery*.

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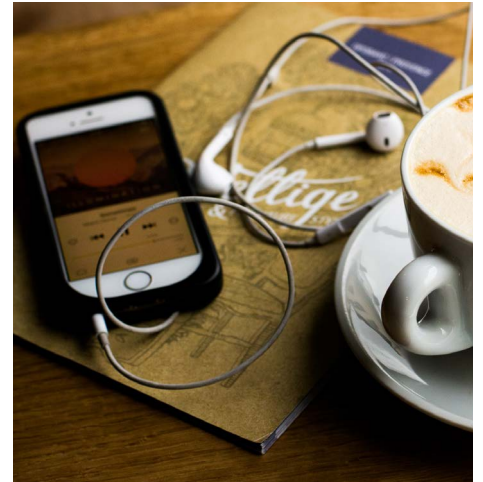
Image courtesy: Alison Hawkings ©

In terms of podcast length, both short and long form can work. The most popular podcasts are between 20 to 40 minutes. For a concentrated burst you can even split a long podcast into two or three 10-minute segments or less – this can help with consumption

The Podcast Description

You need to tell your audience what your podcast is about, often in a single, short paragraph. In the context of Higher Education, this paragraph should follow the clear structure of a Learning Outcome. Make it clear what listening to the podcast will enable your students to do. Make sure this description engages immediately. Write for the person who you want to listen. Know who they are; what they want to know; and why they should stick around. The first line should start with something which matters to them.

The format, length and publishing

What style of show are you going for: interview-based with guests or solo – a single voice? There is no right answer. But for the podcast novice, an interview-based approach can help you get started. You can pull in one or two contributors (colleagues, experts from other departments, industry experts/employers), pooling information and entertaining stories in a single sitting. Solo shows can work too. Such shows can be good for a deep dive into a specific topic which may be complex and/or cannot be covered wholly in the same way in a seminar or lecture.

In terms of podcast length, both short and long form can work. The most popular podcasts are between 20 to 40 minutes. For a concentrated burst you can even split a long podcast into two or three 10-minute segments or less – this can help with consumption. For example, you can add chunks, or a whole podcast, to your VLE; share easily with colleagues; and augment distribution via social media, if your course, school or department wants to feature them.

Publishing a podcast in the context of Higher Education, first and foremost means publishing on your university's VLE as part of your course or module. This is the easiest way for you to embed each podcast in the specific learning content that relates to it, thus highlighting the connection and relevance to your students. In addition, many podcasting sites allow publishing for free if you wish to cast a wider net for your audience, such as Vimeo.com, Soundcloud.com, Podbean.com and Google podcasts. With universities increasingly embracing digital content, your university's website may also consider housing your podcast.

Equipment

The good news is, there is no specialist equipment required to get your first podcast off the ground. However, professional recording equipment can help in producing more polished output. Many universities that offer humanities and arts programmes will probably have recording facilities available for students and academics. At the University of West London, we have a fully equipped Radio Studio located at St Mary's Road, managed by the London School of Film, Media and Design. This is a professional audio environment where you can record a podcast, and which may be a good place to start your podcast journey.

Alternatively, you may want to invest in exploring podcasting yourself and invest in your own equipment. There are some great technical tutorials out there which are easy to follow and suitable for beginners wanting to know more about what equipment to use and how to use it:

LinkedIn Learning: Producing Professional Podcasts

Think Media: How to Create a Podcast for Beginners

Begin listening – suggested podcasts

If four out of ten people in the UK are already listening to podcasts, combined with increasing levels of digital consumption by 18 to 24 year olds, then producing a podcast should be considered a legitimate pedagogical objective.

The following are three good examples of podcasts that are produced by academics and used as part of their teaching and learning. Check them out, get inspired and start your own podcasting journey to benefit your teaching and engage your students.

The History of Philosophy, Without any Gaps.
https://historyofphilosophy.net/all-episodes

Peter Adamson, Professor of Philosophy at King's College London and the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. This is a fascinating series of podcasts that takes you on a journey through the history of philosophy. The podcast looks at theories and ideas, as well as the lives and historical context of the major philosophers. Aveage episode length: 20 minutes.

The Naked Scientists
https://www.thenakedscientists.com/podcasts/naked-scientists-podcast

Dr Chris Smith is a medical consultant, specialising in clinical microbiology and virology at Cambridge University, who laid the foundations for The Naked Scientists back in 1999. There are other contributors and a wider audience outreach. The podcast series covers everything from the artificial pancreas, using magnetic bacteria to fight tumours, and what do we do with space junk. All is neatly packaged in bite-sized episodes, with an average episode length of 10 minutes.

Peace and Conflict: Understanding Our World
https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/queens-university-belfast-peace-and-conflict/id1524033671

Academics from Queen's University in Belfast share their experiences and reflections on conflict and peace-building around the world, from Afghanistan to Ireland, Colombia and South Africa to the Middle East. Average episode length: 30 minutes.

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Key words

Teaching and Learning, Podcasting, Educational technology, Higher Education, Flipped Classroom

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The Joy of Guests: a podcast journey

An interview with Jeremy Strong

the Joy of Guests

by Jeremy Strong

Image courtesy: Mark Owen ©

Abstract:

The podcast market continues to grow, with almost half of UK adults in their 20s and 30s now listening to podcasts at least once a week, and listenership in the UK predicted to grow from 9 million in 2017 to 28 million by 2026 (Statista 2022). Podcasts have developed an undeniable appeal to mass audiences, and as such have also found their way into Higher Education, where they are used to enrich and support learning and teaching (see, for example, Alison Hawkings' article in this issue of New Vistas) and/or offer academics new ways of disseminating their scholarly work and reaching broader audiences.

In light of the increasing popularity of this medium, Jeremy Strong discusses and traces the development of his podcast series *The Joy of Guests* with *New Vistas* senior editor Dennis Olsen.

DO: Thank you for taking the time to talk about your podcast series The *Joy of Guests*. Let's start at the beginning, what is the podcast about?

JS: Well, the summary we offer to listeners is this… "Once upon a time we could rely upon Mrs Beeton and her *Book of Household Management* or perhaps one of the many Victorian guides to etiquette, for advice on catering and the entertainment of guests. But, with the passage of time, and the absence of kitchen maids and butlers, a fresher perspective is needed. *The Joy of Guests* brings the manual on dining, drinks, and associated courtesy into the 21st Century. Or maybe the 20th, since discussion of smartphones, Tinder and selfie-sticks is pretty much absent. But, if you're the type of person who might enjoy a meal based on dishes from the James Bond novels, or need some strategies for dealing with fussy eaters, or you've ever wondered what the perfect mixed grill looks like, then you've come to the right place. Informative, mouth-watering, and quite possibly with its tongue in its cheek, *The Joy of Guests* is waiting for you."

DO: This seems quite different from your day-to-day work as a Professor of Literature and Film. How did you come to take an interest in this field?

JS: I have always had an interest in food, drink, and entertaining; not least as a consumer. Until *The Joy of Guests*, my writing on food was academic, essentially in the field of Cultural Studies. Back in 2006 I published a piece entitled 'The Modern Offal Eaters', looking at how certain foods have been relocated in what we think of as a spectrum of value, becoming signifiers of 'good' taste and, relatedly, social standing. This got a surprising amount of traction and ended up being cited a fair bit. Once, when I was on a plane, I was amazed to see it being quoted in a food article in the in-flight magazine! Since then, I have given a number of food-centred papers at conferences, done some book chapters and journal articles in this area, and published the book *Educated Tastes: Food, Drink, and Connoisseur Culture*.

DO: So, do you revisit some of the themes and topics from your academic writing in this more popular format?

