

A CASE FOR FEMINIST ANTHROPOLOGY ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND

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Abstract: In this paper, I argue a case for feminist anthropology on the island of Ireland and showcase previous feminist anthropological projects that focused on Ireland and Northern Ireland in the form of a literature review. I use the feminist wave metaphor to compare feminist history on the island of Ireland with that of Anthropology and other subsidiary disciplines to illustrate how these movements largely overlap. In the process, I include previous work from the Irish Journal of Anthropology that I deem appropriate for this discussion of feminist history, activism and scholarship in Anthropology and the wider Irish and Northern Irish sociocultural landscapes.

Keywords: Feminism, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Feminist Anthropology, Gender, Race, Sexuality

Introduction

This paper is written for researchers in the field of Anthropology and allied disciplines, who are interested in pursuing feminist anthropological projects on the island of Ireland. Queen's University Belfast (QUB), Maynooth University (MU) and University College Cork (UCC) are currently the only institutions north and south of Ireland that offer Anthropology as structured academic degrees. These courses offer a wide range of perspectives across social sciences ranging from gender, sexuality, race, to name a few. However, I am yet to locate dedicated modules on feminist Anthropology in their curriculums. With constant urges to create educational platforms that engage in discussions around marginalisation and exclusion in societies, it is also important to engage in new pedagogies of feminism in Ireland and Northern Ireland. For instance, as Stockett and Geller (2006) usefully write about how feminist pedagogy can initiate change and enhance alternative ways about knowing the world. Thus, it is my aim in this paper to accredit feminist thought and demonstrate how earlier interventions within the feminist movement have transformed and changed the way anthropologists as well as other social sciences and humanities disciplines conduct research in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Although it is essential to further the discourses of the history of feminist anthropology, it is equally important to highlight the highs and lows of the field. I hope the knowledge presented in this paper will act as an introduction to the vast body of work in feminist Anthropology and Irish feminisms for scholars across the fields.

Gilligan and Zappone (2015) note that Irish and Northern Irish feminisms are committed to activism and transformation having considered an array of issues such as suffrage, political representations, abortion and reproductive rights, the newer landscapes of LGBTQ+, gender violence, prostitution, sex trafficking and issues posed by migrant women. Scholars inside and outside the academy have roughly divided both feminist activism and feminist theory into three different waves. However, over the past decade, such scholars questioned the emergence of a fourth wave of feminism: theoretically, socially and politically. It goes beyond the scope of this article to cover every feminist intervention in Ireland, Northern Ireland and the many sectors of feminist anthropology itself. Yet, this paper highlights some feminist interventions that have contributed greatly to many aspects of Irish and Northern Irish societies; however, I argue that there is a need to establish a collective *Feminist anthropology Network* that is specific to Ireland and Northern Ireland. It has been argued by Silverstein and Lewin (2016) that anthropologists have confronted the impact of relativism while addressing cultural systems that are deeply controversial and unsettling to Western ideologies such as female genital surgeries, veiling and polygamy. Moreover, they argue that while feminist activists advocated for the removal of such customs, others questioned the discourse behind feminists' aim to remove these cultural practices. Walley (1997) suggests that debates surrounding these controversial topics were 'shaped by the exoticization of those engaged in these customs and by obsessions with sexual pleasure that arguably have their roots in particular Western sensibilities' (Walley, 1997 in Silverstein and Lewin, 2016: 16). Drawing inspiration from the questions posed by Silverstein and Lewin (2016), is it possible that feminist activism in Anthropology suppresses local culture traditions, particularly in non-Western societies? Do feminist anthropologists need to question the meaning of their Western assumptions and their impact on local customs and traditions? Thus, this paper attempts to uncover answers to these questions through a methodical overview of the history of Irish feminist activism and Anthropology.

I start with providing a brief juxtaposition of feminist history on the island of Ireland with that of Anthropology and other humanities and social science disciplines as a means of demonstrating how these sociocultural developments largely coincide. I, then, present a review of previous research that I consider successful in scoping the history of feminism and creating new and diverse approaches to understand the realities of life in Ireland and Northern Ireland, particularly in the arena of anthropological discourses. As previously mentioned, feminism can be roughly divided into four waves, and as Stockett and Geller (2006) argue, wave distinctions are indeed historical and generational moments in time that are useful analytical tools to showcase the evolution of feminist activism and theory. Therefore, I structure this paper according to the wave metaphor. Keeping in mind the aims and objectives of this special issue in the Irish Journal of Anthropology (IJA), I have also referred to past volumes that have showcased feminist thought in relation to the island of Ireland. For this, I conducted a quick search through previous issues of this journal and took

