Pagan Self-Representation Online

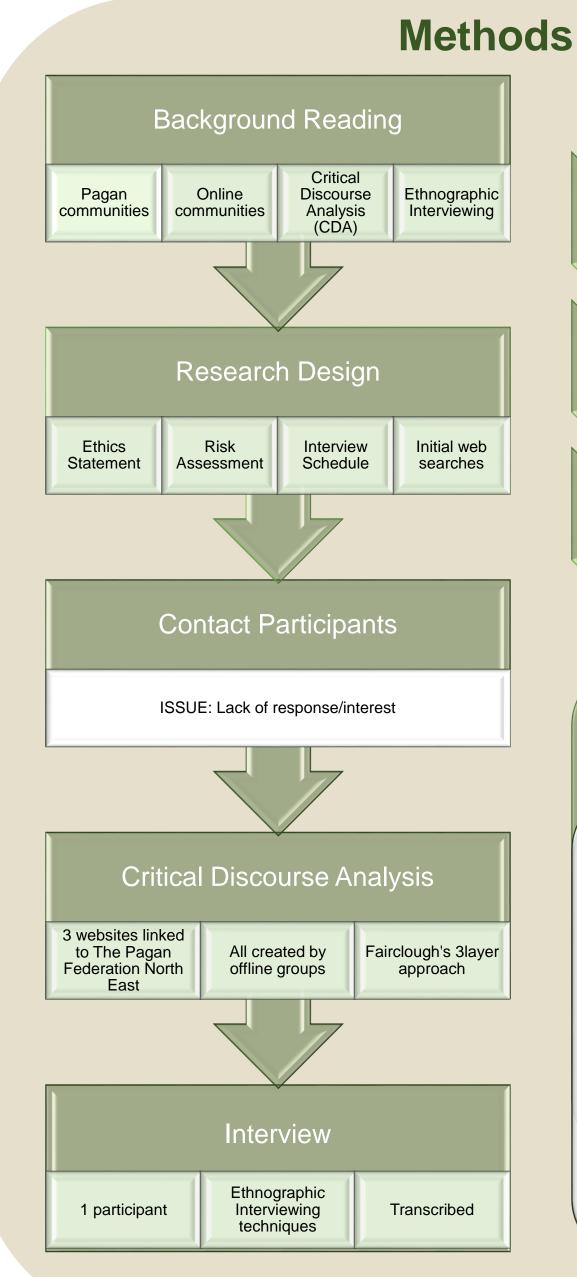
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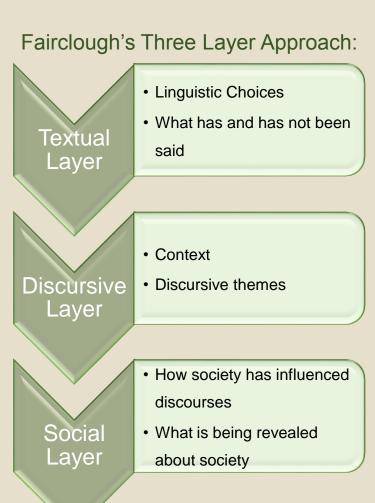
Introduction

The Pagan community has an (imagined) ancient history, often demonised and associated with a need for secrecy. However Pagans in all their diverse forms are starting to reveal themselves to the world via virtual online platforms which, in contrast are characterised by openness and transparency. This project takes a step towards exploring how and why the Pagan community use the Internet

Aims and objectives

- To gain an insight into the web presence of the Pagan community
- Explore the purposes of websites being created and used
- Identify themes and key issues within the Pagan community and their use of the Internet





Ethnographic Interviewing

A qualitative research method which combines observation and awareness of the interview scenario with the interview itself. The interview follows a series of topics and areas of discussion that can be elaborated on to gain a depth of insight into the perspective of the individual being interviewed

Data

General searches using the Google UK search engine showed that websites created by the Pagan community include:

The Pagan federation (top hit), information on Paganism, representation, charities, forums, dating, bookshops, shops, events, blogs, local groups, funeral services and training

Critical Discourse Analysis

Website 1 y, image heavy site, co ened to a Facebook s ion about who. v

Vebsite 2 imple design from a bas page template. No ima mply det<u>ails of where ar</u> when the group mee