JS: Absolutely, yes. Several of the podcasts take ideas and inspiration from the scholarly work. There's a menu based entirely on offal dishes (not for the squeamish!); Another which combines dishes from Ian Fleming's *James Bond* novels, the subject of my article 'James Bond: International Man of Gastronomy'; Foraging for wild food, crops up a couple of times and draws on work I did for a chapter on foraging in the *Routledge Handbook of Landscape and Food*; Ideas around food and ethics, which I addressed in the book chapter 'A Short Poetics of Cruel Food', also make an appearance several times. More generally, my interest in food
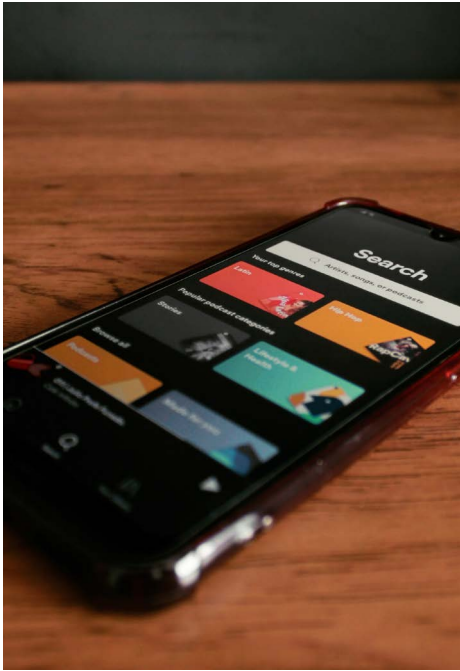
and drink and my background in literature and the screen intersect in lots of references to and discussion of dishes that appeared in books, movies and television.

DO: Why a podcast?
JS: The project started out as a book. I wanted to do something rather different to the type of writing I've done for most of my career, something more light-hearted. As part of my undergraduate teaching, I deliver a first year creative writing module, and working on that made me think more about writing in a comic vein. So I decided to write a different kind of book. Informed by some of my academic interests certainly, and to a degree fuelled by the fact that part of my teaching and research degree supervision was in creative writing. I wanted to write about food and cooking, but with a particular emphasis on the culture of dinner parties and entertaining at home. I wanted it to be tongue-in-cheek and funny, rather than prescriptive, though I also wanted the information it contained to be accurate and interesting. I liked the idea of a modern take on the guides of bygone eras, like Mrs Beeton, as well as upon the conventions of the weekend at a country house that one finds in P G Wodehouse.

DO: But what you ended up with was a podcast, rather than a book?
JS: Indeed. If my imagination had supplied a surfeit of eager literary agents and enthusiastic publishers clamouring for my manuscript in a frenzied bidding war, reality unfolded otherwise. It was, I discovered, not that easy to re-brand myself as a different kind of writer. I was, and remain, moderately well-acquainted with parts of the book trade. That is, I've written and had accepted several book proposals and manuscripts, I've been paid by publishers to evaluate innumerable proposals by other writers and prospective writers and to give feedback on draft

manuscripts, and I've worked with other authors on their projects. What I wasn't, was remotely connected to those branches of the trade that don't look first and foremost to university libraries and students for their sales. If anything, my background in academic publishing seemed to make me less, not more, of a prospect in terms of popular publishing. After hawking my wares about, without success, for some time the only offers I got involved a small print run and an absurdly high cover price, which is fairly regular in academic publishing, but the kiss of death for anything you'd like to be widely read.

DO: So now we get to the podcast?
JS: We're nearly there. I was bemoaning this state of affairs to a former colleague, Pam Myers, who works in radio, in particular in the field of voice-casting for advertisements and drama. Send me the manuscript she said. I did. Shortly afterwards, I heard from her again. "It's really good" she said, "hilarious" in fact. Naturally, one can never hear things like this often enough, so I was delighted. And next she ventured "It should be a podcast." I paused.

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I wanted to write a different type of book, then I began the podcasts hoping that they'd help me achieve that initial aim. Now I've come to look at them as completed objects in their own right; things with their own qualities and affordances… I've begun writing for listeners, rather than reader

You should be aware that, at this point I had heard about podcasts, I may even have had a hazy notion of what they might be. I had certainly never listened to one, or sent or received a tweet, or even a text. But I was very keen on anything that might get the work out there. "Who could we get to read it?" I asked, immediately recognizing that there was a radical disconnect between what I might want, and what was affordable or even possible. The likes of Stephen Fry or Hugh Laurie would be too expensive, while John Gielgud and Richard Burton were too dead. "Don't be daft" She said (or words to that effect) "You should do it. It was your voice I imagined while I read it."

DO: And how did the prospect of doing the recordings seem to you? Is it fair to say that you're not the most technically savvy colleague at UWL?

JS: Indeed. I'm quite the Luddite. But, like many university teachers, in the course of the pandemic and its lockdowns, I had found myself recording lectures. In my case that meant following the advice of my teenage daughter, using the 'record audio' function on PowerPoint to transform my hitherto silent slides into a veritable *son et lumière* of pedagogical thrills. I had discovered that, provided I scripted it carefully, I could speak for a minute, 90 seconds at a pinch, without making a stumble, error, gulp, gasp, or cough that would require me to start over. Pam assured me that this experience wasn't a bad foundation and, crucially, offered to produce and direct. She set about making the necessary arrangements and we selected and revised the first few scripts. Shortly before Christmas 2021, I found myself in the recording booth of a professional studio in Chiswick, connected by headphones and mic both to the amazing studio engineer Jonathan, a few feet away and to Pam, who dialled in from France. To cut a long story short, I quickly discovered that

any number of seemingly tiny things, like moving paper, scratching one's stubble, and – in fact – breathing, can scupper a take, but after these early mishaps, we settled into a pleasant routine. And a little while later, we launched and they can be found, for free, on the major platforms.

DO: Did developing it as a podcast series change how you thought about the material and your relationship to it?

JS: Yes, completely. First, I wanted to write a different type of book, then I began the podcasts hoping that they'd help me achieve that initial aim. Now I've come to look at them as completed objects in their own right; things with their own qualities and affordances, and I'm developing new podcast material that was never in that original, unpublished, volume. I've begun writing for listeners, rather than readers. It has a dimension of performance that you just don't have when you're writing only for readers. And, I have to say, I'm enjoying doing it. If any of the readers of *New Vistas* have the time to give it a listen, I'd welcome their feedback.

The Joy of Guests
https://open.spotify.com/ show/7Lh7nAua6OoYy57HimzIFi

Inspired by his scholarly and creative work in the field, Professor Jeremy Strong shares a wealth of advice and anecdotes both for the aspiring host, and the seasoned veteran of a thousand menus and seating plans. Average episode length ranges between 10 and 20 minutes.

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Factors predicting birth satisfaction in Hungary

Abstract:

Birth satisfaction is influenced by demographic, obstetric and cognitive factors. There is a paucity of research on birth satisfaction in Hungary, despite the country displaying high rates of medical interventions during childbirth. A cross-sectional study was conducted online with 78 Hungarian women. Participants completed the Birth Satisfaction and the Birth Beliefs scales alongside a demographic and obstetric questionnaire. Birth satisfaction was associated with parity, place of birth, pain management methods, delivery mode and adherence to birth plan, as well as beliefs in birth as a medical process, but not with self-efficacy or birth beliefs as a natural process. However, when considered together, none of the variables predicted birth satisfaction, implying that other factors may be at play. Given the limited research on birth satisfaction in Hungary, these results constitute important foundations for further research.