note of paper titles which featured key words or themes that I considered relevant to feminist research (gender, woman, man, sexuality, race). Furthermore, I incorporated readings outside of IJA that I had previously encountered during my MA and PhD programs along with new readings which aided my understandings of feminist histories north and south of Ireland. Throughout my search in IJA, I came across just one recent article which featured ‘feminism’ in the title and focused on the feminist movements in Argentina (Vivaldi and Gomez, 2018). After I collated a list of titles, I began to read each article individually and I subsequently chose nine articles to include which I considered most useful to showcase the state of the subfield. Overall, the works that I included in this paper have been particularly useful for enhancing my understandings of intersectional feminism and have allowed me to develop my Irish feminist anthropologist identity. I respect that many authors may not position their writings in strict feminist lines, yet I deem their work valuable to demonstrate how feminist interventions can create further avenues of research, particularly in the discipline of Anthropology. I conclude this paper by presenting recommendations for the future of feminist anthropology on the island of Ireland.

The First and Second Waves

If we define feminism as ‘advocacy of equal rights for women coupled with organized and sustained action for the purpose of achieving them’, then Ireland, both north and south, was not wanting in feminist advocates during what is considered to be the ‘first wave’ of feminism (Marylin Boxer, 1982 in Ward, 2015: 23).

In the above quote, Ward (2015) discusses the need to expand definitions of Irish feminism which draws on Marylin Boxer’s (1982) description of the first wave in France during the 19th century: ‘advocacy of equal rights for women’ (23). As Ward notes (2015), since the 1860s, Irish women borrowed campaigning tactics from British suffrage groups in their early quests for equal rights. She further argues that framing the first wave of feminism as a movement solely focused on campaigning for voting, property and education rights, marginalizes the place of feminism in Irish nationalists’ women’s agendas. In *Nationalism and Feminism*, Ryan (2020) states that feminism was instrumental in the Irish revolution, particularly during the War of Independence between 1917 and 1923. Although the nationalist movement was complex, it positioned women in the public domain through activism and protest for Irish independence; though, women remained in conservative gender roles within private spheres. Interestingly, feminists had to negotiate between the demands for Ireland’s right to self-determination while advocating for women’s suffrage rights and fighting for the reconstruction of traditional images of womanhood. Similarly, between the 1920s and 1970s, Bacik (2007) suggests that women in Ireland were still under-represented in the public domain and women were placed in roles as wife, mother, virgin, and nun by the influence of the Catholic Church. These stereotypes

were embedded in Irish law, particularly within the Articles of the 1937 Constitution (Bacik, 2007). The early interventions by feminists in the first wave in both Ireland and Britain resulted in increased access to higher and secondary school education for women and girls; the security of married women's property rights; greater access for women to the professional world; and women's right to the parliamentary vote (Ward, 2015). However, despite these advancements, as Bracken (2016) argues, for the most part, in the early and mid-twentieth century, femininity in Ireland was ascribed to mothering and reproducing offspring for the future of Ireland.

By the 1970s, feminists in Ireland had entered into a second wave as they engaged in street protests, political lobbying and they had won enormous battles against 'a church-controlled, patriarchal, political hegemony' (Healy, 2015: 72). Yet, despite feminists' significant efforts to bring about changes to individual rights for Irish women, in *Contemporary Feminism in Northern Ireland*, Turtle (2015) argues that from the 1960s, second wavers in Northern Ireland took on feminist activist projects not only for women's rights, but also for poor living conditions in many communities where living standards were considerably lower than other parts of the United Kingdom (UK). However, in spite of high unemployment and growing emigration around the 80s, many feminist projects majorly revolved around reproductive rights and gender-based violence (Healy, 2015). Moreover, what remained remotely absent were the discussions around consciousness and identity, deemed crucial for feminist politics of Ireland (Mullin, 1991). Although collective goals appeared feminist, Turtle (2015) suggests there was a lack of strong feminist ideologies of identity present in activism, particularly in Northern Ireland. In fact, as the connection between feminism and nationalism deepened, it was difficult for Protestant women to join feminist campaigns (ibid). Hunger strikes and war in Northern Ireland silenced many from the south of the border due to fear of the conflict of the Troubles, yet it mobilized and brought many women from the north down south in search of refuge, 'but never forgetting the need to address the war, and its cause, in their hometowns' (Healy, 2015: 76). The rise of feminist and women's studies in academia was an important attribute of the second wave, particularly within Irish scholarship and in the discipline of Anthropology. This has been well captured in Healy's (2015) *Second Wave Feminism in Ireland: Reflections on Then and Challenges for Now – One Activist's Perspective*, where she draws on her lived experiences of the emergence of women's studies and feminist scholarship both inside and outside the academy. She writes that towards the end of the 1980s, the discipline of women's studies developed in universities creating a space and place for feminist analysis and vision building. Similarly, women's education was elevated outside the academy by groups like *Women in Learning*, a women's group that facilitated women's studies classes in Dame Street, Dublin for many years.