Website 3 ne images. Details of whe hd when the group mee s well as different types o activities

All sites serve to:

Describe and define the organisation of the group Welcome potential newcomers

Act as a bridge between the individual and services within the Pagan community Portray the group as a friendly and sociable community

Enable the group to authenticate itself through the use of images, affiliation with the Pagan Federation and group longevity

Act as a record of events and activities for existing members

Ethnographic Interview Forums act as:

A way of accessing the community when it may otherwise be difficult due to issues such as location, money or disability

A space where group belonging and connections can take place

A lens through which individuals can reveal or conceal elements of the self as well as providing security for those who choose to keep their identity secret

A way for individuals to develop an association with a label/path or to come to terms with not needing a label

Participant is a 62year old, white British, female civil servant, educated to degree level. She has been a Pagan since 1999 and follows the paths of Heathenry and Wicca. She uses the internet daily for activities related to Paganism and is a moderator of a UK

> Online Forum A way into the community for new

> > members

understanding and educating ndividuals about Paganism A way for individuals to

A way of building an

refine their beliefs and thus their identity

A form of soft power/control. Moderators shape discourses and make judgements about the authenticity of individuals seeking access to the group

'come out' as Pagan All websites had a members only area and varying levels of transparency and secrecy were found. Access to both online and offline groups are negotiated though the interplay of authenticity of both group and individual

key theme surrounding Pagan identity. Groups authenticate themselves through the use of images, associations with other Pagan groups and the length of time they have been running. Individuals must then present themselves in a way that is deemed authentic by the group in order to gain access

Misrepresentation The Pagan community is often

mistaken for New Age, associated with Satanism or trivialized in comparison to Christianity. The findings suggest Pagans have awareness of being inaccurately portrayed, in particular by the media but also by a minority of Pagans themselves

- authenticity and trust are made

further research

References: Fairclough, N. (2010) Critical discourse analysis: the critical study of language. Harlow: Longman. Heyl, B.S. (2001) 'Ethnographic interviewing', in L. Lofland (ed) Handbook of Ethnography. London: Sage Images Accessed on 29th September 2016 from: http://ncac.org/blog/ncac-supports-letter-protesting-effort-to-request-us-visitors-social-media.org/wiki/File:Doorway_to_Park_House,_RAF_Uxbridge.jpg https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seal_(emblem) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Doorway_to_Park_House,_RAF_Uxbridge.jpg https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seal_(emblem) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Doorway_to_Park_House,_RAF_Uxbridge.jpg https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seal_(emblem) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Doorway_to_Park_House,_RAF_Uxbridge.jpg https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seal_(emblem) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Doorway_to_Park_House,_RAF_Uxbridge.jpg https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Doorway_to_Park_House,_RAF_Uxbridge.jpg https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seal_(emblem) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Doorway_to_Park_House,_RAF_Uxbridge.jpg https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seal_(emblem) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Doorway_to_Park_House,_RAF_Uxbridge.jpg https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seal_(emblem) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Doorway_to_Park_House,_RAF_Uxbridge.jpg https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seal_(emblem) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Doorway_to_Park_House,_RAF_Uxbridge.jpg https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seal_(emblem) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Doorway_to_Park_House,_RAF_Uxbridge.jpg https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seal_(emblem) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki



Supervisor: Dr Emma Clavering – Newcastle School of GPS Funded by: Newcastle University Research Scholarship

Themes

Diversity Paganism differs from other Religions by its lack of a strict set of beliefs or organisational structure. Nonetheless all groups investigated emphasised an acceptance of diverse beliefs associated with spirituality, nature and the seasons

ACCESS Forums enable Individuals who are unable to

attend offline groups to have access to the Pagan community. They also enable a degree of anonymity for those who feel unable to

Authenticity Throughout the groups, authenticity is a

Conclusions

• The Pagan community has an internet presence that spans a wide range of services, products and platforms for making connections • The primary purpose of a web presence is to bridge the gap between the offline Pagan community which is widely dispersed across the UK Gaining access into the Pagan community has to be negotiated via interaction between the individual and group whereby judgements of

Implications

Whilst intentionally excluded from this study, Facebook was found to be a widely used platform across the online Pagan community offering a potential area for

There is a sense of mistrust towards the Media and the way in which they represent the Pagan community which requires further investigation