From a medical point of view, childbirth is a complex and risky experience in a woman's life. In 2017 globally, 810 women died in childbirth every day (World Health Organization, 2019). Despite a drop of 38% between 2000 and 2017, on average eight maternal deaths occur per 100 000 live births in Europe (Roser & Ritchie, 2019). Traumatic births are also common, with 1.5 million European women reporting having experienced a traumatic birth in 2020 (Devotion CA18211, 2020). Furthermore, as many as 21% of women do not have positive birth experiences (Henriksen *et al.*, 2017). Depression, fear of childbirth, and history of abuse are associated with negative birth experiences (Henriksen *et al.*, 2017).

Several elements have been shown to influence birth experience. Obstetric factors such as the mode of delivery affect birth experience (Handelzalts *et al.*, 2017). Evidence suggests that women who had unplanned modes of delivery (emergency C-section, vacuum extraction) report more negative birth experiences than those with no unplanned interventions (elective C-section, spontaneous vaginal delivery; Handelzalts *et al.*, 2017). Induction of labour may also impact birth experience; but the research on this issue is inconclusive. Some studies show that labour induction is associated with less positive experiences (Kallianidis *et al.*, 2019). Others suggest that women who deliver vaginally post-induction do not have worse birth experiences than those who have spontaneous vaginal deliveries (Schaal *et al.*, 2019). Pain management may also contribute to birth experience. Epidural analgesia has been linked to negative birth experiences (Fenaroli *et al.*, 2019). However, the causal relationship remains unclear, given that epidurals tend to be used when the pain is intense. Birth setting may also influence birth experience, but again, the research is inconclusive. Some studies indicate that home births are associated with higher birth satisfaction (Fleming *et al.*, 2016), whilst others show that women giving birth in health facilities are more satisfied than those delivering at home (Takayama *et al.*, 2019).

Concerning psychological factors, having a birth plan, and the extent to which it is adhered, also affect birth experience. Afshar *et al.* (2017) found that women who had a birth plan were less satisfied and felt less in control of their birth experience. Thus, setting expectations and then not meeting them, might lead to dissatisfaction. Confidence in one's own ability is another factor to consider. Sánchez-Cunqueiro, Comeche and Docampo (2018) found that higher self-efficacy during labour resulted in a more positive childbirth experience.

Birth cognitions also influence birth experience. Preis and Benyamini (2017) suggested that women develop two sets of beliefs about birth: beliefs about birth as a medical or as a natural process. They established that women who score higher on birth beliefs as a natural process tend to have more positive birth experience than those who score high on birth beliefs as a medical process. The former tend to have more positive expectations, consider birth as a controllable event and view pain as inherently part of delivery. Consequently, they tend to choose more natural modes of delivery and pain management methods, and less medicalised places of delivery, whereas women who score high on birth beliefs as a medical process tend to do the opposite (Preis *et al.*, 2019).

Little research on birth satisfaction has been conducted in Hungary, despite it being one of the most medicalised European countries regarding childbirth. In 2018, 41% of deliveries were c-sections — far above the 10-15% rate the World Health Organization recommends — and episiotomies occurred in 55% of vaginal births, despite being contraindicated for routine use (Engler *et al.*, 2021). Hungary is also of interest because of the widespread healthcare corruption in this country (European Commission, 2017), with 60% of women offering cash payments to their obstetricians (Baji *et al.*, 2017).

The mixed findings regarding factors contributing to birth experience and the paucity of evidence in the Hungarian context clearly warrant further research. This study thus examines the factors that influence birth satisfaction in Hungary, considering demographics, obstetric and cognitive (birth beliefs, self-efficacy) factors.

Method

The study used a retrospective, cross-sectional design to assess factors predicting birth satisfaction. The outcome variable was birth satisfaction, and the predictors were birth beliefs, self-efficacy, demographic and obstetric variables. Participants were 78 women, after 19 discontinued the survey (completion rate = 80.4%). To be eligible, women had to be 18 years old or over, fluent in English, and given birth in the past 10 years.

Birth satisfaction was measured with the revised Birth Satisfaction Scale (BSS-R; Hollins-Martin & Martin, 2014). The BSS-R contains 10 items rated on a 0-4 (strongly disagree to strongly agree) scale. It has three subscales – quality-of-care provision, women's personal attributes and stress experienced during labour – and an overall birth satisfaction scale. Example items include: *"The delivery room staff encouraged me to make decisions about how I wanted my birth to progress"* (quality-of-care provision), *"I felt out of control during my birth experience"* (women's personal attributes), and *"I thought my labour was excessively long"* (stress experienced during labour). Some items are reverse-coded. Higher scores indicate higher satisfaction. The scale has good internal reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values between 0.64 and 0.79 (Hollins-Martin & Martin, 2014).

To examine birth beliefs, the Preis and Benyamini's Birth Belief Scale (BBS; 2017) was used. The BBS contains 11 items, rated on a 1-5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree) scale, and comprises two factors: beliefs about birth as a medical process, and as a natural process. Examples of medical beliefs include: *"Often, a woman's body structure does not allow her to give birth naturally"*. Examples of natural beliefs include *"Labour should be allowed to proceed at its own pace."* Higher scores mean a stronger belief on each subscale. Cronbach's alpha values indicate good internal reliability (birth beliefs as a medical process: α=0.79, birth beliefs as a natural process: α =.70; Preis & Benyamini, 2017).

Self-efficacy was measured using the 10-item General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES, Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995), scored on a 1-4 (not at all true to exactly true) scale. Example statements include: *"I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities."*. Higher scores indicate higher self-efficacy. The scale displays high internal validity with Cronbach's alpha values between 0.76 and 0.90 (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995).

Demographic data included age, marital status, ethnicity, and education level. Questions were also asked about the number of pregnancies and children. Obstetric data regarding their most recent delivery covered: date of birth, setting (hospital or other), pain management methods (none, natural methods, TENS machine, gas and air, pethidine, or epidural), whether they had a birth plan and what extent they adhered to it, attendance of birth preparation courses, delivery mode (vaginal, vaginal with instruments, C-section planned/ unplanned), and whether labour was induced.

Data were collected online between March and April 2022. The recruitment advert was shared on social media and provided basic information about the study and the link to the survey. Participants were presented with an information sheet and a consent form. The questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to complete. The research was approved by the University of West London Psychology Ethics Committee. Participants' potential for distress was considered, and the debrief sheet contained contact information on support services.

Results

Altogether 78 women participated in the study. Their profile is displayed in Tables 1 and 2. Participant age ranged between 21 and 50 years old at data collection (Mean = 35.7; SD = 5.87). Most were white, married/in a relationship and highly educated. Most were multiparous, had given birth in a hospital, had a vaginal birth) and had not been induced. Just under half had a birth plan and, of those, most adhered to it moderately or greatly.

The scales' internal reliability were high with Cronbach alpha values between .70 (birth as a natural process) and .88 (self-efficacy).