Particularly in Anthropology, two feminist anthropology publications are beneficial in situating the origins of the field. First, Stockett and Geller's (2006) edited volume, *Feminist Anthropology: Past, Present and Future*, and second, Silverstein and Lewin's (2016) *Mapping Feminist Anthropology in the Twenty-First Century*. Thus, in this section, I borrow from the introductory chapters of both edited volumes to summarize the emergence of feminist anthropology as a sub-discipline from the late 1960s onwards. American cultural Anthropology and British structural functionalism began to diversify understandings of socio-culture as more fluid rather than by the fixed models that had long been considered in the field. Such new perspectives were also imagined for women and men, and feminism made its way into the Anthropology discipline through the second wave (Silverstein and Lewin, 2016). Feminist anthropologists began to critique masculine bias in human experiences and previous foundational teachings in the discipline (Stockett and Geller, 2006). Historically, feminist anthropologists filled the gaps by critiquing social structures that had emerged from the work of anthropologists such as Malinowski and Evan-Pritchard, who had missed the importance of women's roles in creating and maintaining culture(s). Interestingly, in many non-western societies, women attained powerful positions rather than being considered inferior to men (Geller and Stockett, 2006; Silverstein and Lewin, 2016). Thus, debates sparked between those who claimed that the subordination of women was a feature in all global societies, and those who advocated for difference, and traced subordination to certain socioeconomic situations (ibid). During the second wave, many scholars drew on a handful of important scholarship that paved the way for future feminist anthropologists, including *Women, Culture, and Society* (Rosaldo et al., 1974) and *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (Rapp, 1975). One key theoretical assumption of this time described the gendered structure of societies as reflective of maintained, socially constructed arrangements and gender ideologies between men and women. Such arrangements were mostly inherited cultural structures (see Koskoff, 1987; Rosaldo et al., 1974).

In relation to feminist anthropology in Ireland, Nancy Scheper-Hughes' (1979/2001) controversial ethnography *Saints, Scholars and Schizophrenics* is arguably one of the leading publications to put Ireland on the map in the world of Anthropology and indeed feminist anthropology. During her investigations in 1974 and 1975 in Ballybran, Co. Kerry, Scheper-Hughes observed Irish Catholic villagers and discovered that living spaces, places of work, recreation activities and religious practices were constructed on the basis of gender. In a later article, Scheper-Hughes (1983) notes that central to her research was the notion of a 'dying Ireland' that was occurring due to long effects of colonialism, migration of rural communities to urban towns and cities, displaced agricultural workers, reliance on younger generations and mental health issues. However, as Scheper-Hughes argues '[no]where... was the demoralization and anomie more apparent than in the sexual devitalization of especially male villagers, who were slow to court, reluctant to marry, and the majority content to remain celibate sons and brothers of their natal households until death' (1983: 149). The response

she received to her publication from Irish natives and Irish Americans in the format of book reviews and letters, branded her as anti-Catholic and insensitive to Irish spirituality, and in the same response article, Scheper-Hughes states her biases that may have contributed to her findings in Irish sexuality and gender such as her Irish Catholic education, her American identity and 'ego,' and her American feminist identity and perspective. In relation to the latter, Scheper-Hughes identified a feminist agenda when she interpreted male domination, segregation of the sexes and sexual alienation in Ballybran (ibid). Although feminist anthropologists strive to articulate the resistance experienced by women, there have been many unsuccessful attempts at showcasing 'the complex ways that agency and subordination intersect in a variety of locations and institutions, including religion' (Silverstein and Lewin, 2016: 14). I deem Scheper-Hughes' earlier work as an important example of the tensions that can exist when possessing multiple researcher identities: anthropologist, feminist and feminist anthropologist. Indeed, it is not feminist anthropology that is guilty as a whole that runs the risk of suppressing local cultures through the use of negative assumptions and personal biases, rather just one feminist anthropologist on this occasion. However, one cannot deny the fact that Scheper-Hughes' important ethnographic study contributed to social change on the island of Ireland and created an opportunity for third and fourth wave feminist anthropologists and other interdisciplinary scholars to showcase various unique intersectional inequalities that perpetrated (and still perpetrate) Irish and Northern Irish society.

Third Wave

After over a decade of emigration due to high unemployment, the birth of the 'Celtic Tiger' in the mid-1990s brought immense socioeconomic and societal change in Irish society. As Sheehan et al (2017) note, women's place in Irish society had seen the most dynamic shift due to the changing economic and labour structures of the country. These changes were deemed successful due to the abolition of wage scales, acceptance of divorce, minimal inequalities in welfare systems, introduction of maternity leave and the increase of births outside of wedlock (ibid). In fact, scholars (Bracken, 2016; Heffernan, 2017) argue that feminist movements and the postfeminist Celtic Tiger era brought positive changes in women's sociocultural positionality in Ireland. Furthermore, Ging (2009) argues that postfeminist culture comprises a number of key developments, such as the widespread acceptance that gender equality and the 'capitulation of feminism's rejection of the sexual objectification of women' (57). At the same time, in Northern Ireland, the creation of the Good Friday Agreement symbolized an 'ending' of The Troubles—a conflict that had been occurring since the rise of the Catholic Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s (Edge, 2009). Turtle (2015) argues that the development of the women's movement since the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland had yet to receive extensive documentation within feminist intervention due to post-feminist discourses. In her analysis of visual media representations of the Troubles and the peace process in Northern Ireland, Edge (2009) argues that from

1992 onwards, film and television productions which focused on the Northern Irish conflict include narratives about making sense of conflict and post-feminist discourses of masculinity (particularly ‘the new man’) and femininity. Indeed, as Edge points out, ‘while patriarchal culture will always work to naturalize unequal relationships, as in the appearance of popular post-feminist discourses, how it does this will always be influenced by other cultural factors’ (2009: 185).

In *Representations of History, Irish Feminism, and the Politics of Differences*, cultural anthropologist Molly Mullin (1991) argues that by the late 80s, Irish feminists claimed that feminism had been defeated in Ireland and strong internal divisions existed within feminist movements, as those who participated in the sociocultural development of women did not strictly identify with the feminist label (Mullin, 1991). Despite the economic and social boom in Ireland, the Irish public were not always so forthcoming about issues such as sexuality and race (Bracken, 2016). In fact, in her insightful book chapter titled *Feminism and Migrant Women in Early 21st Century Ireland*, Mbugua discusses how the evolution of the Celtic Tiger attracted many immigrants and changed ‘a once homogenous society into an emerging multicultural society’ (2015: 220). Many indigenous Irish felt threatened by this change in Irish society, and immigrants were subjected to individual and institutional discrimination and racism. Black migrant women were largely subjected to discrimination, and to counteract this, Mbugua notes how this resulted in the emergence of Black feminist organisations in Ireland like *AkiPwa* that works towards building an inclusive Irish society and aims to ‘challenge individual and institutional racism, sexism, sexual harassment and exploitation (2015: 222).

The third wave of feminist theory re-instated the importance of considering race, sex and sexuality in feminist investigation. Scholars like Judith Butler (1993; 1999) were (and still are) instrumental figures in redefining categories of gender, sex and sexuality. They heavily criticized the theorizations of second wave feminists’ theorisations of gender as a social construction and sex as a biological facet, and instead, they described such categories as natural and created through discourses, performance and representation, where the body remained as a focal point (Stockett and Geller, 2006). Another major flaw in second wave feminist thought stemmed from debates instigated by African American and other feminists of colour who critiqued the lack of focus on the intersections of sexuality, race, ethnicity and gender beyond white middle-class women (Koskoff, 2014). This led to the intersectional approach, first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989; 1991) to address the ways in which gender and race intersect and construct Black women’s experiences, particularly in the workplace. Additionally, this theory was developed to show how race and gender shape political, representational, and structural factors of violence towards women of colour. An interesting turn started in 1980-90s when feminist anthropologists began to critique their own ways of theorising gender and foreground themes they were not considering (Lamphere, 2006). By the third wave, it was indeed clear that

feminism had not been as inclusive as it claimed (McClaurin, 2001) and had been guilty of the marginalisation of Black feminist thought with failure to include works from Black feminist anthropologists in the repertoire of feminist theories in educational settings. These developments at the intersections of age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class and gender were considered vital to identity construction (ibid). Thus, the edited volume of *Black Feminist Anthropology* (McClaurin, 2001) was a revelation in the sub-discipline, presenting a set of ideologies, theories and ethnographic methods that were found within and outside the Anthropology discipline. It acted as a cultural mediation between Black scholars and academia, Black anthropologists and the Anthropology discipline, and Black and white feminists.