TABLE 1. Demographic characteristics

Variables	N	(%)
Age		
< 35	41	(52.6%)
> 35	37	(47.4%)
Marital status		
Single/divorced	4	(5.1%)
Married/in a relationship	73	(93.6%)
Ethnicity		
White	68	(87.2%)
Others	7	(9.1%)
Education		
A levels or below/equivalent	2	(2.6%)
First degree	28	(35.9%)
Postgraduate degree	44	(56.4%)

TABLE 2. Obstetrics characteristics

Variables	N	%)
Parity		
Primiparous	29	(37.2%)
Multiparous	49	(62.8%)
Setting		
Hospital	67	(85.9%)
Other	11	(14.1%)
Pain management		
None	14	(17.9%)
Low intensity	33	(42.3%)
High intensity	31	(39.7%)
Delivery mode		
Vaginal birth	50	(64.1%)
C-section planned	10	(12.8%)
Unplanned intervention	18	(23.1%)
Induction		
Yes	22	(28.2%)
No	56	(71.8%)
Birth plan		
Yes	37	(47.4%)
No	41	(52.6%)
Adherence to birth plan		
A great deal	13	(35.1%)
A moderate amount	12	(32.4%)
A little	7	(18.9%)
Not at all	5	(13.5%)

Altogether 78 women participated in the study, age ranged between 21 and 50 years old, most were white, married/in a relationship and highly educated. Most were multiparous, had given birth in a hospital, had a vaginal birth) and had not been induced

TABLE 3. Differences in birth satisfaction by demographic and obstetric variables

		Birth satisfaction Mean (0-40)	Mann Whitney (U)	Kruskal Wallis (H)
Total		25.27		
Age	< 35	25.12	717.50	
	> 35	25.43		
Pain management	None	26.36		
	Low intensity	27.48		8.90*
	High intensity	22.42		
Parity	Primiparous	22.45	952.00*	
	Multiparous	26.94		
Delivery mode	Vaginal	27.26		
	C-section planned	22.30		12.83**
	Unplanned intervention birth	21.39		
Setting	Hospital	24.04	628.00***	
	Other	32.73		
Birth plan	Yes	24.95	769.50	
	No	25.56		
Birth plan adherence	A great deal	28.54		
	A moderate amount	26.58		11.97**
	A little	22.57		
	Not at all	15.00		
Labour induction	Yes	23.59	718.50	
	No	25.93		

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Birth satisfaction by demographic and obstetric variables

As most variables were not evenly distributed, non-parametric tests were used to examine differences in birth satisfaction in terms of obstetric and demographic variables (see Table 3).

The results reveal significant differences in birth satisfaction according to: 1) parity (U=952, z=2.50 p=.012. r=.28), with multiparous women more satisfied than primiparous ones; place of birth (U=628, z=3.73, p<.001, r=.42), with those delivering outside a hospital setting more satisfied than those who delivered in hospitals; 2) pain management methods (H(2)=8.90, p=.012), with participants who used high-intensity pain management methods less satisfied than those using low-intensity ones (p=.003); 3) delivery mode (H(2)=12.83, p=.002) with women who had a vaginal delivery more satisfied than women who had unplanned intervention(s) or planned C-sections (p=.001 and p=.028 respectively); 4) adherence to birth plan (H(3)=11.97, p=.007) with women who adhered to their birth plans to a *moderate amount*, more satisfied than those who did so *not at all* (p=.023) and women who adhered to it a great deal more satisfied than those who did so *not at all* (p=.002) or only *a little* (p=.019). There were no significant differences in birth satisfaction in terms of whether women had a birth plan or not (U=769.5, z=.11, p=.912, r=.012), or whether labour had been induced or not (U=718.5, z=1.14, p=.254, r=.012), or age (U=717.5, p=.681. r=.04).

	Birth as medical process	Birth as natural process	Self-efficacy–	Age	Stress experienced	Personal attributes	Quality- of-care provision	Overall birth satisfaction
Birth beliefs as a medical process	–	-.51**	.01	.03	-.31**	-.39**	-.09	-.31**
Birth beliefs as a natural process	—	–	.04	-.13	.20	.03	.23*	.20
Self-efficacy	–	–	–	.11	-.15	-.31**	-.03	-.15
Age	–	–	–	–	-.05	.17	-.07	-.05
Stress experienced					–	.66**	.40**	.88**
Personal attributes					–	—	.24*	.74**
Quality-of-care provision					–	–	–	.69**

*p<0.05** p<0.01*

TABLE 5. Correlation between birth satisfaction and birth beliefs, self-efficacy and age

## Relationship between birth satisfaction, and demographic obstetric and cognitive variables

To determine the predictors of birth satisfaction, correlation analyses were run. The results (see Table 5) show that birth belief as a medical process was the only variable significantly and negatively correlated with birth satisfaction (r =-.31, p=.005), indicating that the higher the belief in birth as a medical process, the lower the birth satisfaction. Birth belief as a medical process was negatively correlated with the stress experienced during birth (r = -.31, p<.05), and personal attribute (r = -.39, p<.05), meaning the higher the belief as a medical process, the lower the satisfaction with the *stress experienced* and the *personal attributes* during birth. Birth beliefs as a natural process correlated positively with satisfaction with the *quality-of-care* during childbirth: r = .23, p<.05. Moreover, self-efficacy was negatively correlated with satisfaction with personal attributes, r = -.31, p<.05. Age did not correlate with any variables. As expected, the birth satisfaction subscales correlated positively with birth satisfaction overall and with each other.

To examine what factors predict birth satisfaction, a hierarchical multiple linear regression was conducted. Results based on the correlations and tests of difference informed the predicting variables used in the regression analyses. Obstetric variables (pain-management methods, delivery mode, parity, setting, and adherence to birth plan) were entered first (Model 1), and birth beliefs as a medical process second (Model 2). Table 6 shows that Model 1 was a good fit for the data (F(5,31)=3.18, p<.05)) and explained 23.3 % of variance in birth satisfaction. The addition of birth beliefs as a medical process accounted for a slight loss in variance (0.9 %), resulting in a slightly weaker ANOVA coefficient F(1,30)=2.72, p<.05 (Model 2), suggesting that this variable had no predictive value for birth satisfaction in the presence of other predictors. None of the predictors displayed significant beta coefficients, indicating that none of them predicted birth satisfaction when considered together.

	β	ANOVA (F)	Adjusted R²
Model 1			
Pain management	-.05		
Delivery mode	-,13		
Parity	.07	3.19	23.3 %
Setting	.23		
Birth plan adherence	-.34		
F(5,31)=3.18, p<.05			
Model 2			
Pain management	-.02		
Delivery mode	-.10		
Parity	.07	2.73	22.4 %
Setting	.19		
Birth plan adherence	-.34		
Birth beliefs as a medical process	-,14		
F(1,30)=2.72, p<.05			

TABLE 6. Predictors of birth satisfaction
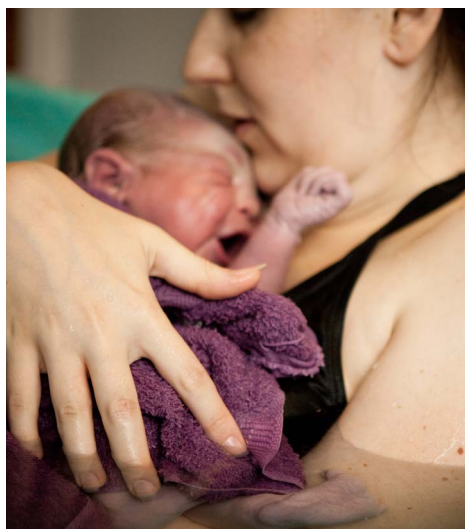
In this study, age did not correlate with birth satisfaction. This is unexpected, since age can be used as a proxy for obstetric history (the older the woman, the more likely she is to be multiparous and thus confident), and previous research suggests that multiparity is linked to more positive birth experiences

Discussion

This study assessed the factors predicting birth experience, using a Hungarian sample. The results show that levels of birth satisfaction in this study (25.27) were comparable to, although slightly lower than in the UK (28.36; Hollins-Martin & Martin, 2014). Several factors were associated with higher birth satisfaction, namely: multiparity, delivery outside hospital settings, lower-intensity pain management methods, vaginal delivery, and birth plan adherence. These results are broadly in line with the literature. Indeed, evidence shows that deliveries outside hospitals are associated with higher birth satisfaction (Fleming *et al.*, 2016). However, in this current study, only eleven participants had a home birth, so that, whilst significant, these results need to be interpreted with caution. Similarly to this study, research by Handelzalts *et al.* (2017) also demonstrated that unplanned childbirth interventions are linked to lower satisfaction, with vaginal deliveries linked to high, and emergency C-sections to low satisfaction. Evidence also indicates that no pharmacological pain relief during labour is more conducive to birth satisfaction than to high-intensity ones, such as epidural analgesia (Fenaroli *et al.*, 2019).

Research has shown that women who have a birth plan are at higher risk of negative birth experiences (Afshar *et al.*, 2017). Although in this study, having a birth plan/no plan did not seem to influence satisfaction, for women who had a birth plan, the greater the extent to which they adhered to their plan, the greater the satisfaction. Therefore, it would be helpful to examine how the level of complexity of birth plans relates to birth satisfaction.

In this study, age did not correlate with birth satisfaction. This is unexpected, since age can be used as a proxy for obstetric history (the older the woman, the more likely she is to be multiparous and thus confident), and previous research suggests that multiparity is linked to more positive birth experiences (Henriksen *et al.*, 2017). However, this may be less relevant in the Hungarian context, given that most births, regardless of parity, are subject to medical interventions (Engler *et al.*, 2021).

Interestingly, in this study, no significant relationships were identified between self-efficacy and birth satisfaction. This contrasts with previous literature (e.g., Sánchez-Cunqueiro, Comeche & Docampo, 2018), perhaps because Sánchez-Cunqueiro, Comeche and Docampo (2018) only included women with low-risk pregnancies, compared to the present study where it is not known whether participants were low- or high-risk. Cultural differences may also contribute to this discrepancy. Given the over-medicalisation of childbirth in Hungary, women may rely on doctors to a greater extent than on themselves. This is supported by Bali *et al.* (2017), who found that the main reason women informally pay doctors is that they want them to be present at birth.

Regarding birth beliefs, in this study, birth beliefs as a medical process were linked to lower birth satisfaction, stress experienced and personal attributes. This partly supports the work of Preis and Benyamini (2017), which shows positive correlations between natural birth beliefs and birth satisfaction, although the authors specify that the two sets of beliefs should not be considered as opposing each other. Interestingly, the regression analysis suggests that medical birth beliefs had no predicting value in the presence of other predictors. It is possible that the medicalisation of childbirth

in Hungary is such that birth-related cognitions (birth beliefs, self-efficacy) are less important in this country. Further research is needed to shed light on this.

This study has some limitations. The sample size and the recruitment through social media mean that the sample may not be representative of the Hungarian female population. The time elapsed since birth might also have influenced the results. Originally, the intention was to recruit women who had given birth in the past five years. However, this had to be increased to 10 years to augment sample size. Because research suggests that satisfaction with birth changes over time (Donate-Manzanares et al., 2019), it may be that women perceive their birth experience more positively over time and remember the actions more than the cognitions at the time. Finally, despite some positive correlations, none of the obstetric or birth-belief variables predicted birth satisfaction and, together, they only accounted for 22.4 % of the variance in satisfaction. This suggests that some important variables were not included in this study, providing a basis for further research to explore factors that influence birth satisfaction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study found that birth satisfaction is associated with parity, place of birth, pain management methods, natural mode of delivery, adherence to birth plan and beliefs of birth as a medical process. Further analyses found that none of the obstetric cognitive variables predicted birth satisfaction, and they accounted for a low amount of variance in birth satisfaction, which implies that other factors might be at play. Accordingly, future studies are advised to explore other variables that can influence birth satisfaction. Despite the aforementioned limitations, given the paucity of research on perinatal maternal health and birth satisfaction in Hungary, this study provides important foundations for further research.

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Keywords

Birth satisfaction, birth satisfaction scale, birth experience, birth beliefs, childbirth

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Examining the influence of Hollywood fiction on attitudes towards transgender people in an experiment using priming videos

The influence of Hollywood fiction on attitudes towards transgender people

Abstract:

Previous research found that viewing positively portrayed transgender characters in Hollywood TV series reduces negative attitudes towards transgender people. This study investigates whether exposure to short clips from Hollywood fiction can also influence participant attitudes. Using a feeling thermometer (FT), a total of 132 participants viewed either a positive, negative or no-portrayal video and indicated their attitudes towards transgender people pre- and post-exposure. A 3x2 mixed-design ANOVA found a significant interaction effect between the type of portrayal and the point in time of measurement. The results highlight the importance of displaying more positive transgender storylines in films and TV series, and the potential of using (short) videos as part of interventions in educational and the therapeutical settings.

It is estimated that around

0.5%

of the adult UK population identifies as transgender

It is estimated that around 0.5 % of the adult UK population identifies as transgender (Government Equalities Committee, 2018). Unlike cisgender people, transgender identity does not match the gender they were assigned at birth. Reitz (2017) argued that many people will never get to know a transgender person in their lives, but, they will be exposed to transgender storylines on television and movies. The representation of trans characters in Hollywood fiction was not always the kindest; from 1960s to early 2000s, transgender characters in Hollywood films and TV shows were mostly presented as killers, villains or predators, often targeting (cisgender) women as their victims (de Castro, 2017). Subsequently, a new trope emerged from the 1990s onwards, in which transgender women and their bodies were mocked and viewed as disgusting. Furthermore, GLAAD (2012; formerly known as Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, now exclusively called GLAAD) found that from 102 episodes of U.S. TV series focusing on transgender storylines, only 12 % of the episodes portrayed trans characters positively and 54 % episodes portrayed them negatively, with the majority of characters being either victims of violent crimes or villains. Although the representation of transgender characters in TV shows became more positive and realistic with shows such as Pose (Koch-Rein, Haschemi Yekani & Verlinden, 2020), trans characters remain heavily underrepresented, particularly in popular Hollywood fiction.

Influence of Hollywood media on policy and prejudice

It could be argued that films and TV series are simply entertainment media. However, Neff (2015) proposed a concept of the *Jaws* Effect, where narratives from films were used as political devices to create real-life change, policies or laws perpetuating prejudice. Neff (2015) based this concept on politicians using narratives from the Hollywood film *Jaws*, which portrayed sharks as aggressive killing-machines, to pass policies allowing the catching and killing of sharks, resulting in a dramatic decline of many shark species. Politicians favoured harmful narratives instead of scientific evidence or statistics, and this is also seen in the passing of the House Bill 2 (HB2), which required people to use the public bathroom that matched the sex stated on their birth certificate (Reitz, 2017). Some politicians argued that this bill would protect women from predators wanting to assault them (Barnett *et al.*, 2018), which seemed to be based purely on fictional tropes from Hollywood, since there has never been a reported incident of a transgender person sexually assaulting anyone in a public bathroom.

Transgender people's experience of victimisation

Furthermore, transgender people are more likely to experience sexual abuse than cisgender people; around 50 % of transgender people have experienced sexual abuse at least once in their lifetime, with one in three perpetrators of the abuse being identified as intimate partners, and 90 % of the survivors reported that at least one of their abusers was a cisgender man (FORGE [formerly known as For Ourselves: Reworking Gender Expression, now exclusively called FORGE], 2015). Moreover, some of the reported effects of the abuse included various psychological issues such as posttraumatic stress disorder, self-harm, attempted suicide, as well as physical issues such as long-term medical conditions and disability. Human Rights Campaign (HRC, 2021) reported that 57 transgender people were murdered in the U.S. in 2021 for simply being transgender, and these numbers are probably too low due to under-reporting. These statistics highlight the importance of conducting research which can contribute to the reduction of negative attitudes towards transgender people.