Such issues were also noted in Irish feminist scholarship, as Bacik (2007) argues that by the third wave of feminism, women's voices in Ireland were firmly rooted in the public arena, and issues of class, race and sexuality began to be addressed in Irish scholarship. However, in contrast, McDonagh (2020) argues, that while the third wave of feminism recognized intersectionality in scholarship, this theoretical underpinning did not reflect racism, discrimination, biases and other difficulties for marginalized Traveller women in Ireland at the time. Indeed, one of the most pressing issues in Irish society is the discrimination and exclusion faced by non-white individuals and Irish Traveller communities. To counteract these absences, McDonagh (2020) notes how Traveller women created their own feminist organisations including *The National Traveller Women Forum* in 1988 and *The Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre* in 1998. Both initiatives fought for Traveller women's rights and adopted feminist-based practices in navigating gender-based violence, promoting equality and ensuring diversity in Ireland. This has been strengthened by Bhreatnach (2007) in her IJA article, where she centralizes the origins of Traveller communities in Ireland. She does so by outlining theoretical aspects proposed by interdisciplinary scholars to demonstrate the gaps within understandings in relation to their dispossession and poverty. She also critiques historians' habits of placing the origins of Irish society in Celtic culture and notes how Traveller activists advocate for the origins of Travellers to be considered as a separate history within Irish society. This thought-provoking article raises questions as to whether more historical and anthropological work need to document histories, material and cultural artefacts of Travellers' pasts.

Another aspect of the third wave brought women's positionality centre stage. For instance, Wardell (2007) points out that women who farm in Ireland had been an under researched topic in Anthropology and wider academic fields. Her collected stories are from twenty-three women who attained diverse farming roles in Waterford, Offaly, Wicklow, Kildare, Laois, and Carlow. Themes relating to gender and labour, gender discrimination, health and hazards in the workplace, and nostalgia were determined in the analysis of the project, which are particularly relevant to feminist anthropological research. Her research opened doors for

further investigations that utilize feminist methodologies to analyse and gather rural perspectives of women's positionality in farming and the gender power dynamics within these roles. Likewise, Cronin (2008) argues that in the late 2000s, anthropologists had mostly avoided researching intimate partner and child violence. Not only does she highlight literature about domestic violence to examine the social suffering of women living in Northern Ireland who had experienced violent home life, but Cronin also moves away from postmodern theories of social realities, which she argues commonly displaces the individual from their world. Interestingly, Cronin usefully analyses topics of gender, sex, economics, and social class, and cleverly links Northern Ireland's post-conflict identity to domestic violence, as she states 'when violence outside the home decreases, violence within the home increases' (2008: 32). Cronin's example of analysing cases of violence conceptually and methodologically within the public and private domains of Northern Ireland could be useful to feminist anthropologists who position their work in broader areas of conflict transformation.

The topic of religion and intersections of gender and intersectionality in Ireland, Northern Ireland and the broader Anthropology discipline makes an interesting area of research, which feminist anthropology on the island of Ireland is in a good position to explore. Ensuring the visibility of women's activities and their economic contributions to societies as well as the analysis of power dynamics is a fundamental concept within any feminist quest (Lamphere, 2006). For over a century, women in Irish society have fought to have their voices heard and their stories written into Irish histories. Irish feminists' pasts, presents and futures have and will envision a more inclusive Irish society (Gilligan and Zappone, 2015). In her examination of evangelical gendered discourses of emotion, Foye (2011) analyses the life narratives of ministers' wives in Northern Ireland and provides readers with a deeper insight into the various kinds of conflicts in life in ministry. Such conflicts contribute to the subordination of women since evangelical circles often position men as 'the privileged owners of rationality and objectivity' and women as 'the psychologically weaker sex, due in part to the fact they are characterised as more 'emotional' (Foye, 2011: 39-42).

This leads us to the discussion around gender, sexuality, and mental health. An aspect that had also been covered in relation to gender in IJA by Sheehan (2012), in his ethnographic investigation of a suicide gender paradox amongst individuals living in Dublin estates. Sheehan (2012) notes how social events in Ireland have contributed to the labelling of suicide as a predominantly male issue by overshadowing suicidal behaviour and self-harm amongst females. However, as Sheehan observed, men and women equally attempt suicide, particularly after the end of a committed relationship. Similarly, Garcia (2012) asks whether an increase in gender equality led to women's development of life skills, social skills and coping strategies, and in turn, minimized their suicide rates in Ireland. She draws on feminist theory considering gender as a social construct, an idea that demonstrates how children, women and men are socialized into different gender