At least 57 people were murdered in the USA in 2021 due to being Transgender (HRC, 2021). It is therefore essential for future attempts at harm reduction to understand how attitudes towards this population are being influenced

Existing research

There is a lack of literature on the influence of seeing negatively portrayed trans characters on viewer attitudes. However, Gillig *et al.* (2018) investigated the influence of viewing positively portrayed trans characters. The researchers recruited 488 U.S. viewers of the TV series *Royal Pains*, of whom 391 watched an episode with positive trans representation and 97 did not watch the episode. The study found that participants who were exposed to the transgender storyline reported significantly more positive attitudes towards transgender people (measured by Short Transphobia/Genderism scale) compared to participants who were not familiar with that storyline. Similar results were reported by Jones *et al.* (2018), who found that participants who were exposed to portrayals of trans people on television had more positive views towards them. However, there was no difference in attitudes based on what type of portrayal was viewed, and watching television more frequently correlated positively with attitudes towards transgender people.

When it comes to priming viewers' attitudes, Taracuk and Koch (2021) used episodes from the TV series *Star Trek* (one with a positive transgender storyline and one without a trans portrayal) as an intervention to increase positive attitudes towards transgender people, measured by the Transgender Attitudes and Beliefs Scale. The researchers found a significant interaction effect between the type of media intervention (positive portrayal and no-portrayal/control) and the time of measurement (pre-intervention and post-intervention) on attitudes towards transgender people, where viewing a positive portrayal video of a transgender storyline increased positive attitudes towards transgender individuals. The research highlighted the beneficial influence of viewing positive transgender portrayals, but also emphasises the importance of conducting research on negative portrayals.

Aims and hypothesis

As presented above, at least 57 people were murdered in the USA in 2021 due to being Transgender (HRC, 2021). It is therefore essential for future attempts at harm reduction to understand how attitudes towards this population are being influenced. Previous research as summarised above has identified the priming effects of entire episodes of fictional representations of trans people, but either had possible confounds (participants had already watched the series involved, or were predisposed to watching more television) or did not consider the effects of a negative portrayal. The current study examines whether exposure to videos from Hollywood fiction portraying transgender characters really influences participant attitudes towards transgender people. Taking into consideration past literature, this study will observe if positive viewer attitudes increase after viewing a video positively portraying a trans storyline, and become more negative after viewing a negative portrayal. This is probably the first study to use a video negatively portraying a transgender storyline as well as short videos from Hollywood fiction, instead of full episodes, in order to prime participants. This is to determine whether viewing a transgender storyline of only a few minutes will be sufficient to change viewers' attitudes. Based on the findings from past research and the present study's aims, the following hypothesis was formed:

H: There is a significant interaction effect between the type of portrayal and the time of measurement on attitudes towards transgender people, where having viewed a positive portrayal video will result in the most positive attitudes, and having viewed a negative portrayal video will result in the most negative attitudes.
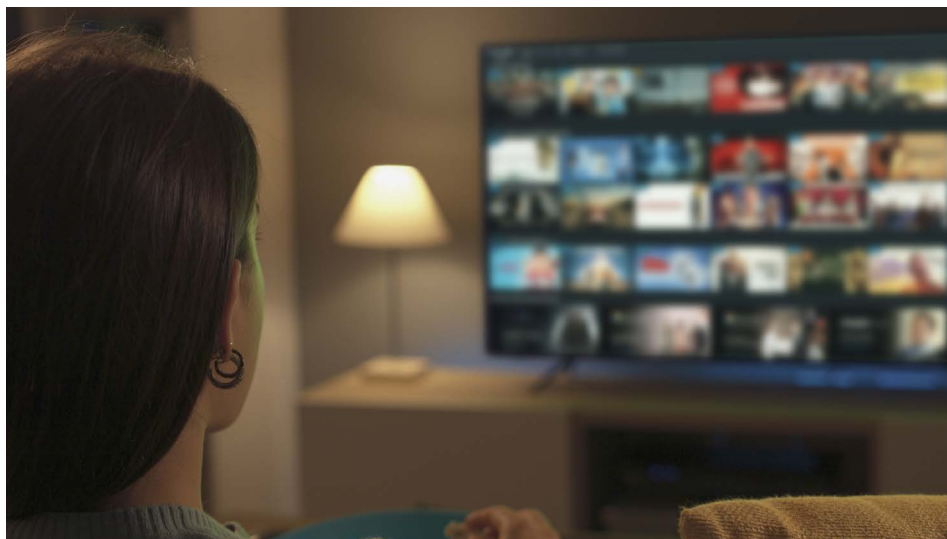
TABLE 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants (N = 132)

Demographic characteristics		N	%
Gender identity	Cisgender woman	56	42.42
	Transgender woman	3	2.27
	Cisgender man	56	42.42
	Non-binary	5	3.79
	Genderqueer	1	0.76
	Genderfluid	1	0.76
	Agender	2	1.52
	Prefer not to say	6	4.55
	Would describe differently	1	0.76
Sexual orientation	Straight (heterosexual)	88	66.67
	Lesbian	3	2.27
	Gay	7	5.3
	Bisexual	11	8.33
	Pansexual	2	1.52
	Queer	5	3.79
	Asexual	2	1.52
	Demisexual	2	1.52
	Questioning/unlabelled	2	1.52
	Prefer not to say	7	5.3
	Would describe differently	3	2.27
Level of education	Left before Sixth form/collage	14	10.6
	Sixth form/collage	28	21.21
	Undergraduate	63	47.73
	Postgraduate	26	19.7
	Missing value	1	0.76
Political leaning	Extremely liberal	15	11.36
	Liberal	37	28.03
	Slightly liberal	13	9.85
	Moderate or middle	26	19.7
	Slightly conservative	19	14.39
	Conservative	18	13.64
	Extremely conservative	4	3.03

Methodology
Participants

Participants were recruited via snowball sampling; an anonymous link to the study was shared on social media, with a message encouraging people to share the link further. Snowball sampling (particularly through social media) was chosen, as it is a feasible sampling method allowing researchers to recruit a greater number of participants, who are not known or easily reachable by researchers (Leighton *et al.*, 2021). The sampling method was different to that used by Taracuk and Koch (2021) to enable generalisation of the current study's findings beyond the student population. Some participants were also recruited in person by being approached at the University of West London (UWL) and at a local leisure centre. This was to avoid bias from recruiting only participants who are present on social media and diversify the type of recruited participants. Moreover, the study was posted on Sona Systems, which is a software that allowed Psychology students from UWL to gain credit points by completing the study. Overall, 200 participant responses were collected. However, 68 had to be excluded from the analysis; 48 due to being unfinished, three due to incompletion of questionnaires needed for the analysis, six due to not providing full consent, and eleven due to inadequate duration of study's completion. That is, finishing the study in less than 6-8 minutes (depending on the type of video portrayal) meant that the participant did not watch the priming/control video, which was a crucial aspect of the study, so that their data could not be analysed. The final sample that was suitable for analysis consisted of 132 participant responses, with 43 participants being randomly assigned to the negative portrayal, 43 to the positive portrayal and 46 to the no-portrayal. The mean age of participants was 31.67 years old (SD = 14.08), with minimum age of 18 and maximum of 80. As Table 1 below presents, the participants consisted of 59 cisgender women, 56 cisgender men, four transgender people and nine identifying outside the gender binary. The majority of participants identified as heterosexual (66.67 %, N = 88) and had completed higher education (67.42 %, N = 89). Moreover, 65 participants identified themselves as politically liberal and 41 as conservative. There were no notable differences between participants' demographics for each of type of portrayal, and furthermore, all trans-binary participants and the majority of trans non-binary participants were randomly allocated to the no-portrayal condition.