categories (Maccoby, 1988). Garcia (2012) suggests that gender identities are a critical part of mental health issues and how masculine expectations are deeply engrained in Irish society. Moreover, she suggests that '*[g]ender does not mean women since, gender equality is not a women's affair exclusively,*' as women have expanded their roles and functions within society, and men have yet to achieve a similar expansion (Garcia, 2012: 26). These conclusions are indeed relevant to contemporary feminist narratives and the inclusion of masculinities in the analysis could be considered more of an important aspect in feminist research today. Having said that, there continues to be an inherent bias in favouring men over women in Western societies. However, from my understanding of feminist history, there seems to be another level to this argument which sees feminist discourses prioritize inclusivity for cis women rather than other minority gender and non-gender identities. In particular, previous research has demonstrated the struggles faced by transgender individuals living on the island of Ireland. For instance, in 2011, a report found that many transgender people in Northern Ireland suffered mental health issues at some stage of their lives, which were largely linked to negative social experiences such as discriminations, prejudice, social stigma and alienation from loved ones. The report found that transgender people felt marginalized from Northern Irish society because of their gender identity (McBride, 2011). However, these exclusions in feminist discourses throughout the third wave are taken by the fourth wave feminists, which seem to be instigated by the boom of new media technologies (Koskoff (2014). This has been elaborated further in the next section.

Fourth Wave

Many current debates, particularly online, reveal extreme views of pro and anti-feminist narratives (Cree, 2014). Nonetheless, these discussions that take place over social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogging sites, allows many feminists to challenge micro-processes of day-to-day sexism, misogyny, racism and comment upon specific events reported on mainstream media (Munro, 2013; Cree, 2014; Chamberlain, 2016; Harvey, 2020). The fourth wave echoes many issues from the second wave, 'but there are also different issues and less clear or ridged 'feminist' parameters' (Cree, 2014: 939). Specifically, on the island of Ireland, there have been some significant milestones in the previous decade contributing to a revival of feminist intervention through activism and scholarly publications. Turtle (2015) notes, that when Northern Ireland entered into the 21st century, new activist networks outside of the structure of mainstream feminism emerged out of a desire to re-establish collective feminist activities and identities, and religion, political divisions and periods of intense violence were no longer issues for feminists in the north. Incidents like the death of Savita Halappanavar, who died in University Hospital Galway in 2012 from a septic miscarriage, renewed the pro-choice movement in Ireland, as Halappanavar was refused abortion earlier in her pregnancy due to Irish laws (Field, 2018). In this period, Turtle (2015) notes how sexual and reproductive rights were major concerns for feminists in Northern Ireland which resulted in vigils for Savita Halappanavar as well as pro-

choice creative media campaigns showcasing the experiences of women denied access to abortion and facilitating education workshops on reproductive rights of women.

In May 2015, the marriage referendum in Ireland, which originated from a lengthy activist campaign by LGBTQ+ communities, was passed by an enormous majority of Irish citizens 'and the definition of marriage in the constitution was broadened to introduce marriage equality' (Elkink et al., 2017: 361). Ireland became the first country in the world to legalize same sex marriage through a national referendum. In 2020, same-sex marriage was legally recognized in Northern Ireland and initial ceremonies began to take place from February of that year. Yet, as Crammer and Thompson (2018) argue, in Northern Ireland, the refusal to introduce same sex marriage because of the influence of religious beliefs and culture had meant that Northern Ireland was 'out of step' with the rest of the United Kingdom (Though of course, it is subject to UK legislation since 2020). Despite this, since 2015, Northern Ireland has experienced a 'feminisation' in political leadership when Arlene Foster was elected leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), one of the largest parties in Northern Ireland (Matthews and Whiting, 2021). In 2016, the centenary year of the Easter Rising, a new political quota developed to ensure that at least 30% of candidates in Irish political parties in Ireland who ran for election were women (O'Toole, 2017). The following year, Michelle O'Neill was elected leader of Sinn Féin in Northern Ireland, while Mary Lou McDonald became president and leader of Sinn Féin in the south (Matthews and Whiting, 2021). The year 2016 'was also a time when campaign to Repeal the Eighth amendment, Ireland's constitutional ban on abortion, was in full swing' (O'Toole, 2017: 7). Grassroots campaign organisations such as the *Abortion Rights Campaign*, the *Coalition Repeal the Eight Amendment* and the *National Women's Council of Ireland* (NWC), lobbied and raised the public's awareness in advance of the upcoming election on the topic of abortion (Field, 2018). In 2018, Ireland voted to remove the constitutional ban on abortion in most instances. The scale of the vote instigated a change within Irish society to a more socially liberal outlook similar to the marriage referendum in 2015 (Field, 2018). Yet, for Northern Ireland, women's rights to abortion were delayed until 2019, when abortion became decriminalized, however, commission of these services have not been administrated because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Kirk et al, 2021).