Materials

The feeling thermometer (FT): Participants were presented with five FTs prior to and after viewing some videos from Hollywood fiction. Only the FT assessing feelings towards transgender people was used for the analysis. The other four FTs (measuring feelings towards Brexit, feminism, legalisation of cannabis and the Black Lives Matter movement) were used as distractors to conceal the true purpose of the study (until participants were debriefed) in order to minimise any potential bias in participant responses. The rating of FTs started from 0, which represented very cold feelings/more negative attitudes, and ended on 100, which represented very warm feelings/more positive attitudes. The scales measuring attitudes towards transgender people used in previous research (Gillig *et al.*, 2018; Taracuk & Koch, 2021) were not chosen for the current study, since asking participants questions regarding trans people would reveal the true meaning of the study to them before watching the priming videos and thus risk response bias. Moreover, the FT was used as a measure in the first identified publication exploring multiple various demographic variables as predictors of attitudes towards transgender people, in a population comprising no only students, which was conducted by Norton and Herek (2013). Based on the FT being used in previous research assessing attitudes towards trans people, as well as its ability to be disguised between other FTs (minimising potential response bias), it seemed the most fitting measure for the current study.
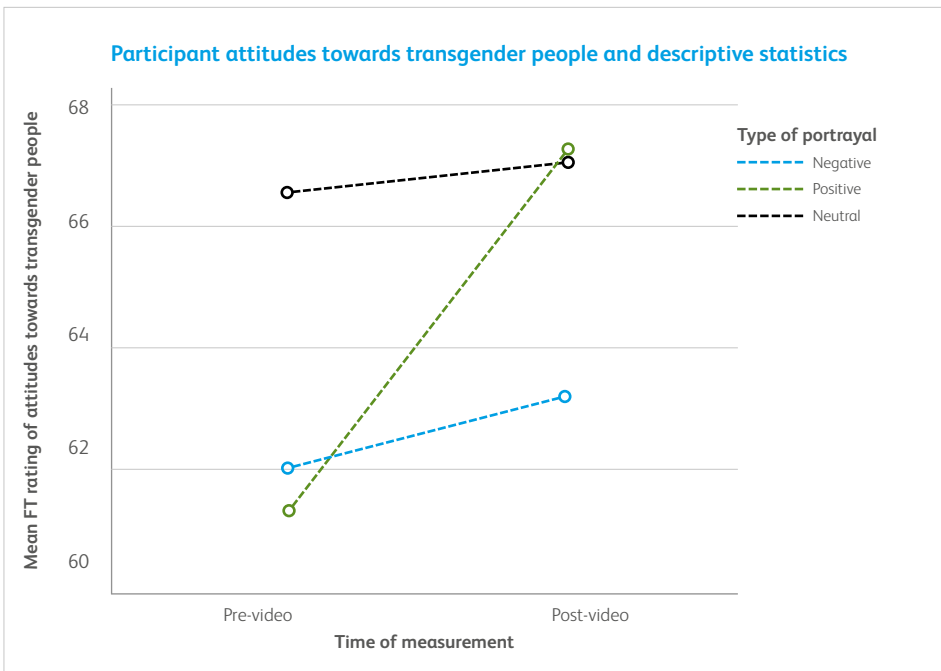
The priming and control videos: Three videos were used, positive and negative portrayal videos to prime participants, and a no-portrayal video for control purposes. The negative portrayal video consisted of scenes from a 1994 Hollywood film *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective,* which was chosen due to its mix of both Hollywood tropes: the transgender character was the villain of the film and her body/being attracted to her, made characters physically ill. Additionally, the film showed transphobic behaviours by the main character who ridiculed, humiliated, misgendered and exposed the body of the trans female character without her consent. The positive portrayal video was a mix of different scenes from a Hollywood TV series *Pose*, which was aired between 2019 and 2021. The scenes showcased a transgender female character who was becoming a motherly figure and displayed multiple positive qualities such as being caring and helpful. The trans character was also educating the cisgender character on experiencing life as a transgender person, and shared a story of being rejected for simply being transgender. The scenes were chosen to make participants feel sympathetic towards the trans character, to understand the experience of a transgender woman, and to see a trans character in a positive light. The no-portrayal video was a scene from a 1998 Hollywood film *Babe: Pig in the City*, which was used because it did not relate in any way to transgender people, LGBTQIA+ people, social change, politics, religion, or any other aspects that could influence participant attitudes and responses. The video mostly consisted of comedic and family-friendly interactions between different animals. The length of the video clips were as follows: the negative portrayal – 6.03 minutes, the positive portrayal – 5.23 minutes, the no-portrayal – 4.39 minutes. Short videos were used in the current study to minimise the risk that participants would become distracted or discouraged from watching the videos, and to determine whether short videos could be sufficient to influence participant attitudes.

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Participant attitudes towards transgender people and descriptive statistics

Type of portrayal
- Negative
- Positive
- Neutral

FIGURE 1 Line graph presenting the mean rating of the feeling thermometer measuring attitudes towards transgender people

Type of portrayal	Time of measurement	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Negative	Pre-video	61.79	29.17
Negative	Post-video	63.05	29.75
Negative	Total	62.42	29.46
Positive	Pre-video	60.98	31.38
Positive	Post-video	67.33	30.20
Positive	Total	64.16	30.79
No-portrayal	Pre-video	66.63	28.64
No-portrayal	Post-video	67.17	28.95
No-portrayal	Total	66.90	28.80
Total	Pre-video	63.21	29.61
Total	Post-video	65.88	29.46

TABLE 2. Descriptive statistics for participants' pre-video and post-video feeling thermometer rating of attitudes towards transgender people in the negative, positive, and no-Portrayal types of portrayal

Procedure

Ethical approval was granted by the School Research Ethics Panel at the University of West London, based on the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics and Conduct. The study was then published through online survey host software – Qualtrics Survey Solutions. Before completing the study, participants were informed that it was "to examine the relationship between different variables measured by various questionnaires and viewers' reactions to videos from Hollywood fiction", in order to obscure the specific topic. They were also informed at this point that 'Some of the videos that might be shown to you could include nudity, sexual references, inappropriate language, violence, and show discrimination or mistreatment' and were given suggested helplines at this point. Once they had given consent, participants were asked to indicate their feelings towards transgender people and four other groups of people/issues (Brexit, feminism, legalisation of cannabis, Black Lives Matter movement) via feeling thermometers. Participants then completed scales measuring their level of religiosity, religious commitment and political leaning. The data from these three measures is not reported here, but was collected for a related study. Participants were then randomly assigned to either negative portrayal, positive portrayal, or no-portrayal, and were shown the Hollywood video which was appropriate to their condition. The videos were shared through the researcher's Google drive, and participants could either watch them on Qualtrics or open the videos via Google drive. After watching the video, participants were asked to complete the same feeling thermometers as those at the beginning of the study. Subsequently, participants completed the demographic questions as reported in the participant section above, and received a debrief form, which revealed the true meaning of the study and reminded participants that they could withdraw their data from the study. Moreover, participants were provided with contact details to various mental health support organisations/helplines for the general public and for transgender individuals.

Results

The data collected from 132 participants via Qualtrics was analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25 software. The 3x2 mixed-design ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis, which referred to a significant interaction effect between the type of portrayal (positive, negative, or no-portrayal) and point in time of measurement (pre-video or post-video) on attitudes towards transgender people, where the positive portrayal video resulted in the most positive attitudes and the negative portrayal video in the most negative.

Mixed-design ANOVA assumptions

Prior to running the analysis, the assumptions for a mixed-design ANOVA were tested. Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests for normality indicated that (after Bonferroni adjustments) the attitude data was not normally distributed in the no-portrayal condition $(Ds(46), ps < .001)$. However, there were no outliers (at two standard deviations above or below the mean), and Levene's found no significant differences between the variance of each group's data pre-video - $F(2, 129) = .33, p > .05$ or post video - $F(2, 129) = .03, p > .05$. Therefore, sufficient assumptions were met to treat the data as parametric and conduct the mixed ANOVA.

Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation of feeling thermometer ratings (pre-video and post-video) assessing attitudes towards transgender people in all three types of portrayal – negative, positive and no-portrayal. As presented in the table, as well as in Figure 1, when comparing the mean rating of attitudes towards trans people before the priming/control videos, participants in the no-portrayal condition had more positive attitudes towards them $(M = 66.63, SD = 28.64)$ than participants in the negative $(M = 61.79, SD = 29.17)$ and the positive $(M = 60.98, SD = 31.38)$ conditions. However, after watching the videos, participants viewing a positive portrayal reported the most positive attitudes towards trans people $(M = 67.33, SD = 30.20)$, followed by no-portrayal $(M = 67.17, SD = 28.95)$ and negative portrayal $(M = 63.05, SD = 29.75)$. The largest increase in positive attitudes occurred after viewing the positive portrayal, and although a slight increase in attitudes also occurred after watching a negative portrayal, the attitudes were still the most negative in the negative portrayal group, compared to the other portrayals. Viewing a no-portrayal video affected participants' attitude changes the least.

Interaction effect and overall findings

A 3x2 mixed-design ANOVA found a significant main effect of point in time of measurement on attitudes towards transgender people, measured by the feeling thermometer, $F(1, 129) = 6.90, p = .01$. This suggest that viewing priming/control videos had an influence on participants' attitudes, with the rating of the feeling thermometer being higher post-video. The main effect of the type of portrayal on attitudes towards transgender people was non-significant, $F(2, 129) = .27, p > .05$, meaning that seeing different types of portrayal videos did not solely influence participants' attitudes. Nevertheless, there was a significant interaction effect of time of measurement and the type of portrayal on attitudes towards transgender people, $F(2, 129) = 3.11, p < .05$. Overall, participants' attitudes towards transgender people were the most positive after viewing the positive portrayal video, and the most negative after viewing the negative portrayal video, with the largest increase in positive attitudes occurring in the positive portrayal condition.

Discussion

The study hypothesised that there is a significant interaction effect between the type of portrayal and the point in time of measurement on attitudes towards transgender people, with the most positive attitudes occurring after viewing a positive portrayal video, and the most negative after viewing a negative portrayal video. The 3x2 mixed-design ANOVA found that this was indeed the case, and the experimental hypothesis was accepted.

Hollywood's history of portraying trans characters could be classified as problematic, and filmmakers now have a chance to contribute to a positive change within the industry by portraying transgender characters in a positive way

Implications

Taking into consideration the current study's finding of Hollywood fiction influencing viewer attitudes towards transgender people, as well as the rate of violence towards transgender people explored in the introduction, people working within the television and film industry should be aware of the impact on viewers of portraying trans characters in fiction. Hollywood's history of portraying trans characters could be classified as problematic, and filmmakers now have a chance to contribute to a positive change within the industry by portraying transgender characters in a positive way.

The current study provided evidence of short clips being sufficient to reduce negative attitudes towards transgender people, and future work could investigate both educational and therapeutic interventions, using this method. If findings are replicated with younger participants, or individuals with destructively negative attitudes towards trans people, this opens up a number of applications designed to develop positive attitudes towards this group, and to reduce negative ones.

Limitations

The main limitation of the current study is that all trans-binary participants and the majority of the trans non-binary participants were randomly allocated to the no-portrayal condition. Potentially, this could have been a reason for the attitudes towards transgender people being the most positive pre-video for the no-portrayal, and it could have led to the interaction effect not having a higher significance level (p = .048). Another reason could have been an inappropriate choice of a negative portrayal video. Although the previous literature identified Ace Ventura: Pet Detective as a classic negative portrayal of a transgender storyline (de Castro, 2017), the film could now be too outdated for this study conducted in 2022. Additionally, there is a possibility that using only a short video from the film did not show the full context of how the trans female character was negatively portrayed as a criminal, and participants could therefore feel sympathy towards her. This may be why there was a slight increase in positive attitudes after watching the negative portrayal video.

Link to existing research

Gillig *et al.* (2018), as well as Taracuk and Koch (2021), found that exposure to positive trans storylines in Hollywood TV shows increased positive viewer attitudes towards transgender people. This is in line with the current study's findings. Moreover, Taracuk and Koch (2021) found a significant interaction effect between the type of intervention (positive vs no-portrayal) and time of measurement (pre-intervention vs post-intervention) on attitudes towards transgender people. This is similar to the interaction effect found in the current study, with the difference being that the current study also included a negative type of portrayal/intervention.

Although Jones *et al.* (2018) found that exposure to trans storylines on television led to more positive attitudes towards transgender people, their findings also suggested that the type of portrayal viewers watched did not have an effect of their attitudes. This was partially supported by the current study, which found no significant main effect of the type of portrayal and attitudes towards transgender people. However, viewing positive portrayals of a trans character reduced negative attitudes towards trans people, more than viewing a negative portrayal

and no-portrayal videos. Therefore, the relevance of the type of portrayal being viewed should not be dismissed entirely.

Two main differences between the current and previous research is the different methodology and different length of material. Previous studies used different scales, while the current one used a feeling thermometer, which allowed us to minimise participants' response bias by the inclusion of a number of distractor items. Previous studies also used full episodes from TV series or programs, whereas the current study used short video clips. This makes the current research the first to find that a video as short as 5.23 minutes could influence participants' attitudes towards trans people by reducing negative attitudes.

The current study was mostly in line with the existing research, finding that viewing positive portrayals of trans people increases positive attitudes towards them. However, a current study also addressed the gap in the literature by including a negative portrayal of transgender people and finding that such a portrayal, presented in a short video, did not have a negative influence on the viewer attitudes.

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Future directions

There is a gap in the literature when it comes to using a negative portrayal video to influence participant attitudes towards transgender people, and the video used in the current study may be outdated. Although no recent popular Hollywood films or TV series were identified in previous literature as portraying trans characters in a negative way, these are not the only forms of Hollywood entertainment media. There has been a trend amongst popular comedians, notably Dave Chappelle and Ricky Gervais, to include humour perceived as transphobic in their Netflix stand-up specials (Murphy, 2022). This has opened a general discussion on whether their stand-up comedy was simply entertainment, or whether these jokes may contribute to the discrimination and violence that trans people face. Therefore, future studies could consider using a clip from stand-up shows including transphobic humour, and a clip from a trans-positive stand-up, in order to investigate whether exposure to stand-up comedy could influence participant attitudes towards transgender people.

Conclusion

The current study found a significant interaction effect of the type of portrayal and the point in time of measurement on attitudes towards transgender people, which revealed that watching short videos from Hollywood fiction was sufficient to increase positive viewer attitudes towards transgender people. Particularly watching a video that positively portrays a transgender character reduced negative attitudes towards trans people more than viewing a negative portrayal and no-portrayal videos. Future plans are to replicate the current study with the use of stand-up comedy videos, due to recent debates on transphobic comedy perpetuating the discrimination of transgender people. It is certainly important for researchers to continue investigating the influence of media on attitudes towards transgender people, due to the sadly high level of violence and discrimination that continues to be aimed at transgender people.