Over the years, the voices of Black Irish feminists have contributed to feminism both inside and outside the academy. For instance, author Emma Dabiri (2019) published the notable publication, *Don't Touch My Hair*, which gives readers an insight into her life as a mixed-race Irish child, where experiences involving her hair are symbolic references to racism in Ireland. In the *Sociological Observer*, Joseph (2021) writes about the murder of George Floyd in the US at the hands of the police in July 2020. The killing sparked huge controversy as Black communities stood in solidarity with the harsh realities of police brutality. Joseph notes that many

Black citizens in countries across the Atlantic drew parallels with the Black Lives Matter movement in the US, and in Ireland, many accounted their experiences of racism. Cullen and Murphy (2021) also note that since the beginning of the global pandemic, feminist organisations in Ireland, such as the NWCI, developed resources for women that were COVID-19 related. Cullen and Murphy (2016) previously critiqued NWCI for their little focus on vulnerable and minority experiences, particularly in relation to austerity. Subsequently, NWCI addressed these issues in their pandemic talks, as well as hosting a series of anti-racist seminars, which emphasized the experiences of indigenous ethnic minority Traveller women, asylum seekers, migrant and Roma women (Cullen and Murphy, 2021). Another important milestone came in January 2021, when the final report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes was published, which was considered 'of utmost societal and sociological significance' (Condon, 2021: 1). From the late 1700s, the Catholic Church and Irish government established Magdalene laundries and Mother and Baby Homes aimed at housing women who became pregnant out of wedlock. Their last institution did not close until 1996 (Clark, 2020). The report found that a total of around 57,000 women were institutionalized and approximately 9000 babies and children died whilst in the care of the State and the Catholic Church (The Irish Times, 2021). However, researchers, members of Government, media representatives and the general public raised issues shortly after its release. In particular, archivist Catriona Crowe noted that the final conclusions of the report were inconclusive in respect to questions of physical abuse, coercion and forced adoption (Condon, 2021).

It is evident that Irish trans histories in feminism and wider society are underrepresented. This facet is argued well by Sherlock's (2015) book chapter titled *Trans Rights in Ireland: A Feminist Issue*, which provides readers with an insight into Irish trans histories, activism, research, challenges and the relationships between feminism and transgender issues. Sherlock argues how core feminist challenges such as access to healthcare, inequalities, violence and media representations are indeed key issues in trans movements. Sherlock further states that '[e]verytime a feminist movement fails to consider and include trans analysis and perspective, cisgender feminists assert their privilege in a way which actively contributes to the marginalisation and exclusion of trans realities' (2015: 325). In recent months, feminist organisations, such as the *Women's Policy Group* (WPG) in Northern Ireland, have campaigned for trans rights. In September 2021, the WPG wrote to the Northern Irish Executive about the importance of safeguarding the rights of trans people in Northern Ireland (WPG, 2021). Hines (2019) argues the importance of accepting trans-inclusive feminism in today's societies. She further notes that creating and maintaining fundamental links between feminism and trans movements is key to promoting social justice for all in feminism and beyond. Thus, it is important that feminists on the island of Ireland today focus much of their efforts to create a feminism that is trans-inclusive.

In relation to feminist anthropology on a global scale, the fourth wave of feminism led towards a new scholarly journal by the Association of Feminist Anthropology. As of August 2021, the journal has published three issues packed with intersectional feminist anthropological perspectives. Co-editors of the first issues, Davis and Mulla (2020) usefully define the aims and objectives of the journal and recognize the criticality of the COVID-19 pandemic on already fragile inequalities and vulnerabilities in many aspects of global societies. They believe that a meaningful recovery can only be achieved by drawing on and learning from lessons of feminist anthropological praxes. What I find most exciting about this journal, is the interest that feminist anthropology is rendering, and I consider this scholarly intervention as a new wave in feminist theory in Anthropology that informs future pedagogies and intervenes in the structural inequality that exists within academic institutions. While there are many useful contributions in this journal, two articles are especially apt with regard to their reflections on this issue. In *The things we believe: anthropology and feminism in the #MeToo era*, Walters (2020) writes that feminist anthropology tends to leverage feminist praxis in ethnographic practices rather than call out its placement in academic structures of Anthropology. Moreover, she notes how the discipline's failure to make changes in university curricula and undermine patriarchal structures 'continues to section off designated feminist spaces where "women" are still its primary practitioners and primary subjects' (Walters, 2020: 35). Secondly, Smith et al. (2021) co-authored *Cite Black Women. A Critical Praxis (A Statement)* with The Cite Black Women Collective, an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary initiative that comprises femme, queer and gender non-conforming individuals from various disciplines and sectors. The collective is dedicated to highlighting Black women scholars who have often been forgotten for their contributions in the academy (Smith et al., 2021).

Anthropologists and other interdisciplinary researchers have indeed explored issues of racism in their projects about the island of Ireland. Joyce (2015) usefully writes about the everyday racism experienced by Irish Travellers and demonstrates the impact that identity status has on mental and physiological health. In contemporary Ireland, there is a reluctance to admit to racism against Travellers, and Joyce further argues that the clear division between Travellers and non-Travellers can be traced to historical instances of exclusion which aimed to wipe out Traveller and nomadic culture. This process of exclusion stemmed from governing bodies, urban planners and policy makers to control Travellers' spatial mobility. Not only does this article educate readers about the realities of everyday racism, but it also points out the impacts of structural oppression from authorities, which is an important aspect, particularly within Black feminist anthropology, in its quest to destabilize and transform structural racism and sexism that symbolizes histories of Anthropology and other disciplines, in North America and Europe (McClaurin, 2001). In the future, investigations of Irish Travellers' lived experiences in contemporary Ireland would be strengthened if Irish

feminist anthropologists' foreground Black feminist theory to understand the complexities of racism and how it intersects with gender, class and place.

In the *Sociological Observer*, Michael and Joseph (2021) argue that the COVID-19 lockdown has illuminated marginalized and vulnerable communities in Ireland and the underlying racism that exists. Though, COVID-19 did not create racism and socio-economic inequality, it has highlighted the disparity between privileged and deprived identities in Ireland. The authors emphasize the need to mobilize discussions of ontological ideas of race and ethnicity, Black identities and citizenship as a means of developing a scholarship that is critically reflexive of Western domination. Joseph (2021) notes how Irish people commonly deny issues of racism and situate them primary within the jurisdictions of the US. What can feminist anthropologies do to further understandings of racial bias and the realities of racism that exist in Ireland and Northern Ireland? Irish anthropologist, Fiona Murphy, has contributed to literature on issues of migration and direct provision in Ireland. In a co-authored book publication, Mark Maguire and Fiona Murphy (2012) examine the everyday lived experiences of former asylum seekers and migrants who have lost a great deal due to conflict and have attempted to make new livelihoods in Ireland. Lack of adequate housing facilities, limited working rights, inaccessible higher-level education and ongoing structural violence is still ever present in everyday lives of asylum seekers and migrants, and the lack of information of government producers influences racism from white residents in Ireland. Murphy's (2021) critical reflection on the experiences of asylum seekers in direct provision in Ireland during COVID-19, highlights the failings of a system that has been in place since April 2000. In addition to this insightful piece, Murphy reflexively discusses the history of her research as an anthropologist of displacement, which is helpful for younger generation anthropologists who are interested in this area of research. Indeed, feminist anthropology in Ireland and Northern Ireland can learn a great deal from critical race theories and theorists who define race as a social construct and consider racial inequality as rooted in socioeconomic inequality, health inequality, and other social stratification in Ireland and beyond (Michael and Joseph, 2021). As this review has established, the publications included in this analysis show how anthropologists and other researchers have previously explored feminist topics in their research quests, and open new pathways of analysis for future feminist anthropologists.

Conclusion

To conclude, I have aimed to provide readers with a starting point in a quest to situate feminist anthropology firmly in the broader Irish and Northern Irish Anthropology discipline by discussing the directions that authors have previously taken in feminist discourses. In this article, I have presented literature that focused on some historical accounts of feminist activism and scholarship that is being done on Ireland and Northern Ireland together with writings from the broader feminist anthropology sub-discipline. I also reviewed some of the

key literature from the IJA and beyond to showcase a selection of works by scholars in Anthropology and other humanities and social science disciplines that focused on feminist themes. In the introduction of this paper, I argued the need to develop further the subdisciplines of feminist anthropology on the island of Ireland, so that questions surrounding power dynamics, equality, visibility, inclusion and exclusion can continue to be documented and discussed. In light of the extensive timeline of feminist intervention in Ireland, Northern Ireland and the broader discipline of Anthropology, it is possible to create new and diverse modes of incorporating feminist thought in Anthropology and produce an inclusive environment for scholars of all genders, non-genders and other intersectional identities in which to collaborate. There is a need to collect information from those who already identify as Irish and Northern Irish feminist anthropologists and invite others who align their research interests within the realm of feminist anthropology. Such information would be helpful to further document feminist anthropological research north and south of Ireland and be useful in creating a committees or organisations specifically for Irish and Northern Irish feminist anthropologists who are interested in networking and identifying with a collective group. Such a community would provide a safe space for feminist anthropologists to discuss and voice their concerns about issues inside and outside the academy, and possibly brainstorm solutions to these problems.

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